Occasional Papers in Sociology and Anthropology

9

Caste/Ethnic Issues

Water Resource Management

Trends in Local Development

Editors

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OCCASIONAL PAPERS IN SOCIOLOGY AND ANTHROPOLOGY

VOLUME 9

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EDITORIAL NOTE

It is our pleasure to present yet another volume of the Occasional Papers in Sociology and Anthropology (OPSA) to the readers. The Central Department of Sociology/Anthropology (established in 1981) at Tribhuvan University began the publication of this series in 1987. A closer scrutiny of the table of contents and the papers published in the OPSA volumes so far (including this ninth volume) allow us to make some interesting observations. First, it becomes evident that a number of Sociologists and Anthropologists working within Tribhuvan University or at other places within Nepal have adopted OPSA as a viable publication outlet for their papers or research write-ups. Let us hope that an increasing number of researchers will choose OPSA as a space for publishing their scholarly works in the days to come. Second, a careful reading of the papers (published in OPSA so far) reveal that most of the write-ups have their basis on applied (read as consultancy) work done by the authors as a part of their engagements with development projects, agencies, NGOs and INGOs. This is a clear reflection of the fact that Sociological and Anthropological research opportunities of the applied nature are more easily available to the professionals of this discipline who have been working with TU or other agencies and organizations in Nepal.

One may ask: What could be the reason for most of the Nepali Sociologists and Anthropologists to be engaged in applied work? Are they not interested in basic research? Non-engagement or minimal engagement in fundamental research by Nepali scholars cannot be because of their dislike for the same. The reality is that research funds are hardly available within the country (more so for the faculty members of TU in particular) in order to enable scholars to be engaged in basic or fundamental research. Therefore, most of the Nepali Sociologists and Anthropologists end up joining the applied, advocacy and action work sponsored by development agencies and projects.

Most of the papers in the current volume of OPSA are not any different in their orientation towards applied work from the papers that have appeared in earlier volumes. There are twelve papers in this volume that are grouped under three cross-cutting thematic sections, viz., Caste/Ethnic Issues, Water Resources Management, and Trends in Local Development.

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CONTENTS

Caste/Ethnic Issues

THE DALIT CONTEXT

Harka Gurung

If You had to give me this birth
Why give me birth at all?
You cast me away to be born; you were cruel.
Where were You at the time of my birth?
Who did You help then?
Chokha says: O Lord, O Keshava, don't let me go.

Chokhamela

The Dalit Context

The above quotation and title of its source provide insight into two problems regarding the Dalit. First is their fatalistic attitude apparent from the above supplication to Lord Keshava, another synonym for Krishna. Since high castes lord over the Dalit through divine sanction, it is an exercise in futility. Second, the book title, From Untouchable to Dalit, illustrates terminological transition from specific to neutral one. That is, adoption of a general term, *Dalit* (oppressed), in place of *Achhut* (untouchable) that is both pejorative and illegal. The above two problems are very much germane to the Dalit discussion.

The Constitution of Nepal-1990 reaffirms the alignment of the state to Hindu ideology (Article 4.1). This means perpetuation of social exclusion of millions of low caste people with its economic and political ramifications. The mainspring of such inequality is the

varna model of social stratification based on birth. The Sanskrit term *varna* has two literal versions: *varna* as colour and *varna-ashram* as four stages of life. Although most ascribe the four-fold caste hierarchy (Brahman, Kshatriya, Vaisya, Sudra) to Manu's version as bodily parts of Brahma, there seems some racial (*varna*) basis to distinguish between the Aryan conquistadors and autochthonous peoples. Racial discrimination is generally considered to be based on color. Untouchability in Hindu caste system has also racial element as the ritual status of one's caste is also based on birth. Thus, the social exclusion of untouchable castes is also a form of racial discrimination[1]. This chapter attempts some clarification on the genesis, definition, population, and situation of Dalits in Nepal.

Orientation

Nepal at the periphery of the Hindustan plain was originally a congeries of tribal units. The earliest inroad of Hinduism was in 5th century A.D. during the Lichhavi rule in Kathmandu Valley. Since the 11th century, Hinduistic orientation in the country was as a reactionary effect of Muslim conquest of India. In Kathmandu Valley, Jasyasthitiraj Malla (1382-1395) introduced an elaborate system of 64 castes among the Newar. In Gorkha, Ram Shah (1605-1633) adapted this model into a less structured form. Thereafter, Sen rulers of Palpa claimed to be 'Hindupati' (champions of Hinduism). These theocratic tendencies were basically as a bulwark against Muslim hegemony in Mughal India. But with the decline of the Mughal, there emerged another power in the plains: the British rule with Christian faith. Such a historical compulsion led to the primacy of Brahman orthodoxy in the Nepalese court to construct a Hindu haven against Mughal (Muslim) and British (Christian) regimes. Therefore, the designation of Muslim and Europeans beef-eaters as 'impure' in the *Muluki Ain* (Law of the Land). One of the

first acts of Prithivinarayan Shah after the conquest of Kathmandu Valley was the expulsion of Capuchin missionaries from Patan. He visualized Nepal as 'asil Hindustan' (pure land of Hindus). Since then, Hinduisation became the *raison d'etre* of the Nepalese state[2].

The *Muliki Ain* - 1854 was a written version of social code that had been in practice for several centuries in Nepal. Its caste categories diverged from the four *varna* of the classical Vedic model and instead had three categories to accommodate the tribal peoples between the pure and impure castes. These were further classified into five hierarchies with the following order of precedence[3].

A. Wearers of holy cord (caste)
B. Non-enslavable Alcohol-Drinkers (ethnic)
C. Enslavable Alcohol-Drinkers (ethnic)
D. Impure but touchable castes (ethnic, other caste & outsiders)
E. Impure and untouchable castes (caste)

The scheme was biased in favour of dominant hill castes (Bahun, Thakuri, Chhetri). Though included in the first hierarchy (A) as pure, Indian (tarai) Brahman was ranked below Chhetri and Newar Brahman. Newar Brahman was similarly placed below the Chhetri. The second hierarchy (B) included Magar and Gurung, long associated with Gorkha regime, and also Sunuwar, who had received the *lal mohar* (royal seal) of being Hindu in 1825. There was no reference to Rai and Limbu, the last tribals to succumb to the Gorkhali rule. The third hierarchy (C) had Bhote, some smaller tribes and descendents of freed slaves (Gharti). The fourth (D) and fifth (E) hierarchies were considered impure castes with the distinction of the former as 'touchable' (no water sprinkling needed after contact) and the later as 'untouchable' (purification necessary after contact). Of the six included in 'D' hierarchy, four were Newar sub-groups, Muslim and Mlechh (European). The lowest hierarchy (E) had six artisan castes of the hill and two Newar

scavenger sub-groups (Table1.1) The *Muluki Ain* was silent about the status of Madhise (tarai) castes, be it touchable or untouchable. There was discrimination in the extent of punishment for crimes according to the caste hierarchy of the person. The rule was one of higher penalty for those in upper hierarchies or the extent of penalty was tied to the level of ritual purity. For example, payment for divorce among the Newar had the following gradation[4]:

Hierarchy		Sub-Group
A.	Shrestha (Hindu)	70
B.	Bada (Buddhist)	60
B.	Jyapu (Farmer)	40
B.	Artisan castes (Hindu)	35
D.	Impure but touchable (Mixed)	15
E.	Impure and untouchable (Hindu)	10

The old legal code, *Muluki Ain* - 1854, was amended nine decades later in 1963 by repealing some penal clauses on untouchability. Further more, Nepal Constitution-1990 guarantees the rights to equality by stating that the State shall not discriminate against citizens on the basis of religion, colour, sex, caste, ethnicity or belief (Article 11.3). However, the above constitutional right is negated by a clause in the *Muluki Ain* as amended in 1992 which stresses that the traditional practices at religious places shall not be considered as discriminatory. This means that those castes once categorised untouchable would still have no access to shrines and temples. In the same way, adherence to 'traditional practices' would imply exclusion of untouchable castes and, therefore, inequality in other spheres also. Thus, caste discrimination and untouchability has remained a fact of everyday life in 'the world's only Hindu kingdom'

Definition

In recent years, the so-called disadvantaged or marginalised groups have emerged as a subject in Nepalese development discourse. Thus, the terms *Janajati* referring to ethnic people and *Dalit* referring to untouchable castes have come into currency. These two terms are not to be found in *Muluki Ain* as the former were labelled as *Matwali* (Alcohol-Drinker) and the latter as *Pani Nachalnya* (Untouchable). It might be useful here to make a subtle distinction of the native terms *jat* and *jati* although both mean the species[5]. Etymologically, *jati* is a derivative (feminine, weaker, sub-species) of the term *jat* (species, group). However, their general usage in Nepal is reversed: *jati* as ethnic group and *jat* as castes. This seems to reflect the reality of their relative political dominance. Following this convention, *jat* would refer to Hindu castes and *jati* to ethnic nationalities and *Janajati* as synonymous with *jati*. There is yet another structural difference between the caste and ethnic groups. Caste division is vertical, based on ritual hierarchy within the same racial/linguistic/ religious group. Nepalese Bahun and Badi represent the extremes of this continuum. On the other hand, ethnic division is horizontal or spatial. That is, ethnic group identity is based on specific native area, common language and religious tradition. The above distinction becomes useful in clarifying the term Dalit later.

The Hindi term *Dalit* had a recent entry in Nepal. But it had a longer exposure in India through two divergent personalities. Mahatma Gandhi (Vaisya) invented the term *Harijan* (God's people) for the Dalit untouchables and his approach was one of compassion and amelioration. The doyen of Dalit emancipation was B.R. Ambedkar, himself of untouchable caste, who had a hand in drafting the Constitution of India (1950) with recognition of Scheduled Castes for affirmative action. Dr. Ambedkar did not believe in Dalit emancipation within the Hindu caste system and

therefore persuaded millions of Dalits into the egalitarian Buddhist fold beginning on 15 October 1956 at Nagpur[6].

In Nepal, the confusion about who are the Dalit has been created by the Hindu regime and its ideologues. This is evident from the official reticence to recognise the specific identity of Dalit castes. Thus, they are subsumed under the rubric of such general terms as disadvantaged, downtrodden, marginalised and oppressed groups. Affirmative action was first referred in the Communist government's budget speech of July 1994 that recognized 16 social groups as 'oppressed class' including 11 low castes. The Coalition government budget speech of July 1995 referred to 12 'oppressed groups' of which 8 were low castes. None of these two statements specified who were the Dalit. Subsequently, a National Committee for Upliftment of Upechhit (Excluded), Utpidit (Suppressed) and Dalit (Exploited) was formed without specifying the target group. The Ninth Plan (1997 – 2002) had a separate section for Downtrodden and Oppressed Communities but with no definition or identification of who they are.

The Dalit Bikash Samiti formed in 1997 listed 23 social groups as the Dalit. Of these, only 15 were of the untouchable caste. Among those included were three Newar impure but touchable castes (Kasai, Kuche, Kusle), one tarai impure but touchable caste (Lohar) and one ethnic group (Santhal/Satar). The recent Government bill (19 March 2002) listing 28 social groups as Dalit is similarly erroneous. Among those scheduled in this list, Kasain, Kuche and Kusule Newars, and Lohar of tarai are impure but touchable castes. Jhangad as an Oraon ethnic group falls outside the caste category. Chunar, Parki and Sunar are sub-groups of Kami while Paswan is the same as Dusadh. Gothe and Thater remain unreported in the censuses. Thus, only 18 of the official list belong to the category of untouchable castes (Table 1.1). Of these, three are not recorded in

the population census of 2001. Kadara could have been included among the Kami, their patrilineal caste. Chyame and Pode must have been included among the Newar.

The lack of clarity in the official definition owes to the diversity of opinion among researchers on the Dalit problem. There is no confusion as to the explicit meaning of Dalit as 'oppressed' but there is difference in interpretation. Some interpret the word Dalit as a derivative from *daldal* or swamp from where it is difficult to extricate[7]. In fact, the term *Dalit* has close etymological link with Nepali words *dalai* or d*alnu* which means to crush, exploit, oppress, or suppress. That expression can be applied to mean people who have been oppressed. The basis of such oppression, exploitation and exclusion of Dalits is caste discrimination.

According to one researcher, *Dalit* refers to "group of people who are religiously, culturally, socially and economically oppressed, who could belong to different language and ethnic groups"[8]. The multiple sources of oppression mentioned (religious, cultural, social, economic) above are as loaded as the much worded designation of the National Committee for Upechhit, Utpidit, Dalit Utthan. In fact, the oppression of Dalit castes emanates from their exclusion as social outcaste on ritual basis, which in effect marginalises them religiously, culturally and economically. It is misleading to assign untouchability on the basis of ethnicity or language since the Bahun and Kami belong to the same racial (Caucasoid), linguistic (Indo-Aryan), and cultural (Hindu caste) group. Therefore, *Dalit* term does not apply to those outside the caste system. That is why in India where the *varna* model as well as the Dalit term originated, the Constitution has two separate categories of backward communities for affirmative action: Scheduled Castes (715) and Scheduled Tribes (461)[9].

8   Occasional Papers

Table 1.1: Inventory of Dalit Castes

Caste Name	Other Surnames	Traditional Occupation	Population		Change
			1991	2001	%
A. Parbate (Hill)			1,619,434	1,615,577	-0.2
1. Badi	Nepali	music & dance	7,082	4,442	-47.2
2. Damai	Pariyar, Hudke (drummer)	tailor – musician	367,989	390,305	6.0
3. Gaine	Gandharva	minstrel, metal worker	4,484	5,887	31.3
4. Kadara (Union of Kami & Sarki)		-			
5. Kami	Agari (ore-smelting), Biswakarma (iron), Chunar (wood), Mahar, Parki (cane), Pouri, Rasaili, Sunar (gold), Tamata (copper)	metal worker	963,655	895,954	-7.0
6. Sarki	Bhul, Charmakar	leather worker	276,224	318,989	15.5
B. Newar (Kathmandu Valley)					
7. Chyame	Chyamkhala, Halahulu, Kuchikar	sweeper	-	-	-
8. Pode	Deola, Dhahla	sweeper	-	-	-
C. Madhise (Tarai)			582,347	886,204	52.2
9. Bantar	Sardar	labourer		35,839	-
10. Chamar	Mochi, Ram	leather worker	203,919	269,661	32.2
11. Chidimar	-	bird catcher		12,296	-
12. Dhobi	-	washer man	76,594	73,413	-4.1
13. Dom	Dum	sweeper		8,931	-
14. Dusadh	Pasi, Paswan	alcohol fermenter	93,242	158,525	70.0
15. Halkhor	Bhangi, Mehatar	sweeper		3,621	-
16. Khatawe	Kahar, Mandal	earth-worker	66,612	74,972	12.5
17. Musahar	Sada	earth-worker	141,980	172,434	21.4
18. Tatma	Tanti	weaver		76,512	-
Total			2,201,781	2,501,781	13.6

Another writer notes that "The word Dalit is used in Nepal to identify a vulnerable and poor group of people, who are discriminated against on the basis of their caste"[1]. This seems an realistic formulation by attributing vulnerability and poverty to caste discrimination. One Dalit writer is more specific to equate the term Dalit exclusively for the so-called 'untouchables' as defined in the old legal code of Nepal (1854)[2]. However, the same writer enumerates a list of 63 Dalit groups including 8 ethnics and many tarai and Newar impure but touchable castes. Similarly, Dalit Sewa Sangha (*Bikas Patrika*, Vol. 9, No. 19, April 2001) claims the existence of 54 Dalit groups including 7 ethnics and 4 Newar touchable castes. Another Dalit writer gives a list of 25 Dalit groups among which 3 are ethnic, and 5 tarai and 2 Newar touchable castes[3].

One researcher clarifies that the term Dalit was chosen by their activists as a means of rejecting other derogatory terms such as 'untouchable', 'Scheduled Caste' or 'Depressed Class'[4]. Their equivalent terms in Nepali are *achhut, kamsel, pani nachalne, sano jat*, all referring to the untouchables. A recent report distinguishes two definitions regarding the *Dalit*, e.g. official one as broader variety of the oppressed and specific one in the sense of untouchable and subscribes to the latter specific one[5]. In other words, they are 'untouchable castes' of Nepal.

The present report considers that the *Dalit* term should be exclusively used to refer to the lowest hierarchy of the Hindu caste society, that is, those considered 'untouchable'. Such a definition would exclude ethnic groups, however, oppressed culturally and economically as they belong to entirely different social order. This would also exclude those considered impure but touchable Newar and Madhise castes among the Hindus. The term is similarly not applicable to non-Hindus as the *Muluki Ain-1854* placed the

Muslim and Mlechha (Christian) in the unclean but touchable hierarchy. Thus, Churaute (hill Muslim) and Buddhist Gara (butcher) cannot be considered Dalit (untouchable) since their religion do not recognise the caste system. Therefore, the Dalit category includes what one may call artisan or occupational castes among the Hindu and the term *Dalit* is an alternative to traditional ones with pejorative connotation for the bottom hierarchy of 'untouchable' Hindu castes. That they are socially ostracised, economically deprived, and politically excluded is the making of Hindu caste discrimination. These Dalit castes are listed in Table 1.1. There could be other castes treated as 'untouchable' but cannot be specified due to three reasons. First, the *Muluki Ain* was not definitive regarding the Madhesi castes of the tarai. Second, some surnames are synonyms or clan (gotra) names to hide the Dalit status. Third, some caste names considered as Dalit are not reported in the population census and their provenance remains undertermined.

Population

The lack of clarity on the definition of Dalit obviously means diversity in data on the magnitude of their population. Although Nepalese decennial census began in 1911, ethnic/caste data were not reported until 1991. Thus, data on ethnic/caste composition of the population in Nepal are available only from 1991 and some studies of specific areas before that. One might refer to four such earlier studies. In 1957, an anthropological survey covered 33 Newar settlements of Kathmandu Valley[6]. In Newari, those in the untouchable category are called la cale ma ju pim or briefly ma ju pim (from whom water cannot be taken). Of the total 37,315 households, the caste breakdown was as follows:

	Caste	Households	%
1.	Newar, Brahman (Hindu)	365	1.0
2.	Gubhaju, Banra (Buddhist)	32,000	9.9
3.	Shrestha (Hindu)	8,100	21.7
4.	Udas (Buddhist)	1,700	4.6
5.	Jyapu (Indigenous)	15,800	42.3
6.	Artisan castes (16)	4,380	11.7
7.	Untouchable castes (6)	2,470	6.6
Total		**37,315**	**100.0**

The second study was based on the inventory of land record of 1964 – 66 for the Central Development Region covering 19 districts of Janakpur, Narayani and Bagmati Zones[7]. It recorded 97 caste/ethnics with a total population of 3,468,816. Among these, the following can be considered Dalit.

Hill	Population	Tarai	Population
1. Badi	216	1. Chamar	34,069
2. Damai	37,497	2. Dom	532
3. Gaine	261	3. Dusadh (29,625)	29,880
4. Kami (53,093)	49,736	+ Pasi (255)	
+ Sunuwar (15,389)		4. Khatwe	8,489
5. Sarki	49,736	5. Tatma	14,077
		6. Mester	8,821
		7. Thater	132
Total	**156,237**	**Total**	**96,000**

The above 12 Dalit castes had a population of 252,237. Thus, they constituted 7.3 percent of the total population of Central Development region.

The third was a regional study of the then four districts of Jumla, Tibrikot, Mugu and Humla of Karnali Zone[8]. The census of

landholdings by caste/ethnicity for 1969/70 showed the following distribution pattern:

Caste/Ethnicity	Population %	Landholding %
Chhetri (including Matwali)	41.1	47.7
Thakuri (caste)	18.0	21.1
Bahun (caste)	14.0	10.4
Bhotia (ethnic)	4.1	9.5
Dum (untouchable)	19.5	9.1
Others	3.3	2.3
Total	100.0	100.0

Accordingly, Karnali Zone with a population of 185,996 was composed of 73.1 percent high caste, 19.5 percent 'untouchable' Dum and 4.1 percent ethnic Bhotia. Of the total 14,959 hectare land, Chhetri and Thakuri held a higher proportion than their population share. Dum or Dalits constituting a fifth of total population had less than 10 percent of the total land holding.

The fourth survey was based on the sample of 5,643 households of 10 tarai districts in 1983[9]. The surveyed households represented 53 ethnic/caste groups. Among these, nine were Dalit castes. These Dalit households together made 465, which comes to 8.2 percent of the total households covered.

Hill	Households	Tarai	Households
Damai	10	Chamar	181
Gaine	1	Dhobi	34
Kami + Sunar	19	Dom	10
Sarki	15	Dusadh + Pasi	66
		Musahar	119
Total	55	Total	410

The census of 1991 reported the population of only five hill and five tarai Dalit castes (Table 1.1). They totalled 2,201,781 or 11.9 percent of Nepal's population. Of all reported Dalits, 1.6 million or 73.6 percent were of hill caste, led by the Kami (16.7%). It is possible that many Dalits were included among the category of 'others' which was reported as 184,216 among the hill and 627,514 among the tarai population. The census of 2001 reported the population of 15 Dalit castes. Of these, 5 were of hill and 10 of tarai (Table 1.1). The population of ten Dalit castes reported in 1991 increased to 2,291,577 in 2001. This meant 7.8 percent increase of Dalit population as against an average increase of 23.0 percent of the total population during the decade. There was also contrary regional trend: hill Dalits declined by 0.2 percent and tarai Dalits increased by 52.2 percent. The Dalit population increase in 2001 was accentuated with recording of 5 more tarai Dalit castes. Thus, the population increase of identified Dalit castes was 14.3 percent during 1991-2001. The 2001 census also recorded 173,401 as unidentified Dalit without any definition of the term Dalit[10]. If all these were Dalit, the total population of Dalits would be 2,601,769 or 11.4 percent of the total population classified by caste/ethnicity.

However, some Dalit writers claim that "the population of Dalits can be estimated between 16-20% of the total national population"[11]. The four sample studies and census data do not support such statement. According to the above sample studies, the proportion of Dalit population was 6.6 percent among the Newar of Kathmandu Valley, 7.3 percent in Central Development Region, 9.1 percent in Karnali Zone and 8.2 percent in 10 tarai districts for migration survey. In fact, there are two contrary tendencies regarding the population of Dalits. One is to inflate by including non-Dalits such as impure but touchable castes as well as some marginalised ethnic groups in official lists and writings for Dalit assertion. Another is the Dalit attempt to divest from their own

identity for a higher status. For example, Kami (Biswakarma) constituted the largest group among the Dalit castes in census 1991. But there were 76,701 less Kami reported in 2001 (Table 1.1). This decline in Kami population was obviously not due to high mortality rate but their reporting under other caste, presumably higher. Similarly, the Badi population reported in 2001 is 47.2 percent less than that in 1991 (Table 1.1). One of the large caste group of tarai, Dhobi, also shows a population decline of 4.1 percent. In fact, the 14.3 percent increase of Dalit population between 1991 – 2001 was accentuated by addition of 137,352 as Bantar, Chidimar, Dom, Halkhor and Tatma that were not recorded in 1991. If these Dalit castes were to be excluded from the calculation, the increase of Dalit castes reported in 1991 and 2001 censuses would be only 7.8 percent, far below Nepal's average population increase of 23 percent for the same period. The conclusion is that the low number of Dalits can be attributed to their own disclaimer of being a Dalit for a higher caste status by adopting Brahmanic gotra (clan) designation or other caste names. Dalit castes will not be emancipated unless they rid themselves of such inferiority complex.

Situation

Whatever their population magnitude, the Dalit of Nepal remain socially excluded, economically exploited and politically suppressed. The source of such oppression is the State's religious ideology that sanctifies inequality based on caste. The revised Muluki Ain-1963 retains vestiges of discrimination with terms like 'high' and 'low' caste, religious segregation and vagueness in clauses on untouchability[12]. Since the Dalit plight is of least concern to higher castes, there is paucity of hard data on the extent of their deprivation. The data available on the education level and incidence of poverty provide clear evidence of the correlation between caste hierarchy, on one hand, and literacy and economic

status, on the other. That is, lower the caste rank, higher the illiteracy and propensity to poverty[13]. According to the 1991 census, the literacy rate of Nepal was 39.3 percent. Of the 60 ethnic/groups then, 19 or one-third exceeded this average literacy level[14]. All of these were non-Dalit. Among the bottom ten with low literacy rate, 5 were Dalit, 3 ethnic and 2 other caste groups. Literacy rate of Chamar, Dusadh and Musahar was less than 11 percent. With literacy rate of 33.9 percent for male and 12.0 percent for female, the average literacy rate for the Dalit comes to 22.8 percent.

The 1991 census reported 96,977 persons having educational attainment of graduate and above level. Of these, only 3,034 or 3.1 percent belonged to Dalit castes. Thus, while high illiteracy limits the Dalit from access to higher education, the absence of such qualification restricts their entry into bureaucracy or better employment opportunity. It is obvious that Dalits are virtually absent in bureaucracy and institutions of national life[15]. There was not a single Dalit out of 762 persons as judges, senior bureaucrats, campus teachers and university staff as recorded by Nepal Institutional Manpower Directory, 1998. Similarly, out of 191 DDC chairpersons, mayors and 165 central party members of major parties, none was a Dalit. Out of 363 civil society leaders, only one was a Dalit. According to UNDP/Nepal source, there were only 4 Dalit out of 855 employees in multilateral donor institutions and donor projects[16]. It is not surprising that out of 1,520 high level personnel included to derive an integrated national index of governance, there were only 5 persons or 0.3 percent of Dalit caste[17].

The Nepal Living Standard Survey - 1996 (NLSS) sampled 3,388 households that had a representation of only 14 ethnic/caste groups. The NLSS data of even this restricted coverage clearly evidence

economic status being related to social hierarchy and literacy rate[18]. The survey showed that the country had 42.6 percent households below the poverty line (Table 1.2). Dalit caste households below the poverty line ranged from 65 to 68 percent and mostly ranked at the bottom. Of the four social groups with a higher proportion above poverty line, two were high caste, one partly Hinduised (Newar) and Muslim. The two top ranked social groups with one-quarter to one-third poverty level were Newar and Bahun having the highest literacy rate. The three Dalit castes ranked very low in literacy and had high incidence of poverty. Muslim and Limbu were aberrations showing no nexus between poverty incidence and literacy rate. Overall, the Dalits had lower rate of literacy and higher incidence of poverty.

Table 1.2: Poverty Incidence and Literacy Rate

Caste/Ethnicity	Proportion below poverty line (1996) a		Literacy (1991) b	
	Rank	%	Rank	Rate
Newar* (40% Hindu castes)	1	25	2	60.4
Bahun	2	34	1	61.6
Muslim	3	38	14	22.2
Yadav	4	40	11	26.3
Gurung*	5	45	3	46.9
Tharu*	6	48	10	27.7
Chhetri	7	50	5	45.0
Rai*	8	56	6	44.5
Magar*	9	58	7	39.3
Tamang*	10	59	9	27.8
Sarki	11	65	13	24.2
Damai	12	67	8	27.9
Kami	13	68	12	26.0
Limbu*	14	71	4	46.8
NEPAL	-	42.6	-	39.3

* = Ethnic
Sources: a.   NESAC, **Nepal: Human Development Report**, 1998, Table 7.24.
              b.   CBS, **Population Census – 1991**, Vol. 1, Part VII, Table 26.

The livelihood problem of the Dalit is mainly due to lack of farmland as they are dependent on artisan occupation and wage work. Furthermore, their traditional skills are being made redundant with intrusion of mass produced goods and new technologies. It was noted above (p. 8) that Karnali Zone in 1969/70 had 19.5 percent as Dalit population but their share in land holding was only 9.1 percent. Recent surveys show that land reform programme had made no dent in the skewedness of landholding. The extent of land hunger was found to be 39 percent among high caste and 64 percent among Dalits[19]. Almost one-third of Dalits were marginal farmers (with 3-9 *ropani*). As a consequence, the proportion of food deficit households was 88.3 percent among the Dalit compared to 56.7 percent among the high caste[20]. The per household income was found the highest among high castes and the lowest among the Dalit. The findings of the TEAM Consult study conclusively prove a high congruence between caste hierarchy and economic status.

The depressed status of the Dalit is evident from their low levels of literacy, low income, and low life expectancy. The fate of Dalit is one of a vicious circle. Caste discrimination marginalises them from economic opportunity, which in turn lead to further dependence and destitution. Since they are unable to compete economically and politically due to social exclusion, constitutional provisions pertaining to equality of opportunity remains a mere rhetoric. Therefore, such a condition of exploitation based on caste can be tackled only through the initiative of affirmative action.

End Notes

*   Eleanor Zelliot, *From Untouchable to Dalit*, New Delhi: Manohar Publications, 1992

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2. Harka Gurung. "State and Society in Nepal", *Nationalism and Ethnicity in a Hindu Kingdom*, edited by David Gellner, Johnna Pfaff-Czarneka & John Whelpton, Amsterdam, 1997, pp. 495 – 532.

3. Andras Hofer. *The Caste Hierarchy and the State in Nepal: A Study of the Muluki Ain 1854*, Innsbruck, 1979, p. 45.

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5. Harka Gurung. *Nepal: Social Demography and Expressions*, Kathmandu: New ERA, 1998/2001, p. 35

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7. Jit Gurung & others. The conditions of the Dalits (Untouchables in Nepal): Assessment of Various Development Interventions. TEAM consult report to UNDP, 1999.

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12. Hira Viswakarma, "Dalits of Nepal: Their movement now and then", *Dalits of Nepal: Issues and Challenges*, edited by Prabodh M. Devkota, Kathmandu: FEDO, 2002, pp. 19 – 42 (see table. p.27).

13. Jit Gurung. Promotion of Sociocultural, Economic and Political Participation of Dalits and Other Disadvantaged Groups: A Strategic Approach (Draft). Submitted to the Enabling State Programme, Kathmandu, Oct. 2002, p.7.

14. D.R. Dahal & others. National Dalit Strategy Report: Part I: Situation Analysis of Dalits in Nepal. Submitted to Action-Aid Nepal, CARE Nepal and Save the Children US., Kathmandu, April 2002, p.8.

15. Colin Rosser. "Social mobality in Newar caste system", in *Caste & Kin in Nepal, India & Ceylon*. Edited by C. von Furer-Haimendorf, Bombay, 1966, pp. 68 – 139 (see pp. 85 – 86).

16. Walter Frank. Ethnographic Survey of Nepal, 2 Vols. Unpublished manuscript in mimeo.

17. Barry C. Bishop. *Karnali Under Stress: Livelihood Strategies and Seasonal Rhythms in a Changing Himalaya*, Chicago University Press, 1990, p. 176 (Table 9).

18. Harka Gurung & others. *Internal and International Migration in Nepal* (in Nepali), Vol. V (Table 12.42), Kathmandu: National Commission on Population, 1983 (see Table 12.43).

19. CBS. *Population Census, 2001: National Report*, Kathmandu, June 2002, pp. 102-102 (Table 18).

20. Hira Biswakarma, 2002, op. cit. (Footnote no. 12) , p.27.

21. Padmalal Biswakarma, op. cit., (Footnote no. 1) p. 300

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23. Harka Gurung, 1998/2001, op. cit., (Footnote no. 5) Appendix L.

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27. NESAC. *Nepal: Human Development Report – 1998*. Kathmandu: UNDP, 1998, Table 7.24

28. TEAM Consult, op. cit. (Footnote no. 25) p. 48

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THE PLIGHT OF THE THARU KAMAIYAS IN NEPAL: A REVIEW OF THE SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL FACETS

Ram B. Chhetri[1]

Introduction

This paper examines the predicament of Tharus in the Tarai of Nepal who were subject to an extreme form of socio-economic exploitation through the Kamaiya system (a bonded labour system) until recently. It reviews the social and economic problems of the Tharus in an historical perspective. In particular it looks into the Kamaiya practice and the recent freeing of the Kamaiyas. The discussion in this paper reveals that the issues related to the Kamaiyas—before and after freedom—have not been looked at from a holistic perspective by the concerned agencies. The paper is primarily based on a review of existing literature (both published and grey) on the Tharus in Nepal supplemented by some interviews with Tharu youths during October-November 2002. Data for the district of Bardiya and the Rajapur area within the district have been presented in view of the fact that these areas have the largest proportion of Tharus in the local population. The Tharu youths interviewed while preparing this paper also came from the Rajapur area of Bardiya district.

Tharus are believed to be the aboriginal people of the Tarai region of Nepal and India. The earliest mention of Tharu as en ethnic label is found in a 11th century geographer's description of an area called Tirhut—today's Mithila in eastern Tarai (see Krauskopff, 1999:50). In Nepal's Tarai today, there are various groups of people that are included under the ethnonym Tharu (see Guneratne, 2002). Guneratne reports that Tharus in Nepal's Tarai have not been a homogenous group of people in terms of their culture, language, and politico-economic situations although they now claim a pan-Tharu ethnic identity. However, in spite of the intra-ethnic-group variations in certain social and cultural aspects, most of the Tharus in various parts of the Tarai in Nepal seem to have gone through similar experiences in relation to their access to land and other vital resources in their own homelands (see Guneratne, 2002, Müller-Böker, 1999; Skar et. al., 1999). The emergence of intra- and inter-ethnic economic relations such as the well-known Kamaiya practices or similar economic relations (see Robertson and Mishra, 1997) have remained a widespread experience among the Tharu community.

Scholars have challenged the assumption that Tarai was an area inhabited by Tharus only before the migration of Paharis into the area (see Krauskoff, 1999, Rankin, 1999). According to researchers the idea that Tarai was a pristine forest area always inhabited by Tharu people only is not supported by historical records (see Rankin, 1999). Researchers cite persuasive historical facts to argue that non-Tharus too were in the Tarai already in the historical past. As evidences they cite the birth of Gautam Buddha in the Tarai and the founding of Simraongarh or Mithila around the 11th century (for details see, Sachau 1888 cited in Krauskopff 1999). Given this, the question of the emergence or the origins of Tharu population in the Tarai region of Nepal and India warrants closer examination with the aid of available historical documents and any other relevant evidence. Seeking an answer to this question, however, is not within the scope of this paper.

The Tharus and their Population

The total population of Tharus according to 1991 census was 1.19 million in the country. This constituted 6.5% of the total population of Nepal. The recent population census of 2001 records a total of 1533879, Tharu population in Nepal, which is 6.75% of the country's total population (CBS, 2002). As is evident, the proportion of Tharus in the country seems to have gone up by 0.25% between 1991 and 2001.

In terms of the total population by caste/ethnic groups, Hill Brahmins, Chhetris and Magars are the only groups that have had larger populations than that of the Tharus in the country. It is interesting to note that the total percentage of the other three groups in Nepal's total population seems to have declined between 1991 and 2001 (Hill Brahmins—from 12.9% to 12.7%; Chhetris—from 16.0% to 15.8%; and Magars—from 7.2% to 7.1%) while that of the Tharus has increased. But within Bardiya district, the population of Tharus has declined by 0.21% while that of Brahmins, Chhetris, Thakuri, and other groups has either remained the same or has increased between 1991 and 2001 census period (see Table 1).

Of all the districts where Tharus live, Bardiya has the highest proportion of Tharu population vis-à-vis non-Tharus. Kailali is the only other district (and Rajapur area borders with Kailali) with approximately 50% Tharus in the total population of the district[2]. In Bardiya district, Tharus had a total population of 153,322, which constituted 52.81% of the total population of the district in 1991 (see CBS, 1999, Table 1.6). According to 2001 census reports, the population of Tharus in Bardiya has reached a total of 201276—registering a growth rate of 2.72%. In this district, they are the predominant people in terms of numbers followed by Chhetri (9.73%), Brahmin (9.44%) and other groups (see Table 1).

Table 1: Population and Growth Rates by Caste/Ethnic Groups in Bardia District, 1991 and 2001

Caste/Ethnic Group	1991 Census		2001 Census		Growth Rate 1991-2001
	Total	Percentage	Total	Percentage	
Tharu	153322	52.81	201276	52.60	2.72
Chhetri	28264	9.73	40681	10.63	3.64
Hill Brahmin	27414	9.44	36163	9.45	2.77
Kami/Lohar	15561	5.36	13354	3.49	-1.53
Magar	8583	2.95	10749	2.81	2.25
Thakuri	6663	2.29	9384	2.45	3.42
Muslim~	7267	2.50	8409	2.20	1.46
Damai	5147	1.77	6657	1.74	2.57
Yadav/Ahir	5145	1.77	6852	1.79	2.86
Sarki/Chamar	3981	1.37	5242	1.37	2.75
Others*	28966	9.98	43882	11.47	4.15
Total	**290313**	**100.00**	**382649**	**100.00**	**2.76**

Sources: CBS, 1999; and CBS 2002.

* = Others include various Tarai and non-Tarai caste/ethnic groups. ~ = Muslims are a religious group. But they are erroneously listed as one of the caste/ethnic groups in the census tables.

Although Tharus are in majority in the district's total population, most of the indicators of socio-economic development show that they are disadvantaged in comparison to the non-Tharus in the district. For instance, the literacy rate for Tharus in Bardiya was reported as 17.2% while that for the non-Tharus was 37.5% (a 100% difference!). The labour force participation rate (Tharu, 55.9% and non-Tharu, 44.8%) and the proportion of Tharus in agricultural labour force (Tharu, 88.7% and non-Tharu, 74.8%) is much higher than that for the non-Tharus. This pattern is consistent in most of the districts in the Western Tarai Region where Tharus live in significant numbers (see Sharma and Thakurathi, 1998:22). Given this, it is evident that the numerically predominant Tharus

are disadvantaged and a deprived group of people in comparison to non-Tharus living together in the Tarai[3].

Population Features in Rajapur Area

Rajapur area within Bardiya is known for being predominantly settled by Tharu people. It is said that most of the Tharus in this area are first or second generation migrants from Dang district. There are 11 VDCs within Rajapur area (which is more than 1/3rd of the total of 31 VDCs and one Municipality in the district). The total population of Rajapur area as per the 2001 census is 92,908 in 13,303 households. This consists 24.3% of the total population of Bardiya district. The area has a fairly large average household size, i.e., 7.0—slightly larger than the district's average household size of 6.42 (for details see CBS, 2002). It is generally held that larger family size in a population may be is associated with its poorer economic conditions. For instance, citing data from Nepal Living Standard Survey (1995/96), a recent report pointed out that the average household size for the Tharus varied by "poverty status with poor (population below poverty line) having larger average size than non-poor (population above poverty line). The actual household size for poor and non-poor Tharu households are 8.6 and 7.0, respectively" (see Sharma and Thakurathi, 1998:12). Thus, the larger average household size in Rajapur Area may also be an indication that majority of the people here could be economically very poor.

Table 2: Population by Sex and Household Size in 11 VDCs of Rajapur Area, 2001.

VDCs	Population			Household	
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Av. Size
Badalpur	6738	3408	3330	978	6.9
Bhimpur	9968	5036	4932	1360	7.3
Daulatpur	7246	3563	3683	1085	6.7
Gola	6679	3293	3386	918	7.3
Khairi Chandanpur	6901	3524	3377	1034	6.7
Manau	7054	3485	3569	1080	6.5
Manpur Tapara	9495	4738	4757	1307	7.2
Naya Gaun	5815	2952	2863	768	7.6
Pashupatinagar	6250	3068	3182	967	6.5
Patabhar	14105	6955	7150	1930	7.3
Rajapur	12657	6437	6220	1876	6.7
Total	**92908**	**46459**	**46449**	**13303**	**7.0**

Source: CBS, 2002.

More than 50 different caste/ethnic groups are represented within the Rajapur area (see CBS, 2002: VDC-level data). The proportion of Tharus in the area is 69.8%, (see Table 3) which is perhaps one of the highest spatial concentrations of Tharus in the whole country. The total population of Tharus in this area at present is 4.23% of the total Tharu population in the country. Studies have also shown that most of the Tharus are among the poorest groups of people in the country (see INSEC 1992; Robertson and Mishra, 1997; Sharma and Thakurathi, 1998). Given this, the discussion on the situation of Tharus in Rajapur Area in this paper could be considered to give us a fairly representative picture of this community in the region as well as other poor and disadvantaged groups of people in the country.

Table 3: Population Distribution in the VDCs within Rajapur Area by Caste/Ethnic Groups, 2001

VDCs	Population by Caste/Ethnic Groups			
	Tharus	Dalits	Bahun-Chhetri	Others
Badalpur	5451 (80.9)	364 (5.4)	813 (12.1)	110 (1.6)
Bhimpur	6783 (68.0)	852 (8.5)	1438 (14.5)	895 (9.0)
Daulatpur	5790 (79.9)	280 (3.8)	1039 (14.3)	137 (2.0)
Gola	3786 (56.7)	625 (9.3)	2162 (32.4)	106 (1.6)
Khairi Chandanpur	4912 (71.2)	656 (9.5)	1040 (15.1)	293 (4.2)
Manau	4113 (58.3)	843 (12.0)	1750 (24.8)	348 (4.9)
Manpur Tapara	7754 (81.7)	584 (6.1)	1003 (10.6)	154 (1.6)
Naya Gaun	5428 (93.3)	77 (1.3)	223 (3.8)	87 (1.5)
Pashupatinagar	3476 (55.6)	401 (6.4)	2328 (37.2)	45 (0.8)
Patabhar	9876 (70.0)	929 (6.6)	3133 (22.2)	167 (1.2)
Rajapur	7519 (59.4)	681 (5.4)	2391 (18.9)	2066 (16.3)
Total	64888 (69.8)	6292 (6.8)	17320 (18.6)	4408 (4.7)

Source: CBS, 2002.

Note: Dalits include Damai/Dholi, Badi, Kalwar, Kami, Sonar, Sarki, Lohar, Hajam, Kumal, and Teli. Bahun-Chhetri include Bahuns (Hill and Tarai), Chhetris, Thakuris, Sanyasis, and Rajput.

The data summarised in Table 3 reveal that the Bahun-Chhetris who are reported to have held access to resources and power in most of the Tarai districts in western half of Nepal in recent years may not be numerically a predominant group of people in the area. In Rajapur area they consist only 18.6% in the total population whereas the socially and economically disadvantaged groups of people (Tharus and Dalits together) comprise 76.6%. This should be considered a significant point for our discussion in this paper. It becomes evident that the numerical size of a group of people in a given geographical locality may not necessarily be correlated to its dominance or lack of it in the social and economic life within the

locality. A question that crops up immediately is whether the social and economic disparities prevailing in the area between the numerically few elite and the larger number of poor including the Tharus in the Tarai could be the backdrop for today's miseries or unhappy state of affairs in the country. This point will be referred again while discussing the Kamaiya practices.

Literacy in Rajapur Area

Literacy situation of an area can be one of the indicators for assessing the level of socio-economic development, access to resources, empowerment, etc., in the local population. The data presented in Table 4 show that the percentage of illiterates is significant (ranging from 28.7% to 46.5% among male and 47.3% to 66.0% among female population). Once again, the data on literacy level for Tharus and other disadvantaged groups of people are not yet available from the 2001 census. Given the fact that the social and economic conditions of poor people like the Tharu Kamaiyas has not changed much in the past few years, it could be assumed that their literacy level also may have hardly registered any significant change. However, surveys conducted by INSEC suggest that literacy situation among the Kamaiyas has been improving in recent years. Sharma and Thakurathi (1998) found that the literacy among Kamaiyas in Baridiya district had increased from 4.6% in 1991 to 30.5% in 1997. Similarly, the children attending school also is shown to have gone up from 0.2% in 1991 to 7.7% in 1997. These are certainly encouraging signs and it could be easily inferred that literacy status among the Kamaiyas in Rajapur area must also be improving.

Table 4: Population 6 Years of Age and Over by Literacy Status (%) for Sex in Rajapur Area, 2001

VDCs	Illiterate*		Read Only		Read and Write	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Badalpur	31.5	58.6	7.1	8.1	61.4	3.3
Bhimapur	46.5	66.0	8.4	7.3	45.0	26.7
Daulatpur	35.5	58.0	1.8	3.3	62.7	38.7
Gola	29.1	47.3	17.1	20.8	53.7	31.9
Khairi Chandanpur	41.8	60.5	4.7	7.2	53.5	32.3
Manau	32.3	53.3	1.7	3.0	66.0	43.6
Manpur Tapara	31.1	52.1	4.5	6.0	64.3	42.0
Naya Gaun	37.0	58.5	4.1	8.0	58.9	33.5
Pashupatinagar	35.2	49.9	11.4	12.8	53.2	37.3
Patabhar	30.6	49.1	3.2	5.7	68.0	44.8
Rajapur	**28.7**	**53.1**	**5.2**	**3.2**	**66.0**	**43.7**

Source: CBS, 2002. * 'Not Stated' have been included under this category assuming that literate people would have most likely reported clearly on their literacy status.

The percentage of illiterate population is quite significant in the Rajapur area. The women in this area seem to be further disadvantaged in terms of access to education (considered as a medium for access to information and empowerment). Since the majority of the people in this area consist of Tharus and Dalits—who are, in general, also very poor—it is very likely that most of the people who can read and write belong to the Brahmin-Chhetri and other economically and socially better off groups.

One striking feature of the data presented in Table 4 is that in the 'Read Only' category, except for Rajapur VDC, the percentage of women is consistently higher for all VDCs than that for the men. A question that needs to be examined is whether this is because of the Non-Formal Education (NFE) or adult literacy program (which tends to focus primarily on adult females) conducted by various agencies with support from different programs and donors. If the answer to this question were to be positive, the efficacy of the program should not only be recognised but also concerted attempts ought to be made to give continuity to such programs in the future. The NGO, INGOs, and donors together seem to have made a significant difference in raising awareness and empowering the local poor and disadvantaged groups including the women—and this warrants a closer examination.

The Kamaiya Practices: Social, Economic and Political Facets

Tharus in the Tarai of Nepal are known to have been a community dependent on agriculture for making a living. That is, Tharus are known to have been mostly involved in agriculture as their primary economic activity. This is an irony in the face of the fact that majority of the Tharus have also been landless people in recent years. Given this, a question that has drawn the attention of researchers has been whether Tharus as agriculturists did own farmlands in the past or that they have always been working for the landlords. Some studies have attempted to examine this question but (see Guneratne, 2002; Lowe, 2001). Peter Lowe, on the basis of personal stories collected from many Tharu Kamaiya and ex-Kamaiya men and women reveals how once the land owning Tharus slowly turned into landless people. His study corroborates the earlier story common in research reports and studies that Tharus were gradually alienated from their land by Pahari people and other elite within the past 100 or 200 years (Bhandari, 1985; Krauskoff, 2000; INSEC, 1992; 1998; McDonaugh, 1997).

A brief discussion of the Kamaiya practices that prevailed in certain parts of the Tarai will help us understand the deteriorating economic condition of Tharus and some other intriguing issues in this context. Specifically, focusing on the socio-economic relations among different groups of people will be useful to understand the

predicament of the Tharus. To begin with let us first consider the connotations of the term Kamaiya. From a quick survey of the literature on Tharus, it becomes evident that the term Kamaiya has been given two sets of meanings. One of these has a positive connotation according to which the term Kamaiya denotes any one who works hard. For instance, in local vernacular the term simply means a hard-working farmer, a hard tiller of land, and an earner (Nepali Dictionary). Similarly, in the languages spoken by the Tharus, "the words *Kamaiya* and *kamalahari* (both used as a noun) mean male and female hard working persons respectively. Kamaina (used as a verb) literally means to 'earn'" (Dhakal et. al., 2000:28). Such people may have worked on their own or in someone else's farm in the past and the term Kamaiya therefore did not have any derogatory or demeaning connotations.

The other meaning of the term Kamaiya has a more negative connotation and appears to be of recent origin. A Tharu informant asserted that "In the past it was not a bad thing to recognise someone as a Kamaiya because it simply meant a hard working person. But the element of bonded labour in recent years has made Kamaiya a derogatory term". The entry of the element of bonded labour and slavery as features had turned the person who worked very hard into some sort of 'a commodity' to be owned, bought and sold, and exploited to the extent possible. Today, the term Kamaiya has become a loaded term which connotes a person working for a landlord and someone who may be a bonded labour. Kamaiya may have taken a derogatory connotation when they were bought and sold between landlords (through payments of *Saunki*) during *Maghi*. A closer look at the history of Kamaiya practices reveals that in recent years the Kamaiya system was converted into a highly exploitative one whereby the large landlords kept Kamaiya to work their land in the same way they kept oxen, or other farm livestock (see Robertson and Mishra, 1997:17). Kamaiyas as bonded labours

were relegated to the status of slaves over time by the landlords and elite for whom the Kamaiyas worked in various capacities.

Kamaiya form of bonded labour was prevalent in several of the Tarai districts like Dang, Banke, Bardiya, Kailali, and Kanchanpur until it was officially abolished by His Majesty's Government of Nepal with a declaration to that effect on July 17, 2000. Under this system of bonded labour, the Kamaiya—generally a male—entered a labour contract with a landlord (large or small). Payments to the Kamaiya families would be either in kind (a fixed amount of paddy and some lentils, etc.) or in the form of share (normally $1/3^{rd}$) of the total production of the main crop (i.e., paddy). The term Kamaiya today seems to be synonymously used to refer to a poor Tharu who is/was made to work as a slave for a landlord for his own and his family's survival. Such use of the term may be because of the fact that most of the Kamaiyas came from this community in a number of districts in the Tarai (see Table 5).

According to a recent report, majority of the Kamaiyas belong to Tharu community while non-Tharu Kamaiya were also to be found in significant numbers in some districts (see Sharma and Thakurathi, 1998:44, Table 4.14 for details). On the basis of a field survey conducted in 1997 in eight Tarai districts, Sharma and Thakurathi (1998) conclude that the districts where Tharus have a larger concentration of population than non-Tharus, the percentage of Tharu Kamaiya was more than 90% (see Table 5). Since there are no reliable data on the exact number of Kamaiyas for the country or for Bardiya district for that matter, it becomes really difficult to make an estimate of the total Kamaiya Tharu households in Rajapur area. On the basis of some assumptions and the available statistics on Tharus and Kamaiyas in some selected sources, it was estimated that Rajapur area may have a total of about 9,218 Tharu Kamaiyas (see footnote # 3 for details on the assumptions)[4].

Table 5: **Percentage Distribution of Kamaiya by Ethnic Groups in Selected Districts, 1997**

Districts	Ethnic Group		Sample Kamaiyas
	Tharu	Non-Tharu	
Kanchanpur	95.9	4.1	362
Kailali	98.7	1.3	602
Bardiya	84.8	15.2	604
Banke	77.9	22.1	353
Dang	93.8	6.2	482
Kapilbastu	94.2	5.8	308
Rupandehi	50.9	49.1	169
Nawalparasi	67.3	32.7	156

Source: Sharma and Thakurathi, 1998, Table 4.14.

It was the operating mechanism of the Kamaiya system which was responsible for further marginalizing the Kamaiya Tharus. Once an individual entered the Kamaiya contract, the combinations of labour, credit, and land contracts together made it virtually impossible for the Kamaiya to get out of the vicious circle/cycle (for details see Dhakal et. al., 2000; Krauskoff, 1999; Rankin, 1999; Robertson and Mishra, 1997). Kamaiyas happen to be not only poor but also illiterate. Thus their landlords would manipulate the Saunki (the loan—in cash or kind—taken by a Kamaiya) and increase the amount. As a consequence of this the Kamaiya would end up with a large amount of loan that he would not be able to pay back (see INSEC, 1992 for further details).

Researchers have reported not only about the diversity of groups of people subsumed under the ethnonym Tharu, but also that each of such groups seem to have their own history of Kamaiya practices (see Guneratne, 2002; Krauskoff, 1999; Mayer and Deuel, 1999, Rankin, 1999). Rankin in particular refutes the reduction in popular discourse of a single Kamaiya system while suggesting that the Nepali state's taxation and resettlement policies during the Shah,

Rana and Panchayat regimes could have also given rise to some of the forms of Kamaiya practices (see Rankin, 1999:28). That is, closer look at the history of the taxation, resettlement, and land tenure policies of the Nepali state would allow us to find out how Kamaiya or similar exploitative bonded labour practices began and took roots in different parts of the country.

State Policy and Variations in Kamaiya Practices

A combination of social, economic and political processes that operated in Nepal during the past three hundred years or so seem to have given rise to and then nurtured the Kamaiya practices which became known in recent years as a form of "veiled slave trade" (Robertson and Mishra, 1997:15). Historically, the Tharus were said to have lived in the Tarai by owning and cultivating the lands in the area. The community may have been self-sufficient until the State intervened with its taxation and land policies within a unified Nepal. The gradual penetration of the state into the Tarai and in the lives of the Tharus (which began in the 18th century) seems to have made itself a force by mid 19th century when the government began to take control of land and other resources in the Tarai (see Krauskoff and Mayer, 2001). The state recognised the land in the Tarai as an important resource in order to sustain its economic and political power base. In order to realise this potential, land grants were made (in the form of Birta, Jagir, etc.) to members of the royal family, nobility, civil and military personnel, etc. Such a practice of the state resulted in the eventual alienation of the Tharus from their farmlands while creating a socio-economic and political environment conducive for the cycle of dependency, disempowerment, exploitation and oppression to operate.

Rankin (1999) provides detailed information about how traditional Kamaiya system operated and how it was transformed since the nineteenth century. Rankin's study among Rana Tharus in Kailali

and Kanchanpur districts reveals that traditional Kamaiya practices were not of the oppressive type but were an "example of the social embeddedness of bonded labour practices" (Rankin, 1999:29). Borrowing a concept from James Watson (1979), she considers this to be an "open system of slavery". Under this traditional Kamaiya system, the Tharu Kisan (farmer) family would retain Kamaiya Tharu through the bonds of debt and affectionate ties in order to ensure availability of labour supply during peak agricultural seasons. Both Kisan and the Kamaiya would depend on each other and thus in this case "the bonded labor system serves as a social safety net that will protect them against utter destitution" (1999:33). That is, the Kamaiya families would have access to food that came in the form of shares/wages annually while their landlords did not have to worry about shortage of labour during peak agricultural activities every year.

On the basis of her field research among Rana Tharus in Kailali and Kanchanpur, Rankin observes that in certain circumstances "the terms of indebtedness through Kamaiya contract may extend over several years, but is rarely life-long or inherited across generations" (1999:32). She also points out that a Kamaiya could pay off the debt and graduate to become an *adhiya* tenant (i.e., share cropper) or even a kisan himself—that is, a subsistence farmer to begin with. Thus the traditional form of Kamaiya was not a fixed status in all instances but one that could be changed. That is, it was possible for the Kamaiya to be transformed into an independent farmer. The more recent Kamaiya model did not have this option.

State policy in Nepal has had implications for demographic and socio-economic processes in the Tarai. Governments in the country used to appoint tax collectors who would obtain revenue for the state from the farmers within their area of responsibility. Such functionaries were known as Chaudhari in the past. This suggests

that local people themselves—including Tharus—were appointed for that purpose by the state. But later day tax collecting officials called Jamindars were not always filled by former Chaudharis. This is an indication of the entry of Paharis as landlords and a politically powerful class in the Tarai.

Creation of local Tharu elite and the economic disparity in local population may have resulted through the appointment of Chaudharis or Jamindars and Talukdars. These tax collectors and other land grant holders (of Birta, Jagir, etc.) had considerable autonomy in administering the 'means of production' including the right to exact unpaid labour from their tenants (see Regmi, 1978). This practice plus the absentee landlords could have very well been responsible for the genesis of the present day Kamaiya practices (i.e., the exploitative form of bonded labours). The creation of landlord class by the state thus resulted in the formation of another 'fixed' class—the Kamaiya.

Rankin contends that "taxation and resettlement policies of the Nepalese state during the early Shah, Rana and Panchayat regimes" (1999:28) laid the foundation for transformation of the previously socio-economically embedded Kamaiya system into an oppressive, exploitative and malignant form of bonded labour. Under the transformed Kamaiya system, the landlords (mostly Paharis) engaged the Kamaiya as bonded labourers and exploited them to the fullest possible extent. Studies have also revealed that Kamaiyas bonded to the landlords or jamindars would generally work longer hours and on a greater variety of tasks than Kamaiyas on Kisan farms (see Guneratne 2002; Karauskoff, 1999; Rankin, 1999). Rankin summarises the plight of the Kamaiyas as it was until few years ago (1999:39):

> State policies of revenue farming and resettlement thus created the potential for both elite Tharu and Pahari

landlords to produce large agricultural surpluses based first on rights to unpaid labor and increasingly on cheap Kamaiya labor. By maintaining large Kamaiya debts—through fines, compounded interest, and other dishonest and illegal strategies—and by relying on political alliances to insulate their agrarian enterprises from legal scrutiny, landlords continue to ensure a reliable supply of Kamaiya labour and enjoy opportunities of unregulated exploitation.

Researchers argue that the earlier Kisan landlord and Kamaiya relations were often directed towards fulfilling their mutual interests and were not always characterised by (or not perceived as) an exploitative relation. But when the Kisan landlords were no longer the Tharus only, the non-Tharu landlords must have manipulated the Kamaiya contracts on more exploitative grounds. Such a practice marked the end of socially embedded moral economy in the Tarai and thus the condition of the Tharus as bonded labour begins to worsen. In this context it is worth noting what Rankin writes in a footnote. She contends that the claim by Tharu jamindars as better masters to their Kamaiya than the Pahari counterparts needs to be taken with caution. She points out that "with respect to Kamaiyas, the class convergence of Pahari and Tharu jamindars is more significant than the shared ethnic identity of Tharu Kamaiyas and Tharu jamindars" (Rankin, 1999:44 note #22). That is, the solidarity of the landlords as a class (with identical economic and political interests) vis-à-vis that of the poorer people including the Kamaiya Tharus began to intensify along two ends of the social, economic and political continuum within the Tarai region. This seems to have manifested in the recent uprising among the Tharus of Mid- and Far-Western Nepal that eventually forced the government to yield to their demands for freedom (or abolition of Kamaiya system).

Abolition of Kamaiya Practices

In Nepal, the age-old "Kamara-Kamari" or the country's own form of slavery system was abolished in 1924 by the then Rana Prime Minister Chandra Shumsher. The government is said to have paid large sums of money to the owners of such slaves in order to free them from slavery. In spite of the abolition of the practice of slavery, Kamaiya and similar forms of unpaid or underpaid bonded labour system seem to have prevailed in the country until recently.

It is worth pointing out here that the very NGOs that are often alleged to be dependent on donor's dollars in the name of the poor in Nepal seem to have played a critical role in backing the Kamaiyas in the 'Free Kamaiya" movement. The awareness raising for this movement must have been a daunting task (see Lowe, 2001; Ødegaard, 1999; Rankin, 1999). The Tharu elite who were so much concerned about creating a pan-Tharu ethnic identity in the country do not seem to have spoken about the evils of Kamaiya system (see Guneratne, 2002). But the issue of Kamaiyas was addressed by NGOs including one belonging to the Tharus themselves (BASE) little over a decade only. Efforts to do away with the Kamaiya system gained strength, as the Kamaiyas themselves gradually became aware about how they had been exploited by their landlords (see Lowe, 2001). The movement certainly resulted in empowering the Kamaiyas by publicising the issue and by putting a pressure on the government to take necessary action. But, the problems of the 'free Kamaiyas' do not seem to have come to an end.

Post-Freedom Predicaments

Kamaiya system was officially banned by His Majesty's Government of Nepal on 17 July 2000. The loan papers held by the landlords as proof of cash loans said to have been taken by the Kamaiya were also declared illegal. That is, they became free of all

the debts or Sauki they had supposedly incurred during their lifetime or inherited from their parents. The government had also announced that small parcels of land would be allocated to each of the freed Kamaiya families. Besides they were promised that they would also be granted small volume of timber to enable them to build living quarters for themselves in such newly acquired lands.

It remains little known as to what the changes in the wider socio-economic and political contexts in Nepal or just in their region have meant for the Tharus. The life experiences or situation for many Kamaiya Tharus at present is perhaps described well by the saying 'from the frying pan into the fire'. In the past when they were bought and sold during Maghi, the bonded labourer families in most cases moved from one cunning and often cruel landlord to another one who treated them equally badly if not worse. The recent Kamaiya mukti or freedom does not seem to have done much to "free" the Kamaiyas of their genuine problems. In the post freedom years too the poor Tharus have been subject to exploitation. Besides, lack of employment opportunities for the Tharu Kamaiyas outside the landlords' farms makes them more vulnerable.

A Tharu youth said "Soon after the Radio Nepal aired the news that the Kamaiyas had been freed, the landlords evicted their Kamaiyas. Kamaiyas felt good to be free from the bonded slavery. But we found out soon that Kamaiya families had become homeless and jobless". The Tharu youths concurred that with this 'freedom' ended the relationship of the Kamaiyas with the agricultural farms and with production system—even though the relationship was with landlords' farms and not their own. The Kamaiyas who were recognised as skilled and hard-working agriculturists were not only turned into "non-productive" category of people but also were left with no alternative livelihood earning option. As most of them

lacked skills to work outside the farming sector, they and their families were bound to starvation.

Kamaiyas were and are used to hard work. They worked hard whether it was in the fields or in the houses of their landlords. But after they were freed, their energies for work may have been unutilised or under-utilised. Keeping a workforce that has specialised skills and the required energy to do productive work is a loss to the country. As suggested by news reports in the post freedom years, many Kamaiyas are already going across the border to India in search of work/employment. It will not be difficult for such hard-working people to find work wherever they go. How this plight of Kamaiyas from their homelands will affect the food production in Nepal's Tarai can only be imagined. Future research on this subject can only reveal the realities.

Considering the announcement to free the Kamaiya and the un-met promises that were made to them, it becomes evident that a holistic approach to the problems associated with the Kamaiya practices was lacking. A recent publication with pictures of freed Kamaiyas and their stories bolsters this argument (see Peter Lowe, 2001). Many freed Kamaiyas have repeated the argument that they were not only made to evacuate their living quarters built within their landlord's farms, but were also denied access to their own belongings left inside such quarters. This is a clear example of how haphazard, inhuman and careless the process of freeing the Kamaiyas was.

Some Kamaiyas continue to work for the landlords and earn daily wages (see Lowe, 2001). It is true that examples of this type of relationship are not going to be many at present. However, the trend should be of concern to the state or concerned agencies. As reported in the Kantipur (Nepali National Daily, January 2, 2003), some parents have already started sending their children back to the

landlords to work as Kamaiyas in return for 1-2 quintals of rice paddy.

According to a report published in Kantipur (Nepali National Daily) on January 2, 2003, lack of employment has forced many Kamaiya families to starvation besides being victims of other problems. Some parents have sent their children to work in the restaurants while they themselves are forced to take any kind of casual work (including rickshaw pulling) available in the nearby urban centres.

If Kamaiyas and their children are forced to return to the same or similar working environments in order to earn a living, one is bound to ask: Were the Kamaiyas really freed? Was the intention of the government just to save its own face? Was the government eager only to get applause by making a progressive looking decision? Questions such as these come up now because the problems associated with Kamaiya practices in the Tarai seem to have been shifted elsewhere than being solved. A genuine commitment to end the malady is yet to be seen.

Concluding Remarks

As a result of the freedom movement launched by the Kamaiyas they got freedom in principle—which came in the form of a government decree. A genuine freedom from the servitude and exploitation is yet to be a reality. Kamaiya Tharus are not yet able to stand on their own and become self-sufficient. They are forced to depend on 'others' for survival and their struggle for a genuine freedom seems to be far from over. The challenge ahead for them now may lie in the question of land and employment—that is, creating an environment for equal opportunities for earning a living, improving their livelihoods and ensuring a secure future for their children.

It has to be acknowledged that the fundamental power structure which had put majority of the Tharu Kamaiyas into vicious cycle of poverty and servitude over the years has been challenged albeit all that needs to be changed is yet to come about. The post-1990 reintroduction of multiparty democracy in the country certainly provided an enabling environment for the Kamaiyas, the NGOs and the Human Rights organisations to join hands in the struggle for the freedom of Kamaiyas. "This sort of open and coordinated popular movement would never have been allowed under the one-party Panchayat system…" (Whyte in Lowe, 2001).

Raj Dev Chaudhary who was reported to be one of the first Kamaiyas to have filed the case for freedom once remarked: "If the government gives us only one or two katthas of land, most of the Kamaiyas will have to go back to the landlord to work. They will become Kamaiya again" (Quoted by Whyte, 2001). His prediction has come true for a number of such Kamaiyas even after four years of the banning of the practice by the state.

What amounts of land grants per family are going to be enough for a Kamaiya family to become self-sufficient? This is not going to be an easy thing to determine. Other alternatives may have to be identified and adopted in order to address the livelihood issues of the freed Kamaiyas and their families now living in the makeshift rehabilitation camps. More crucial can be the creation of situations that will enable the freed Kamaiyas to negotiate favourable conditions of employment for themselves as cultivators, wage earners or in other kinds of jobs. All the agencies (State or Government, NGOs, etc.) will need to make concerted efforts in making the Kamaiyas less dependent on outside support only. Moreover, equally crucial will be to enable and empower the Kamaiyas (and other disadvantaged groups of people) so that they

continue challenging the traditional social, economic and power structures that oppress them now or may do so in the future.

Poverty is a key problem in Tarai where Tharus live. The economic plight of the Tharus seems to be associated with the unequal relations with the landlords fostered by the Kamaiya practices. Such unequal socio-economic and political relations go back to many generations (see Karauskoff and Meyer, 2000). State policies in relation to resource access and ownership, plus the locally dominant groups of people may have had equal share of the responsibility for the plight of the Kamaiya Tharus. Given this, efforts to improve the lot of the Kamaiyas have to come from all sides in a concerted way.

The case of the Tharus discussed here may only be symptomatic of a larger or a more serious tragedy in the making for the majority of the poor and disadvantaged people across the length and breadth of the country. That is, many other communities that are also economically deprived, socially and politically disenfranchised in many ways in different parts of the country could be either having similar problems or may be closer to what is happening to the Kamaiya Tharus today. Whether to avert the tragedy or deal with it when it comes about are the two alternative choices available for all concerned parties claiming to serve the interests of the 'people'.

End Note

1. I am grateful to Dr. Hikmat Bahadur Bista for his constructive ideas and support in preparing this review paper. He also provided useful comments on an earlier version of the paper.

2. According to the 1991 census, the proportion of Tharus in the eight districts of Western Tarai is as the following: Nawalparasi—16.9%; Rupandehi—10.7%; Kapilvastu—11.8%; Dang—31.5%; Banke—16.0%; Bardiya—52.8%; Kailali—49.5%; and Kanchanpur—27.4% (see Sharma and Thakurathi, 1998:22).

3. See Sharma and Thakurathi 1998:22 (Appendix Table 1) for data on other districts. It should be noted that the non-Tharus in the table must include a number of Dalits and other disadvantaged groups of people. Thus, if the data were to be further disaggregated for Bahun-Chhetris and others, the socio-economic disparities may widen significantly.

4. *Assumption 1*: 11.7% of the total population or households in Bardiya are Kamaiyas (based on data presented by Sharma and Thakurathi, 1998: Table 3.1). Applying this to the total population of Rajapur at present we get 10870 as the total Kamaiya population here. *Assumption 2*: 84.8% of the Kamaiyas in Bardiya are Tharus (based on data presented in Table 4.14 in Sharma and Thakurathi, 1998). Applying this to the total Kamaiya population just calculated in Assumption 1, the total Tharu Kamaiyas in Rajapur is derived as 9218.

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NEPALESE BUDDHISTS' VIEW OF HINDUISM[1]

Krishna B. Bhattachan

Introduction

Nepal is a multi-caste/ethnic, multi-lingual, multi-cultural and multi-religious country. The Hindu "high castes" belong to Caucasoid race and they are divided into Bahun/Brahmin, Chhetri/Kshatriya, Vaisya and Sudra/Dalits and the peoples belonging to the Hill castes speak Nepali and the Madhesi castes speak various mother tongues belonging to the same Indo-Aryan families. There are 59 indigenous nationalities of Nepal and most of them belong to Mongoloid race and speak Tibeto-Burman languages. There are Dravid and Proto-Australoid races, who speak Dravid and Munda language respectively and they are also Indigenous Nationalities of Nepal. About 125 languages and dialects belong to four language families, namely, Indo-Aryan, Tibeto-Burman, Dravid and Munda.

Nepalese peoples have faith in different religions, including animism, Bon, Kirata, Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Jainism, Sikhism and Bahai (cf. Dastider 1995). All religions are divided into different sects. For example, Bon is divided into White Stripe Bon and Black Stripe Bon. Kirata is divided into White Stripe and Red Stripe Kirata and the followers of Guru Falgunanda. Similarly, Buddhism is divided into *Hinayan. Mahayan, Bajrayan* and *Therbada* (cf. Gurung 1987). Hinduism is divided into Shaivism, Vaisnavism etc.[2] Similarly, Christians are divided into

Protestants, Roman Catholics etc. Islam is divided into Shiya and Sunni groups. According to the census of 2001, Hindus comprise 80.6%, Buddhists 10.7%, Islam 4.2%, Kirant 3.6%, Christian 3.6% of the total 22,736,934 population of Nepal (Table 1). The population of Jain and Sikh are less than 5,000. Non-Hindus have often expressed through different media that they have serious concern about reliability of census data on religion collected since the Census of 1952/54. The exclusionary process adopted by the Hindu rulers in all the Census have resulted in an engineered data on religion that over-inflates Hindu population to somewhere between 80% to 90% and under-enumeration of non-Hindus, including Buddhists and Christians (cf. Bhattachan 2001; Gurung, 2002).

Table 1. Population by religion in the Census of 1952/54, 1991 and 2001

Religion	1952/54	%	1991	%	2001	%	Increase-Decrease 1991-2001	%
Hindu	7,138,392	88.8	15,996,953	86.5	18,330,121	80.6	2,333,168	14.6
Buddhists	707,104	8.6	1,439,142	7.8	2,442,520	10.7	1,003,378	69.7
Islam	208,899	2.6	653,218	3.5	954,023	4.2	300,805	46.0
Kirant	-	-	318,389	1.0	818,106	3.6	499,717	157.0
Christian	-	-	31,280	0.2	101,976	0.5	70,696	226.0
Jain	-	-	7,561	0.0	4,108	0.0	-3,453	-45.7
Sikh	-	-	9,292	0.1	5,890	0.0	-3,402	-36.6
Other	6,840	0.0	17,124	0.1	86,080	0.4	68,956	402.7
Unidentified	-	-	18,138	0.1	-	-	-	-
Total	**8,235,079**	**100**	**491,097**	**100**	**22,736,934**	**100**	**4,245,887**	**23.0**

Source: Table Number 10: Population by religion (cf. Gurung 2002:9).

His Majesty's Government of Nepal has recognized 59 Indigenous Peoples in Nepal and most of them belong to Mongolian race and speak Tibeto-Burman languages. However, the Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal, 1990 promulgated after the downfall of the

autocratic partyless Panchayat political system in 1990, which is modeled after West-Minister style of parliamentary form of government and where winner takes it all, have yet to recognize Nepal as a multi-religious country. Despite of strong demands for secularism, the Constitution declared Nepal as a Hindu state.

Religious Conflict in Nepal

Religious conflict is ubiquitous in the South Asia and Nepal is not exception to it (cf. Allen, 1993). Hindus are the dominant religious groups in Nepal. They, therefore, are in direct conflict with other religious groups, including Buddhist, Animist, Bon, Kirata, Islam and Christian. All non-Hindus are against Hinduism as the State religion— Hindu, political recognition of the *Siva Sena* ("Army of the Lord Shiva") as a registered political party, direct or indirect harassment against non-Hindus, particularly Christians and Islam, and engineered census data.[3] Non-Hindus are for religious harmony, secularism, constitutional and legal equality, affirmative action or positive discrimination and true census data.

Almost all political leaders, planners, policy makers and development workers belong to the dominant caste, that is, the Hill Bahun-Chhetris, they continue to engage in impression management that religious harmony is the characteristic of the Nepalese society since time immemorial. I attempted to deconstruct this myth by arguing that there has been no case of religious harmony in the past and present. David N. Geller has conceded that "religious harmony" has been exaggerated but he still does not agree that there is a serious religious conflict in Nepal (Gellner 1997: 6). It is true that Nepal has never experienced serious violent conflict but flashes of violence has occurred in the name of religion but such conflicts has been immediately suppressed by the local administration controlled by the dominant caste groups taking side of the perpetrators belonging to their own group. The latest clash was reported in the

second week of August of 2002 between Hindus and Muslims in a village in the Mahottari district in the Terai region of central Nepal bordered with India and the local administration and political parties, which are dominated by the Hindus, suppressed it.

Buddhists View of Hinduism[4]

All Nepalese Buddhists have identical views about Hinduism though some may list more and others less about the differences between Buddhism and Hinduism or what Buddhists do and what Hindus do. What is interesting here is that Gautam Buddha was born in Nepal but he received *Budhatwa* ("enlightenment") in India and the Indian rulers like Ashoka was instrumental in spreading Buddhism around the region and the world. In contrast, Hinduism originated in India but by now Nepal has become the first Hindu country in the world. Thus, encroachment of Hinduism in Nepal and its dominant status for the last few centuries have often developed some tension between the Nepalese Buddhists and Hindus.

Given a long historical experience of overt and covert conflict between Buddhists and Hindus and the current political economic conditions, it is very natural that both Buddhists and Hindus have developed predominantly, following J. D. Gort, "prescriptive mode" or "negative theories, perceptions, attitudes and practices" against one another (Gort n.d.: 3). The distance between Buddhists and Hindus has widened after the heightened conflict between the Nepalese Buddhists and Hindus when the Hindus made a failed attempt to organize a Hindu-Buddhist Unity Conference inside the sacred Lumbini complex from November 19 to 21, 1999. Jayaendra Saraswati Shankacharya Kanchikamakoti and Goenka released a press statement from Varanassi, India stating that Hinduism and Buddhism are separate religions and that Buddha is not the ninth incarnation of Lord Vishnu as claimed by some Hindus and eventually it helped to diffuse the mounting tension. Due to strong

protest from the Buddhists, the conference was organized in Siddharthanagar, a nearby town near Lumbini. Thus, direct physical conflict was averted but the psychological conflict continues. Later, Jayaendra Saraswati Shankacharya Kanchikamakoti, inaugurating the first World Hindu-Buddhist Conference in Lumbini, in Nepal said, "There is no difference between Hinduism and Buddhism" (Quoted by SPOTLIGHT 1999). The Nepalese Buddhists, on the contrary, views Buddhism different from Hinduism in many ways.

Buddhists Views on Hindu Doctrines

The Nepalese Buddhists believe that the doctrines of Hinduism and Buddhism are diametrically opposed (cf. Guvaju, 1990).

Creation of God and Absolute Truth

Hindus believe that god has created everything, including the Vedas. All Hindus regard four Vedas—the Rigveda, the Samveda, the Yajurveda and the Atharvaveda—as their supreme, holy and consensual documents created by gods. Also, they believe that it was true in the past, it is true at present and it will be true in future and they consider those people as Nastik ("atheist") who show disregard to the Vedas. Also, Hindus believe that priests are the mediators between god and human beings and thus, if Hindus satisfy their priests by giving money, commodities etc. ultimately gods will be satisfied.

The Nepalese Buddhists criticize such beliefs saying that these Vedas are neither the creation of god nor these are true forever. As Buddhists do not believe in the existence of any god they reject the divine authority of the Vedas. Following the Law of Dependent Origination ("Pratitya Samutpada") propounded by Budhha, Buddhists believe in cause and effect relationship but not on the divine origin (cf. Wadia, 1992). They, therefore, believe that priests are nothing but the "cheaters."

Hierarchy/purity and pollution of castes and foods

Buddhists believe that hierarchy and purity and pollution of castes and foods are one of the worst characteristics of Hinduism. Hindu thoughts and practices are based on the paradigm of hierarchy, that is, everything is graded in a hierarchy, some are at the top, some are at the bottom and rest are in between. Hindus divide the society into fourfold *Varna* system, that is, *Brahmins* at the top followed by *Kshyatriays* and *Vaishya* and *Sudra* at the bottom of the hierarchy. *Brahmans* are considered superior and *Sudras* as the inferior, polluted or untouchables.

Nepalese Buddhists believe that is "upper caste" Hindus' strategy to perpetuates discriminatory caste system and discriminatory division of labor through the four-fold *Varna* hierarchy. Buddhists, therefore, believe that Hindus are naïve to say that the four *Varnas* were born out of different parts of the body of god Brahma ("god of creation")—Brahmin form his mouth, *Kshyatriyas* from his hand, *Vaishya* from his belly and *Sudras* from his feet. Also, Hindus believe that Brahmins' main duty is intellectual activities, *Kshyatriyas'* is security, *Vaishyas'* is economic activities and *Sudras'* is menial activities. The *Varna* system, therefore, is based on ascription and each individual's position in the *Varna* hierarchy is predestined; it cannot be changed through achievement.

Atma ("Soul") and Its Rebirth

Hindus strongly believe in the existence of *Atma* ("soul"). They believe that soul is eternal. Hindus believe in what Lord Krishna had said in the *Bhagvad Gita*[5] that souls are like bodies and that soul may change its "bodies" just like we change new clothes or outfit if it should be old. Hindus believe that bodies are made of five elements—air, water, fire, earth and sky. They believe that bodies go through a series of birth and death and that even after

death, soul may roam freely and harm people if they are satisfied. Hindus believe that if any individual should perform his/her "*dharma*" ("duty") in this life as sincerely as possible, his/her next life would be just wonderful and prosperous. Nepalese Buddhists do not agree with such Hindu beliefs about the existence of "soul" and its re-birth.

Iswarbadi ("Belief in God")

Buddha never believed in the existence of god or supernatural things. He did not believe in the creation of the world by gods. Instead, he explained the existence of living beings and things through cause and effect relationship. Hindus, on the contrary, believe in the existence of 33 *Koti* gods and goddesses. Hindus believe that there is a presence of super mundane god (*Vishnu*) and the total number of gods is 33 *Koti* (330 million). Although, they regard Lord *Brahma*, Lord *Vishnu* and Lord *Maheswor* or *Mahadev* as the gods of creation, procreation and destruction respectively, they, in their every-day-life, worship powerful female goddesses such as *Durga* and *Kali*. What is interesting about Hindus is that they worship almost everything, including dogs. Hindus worship dog during the *Tihar* or *Tyohar* festival (the festival of lights) but do not hesitate to beat and kill dogs for next 364 days. Also, Hindus worship the most "powerful" gods and goddesses only and ignore other less powerful ones. For example, majority of Hindus visit temples of Lord *Mahadev* or *Biswanath*, *Durga*, Kali and *Sankatmochan* ("end crisis") than Brahma.

Niskama Karma ("Work with no expectation of its fruits") or Fatalism

Hindus care very little about this life but they are very much concerned about next lives. They say that all individuals should obediently and sincerely follow their *dharma*, including the *dharma*

of *varna* and castes. If each and every individual does so in this life, his/her next life would be much better and prosperous. On the contrary, if they disobey, their next lives would be ruined. Sociologists and anthropologists characterize such a belief as fatalism. This means, *Brhaman*, *Kshyatriya*, *Vaisahya* and *Sudra* should perform their respective dharma. As this has been a social reality for several millenniums, "low castes" peoples have always been exploited and forced to remain in their "lowest" social status all the time. Thus, such a belief has positive impact on "high castes" and negative impacts on "low castes."

The Nepalese Buddhists criticize Hindus' such beliefs. Buddhists, on the contrary, believe that this life is more important and each and every individual who wish to get rid from sorrow and attain Nirvana, they must accept the four-fold truth and eight-fold path and follow *Shila* sincerely. It should be noted here that the Tibetan Buddhists believe that there is re-incarnation of Lamas. Such belief appears to be the influence of Hinduism.

Conformity in means, not ends

Hindus often try to justify means without relating them with ends. In the *Bhagvada Gita*, Lord Krishna suggested Arjun to act without expecting its fruits or outcomes. Thus, Hindus justify war, violence, exploitation etc. on this ground. On the contrary, Nepalese Buddhists, following the teachings of Buddha, believe that both cause and effect are interconnected. They believe that what one does has its definite outcome and whatever outcome one may see has its cause. For Buddhists, there is indeed no cause without effect and no effect without any cause.

Intolerance

Nepalese Buddhists strongly believe that Hindus are very intolerant with other religious groups. They do not hesitate to use the four

policies, namely, *Sam* ("policy"), *Dam* ("Money or Gift"), *Danda* ("Punishment") and *Bhed* ("Divide"), developed by the famous scholar Chanakya. In the past, Nepalese Hindus' intolerance was exhibited in the form of burning of Buddhists texts, dismantling of Buddhists "*bihars*," "*stupas*," and "*gombas*" ("monasteries") and proseylitization in Hinduism by misusing State power and authority. At present Hindus' intolerance towards Buddhists (and also to Christians, Islams and other religious groups) is exhibited through political domination in executive, legislative, judiciary, media and political parties. For example, the Supreme Court of Nepal, in its verdict of August 17, 2002, did not find any evidence that the United Mission to Nepal (UMN) and ADRA-Nepal had engaged in proseylitization as alleged; nevertheless, the Court issued a directive order to the government to take strong action against those people or organizations who engage in proseylitization of the Hindus.

Individualism

The Nepalese Buddhists perceive that Hindus are primarily individualist. On the contrary, Buddhists are very much collectivists. Lord Buddha himself have emphasized on *Sangha* as one of the three *shilas* the praying *Buddham Saranam Gachami, Dhamam sharanam gachhami and Sangham sarnam ghachami.*

Violence

Buddhists believe that Hinduism is characterized by violence. Most of the powerful gods and goddesses, such as *Shiva*, *Durga* and *Kali*, symbolize violence. Many Hindus observe different types of sacrifice rituals including *Pancha Bali* ("five sacrifices"). The famous epics, namely, the *Ramayan* and the *Mahabharat*, are full of violence. *Dasain* is the biggest festival of the Nepalese Hindus and the offices of His Majesty's Government of Nepal are closed for

about a week and educational institutions are closed for a month to celebrate the festival. On the eight and ninth day of the *Dasain* festivals, most of the Nepalese Hindus sacrifice animals such as goat, water buffalos, rooster, ducks, etc. in their homes. The Nepalese Buddhists have demanded with the government that killing of animals should be prohibited at least on the annual *Buddha Jayanti*, a day to celebrate Buddha, but they have turned a deaf ear so far. Buddhism, in contrast to Hinduism, is characterized by non-violence and peace.

Extreme Paths

Hindus are often said to be taking extreme paths. For example, there Hindus who believe in violence and there are other Hindus who believe in non-violence. Buddhists, on the contrary, follow the middle path.

No Shila and No Liberation

The Nepalese Buddhists appreciate Hindus' ideal behaviors. They believe that such ideals are pretensions because Hindus do not indeed practice it sincerely. The Nepalese Buddhists believe that liberation can be attained only through following *shila* and accepting four noble truth and the noble eight fold path. The four noble truth are (1) there is suffering in this world, (2) there are causes of suffering, (3) there are ways to do away with suffering, and (4) the ways to prevent suffering are this world itself. The noble eight fold path are (1) right view, (2) right thinking, (3) right speech, (4) right action, (5) right livelihood, (6) right diligence, (7) right mindfulness, and (8) right concentration.

Buddhists views of Hindus' Politics of Religion

The Nepalese Buddhists express their dismay about the "dirty" politics played by the Nepalese Hindus. Often, they mislead people

and annoy Buddhists by spreading rumors that Buddhism is one of the branches of Hinduism. The following are the main issues of Hindu-Buddhist conflict.

Omkar Family?

The letter ॐ ("*OM*") has a great significance in Hinduism. Some Hindus argue that the Buddhists chant "*Om Mani Padme Hun,*" they belong to the "*Omkar*" family, suggesting that Buddhism is a branch of Hinduism. There is no mention of the letter ॐ ("*OM*") in Buddhist texts such as *Tripitak* and Buddha never mentioned any significance of ॐ ("*OM*").

Buddha as the Ninth Incarnation of Lord Vishnu

Hindus believe in 10 *avatars* ("incarnations") of Lord *Vishnu*. These are: (1) *Matsya* ("Fish") *Avatar*, (2) *Kurma* (Turtle) *Avatar*, (3) *Baraha* ("Pig") *Avatar*, (4) *Narisingha* ("Human body with Lion's head") *Avatar*, (5) *Baman* ("Dwarf") *Avatar*, (6) *Parshuram Avatar*, (7) *Sriram Avatar*, (8) *Krishna Avatar*, (9) **Buddha Avatar**, and (10) *Kalki Avatar*. Based on this belief, Hindus argue that Buddhism is a branch of Hinduism. In a book entitled **Radio Style** Book published by the government owned Radio Nepal, the authors have mentioned that "Hindus regard Buddha is regarded as the ninth incarnation of Vishnu" (Acharya *et al.* 2000:374). Every year, the newsreaders mention this statement by offending the sentiments of the Buddhists listeners. Buddhists take such a Hindu view very offensive. Buddhists defend it by saying that Buddha was very much against re-birth and gods. Instead, Buddha believed in *Hetu Pratyaya*, which means cause-effect relationship.

State Patronization

The Nepalese Hindus believe that Nepal should be a Hindu State, the King must be a descendent of Arya race and Hindu religion.

Nepalese Buddhists do not agree with their first argument and have no objection on the second one. They argue that State like the Nepalese State can have no religion of its own because Nepal is a multi-religious, multi-caste and ethnic, multi-lingual and multi-cultural society. Buddhists along with other non-Hindu religions such as Bon, Kirata, Animism, Christianity and Islam have demanded that the Constitution should declare Nepal a secular country.

Closed (Proselytization as a threat) membership

Buddhists believe that Hinduism is a closed system where people with faith in other religions cannot become Hindus. On the contrary, there is no such restriction in Buddhism. In Hindu society, *Varna* and caste hierarchy is based on ascription. Therefore, people at the top generally do not fall down, except in violation of caste rules such as marriage relationship with "low castes". "Low caste" people have no chance to move up in the caste hierarchy, though few of them move up through the process of Sanskritization. Many Dalits ("low castes") in Nepal strongly believe that they can not get be free from caste-based discrimination as long as they follow Hinduism. Many of them, therefore, aspire to adopt Christianity or Buddhism. The Buddhists of Nepal have no problem in accepting them but the Hindus do not accept Buddhists or Christians or Islams turned into Hindus.

Cold Approach towards the Development of Lumbini

After the visit of U Thant, UN Secretary General from Burma, in Lumbini in Nepal in 1967, he appealed the international community to contribute for the development of Lumbini. Accordingly, Japanese archaeologist Prof. Kenzo Tange prepared the Lumbini Master Plan in 1978 for the development of Lumbini in 1150 *bighas* of land divided into three zones: (1) garden, (2) monasteries,

and (3) research center. Unfortunately, Lumbini's development is moving in a snails pace because of cold attitude of His Majesty's Government of Nepal during the partyless Panchayat political system (1960-1990) and in the last twelve years after the reinstatement of democracy in 1990. The Nepalese Buddhists believe that the dominant Hindus, including rulers, planners, policy makers, decision makers, political leaders and intellectuals do not want to see the development of Lumbini and Buddhism (and also other non-Hindu religion, including Christianity).

Hindus' disrespect to other religions

The Nepalese Hindus believe that Hinduism is the only super-religion of the world and all other "religions," including Buddhism, Christianity and Islam, are its branches. In practice, however, the Nepalese Hindus have a lot of ill feelings against both Christians and Islam. The Nepalese Buddhists are of the views that the Nepalese Hindus wrongly suspect all international donors community as agents of proselytization of Hindus to Christianity and that all Islam are agents of ISI of Pakistan.

Anti-non-Hindu stance of Hindu fundamentalist organizations

The Nepalese Hindus have close ties with Hindu fundamentalists and extremists of India. For example, the Nepalese Hindus have established *Shiva Sena* ("Army of the Lord Shiva") in Nepal and registered with the Election Commission of Nepal of His Majesty's Government of Nepal as a political party. They have close link with the *Shiva Sena* of India lead by Mr. Bal Thakrey. Similarly, the Nepalese leaders of *Biswa Hindu Mahasangh* ("the World Federation of Hindus") also have close ties with the *Bharatiya Janata Party* (BJP), the ruling party of India.

Conclusion

Nepal being a multi-religious country, religious tolerance and harmony is required for maintaining peace and attaining development. However, the first precondition for developing such harmony is that the Nepalese State should possess no religion. In other words, Nepal should be declared as a secular country. The second precondition is that the Nepalese Hindus should change their negative attitude and dominating behavior against non-Hindus, including the Buddhists. Hindus should indeed give up for good their wrong belief that Buddhism is a branch of Hinduism, that Buddha is the ninth incarnation of Lord Vishnu and that Buddhism is one the members of ॐ ("*Omkar*") family. Also, the census of 2011 should bring out true population of different religious groups. The Nepalese Buddhists believe that Buddhism is neither a religion nor an irrational faith but it is a process of becoming or a peaceful way of life or a science of living and looking at the world.

End notes

1. This is a revised version of my paper "Nepalese Buddhists' View of Hinduism" presented in an "International Interreligious Workshop: Religions View Religions: Explorations in Pursuit of Understanding"organized by the Research Group on The Encounter of religious Traditions, Faculty of Theology, Free University, Amsterdam, the Netherlands at the Retreat Centre, Guldenberg, Helvoirt, the Netherlands on November 1-4, 2002. I highly appreciate support and inputs provided by Prof. Hendrik M. Vroom and Prof. J. D. Gort, and Prof. Laurence Minnema of Free University of Amsterdam, and other participants of the workshop to enrich my paper.

2. According to Max Weber, "The term "Hindu" was first used under the foreign domination of the Mohammedans to mean unconverted native Indians. Only in recent literature have the Indians themselves begun to designate their religious affiliation as Hinduism" (Weber 1967: 4).

3. Johan Galtung writes, "…buddhism is not a question of sudden conversion, of *becoming* something one was not before, but of a process, of *always becoming*" (Galtung 1988: IX).

4. The Election Commission would not register political parties formed by the non-Hindus with similar explicit religious connotation such as the "Buddhist Army" or "Christian Army."

5. In the course of writing this paper, I talked to several Buddhist scholars, monks, activists, students and laypersons seeking their views about how they vie Hinduism. Also, I reviewed a couple of literature written by Nepalese Buddhist scholars. Also, I have developed some views on Hinduism from a sociological perspective and also from my own life experience as a Buddhist.

6. The *Vagavad Gita* for Hindus is like Bible for Christians and Kuran for Islams.

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CULTURE AND POLITICS OF CASTE IN THE HIMALAYAN KINGDOM

Tulshi Ram Pandey

This paper defines the concept of caste as it can be derived from the literature and attempts to highlight the modality of its manifestations in the context of Nepal. It argues that caste as an ideology or a system of values should not be taken as a face value while it is judged in terms of its application in field reality. Evidences from its practice in Nepal do suggest that it is highly molded by the cultural context of society and political interest of the rulers. Many of its ideological elements apply only partially in field situations.

Defining the Concept of Caste

Indeed, the division of the population into a number of caste groups is one of the fundamental features of social structure in Hindu society. In these societies, one can encounter with different groups of people identified by a variety of caste names. Even in Nepal, the prevalence of such a division of the population is evident from the fact that the national census of 2001 presents demographic information for more than one hundred caste/ethnic groups. Caste division as a feature of Nepalese society can be discerned not only at its macro national level. Even in micro settings like individual villages, people are divided into a number of caste groups. Let us begin our discussion by settling the meaning of the concept of

ably in the text), Vaishya and Sudra are located in the order of hierarchy between these extreme categories.

Brahmans, Kshatriyas, Vaisyas and Sudras are the four fold categories of the Varna system. This system keeps the "Untouchables" out from its domain. However all the above five categories are ranked linearly in terms of relative superiority of their status in the hierarchy of caste system. Nevertheless, the interval of status differences or the level of purity or impurity between these broader categories is not linear. Dumont has the following observation about the rules of this type of hierarchical ordering (Dumont 1972: 106). The hierarchy of the Varnas can also be seen:

> As a series of successive dichotomies or inclusions. The set
> of the four varnas divides into two: the last category, that of
> the Sudras, is opposed to the block of the first three, whose
> members are 'twice-born' in the sense that they participate
> in initiation, second birth, and in the religious life in general.
> These twice-born in turn are divided into two: the Vaisyas
> are opposed to the block formed by the Kshatriyas and the
> Brahmans, which in turn divides into two.

By this rule, it can be said that the four Varnas as touchable to each other also form a single block of the pure castes given the uniformity of rules that govern their relation with the "untouchables."

The above five are the broader level categories, which represent the prototype of caste classification at ideological level. In field reality, we confront with a multitude of human groups identified by a variety of caste names. Such a context raises a curiosity to get an understanding of the type of relationship that exists between them and the broader categories.

Indeed, all caste categories are linked to each other by a structural principle. It has already been mentioned that the notion of relative purity or pollution involved in tasks specialized by different category of the population is the foundation at which the four Varnas and the "Untouchables" are ranked in caste hierarchy at the broader level. The members of these groups are also required to follow a number of other rules and regulations related to food habits, marital practices, rites and rituals of lifecycle ceremonies and other types of social relations to preserve the purity of their caste. However, it is not true that all members of each group always fulfill these regulations perfectly. Whenever, some of the members of a caste violate the rules of their caste group, it is possible that the violation will divide the group in to a number of sub-caste categories. The status or rank of these sub-groups is determined by the extent at which their members have violated those rules.

A caste may be divided into a number of sub-caste categories through three important ways.

One such a way appears in the form of portioning out of caste status to its members in different ways (Béteille 1964). It happens in those conditions when some of the members of a caste fulfill some rules of the group only partially, or violate some provisions of those rules tolerably. These types of violations are tolerable to other members of the group that they do not exclude the violators from their caste. However, they divide themselves into differentially named caste segments with relative differences of their status within the umbrella of the original caste. This process has provided the caste system a segmentary character.

The sub-castes may emerge also by way of fusion of diverse groups into new categories (Karve 1961). Marital relation between partners of different castes is the important way that sets opportunity for such a fusion of the groups. Hypergamy is among the accepted

forms of marriage in Hindu society. People establish even the hypogamous type of marital relations even though these types of practices are not encouraged by caste rules. The progenies born of parents from both of these types of unions comprise a separate category of sub-caste within the caste group at which they are incorporated.

A third method of the division of a caste into sub-caste categories is manifested in different forms. It happens particularly when the territorial subdivisions of a caste meet together within a single locality. In such a condition, none of these divisions is prepared to fuse with or accept the supremacy of the others. Rather, each of them preserves a separate identity by claiming its supremacy over the others.

The processes discussed above only express the theoretical possibilities. In practice, these processes may not operate uniformly in all field realities. Caste as a system of social organization may have, therefore, its local specificity. As a result, the cultural contest of Nepal has contributed to develop some uniqueness even in its caste structure.

Cultural Context and the Caste System

Above discussion on the concept of caste has noted already that the notion of purity and pollution, food taboos and commensality regulations, restrictions on occupational choice and the requirement of endogamous form of marital practices are the ideological features of caste system in Hindu society. These features play fundamental role to govern the relationship among people within and between the caste groups. However, it has also been explored that the cultural context of a zone or a region affects the extent of rigidity in the application of these rules (Hutton 1963).

The ethnic and religious makeup of a population and the span of time lapsed in the process of interconnection between them set the cultural context of a society. These features have a unique combination in the context Nepal, since this country also forms a distinct type of cultural zone in the South Asian region. Such uniqueness found in the culture of Nepal is a result of its location between the countries with two different cultural traditions. To its north, people in the Tibetan region of China follow a cultural pattern based on Buddhism in its Lamaist form. To its south in the plain land of India, caste Hindus are dominant. The ancestry of people that comprises the population of present day Nepal has been derived from both of these directions. This event has contributed to develop Nepal as a contact zone of cultures originated at both of these neighboring regions.

One example of Nepal being a contact zone of two different cultural traditions can be found in the linguistic diversity of its population. The population census taken in the year 2001 has shown that Nepal has 92 types of known languages spoken as mother tongue by her people. More than 48 percent of this population speaks Nepali as the mother tongue. This language is also used as the official language of the nation and the *lingua franca* of communication. A substantial proportion of the population also speaks Maithili, Bhojpuri, Tharu and Awadhi languages of Indo-Aryan family. There are also some larger groups of people who speak Tamang, Newar, Magar, Bantawa, Limbu, Sherpa, and other languages that belong to Tibeto-Burman language family (see CBS 2002: Table 19).

People of Nepal also differ in terms of their religious beliefs and practices. Hinduism is the dominant form of religion observed by more than 78 percent of the population. The second most popular religion, defined in terms of numerical strength of the followers, is

Buddhism. It is followed by 10.5 percent of the total population. The followers of other religious traditions such as Islam, Christianity, Jainism, Sikh, Kirant, etc. are proportionately small (Dahal 2003).

As a society inhabited by overwhelming majority of Hindu population, one of the important features of social organization of Nepal is the division of that population into different caste and sub-caste categories. The 2001 population census has presented information on 103 "caste and ethnic" categories (Dahal 2003). Such a categorization has been made to produce data for administrative intention, in which both the caste and ethnic groups are classified together into a single system. This classification does not provide an exhaustive list of all caste, sub-caste and ethnic groups of people living in different parts of the country. Some caste or the ethnic groups are reported only in their generic form, whereas some others are listed even in terms of their sub-divisions. This classification does not provide, therefore, an exhaustive list of all caste, sub-caste and ethnic categories. Indeed, preparation of a comprehensive list of these categories is a difficult exercise. One may define them in different ways according to ones own requirements.

There are some reasons for the availability of such a liberty to delegating a specific type of caste or ethnic identity to different category of the population. One such reason may be found in the provisions of the Civil Code enacted in 1854, as will be discussed below, which have attempted to incorporate all categories of people within the framework of the caste system. Even the constitutions of Nepal formulated after the 1950 have made no mention of the caste or the ethnic identity of any specific group of the population. The ethnic groups in Nepal were considered even as castes until very recently[3]. Together, the interface of a multitude of caste and cultural

groups for a long period of time in this society has contributed to weaken the rigidity of many features that could be used to define their caste and cultural identities. Hamilton has a comment in this regard that what may be termed as "tribal" groups of Nepal are characterized by a relatively week notion of purity and pollution, relaxed food taboo, relaxed marriage rules and greater freedom of women (cited in Sharma 1978)

What is implicit in this remark is that most of the cultural groups of Nepal, even if they may not belong to Hindu caste categories, possess some features of caste group. The concept of Sanskritization may explain this characteristic. Interactions among different categories of the populations over a long period of time might have motivated many of the "tribal" groups or even the caste Hindus to change their "customs, ritual, ideology, and the way of life in the direction of high" caste (Srinivas 1966: 6). However, the influence of cultural contact on caste has not remained an entirely one-sided affair. Even the Hindus placed at the upper rank in caste hierarchy have followed some cultural features of other groups placed below them in the caste system or even outside that system. "Relaxed rules of inter-caste marriage, widow remarriage, easy divorce for women even among high-caste Hindus are some examples of this" (Sharma 1978: 6).

It should be remembered at this point that the influence of cultural contact on socialization has not been uniform to all groups of people living in all parts of the country. In terms of the magnitude of share of inter-cultural features, the population of Nepal can be grouped in three broader categories. These categories may be termed as the Bhote, Parbate, and Madhese. At one level, the people who are included in either of these categories reflect some connection with a particular geographical regions. Those, which may be termed as the Bhote, as will be noted below, inhabit in the

high mountain zone close to Bhot or Tibet. The Madhese, on the other hand, are the traditional inhabitants of the Tarai or Madhesh region located along Nepal's the border in the south with India. The Parbate live in the hills and river valleys between the high mountain zone and the Tarai Region. However, such a categorization for the present purpose has a relevance to cultural differences of the populations rather than their affinity with a particular geographic region.

It is true that the features of culture of a particular region largely shape the culture and behaviors followed by people living around that area. This is one of the important reasons that the Bhotes have close affinity with the culture of Tibet (or Bhot) than that of the plains of India. "Bhote" is, however, a generic category, which incorporates a wide variety of endogamous groups of population. Jest prepares a list that the Bhotes includes the cultural groups like "Humla, Mugu, Dolpo, Lo (Mustang), Nar, Nyi-shang, Nub-ri, Tsum, Langthang, Sherpa and Helung" who reside from west to east at different parts of high mountain areas (1978: 359). To this list are added further some other groups like Baragaunle (Bista 1972) and some other divisions of the "Bhote" population (Gurung 1992: 19).

The separate identity possessed by various groups found among the Bhote is an indication that they all have been able to preserve some uniqueness in their respective cultures. However, there are also some commonalities in the culture of all these groups that they come together to form a single category when they are compared with the Madhese and the Parbate. Physically, the members in all the groups of the Bhote population have Mongoloid character. They speak Tibetan dialects, follow Buddhist religion and are least influenced by Hindu cultural tradition. Their economy is based on pastoralism, long distance trade across the border region, and

cultivation of barley, buckwheat and potato in the high mountain zones and the inner Himalayan valleys.

On the contrary, the Madheses have a high level of cultural affinity with the peoples of plains of India. Most of them are the Hindus and are divided into a number of caste groups such as the Brahman, Chamar, Dom, Lodh, Kayastha, Kewot, Koiri, Kurmi, Mushar, Rajput, etc. The Tharus, one of the indigenous groups of population of this region, also make significant proportion of the Madhese population. Muslims are also found in some pocket of this cultural region. The region inhabited by the Madhese population is known as the granary of the nation. Land cultivation is the major occupation of people living in this area. This is also a region with a major concentration of industrial and business activities of the country.

The Parbates combine the features of both the Bhotes and the Madheses. Such a combination can be seen at the level of their racial composition as well as other feature of culture. Racially they are comprised of both the Mongoloid and Caucasoid stock. Gurung, Limbu, Magar, Rai, Tamang, Thakali, etc. are among the well-known groups of Mongoloid population living in this cultural zone. There is certain area having major concentration of each of these populations (Bista 1972). In between them are interspersed the caste Hindus of Caucasoid origin. Brahman (or Bahun), Damai (tailors and musician), Kami (ironworkers), Kshatriya (or Chhetri), Sarki (leather workers), Sonar (goldsmith), etc. are among these caste groups, which are distributed in many parts of this cultural region. Each of these caste and ethnic categories has its own separate identity. However, the interface of a variety of cultures in the region has brought them together into a common bond of a broader groups of the Parbate population.

At one level, such an inter-cultural interface can be observed in the form of what has already been noted as the process of

Sanskritization or Hinduization (Srinivas 1966). The cultural groups, which belong to Mongolid stock among the Parbates are racially close with the Bhotes. As a result, people belonging to both of these categories have many similarities in culture. Like in the case of Bhotes, Buddhism is the basic form of religion followed by Gurung, Tamang Thakali[4] and other such categories among the Parbates. At the same time, all the Mongoloids among the Parbates are highly influenced by Hinduism.

It does not mean that Hinduism has made its influence to all the Mongoloids among the Parbates in uniform way. Its influence is very high among the Magars compared to other groups of this race. Although the process of Hinduization is not uniform even among the Magars of different areas, they worship Hindu gods and goddesses and use Brahman priests in ceremonial practices. They themselves also serve as the temple priests in many shrines[5] of these gods and goddesses.

The Gurungs, Tamangs and Thakalis possess many features of Tibetan cultural tradition. About the cultural root of the Thakalis, Fürer-Haimendorf has noted, "… they conformed to the general pattern of Tibetan Buddhist society." He notes again about their changes that through the passage of time and their interaction with other groups of population, the young and educated Thakalis "in their striving for an improved status vis-à-vis Brahmin, Chhetri and Newar" "used the most tortuous argument to prove that the Thakalis had originally been Thakuris" i.e., members of the High Hindu caste." (1966[a]: 143). About the Gurungs, as Macfarlane has commented, "[t]hey appear to incorporate the elements of both Tibeto-Burman and Indo-Aryan origin." (Macfarlane 1976: 12). They speak Tibeto-Burman language, observe some Tibetan religious festivals, and receive priestly services from members belonging to one of their separate clan known as "Lama." Together,

they also celebrate Hindu festivals like the Dasai, Tihar, etc., and are divided into a number of castes having hierarchical status. These castes among the Gurungs are lumped in two broader categories known as Char Jat (four castes) and Sohra Jat (sixteen castes). All these Mongoloids among the Parbates keep similar level of social distance in their dealings with the castes that were traditionally regarded as untouchables.

Adoption of the features of Hindu cultural tradition by those social groups whose race was originated in non-Hindu areas suggests only one dimension of cultural contact among different groups of Parbates. Another dimension of such a cultural contact can be seen in the process of relaxation of norms of Hinduism that govern the relationship between people belonging to a variety of caste and non-caste categories. Specially, such a relaxation is pronounced in areas of food taboos, commensality rules and the status of children born of parents from inter-caste unions.

At least in urban areas, the youths born in Bahun and Chhetri castes, for example, are increasingly being less strict to observe the rules of food habits prescribed for members of their respective castes. According to conventional practices, members belonging to these caste groups are not permitted to take liquor, pork, chicken or even meat of any kind. However, the emerging practice has been that they do not feel any hesitation to take these food and alcoholic beverages without reducing their status in caste. Now a day, one's caste status is defined mainly in terms of the caste group at birth than the type of food someone takes in personal life. The ability to make a lavish supply of meet and alcoholic beverages has emerged in the form of a symbol of status among the families of high-ranking politicians, bureaucrats, and businesspersons of all caste categories during the feast they arrange at ceremonies like birthday and marriage of members of their respective families. Food taboos

and commensality rules are observed within the household, and generally at times of worship and related religious ceremonies.

Hinduism endorses hypergamous type of inter-caste marriages. However, the status of offspring born of parents from this type of marriage relations is distinct among the Parbates. Specially, the children born of Brahman and Chhetri father and the mother drawn from any caste located above the margin of "untouchability" are regarded as Chhetris or the warrier caste. Although, the Chhetris also are divided into a number of ranked groups in terms of the caste of their mother, such a hierarchy hardly influence the selection of mates for members belonging to either of these categories (Fürer-Haimendorf 1966[b]). However, a special category of Chhetris are found in western part of the country. They drink liquor, wear no sacred thread and are identified in the name of the Matwali (loquor drinking) Chhetri (Bista 1972). It is believed that these Chhetris are also the descendents of the Brahman and Chhetri fathers and the mothers from tribal groups. They acquired this status simply by reason that they did not observed the rules related to food taboos prescribed by Hindu caste regulation for their groups, when Hinduism was dominant in this area (Fürer-Haimendorf 1966[b]).

The process of Hinduization of those cultural groups whose race was originated in areas where Hinduism has no influence; the relaxation of caste rules among the Hindus as they come into contact with other categories of the population; and the emergence of a variety of caste and cultural groups through these types of interactions have made the cultural zone of Parbate population as a melting pot of diverse cultural tradition. The Newars represent the perfect example of a group which combine the features of a variety of cultural tradition. The facial and bodily structure of the Newars has made scholars to conclude that they are an "Indic subtype of the

Mongolians" (Doherty 1978:435). They are highly organized among all social groups of the country. They speak a dialect of Tibeto-Burman language family and follow both Hindu and Buddhist religious practices. Newars, like other Hindus among the Parbates, are divided into a number of caste groups ranking from Brahman to "Untouchables". Rosser counts 26 castes among the Newars of Kathmandu valley (1966:86).

There is, however, a fusion of Hinduism and Buddhist cultural tradition among the Newars in the valley of great civilization. Rosser points out that "[f]rom remote antiquity Hinduism and Buddhism have existed side by side in the Kathmandu valley producing a magnificent array of superb temples and *stupas* and ornate shrines" However, in the process of coexistence for a long period of time through the centuries "the strength and vitality of the Buddhist faith in the Kathmandu Valley appears to have undergone a steady decline" (Rosser 1966: 77-78). This process has been noticed also in the form of formation of caste groups even among the Buddhist of this population. As Rosser puts it again:

> The Newar monks in the monasteries … ceased to be celibate and became fully incorporated in the Newar caste system as a distinct and hereditary priestly caste. …there are in the present day Newar caste system two separate castes at the highest level of ritual status with the traditional and hereditary occupation of being family priests. One of these Newar castes is Brahman and of course Hindu, serving all Hindu Newar families apart from the untouchables. The other is Buddhist and called Gubhaju, serving all Buddhist Newar families apart again from untouchables) (ibid: 78). He has, however, the observation that also the "Buddhism was tolerated without apparent discrimination and Buddhist temples were revered" even by the kings who themselves were Hindus.

Within the past few decades, the process of inter-regional migration of population, and particularly that from the Hill to the Tarai region, has developed a trend to bring Parbates and Madheses closer to each other. The literature in the history of Nepal has recorded some evidence that since after the formation of present State of Nepal, there was some level of contact between the Parbates and Madheses even in the Tarai region. At least until mid-20th century, such a contact was limited in a form of Parbate landowners and their Madhese cultivators (Regmi 1976). After this period, opportunities allowed for the poor and marginal farmers of the hill region to explore cultivable lands in the Tarai. This process has provided an adequate opportunity for the interaction of people of both of these cultural zones. It is still a question of research to identify the intensity of their interaction. The migratory process, however, has helped to strengthen the feeling of nationhood among people living in both of these regions.

Politics of Caste and/or the Caste System

At its ideological level, one of the important features of the caste system, as noted above, is the division of labor according to caste groups. The 4 Varnas, as the ideological prototype of caste divisions in society, are required to perform four distinct activities. The Brahman at the apex of this hierarchy has the duty to provide priestly services for people belonging to other categories. The Kshatriya ranked below the Brahman in caste hierarchy, has the right to use power to protect people and society. The Vaishyas placed in the third rank of such a hierarchy are the farmers, grazers and producers. The lot of Shudras is to serve for the groups placed above them in the hierarchy. The "Untouchables" not incorporated in the Varna model form a fifth category of the impure Shudras and have the duties to serve their superiors in various ways.

Such a prescription of caste-based occupation and the requirement of hereditary membership in caste groups have many economic and political implications. Economically, this type of context poses severe limits on occupational choice for the population. The limitation to occupational choice is more pronounced for people located in lower than in upper rank in caste hierarchy. Those in the upper ranks may have chances to follow tasks prescribed for the lower castes, if they are willing to loose their original status. Nevertheless, the members of the lower rank cannot improve their caste status and follow the occupations prescribed for the upper castes. These differences in the limitations of occupational choice provide different level of power and privileges to members of different caste categories.

In fact, the Kshatriyas as rulers and the Brahmans as priests of the rulers have the opportunity to develop themselves into "the dominant caste" (Bailey 1960: 257-263) by concentrating in their hands most of the political and intellectual power of society. Such is, however, a theoretical possibility. In practice, this principle may apply differentially among different members of the same castes in different points of history of a society, or between societies even within a single point of time. Let us briefly make a historical overview of the application of this principle in the broader context of Nepal.

Hinduism continued to dominate the system of values of majority of people of Nepal all through the period since the beginning of human settlement in this area. Chhetri Kings have ruled over this country through all the period since its unification. As a result, the Brahmans have been the priests of these rulers through generations. However, caste as a system of social organization has been taken in different ways at different period of time by these rulers in the process of their system of governance. Until the 14th century, and

specifically before the time of King Jayasthiti Malla, as will be discussed below, Hinduism had its influence in society simply by way of practice of tradition. Of course, it was a dominant religion followed by a large section of society; it had not received any special favour by law of the country. Buddhism was also a popular religion among many sections of the population. At some points of the history, even the rulers were the followers of this religion[6].

Jayasthiti Malla, the king of Kathmandu valley during the later half of 14th century provided for the first time a legal recognition to caste based hierarchy as a prioritized form of social organization among the the people of Kathmandu Valley including the Newars. Through a campaign of what is generally known in the historical records of Nepal as a social reform measure of Jayasthiti Malla, his law divided the "great proportion of society into 64 castes" (translation mine) (Sharma 1978). There were many subdivisions even among these caste groups. In a summary report published of the "reform measure," it has been mentioned that among the Newars, the Shresthas were divided into 36 castes of which 13 were regarded as the sacred thread wearers; the Jyapus were divided into 32 castes; Kumals into 8 castes; Banda, Kushale and pode each into four caste; Khasha into 64 caste, etc (Budathoki nd: 6). Through such a measure, the caste system was received as a legitimate form of social organization in Nepal.

A more vigorous attempt to enhance the legal support for the entrenchment of caste-based organization of society was made by the Nepali State during mid 19th century. Through the formulation of the Mulki Ain (Civil Code) in 1854, it tried to accomplish this task in two different ways (see Höfer 2994). At one level, the provisions of the Code attempted to expand the process of Hinduisation by carving the way to incorporate all ethnic categories into the caste system. For this purpose, the Code transformed the

conventional categories of the Varna system into five broader caste categories (Table 1). This method allowed it to integrate all ethnic groups of the country into new framework of the caste system.

Table 1: Caste Classification of the Mulki Ain (1854)

A.   Pure Caste (*Chokho Jat*) or Water Acceptable Caste (*Pani Chalne Jat*)

Caste Category	Caste Groups Incorporated in the Category
1. Wearers of the sacred thread (*Tagadhari*)	Hill Brahman, Tarai Brahman, Thakuri/Chhetri, Sanyasi (ascetic sect) and some Newars
2. Non-enslavable alcochol-drinkers (*Namasinys Matwali Jat*)	Magar,Gurung, Sunwar, some Newar caste
3. Enslavable alcohol-drinkers (*Masinya Matwali Jat*)	Bhote, Chepang, Kumal,Hayu, Tharu, Gharti

B.   Impure or Water Unacceptable (*Pani Nachalne*) Caste (*Jat*)

4. Inpure but touchable (*Pani Nachalne Chhoi Chhito Halna Naparne*)	Kasai, Kusle, Dhobi, Kulu, Musalman, Mlechha
5. Impure and Untouchable (*Pani Nachalne Choi Chhito Halha Parne*)	Kami, Sarki, Khadara, Damai, Gaine, Badi, Pode, Chame

Source: Höfer 2004)

Note: The castes placed within the group "A" category may not accept water from those placed in group "B" so that the latter are labeled "water unacceptable". Enslavable castes are those caste groups whose members can be punished by enslavement for committing certain types of offences. The caste groups mentioned within each category in the Table do not necessarily follow their rank order.

Table 1 above presents the broader caste categories identified by the Code and the caste groups incorporated within them. This classification lumped together the wearers of sacred thread such as the Brahmans, Chhetris and others into a single caste category. It did not challenge the rank order defined for these groups by the

conventional norm of the Varna system. What it did was simply to narrow down the conventional categories of the caste system and make it easier to add some new categories into it without creating much confusion. Accordingly, it placed together the Brahman, Chhetri, Sanyasi and some Newars into the apex of such a classification system. Below them in the caste rank was introduced a distinct category of the Namasinya Matwali Jat. The provision of the Code placed some of the important ethnic groups of the country within this category. However, many others also came under this category by practice of tradition. Through this process, they were brought under the umbrella of the caste system. The standard followed for such a ranking of their caste order was defined to be their consumption of alcoholic drinks. The remaining castes of the Varna system and some other ethnic categories were ranked below them. The code does not provide a comprehensive list of all caste and ethnic categories available in different parts of the country. However, it established a principle of the classification system under which they all find their place in either of the five broader categories, at least in practice of tradition.

In defense of the caste system, the Code also provided a legal sanction to relative differences of privileges enjoyed by members of different castes. In this regard, it specified their occupation, prescribed rules related to commensality and marital relations, and endorsed differential treatment in the application of law even for committing the same crime (Höfer 2004). The laws of the Code embraced "in letter and spirit the values and ideologies taught by the Hindu *dharmsastric* text" (Sharma 2004: xvii). They legitimized the rulers and their rules as the custodian of the caste system.

After the termination of the Rana rule, the state took a different approach towards its treatment of the caste system. With the introduction of Interim Constitution in 1951, it started to show its

commitment, at least in theory, towards democratic ideals. The rules and regulations that came into being after this event gradually erased the legal support for any type of discriminatory practices based on the caste system.

It does not mean that Nepal was declared a secular state. Nepal's identity as a Hindu Kingdom was kept intact by provisions of all constitutions formed during this period. All the constitutions required the country to be governed by a Hindu monarch. However, they also established the principle that all people of the country, disregarding their caste identity, be treated equally before law. In 1963, a New Civil Code (Naya Mulki Ain) was introduced. This Code also declared the practice of untouchability as an illegal act. Through various provisions of its constitutions and laws, Nepali state has refused since the 1950s to acknowledge its role as a custodian of the caste system.

The disavowal of the states to provide legal protection to caste based organization of society transformed its practice from public to personal domain of tradition. Now, it became a matter of personal choice for anyone to follow or not to follow their caste norms. However, it is required that each individual pay respect for the interest of other individuals while selecting his/her personal path.

Since the1990s, the state opened an environment conducive for the proliferation of a plurality of interest organizations. The freedom of choice allowed for people within the context of such an environment diverted the caste-based politics of the country into a different direction. Now, some interest groups are opened in the form of organizations of ethnic categories and those of the caste groups. The ethnic organizations have expressed their identity in the name of organizations of "Janajatis." These Janajati organizations sometimes urge the members of their respective groups to

refrain from performing the Hindu rituals and avoid celebrating their festivals. Unitedly, these organizations through formulation of their federation have started to demand an adequate share in the system of governance for themselves.

The groups ranked as "impure" or "untouchables" under the conventional norm of caste-based hierarchy have also expressed their unity by identifying themselves into the single "Dalit" category. Like the Janajatis, the Dalits also have their organizations to communicate their collective demands and influence the government. With these developments, issues are being raised to consider ethnicity and/or the Dalit castes as units for the implementation of programs intended to solve some mundane problems like poverty (Kievelitz 1996; Bennett 2003).

The formations of these caste and ethnic based organizations and the demands they pose with the government have two important advantages towards democratization of society. At one level, they may help to break the concentration of power in the hands of the elites of a limited number of caste groups (see Caplan 1970; Caplan 1972 as an example of such a case even in the micro settings) by dispersing it through the expansion of the circle of elite in society. Once caste and ethnic categories are recognized as appropriate social units to implement programs of development in the country, the leaders of all caste and ethnic groups will have a chance to get an easy access to power with a minimum risk of competition. Secondly, caste and ethnic organizations, if equipped with power, may be the best units to implement programs addressed towards the promotion of cultures of their categories.

However, in the case of programs intended to solve problems faced by people at the level of their household units, caste and ethnic categories as a form of development units have to be considered very cautiously. Particularly when the problems are related to

households' access to income and resources, selection of a caste or an ethnic category as a development unit suffers the risk associated with homogenization of the population. A caste or an ethnic group may be graded to a specific rank in terms of the aggregate features of its population. This aggregation by presenting the group in an image of a homogenous category covers up of the differential experiences faced by individual members of that category. Such a context leads to a situation that in some groups of society the elite themselves will have an opportunity to seize the fruits of development simply by reason that they belong to a caste or ethnic group in which a specific program is implemented. In others, even the marginal households will be deprived from having their share of such a benefit by simply the same kind of reason that they happen to be the members of a caste or an ethnic group, which is not selected to run the program.

A Brahman may be a priest, a Chhetri may be a king, a Newar may own a large business enterprise or a Gurung, Magar and Limbu may have an opportunity to receive a handsome salary by virtue of their recruitment in selected jobs in the foreign nations. The facilities and other chances of life enjoyed by these caste and ethnic elite do not represent the conditions of life suffered by general members of respective communities. There are evidences that the human development status of the population is very low in mountain and hill districts that part of the country where the Brahmans and Chhetris are in majority (see District Human Development Index in NPC/UNDP 2004: Annex 1.3, Table 2 and Dahal 2003). The status of such a development is not uniform even among the members within and between the other ethnic categories. Given this situation, it is not a caste or an ethnic group but the economic class of households that appears more appropriate to take into account as the unit for the implementation of development programs addressed to affect the economic life of any group of the population. Even if a

caste or an ethnic category were taken into account, it would be useful to consider it in the context of a locality rather than a generalized category.

Conclusions

Above discussions help us to come to the conclusion that the interactions among people of different cultural traditions for a long period of time in the past have made two interrelated types of effects on caste as a system of values and social organization in Nepalese society. At one level, such an interaction has impressed many non-caste categories of the population to adopt the caste-based values in the patterns of their social behaviour. At another level, such an interaction also contributed to erode the rigidity of those values even among members of caste groups as their behaviors were influenced by the cultures of non-caste people. However, the Nepali state at least from the late 14th to mid 20th century projected itself as a defender of the caste system. By using the state to endorse caste-based discrimination in society, the elite of some of the caste groups that were placed at the upper rank of the caste order also took many political and economic advantages. Since the 1950, the state has relinquished its role as a defender of the caste system. Particularly since the 1990s, the non-caste categories of the ethnic people as well as the caste groups placed at the bottom rank of the caste order have started to raise their voice for an appropriate share of their respective groups in the positions of power in society. These types of developments have a positive effect towards breaking down the concentration of power through allowing the expansion of the circle of elite in society. Yet it is not a caste or an ethnic group, but the economic class of the population that has to be considered as a social unit to tackle the problems related to differences in the distribution of resources and opportunities.

Notes

1. The terms "good caste" in this context make reference to those caste groups which are placed at the upper rank in the hierarchy of the caste system.

2. In the context of the caste system "Untouchable" as a caste group does not represent an indigenous category. Each of the caste groups, which are identified by this label, has its own caste name. "Untouchable" is therefore, a category developed by the scholars, which incorporates a variety of caste groups within a single unified category.

3. It is only after the formation of National Janajati Ayog (National Commission of the Nanajatis) during the decade of 1990s that the ethnic groups of Nepal became able to establish their non-caste identity in the legally recognized terms.

4. The original home of the Thakalis also lies in the Himalayan region. However, the involvement of members of this group into a variety of trade and business activities has pulled them down to interact with people in the major towns of the hills and the Tarai regions. As a result, like the other groups of mongoloids of the hill region they also form one component of the Parbate population.

5. To take few examples, the Magars are the priests of such famous temples as the goddess Manakamana of Gorkha, Alam Devi of Syanja, etc.

6. For example, King Manadev who is supposed to have ruled the Kathmandu Valley at some period of the last half of the 5th century was a Hindu. His grand father is supposed to be the follower of Buddhist religion. Later, Shivadev first, who ruled the Valley during a certain period of time in the second half of the 6th century is also supposed to have abdicated the throne by becoming a Buddhist monk. While the rulers may have their faith in one or another type of religious tradition, the state had not presented itself as a custodian of a particular form of religion until the time of Jayasthiti Malla in the 14th century (see Sharma 1978 (2033), Part VI for details).

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ADAPTATION AND IDENTITY OF YOLMO

Binod Pokharel

An Overview

This article focuses on adaptation and identity of Yolmo people living in the western part of the Sindhupalchok district. The Yolmo are traditionally herders and traders but later they diversified their economy and are now relying on tourism, wage labour and work aboard for income. It is believed that they arrived in the Melamchi area from Tibet from the 18th century onwards. This article basically concerns on how Yolmo change their adaptive strategy for their survival and how did they become successful in keep their identity even though they have a small population. The economic adaptation in mountain region is very difficult due to marginal land and low productivity. Therefore they diversified their economy in multiple sectors to cope with the environment. Bishop states that "diversification involves exploiting one or more zones and managing several economic activities simultaneously" (1998:22). Adaptation is an active process because neither the organism nor its environment remains constant. New problems and new solutions to the old problem arise. Each community has its own survival pattern. Such pattern is partly determined by environmental conditions and partly by socio-cultural system (Hardesty 1977).

Understanding the Concept of Adaptation

Anthropology is the study of physical and behavioural aspects of human beings. Cultural ecology is a sub-branch of anthropology which directs our attention to the problem of human survival within specific environment (Fricke 1993). Adaptation is the central theme in anthropology whereby beneficiaries organism/environment relationship is established (Hardesty 1977). Most of the cultural ecological studies focus on environmental adaptation, adaptive process and survival strategies of particular groups. Adaptation also denotes the coping mechanisms utilized by organisms during their lives (Bennett 1996) in the given environment. Each group or individual has its own strategy for survival. Adaptation can be held in group and individual level. In this regard Bennett (1976) mentioned that a certain type of adaptative strategy is followed by individuals can be adaptive for them. However, adaptation for individuals may or may not be adaptive or maladaptive for group and environment. It is a living mechanism of the human being in a particular environment. Julian Steward who pioneered the study of cultural ecology suggested that the explanation for cultural variation could be found in the adaptation of societies to their particular environment (1955).

In the beginning adaptation was considered as coping mechanism with local environment. The earlier studies had tendencies to stress equilibrium aspect of cultural adaptation to environment (Fricke 1993). Now many anthropologists give emphasis on political and institutional aspect to study the adaptive process of the particular community (see Graner 1997; Metz 1989). In the past, many communities depended on animal husbandry and agriculture and they exploited the local environment for their survival. However, many traditional communities have now been exposed to outside world and monetized economy due to the national and international intervention and development. Adaptability is the capacity to

expand niches or to find new niches. Adaptation and maladaptative behaviour in humans is based on the capacity for self-objectification and normative orientation (Hallowell, 1960 cited by Bennett 1996:31).

Hardesty defines that "cultural behaviour is patterned, shared and traditional and the most distinctive features of the human species" (1977:24). He has categorized cultural behaviour in three groups (See Table 1).

Table-1 Facets of Culture

Facets	Cultural Characteristics
Technology	All equipments made by human beings from digging stick to nuclear power plant
Organization	Kinship, social rank, stratification, voluntary associations and politics among other things
Ideology	Value, norms, knowledge, themes, religious belief, sentiments, etc.

Source: Kaplan and Manners, 1972 cited by Donald Hardesty 1977:24.

Adaptive process is an achievement oriented for human species. Bennett views that adaptive behaviour refers to any form of behaviour that adjusts means to ends, accomplishes objectives, achieves satisfaction, exercise choice, or avoids or refuses action or involvement in order to adapt or adjust (1976).

In the transition of adaptation certain images of humanity are replaced by others. Bennett writes that "the transition is marked by the expansion of ecological impact resulting from the accumulation of substances and objects for social purposes unrelated to the biological survival" (1976:6).

Understanding Adaptation in the context of Nepal

The literature on adaptation in Nepal in relation to subsistence strategy of small population mostly focuses on interrelationship between local ecology and population. In constrast, Stevens (1993) has done a study on subsistence and environmental change in Khumbu of Solukhumbu applying regional approach to understand the adaptive strategy of the Sherpa. Most of the past studies are centered to micro level cultural ecosystem in Nepal. However, Stevens offered both micro and macro level analysis of Sherpa cultural ecology and highlights the political economy of the Sherpa land. He has dealt with environmental change and land use from the perspective of individual and managers. He uses the term manager in a broader sense which includes all people and institutions. Institutions refer to development agencies, and local, regional, national and international government and institutions. He mentioned that with the Chinese occupation over Tibet the trade on Sherpa area decline and they were attracted by tourism. Sherpas have developed multiple adaptive strategies for their subsistence. In this regards Stevens states: "the people of the Himalaya, like those of other highland regions, have developed a number of different adaptive strategy and practices for subsisting in distinctive conditions of mountain ecosystems" (1993:58).

Stevens states that there are several interventions (tourism development, establishment of National Park, etc) in Sherpas' land but they have been successful in preserving their own culture partly due to their relative isolation and distance from low land areas and Hindu culture. He concludes that they accommodated the new inventions in their culture. Unlike Khumbu Sherpas, however, the Yolmo have only recently become involved in tourism sector, and this is to a limited degree. Bishop (1998) mentioned that Yolmo depend on livestock production and out-migration for income to a high degree.

Chhetri (1987) analyses the adaptation process of Thakali in uraban center to understand migration, adaptation and socio-cultural change of the Thakalis of Pokhara. He observes that migrant Thakalis are preserving some aspects of their indigenous culture with some adaptational changes. He notes that Thakalis tend to show an enclosed and isolated character in terms of culture and religion. But they tend to be open and showing a desire to adapt to socio-economic life in the uran center (1987:63). Similarly, he (1990) examines adaptation of Tibetan refugees in Nepal in the context of persistence and change in socio-cultural, economic, religious and demographic aspects.

Naomi Bishop (1998) describes the tradition, adaptation and change among the Yolmo people of Melamchi valley. She also examines the socio-economic transformation of Yolmo from 1971 to 1993. In this regard the author mentions: "between 1971 and 1993 the Melamchi economy continued to shift away from agro-pastoralism and a subsistence economy and toward a dependence on circular migration and cash" (1998:142).

According to Bishop transhumant practice has gradually decreased since mid 1970s and people began seasonal migration to India. She argues that establishment of the National Park in the Yolmo land and restriction on traditional subsistence activities that supported animal husbandry is responsible for the decline in transhumant activities in Melamchigaun.

Fricke (1993) with a demographic approach focuses on the adaptive process of Tamangs of Timling. His concern is to explain how birth, marriage and death determine the adaptive mechanism of the households. He contends that the number of children in a households influence the diversification of the household economy. In this regards Fricke writes:

The household labour force is largely determined by the facts of birth and death. Some household will have many sons, others none at all. Further, the extent of property that the household begins it life with will be partially determined by the size of sibling groups within which land and other capital must be divided (1993:132).

Children are considered as an asset due to labour potentiality when they reach 16 and 17 years. He observes the direct benefit of having more children among the Tamang of Timling. He notes that "a large household is not simply secure in its diversified economy. It is also in a strong position to expand its holdings" (1993:185).

Augusta Molnar (1981) carried out a study on Kham Magar applying ecological model to describe a subsistence economy. She focused on four Kham Magar communities (Thabang, Lubang, Taka and Maikot) of western Nepal. All of these communities mainly depend on herding and agriculture. However, there are differences in economic strategies among them. Culturally, they share common value system and marriage practices. They speak the same dialect known as Kham language (a dialect belonging to Tibeto-Burman language family). However, the available natural resources and harvesting strategies make differences. Originally, all of them were involved in herding. According to the author Taka and Maikot have a greater access to northern pasture land. Lubang and Thabang have no easy access to northern pasture land due to change in pasture landrights and charges. The author has analyzed the main constraints for adaptation of Kham Magar: access to pasture land, trade pattern, seasonal labour availability, cultural attitude towards animal husbandry and education. These constraints have determined the adaptive process of the four communities.

Desjarlais (2003) has carried out a study on Yolmo people. He applied person centered approach to cultural phenomena. The aim of this research to show how the dominant sensory orientations of

the modern west are historically distinct and it tends to focus on culturally pervasive themes and dynamics. The goal of the author is to understand how sensory modalities and dispositions play themselves out in individual lives, how members of a single society live out different sensory biographies. Although Desjarlais' focus is not much on adaptation his work is important in that he analyses the Yolmo perception towards the contemporary society and world.

In the present study I look at Yolmo's adaptation to environmental and socio-cultural condition as well as changes resulting from internal and external forces. My attempt is to understand how they shift from herding and focus more on seasonal labour migration and hotel business. The Yolmo are exposed to the outer world in several ways but how they become successful to preserve their own identity is also an issue of concern.

Helambu: Home of the Yolmo People

Helambu is the traditional homeland of the Yolmo people. The upper reaches of the Melamchi Valley is occupied by Yolmo people. The study area lies within the Buffer Zone of Langtang National Park. In addition, the *Tupu* Cave is close to Sermathang where the famous Guru Rimpoche meditated. Yolmo are Buddhist and economically they practice a combination of mixed agriculture comprising of livestock herding and business ventures such as hotels, restaurants and trading as far a field as India. Now they are gradually shifting from their traditional occupation into national and international wage labour. The total population of Yolmo in Melamchi Valley is 4577(CBS 2002). The main settlements are Melamchi Ghyang, Tarke Ghyang, Nakote, Kangyul, Sermathang, Norbugoun, Timbu and Kutumsang. Among them Melamchi Ghyang, Tarke Ghyang and Sermathang are densely populated areas. These areas make a common name called Helambu. A few Yolmo houses are found in the Yangri and Larke valley to the

north-east of Sermathang. There are also Yolmo people residing other parts of the country such as Gorkha district (Bishop 1998:14).

The present study is confined in Sermathang which lies in the upper reach of the Kiul Village Development Committee (VDC) of Sindhupalchok district. It is a part of Melamchi valley. It takes one day's walk from Melamchipul Bazar to reach Sermathang. The study village is located in moderately sloped terrain. It is situated at an elevation of about 2700 meter high from the sea level. There are sixty Yolmo households with a total population 350 populations. Each entrance of Sermathang has prayer flags and *mane* (stupas containing prayer wheels). Bishop records a significant population growth in such a settlement after the1920s. The population growth is likely related to the change in livelihood systems from predominantly herders to mixed agriculture after the introduction of wheat, barley and potatoes. By the 1970s the last areas of cultivation were developed in most of the area (Bishop 1998:20). Villages such as Melamchi Ghyang, Sermathang, etc., were probably originally summer residences for herds and only later developed into permanent settlements.

The Yolmo are the numerically largest ethnic group of people in the upper part of the Melamchi valley. The middle part of the valley has predominantly Tamang population. The lower part of the valley is populated by "high castes" and mixed group of people. The Yolmo have economic relation with caste groups of low land and they have both economic and marriage ties with Tamang people. They can be clearly distinguished from their neighbouring non-Yolmo such as Tamang, Magar and caste groups in terms of language, social structure and shared history. Desjarlais (2003: 8) notes that Tamang families are poorer than Yolmo and they often serve as labourers for Yolmo. However, there are some sorts of

commonalities between Tamang and Yolmo due to their same religious affiliation.

There is more attraction of local people towards the Yolmo culture. The Tamangs living in the Yolmo region, in fact, claim that they themselves are Yolmo. The Tamang and Magars who live close to Yolmo settlements have adapted many cultural traits of Yolmo people. Many of them have forgotten their own language and speak the Yolmo language. Some of them have adapted Yolmo surnames. According to them the area between Indrawati and Melamchi rivers is called Helambu region and the people who live in this area are generally known as Yolmo. The reason for adaptation of Yolmo culture by other groups is economic since most of the tourist coming in Yolmo region would like to spend in the hotel run by Yolmo. Like Sherpa of the Yolmo people are renowned for strength, courage, endurance and deep faith on Buddhism and also attract other local group to adapt the Yolmo culture.

Historical Background: People in Helambu

The term Yolmo is derived from the Tibetan language and means 'place screened by snow mountain or glaciers' (Bishop 1998:12). According to earlier anthropological studies, it is likely that the Yolmo were settled here by 18th century and originated from Kyirung region of Tibet, approximately a 3-4 days' trek from Helambu (Clark 1980; Bishop 1998:13-17). A local informant told me that a group of Tamang had invited the Yolmo to the Melamchi valley. According to the oral history of Yolmo, when the Tamang fled from Tibet and settled down in the Helambu region they did not have any Lama (ritual specialist). When a Tamang died, there was no Lama in the Tamang Communities for ritual purification. Without a Lama, the dead could not be buried properly according to Buddhist and Tibetan religious traditions. So, some of the Tamang visited Tibet and requested Yolmo Lama to settle down in

Helambu. This oral history contradicts the historical evidence since genealogical data suggests that the arrival of Yolmo Sherpa was not more than seven generation ago and the Tamang's arrival in valley are hundreds of years ago (see figure-1).
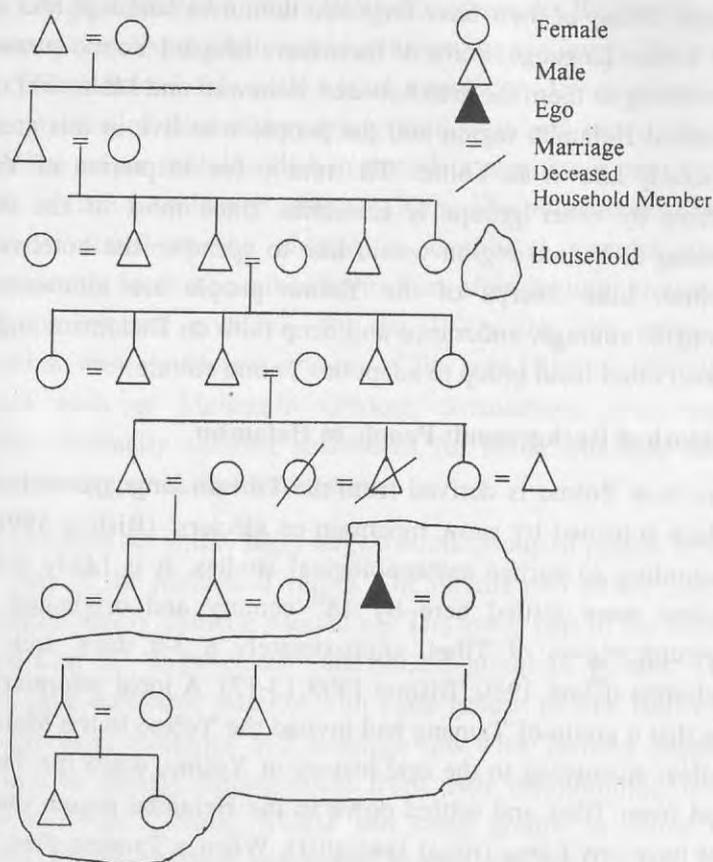
Figure 1 : Ganealogical Chart - Yolmo-Mingar Lama

Figure 1-1 shows that Yolmo lives in joint families and often three generaions can be found living under the same roof. As indicated in fugure 1-1 decent is through the male but practical cirmumbstances such as location, socio-economic status and personal reasons are taken into account to determine which son will be responsihble for taking care of his parents in old age.

The story illustrates rather the ritual dependence of the Tamang on the Yolmo people, the later having ties with religious institutions in Tibet. The settlement pattern of Yolmo indicates that all Yolmo did not come at the same historical epoch. They come and settled down from different places of Tibet in different time. Some of them did not come directly to Helambu. In this regards one of my informants said that his forefather first settled in Langtang village of Rasuwa district and later migrated into Helambu. Similarly, Yolmo language is similar to Tibetan language than eastern Sherpa from Solukhumbu, "which may indicate that Yolmo was settled more recently" (Bishop 1998: 15). Yolmo is the language of daily communication for Yolmo people.

Natural Resources and Utilization

Yolmo region is rich in natural resources. Sermathang comprises forest, grass land, shrub land, and agricultural land. According to LNP (Langtang National Park, 2001) less than two percent of the total land in Helambu region is under agriculture. The forest area is large occupying approximately 30 percent of the total land. A large proportion of the land area lies under the rocky and waste lands. There are two main river systems, i.e., Melamchi and Indrawati. The complex topography and geology of the park area are reflected in the wide spectrum of bio-diversity. The Yolmo region includes a wide variety of vegetation including endemic and localized species such as rhododendron, oak and coniferous forest. The recorded mammalian fauna of the park is 46 species including snow leopard, clouded leopard, musk deer, red panda and Assamese monkeys.

Yolmo people had their own pasture land and forest land. The right of occupancy and use of the land for individuals and villages were determined by *ghyang* (monastery) and chief Lama of *ghyang*. The *guthi* land (trust land) of the Yolmo region was designated to *ghyang*. Bishop (1998: 54) notes that permission for land utilisation

was generally granted, and after a small payment to the *ghyang*, the land was theirs. In 1980 land cadastral survey was held in Melamchi Valley. The survey registered the village land with the government in the villagers own name (Bishop 1998:55). Still there are large areas under *guthi* land. According to local tradition people who live on *guthi* land are responsible for managing the *ghyang*. Some of the *ghyangs* have paddy fields in low land of the Melamchi valley which are cultivated by non-Yolmo people on fixed rent basis.

After the establishment of National Park (1976) these resources came under the jurisdiction of the government. People within the park area are allowed to collect fuel wood from dead trees for cooking and heating purposes. However, the demand of firewood has increased due to arrival of tourist and establishment of hotels. To cope with the increasing firewood demand the people have planted trees on the edge of the agricultural land and LNP introduced solar energy to reduce the rate of firewood consumption. Timber is used basically to repair/construct house, hotel, school, and monastery. One should pay royalty for timber to the national park. If they need more timber they borrow or buy from the *guthi* jungle holders. Due to this intervention the Yolmo cultivated several habits in the field of forest consumption. Now people installed improve stove which consumes little firewood than traditional one. Some of the hotel owners have recently introduced LP gas and kerosene stove in the study areas. There are the records of change in forest consumption pattern in other parts of the country due to intervention of National Parks. In this regards Stevens (1993) mentioned that the Sherpa experienced the greatest change in their firewood collection due to Sagarmatha National Park. The traditional institution '*nawa*' roles replaced by the park and several restrictions were made for grazing and collecting firewood. However there was no concept of *nawa* in Yolmo region.

Traditionally forests were under the jurisdiction of *guthi*. People used to harvest the forest resources by paying the tax to *guthi*. Some of the houses were constructed within the *guthi* land and they also pay the taxes to *guthi* in annual basis.

A Forest User Group is formed in Sermathang comprising four wards of Kiul VDC. Forest user group represents each household of the village, hamlet or settlement. The forest user groups are mainly concerned on conservation of natural resources, community development and utilization of forest products. Theoretically, community forestry scheme in the Buffer Zone is explicitly targeting the people of buffer zone. The park has invested in afforestation on private and public land with the substantial local support. People can make own decision on conservation, management and utilization of the forest products. However, there is the requirement of approval from the chief warden of the National Park for each decision made by the Forest User Group. As like the Sherpa of Khumbu the Yolmo also accommodate the Forest User Group concept within their culture.

Cultural Landscape

The cultural landscape of Helambu region is rich in terms of religious structure and monuments. Most large Yolmo Sherpa village can be considered temple villages (Bishop 1998) since they contain *ghyangs* and have a religious routine and community obligation towards these institutions. Many of the larger *gomba* complexes, such as the one at Melamchi ghyang are artistic and architectural wonders with frescos, *thankas* and ancient books of historical value. The maintenance and restoration of these structures have been carried out by the community through the contribution of labour and cash by locals.

Ghyang

Ghyang is socio-religious institution of Yolmo community. However, other group can also go *ghyang* for prayer and can contribute. Gomba and *ghyang* are synonymously used in the study area. There are images of gods and religious paintings in the *ghyangs* as well as religious texts written in Tibetan script. In all Yolmo villages there is a roadside stone wall called a *mane* is built as memorials to dead persons. Each household is linked to *gomba*. Most of the rituals including funeral rites and festivals are organized in Ghang. Most of the *ghang* has *guthi* land and forest land. The income coming from the guthi land is used for daily worship of *ghang* and to cover the cost of chief Lama. The income of the *guthi* land does hardly cover the actual expenses of the *ghang* therefore the households living near the *ghang* raise the funds on rotational basis. In the past they used to provide some portion of their land and animal products (crops and ghee) to make a *ghang* functional. Bishop mentions that the contribution for *ghang* was based on the sizes of landholding (1998). Now the situation has changed. Many Yolmo are away from the village. They earn cash through business and wage. Each member of *ghang* sends money to *ghang* on his or her turn. As informed by chief Lama of Kesari *ghyang*, Sermathang a member sends at least 15,000 to 20,000 thousand rupees in his turn. Respective households living in Sermathang cover all expenses and needs of that *ghang*.

Belief System

They have two major belief systems. In this regards Sparks and Pokharel note:

> The Yolmo Sherpa appear to have two parallel belief systems that are at times complementary and at times competitive. This is best illustrated by the roles of two ritual specialists: the Lama and the Bombo. The former resides in monasteries

and represents the Tibetan monastic Buddhist tradition-avoidance of violence, dependence on the lay population for food and support and participation in large communal and mortuary rituals. The latter are local practitioners of the spirit world and how that affects the day to day living of the people (2003: 45).

Lama does not plough field. According to Buddhism one should not give torture to any living things. Non-Lamas can plough the field. Lama as a religious teacher does not till the field and perform other heavy physical work. But Bombos can perform such tasks. According to Yolmo tradition the main responsibility of the Lama is to conduct cremation and funeral rites (Desjarlais 2003: 11).

Lhosar is the biggest festivals for Yolmo and celebrated as the New Year festival. *Nara* is a long festival that falls in the time of *Hindu Dasain*. The other major festivals of the Yolmo region are *Dhukpa, Chhuju, Hyulka Chheju, Torpe*. The Yolmo never plough and plant seeds during days proceeding and following the full moon and new moon. On these days there are religious rites held in the *gomba*.

They celebrate *ubhauli* and *udhauli puja*, which involves the worship of the earth deity responsible for providing food. *Ubhauli* is celebrated before monsoon or beginning of agriculture cycle. The people pray for sufficient rainfall and a good harvest. In the past this festivals was considered as making the movement from low altitudes to higher summer pasture. *Udhauli* symbolizes the beginning of winter when the herds gradually come down to lower altitudes and when harvesting is almost complete. In this ceremony they thank to earth deity for a good harvest and wish for a good harvest next year.

Housing

The cultural landscape as reflected in house types and architecture of the building are almost similar in most village settlements in

Sermathang. Timber, mud and stone are the main construction materials for the construction of Yolmo houses. They used slate for the roofing of the house. Now newly constructed houses are roofed by Corrugated Galvanized Iron sheet. The traditional roofing is costly which requires a tremendous investment in wood and labour, especially since "it must be replaced every five years" (Bishop 1998:49). Restriction of free collection of timber from forest and durability of sheet tin attract them to replace the traditional roofing style. The houses are two storied. Cowshed is placed within the compound of the main house. The compound wall of the house is fenced with dry stone wall. A hotel owner Yolmo would generally construct two houses one for hotel use and the other for personal uses. In some cases rooms are added to the existing house, joining it rectangularity. Houses are not simply physical structures. Houses express symbolically, through architectural design, decoration and lay out, their purposes and the pertinent characteristics of their habitants (Howell 2003). The houses of Yolmo are peculiar one. The doors and windows are carved beautifully. The kitchen is well decorated and spacious. Bishop nicely described the kitchen arrangement of Yolmo Sherpa. She says:

> People sit around the fire, for sociability and warmth, always eating something. Those of higher status sit next to the host, in order of descending status, so newcomers arrive, there is a shuffling of location as people adjust The female householder sits on the left side of the fire, she is surrounded by working equipment and food stores and can serve the entire house from her vantage point(1998:50).

The settlement and village pathways are stones paved and are quite orderly and clean. Courtyard is also paved with stone and is regularly swept. The Yolmo puts a prayer flag in the courtyard of the house. This flag clearly distinguishes the Yolmo houses from others.

Social Organization

Yolmo society is patrilineal society and organized into clans. As reported by the informants, there are seven clan groups of Yolmo in the Helambu region such as Dong Biruchan, Jhyapa, Syangba, Chujhyang, Waiba, Salma and Nirgma. Cross-cousin marriages are the ideal for producing and cementing alliances between clans (Sparkes and Pokharel 2004). However, most of them write Lama as a surname instead of their clan name. However, only Syangba is Lama by lineage. Bishop notes that the Yolmo called themselves "Yolmo people" or Sherpa from Yolmo. Since government personnel refer as Lama People, they often add this term as a surname in citizenship papers and official documents (1998:13). Yolmo used to call themselves as Sherpa or Helambu Sherpa in the late 1960s (Desjarlais 2003:12). Previously, they call themselves Lama People to distinguish themselves ethnically from Tamang clans (Ibid: 12). In the past one could be Lama if he was able to read holy text. In this regards Sparks and Pokharel (2003) comment that this adaptation or change is probably due to the imposition of the Nepal ethno-caste classification where one's last name indicates one's place in the hierarchy. In addition, the Lamas had high status within Yolmo society as learned people. In this community one can be Lama (non-Buddhist person also) if he can read Tibetan and Buddhist texts. Desjarlais notes that after 1990s they reconstruct the collective identities and now they identify themselves as Yolmo people (2003:12).

The Yolmo of the study area can be described as having consanguineous kinship rather than affinal kinship that is relations by blood dominate rather than through marriage or in-marriage into clans (Sparkes and Pokharel 2004). They mostly employ the descriptive kinship terminology. They use different kinship terms for different relative by kinship terminology. However, few terminologies are explanatory in nature such as they use *mheme* for

father's father and mother's father and *mum* for father's mother and mother's mother. They use the same terminology for elder brothers and wife's elder brothers (*jyo-jyo*). Most of them live in joint family (see genealogical figure-1).

Both religious and social power is enjoyed by the chief Lama of the *gomba*. After 1970s several local elections were held in the Yolmo region but there is no evidence of confrontation between Lama and chairperson of the VDCs. The community acknowledges the power, roles and responsibilities of Lama.

The Yolmo are basically egalitarian. There is no explicit social hierarchy and the concept of purity and pollution, which marks caste distinctions, is lacking. Desjarlais (2003) notes about the social hierarchies among the Yolmo people. He writes:

> Lamas, who usually inherit that role patrilineally, call for respectful deference more than lay person do; wealthy families are to pay respect to the elderly, and husbands have higher status than wives.

Marriage Practices

Bishop reports that there was considerable intermarriage between the Yolmo clans and indigenous Tamang (1998:98). Both groups are patrilineal and patrilocal and organized into clans. The most common form of marriage is capture marriage where the bride is captured by friends of the groom and forced to marry the groom at his residence. Most marriages are arranged or at least have the consent of elders and often the knowledge of the bride. However, there are many examples of force and coercion. Bishop reports three stages (1998: 98-99):

1. Seeking permission of the bride's parents-*nama langdwang*- and presents are given and the wedding planned.

2. The capture in the early morning (with feigned planned) and meal and ceremony at the house of the groom.

3. Presentation of the bribe price (*toljung*) with both families present- a formal recognition of the marriage.

However, the incidence of capture marriage and cross cousin marriage has been decreased in the study area. Most of the young generations of Yolmo live outside of the village for schooling, wage labour, business and foreign labour. As reported most of the marriage is now held in their work place and later they come into village for social acceptance and ritualistic formality.

Economy of Yolmo

Traditionally Yolmo are herders and traders. They almost gave up the herding business and continue the trade in other forms. They used to barter animal products and potato with cereal crops with low land people. Now the economy of the Yolmo is highly diversified. They are found engaged in multiple occupations so that all sons no longer reside in the village since they go to business in Kathmandu or migrate for wage labour. All brothers contribute for main house and become independent from parental property. For example an informant of Sermathang has two sons one lives in the USA with his wife. The grandson and grand daughter of respondent are studying in Kathmandu. The other son and one daughter of the respondent have not yet married and run the hotel in the village. The brothers of the respondent do not live in the village. One of them lives in Baudhha, Kathmandu and another in India. Having a number of children helps to expand the economy of the households in mountain or high altitude region. The finding of Fricke (1993) seems to agree with the case of Yolmo. If some one has more siblings they can extend their economy within the village or beyond the village. According to the Fricke those who have more children

they can exchange their labour with their relative and domestic economy can boost up. He argued that the population growth at family level created the economic opportunity for the family is question.

One of the major source of cash earning is business in Yolmo region i.e. tourism and hotel. The family members who stay at main house handle hotel, other business and agriculture. The other family members either are in national and international labour or carpet weaving in Kathmandu. Some of them have settled permanently in Kathmandu and are involved in trading and carpet weaving. They used to be involved in a trading in Tibet the past with limited scope. In this regards Bishop states that Sherpas elsewhere are well known as traders between Tibet and Nepal and India, but such activity has been limited in Yolmo. However, they have a long history of circular migration in the eastern states of India (Bishop 1998: 71). This process is still continued in the Yolmo region.

Agriculture

The Yolmos practice agriculture as a means of livelihood. The main crops of potato, maize, barely, wheat and bean are intercropped on dry land. The agriculture lands are fenced with stone walls to protect the crops from animals. Barley and potatoes are the oldest crops for Yolmo in Sermathang. Later they introduced wheat and maize. After the introduction of the tourism they started to give importance to vegetable crops due to cash value at local level. Now they give growing priority to potato, turnip, radish, bean and other green vegetable because these things are in high demand in local hotels and low land people also visit Yolmo village to buy these things.

Some of them have paddy field along the banks of Melamchi and Indrawati rivers. They have rented these to Bahuns, Chhetries,

Blacksmiths and Sanyasis. Yolmo generally are not involved in paddy production because of their traditional involvement in trading and animal husbandry. Another reason is that paddy fields are located in the lowlands which are very hot and far from Yolmo villages. The low land people would like to sell their paddy fields to Yolmos because after selling the land they can continue to cultivate it as tenant. A Yolmo respondent stated that he does not visit his paddy field. The tenant sends his portion of paddy at home after harvesting the paddy.

Maize, barley and wheat are used for domestic consumption and potato is produced for both own consumption and market. However, agriculture is only a source of supplementary food because the production from land does not support the food demand of Yolmo.

They dig the land with a hoe instead of a plough. Very few of them keep oxen for ploughing. They use both family and hired laour in agriculture. There is no gender based activities in agriculture in Yolmo community. Both male and female are involved in all types of agricultural works. In Sermathang, most of the adult population migrated to Kathmandu, India and abroad for wage labour and business. The system of labour exchange has gradually decreased due to the absence of adult population in the village. The unmarried children with their parents and grand parents run their business, hotel and agriculture. Therefore the demand for agriculture labour is fulfilled by Tamang. The Tamang acquire labour opportunities in the Yolmo households at the planting and harvesting of Potato and maize. A Tamang worker told me he would prefer to work at Yolmo houses than for caste groups because he gets better food and liquor in Yolmo households.

Potato seed trade

The local economy of Yolmo was somewhat commercialized from the beginning. Although they produce food largely for their own consumption and they sell part of the surplus. Still they practice potato-grain barter with low land people. The potato fromYolmo region is in high demanded in lowlands for planting there. It is harvested in the mouth of July-August at a time when there is a scarcity of potato in the lowlands. The lowland people usually exchange potato with their crops, mostly with wheat. The exchange value of the potato with crops is the same in the beginning of harvest. In late August and early September the price of potato increases and it has double value of wheat. One should pay 2 *pathi* wheat (Approximately 7 kilos) to get one *pathi* (approximately 3.5 kilos) potato. A large quantity of potatoes is also produced in the lowlands during the months of January to March. However, potato grown in the lowlands could not be used as seed; therefore they depend on Yolmo production. As stated by the informants, prior to 1990 the Yolmo of Sermathang visited to lowlands to exchange potato. But now the lowland people come up to the Yolmo villages with loads of wheat to exchange with the potato. This is because the Yolmo of Sermathang used to depend on potato but later they diversified their economy and they earn money from trade and foreign jobs. Thus, it appears to be a suppliers market and buyers come to suppliers rather than the reverse situation of dependency on buyers to exchange potatoes for wheat as was the case prior to 1990.

Decline of herding

Bishop (1998) mentioned that there were several *gode* or herding huts in Yolmo region in the early 1970s. However, at the time of my field study there were only seven families throughout the whole Yolmo region living on herding. No one was involved in the

traditional *zomo* herding in Sermathang. An informant (an old age Yolmo) reported that there are few households in Kangyul, Tarke Ghyang and Melamchi Ghyang involving in *zomo* herding. There are many reasons for the reduction of *zomo* herding as an occupation. One of the main reasons was restrictions on herding at in the Langtang National Park in 1976 and the shift to livestock production. The second factor was the attraction of younger generation for job aboard and trade. The last one included the migration of village population to Kathmandu for work in carpet weaving.

Similarly, the traditional subsistence pattern has threatened by the park as well as by the changing priorities of the residents themselves (Bishop 1998: 163). The population of the herders has decreased due to intervention of National Park in Nepal. The observation made by Stevens (1996) in Solukhumbu also suggests that an intervention in the form of designating that a National Park discourage families from investing on livestock herds. He further adds: "A change in the policies of trekking companies and expeditions that favored the use of porters rather than pack stock would certainly also dramatically effect regional stock numbers and fodder requirement" (1996). Now job at a hotel at confer considerable status to Yolmo rather than *zomo* herding. Zomo herding becomes least preferable for them. Some of the households keep water buffaloes, cows, goats and sheep in small number. All of them are stall fed.

Tourism, Hotel and Lodge Business

Hotel and lodge business in Yolmo region is recent a phenomenon started in 1980. The growth of hotel and tourism in the last twenty four years has expanded the Yolmo niche further. The expansion of the hotel and tourism has been the result of the opening of new tourist destination for Halambu by Government. This concept was

brought by the Langtang National Park. The park provided training to Yolmo in hotel management for the tourist promotion in the region. Sermathang is on the main trekking route to and from Langtang National Park. According to the LNP records more than 5,000 tourist visit each season. There are twenty-five hotels and lodges in Sermathang handled by Yolmo. Langtang Ecotourism Project (1996-1999) has launched and implemented a community based tourism activity with the co-operation of Langtang National Park (LNP 2001). LNP provided trainings for cooking and lodge management. The park also introduced solar system. Hotels and lodges are good sources of income of the Yolmo but this business is only seasonal. Hotels are mainly managed by the female members, elderly people and unmarried siblings. The facilities in Yolmo hotels are reasonably well. Tourism helps them to establish good relation with western people especially with American and European. This relation often makes it possible to enter into marriage ties between Yolmo and western people. This network helps them to expand their seasonal migration to western countries, too. The Yolmo involvement in trekking (as tourist guide and porter) is low in comparison to the Sherpas in other parts of the country. However, the number of Yolmo involved in the hotel and lodge business is encouraging.

Though tourist number is increasing, competition among the hotels is increased. Many hotels are offering free tea or reduced lodging (or even free lodge) rate in turn they may charging higher rate in food items. Such competition is high in off-season. In the time of peak season of trekking they have mutual competition among them. They do not want to accommodate whatever numbers of tourists come to their hotels. They keep reasonable number of tourist so that they can extend service properly. The exclusionary competition among the hotel owners was not noticed during the field visit.

Seasonal Labour Migration

The seasonal migration is a major survival mechanism of Yolmo. Seasonal and circular migration is an old-age tradition for Yolmo. It started in Yolmo region in the early 1950s. "Earlier migration was in permanent nature. However, in the 1970s and 1980s circular migration over short- and long-term cycles become increasingly common" (Bishop 1998:74). The past studies (Clark 1980; Bishop 1998) show that number of Yolmo used to migrate in North Hill States (Nagaland, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh) of India seasonally. Now the destination of migration is diverse and now they are working in western countries and northen state of India (Himanchal Pradesh, Kasmir, etc) also. As stated by informants, they work in different field such as road construction, carpentry and as porters. As stated by Bishop the female migrants with young children worked providing food, tea, home-distilled liquor, and ran tea shops or hotels where workers sleep, socialize, and gamble(Bishop 1998:71). During my field visit I met three seasonal migrants and they confided that they prefer to go India instead of working in their own village. They argued that the daily wages in India was higher. Similarly, the job in India was available throughout the year which is not the case at house. There is no fixed time for departure for seasonal migration but generally they move from the month of March and come back to village before Lhosar. In some cases the period of migration is longer and they come back after two years. Sometimes the duration of migration is determined by the type of family. If the migrant is from joint family he migrates with spouse including their unmarried children. In such a case the duration of migration is longer than single person migration.

Migration an abroad is recent phenomena in Yolmo region. Migration to western countries started along with the tourism development in Yolmo region. The duration of migration to western

countries is longer than migration to India. There are seven cases of out migration to western countries in Sermathang and some of these are due to marriages.

Conclusion

The above discussion shows that there have been a number of changes in Yolmo region. In order to adapt in this mountain environment they profess multiple economic activities simultaneously. The agricultural intensification in the Yolmo land is very low. Herding is limited due to intervention of National Park and declining interest of younger generation. Similarly the population growth also compelled the Yolmo to seek job outside from the *zomo* herding. They efficiently exploit multiple areas (local, regional and international) for their survival. They have found out new niches and expanded old one in course of their adaptation. The cultural adaptation of Yolmo is not just confined in immediate local environment but is diversified into multiple levels and areas. Many new things come in place in Yolmo region such as tourism, hotel, Forest User Groups, etc. The technological aspects of Yolmo have changed tremendously. For example they have almost given up zomo herding and have entered into new area such as hotel business. However, the effect of technological change on organizational and ideological behaviour is very limited. They also accommodate the Buffer Zone idea into their culture. Now they form Forest User Groups to manage the local forest. They are fully aware of environmental conservation, management and utilization. They realize that if the forest of Yolmo region degrades the numbers of tourist visitors could decline because many of them come in this region to observe the bio-diversity of the National Park. Due to tourism they became successful in expanding their circular migration up to Europe and America which was mostly confined to North-eastern states of India before 1980s. There is a

drastic change in transhumant herding. Some changes are also to be noticed in the field of agriculture and animal husbandry. They started to keep few numbers of water buffaloes and cows in a stall fed manner instead of *zomo*. They started to give little emphasis to agriculture and put more focus on wage labour and business. Likewise, some noticeable changes have taken place in the social institution of Yolmo community. For example, they started cross cultural marriage due to modern education and influences of Hindu culture. There are some instances of cross-cultural marriage between Yolmo and Europeans/ Americans. Similarly, because of contact with other cultures in Nepal and exposure to new ideas and materials, many Yolmos no longer wear their traditional dress.

Although several changes have occurred in the Yolmo region many of the traditional beliefs and cultural values remain unchanged. They have maintained cultural and social value system while adapting to the new economic strategies. The role of Lama for Yolmo is still significant and functional. The Yolmo, wherever they live, they contribute for *ghang* in their turn.

There are several *ghyang* (monasteries) and *mane* throughout the region. The Yolmo maintain all of the *ghyangs* themselves. Besides, the regular worshipping and prayers, Tibetan Buddhist and Yolmo language are also taught at the *ghyang*. Training in *thanka* painting and crafts is organized for Yolmo youth at the *ghyang*. They have good source of cash income from hotel and wage labour but still they have continued their agricultural economy. They are continuing the rituals relating to transhumance although they have almost given-up *zomo* herding.

Note

1. This article is based on a field study undertaken during July/ August 2003 in Melamchi valley with the support of Melamchi Water Supply Project. In course of my fieldwork, I collected data for Yolmo

adaptation and some of the data I have borrowed from our joint report (Ethnic Minority Development Plan) produced by Stephen Sparkes and myself for Melamchi Water Supply Project. However, I am fully responsible for ideas and views presented in this article.

2. gode =   refers both to the temporary shelter constructed from bamboo mat over a framework of poles in which herding families live and to living as a herder.

3. Angsa =   portion of property inheritated from parents.

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SOCIAL STRUCTURE AND INTER-GROUP RELATIONS: A CASE STUDY OF A VILLAGE IN NEPAL TARAI

Surendra Mishra

Background of the Study

Caste is defined variously. Hereditary membership, traditional occupation, commensality rules and purity are some of the major features of the caste system (Berreman 1972). It is culturally constructed and is the product of Hinduism. Castes are closed social groups: one may only marry within one' caste and the children of the marriage belong to the caste of their parents. Castes are hierarchically ranked on a purity pollution scale according to their traditional occupations. Castes are groups with a well developed life of their own, the membership where of, unlike that of voluntary associations and of classes, is determined not by selection but by birth. The status of a person depends not on his wealth but on the traditional importance of the caste in which he has the luck of being born (Ghurye 1969). According to Berreman (1972) castes are ranked endogamous division of society in which membership is hereditary and permanent (quoted by Sharma 2004: 129).

Anthropologically speaking, social structure is any enduring pattern or interrelationship of social elements/entities. In other words, it is more or less enduring pattern of social arrangements within a particular society, groups or social organization. In general, social structure is an arrangement of persons in institutionally controlled or defined relationships (Brown 1952).

Hierarchy is a ladder of command in which the lower rungs are encompassed in the higher ones in regular succession. Hierarchy in the caste system is the opposition of the pure and the impure: superiority and superior purity are identical. It is in this sense that, ideologically, distinction of purity is the foundation of status. (Dumont 1980). Nepal is a stratified society consisting of its hierarchically arranged caste-rankings. Caste has been recognized as unique socio-cultural phenomena. Nepalese caste rules normally prescribe isogamies for its members (Sharma 2004).

Nepal is a homeland for a number of ethnic/caste groups with different languages, religions and cultural traditions. There are over 100 distinct ethnic/caste groups who have been living side by side over the last 1500 years, maintaining separate yet related cultural traditions collectively known as "Nepali culture" today. This Nepali culture, in essence, is the combination of five distinct groups of people viz; the Hindu groups with caste origins, the Newars, the ethnic/tribal groups, the Muslims and others (Sikh, Bengali, Marwari and Christians). The Hindu caste groups comprise both the Hill and the Tarai groups. The social structure of the Hill caste Hindus is simple, in comparison to that of the Tarai. In the Tarai caste Hindus, there are more than 40 distinct cultural groups sharing mostly a common language and present a more complicated social structure than the hill caste Hindus (see Dahal 1995:150; Gunaratne 2002).

In the Nepali context, caste has become an institution rooted in the Hinduized way of life promoted by the state by nurturing customized laws (Hofer 2004). The religion and rituals prohibit the inclusion of those considered impure, lowly and untouchable into the social sphere. Caste, therefore, has in itself become an

exclusionary social institution forcing those considered lower caste or outcaste people to live a life on the margins and struggle to survive on the crumbs. Ultimately, caste system has become a process of social exclusion through which participation is restricted and claims to social opportunity denied (Kumar 1995:48).

It is evident that Nepali society is hierarchical and caste based where inter-groups harmony and cooperation also remains very strong. No doubt, conflict, clash of interest and competition are the essence of stratified society (See Caplan 1970). Many studies either by foreign scholars or native social scientists have revealed that there is extreme inequality between high caste and non caste ethnic groups; conflict between high caste Bahuns and untouchable caste. In spite of all these facts the bitter reality is that of multiple caste groups residing in a limited area for centuries past without any vital communal riot. It is a matter of interest to sociologist and anthropologists to look into the structure of the Nepali society and analyze the hierarchical caste system from functional point of view.

The Study Area and Research Method

This paper makes an attempt to demonstrate how the different caste groups in a rural village setting are interrelated with each other. More specifically, this paper attempts to deal with the political, social, economic, ritual and religious relationship between and among different caste groups in the Terai region.

The field work for this paper was carried out in 2003 in Mahamadpur Village Development Committee (VDC) Rautahat district. This village is heterogeneous in terms of caste composition. More than 25 caste groups were found residing in the study area. The numerically large caste group was Yadav and Bhedihar. A couple of sociological/anthropological techniques were used to generate data for this study. The total population of the study area

was 6553, consisting 3367 male (51.38%) and 3186 (48.61%) females.

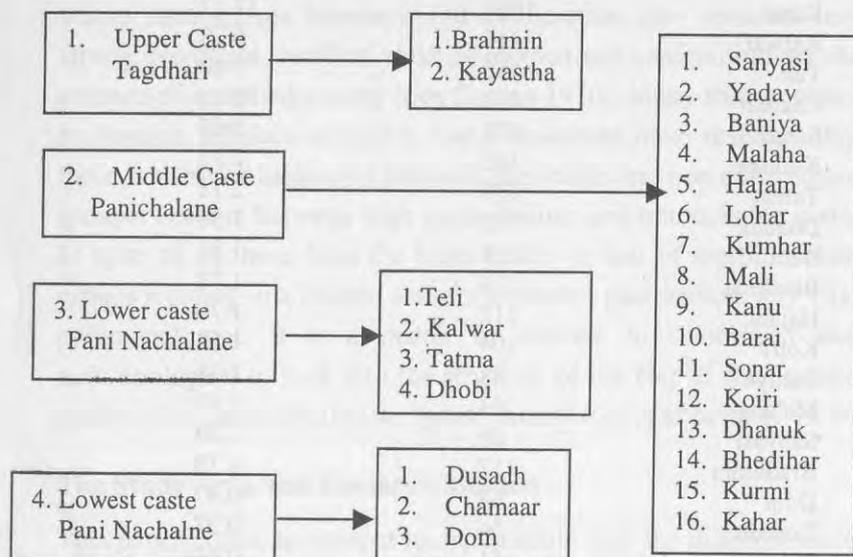**Table No.1 :Population in Mahamadpur VDC by caste Groups, 2001**

Caste Groups	Total Population	Percentage of the Total Population
Yadav	2197	33.52
Kanu	1060	17.17
Kalwar	410	6.25
Teli	485	7.40
Chamar	401	6.11
Sonar	371	5.66
Kumhar	192	2.92
Tatma	139	2.12
Dhanuk	122	1.86
Barai	119	1.81
Bhedihar	114	1.73
Hajam	112	1.70
Koiri	104	1.58
Baniya	88	1.34
Malaha	94	1.43
Sanyasi	85	1.29
Bradhmin	117	1.78
Dom	64	0.97
Dusadh	64	0.97
Lohar	61	0.93
Dhobi	57	0.86
Mali	58	0.88
Kahar	13	0.19
Kurmi	10	0.15
Kayastha	16	0.24
Total	**6553**	**100.00**

Soucre: CBS. 2001

As stated above, there are many caste groups living in the study area (see table 1-1 for details) Yadav comprises of 33.1%, the absolute majority of the population of the study area. The percentage of other caste groups consists of 16% of Kanu, 7.2% of

Teli, 6.1% of Kalwar, 6.0% of Chamar, 5.5% of Sonar, 2.8% of Kumhar, 2.1 of Tatma, 1.9% Dhanuk, 1.8% of Barai, 1.7% of Bhedihar, 1.7% of Hajam and 1.6% of Koiri.

Fig 1: Hierarchy of various caste Groups in the Study Area: A General Model

1. Upper Caste Tagdhari	→	1.Brahmin 2. Kayastha	

1. Sanyasi
2. Yadav
3. Baniya
4. Malaha
5. Hajam
6. Lohar
7. Kumhar
8. Mali
9. Kanu
10. Barai
11. Sonar
12. Koiri
13. Dhanuk
14. Bhedihar
15. Kurmi
16. Kahar

2. Middle Caste Panichalane →

3. Lower caste Pani Nachalane → 1.Teli 2. Kalwar 3. Tatma 4. Dhobi

4. Lowest caste Pani Nachalne → 1. Dusadh 2. Chamaar 3. Dom

The local distinguish four different hierarchical groupings of castes (see figure 1). As the general model indicates there are many caste groups in the middle caste whose water is accepted by all the caste groups. There are four low castes whose water in not accepted by middle and high caste groups. Likewise there are three lowest caste groups in the study area whose water in not accepted by lower, middle and high caste groups. Not only this the water from the lowest caste groups is not accepted between among the caste groups themselves.

Not all of the above mentioned caste groups are the indigenous inhabitants of this area. They migrated to this area from Bihar state in India many generations ago in search of work. They are Hindus and celebrate rituals and festivals of the Hindus. In general, the rituals, ceremony and festivals of all the Hindus are similar. The major festivals they celebrate are Dashain, Tihar, Holi, Chhatha. On the occasion of workship of Shiva and Satyanarayan Katha, they offer a big feast to all their fellow caste members in the village. They decorate their houses by painting and making pictures on the walls on the occasion of Tihar and marriage.

Inter group Relations: Social

Caste is one of the most important social institutions in the Nepal Tarai even today. Caste behaviours are deeply embedded in peoples 'values, reflecting hierarchy, endogamy, commen*sali*ty and the other forms of the day to day interaction of people. Contacts of any kind touching, dining, sex and other social relations between castes of equal status are permissible or do not result in pollution. Mutual acceptability of cooked food, particularly rice and lentils denotes equal social status between caste groups. A member of the village community will marry only with the member of his own caste. Though 2 cases of inter caste marriage i.e. marriage between Tarai and hill caste group are reported in this VDC, these married couples are not accepted by the community even today. In other words, marriages across caste boundaries are regarded as deviations from an ideal norm of caste behaviour.

Even the type of meat consumed signifies social status; only mutton, pigeon and fish are consumed by the high caste Hindus. High caste Hindus are also not supposed to drink any kind of alcoholic beverages. All of these food items are defiling for them to maintain their ritual status. The pig raising is considered the most defiling job in this VDC. This job is done only by the lowest caste

of the untouchable groups like Dom and Dushadh. Even today, the untouchable peoples mostly Dom and Halkhor are not allowed to enter the houses of the middle and high caste Hindus of the study area.

Nevertheless, most of the members of the village cooperate with each other on certain occasions such as weddings, funerals, festivals, worship of the village deity and thatching or building of a new house. For example, in the wedding ceremony of a Sanyasi and Yadav, most of the village members are invited for feast and Janti. Likewise, in the marriage ceremony of the Sonar group, other caste groups like Bhedihar, Lohar, Barai and Sanyasi actively participate in the marriage procession, eating and drinking. However, members of the higher caste such as Brahmin eat foods (except rice) appropriate to their caste which is prepared by persons of equal or higher status and served in an acceptable manner. Even during the funeral procession, most of the village people participate in the procession without much caste feeling. But in the funeral procession of lower caste and the lowest caste groups such as Dushadh, Chamar, Dom and Halkhor no high caste groups and few middle caste groups participate.

It is because of the high caste Hindu model which is operating smoothly in the village life over the years, some type of social mobility is gradually taking place in some groups of the Tarai. In the last one decade or so, with the decline of traditional occupation and participation in new types of economic activity, some groups like Teli and Kalwar are gradually upgrading their social status through wealth. These days, they are treated as the water acceptable community in the study area. They are now involved in different types of businesses.

Inter group Relations: Economic

On the basis of the survey of the study area, it can be said that most of the high caste groups such as the Maithili. Brahmain, Kayastha and middle caste groups like Yadav, Sanyasi, Bhedihar, Teli are the land owners and most of the untouchable castes are marginal landowners and landless labourers.

Even though involvement in agriculture is common to all castes from the Brahmin to the untouchable, certain kinds of occupation can be performed only by certain caste groups. Certain kinds of occupations are considered defiling for high caste Hindu groups. In other words, the economic disparity and caste specific occupations have resulted in economic interdependence between and among groups in the study area.

All the high caste, middle caste and the low caste groups come into contact with the Lohar (carpenter), Hajam (barber), Dhobi(washer man), Chamar (cobbler), and Dom (basket maker). Their services are considered indispensable in the village community. All of these groups come into contact with other groups usually in a non ritual context, mostly economic but there are exceptions. For example the Hajams, Lohars and Chamars, services are essential in certain ritual and social occasions of the community.

Some of the caste groups of the study area provide their services in the traditional Jajamani system. Jajamani is a service rendered by a person to his client in cash or kind or both. Two types of Jajamani services are prevalent in the study area.

1. Services provided by the Maithil Brahmin Priests to their clients, particularly the high caste, middle caste and the lower caste Hindu groups except the lowest caste groups such as Chamar, Dushadh, Dom and Halkhor.

2.   Services provided by the lowest untouchable castes and Middle castes to the higher, middle and lower caste. In return of their services, these groups are provided grains on an annual contract basis.

Services provided by the low castes to the members of their own caste and high and middle castes (known as Jajmani) is locally known as *Sali* system. The caste groups who are engaged in *Sali* system in the study area are Hajam, Lohar , and Chamar.

Hajam

By providing their traditional services of shaving, a Hajam is paid 20 kg of paddy annually per person. A Hajam visits the households of his client once or twice in a week. The wives of Hajam also visit their client's households during delivery, Bratbandh and death ritual to cut the nails (of hands and feet) of women. In the study area, almost every Hajam household has 30-40 clients and collects 6-8 quintals of paddy per annum. They also get cloth, grain, and money on special occasions such as *bratbandh (sacred thread wearing ceremony),* marriage, *mundon (hair shaving ceremony),* and death.

Lohar

The Lohar is a carpenter in the local context. For their services, they charge cash or sometimes grains on a piece work basis. Unlike hill group, the Lohar also does the iron work and contract their clients on a fixed amount of grains to be paid annually. They charge 40 k. g. of grains per plough per household.

Chamar

The Chamars are also engaged in the *Sali* system. Each Chamar household is paid 5 k.g. of grains annually for disposing the dead animals. Every household who has animals like ox, cow, buffalo

pay this grains annually whether an animal dies or not. The Chamar ensures his clients that his services are guaranteed when it is needed. A Chamar household has 20-25 households as clients and collects about a quintal of grain annually from every household. Now a days the *Sali* system is gradually changing. The Chamars are not paid grains annually; instead they are paid in cash on the basis of the dead animals. They charge NRs 50 to 100 per dead animal for disposing the carcass.

The Chamars play musical bands in different rituals and festivals occasions, for which they are paid cash and grains.

The Maithil Brahmins provide their priestly services both from whom they accept water and some of the middle castes from whom they do not accept water. In this respect, they can be treated just like the barber and the carpenter. However, the basic difference between them is that the Brahmins are not paid annually; they are paid on piece-work basis for their services. Moreover, the amount to be paid is not fixed; it depends upon the economic status as well as the generosity of the clients. Nevertheless, the priest is an important member of the village organization and maintains good socio-economic relationship to the members of almost all the water acceptable caste groups.

The other form of economic interrelationship and economic interdependence is the source of credit to cope up with the food shortage and to meet the household's incidental and contingent expenses. A number of poor farmers in this VDC take loans.

The sources of institutional credit in the study area are the local landlords such as Brahmin, Sanjasi, Bhedihar, and Yadav. Loan is taken in two forms:. cash and grain. The interest rate is high, ranging from 48 to 60 percent per annum. Normally, the loan taken in grains must be repaid in grains only with high interest. As many farmers are landholders in the study area, they repay loans by

working in the fields of landlords either in planting or harvesting seasons. Most of the loans are borrowed against gold, silver and land as surety.

Some poor people also work as ploughmen or agricultural labourers as desired by the landlords because they have been provided some land to subsist themselves without rent. However, the landlord also provides them their daily wage (Rs. 50/- and 2 meals per day for working from the morning to the evening) while working. They are also free to work in other s land when there is no work in the house of the landlord. In other words, labour scarcity is creating economic interdependence between landless farmers and the landlords.

Inter-group Relations: Political

The Tarai as a whole was considered sensitive politically by the ruling elites of Kathmandu throughout history. Because of their close affinity with India and the Indian people, the Tarai people, particularly the Indian origin people were mistrusted and wherever possible they were excluded in the national politics of Nepal. For the first time, King Mahendra realized this political sensitivity of the Tarai people and gradually incorporated the Tarai indigenous groups as well as other caste groups into the mainstream of the National politics of Nepal. King Mahendra encouraged directly or indirectly to settle down the hill people into the Nepal Tarai to harmonize the process of "Nepalization" and national integration so that no hatred feelings could be developed towards each other, i.e. between the hill and the Tarai people.

The Tarai people are coming more and more closer to the hill people but also engage in debate about participating in the national politics of regionalism which also harbouring some sort of hatred feeling towards one another. Moreover, factions within Tarai groups i.e. between high castes and low casts and Yadavs verses

other are also on the rise in recent years. The prominent groups in the Tarai politics today are the Yadavs and the Muslims.

In Tarai politics, Rautahat district is no exception in regard to political power becoming the privilege of the economically better-off people. Rauthat district is controlled by Yadavs-over the last four decades or so. The district president was Yadav and one of the members of the parliament in the lower house was from Yadav community in this district.

One of the important qualities of the Yadav community is that they always form a close-knit group vis-à-vis other castes. They possess wealth and also demonstrate muscles to take control of politics. The Yadavs have been the successful political leader in this VDC from the time of Panchayat period. There are many reasons why Yadav could hold the active leadership in this VDC. For instance, Mahamadpur VDC is composed of diverse caste groups and the number of highest and many of the lower castes are landless. These landless and marginal hand holding people always need financial and other kinds of moral support services. These support services are provided to the people mostly by Yadavs of the area.

The Yadavs of this VDC are rich compared to other caste groups. They are helpful. They not only help others in the village but also at the district level. They go with the people to district headquarters and help there wherever needed. The local people therefore trust them for economic and social security.

Nevertheless, in the village election, different castes hold the positions of ward chairman such as Bhedihar, Sonar, Chamar, Yadav, Barai. But the position of VDC chairman is held by the Yadav only. During the election period, though there is caste feeling, people cast vote considering the party after the restoration of democracy. In other words, inter-groups relationship is gradually increasing in the larger political context of the society. The people

help and try to understand each other to make the village environment peaceful and developed.

Inter-group Relations: Ritual and Religious Context

Though there is an overlap of social and religion activities, there are distinct caste services which are indispensable in certain religious and ritual occasions of the village life. Such groups who provide their religious services are the barbers, Brahmins, goldsmith (sonar) and Chamars.

The barbers' services are necessary in most of the ritual occasions of middle caste, lower caste and the high caste Hindu groups. A barber acts as a ritual purifier during birth, marriage and death. Shaving is required for a man in many ritual occasions such as 'Upanayan' ceremony, death of any member of a family, during the ancestor worship and at the time when a person takes part in a ceremony. During delivery, a woman is ritually purified on the 6th day when her nails of hands and feet are cut and also after the death of any member of a family her nails are cut down on the 10th day of the death by a Hajam woman.

A Maithil Brahmin is respected in the ritual context even if he may be very poor. In every ritual such as birth, marriage, Upanayan, construction of a new house, worship of any god, new vehicle and death, all castes, expect the lowest caste group of the Tarai invite the Brahmin. The goldsmiths (sonar) are invited to ritually pierce the ears of young boys and girls of high caste Hindus. Similarly, the Chamars play with their drums in many rituals occasions such as the Mundan (hair cutting ritual) Upanayan, worshipping of the village deity.

There are many caste specific festivals and ritual occasions such as the "Madhusrawani" by the Maithil girls in the month of Shrawan, and the worship of Salesh by the Dushadh in the month of the

Kartik. On the other hand, there are certain festivals and rituals which are celebrated by most of the caste group of the village community. Some of the common Tarai Hindu festivals and rituals are listed, where inter-group relations can be observed distinctly.

Chaurchand

Almost all caste groups celebrate *chaurchand* in the month of Bhadra. They worship the moon by offering rice pudding, fruits and curd. On this occasion, they also invite close relatives and friends for a feast at home.

Durga Puja

Durga puja is also widely celebrated by the Tarai caste Hindu groups in the month of *Asoj* or *Kartik* (Oct/ Nov). Unlike the hill people, who put *tika* on their forehead and move to the households of relatives for *tika*, blessings and feast, the Tarai people worship Durga only to get *tika* and blessing from the priest (Brahmin). They worship goddess Durga by offering sweets and by sacrificing goats and pigeon. The people of other castes of this VDC receive *jamara* from the Maithil Brahmin- the local priest.

Tihar

All the caste groups celebrate the Tihar festival by worshipping the goddess Laxmi in the month of Kartik. However, the Teli, Baniya and Kalwar (all of them are the business groups) celebrate this festival lavishly.

The Kayasthya worship Chitra Gupta (who is believed to write peoples fate during birth) in Tihar while worshipping inkpots and pens. The festival follows a feast, inviting the relations and neighbors.

Chhath

All the Tarai caste groups celebrate this festival in the month of Kartik. The people celebrate this festival for two days. On the first day they worship the setting Sun god and on the second day they worship the rising sun god in the morning.

In brief, a Village Development Committee (VDC) in the Tarai is not necessarily a homogenous community today. It shows considerable diversity in terms of language, religion and culture. Though there is tremendous diversity among the Tarai caste groups, they, however, co-exist together because of the following economic factors:

1. In a board sense, a single culture area in the Tarai constitutes a region in the sense of a common language. The people speaking the same language have certain degree of commonalities which bind them together. For example, the Maithil Brahmins and the untouchables speaking the same language have certain culture forms in common, though they pace themselves in two extremes in the hierarchical model of the Hindu caste structure.

2. It is also difficult to isolate a particular culture trait as social, economic or religious as one trait complement the other in an organic, functional character of the society. Nevertheless, the other most important binding factor is the economy of the people itself. Historically, the economy of the Tarai is governed by two groups of people, the big landlords and the peasants or landless farmers. This economic model is operating up to now. Similarly, certain caste groups are permitted to do only certain type of caste specific occupation. In other words, the economic disparity and caste specific occupations force people to line together for survival

3. Historically, the Hindu caste hierarchical structure has remained as a model to co-exit. The various caste groups have remained as a basis of social interaction among the majority of the Tarai people.

4. Rituals and festivals which are celebrated locally by the people, always help to minimize the structural cleavages between and among groups.

5. Finally, the Tarai social structure is little dynamic as a whole Over the last 200 years of the settlement history of the Tarai, only few groups like Teli, Sudhi, and Kalwar are able to raise their social position from the water unacceptable group. The nature of struggle is economic rather than social. As these groups earned good money in the local context through business, and started sending their children to better schools these socio-economic mechanisms have helped them to raise their social status as water accepted community. In this VDC the local people, except the Maithil Brahman started accepting water from these caste groups only during the last decade or so.

Conclusion

The Tarai villages in general and Mahamadpur village in particular are not the homogeneous communities. However, this Village is more homogenous in its social structure. If we analyze the socially defined boundaries of kinship, caste, ethnicity, language, economic condition, duration of stay and religious values, this village shares many of these features in common. Though a clear account of the history of many of the caste groups under study is not available, it is however clear that most of the caste group under study came from the neighbouring states of Bihar in India. All of the caste groups in the study area are Hindus. They celebrate Hindu festivals

and worship Hindu gods and goddesses on different occasions. They speak local Maithili language. Their marriage and kinship patterns are similar and they are closely tied with the Tarai Hindu caste, hierarchical model.

Though the caste solidarity is more pronounced among the caste groups, politics is controlled more by the Yadav in the study area. The Yadavs are economically well off and also stressing their horizontal tiller across the village boundaries.

All the caste groups in the study area have harmonious social relationship. They participate in feasts of each other, worship of village deities, marriage ceremony and death ritual. The social solidarity is seen on the occasion of Holi festival in which all the caste groups irrespective of political ideology and local personal differences gather at a public place and exchange their best wishes by distributing red colour and cardamom, nuts and betel.

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Water Resources Management

Prelude

This paper aims to ascertain and explicate the role of 'social equity' in water resources management as a common property resource by focusing on two farmer-managed irrigation systems from the western *Terai*. It begins with a brief analysis on the theoretical understanding of water for irrigation as a 'common property resource' and 'social equity' and offers specific in-depth empirical understanding and explication on the role of 'social equity' in the sustainable irrigation management.

Understanding Water for Irrigation as a Common Property Resource

It is contextual to have a brief understanding on the very notion of 'common property resource' before gaining clarity on the understanding of 'water as a common property resource' wherein 'social equity' variable plays an important role for the sustainable irrigation management and development.

Understanding Common Property Resource (CPR):

The literature on CPR basically focuses on the organizational and institutional arrangements for the management of a particular resource, which is traditionally conserved and exploited by a group

SOCIAL EQUITY IN FARMER-MANAGED IRRIGATION IN THE TERAI OF NEPAL

Laya Prasad Uprety

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Understanding Common Property Resource (CPR):

The literature on CPR basically focuses on the organizational and institutional arrangements for the management of a particular resource, which is traditionally conserved and exploited by a group

of people for their livelihood. Only the co-owners who have contributed to conserve, develop and sustain the resource for their livelihood over time do have the property right on it, and can use it with full sense of security. And they can also transfer the ownership of the resource as property to other potential resource appropriators. Thus, following Place and Shallow (2002), I would argue that **exclusivity, security** and **transferability** are the main characteristics of common property resource management, which are largely governed by the institutions. Jodha (1974) asserts that common property resources are the resources accessible to the whole of the community of a village and to which no individual has exclusive property right.

According to Bennett (1996), common property means that the group has a collective responsibility for resources, which tends to guarantee care and conservation; Some of the common elements regarded as crucial common property resource include a collective sense of responsibility for resources, sharing of resources by a specified group of people with specified rights and controlling of such resources by an identifiable groups (see Bennett 1996; Fisher 1991; Berkes and Farvar; 1989). They also note that common property systems are characterized by the presence of arrangements for allocation of the resource among co-owners. They provide mechanisms for the equitable use of the resources with a minimum of internal strife. They are the integral part of the local culture.

Ostrom (1997) and Ghate (2003) hold the opinion that the self-initiated efforts for the management of common property create a condition for the resource users to be involved over time in making and adopting rules within collective choice arenas regarding the inclusion or exclusion of participants, appropriation strategies, obligation of the participants, monitoring and sanctioning, and conflict resolution. A shared understanding of social norms plays a crucial role in community-initiated management regimes. Collective action for resource management through organizational efforts comes into being as the function of resource scarcity. The co-owners of a resource have, in fact, crated the indigenous institutions for the governance of the behavior of the resource appropriators from which a lot of **social learnings** can be borrowed to feed in the contemporary mainstream development model.

Understanding Water as a Common Property Resource

Co-operative relationship for the exploitation and utilization of water for irrigation by sharing is the function of the transient nature of water. Martin (1986) regards water resource as a "fugitive" natural resource. "Fugitive" resources are mobile and must be captured before they can be allocated to individuals or groups. Since such capture and allocation poses the problem of exclusion, institutional regulation of these resources tends to develop early. Referring to the work of Ciriacy-Wantrup and Bishop (1975), Martin (1986) argues that common property institutions are the most important means of regulation of "fugitive" resources." He considers a farmer irrigation organization as the owner and manager of water as a common property. He (1986:231) writes:

> The rights to the water in the source are vested in the group. Irrigation organizations work vigorously to exclude non-members from using the water. The amount of water that members can use and when they receive it is regulated by the organization.

Coward (1986) views irrigation development as a property creating or a property-reproducing process. Collective action is based on property relations because irrigation groups formulate principles of action and perform irrigation tasks that reflect prior and continuing investments in their hydraulic property. He considers this

relationship of co-property holders as the factor legitimizing and activating their solidarity.

P. Pradhan (1989) treats water as community property: an organizing force for farmers in a given system. In a well-organized system, the beneficiaries perform irrigation-related tasks collectively or the individuals carry out group agreements. He argues that the concept of "community property" has become the basis for organization in all sectors as well. Once the resource becomes the community property, the group must organize to preserve it and distribute the benefits to members of the community. This, he argue, requires a viable community-based organization. Protection of the water rights is an organizing force (e.g. guarding the source of water at night in group on rotational basis). Similarly, achieving water distribution in proportion to water share is also an organizing force (water shares are distributed among the members on the basis of investment made during the time of construction and in some cases, water shares are distributed in proportion to the area irrigated). Organizations are designed for the acquisition of water, mobilization of manpower and local resources to operate and maintain the system, equitable water distribution and minimizing conflict.

Coward presents the conceptualization of the sociology of irrigation in the regime of common property. He argues that a sociological perspective of irrigation can commence with two fundamental concepts, namely, 'institutions' and 'social organization'. He (1985: 30) writes:

> "Institution" in irrigation refers to ideal behavior and role expectations and as a generic concept for the variety of rules that help pattern social behavior: norms, folkways, mores, customs, convention, etiquette, and law. ... In addition to these institutions, there are in any human group patterns of

social behavior and interaction that are referred to as the social organization.

Discussing the principles of irrigation organization for managing water as a common property, Coward (1979) in another context states that the operation of an irrigation system is a complex organizational enterprise that involves engineering and construction activities, the management of soil- water relationship, the allocation of water rights to groups and individuals, and other activities. While there are many tasks which must be organized to sustain the operation of an irrigation system, three are of fundamental importance: (i) the organization of water allocation; (ii) physical maintenance activities; and (iii) conflict management.

Norman Uphoff (1986) also holds the notion that four basic sets of activities-decision-making and planning, resource mobilization and management, communication and coordination and conflict resolution-constitute the core of an organization for managing the water as a common property resource.

Ostrom (1992) has developed the "institutional design principles" of long- enduring self-organized irrigation systems on the basis of empirical evidences. For her, a design principle is an element or condition that helps to account for the success of institutions in sustaining the physical works and gaining the compliance of generations of users to rules-in-use. She presents the design principles that characterize long-enduring, self-organized irrigation institutions. These comprise: the clearly defined boundaries of the service area and the individuals or households with rights to use, proportional equivalence between benefits and costs; collective-choice arrangements; monitoring; graduated sanctions; conflict resolution mechanisms; minimal recognition of rights to organize and nested enterprises She discusses institutions as rules-in- use.

Thus, there has been the emphasis on the forms of structural social capitals and their roles in sustaining the irrigation management. In other words, the irrigation collective actions are governed by the set of cultural norms collectively developed and complied with by the irrigators for their mutual benefits and in so doing, the role of the irrigation organization is crucially important for acquiring the water in the canal from its source, mobilizing the resources for the regular repair and maintenance of the canal, allocating and distributing the water equitably among the irrigators, and managing the conflicts.

Understanding Social Equity in the Context of Sustainable Common Property Resource Management

The term 'social equity' has acquired much currency in the contemporary literature of development. The scholars working in people-centered sustainable development have scrupulously underscored the notion of "social equity". The existing social science literature on developmental practices describes "social equity" as "social justice in benefit sharing" or the "fair distribution of benefits". In this regard, Korten (1990: 4) succinctly writes:

> Justice does not require equality of income, nor does it require that the productive be required to support the slothful. It does require, however, that all people have the means and the opportunities to produce a minimum decent livelihood for themselves and their families.

Other development scholars working in the regime of common property resource management (Gilmour and Fisher 1992; Mukherjee 2001 and Carol et.al 2002) have also emphasized on the say or the active participation of the members of various interest groups. Pointing out the importance of a fairly broad-base ambience for decision-making to represent the interests of all groups utilizing a particular common property resource, Gilmour and Fisher (1992) underscore to ensure the meeting of the legitimate interests and

needs of disadvantaged groups and empowering them to enhance their effective role in decision-making. While dealing with the ingredients of the social equity, Carol et.al (2001) have underscored the sufficiency of access to resources; economic opportunity, decision-making opportunity and justice. Mukherjee (2001) is very much concerned with the equitable distribution of benefits from the group-based activities for the management of common property resources. For him, the criteria considered for reflecting 'equity' in measurement of social capital are broad-based understanding of group activities and worldview, group participation in decision-making, equity in benefit-flows and livelihood impacts and reduction in vulnerabilities.

Thus, there has been an increasing emphasis on the notion of 'social equity' or 'distributive justice' as one of the guiding principles of contemporary people-centered development paradigm. Policy-makers have been asked by the development professionals and researchers as well as the communities themselves to make the optimal efforts for ensuring sustainable access to common property resources. Carol et.al (2001) underscore that such an access implies three qualities: that the resource remains in sufficient quantity and quality; that the people can use it as needed or to the same extent as in the past, and that 'fairness' or 'equity' exists in regulations governing its use and distribution. Gautam and Uprety (2002) have argued that the development of water resource as a common property has to be geared towards promoting equity by simulta-neously underscoring the institutional inclusiveness through the representation of the potential beneficiaries in the decision-making and implementation and accountability of the different stakeholders involved in the development process.

> On the basis of theories of social psychology Lind (1995) treats fairness or social equity or justice as a device for resolving conflict. Discussing the fairness norm, he states

that people are generally willing to accept compromise, as long as outcomes are fairly distributed and as long as the clash of people, groups and ideas is governed by rules that are just and evenhanded. He also notes that people are willing much of the time to subordinate their own desires to the greater good, as long as they have faith in some fundamental fairness in the way that greater good is achieved.

Slater and Chasca (2003) have also underscored the need to understand the place of equity or social justice with the livelihood systems because by exploring it, the sensitivity of our understandings can be enhanced and links between incentives, actions and institutions developed. This involves exploring rights-based approaches to natural resource use and management and the links to livelihoods. They also argue that our understanding of equity and justice relates very closely to notions of rules and practices. We need a more sophisticated understanding of the structure of rights that can address the questions of justice and that these are desirable goals. Participation of the broader community in the management of the resource, fair decentralization of decision-making, and fair distribution of benefits can regulate the "free-riding".

Pradhan (2001) is of the opinion that equity of distribution does not mean equal distribution to all, but distribution according to a system of rules, which everyone can understand. Sometimes, rules allow different groups to receive quite different quantities of water, but users accept the fact because they know the basis for the rules. He underscores that the rule system must be transparent, easy to understand, operate, and monitor.

Some other scholars working in the regime of water for irrigation have also focused on equity in resource mobilization and irrigation access (see Shukla and Sharma 1997; Tang 1989). From the foregoing discussion it becomes clear that most scholars agree that

resource management systems which have emphasized participation of the various interest groups in the governance structures and decision-making processes in the most inclusionary way, and equity in the resource mobilization and distribution of the benefits have remained sustainable.

The Social Settings of the Study Area

Research was conducted in the command areas of *Sora* and *Chattis Mauja* farmer-managed irrigation systems located in the plains of Rupendehi district. These irrigation systems have a command areas of about 1,500 and 3,500 hectares of land, respectively. These were originally constructed by the autochthonous *Tharu* people of the *Tearai*. Initially, the *Sora Mauja* irrigation system served a total of 16 *Maujas* (settlement areas which roughly corresponded to villages) and *Chattis Mauja* irrigation system served a total 36 *Maujas*. But the command areas of both the systems later expanded a function of the population growth triggered by the Hill to *Terai* migration particularly after 1960. The migrants comprise *Brahmins, Chhettris*, traditional service caste people and indigenous nationalities of *Mongoloid* origin.

Field research in 2003 revealed that, the *Sora Mauja* was expanded to 30 *Maujas* and *Chhattis Mauja* was expanded to 56 *Maujas*. The increase and decrease of the number of command *Maujas* depends on whether the farmers make the regular collective contribution of labor and financial resources for the repair and maintenance of the irrigation systems. Though both these systems were originally developed in two different locations of Tianu River more than 170 years ago, they have been sharing water from a single mega- canal since 1964. Since then, the mega-canal has been jointly managed up to the point of bifurcation (called Tara Prasad Bhond) from where water has been divided between the two systems proportionate to the size of their respective command areas.

Despite the heterogeneity in the social structure of the beneficiary farmers of the command areas, both irrigation systems have been effectively functioning for a relatively long period and have become the often-cited references of the participatory and sustainable irrigation systems in Nepal. Hence, I have selected these two systems to document the role of social equity among the stake-holders of irrigation systems with a view to generating the social learnings, which are worth sharing for the wider academic discourse on developmentalism (i.e external intervention vs indigenous model or the blending of the both?) for the sustainability of the development, including in the regime of water as a common property resource.

Methodology Employed

The fieldwork for garnering the data to write this paper was conducted in March and April of 2003. While drawing the sample locations for the study, first of all, the whole command area of both irrigation systems was divided into head, middle and tail locations in consultation with the key informants. And one *Mauja* was randomly selected from each location of the *Sora Mauja* irrigation system, which is a total of three *Maujas* (10% of the total 30 *Maujas* during the period of the study). Similarly, two *Maujas* were selected from each location of *Chattis Maujas*, which is a total of six *Maujas* (10.7 % of the 56 total *Maujas* during the period of the study).

A total of 31 key informants were selected and interviewed to obtain qualitative information. Of these, four comprised from the joint management committee (the chairman, vice-chairman, secretary and *Meth Muktiyar* - chief staff), 11 from *Sora-Mauja* (the chairman, vice-chairman and secretary of the main committee, two *Meth Muktiyars*- chief staffs, three *Mauja Muktiyars*-village level staffs, and three regional representatives out of the six) and 16 from

Chhattis Mauja (the chairman, vice-chairman and secretary of the main committee, *Meth Muktiyar--* chief system level staff, six regional representatives out of nine, and six *Mauja Muktiyars--* village chief staffs) from six sample village-level irrigation committees. They furnished data on the role of social equity among the stakeholders of both the systems and their role in the sustainability of the irrigation management.

The primary data was collected by means of the ethnographic method, Ethnographic method in this research involved the direct and participant observation and key informant interviews. Utmost effort was made for the triangulation of the information generated in the field.

Social Equity Regime in *Sora and Chattis Mauja*

This section focuses on the governance structures for ensuring the social equity in a multi-stakeholder situation through the involvement of various interest groups. In particular it deals with decision-making processes as well as equity in resource mobiliza-tion and management, distribution of water for irrigation, and information sharing. Rules for conflict management and for maintaining the transparency and accountability for ensuring the equity/fairness are also discussed.

Governance Structures in a Multi-stakeholder Situation

It is contextual to have the understanding on the notion of 'governance' in farmer-managed irrigation system (FMIS) before explicating the empirical facts. Coward (2004) shares that FMIS needs to govern the internal actions through the exercise of authority or control and management such as building and repairing water works, allocating and distributing water and resolving conflicts and disagreements among water appropriators. He also

underscores the external activities to be organized including dealing with other irrigation groups and state and its agencies. Governance is also concerned with organizing group actions to deal with the vagaries of the environment. In fact, non-state entities such as the irrigation organizations govern the behavior of the water appropriators in the management and the utilization of water for sustained irrigation. Thus, FMIS governance is vitally important for the effective and continuing operation.

Both the irrigation systems under study have the nested enterprises of the governance organizational structures. They have three-layered of the governance-nested enterprises, namely, system level executive committees, regional committee structures, and *Mauja* level committees. Put in other words, they have the federated governance structures. Given the fact that both systems have shared the water from the single mega- canal, they have also formed a *Sora-Chhattis* joint management committee comprising the representatives from both the irrigation systems.

Given the fact that the *Sora* and *Chhattis Mauja* started to share water from the same diversion since 1964, the water management effort became joint from the headwork to Tara Prasad Bhond-- the place from where the water has been bifurcated/divided proportionate to the size of their respective command areas. And all this was feasible only through the formation of a joint governance structure comprising the representatives from both the systems. Both the systems have the constitutional provisions to send representatives to it so long as the committee has the justification of being in the operation. As per the understanding of the representatives of the two systems, *Chhattis Mauja* nominates six members and *Sora Mauja* nominates five members from their respective system level executive committees making a total of 11 members. Of the 11 members, one is elected as the chairman, one vice-

chairman, one secretary and one treasurer as the functionaries and other remain as the members. The committee has also *Meth Muktiyar* (chief staff) and one *Chaukidar* (watchman-cum-messenger).

Both the systems have provisions of appointing *Meth Mukthiyars* (chief system level staff-one in *Chhattis* and two in *Sora*) and other staffs for discharging the irrigation-related activities with the direction of the executive committees. Both have the provision of the appointment of organizationally and institutionally speaking, they are the backbones of both the systems because in actuality, they are the ones who play the instrumental role in making the systems operational by mobilizing the *Kularas* in the *Kulahai* (labor contribution for repair and maintenance) and distributing water between and among the *Maujas* equitably as per the direction of the executive committees. They are basically assisted by the *Chaukidars* (watchmen) in discharging their duties.

In the case of both irrigation systems, there is also the provision of *Mauja Muktiyars* (village level staffs) who are selected by the water appropriators of the particular *Mauja* (village) and are responsible for disseminating the information of the village level committee apropos of its activities, distributing water equitably, mobilizing the labor, resolving the conflicts, getting the decisions of the executive committees implemented, etc. Though not universal, there is also the *Gaun Chaukidar* (village level watchman) in the irrigation systems who comply with the orders of the *Gaun Muktiyars, Chetradakshya* (regional chairman/representative) and executive committee. He plays the crucial role in the exchange and dissemination of the information.

Both *Sora* and *Chhattis Mauja* irrigation systems have their democratic culture in the regime of decision-making. At the *Mauja* level, all the water appropriators have the opportunity to have their

say during the time of *Mauja* level general assemblies or any other mass meetings. Their genuine voices, regardless of the caste/ethnic and class statuses, are heard by the concerned functionaries and staff and decisions made accordingly. If any genuine problem related to the irrigation, resource mobilization and any other related works crops up during the discussion of the general assemblies, decisions are made immediately in a participatory way. If it can be resolved at the *Mauja* level, the functionaries of the *Mauja* level committee and the *Mauja Muktiyar* make efforts for this. But if it cannot be resolved at this organizational level, this is communicated to the higher-level committees and staff of the organizations. In both the irrigation systems, the regional level committee structure composed of the representatives of each command *Mauja* simply works as the link between the system level executive committees and *Mauja* level committees.

The *Amsabha* (the general meeting) and the *Sadharansabha* (general assembly) are also the powerful bodies for making the decisions where the representatives of the farmers from all the *Maujas* participate. In these fora, every representative has the opportunity to articulate clearly the inter-systemic, systemic, inter-*Mauja* and intra-*Mauja* (which cannot be solved locally) irrigation-related problems and actively contribute to the process of decision-making and planning. During the process of decision-making, majority view is granted. It is the same case in the *Sora-Chhattis Mauja* joint committee.

In both the irrigation systems, the planning approach is highly decentralized. More specifically, the planning for the jointly-operated canal up to Tara Prasad Bhond is the domain of the *Sora-Chhattis* joint management committee. The system level planning is the domain of the autonomous executive committees. And finally, the *Mauja* level planning is the domain of the *Mauja* level

committee. The planning activities have to happen within the boundary of the constitutional arrangement and the annual policy level decisions made by the general meetings/general assemblies.

In the governance-nested enterprises of both the systems, the resolutions are passed either through consensus or voting system. Each organizational nested enterprise formulates its plan every year for the water acquisition, system maintenance, water distribution, and resource mobilization with emphasis on social equity.

Equity in Resource Mobilization and Management

The water appropriators of both the systems have developed an organizational culture for mobilizing and managing the resources/ inputs required for the repair and maintenance and operation of the irrigation systems in the most equitable fashion. In fact, the operational rule implemented by the elected functionaries and employed staffs with the mandate of the water appropriators has been immensely instrumental in sustaining the irrigation systems. In fact, it is this aspect of culture that has the bearing on the popularization of these two relatively old irrigation systems. This relative strength has enticed a large number of the lead farmers and trainees from other parts of Nepal to visit them for learning about the resource mobilization and management culture.

In both the systems, the principal financial sources include: (i) *Khara Sulka* (fines) collected in the case of the non-contribution of the labor by the water appropriators; (ii) fines collected from the persons/*Maujas* who have violated the rotational rule of the water distribution or stolen water in others' turn; (iii) fee collected while changing the *Mohada* (diversion location) of the branch canals from the system main canal; (iv) entry fee for any new *Mauja* and re-entry fee for old *Mauja* (who relinquished to use water after using for some time) charged on the basis of the number of *Khetala*

(laborer) to be made available for the annual repair and maintenance of main system canals; (v) money collected from the water appropriators during the time of emergency (in the form of the assistance); (vi) any amount of money received from government, non-governmental organizations and persons in form of grant, etc, and (vii) *Bigathhi* (the annual irrigation service fee rate to be paid to the organization if one is unwilling or not available to contribute the labor for the system repair and maintenance and the rate varies from one *Mauja* to the other).

The basis of labor mobilization for the repair and maintenance of the headwork and jointly-operated section of the mega- canal system is *Kulara* in both the systems. One *Kulara* means one laborer per 25 *Bighas* of land. Both the systems have a typology of *Sheer Kulahai* (labor work for the repair and maintenance of the headwork of the canal). These are called *Sabik* (one laborer per 25 *Bighas* of land per day), *Double* (two laborers per 25 *Bighas* of land per day), *Treble* (three laborers per 25 *Bighas* per day) and *Chauble* (four laborers per 25 *Bighas* of land per day). Generally, *Sabik* system of labor mobilization is practiced if the repair and maintenance work is not voluminous. The increase of the number of the laborers is the function of the volume of the siltation and the debris along the alignment of the head of the main canal. When there is tremendous amount of work for desilting the headwork, there may be the exhortation from the executive committees of both the systems for sending one laborer from each household compulsorily, which is called *Jharuwa* in the local parlance. Thus, labor for the *Sheer Kulahai* is generally mobilized in the equitable way. The *Meth Muktiyar* of the *Sora- Chhattis* joint management committee mobilizes the laborers for *Sheer Kulahai* with the regular co-operation of the *Meth Muktiyars* of *Sora* and *Chhattis Mauja* systems who are remunerated for their services.

The *Meth Mukthiyars* of both the irrigation systems also play the instrumental role in mobilizing the labor from each *Mauja* for the repair and maintenance of the separate *Sora* and *Chhattis* canal systems. Both the systems have a traditional norm of assigning the *Maujani Naj* (in the parlance of *Sora- Mauja*) or *Maujani Nath* (in the parlance of *Chhattis Mauja*) which is the measured area of the main canal assigned to a particular *Mauja* for its annual repair and maintenance. It is always the responsibility of the individual *Mauja* to clean the canal portion assigned to it either on the basis of the labor mobilization of the irrigator household proportionate to the size of the landholding or on *Jharauwa* basis in isolated cases. Labor contribution proportionate to the size of the holdings is more or less universal in both the systems.

Both the systems have developed a norm to pay *Khara* for failing to contribute the labor to repair and maintain the canal systems. The potential punishment is determined by the responses of the concerned *Mauja*. If the punishment is also ignored, the non-complaint *Maujas* may face the dismissal. Both the systems also have developed the norm to repair and maintain the branches, tertiaries, water courses and field channels with the labor/cash contribution from the beneficiaries of the command area.

The governance structures of both the systems have been extremely successful in the mobilization of the internal resources. They are maintained by the internal resources. Put in other words, the payment of the remuneration of the staff and operation cost is largely met by the amount of *Kharas* collected every year. In exceptional cases, there is also the exemption. For instance, in *Sora- Mauja*, if there is any genuine cause for not paying the amount required and labor demanded, the *Mauja* can be exempted. The *Meth Muktiyar* needs to consult the chairman of the executive committee and follow his directive.

Though land ownership or leasing –in the land within the command area, membership in the organization, payment of certain entry fee each time before withdrawing water and regular contribution of labor or cash or both for the repair and maintenance of the irrigation system create the bases for the creation of the property rights for a particular water appropriating household, each household of *Sora-Mauja* and *Chhattis Mauja* has to contribute labor or *Bighatti* (irrigation fee per *Bigha)* every year for the irrigation system maintenance. Failure to do so results in the deprivation of the water rights. And all this is indicative of the fact that there is complete control of the free-riding behavior which has, in turn, generally contributed to ensuring equity in labor or cash resource contribution for the operation and maintenance of the irrigation systems.

Though resource contribution is generally proportionate to the size of the land holding, there are isolated instances of mobilizing the labor on *"Jharuwa"* basis (compulsory contribution of labor every day until the repair and maintenance is over). The *raison d'etre* of the continuity of the practice of the *Kulara* system is that it is the most equitable system of labor mobilization for the repair and maintenance of the headwork and the jointly-operated canal system, which ensures water rights for the farmers without any form of exploitation. The system was the function of the abandonment of the *Jharuwa, Sidhabandhi* (labor contribution with foodstuff for the night halt until the repair and maintenance is over) and *Bhujabandi* (labor contribution with tiffin to work for the full day until the repair and maintenance is over) systems practiced in the past which was exploitative in nature (because the small holders had to contribute same amount of labor like the large holders). Nonetheless, there is still the remnant of *Jharuwa* system to a lesser extent among a few *Maujas* for the *Mauja* level repair and maintenance and large-scale emergency maintenance of the headwork of the common mega- canal.

Equity in Water Allocation and Distribution

Albeit the terms "allocation" and "distribution" are interchangeably used, they have different connotations in the literature of irrigation. "Allocation" is the entitlement to the use of water, which is mutually agreed by the beneficiaries and "distribution" is the actual delivery of water to their fields as per the agreed principle. A permanent proportioning divider has been constructed at a place called Tara Prasad *Bhond* as per the consensual decision between the representatives of both the systems. The total volume of the water running in the single mega-canal has been considered to be 16 *annas (a* local unit of measurement for 100%) of which 6.5 *annas* of water has been allocated to *Sora- Mauja* and 9.5 *annas* of water was allocated to *Chhattis Mauja.* The permanent structure is such that automatically divides the flowing water in the two separate canals as per the agreed principle, which ensures equity in the actual distribution of water between the two systems.

In both the irrigation systems, the water appropriators have evolved their own cultural norm of water allocation, that is, *Kulara* is the basic water allocation unit. As indicated above, the traditional local cultural definition of one *Kulara* is the 25 *Bighas* of land. Each *Mauja* is required to send one laborer for the repair and maintenance of the main system canals per *Kulara* as and when needed. Thus, traditionally, each *Mauja* has the right to claim the fraction of the total discharge of water perennially flowing in the main canals, which has to be proportionate to the number of the *Kularas. Kulara* has still been the unit of labor/cash contribution or resource mobilization. *Kulara* has been found easier unit for them to calculate the share of water and resource contribution from the water appropriating *Maujas.* This has been primarily so because one can claim the right to water upon the fulfillment of the requirement of resource contribution (cash or labor or both).

The general practice of the water distribution from the outlets of the main canals depends on the number of *Kularas* assigned to a particular *Mauja*. In both the systems, water flows continuously in all the branches during the period of the abundance of water in the rainy season. And particularly for the water scarce period in winter and spring seasons, the water appropriators have evolved an operational cultural norm of the rotational distribution of water. The system level executive committees decide the number of hours for the rotational distribution of water. For instance, in the case of *Sora Mauja*, one *Kulara* may get 8 hours' water distribution per *Kulara*. It was reported that water is distributed for 6-7 hours per *Kulara* in *Chhattis Maujas* by preparing water schedule.

In both the systems, the outlets for the branch canal for water distribution from the main canals are constructed as per the decision of the system level executive committees. Though the outlets are manually constructed based on the observational judgment, they are reliable to distribute the water as per the allocation principle. The outlet of *Mauja* is measured as per the availability of water in the main canals. The width, length and height of the outlets are determined on the basis of the number of *Kularas* (despite the fact that they do not have the scientific system of measurement and control). Sacks of sand are used to control the outlets of water from the main canals.

Once the water flows within the boundary of the *Maujas* in both the systems, the *Mauja Muktiyars*, with the advice of the *Mauja* level committee and the assistance of the *Mauja Chaukidars*, distribute the water by preparing the water schedule for the head, middle and tail locations within the *Mauja* settings regardless of the abundance and scarcity of the water. In practice, the *Mauja Muktiyars* and *Chaukidars* monitor the effective execution of the rotational distribution of water. As indicated above, during the water scarce

period, water appropriators within the *Maujas* strictly follow "*Ghante Pallo*" (hourly turn). At the *Mauja* level, each household gets water to its field proportionate to its size. The effective internal resource mobilization is possible because of the equitable distribution of water to grow crops.

Equity in Information Sharing

The existence of in-built cultural norm for the communication within the organizations of the irrigation systems and between the irrigation organizations of the two systems and other external agencies and between and among the water appropriators is of paramount importance. Both irrigation systems have also developed their own reliable systems of communication. Within the systems, the decisions made by the executive committees about the resource mobilization for the systemic regular and emergency maintenance and water allocation and distribution are communicated to the *Mauja* level committees and *Mauja Muktiyars* by the *Meth Muktiyars* with the support of the *Chaukidars*/office assistants of the executive committees. Once this is done, the *Mauja Muktiyar*, with the support of the *Mauja Chaukidar,* disseminates the information among the water appropriators of the *Mauja*. Occasionally, the water appropriators also meet the system level *Meth Muktiyars* and functionaries/members of the executive committees. During such meetings, the water appropriators are also informed informally about the organizational decisions and the irrigation-related activities. During the period of the general meetings/general assemblies in both the systems, the representatives of the water appropriators participate in the decision-making process and during that time also, they communicate the operational problems of command area *Mauja*s faced by the water appropriators. This is one way of the communication from top to bottom.

But there is also the system of bottom-up communication. For example, the decisions made by the *Mauja* level committee are communicated to the *Meth Muktiyars* or the functionaries of the executive committees through the *Mauja* level chairmen/ *Muktiyars / Chaukidars*. The complaints lodged by the water appropriators at the *Mauja* level (if they cannot be solved locally) are also communicated to the executive committees/ *Meth Muktiyars* in the same way. The nine regional representatives of *Chhattis Mauja* and six regional representatives of *Sora Mauja* also work as the link of communication between the *Mauja* level committees and executive committees. If there is any serious operational problem being confronted at the *Mauja* level by the water appropriators, they communicate it to the *Mauja* level committees /*Mauja Muktiyars* who send message to the system level executive committees/*Meth Muktiyars* for their support to resolve it.

The decisions made by the executive committees that potentially affect both *Sora* and *Chhattis* are also communicated to the joint management committee and its *Meth Muktiyar* through the *Chaukidars* or *Meth Muktiyars* or other functionaries of the executive committees who represent the system in the joint management committee. Depending upon the gravity of the problem/issue, both formal (through written letters) and informal (oral) means of communication are used. The *Meth Muktiyar/* the secretary of the joint management committee communicates the message to the *Meth Muktiyars* of the *Sora-Chhattis Maujas* through its *Chaukidar* and their system level executive committees on the regular and emergency maintenance work and the necessary resource mobilization for the main canal above the Tara Prasad Bhond. The decisions of the joint committee (as per the necessity) are also communicated to both the executive committees in formal way.

Rules for Conflict Management for Ensuring the Equity/ Fairness

The water appropriators have developed their own indigenous system of conflict management. In other words, infractions are resolved through both the informal and formal mechanisms. While discussing the indigenous institutional systems of resolving the conflict in the command areas of both the irrigation systems, the analyses have proceeded at three levels: inter-systemic conflict, inter-*Mauja* conflict, and intra-*Mauja* conflict.

Given the fact *Sora* and *Chhattis Mauja* irrigation systems have been using the irrigation from the same source of water and from the same mega-canal, sometimes conflicts may occur apropos of the water allocation and distribution and resource mobilization. Under such condition, the joint management governance structure/ committee helps to resolve any outstanding issues/problems between the two systems. Both the systems have been managing the water as a 'commons' very successfully for sustaining their livelihood by resolving inter-systemic conflict through consensus –a function of the mutual discussion, negotiation, trust, solidarity, etc.

Conflicts between and among the *Maujas* are also the common sociological phenomena in this irrigation system. The conflicts between the head, middle and tail locations arising from the violation of the distributional norms do occur frequently. Some of the conflicts are specific to the cropping seasons. For example, conflicts between the *Maujas* occur more frequently during the period of the paddy nursery seedbed preparation. Such cases are generally mediated by the system level executive committee. The conflicting parties generally accept the decisions. More specifically, a water monitoring committee comprising of four members has been formed for the settlement of water cases in *Sora Mauja* irrigation system. This committee charges fine if a *Mauja* steals the

water in the turn of another *Mauja*. It charges Rs. 500 for the one time water theft. All inter-*Mauja* conflicts are settled within the *Maujas*. They do not resort to the courts/police/administration for the conflict settlements.

Intra-*Mauja* conflict is also very frequently occurring sociological phenomenon. The principal sources of the conflict comprise the violation of water distributional turn between head, middle and tail locations, water theft, unjust distribution of water between head, middle and tail farmers (which is disproportionate to the size of the landholding of a particular location), etc. Water theft within the *Mauja* is more frequent during the period of paddy nursery bed preparation and maize cultivation. Characterizing the scale of the water theft during the period of the maize cultivation in March-April, one key informant of *Sora- Mauja* remarked: "Water appropriators here have a proclivity to steal water very frequently during the period of maize cultivation but they are ready to pay Rs.500 as fine because that payment of fine contributes to accrue Rs. 7000-8000 from the sale of the cobs of maize". When the conflict arises between and among the farmers of the head, middle and tail locations or between and among the water appropriators of a particular location, the issue is brought to the *Mauja Muktiyar* by the affected party/ies who then make the immediate on the spot observation for the study of the situation. During the period of the observation, the conflicting parties are allowed to present their arguments. The witnesses are also called. Once the complaints of the conflicting parties and the opinions of the witnesses are heard, the *Muktiyar* tries to persuade the conflicting parties and resolve the issue through compromise. Failing this, the case is brought to the *Mauja* level mass meeting, which then finalizes the case through the elaborate discussion. The person/s responsible for the infraction of the irrigation norm has/have to accept the decisions of mass arbitration including the compromise/payment of the compensa-

tions to the affected party/ies. Generally, the intra-*Mauja* conflicts are not referred to the police, court and administration. This shows that community verdict is the final one.

Both the irrigation systems have crafted a norm to impose the graduated sanctions on the persons/ *Maujas* responsible for the infraction of the rules. In the case of *Sora Mauja, if* any *Mauja* within the system develops a *Mohodha* (diversion of the watercourse) from the main canal at its own disposal by severely affecting other *Maujas* and steals water, Rs.500 is collected as the compensatory fine from this *Mauja* for the first *Kulahai* year, Rs.1000 for the second time, Rs.2000 for the third time and if the act of non-compliance/stealing continues, a compensatory fine up to Rs. 10,000 can be imposed on it. If the water is stolen by a *Mauja* during the *Maujane Palo* (rotational turn of a particular *Mauja*) of another by diverting water from the main canal and if it is proved, it will be fined Rs.500 for the first time, Rs. 1000 for the second time, and Rs. 2000 for the third time.

Sora Mauja has also the system of imposing the fines for the non-compliance of the rules for the repair and maintenance of the main system canal. The rule stipulates that while repairing and maintaining the main system canal, the *Maujas* have to finish the assigned *Naj/Nath* (measurement of the assigned labor work) at the said/specified time. If the assigned work remains incomplete, they have to pay the fines as compensations for the all *Kularas*. If the *Kularas* leave the *Kulahai* after accepting the *Naj/Nap*, they are imposed double compensatory fines in the usual *Khara* fixed. The compensatory fines imposed on the *Kularas* for being absent in the *Kulahai* is decided by the *Sadharansabha* every year.

There are also the cultural norms of imposing the graduated sanctions in the larger command area of *Chhattis Mauja*. For example, if any *Mauja* develops a *Mohoda* (diversion of the

watercourse) from the main system canal at its own disposal by severely affecting other *Mauja* and steals water, compensatory fines are imposed by looking at the level of negative impact. For the fist time, it will be fined Rs.1000, Rs.1500 for the second time, and Rs. 3000 for the third time. And if the trend of non-compliance continues, the maximum punishment can be inflicted upon it by closing the *Mohoda* from the main system canal for a specific season or for the whole year. This norm is also applicable to the case of violating *Maujani Palo* (the rotational turn of a *Mauja*) by any *Mauja*. But the norms of *Mauja* are applied in the case of violation of the water rights of water appropriators within the *Mauja* as decided by the functionaries and staff of the *Mauja* committee. If any *Mauja* cannot finish the repairing and maintaining the dry main system level in the specified period of time, it has to pay Rs.250 to the committee as *Khara* per *Kulara* prior to accepting another *Naj/ Nath*. *Khara* has to be paid for the number of days required for completing the *Naj/ Nath*. The daily rate of *Khara* for the absence of the *Kulahai* for other than the dry main system level canal is decided by the *Sadharansabha*.

Rules for Maintaining Transparency and Accountability

The cross-cultural studies on the indigenous resource management systems have demonstrated that they have a high degree of transparency and accountability which, in turn, have contributed to ensuring 'social equity'. Transparency in the organizational and institutional system ensures trust/confidence between and among the members-- a strong social capital/asset for harnessing the social energy of the community of the resource appropriators. The culture of maintaining the sustainability of both the irrigation systems is the direct function of the traditionally "nurtured culture of maintaining the transparency and accountability". The operational rules as well as the constitutional provisions are, in fact, framed democratically.

In other words, even though they are drafted by the committees authorized by the powerful decision- making bodies such as the general meeting and the general assembly, they are finally ratified/approved by these bodies after the protracted discussions and deliberations. And the approved copies of the constitutions, which also have the operational rules, have been distributed to the responsible members, functionaries of the different layers of the committees, and the interested water appropriators. So there is complete transparency of the irrigation operational rules and constitutional provisions at the system level. Occasionally, the same powerful decision-making bodies as per the organizational necessity amend these and the amendment process is also transparent because the amendments are discussed elaborately in these powerful decision-making bodies and approved. These constitutional and operational rules have always underscored the equity considerations as discussed in the preceding sections.

The *Mauja* level committees also frame their own operational rules without contradicting to the system level rules/constitutional provisions. But in so doing, they also get them approved through the *Mauja* level mass meeting of the water users. The functionaries and members do implement/enforce only those operational rules that are approved by the mass meeting. So transparency of the operational rules is maintained even at the *Mauja* level.

As indicated earlier, the primary source of income for both the systems is the *Khara* which is collected by the system level *Meth Muktiyars* with the support of *Mauja/Gaon Muktiyars*. The annual irrigation service fee called *Bighatti* is also collected in each *Mauja* in lieu of the *Kulahai*. This collected money is handed over to the treasurer for the proper book-keeping. And given the fact that both the systems have the culture of having the account audited and presenting to the general assemblies/general meetings for the

elaborate discussion and questioning, there is full transparency of the whole financial system (also see the resource mobilization section). It is these decision-making bodies, which approve the audited record of income and expenditure. If any functionary misappropriates the funds, the public criticism and the pressure of the executive committee are so strong that there is no other way other than returning the misappropriated fund. This transparency encourages the water appropriators to be organized for the mutually beneficial collective action.

Given the fact that the command areas of both the irrigation systems are increasingly being urbanized, there is already high level of awareness among the water appropriators apropos of the roles of the irrigation functionaries and the staff of the system level and *Mauja/Gaon* level committees. The awareness is triggered by the literacy/education variable. Succinctly put, all of the functionaries/ leaders including the staffs have to be accountable to the water appropriators. If they cannot work for the promotion of the collective interest/ equitable distribution of the benefits, there can be growing complaints by the water appropriators against them.

Once the issue of the injustice or deprivation of the benefits begins surfacing, fellow water appropriators also take such incidence very seriously and there is the talk in the community about it. Though party politics is not played within the organization after the election, the political groupings can play an important role in determining and electing the functionaries and the members of the nested enterprise. Hence, the issues of the unaccountability and injustice can be capitalized during the time of the election and the functionaries/members may not be elected/selected again. Therefore, the degree of accountability is high in both the systems. It is also the same for the system level and *Mauja* level staff. For example, it has also been ascertained that both the system level

Meth Muktiyars and *Mauja/Gaon* level *Muktiyars* are also required to be transparent and accountable in executing the decisions. Failure to do so may result in the severe "public criticism". Dismissal may be the eventual outcome.

Closing Remarks

The traditional farmer-managed irrigation systems have succeeded in addressing social issues such as equity among the water appropriators. In other words, there is always an effort for putting people first in such systems and therefore, they have been sustainable for relatively long period of time. When there had been no focus on the people and other social issues under the modernization paradigm and over-emphasis on the rational technology in 1950s and 1960s, the development interventions including in the irrigation sector could not be sustainable. It followed as a corollary that a group of social scientists, mainly sociologists and social anthropologists, began emphasizing on "putting people first" in development projects in 1980s. Michael Cernea (1985) considers "putting people first" as a firm request to give priority to what is the basic factor in development. In fact, he considers the vital role of sociology and social anthropology as the non-economic social sciences, which study peoples, cultures, and societies. These are slowly being recognized because of the repeated failures in development programs which were socio-logically ill-informed and ill- conceived. This reluctant recognition leads to increased interest in identifying and addressing the socio-cultural variables of projects. Rules for Maintaining Social Equity among the Disadvantaged Groups within the Irrigation Systems.

In fact "putting people" under the contemporary people-centered development paradigm means emphasizing on social issues such as equity consideration and a lot of lessons can be learned in this

regard from the traditional farmer-managed irrigation systems such as the ones described in this paper.

Given the fact that irrigation management is a mutually beneficial collective action, there is the involvement of multi-stakeholders in the systems studied. These farmers have a democratic space to participate in the decision-making process and articulate their interests. As noted in this paper, smaller holders and autochthonous *Tharus* are the disadvantaged groups. Most of these social groups have direct participation in the meetings/ general assemblies of the *Mauja* (village) level committee. In these fora, every member of these social groupings is encouraged by the local leadership to articulate their opinions/ voices, share their irrigation- related problems, assess the performances of the leadership and policies, and their inconsistencies (if any). In the system level governance structures also, the voices of the different interest groups have been heard because the leaders represent them.

As analyzed in the preceding sections, both the systems have evolved the norm for the equitable distribution of the water, that is, every appropriator is entitled to receive the water proportionate to the size of the landholding, which is again determined, by the amount of contribution (cash or labor or both) as per the necessity. This fair distribution of water as per the norm is equally applicable to all the water appropriators regardless of the socio-economic statuses. This means the minority *Tharu* ethnic people as well as the small holders have also the right to the equitable distribution of water. There is no evidence of the discrimination in this regard. The activities of the governance-nested enterprises such as the resource mobilization, conflict management, communication, etc basically contribute to ensuring social equity among water appropriators of both irrigation systems. Therefore, it can be safely concluded that farmer-managed irrigation systems have been sustainable for a

relatively long period of time because the water appropriators have a perception that: they have been fairly represented in the governance structures/decision-making processes; that they have been asked to make equitable contribution to repair and maintain the systems on which their livelihood depends, and that they have enjoyed the fair distribution of irrigation benefits.

End notes

Bigha= 0.6772 hectares

Bighatti= annual irrigation service fee per Bigha

Bhujabhandi= labor contribution with tiffin to work for the full day until the repair and maintenance of the main canal system and headwork is over

Chauble= four laborers to be sent per 25 Bighas of land

Chaukidar= watchman-cum-messenger in the local context

Doule= two laborers to be sent per 25 Bighas of land

Gaon= village

Kattha=0.0339 hectares

Khara= fine imposed on absentee water appropriator

Kulara= one Kulara means one laborer per 25 Bighas of land which is the unit of water allocation between and among the Muajas of the irrigation systems

Jharuwa= contribution of labor for the repair and maintenance of the canal system on compulsory basis by each water appropriating household until the work is over

Mauja= a settlement cluster which roughly corresponds to a village

Maujani Nath/Nap= the measurement of the main canals assigned by the *Meth Muktiyar* to each *Mauja* for the annual repair and maintenance which is proportionate to the size of its command area

Meth Muktiyar=-the chief system level staff

Sabik= as usual, for instance, one laborer to be sent per 25 Bighas of land

Sheer Kualhai= labor work for the repair and maintenance of the headwork of the canal

Sidhabandhi= labor contribution with foodstuff for the night halt until the repair and maintenance of the main canal system and headwork is over

Treble= three laborers to be sent per 25 Bighas of land

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WOMEN AND IRRIGATION IN NEPAL: CONTEXT, ISSUES AND PROSPECTS

Sujan Ghimire

Background

Gender norms in Nepal categorize farming as the men's domain. But studies exploring the social realities of women provide a different picture. Works by Acharya and Bennet (1981), show that Nepali women are involved in subsistence farm management activities and that the rural women's input into the farm activities (9.91 hours per day) is more than the men's (which is about 5.86 hours per day). Not only do women contribute labour in household and farm activities but also have influential roles in deciding certain activities such as crop seed selection, use of organic manure, choice of food for daily consumption etc. These studies also show that the decision-making roles of women and men vary with the types of activities undertaken and the types of ethnic group to which they belong. Studies - specifically exploring women's roles in irrigation - have also shown that rural women carry on different irrigation related activities. In the study on the Chhatis Mauja Irrigation Systems in Nepal, Zwarteveen et al (1993) write that female members of farms that are jointly managed by men and women are involved in irrigated agriculture. A study carried out by this researcher shows (1996) that women of the hills are involved in carrying out different irrigation tasks but their participation is limited to providing labour and have marginal role in the decision making process of irrigation.

During recent years, the Nepali government has acknowledged women as irrigators and has formulated policies for promoting women's participation in the irrigation sector. This paper explores the role of women in irrigation in two areas. It first looks at actual labour contribution and then examines their role in decision-making. The former relates to the different tasks done by women whereas the latter relates to their participation in the Water Users Associations (WUA). The paper then tries to examine the relevance of the major irrigation policies regarding the participation of women in irrigation. To understand the national irrigation concerns on women, a brief historical sketch of the major global concerns on women is undertaken.

Introduction

Irrigation in Nepal is conceived as men's work. This idea is based on societal gender norms. Some of the common norms relate to the idea that: irrigation is related with physically strenuous works in which *kodali* is frequently used, so the women being biologically weaker than the men, cannot and should not partake this activity; irrigation works take place outside the household domain and includes social interactions with the outsiders, so men can conduct this activity not women. A closer look into these stereotypes reflects the idea of male superiority in economic, social and political arenas. Empirical studies exploring women's role in agriculture (Acharya and Bennet, 1981) and irrigation in particular (Zwarteveen, M. 1993; Neupane, N. 1997; Ghimire, S. 1996 & Dawadi,D. 1999) have explicitly shown that in spite the prevailing gender norms, women do take part in irrigation activities and will increasingly be involved in the future.

Modernization has brought many changes in the traditional division of labour in Nepal. Agriculture, which is the main source of rural subsistence, is insufficient in sustaining livelihood. The poor resource base, fragmented landholdings, population growth, under-employment are some factors that compel people to migrate to Tarai or to the urban areas, in search of economic avenues. And it is the men who are more rapidly being drawn into the cash economy than the women. As more men leave their homes and farms to pursue economic pursuits, women are left in their homes to shoulder both the household works and the farm works. As irrigation is an integral part of agriculture, women will become more involved in irrigation and related activities.

Women perform both productive and reproductive works. Productive works are works that have economic value and include the production of commodities that are geared towards the market. Reproductive works are the domestic works of the household and are generally not considered "work" because these do not directly contribute to the production of tradable products (Zwarteveen,M. 1994). Common gender norms assume that women carry out only reproductive works in society and their productive roles are overlooked. As already mentioned, the concept of male superiority in different spheres has been largely instrumental in promoting this kind of view of social reality.

Not that this dominant view has not gone unchallenged. From as early as the mid-19th century the concept of male supremacy was challenged. As a result of this critique, many different types of knowledge are emerging which try to understand social realities. Many sociological and anthropological researches have shown that women's location in and experience of most situations is different from that of men. The situation is less privileged and unequal for the women. It is not only unequal but women are oppressed,

restrained, used and abused by the men. Above all, women's experience of differences, inequality, and oppression varies by their social location. This type of knowledge has given rise to theories of gender differences, gender inequality and gender oppression (Ritzer, G. 1996). A pioneering work concerning women had been undertaken by Frederick Engels in "The Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State", in which he had sought to critically explain women's unequal position and oppression. He argued that women's subordination results not from her biology but from the social arrangements, which the society legitimizes like the institution of family.

Global Concerns on Women

Women's concerns began to be addressed to some extent with the formation of certain global institutions. The Commission on the Status of Women was established in 1946 under the auspices of the United Nations (UN) as a subsidiary body of the Economic and Social Council. This commission's role was to create guidelines and to formulate actions to improve the situation of women in the economic, political, social, cultural and educational fields. In the early 1950s, the UN called on governments to stop discrimination against women on the basis of race, sex, language and religion. The underlying emphasis of these concerns can be interpreted as being protective towards the women. During the 1960s, there were feminists' movements in North America and Western Europe, which was concerned with women's reproductive rights, violence against women, sex discrimination and freedom from sexual domination, etc. (Bhadra, 2001).

The protective concerns for the women of the 1960s began to be criticized in the 1970s. The seminal work by Easter Boserup (1970), explored women's role in the productive sphere. In her (now famous book) *Women's Role in Economic Development*, she

examined the division of labour in African, Asian, Latin American countries – in the process of examining the works done by the women in these societies. She shows that women are involved in productive spheres and that they do contribute to the national economy. She argues that these facts have been largely ignored by development agencies. Boserup's study illustrated the negative effects of development interventions on women (Boserup, 1970). This insight brought about many changes in the perspective regarding women and development.

The UN declared the decade from 1975 to 1985 as the Women's Decade. This period led to the birth of Women In Development (WID) approach. The term, "Women in Development "(WID) was coined by the Women's Committee of the Chapter of the Society for International Development at Washington, D. C. With the WID approach the focus shifted from the reproductive roles of women to the productive roles. The main argument of this approach was that development interventions, by focusing on men only, have resulted in the marginalizing women from the development arena. To overcome this, the WID approach argued for the need to target women. It also emphasized women's access to services and technology. The policies and programmes of WID were targeted towards solving the practical needs of the women and improving their conditions.

The concept of WID came under attack by feminists who argued that the problem of women was more of equity in development rather than integration with development. Subsequently, the term Women And Development (WAD) replaced the WID concept. With the WAD advocacy, policies were formulated based upon equity; emphasis was given to women's equal participation in development and improving the conditions of women (Bhadra, C. 2001).

Since the late 1980s the acronym Gender and Development (GAD) has been gaining ground. One of the reasons for its popularity vis-a-vis the earlier acronyms is that it perceives the problem more holistically and the policy recommendations that follow seek to address concerns that relate not only to women, but to men as well. Gender is a socio-cultural construct that has variation within cultures and over time. GAD focuses on the roles of men and women because it is by analyzing the differences between the roles/relationships of men and women that the discrepancy of men and women can be understood. Needless to say, the GAD approach focuses both on the productive and reproductive roles of women and tries to integrate men and women within the development process. GAD, it is argued tries to fulfill the strategic needs of women by empowering them and improving their position in society.

In Nepal, the global concerns of women have been reflected in different policies and programmes of the government as well as of the NGOs and INGOs. The WID policy was mentioned in the Fifth Development Plan (1975-1980). The WID approach helped rural Nepali women to satisfy their practical needs to some extent. The WAD approach helped women to be economically independent by providing credit, and skill. The Ninth Five-Year Plan stipulated many GAD policies and programmes by mainstreaming gender equality and women's empowerment in different sectors. (Pokheral, and Mishra, 2001). Irrigation has been one of the key sectors where concrete steps taken have been taken for towards strengthening the role of women.

Before, looking into the role and participation of women in irrigation, it is essential to understand how scholars conceptualize irrigation as an enterprise. It is also necessary to understand how irrigation in Nepal in general has been categorized.

Concept of Irrigation Management

Based on the management of systems, irrigation in Nepal can be broadly categorized into two types: The Farmer Managed Irrigation Systems (FMIS) and the Agency Managed Irrigation Systems (AMIS). The FMIS in Nepal have had a longer history than the AMIS. For centuries the Nepali farmers have been managing irrigation systems without any outside help. It is estimated that over seventy percent of the irrigated land is irrigated by FMIS. AMIS have been launched by the Irrigation Department and are usually managed by some agency. Studies that have compared AMIS and FMIS have shown that FMIS have stronger water users group and are more efficient compared to AMIS (Pradhan, 1988). In AMIS the recent government policy initiative has been towards handing over part of the system management to the farmers. This policy is guided by the emphasis on a more participatory management program Thus for irrigation management to be more effective and efficient the users groups have a crucial role to play. It has already been mentioned that women are quite involved in agriculture and irrigation.

Prior to the entry of sociological and anthropological knowledge in irrigation, the enterprise was seen purely as a technical input to increase agricultural production and was understood in terms of engineering models. After the entry of knowledge from the social sciences, irrigation began to be viewed as a social process. As the noted sociologist Walter Coward points out, irrigation as a social process involves institutions and organizations that are fused together through roles (Coward, 1985). As a social enterprise the major social processes of irrigation consists: (1) Water Acquisition, (2) Water Allocation and Distribution (3) System Maintenance (4) Resource Mobilization (5) Conflict Management (Sharma, 1992; Uprety, 1989). The subsequent section examines these processes in Nepal in more detail.

Roles and Responsibilities of Women and Men in Different Irrigation Activities

Water acquisition: This is the process of acquiring water from the water source. Studies show that men participate more than women in this process. The difficulties in reaching headworks, may be one important factor in limiting women's participation. But there are some instances of women participating in this activity. For example, if the family has to provide certain labour days and there are no men in the family to do so then the women may take part in this process. Or if there is paid labour then the women may partake for monetary gains (Ghimire, 1996).

Water allocation: Water allocation means assigning rights to users and determining who shall have how much of water (Uprety, 1989). If there is a WUA, then water is allocated according to the rules and procedures of the WUA. It is the executive committee of such association that lays down the related rules for water allocations at all levels, from the main branch to secondary till the tertiary levels. In the absence of the WUA, water is allocated usually according to the customary rules of irrigation. The main customary law prevalent in society is that the upper stream lands will have the first priority over the irrigation water. Only after the upper stream farmers irrigate their lands will the lower stream farmer have access to the irrigation water. Another customary law is that the water is allocated according to the size of the land of the farmer. But these customary laws are not usually practiced. Even in the presence of a formal WUA the rich and the powerful farmers usually have the upper hand in irrigation. Women do not have substantial role in deciding how much irrigation water to allocate and to whom.

Water distribution: Water distribution is the actual delivery of water to the fields. Women and men both are involved in this process. Men are more involved in distributing water at the main

branch whereas the women are active in distributing water at the branch and field channel levels (Ghimire, 1996). If the irrigation canal passes near from their homesteads then women of all groups irrespective of class, ethnicity, class and household size and structure are involved in the distribution works. Sometimes in the absence of men in the households, the women of the hills, carry on night irrigation by forming small women-groups. But the distance of the fields and the canal is one important determining factor for this activity. It is only the upstream women farmers, who carry night irrigation. Women find it difficult to walk long distances from their homes in the dark due to both physical and social constraints (Ghimire, 1996).

System maintenance: System maintenance is the repairing and cleaning of the canal for regular and efficient water acquisition and water allocation (Uprety, L. 1989). Both men and women participate in this process. Women of those households, who do not have male family members and cannot also send hired labourers, participate by providing labour.

Resource mobilization: Resource mobilization is an important process of irrigation because it is only through effective mobilization of cash and labour material that an irrigation system can develop and be sustained for a long time (Uprety, 1989). Women of lower income groups usually provide labour. Sometimes women provide labour for more days than the men when constructed activities of the irrigation canal takes place under paid labor. Cash acts as an incentive for their participation (Ghimire, 1996). The fact that more women are involved in resource mobilization does not imply that women can take decisions regarding issues of resource mobilization. It is the executive committee of formal or informal farmer users association takes the

necessary steps regarding what types of resources to be mobilized and how.

Conflict management: Disputes and conflicts usually occur among the farmers. Inadequate and unequal water, nocturnal stealing of water, etc. are some of the main causes, which give rise to ill feelings and disputes. If there is a WUA, then it is according to the rules of the WUA that the culprits are punished (Uprety, 1989 & Ghimire, 1996).

Studies that have examined the processes outlined above have shown that both women and men are involved in irrigation and related works (Zwarteveen, 1994; Ghimire, 1996; Neupane, 1997; Dawadi, 2001). The levels and types of participation of men and women vary. And participation even varies among and between women. Men participate both in labour contribution and decision-making process whereas women participate more in labour contribution and do so negligibly in decision-making. Until and unless women are involved in the water users association, which is the deciding body regarding irrigation water, it cannot be said that women are effectively participating in irrigation process. The Nepali government, through the specific legislations it has passed, has acknowledged that Nepali women are engaged in irrigation and related works. For instance, the Irrigation Policy 1992 states that there should be at least 20 percent women members in the general body of the WUA. The general members of the WUA are the heads of those households who have land in the command area of the irrigation canal. Thus, only the women having land registered in their names become the general members of the WUA.

But being general members does not guarantee the participation of women in the proceedings of the WUA. For instance, the elderly widows might have land registered in their names but it is their adult sons that conduct all agricultural activities. These old women

do not take part in the WUA meetings; their sons represent them. Then legal documents may identify women as landowners but this may be due to the fact that their husband/s, father/s, in-law/s, brother/s have more land than prescribed by the land ceilings and so in order to escape land taxation, these may have been registered in their wives', sisters', daughters', daughters'-in-law names. (This has frequently been observed in the Tarai). These types of women automatically become the general members of the WUA but do not usually have any interest to participate in the WUA. The aforementioned category of women might not even know that they are the general members of the WUA. On the other hand there are some young widows, separated wives, de facto women heads whose husbands/men in the family have migrated out for work. These women are the ones who are most involved in irrigation and related works. But they might not have landholdings in their names and subsequently cannot be the members of the WUA. In case of men also, there may be tenants (men) cultivating lands of absentee landlords. The landlords become the WUA members though they may rarely come to the farms except to collect their agricultural rents. In such cases, the tenants conduct all the irrigation activities but they have no say in the WUAs (Ghimire, forthcoming). The policy which states that there should be 20 percent women members in the WUA association, seen in this light, seems to be a lame instrument for promoting women's participation in irrigation.

It need not come as a surprise that the formulation of this policy (that stipulates a certain percentage of the WUA to be women) in Nepal coincides with the period of the global popularity of the GAD concept, within the development arena generally and in the third world countries particularly. In 1992, there was the Dublin Conference on Water and it was followed by a number of conferences emphasizing women's role in water. Accordingly, The Water Resources Act 1992, Irrigation Policy 1992, Irrigation Policy

2002, have addressed women. The Water Resource Act (1992) is seen to be working towards providing equity to women concerning the domestic use of water. Article 7(1) of this Act provides the order of priority that should be followed in utilizing water resource. Water for drinking and domestic purposes is listed as the top priority followed by irrigation, agricultural, hydroelectricity uses etc. The women in Nepal generally fetch water for drinking purposes and for domestic use. Studies have shown that women use the water of the irrigation canal for domestic use also (Ghimire, 1996). If the irrigation canal passes by the household, then the women of that household use the water for washing clothes, dishes, watering and bathing cattle. This is particularly true if the household is poor and does not have its own water source. Studies (Ghimire, forthcoming) have also noted that after the WUA has been formed, the main priority goes to irrigation water and women who had been previously using the water are deprived access. There are no means to safeguard the needs of these women though it is legally stated that water for drinking and domestic purpose should be given the first priority.

Similarly, the Irrigation Policy (1992) has made provision to include women users in the water users associations but it has done so in an incomplete manner. It assumes 'women' as a homogenous group and overlooks the differences and needs of different categories of women. Going still further, the Irrigation Policy 2002 states that in the Water Executive Committee (WUC) there should be at least two female members. But this policy also does not define membership criteria nor does it categorize the types of women who should be the executive member; neither does it say anything about the selection or the appointment criteria. Studies (Ghimire, S. forthcoming) that have examined women in irrigation have already noted that there are different categories of female members in the WUA and that their participation in the WUA varies accordingly. It

is not sufficient to say 'women' should be involved in the WUA and in the WUC; it is necessary to define which types of women and to lay down the criteria for their selection.

Researches in irrigation have shown that the men in the WUA generally do not properly communicate about the agendas and proceedings to the women members. Not being fully aware of what is happening, the women do not feel inclined to attend the WUA general meetings; when they do attend the WUA general meetings, women are usually hesitant to speak out their irrigation needs and problems (Ghimire, 1996; Dawadi, 1999; Udas, 2002). It is usually assumed by women that they have to be "educated" and "eloquent" to give their opinion in such large gatherings.

Prevailing Situation and Overcoming the Impasse

Women participate and will continue to participate in irrigation works as more men migrate to urban areas in search of economic alternatives. But it is not all that all women are engaged in irrigation. It is usually the poor women of nuclear families, whose husband/family members has/have migrated out in search of other economical avenues, or separated women or young widows with children who perform irrigation works (Ghimire, 1996; Dawadi, 1999). These women are mostly young and married women with little or no education. There is a need to strengthen this group's participation in the decision making process by involving them in the WUC (and not 'women' in general). Studies (Sharma, S. 2001) have also shown that those who qualify for the leadership positions in the WUC are those who come from well off households and have the time to pursue community activities; they are not tied by domestic chores, can travel to the district headquarters when required and are educated and can communicate with outsiders. Studies have shown that it is those who can speak the *bikas* language made possible sometimes by their higher educational

attainment and at other times by prior involvement in government offices and at other times by involvement in student politics at school and college levels, that usually occupy such positions (Sharma, S. 2001). In this context, the representation of women in bodies such as the WUA and the WUC has been simply a token to bring in other powerful men (namely their husbands) by proxy.

It has also been observed that in the pretext of involving (according to a fixed quota) women, it is usually the educated women of higher class that are selected as members. This category of women is more often than not, educated, vocal, have time and resources for traveling but might not in fact represent the needs of the actual women irrigators. Initiatives to enhance participation should try to reflect the women irrigators' needs, interests and their workload.

Studies(Ghimire, forthcoming) have shown that women who are involved in irrigation disseminate information of the proceedings of the WUA informally. These women either go to their neighbours or relatives to discuss their irrigation needs and problems. If some sort of informal smaller committees can be formed within the larger WUA bodies, the women would certainly feel more free and convenient to discuss their problems. It has been clearly demonstrated that women do better than men in conducting small credit and income generating activities. Unfortunately, in irrigation related activities, women's involvement does not directly provide them with monetary returns. If involvement in irrigation can be linked with credit, such as multipurpose type of co-operation, then women might be stimulated to participate in irrigation management. However, in the name of development and participation, women should not be forced to sacrifice the little extra time they have had for themselves.

Women and Irrigation: Balancing Practical With Strategic Needs

Nepali women are substantially involved in irrigation. Their participation varies with their household structure and other social factors. Generally speaking, it is the women who come from nuclear families, those who have less amount of irrigated land, have little or no education that are mainly involved in irrigation works. Their involvement, is, however, limited to labour works and have a marginal role, including decision-making, in WUA. The Irrigation Policy 1992, has tried to work towards equity concerning women by stating that 20 percent of the general members should be women. The Irrigation Policy 2002 has moved in the direction of empowering women by stating that in the WUC, out of the 9 members 2 should be women. These steps are commendable. There are, however, gaps between the intentions of the policies and the social reality.

This makes it relevant to take into cognizance both the practical as well as strategic needs in formulating policies that aim to strengthen women's role in society. As related to irrigation, getting adequate, equal and timely irrigation water are some important practical needs of the women. Likewise, having access to the water of the irrigation canal for domestic use is also another important practical need of the women. If women become the WUC members they can act towards safeguarding their water rights. But the tenure of the WUC membership is such that not all people can qualify to become the members. Representation of women in WUC addresses the larger strategic needs of women. While endeavors at the micro levels are geared towards satisfying the practical needs of women, the women's social movement taking place in Nepal is concerned with their larger, longer-term strategic gender needs. At this juncture it is necessary to see the practical and strategic needs of women as complementary and convergent and not as divergent or working at cross purposes. More research needs to be done on how incentives (such as those stipulated in the Irrigation Policy) could address their immediate practical needs as well as work towards fulfilling women's larger strategic gender needs as well.

Note

The paper mainly deals with the findings of the research on women and irrigation, conducted by the author over the years. In particular, one research was conducted in the hills (unpublished Masters' thesis) and the other in the Tarai. I express my gratitude to The International Irrigation Management Institute (IIMI) for providing me the grant to conduct the research in the hills and to The Nepal Water Conservation Foundation (NWCF) for enabling me to conduct the study in the Tarai. The editorial inputs provided by Dr. Sudhindra Sharma are duly acknowledged.

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WATER RESOURCES IN NEPAL: INSTITUTIONAL ANALYSIS BASED ON LEGAL PROVISIONS

Shyamu Thapa Magar

Introduction

Natural resources are fundamental to life and are the basis of livelihood for human beings as well as animals. Water resources also play important role for survival and prospects for biotic environment. For the livelihood activities, all kinds of sources of water are important to the viability of ecosystem. Water resources come in different forms and have multiple uses. Water is present in surface stocks (lakes, ponds) and flows (rivers), as groundwater in aquifers or as soil moisture. The multiple sources and multiple uses of water resources means the competition between various stakeholders with various interests, especially since water users often involves externalities whereby secondary costs or benefits do not accrue to the water users themselves (Soussan, 1998:181).

The vitality of water for all living creature is explained by showing its scarcity in preset situation that water is in short supply in many parts of the region of Nepal. Water quantity as well as water quality issues are becoming matters of increasing concern. With growing population and intensification of the present agricultural practices, the pressure on water and the need for sustainable water management is increasing due to the growing demand for domestic consumption and agricultural use, which is shown as the importance of water in the life of Yarsha Khola people "without water no life" quotation (Merz, Shrestha and Dhakal et.al.2003:34).

Bandaragoda (2000,1-3) writes in the preface of her "Five Regional Study on Development of Effective Water Management Institutions" the definition of the term "Institution" suggested the framework for Institutional analysis focusing on three pillars such as Laws, policies and administration. The Institutional environment of human actions is seen as a necessary condition for management performance. Effectiveness of water management institutions, therefore, is seen in their ability to provide an appropriate, adequate structure to human actions involved in water management, a structure which can bee used with least transaction costs.

According to Bandaragoda, the term institution is used commonly in our daily life as taken for granted without knowing its real meanings that might have different meanings depending upon the situation and the context. In sociology, an institution is "an organized, established, procedure" (Jepperson, 1991). These procedures are represented as constituent rules of society, or "rules of the game". The Institution defined by Durkheim coated by Bandaragoda (2000:3) is seen as the functions of society by comparing the biological organism as their cause and effect relationship among organs claims that an institution, norms, tradition, or whatever, will be maintained as a result of positive social effects. Institutions set the ground rules (Taylor, 1991:283) for resource use and established the incentives, informations, and compulsions that guide economic outcomes.

Bandaragoda coats Merrey (1993) explaining that institution can be both formal and informal. Informal practices become rules in their own customs after many years of practice accepted by the society. Behavioral roles of individuals and groups in a given context of

human interaction, aimed to a specified set of objectives are defined as informal institutions which persist as a valuable and useful for the society. Informal institutions have its own local rules and regulations based on customary systems which are very practical and regulate its members in every social, economic and political affair among various indigenous and ethnic organizations (Bhattachan, 1997:23, Dhakal, 1996:39-49). For the enforcement of laws, rules and regulations, institutions helped to provide the basic structure to the process as the procedures including the penalties or sanctions for violations, and sometimes rewards for compliance. In general, the definition given above as well as the terminology used in practice tried to defined the policies and objectives of the institutions its rules, and regulations, and core values of the organization such as operational plans and procedures, accountability, incentive mechanisms, norms, traditional practices and customs (Bandaradoga, 2000:5).

To use water resources in equitable basis and to achieve a sustainable development and management of water resources, it has become necessary to built country's capacity to plan and manage its resources and to implement water resources policies that incorporate principles such as water conservation, cost recovery, stakeholder participation, environmental protection etc. Focusing on these issues, national policies, rules and regulations based on water resources has been studied and tried to find out the gaps in coordination and linkages between upper level and lower level institutions in national and local level. This study will also try to find out the existing institutional practices in local and national level based on the legal provisions. This study will be also helpful for those who are interested on the legal provisions of water resources management in legal anthropological aspects.

Key points: Water, policy, Institutions, and Management

The main objective of this paper is to carry out analysis on water management and arrangements in existing water sectoral institutions in Nepal in terms of their appropriateness and adequacy for the management of water resources, which will focus on broad areas of inquiry of water policy, water laws and water administration in Nepal.

Material and Methods

Primary and mostly secondary informations were collected for the fulfillment of writing this paper. Various relevant water related policies, government's circulars and related official publications were reviewed to analyze the existing rules and regulations to find out the gaps during its implications. Fieldwork was done in the Indrawati river basin area in 2001 to find out the local processes on using the water resources in their daily life, local water resource management procedure and distribution among villagers in irrigation system. Key informant interviews were conducted with (District Local Development Office, Chief Officer of District Drinking Water Corporation Office and from District Irrigation Office) as well as focused group discussions were held among Water User Groups to find out the local distribution process and its existing practices in irrigation sector as well as linkages between government and local institutions.

Water Related Legal provisions in National level: Water policy and its development

The goal of water resource development in the country is to tap and utilize water resources for gaining social benefits by ensuring the participation of the private sector. It is believed that developing potential huge water resources of the country will not only meet the country's energy demand but also help to develop agriculture and

industrial sectors, facilitate socio-economic development, and contribute to poverty alleviation by covering the objectives of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal 2047 focusing on the utilization of the natural resource of the country in sustainable manner. Although, the great effort of formulating overall water resource development and management strategy for the fulfillment of the objectives of the national policy, water resources of the country are not used according to its potentialities (Savenije, et.al 1998).

The overall national level objectives of Water Resource Act, 1992 focused on management and utilization of the available water resources for safe drinking water available for required quantity, increasing agricultural production and generate hydroelectricity for substituting the imports of the petroleum materials in the friendly way to environmental conservation and protection as well as to encourage consumers and private sector's participation in development, management and utilization of water resources in achieving multipurpose objectives in a complimentary way as far as possible.

The government in the ninth five-year plan (1998) emphasizes on the development of overall water resource policy and puts forth the necessity of discouraging earlier sectoral or sub-sectoral policies to move towards managing the growing inter-sectoral water using competition. Currently, efforts of formulating overall water resources development and management strategy are underway with the vision that efficient and judicious harnessing of the water resources can achieve the purpose of maximizing the sustainable benefits of water use to Nepal and thereby contribute to the significant improvement of the living conditions of Nepali people. Water resource development so far, especially in such areas as irrigation, hydropower generation, drinking water supply and sanitation, is far below its potentialities.

The Water Resource Act 2024 was the first significant action for the implications on the enactment of the Canal and Electricity. The policy on irrigation was first adopted in 2045 focusing on people's participatory management from the HMG level. In 2049, HMG came up with overall management of water resources with umbrella coverage in the form of the Water Resources Act, 2049 in more elaboration form on irrigation as well as on hydropower with Irrigation policy 2049 and Hydropower Development Policy 2049. Electricity Act 2049 and the Water Resource Regulations Acts 2050 were enacted thereafter. The Industrial enterprise Act 2049 was also amended 2049 to supplement other policy such as Hydropower Development.

In the water supply and sanitation sub sector, some policy guidelines were adopted in 2042(sixth plan) for basic needs programme. Policy relating to sanitation came out in 2050. It was only 2055 that a comprehensive policy covering both Water Supply and Sanitation, Nepal Water Supply Sector Policy, 2055 was adopted followed by Drinking Water Regulation 2055.

Irrigation Policy 2049 has clear provision of Water Users' Association to Participate in decentralized institution, capacity development, reforms for efficiency, development of technology, service fee collection for observation and management, coordination with agricultural sector, conjunctive use of water, constitute the main features of this policy. This policy also makes clear about the decentralization of authority along with the spelling out of duties and responsibilities of each institution and service provider as well as the provision of users.

Hydropower Development Policy2049, envisages on the opening up to the private sector while retaining the government's role in its development. The policy exempts licensing from small projects up to the capacity of 1000Kw. There is reference to the cooperation

and coordination between the private and government sectors along with the benefit sharing with the local people. Social and environmental effects have to be studied before the project implementation in order to avoid the social and environmental deterioration.

The major emphasis has been given on the maximization of using water resources, private sector involvement, expansion of rural electrification with people's participation and development of fund, priorities on domestic needs, minimization of adverse effects with project affected area and protection of environment. Beneficiaries are required to make their contribution to the development and rehabilitation of the system according to the nature of the policy.

National Water Supply Sector Policy (2055) emphasizes on the establishment of a system, which would enable the communities themselves to take up the leading role in process on the need for the need of identification, selection, formulation, implementation and management of water supply programme. It points towards the end of the HMG/N involvement in implementation of water supply and sanitation projects and strengthen institutions for decentralized service delivery. These policies also envisage on the priority to the disadvantaged people using of local resources, promotion of hygiene and sanitation and minimize environmental effects. Social, economic and technical factors are the major selection criteria for project implementation. It envisage on the hardship for fetching water, felt need of the communities and participatory level of the beneficiaries.

Most of the water supply projects shall be handed over to the users' committee, municipality, water supply related organization or community based organizations. Capital investment by the government shall not exceed 90 percent of the project cost in the case of rural water supply schemes. In the case of rural water

supply projects, users committee has to deposit Rs.1000 per tap or as decided by both the parties for Operation and Management (O&M) fund. Government shall facilitate loan provisions from financial institutions for rehabilitation and extension of water supply projects. Industrial Policy 2049, encourages private sector industries including hydropower focusing on Industrial production to contribute more to the national economy by utilizing local resources and emphasizing in promotion of industries for employment opportunities by developing through industries.

Foreign Investment and One Window policy, 2049 focused on to build up strong economy by focusing on producing goods, generating opportunities, increasing private sector participation for productivity, mobilizing internal resources and focusing on competition of Nepalese industries in international markets.

Sectoral water allocation in the Policy

Water Resources Act of 2024 recognized the rights of individuals, group of individuals or the community to divert water from sources like streams, rivers or ground water to the extent that the extraction does not affect adversely the functioning of government irrigation schemes or hydro-power plants, in the context of using water for irrigation. Water Resources Act 2049 states that the ownership of all water sources of the kingdom will be vested in the state and people will have use-rights so that the resources is utilized for creating national assets and contribute to revenue.

There is a mechanism of sectoral prioritization of water resources in the country in order are,

i) Drinking & domestic use, ii) Irrigation, iii) Agricultural uses (animal husbandry), iv) Hydropower, v) cottage industries, industrial enterprises mining, 6) Navigation, 7) Recreational use, and Others.

Drinking water among the various sectors is given importance as well as active competition among the users is viable. In the river basin area, irrigation is the main sector in the water using activities. Environmental consideration is given more importance besides all these water allocations into various sectors. Policy relating to sectoral water transfer has precisely none existed with respect to inter-sectoral water transferors.

People's Participation in Public/Private Sector Water Management

Public sector participation is encouraged in water resource development by the government through water resource policy. The most visible is in the irrigation sector as evidenced by a large number of community managed irrigation systems. The role of the state provided by the policy is focused only on the technical and financial support for the improvement of the community managed irrigation system. Various projects are being implemented by the District Office of Irrigation to support their community managed irrigation systems. However, the ownership of the irrigation systems remains with the community. The Water Users Group (WUG) registered with the government agency recognized officially is not supported by the government but it is run through the participation by the community itself.

In the development of irrigation system, private sector participation is also recognizes by the government policy though Government does not provide financial and technical support. The support from other agencies such as bank, NGOs and other organizations are allowed positively. Mostly private sector participation is found in the development and operation of the shallow tube wells in the ground water sectors for the direct benefits of the people.

The recent policy of the government is to promote public/private sector participation in the development of the hydropower. The individuals or a group can obtain government license for the development of hydropower. A number of micro-hydropower projects are currently being developed privately and by groups promoted by the government in some areas where services from the grid lines are not provided. The users receive technical and financial support from the government and also mobilize their resources for development.

In the drinking water sector, the government policy is to encourage the community participation in the development, operation and maintenance of water supply systems. The government owns almost all the drinking water systems in the urban areas. However, the hand pumps in the urban areas are privately owned. License is not required for extracting ground water for any individuals and group.

Users' participation at all stages of projects implementation including decision making and cost sharing for development need infra-structures by the first irrigation policy 2049. The policy puts forward the vision of implementing joint management systems larger than 500 hac. in the hills and 2000 hac. in the plains though smaller systems than these sizes would be turned over completely to the users. The initiation through the users is given more importance for the government support by forming the Water Users Associations (WUA) from among the users. The WUA organizes and mobilizes the users and maintain linkages with the agency. The WUA is registered with the government agency in order to provide legal entity. The WUA facilitates the interaction between the users and the agency officials during the design and implementation of the project as the policy emphasizes "participatory approach".

Water User's Associations

In Water Resources Act 2049, clearly defined about the constitution of Water Users' Association as a corporate body with the statement written in policy is "people willing to make use of water resources for collective benefits on an institutional basis may form a Water Users' Associations (WUA) as prescribed". It has to be registered as a person before the officer or authority. It becomes a corporate body having perpetual succession. It has right to acquire, enjoy, sell, dispose or arrange by any means of moveable and immovable property and it may sue or may be sued as person against it.

Those users, who wanted to utilize water from canal for irrigation is developed by His Majesty's Government, should have nine members at least including two women is allowed to form executive committee. With fixed registration fee, water users have to apply to irrigation office in the district. More than sixty-seven percent users should present to the meeting who will be automatically become general members. If the committee members do not work properly, complain from two third of the members to the related irrigation office, will dissolved through the initiation of the District Irrigation Office. For the empowerment and participation, women are involved in WUA for the equal utilization of the resources as well as their participation but it has not stated about the provision of women's participation in Drinking Water User's Association clearly.

During the field work in *Thangpaldhap, Thangpalkot* and *Gunsa,* in Indrawati River Basin area, in Sindhupalchowk district, Water User's Associations are quite active to use water resources for their benefits. Their aim is not only to use the resources but also to uplift the socio economic condition of the people with the vision to pay back their loans. Most of the water users are formed only to use the resources for getting the *kulo* for irrigation only.

During the implementation of the project, certain percentage of the capital costs through cash and labor contribution from the users' is required in the nominal cash contribution. Users' are allowed to implement small-scale project themselves. The users are responsible for repairing and maintaining the system by contributing the substantial level of labor. With the deviations from one systems to the other, awareness in the sense of ownership and incentives have been the prime driving forces to create institutions for resource mobilization, record keeping, sanctioning, water fee collection and account auditing for achieving distribution and production of resources in an equitable basis among users in the river basin.

The operation of the system is the sole responsibility of the users except for the government owned system. Water allocation defined the water rights of the users. Thus, the users can acquire and distribute water within users in a system. The water allocation within the system is governed by a set of rules, which is usually drawn by the users themselves. Mutual consensus on sharing water from common sources is found through user's participation in system operation among farmers and their committee members. During water deficit periods, system may share water by adopting time-based turns mostly in days and nights. In most cases, there are formal documents describing legal access to the sources. Sharing from the common intake from more than one system, the amount of water for irrigation is shared proportionately through the contribution of labor for intake maintenance.

The rules of water allocation to different places inside irrigation system is based on the time, land size, water discharge, canal net work, location and number of outlets, number of water users, type of land to be irrigate, shape of the command area, rainfall, patterns and demands of the farmers. Both formal and informal WUA are responsible to carry out operation and management related to

acquisition, control, distribution, and using water for irrigation systematically. Resources are mobilized through fee collection and labor contribution among members.

The user's participation is limited to the development of micro hydropower only. The users have to take the full responsibility for the operation and maintenance in case of community owned micro-hydro after commissioning. However, they receive technical support from the government in case of major maintenance.

Water Law and Legislation

Water Law in Nepal consists of customary rights written in civil code and statutory law clearly. The customary right over water is acquired throughout year of usages as codified status in the Muluki Ain, 2020, the National code of Nepal. The right to access on drinking water and irrigation was based on prior use, i.e., first come first service basis. However, on many occasions, the users themselves have made readjustments in water use from irrigation to drinking water.

As the process of water laws, rules and regulations, Water Resource Act 2049 was the first comprehensive attempt on using water resources focusing mainly on the customary water use right recognized legally by means of the National Legal Code 2020 (1963). Public interest is given more importance than the interest of individual by HMGN and has authority to take any kind of natural resources from the country by giving compensation to the local people.

Surface Water

The legislation on water sector dates back to 2020B.S only. Water issues had seldom been a problem demanding the legal and regulatory measures in the past. Recently there has been paradigm

shift in treating water as a capital commodity rather than a free commodity.

The responsibility of water management is distributed throughout different levels of administration from highly centralized level to the local bodies (to some extent). There is not any distinction on ground water and surface water in the water legislation and has not clearly written about the authority of the state over the resources of the country. State has full authority to use the water resources for the public use as well as have power to control over those people who are utilizing and mobilizing resources.

According to the Legal Code 2020(Ninth Edition), the land rehabilitation section has clearly stated "A person whoever built Kulo (small canal) has the authority to use water first. No one is allowed to restrict those people who are using it since from the beginning". Other people can use water but not from the same source. New canal can be built without hampering the situation of the previous user. The duty for the maintenance goes to users. If sharecroppers are not able to maintained, then the landlords are allowed to report to Government office if it is possible. Farmer is allowed to take water through canal to use in his land. Compensation should be given for those lands that are under the irrigation canal according to current rule.

Glaciers

Most of the river water resources are from the Glaciers though there is not any clear legal provision regarding glaciers.

Ground Water

It is important to require license for the survey and exploration and exploitation of groundwater resources in order to present interference with existing rights. It is also essential to adopt

protective measures to prevent the depletion of aquifer but there is no regulation to take care of this aspect. The WRA 2049 defined groundwater as water resources made applicable to harvest by all users. The legislation has linked ground water directly with the surface water. The protection of drinking water sources, pollution control, ground water recharge, overdraft and water quality problems are the key issues needed to be addressed clearly in legislation. Ground water is allowed to use by the landowner who owns the land. There is no need of license to use ground water for domestic purposes in practice. Land and water rights are interrelated with each other. Right to water is related with right to land. In the case of groundwater and water in wells, rights to land and rights to water are inter-linkages directly. In the irrigation system, local people's right is attached to the rights in the command area. Rights to water are always transferred with the right to land, whether by purchase or inheritance.

State has the right over the water resources of the country in whatsoever form, even springs, wells and groundwater on private land.

The rights of individuals, or group of individuals or the community are allowed to divert water from sources like streams, rivers or groundwater to the extent that the extraction does not affect adversely to the functioning of government irrigation schemes or hydropower plants

Existing Legal Instruments for Ensuring the Accountability of Officials/Water service providers and Users

Formally there are two types of legal instruments for ensuring the accountability of water resources in the different systems.

For the irrigation development, expansion and conservation, an irrigation and river-controlled committee will be established in each

district. There will be seven members in the committee. Fixed Service fee charging of three members will be there to charge fee from users after handing over the project to local user and service charge from it.

Water Resource Regulations 2049, has the provision of District water resource committee with nine members for the utilization of water resources in the District. Usually two instruments are common for the water accountability in water sectors which are, HMG Officials providing water services and Users using water resources. Officers are prescribed to provide licenses to those who apply in proper formats to utilize water resources. Contracts might be given for the utilization of water resources and fix the terms and conditions for the use of service and realize the service charge. Those who utilize the resources without any authority or misuse the services including not paying the charges properly will not allow using. The prescribed officers may cancel the license incase of contradiction to the written act as well as have authority to impose fine.

Property rights

According to the constitution of Nepal in Article 17, all citizens of Nepal have right to earn property, use it and have rights to sell and get profit from mobilizing it. For the good agricultural production, country should focus for the economic development of the people by running land reformation program to develop agriculture and to promote small industries. Women should be promoted by focusing the program of education, health and employment by making them participate to focus maximum welfare of the rural people.

The establishment of the general code of conduct while exercising the right of the public to use water to fulfill various domestic and industrial needs has recognized the customary water use right

prioritizing for irrigation. The recent WRA 2049 regulate the exploitation and management of the nation's wealth. Permission has been allowed to utilize, conserve, manage and develop energy and to protect the environment from water pollution under the authority of the government of Nepal.

Legal Provision of controlling environment and Water pollution

Muliki Ain (tenth edition) clearly states about the prohibition of any forms of contamination to the water body limiting the access of others to use the same water as well as prohibits the discharge of water and sewage into groundwater aquifer. Irrigation Act 2049 also clearly states that no one has right to pollute water by mixing any litter, any kind of garbage, industrial development waste, and poisonous chemical waste. No one is allowed to utilize the resources hampering the environment occurring landslide, floods and erosion. The government is empowered to prescribed necessary terms and condition for carrying out such activities by any individual or organization. The government may designate environmental inspector for inspection of activities, who has causes adverse effect on the environment.

For the protection of Environment, Users are allowed to plant trees near to the canal and sub canal. The Industrial Enterprises Act, 2049 gives due consideration to environmental and pollution problem. New industries have to comply with the predetermined standards against pollution and environmental effects. The act provides some incentives for the installation of pollution control equipment. In the case of Rural Water Supply System, the intake area at the water sources is being protected through fencing against the external pollution. To extend the use of hydroelectricity for minimum utilization of fuel wood and render necessary assistance in the conservation of forest and environment, this policy has also

focused on the construction and operation of hydroelectric project to have minimum adverse effect on the environment.

The Existing Water Administration and its Organization functions

For the utilization and management of country's Water Resources in a sustainable manner, various appropriate institutions are required for the development at the national, regional, district and local levels.

In spite of abundance water resources, water necessity is not fulfilled due to having imbalance between the supply and demand. Government is facing various problems on managing of water resources for the fulfillment of the necessity of water resources.

After the promulgation of the water acts and policies, most of the water resources are under the authority of government. Government's presence was the common practices in all aspects of activities in the past but People's participation is given more emphasis for the development and management of water sector in the new policies, rules and regulations.

Present organizational structure of the policy can be divided into various levels- such as coordination, implementation, operational, and regularity. According to the government's policy, the involvement of the community organizations, NGOs and the private sector to manage the water sector gradually replace government bureaucracy and its services. This results the government to move away from its involvement in resource utilization and emphasis is given for the involvement of the local community. For the appropriateness of institutional arrangements, government is supporting on the involvement of community organizations, which is declared clearly by the policy.

Inter–linkages between various organizations

Though there are several policies, laws and legislations relating to the development and management of water resources in various sectors such as irrigation, domestic water supply and recreational work in separate department, the government institutions are not able to work alone efficiently. About the resource utilization in the river basin, all polices, rules and regulations are silent but the Ninth Five-year plan has put emphasis on the integrated development of water resources on the basis of a river basin.

Government had the whole responsibility for development and management by fulfilling the water demand of people with the help of its various numbers of departments and their supervisory ministries. Most of its new programme never included the users and it was in the unsatisfactory form. For the sustainability of using resources, new efforts were brought to encourage local people by letting them to participate in using resources as well as participate on maintenance and development of the project launched in their area.

Existing several sub-sectoral plans are lacking during co-ordination and cohesion. Sub-sectoral agencies for irrigation, domestic water supply and hydropower policies based only on their limited needs. Various conflicts over resource utilization and ecological systems might seen clearly due to the lack of coordination of various undeveloped sub sectors programme which helps to deteriorate ecological system such as lowering of groundwater level and drying up of wells in certain pocket through the destruction of the forest.

Although having various sectors and sub-sectors in various levels in different resource utilization, it is very difficult to implement the objectives through the interference of using politics by different politicians and higher-level officers. Most of the decisions are

referred to a higher-level officers and it is widely practiced in most of the HMG offices.

Various main agencies are associated with the water resource association with the existing coordination level such as water resources development Council, National Planning Commission and District Water Resources Development Committees. For inter-sectoral water allocation, only informal arrangements are existed, such as water mills and irrigation.

There are no institutional arrangements at Indrawati river basin level to cope up with multiple use of water except WUA. With the help of some external agency, some systems are used such as mini-hydropower agreement with the system of Irrigation, Water Turbine and saw mill.

Organizations and its Functional Management

For the Management of Organizations, three levels of managerial functions are clearly seen. In the section of management, Policy formulation, Planning, Public participation and inter-organizational coordination, Research and Evaluation, Resource mobilization and macro-level resource allocation, Water Service Delivery Functions, Design, Construction, Operation & Management and Monitoring and Evaluation will be conducted in the given criteria.

After the Sixth Five year plan, Government department took new programme of participating community and private sector for the sustainable development so that the burden of the government over maintenance, operations and management of any project avoid the difficulties of finding financial sources for new sectors which was under the authority of government before.

The functions of the government are carried through different layers of administrative structure with growing emphasis on community

and private sector participation in the development and management of water sector. The organizational structure of water administration is believed to be in three levels via co-ordination level, Implementation and Operational level, and Regulatory level.

Some number of councils, commissions and line ministries are also involved at the Policy, planning and decision making level. The National planning Commission (NPC) is responsible for the national planning and coordination of all sectors. For the water sector, The Water and Energy Commission and its Secretariat (WECS) were established as a coordination and advisory body. Its ability to coordinate the numerous agencies involved in a water sector has not been found effective due to lack of explicit authority. The National Water Resources Development Council (NWRDC) has the highest authority for decision making on water related issues. Member of political party, senior government officers, and non-government officers are representing to NWRDC. The Secretariat of NWRDC is the secretariat of Water Energy Commission.

Two levels of institution on Water Resource administration and management are clearly seen such as, central level and local level. In the central level, The Ministry of Water Resources is responsible for hydropower, irrigation, disaster prevention and Ministry of Physical Planning and responsible for drinking water supply, as well as urban infrastructure, housing and roads construction. For Sub-sectoral implementation departments are placed under these two ministries including the Department of Irrigation (DOI), Department of Water Supply and Sanitation (DWSS), Department of Electricity Development (DOED), Department of Water Related Disaster Prevention and two public corporations including the National Water Supply Corporation (NWSC) and the Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA). There are also some departments

related with other line ministries. The Department of Hydrology and Meteorology (DHM) has been placed under the Ministry of Science and Technology and Department of soil conservation is placed under the Ministry of Forestry & Soil Conservation.

Under the Ministry of Water Resources, the Department of Irrigation (the DOI) is responsible for the development and management of surface and ground water. The functions of the Department are (a) planning, designing and implementation of major and minor irrigation systems and sustainable operation and management of major and minor irrigation policy. The central organizations have five divisions each headed by a Deputy Director General.

At the local level District Development Committee (DDC) is the key institution in each district for the planning and implementation of Projects. The DDC liaison with line ministry offices that located at regional and district levels, including irrigation, rural water supply, and meteorology and hydrology. For the planning and implementation of project in VDC, DDC is responsible for the coordination. Water User Association (WUA) or Water User Groups (WUG) is administered through DDCs and VDCs. Solving the dispute and licensing for water is the responsibility of District Water Resource Committee.

The Institutional mechanisms of the Water User's Association have gained popularity since from the involvement of the beneficiaries for planning, implementation, management and operation of water resource projects by following the government's strategy. The involvements of the local people in the local development program are the main efforts of the government to take over the responsibility from the government agencies for service delivery at the local level. This program might bring the ownership feeling for

the local people as well as conservation, protection, management and utilization of the local resources.

Regulatory Institutions

According to the policy of handing over the local resources to the local people from the government side, it gives more responsibility to the government agencies to see local agency's proper work. The more the government sends the programs out to the community organizations and the private sectors, the more responsibility will be on the part of the government to see whether these functions are being carried out properly or not by the interested consumers. The purpose of regulation is to encourage or promote competition for better service and its sustainable use.

The Water Resource Act, 2049 and the related regulations provide for a set of instruments for regulation of water use. As the ownership of water resources is vested on the government, the use of water is regulated through a system of permits. A system of license has been introduced. The District Water Resources Committee in each of the seventy-five districts is empowered to grant license for their utilization. Domestic uses have been put outside the domain of licensing for practical reasons. The committee is chaired by the Chief District Officer and includes members from various district-level sectoral offices.

Conflict resolution

A Water Resource Utilization Investigation Committee at the national level has been provided with the membership of representation of the Ministry of Water Resources (MOWR) as chairman and one representative each from the concerned DDC and the regional office of the National Planning Commission Secretariat for the conflict resolution provided by the Water Act and Water

Rules and Regulations. The Water and Energy Commission will solve any kind of conflict arise to the beneficial during the utilization of water resources on large and middle project. Conflict on small and local projects is resolved by Water Resource Utilization Conflict Resolution committee where there will be four members in each district. If the conflict between two or more districts arises about utilization of water resources, the conflict will be solved by district water resource management committee focusing on water resource and energy utilization, conservation, management and development for formulating policy for advising local agencies that will have nine members.

These commission and committees will work on conflict resolution on behalf of those local individuals who are suffering from launching new projects, and trying to find out its alternative solutions focusing on total budget, total numbers of users and their problems, demands of local people, and the effects to village and environment.

If the dispute is related with two or more districts, one representative from each of the concerned DDCs will be the member of the Committee. The Regulations provided for the guidance of the committee, detailed factors to be considered while deciding on the dispute. User Group Association is also a good dispute resolution institution in the local level.

Inter-system conflicts are mainly attributed to the use of common sources, whereas intra-system conflicts mainly arise from method of water distribution often occurred during dry season or low water flow periods.

In Sindhupalchowk district, there are several cases about filing report on selling of the license of resources utilization in the district. District Development Committees have filed cases in district against District Water Resource committee that no one has

right to sell the license of using resources of the district to any person, where all the resources of the country is vested to His Majesty's Government.

In community level small disputes are solved among the user in the village in front of VDC members. Before coming to the VDC, conflict is solved among the wards members. If it is difficult to solve in the wards, then it will go to VDC and if it is not possible to solve in the VDC level then it goes to the District level.

Inter- system, conflict has been mainly for agricultural use for irrigation, water turbine and water mills (*Ghatta*) in Indrawati river basin. Constructing new Kulo from the same source by the user of same ward or some times by other VDCs arises due to the lack of water resources. Sometimes, people who have not participated during the labor work, paid cash for the necessary fees and repair-works. More conflicts occurred due to water scarcity among users which have been solved through users themselves. For minimizing the conflict within the system, different water rotation schedules have been found in practiced helps to reduce conflict in the river basin area. Institutional Arrangements for Managing Water

Water User's Association is given preference during handing over of any kind of projects related with using water resources from government to local users. In Indrawati River basin area, various WUA related with Irrigation and drinking water systems were formed during launching the program in the VDCs level. Now most of the WUAs are defunct and have never changed their committee member, which is supposed to be changed according to their operational plan.

Politics plays important role on using resources. Only very few people especially elites are active on launching program in their areas and got benefited to use the resources who have large amount of land and wanted to have irrigation project in their field.

Policy are lacking in inter sectoral water transfer system and inter water basin system to use local water resources. For inter sectoral water allocations, only informal arrangements existed as a forms of water mills and irrigation.]

Resource Mobilization

For the social and economic upliftment of the society, utilization, management and protection of water resources without hampering its condition should be given importance for the successful livelihood, through encouraging local people during using local resources by themselves in the guidance of government. To use and mobilize water resources in maximum level, government has made several rules and regulations related with different resources in different Acts. Different provisions such as water pricing, cost recovery and revenue collections are clearly written in these Acts also.

At present, in medium and large surface irrigation projects, government constructs the major infrastructure, while the users associations are supposed to construct their minor cannels. In small Agency Managed Irrigation System (AMIS), deep tube well system and rehabilitation of Farmers Manage Irrigation System Users Association (FMISUA) have to share from 5 to 15% of the construction cost during management.

The Department of Irrigation (DOI) until the Sixth Plan Period had focused all the attention in the development of infrastructures of irrigation schemes. After completion of the projects, the operation and maintenance of AMIS remained full responsibility of DOI, whereas the users were expected to pay service fee to meet the operation and management cost.

Stakeholders are the one who initiate to bring new projects in their place so some time farmers are found to attempt or exert their social

and political power to use more water and convert their dry land into paddy field for cultivating rice. Generally they are found to be reluctant and in most case opposed sharing of water with the new users in the lowest rates. The state intervention and expansion of the command area with financial support from the government, farmers in the upper canal have been found to be ready in adjusting their water rights by sharing with other people from the tail end of the canal. As an example, In Indrawati river basin area, new *kulo* was built from the government support though the new *kulo* system might not help to include all users due to the geographical condition of the settlement People suspected that New *Kulo* might be failed to run water for irrigation after using lot of money from the government and labor contribution from the farmers. Before launching the project to the area, feasibility survey about the water sources for sufficiency for the future, household survey, attitude of the local people about their belief, and tradition, should be studied to prevent from over cost and long lasting utilization.

Water Pricing

In Water pricing systems of Nepal, the traditional cost accounting approach and pricing is usually linked to the cost recovery of Operation & Management (O&M), required to produce services. Basically water pricing was based on the demand-based management, goals for the generation of revenue for operation and maintenance and extension of the system. Irrigation projects are viewed as instruments of development especially for augmenting income (poverty alleviation also), generating employment and food production. The pricing based on the traditional cost accounting approach has also not been done effectively due to the political pressure on fixation of tariffs.

In Nepal, for rural water supply and irrigation sub-sectors, O&M cost recovery-pricing approach is used. While pricing for urban

water supply and electricity, traditional accounting approach of costing is practised. The most recent electricity tariff fixation is, however, a departure from the traditional accounting approach to cover capital cost and depreciation. Electricity prices are fixed also to cover the investment needs for future expansion of electricity services.

One of the strategies for effective water demand management is to establish and implement appropriate water pricing policies that encourage efficient use of water and discourage waste. Water pricing policies is instrumental in achieving important goals as revenue generation for capital recovery, operation and maintenance and extension of the system, promotion for the efficiency in the protection of quality of water resources by reducing the waste discharge.

According to the user pay principle, water users' should pay full cost of resource utilization including operation, maintenance, and cost of the resource development. In the process of setting water tariff, equality and equity is given preferences while using water resources equally. In irrigation, WUAs has full authority and responsibility after the implication of these systems. O&M responsibility goes to the WUAs in small and medium systems after transfer. Charges are collected by WUAs. In large project DOI is responsible for other parts of the project besides WUAs responsibility. On the other hand, it also reflects the strengthening of institutional capacity for sound operation of the whole system.

With the initiation of government agencies, and with the help of external intervention, local people formed Water User Association or Organization to fulfill the need of irrigation scarcity by making water canals for irrigation as well as for micro hydro power in Thangpaldhap, Sindhupalchowk. Phalame Sanghu irrigation projects, Chureta irrigation projects, Kalidaha beltar Irrigation

projects, Taruni besi Irrigation projects, Besi ko kulo, Chimti irrigation project are the main irrigation projects to irrigate the land which help people to convert their unirrigated land. Due to availability of water, the process of converting cropping pattern from two cropping system to three cropping system is common in Thangpaldhap VDC. Three types of crops are produce within one year. Paddy, Chaite Paddy, and Wheat. For Wheat and Chhaite paddy, irrigation is needed. For the good production of Chhaite paddy, Wheat and Kitchen vegetable garden, irrigation is important. Farmers do not have to pay regularly to the government but during building canal farmers have contributed their labor. People paid for the Ghatta owner for grinding flour but not any kind of fee paying system within Users.

The sources of the water in most rural areas are far away from the settlement. Some time sources might not be sufficient for the total village settlement. Rural people still feel that water is a free commodity so hesitation for using for paying water charges is common. Adequate revenue by collecting water charges from the consumers is expected to pay village maintenance workers and caretakers, to meet the expenses for the purchase of required spare parts and other inputs in order to maintain the sustainability of the water supply. For rural water supply, the cost of administration is not so significant. But there are no proper water tariff structures or effective arrangements are existed.

Ehchowk drinking water project was established on 2046. Five thousand households were benefited from 340 drinking water taps but only very few taps are on used. The project was covered to one to five wards in Kiul VDC. Twenty rupees from each household were collected for the drinking water projects besides all the support from the government side. Nangi Danda drinking water

projects was established by depositing some amount of money in district drinking water office.

Water pricing for urban water supply

A structured water tariff has been designed by Nepal Water Supply and Corporation which covers the cost involved in operating, repairing and maintenance, depreciation or debt service, which is higher than working capital requirement. The water tariff has been fixed under the following principles and criteria on their consumption basis are the minimization of wastage of water through meter connection and the size of the connection, affordability, tariffs based on the cost of production and encouraged public to connect sewerage in order to promote public health and sanitation.

Mobilization of natural resources in maximum level costs millions of rupees so after mobilizing it; the cost benefit must be recovered by selling it to the user. Electricity pricing has been determined mainly on the basis of financial or accounting criteria, e.g. raising sufficient sales revenue to meet operating expenses and debt service requirements while providing a reasonable contribution towards the capital required for future power system expansion.

Three different grounds of electricity pricing are practiced such as Electricity distributed through the national grid, the electricity tariff and other charges on the basis of rate of depreciation, reasonable profit, mode of operation of the plant, change in consumer's price index, royalty as mentioned in the Electricity Act 2049.

Cost Recovery System

As the primary organization, department of irrigation is responsible for planning, development and management of irrigation systems in the country. In terms of ownership, irrigation system is classified into two groups such as agency managed and farmers managed

systems. The agency-managed systems are designed, constructed and managed by the government and farmer managed systems, are constructed and managed by the farmers themselves.

It is important to achieve the collected irrigation service fees (ISF) for the O&M cost recovery of the irrigation system. In most of the irrigation projects mostly money has been vested for the benefit of the local people by involving them to work in their local irrigation projects for their uplift of their livelihood. Only their labor contribution is asked to make them feel that the project belong to them. The collections of recovery cost are all needed for their future O&M. In Drinking water supply and sanitation in rural areas, O&M cost recovery is actively collected in those areas where there is the intervention of external agencies such as in ADB supported areas. In this areas water user' group committees are actively functioning, village maintenance woks are carrying out routinely on O&M and users are paying for service, where water user committees are not active and are almost on defunct form. Nepal Water Supply Corporations (NWSC) is responsible for planning, implementation, operation and management of urban water supply in the country. It is authorized to fix the water charges on the basis of cost plus recovery approach but full (replacement) cost recovery is tried to be analyzed because the targeted return on investment is the policy variable that may vary in different situation.

Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) is responsible for planning, designing, constructing operating and maintaining of generation, transmission and distribution of electricity in the country. The NEA is producing electricity from both hydro and diesel projects. Electricity is also produced by the private sector. NEA purchases most of the electricity produced by the private sector in Nepal.

Conclusions

Water resources are wealth of nation. Nepal's unused water wealth is flowing away in absence of good programming and financial constrain. Every society has their own local rules and regulations to mobilize resources for their benefit. The external intervention from the government agencies and other foreign intervention bring support as well as confusion among the user which has been seen from the case studies of some of the farmer managed irrigation systems in Sindhupalhowk district.

Most of the Water user groups are defunct. Water User Association was formed during making *kulo*, irrigation canal or micro hydropower but committee meeting was never held except in some WUA. Lack of awareness on using resources as well as feelings of ownership over the project is clearly seen. People's participation is not sufficient for the sustainable rural livelihood, people's awareness is also important for making people participation for the development. Rules and regulations must be clear and understandable which could not contradict with each other during implementation. The policy of water pricing and cost recovery must have clear provision about the state's role and user's role. Water resources in Nepal should be mobilized in its full potentialities through the proper institutional arrangement and management. The policies, rules and regulations of using country's water resources should be analyzed and try to fill the gap between water related institutions.

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Trends in Local Development

FOREIGN AID, SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND RAPTI IRDP

Madhusudan Sharma Subedi

Perhaps it would be appropriate to refer to 'aid' as 'involvement' of the more developed countries in the economic, political, military and social sectors of developing countries, either directly or through international agencies.

- Katar Singh 1999:310

Introduction

The issue of foreign aid and sustainable development, as it usually applies to the developing countries, is full of the apparent dilemmas and contradictions. There are many roots for these contradictions. The first one is the discrepant interest of sets of actors involved in the aid game. Aid operated projects have appeal to the affluent donors as well as development countries' politicians and decision makers. Projects come into existence and get implemented in a fascinating process. Often they precipitate from multistage processes of which we can identify at least three: agenda setting, planning and implementation. At each stage of these processes there are alternative courses of action, with more open options and relatively more power at the top. There are many variables involved in the equation.

The main concern of this paper is to deal with the role of foreign aid in Nepal's development. In the mid nineties, I got an

opportunity to travel different parts of the Rapti Zone. There I observed two faces: children without clothes, farmers without food, traditional occupational groups without job, and a few well equipped local elites enjoying all locally available facilities. I remembered the Rapti IRDP, a mega project funded by USAID, which was just completed. I talk with local farmers who were far from roadhead, with dalits who were going to *kala pahar*, India for seasonal labour, and I also talked with local elites, contractors who were saying about Rapti project and its benefit to them. I also observed the real life situation of people living is differents of the Rapti Zone. Here, I shall present some realities of Rapti Integrated Rural Development Project (Rapti-IRDP) from the political economy perspective.

Foreign Aid and Sustainable Development: Cross Cutting Issues

Foreign aid in its generic sense is defined as a flow of capital from the developed to less developed or developing countries. It is given at a concessional term and with a view, when it is purely economic, development and general welfare of the people in the recipient countries. Aid generally serves three objectives: political, economic and humanitarian. These three objectives are not separable but are rather mutually interdependent. Whatever objectives a donor agency (country) would like to achieve, the general belief is that aid promotes development in the receiving countries.

The term 'sustainable development' has been used differently by different scholars. Many development workers and donor agencies' reports become incomplete without this word. What are we trying to sustain? This is a very crucial issue for the social scientists, and especially for the sociologist and anthropologists for the developing countries like Nepal where the plans and policies are directly influenced by external forces and donor agencies. It is also

important to note that the conditions and dynamics of the sustainable development vary among different types of activities.

World Commission on Environment and Development, popularly known as Brundtland Commission defines sustainable development as, "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generation to meet their own needs (WCED 1987 quoted in Goldman 2000:293)". In this sense sustainable development is a process that can be maintained without interruption, weakening or loss of valued qualities for future generations. This concept sustainable development leaves scope for dynamic adjustments in institutional factors (such as market, community and state), economic factors (such as investment) and scientific and technological factors, and above all, encompasses both needs and aspirations (Chopra and Kadekodi 1999). However, there are unlimited needs for the present generation itself. How can we think for the future generation without fulfilling basic needs and other requirements for the present generation?   Brown et al. (1987:717), on the other hand, write, "In the narrowest sense, global sustainability means the indefinite survival of the human species across all the regions of the world….. The broadest sense of global sustainability includes the persistence of all components of the biosphere, even those with apparent benefit to humanity". In this definition, it is very difficult to make an indicator to evaluate an empirically based approach to sustainability of development activities. What is or are object(s) of sustainability? How do we know whether something is or is not sustainable, or is more or less sustainable than something else? What are the main threats to and sources of sustainability for the things we want to sustain?

My argument here is that we should take development as a vector of desirable social objectives which should include: increase in real income per capita; improvement in health and nutritional status;

educational achievement; access to resources; a fairer distribution of income; increases in basic freedoms. The sustainable development is a situation in which the development vector does not decrease over time. Thus the concept of sustainable development encompasses: help for the very poor, marginalized and disadvantaged; self-reliant development; basic health and education facilities for all; clean water and shelter for all; human beings, in other words, are the resources in this concept. We should focus not only economic growth but overall development of human beings. Sustainable development must be ecologically sound, economically viable, socially just, and culturally appropriate. Are we getting positive indications by using huge amount of foreign aid in the name of development or the development aid has created dualism? What are the main threats and source of sustainability? This is an issue to evaluate the use and misuse of foreign in the name of development.

Thus, relationship between foreign aid and sustainable development has been one of the most controversial issues in aid literature. There has been big concern both in donor and recipient countries about the effectiveness of foreign aid. By the mid-sixties, evaluation of the impact of aid also became one of the important issues in developing countries. Case studies of some countries had already warned that aid had failed to attain its goals (Dhungana 1981; Hardin 1977; Haaland 1990; Khadka 1991; Mishra and Sharma 1983; Pandey 1983; Poudyal 1982). These studies, however, work as a basis for more rigorous and detailed examination of this issue. Not only are the results inconclusive, but also that these results polarized between the supporters and the opponents of aid. At least, three different views can be mentioned.

One view is represented by the conservatives who consider aid as unnecessary. This group poses the question why the poor people of the industrialized countries should be taxed to support the richer people in the poor countries. This group thinks that aid is supporting the repressive regimes and urban elites. Another view is represented by the radicals who consider aid as "imperialism". This group thinks that aid is used as an instrument to perpetuate the exploitation of the poor countries. The school of dependency falls into this category. According to this group, the assistance that developing countries receive with so many conditions in terms of material import requirement and expatriate in such a way that the net flow remains very low. Of the total aid provided a large proportion is siphoned off by the donors by trying technology and manpower imports of their own origin, which would mean that the net amount available to be actually spent inside the country is far less than what is recorded. Of this net amount some proportion is apportioned for financing the study or observation visit of high-ranking officials from the donor countries. Thus, a large proportion of assistance does not enter into directly productive activities, and whatever proportion is finally used that too suffers from ineffective utilization (Poudyal 1982). It has been empirically found that the net investment out of the gross foreign assistance comes to only about 25 percent. About 10 percent of the total project's cost goes in terms of wages and this is the only benefit that the majority of the poor receive actually (Dhungana 1981). Haaland (1990:1), for example, writes "Aid projects attempting to break this vicious circle has to confront a multifaceted problem involving not only techno-economic and socio-cultural conditions, but also fundamental ethical dilemmas. It is easy to say that one must take poverty and environmental degradation into consideration in planning development projects, it is notoriously difficult to design a practical course of action which promotes economic growth and at the same time leads to a distributions of benefits which reach the poor without having the effects which undermine the ecological basis for viable

adaptation." He further writes "if the development agencies are serious about their task they have to ask questions about the will and the ability of particular government to engage in different phases of development activities from planning, to implementation and maintenance. These questions have to be placed in the political context of different ethnic groups and their ability to influence the government's economic policy, as well as in the contexts of administrative culture influencing the performance of bureaucratic personnel (ibid.:17).

In Nepal, almost all of the foreign aided projects are either directly located in the urban centers or in the close vicinity of such centers. The ultimate result is that the beneficiaries are urban elite and urban well-to-do contractors. The poor and the downtrodden are basically left out for all practical purpose. It leads us to greater dependency. By virtue of foreign aid the rich have been gotten richer while the position of the poor has worsened. One commonality between these two views is that both the radicals and the conservatives have cast a slur upon aid and argue for immediate withdrawal. In between these two arguments lies the pragmatist group. This group believes in the dynamic role of aid and advocates for more aid in order to create the possibilities of development in recipient countries. Some variants for this group recommends for using aid effectiveness as the critical parameter for allocating countries requiring aid.

Theoretically, the contribution of foreign aid in recipient economy will be, (a) to release resource constraints caused either by insufficiency of domestic saving or lack of adequate foreign exchange, and (b) to overcome the technical constraints posed by the lack of technical know-how and skill. The particular role of aid will be applied in the case of countries that have adequate resources but insufficient technological base. The former will be applied in the case of countries, which, over a period of time, have created the technological bases but lack the adequate financial resources for its efficient use.

The rapid development in the science and technology has posed ethical questions to the utilities and values of each of the development concepts in different interval of time and place. Eventually in some cases, they contributed to improve the quality of our lives. But, at the same time, science and technology have equally heightened a sense of risk, which seems to threaten the natural balance of our life support system. How can we evolve human and ecological ethics to economic mores so the sphere of social institutions adequately provides the scope for a new social contract between nature and culture, between rich and poor, and between male and females? Such ethical issues are vital to the idea of striking an interface between ecological sustainability, economic efficiency and sustainable livelihood of the people. The key question confronting us today is: How to achieve a sense of balance where the positive features of each of these mediating agents serve human security? (Hering 1997 n.d.)

Theoretical Debates on Aid and Sustainability

Although sustainability as a concept and value has been widely advocated, and numerous definitions have been given, there is no consensus on the meaning of the term. The main proponents of the concept are probably those who view sustainability in terms of stewardship and preservation of resources and ecosystems with maintenance of sustained yield capacity of resources as primary objectives. It is usually defined as the social and economic change that meets the needs and aspirations of this generation without jeopardizing the ability of future generation to do the same. The intellectual heritage of this school derives mainly from ecological theory and from the tradition of sustained yield resource use and extraction. The social norms often associated with this theme

educational achievement; access to resources; a fairer distribution of income; increases in basic freedoms. The sustainable development is a situation in which the development vector does not decrease over time. Thus the concept of sustainable development encompasses: help for the very poor, marginalized and disadvantaged; self-reliant development; basic health and education facilities for all; clean water and shelter for all; human beings, in other words, are the resources in this concept. We should focus not only economic growth but overall development of human beings. Sustainable development must be ecologically sound, economically viable, socially just, and culturally appropriate. Are we getting positive indications by using huge amount of foreign aid in the name of development or the development aid has created dualism? What are the main threats and source of sustainability? This is an issue to evaluate the use and misuse of foreign in the name of development.

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Although sustainability as a concept and value has been widely advocated, and numerous definitions have been given, there is no consensus on the meaning of the term. The main proponents of the concept are probably those who view sustainability in terms of stewardship and preservation of resources and ecosystems with maintenance of sustained yield capacity of resources as primary objectives. It is usually defined as the social and economic change that meets the needs and aspirations of this generation without jeopardizing the ability of future generation to do the same. The intellectual heritage of this school derives mainly from ecological theory and from the tradition of sustained yield resource use and extraction. The social norms often associated with this theme

involve preservation of resource potential for future generations. Since much of the conceptual and analytic grounding derives from experience in extraction of renewable resources, there is strong concern with rates of extraction in relation to rates of natural and human managed regeneration. The notion of carrying capacity, borrowed from ecological studies of nonhuman populations and applied to human systems, plays a large integrative role. As a result, population growth and/or the growth of economic demand are often seen as the principal sources of threat to agricultural sustainability. Even in the absence of direct population pressure on land, excess use of modern inputs, including agrochemicals, energy, and in some cases irrigation, is also seen as a major threat to sustainability, either through negative environmental impact or resource depletion (Goldman 1995: 292-295). There are problems with making this definition workable because hard decisions need to be made about what is to be sustained. It is not possible to maximize everything at once, including biological, social, and economic goals and values.

Secondly, the mainstream economists argue that resource concerns must be tempered with the consideration of economic needs and desires. There is greater focus on meeting economic needs. The third strand is linked to the sociological tradition and emphasizes maintenance of community as well as of social values such as equity and quality of life. It suggests that neither resources nor economic welfare are sufficient objects of sustainability if the human community and its social values are not also maintained. Political economists have also addressed sustainable development, often by combining elements of three things. They argue for the necessity of understanding historical process, class relations, and the structures of the international economic system in analyzing the obstacles to sustainable resource use and development.

Foreign Aid, Poverty and Stagnation in Nepal: An Overview

Due to the multiple dimensional effects of aid on the economy, it is difficult to identify certain comprehensive indicators of performance of aid. It is even more difficult in the case of the country like Nepal, which has no systematic database and has only a limited national base accounting system. Both donors and recipients have different purpose of, and approach to, evaluation of the impact of aid on the economy.

Nepal started its developmental activities in a planned manner in 1956 and ever since the process of planning and development is continuing. The basic planning objectives have been to target expenditure for various sectors of economy such as agriculture, industry and transportation in each development plan. These financial outlays call for increase in production and gross domestic product without considering the environment degradation, which results from the development projects. The total investment pattern and financing of it over the period of more than four decades shows that foreign aid financed more than fifty per cent of the total resources. There are some visible sign of progress during the past fifty years. A roadless country in 1950, Nepal has built many paved highways, new branded jeeps are imported, communication facilities are improved, and literacy rate has increased and many more buildings are made. This would not have been possible without foreign aid. At the same time, there are many visible scars of environmental degradation, the results of roads, dams and bridges carelessly constructed without environmental safeguards. The need for short-term economic returns led them to dismiss or give low priority to any potential environmental hazards in development projects. There are frequent famines, and the process of erosion and ecological decline, coupled with continuing population growth (Blaikie, Cameron and Seddon 1980). The large-scale exploitation of ecosystem for strictly economic ends has produced

disastrous results-ecosystem have been degraded and economic benefits have turned out to be illusory (Karan and Iijima 1986:282). A collection of Nepalese scholars, in an October 1983 seminar termed by a World Bank official as a "landmark events" of public cognizance, concluded that aid programs have completely missed their ultimate mark. "Agriculture has not benefited; the poor have been bypassed; the women have not even been understood; the relations of production and distribution of power have gotten worse and the technical assistance has not contributed to the improvement of administrative capability", the participants wrote in their final statement (Pandey1983: 282). The worst news is, the population continues to explode, erosion continues to eat away topsoil, and cooking fires continue to consume forest cover without arrest; virtually all arable land in the country has now been colonized (Luhan 1987:29). Mishra and Sharma (1983) argued that in the context of the country like Nepal, "development through foreign aid essentially becomes a metaphor for the maintenance and strengthening of the traditional native power structure. They further argued that the upper social classes were driving the major benefits from foreign aided development. Foreign aid, therefore, enhances the position of the upper social classes who benefit from the maintenance of the existing system of political and economic power. Mishra and Sharma further argued that the foreign aided development projects has had no significant effect on mode of production but role of foreign aid has consisted in the increase of political dependence of the underclass.

This simple issue illustrated "how our country is experiencing its so called magic of development, decentralization, economic uplift-ment, and local self governance all amount to just bureaucratic jargons. They are adornments employed by ghost speechwriters for ministries. They are jargons that turn people at the grassroots into parrots for they do not know what these actually mean (Adhikari 2000:92)."

According to Nepal Human Development Report 1998, poverty in Nepal has increased at an annual rate of 3 percent and the number of absolute poor has nearly doubled in the last two decades. Similarly, while the share of bottom 40 percent of population in total income was 23 percent in 1985, it declined to 11 percent in 1996, and the share of top 10 percent has increased from 23 percent to 52 percent (NESAC 1998:116). In 1977, the proportion of households falling below the poverty line was estimated at 33.7 percent, it increased to 42.6 percent in 1985, and 45 percent in 1996, an increase of nearly 9 percent points within two decades (NESAC 1998:126-27). Disparity in distribution of both assets and income, in turn, influences access to education, health, nutrition and standard of living. Inequality in household land holding also remains pronounced. Rural-urban inequality, which is large and growing, remains another salient feature (Mishra 2000). Consump-tion expenditures show that the poor households spend two-thirds of their total income on basic food items, and can spend only a tiny amount to fulfill other needs-those related to clothing, education, health, shelter, utilities etc (Mishra 2000). In terms of global ranking, Nepal ranked 144 among the 174 countries (UNDP 1999). How this situation evolved, which long time development hands have watched with growing dismay and regret, has to do with both the logic of foreign aid and Nepal's domestic culture. But the core of the problem has been completely disjoined planning to justify the inflow of aid, coupled with donors' blind urge to continue pushing projects rather than coherent policies.

The attitude of foreign aid is greatly affected by the Nepali sense of paternal dependency. For example, a prominent anthropologist of Nepal writes -" foreign aid donors are sometimes seen as father-

surrogates. ... When this passive paternal dependency is applied to foreign aid, the only active agent of development becomes the foreign party, who then must supply the resources, the administration, the imagination to plan, and the motivation to make it all work (Bista 1991:136)".

Thus, rural development efforts in Nepal have had little success in achieving their objectives. The regular changes in rural development strategy have certainly helped bring more and more foreign aid into the country. Much less has been accomplished regarding the social mobilization and economic development of those who suffer from absolute poverty and intolerable social and political suppression (Devkota 1992).

It would, however, be wrong to judge the performance of economy in terms of foreign aid only. But as foreign aid does provide substantial help to overcome the financial constraint, which generally constitute the major development constraint, the pace of country's development should have been somewhat better than what it is. Though foreign aid has contributed to the establishment of some roads, communication systems, irrigation, power, drinking water large industries and higher education have all been benefited by foreign assistance. In fact there is hardly any development project totally financed by domestic resources. It is true that had there been be no foreign aid, the country would not have developed these projects for many years, but the question is whether these projects represents all that we could have done from the inflow of foreign capital (Poudyal 1982).

Similarly, foreign advisors gain more personal and professional benefits from the projects than Nepali counterparts. In 1978, for example, for a foreign staff member or advisor in Nepal, was getting a million rupees per year other facilities whereas a Nepal for the similar type of work Nepali officer was getting between 20,000

to 30,000 rupees per (Justice 1986). She further writes, "Although foreigners live in various parts of Kathmandu, they tend to cluster in certain areas where enterprising Nepalese have built new houses with western style amenities and plumbing, specifically for the purpose of renting to foreigners. These houses are well equipped and spacious by most western standards, many being located in large gardens surrounded by trees and greenery. Some organizations, such as USAID and the Canadian International Development Agency, furnish them with imported appliances and Western-style furniture made by local craftsmen. Allowances are provided for domestic servants - cooks, bearers, watchman, gardeners, and *ayahs* (nannies). Utilities are often maintained and paid for by the donor organization (Justice 1986:39)". Observing this situation, Stiller and Yadav (1979:58) have rightly said, "foreign aid is good business for Kathmandu, it is equally profitable for foreigner advisors, many of whom live at a social economic level above what they could expect in their home country." Thus in addition to humanitarian and professional motives, financial motives cannot be overlooked as a reason for accepting foreign consultancies (Justice 1986). This situation has raised the questions of about the actual flow of budget to the target groups and cost-benefit analysis of the project.

For better or worse, donor aid and Nepalese development will be inextricably linked in foreseeable future. Nepal government has virtually ceded all development authority to the donors. Almost major projects reveal a predictable pattern: foreign design, funded and implemented from beginning to end. The Rapti Integrated Rural Development Project (Rapti-IRDP), funded by U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), provides an example.

Rural Development Project in Rapti Zone (Rapti-IRDP)

After the overthrow of Rana Regime, USA and India made breakthrough in 1951/52 by providing the first quantum of

assistance to Nepal in the form of grants. Consequently, the first Five Year Plan was launched in 1956 totally financed by foreign aids (Poudyal 1982). When we review year-to-year aid flow, it is an increasing trend. The concept of IRDP was adopted in the Fifth Five Year Plan (1975-1980). Principally, IRDP "aims at providing income-generating assets and self-employment opportunities to the rural poor, to enable them to rise above the poverty line once and for all. IRDP in effect, seeks to redistribute assets and employment opportunities in favor of the rural poor, and thereby reduce income inequality (Singh 1999:224)". The goal of implementing the IRDP in Nepal was to provide an effective development strategy characterized by participatory planning and decentralized development administration.

The first phase of Rapti-IRDP was launched in 1980 according to the Base Line Survey done in 1979 by a government research organ, APROSC, to generate a brief "project identification document". It was the biggest IRDP in terms of area coverage and financial involvement. A lot of study and preparation had gone into the formulation of the project (Pradhan 1982:28). In the design of the project it had been recognized that the five years of proposed activity must be part of a longer 15-20 years intense development effort. Donors were arguing that several subsequent effort, with donor support, were likely to be required to respond to and sustain local development initiatives, integration, functional specialization, economic stabilization and growth within the Rapti Zone (Pradhan 1982:28). In 1987, HMG Nepal and the USAID signed the project grant agreement to launch the second phase activity for the development of the Rapti Zone. In 1991, The Rapti Development Project (RDP) directed its attention to increasing household income and well-being through increased productivity and sustainable management of farm and forest resource systems.

When we view geographically, Dang district lies entirely in the inner tarai region. The three districts of Rolpa, Pyuthan and Salyan and major parts of Rukum district lie in the mid-hill region. A small part of the Rukum district in the north-east and north-west lie in the high altitude Himalayan region. AID brought dozens of Washington experts into the zone to expand its development possibilities. AID then signed a five-year agreement with the Nepalese government to finance "Rapti I" an ambitious IRDP, and contracted with PADCO, a Washington-based firm, to act as the technical assistance manager. The main objectives of the projects were to:

1. Increase production and consumption of food by the people of Rapti Zone;

2. Construct new roads and maintenance of the old roads; and

3. Strengthen the capacity of Panchayats (now called Village development committee) and other local organizations to plan, implement and sustain local development efforts.

The theme of Rapti - IRDP was poverty alleviation but the development process led to frustration as the poverty increased despite two decades of development efforts. An interim evaluation, according to an AID official, found that cereal production in the region - targeted for a 27 % expansion - had increase "minimally, perhaps 5 % at most" (Luhan1987: 31). The grain production has increased in the zone mainly from increased area cultivated and notably in the hill districts. Rapid population growth and the low production records in the agriculture sector have also direct socio-economic implication for nutritional deficiency and reduced per capita food consumption in the hill and mountain villages in Rolpa, Salyan and Rukum districts, this has created other vicious problems. For example, decline in production forced the population of the two regions to take recourse to two measures: (a) encroach upon new forest for acquiring new land for cultivation, and (b) drift

into the terai and urban areas in search for jobs. Since the extension of land through encroaching upon the forest is limited, the inter-regional migration from the hill districts to the Dang valley has been increasing very fast. This means that land ratio in the hill and mountains crossed the minimum support limit of agricultural sector. The man-land ratio is now declining in the terai also.

Another dimension of the problem is the growing environmental degradation. The new or marginal land for cultivation has devastating effect on the forest resources. The continuous encroachment upon forest depleted this resource and hence pushed the environment to a critical level. The ecological balance between natural environment and population growth has been disrupted to a larger extent. This could be directly related to soil erosion and drought caused from time to time. As in many parts of the country, more than 90% of the required fuel energy is met through forest resources, the increasing drain on the forest resources is the main factor responsible for the environmental degradation. As a consequence of this, landslides, floods and silt-laden rivers have become common problem. The consequence of ecological imbalance caused by population growth also affected the downstream. Deforestation in the hill districts caused to the siltation and floods in the plain.

One of the critical implications of foreign aid investment in agriculture sector is its failure to link up agricultural development with socio-economic and infrastructure sectors. The government failed to make genuine efforts to generate economic possibilities for investment in agricultural sector. For example, the investment in road transport sector had no linkage effects either on agricultural production or on its marketing. The program of Rapti IRDP was to upgrade and improve three roads in zonal level of about 288 km. existing trails. These roads linked the administrative headquarters of Salyan, Rolpa and Pyuthan districts with the Zonal centers of

Tulsipur and Ghorahi. We do not have information about the economic viability of the roads. The economic viability of these roads was not systematically investigated before the roads were economically justified for construction. On the contrary, the people were deprived of the local products as part of the produce had been diverted towards the urban area. The small farmers and poor peasants did not gain much because, first of all, there was an intrusion by the big traders and merchants who monopolized the market through bullish and bearish trading practices and secondly, they lack both financial leverage and market information on price of agricultural commodities. Thus, the construction of road took away the local production by the powerful merchants and traders to the cities. A few producers profited because of the market, but majority of the population in the rural areas suffered because they had to pay higher prices for the same produce. Another implication of foreign aid vis-à-vis performance of agricultural sector is that it did not contribute to the development of projects on an institutional basis. As the projects / programs earmarked in the budget are determined by the political consideration, each member in the parliament tried to get some projects in his / her constituency in order to win over the voters. These projects/programs were (and still are funded by other donor agencies) politically motivated and economically short lived. They were not guided by the consideration of specificity in terms of exact nature of program, its scope and continuity and complementarily. For instance, some expenditure were allocated for building irrigation, piped water supply and gully protection projects in a particular area which had an immediate impact to create an impression on the local people. Since no accurate evaluation studies were done, there were no information and records whether or not those projects are running or disappeared. Many of the projects selected by the vested interest groups suffered because of lack of provision for the supply of inputs, maintenance cost, administrative

and institutional arrangements for the operation of projects. Lack of sound institutional arrangement for the provisional complementarily supplies, in fact, favored the big farmers.

One of the serious effects of the road is the creation of socio-economic and technical dualism between "on-the-road areas" and "off-the-road areas". Opening of roads have caused out migration from the "off-the-road" to the "on-the-road areas" or from the rural to urban areas. Another effect of road networks is technological dualism. Though there is no big revolution in using the technology in the urban areas on the roadsides, but in terms of facilities provided with the opening of the roads made those two areas different. People living along the roadsides can get cheaper fertilizer vis-à-vis the improved varieties of seeds and pesticides but people living in the rural areas have to depend on traditional methods of cultivation. All these caused inequalities to widen, in both income and space between these two areas.

The need for road network and the cost of repair and maintenance should also be examined in terms of social equity. If one looks at the type of automobiles and their ownership pattern, it is clear that the beneficiaries of the roads are the richer community. Most of the vehicles are privately owned. The charges the owner of the vehicles pay is very insignificant compared to the benefit they receive. Considering the repair and maintenance costs, it will not be justified to subsidize roads for the use of few richer people in any country. From social equity point of view also, roads have not yielded significant benefit to the poor people. Even during the construction phase the real benefits of the road projects was very limited due to the use of capital-intensive techniques.

Capital intensive technology destroyed the livelihoods of laborers, and commercialization those of artisans. Both concentrate wealth in the hands of those already less poor, and enable them to become

wealthier, to buy more land, to appropriate more of a larger surplus, and to expand their trade. These processes also weakened traditions of mutual responsibility and sharing between patrons and clients, and between the small farmers and landless. Social relationship with obligation gave way to cash relationships without obligation (Chambers 1983).

Despite the huge investment in irrigation, the evaluation team reported that the performance of the medium irrigation components of the Rapti IRDP was disappointing, not only due to contracting and administrative delays, but also due to the implementing agency's inability or unwillingness to include social factor in project design or to illicit beneficiary participation (Bista 2000:92). The major irrigation projects were concentrated in the plain areas and the hill areas did not show any sign of improvement. This investment was not being linked with other agricultural inputs such as, credits, fertilizers, marketing channels, and technical services. The use and supply of water were also politically determined. Since the local government was involved in the operation of the projects, the advantages were reaped by the powerful landlords because these are the people who control the local political and economic affairs. The selection of projects itself were done on the political consideration and hence the use is inevitably political.

In the sector where the aid investment was direct because of capital intensive nature and high degree of technological requirements, the achievements made were more visible, at least in quantitative terms. The positive change in the quantitative magnitude of some of these are, if examined without analyzing, (a) the cost-benefits, (b) the cost-effectiveness, (c) problem of local cost and maintenance, and (d) socio-economic inequalities, buildings made by the project for different service centers look impressive. These are sectors where aid-investments have comparatively directly observable and

pronounced achievements. The voluminous increase in aid invest-ment large on buildings constructions should be measured by the actual use and not by the amount of investment or the size of its quantity. The dalits and marginalized ethnic groups, small farmers, landless labors, workers and urban poor who comprise 90 percent or our population, and it is them under whose name development plans and programs are designed and yet they are the ones least cared about.

Though consultancy firms had been invariably used in developing Rapti project, donor seemed to dominate in the processes of project formulation. It made not only unrealistic assumptions but also distortions. In the formulation of the project, the existing institutional arrangements had been ignored, though the 'users committee' was often mentioned. Neglect of this important resource, on the one hand, and the raising of expectations that foreign resources are coming in a big way to develop the area, on the other hand, had brought about an erosion of self-help attitude and developed 'aid mentality' among the people. The influence is worst in project headquarters and service centers. It decreases as we move away from these centers.

As a matter of fact the complete dependency on foreign aid- a cheap money (as considered by many people) - further corrupted the thinking, values and attitudes of our people who are working as a higher administrative or a professional/consultant. The tendency that somebody else's money has come, had led to wastage and misappropriations (Dhungana 1981). It was also observed that there was a tendency for leakages in various ways such as over costing, overpricing in local procurement and construction. This may be due to the general perception of the project staff that because foreign capital is involved, they should also enjoy some of extra benefit out

of it. People think foreign aid meet the needs of government rather than their concerns (Devkota 1988)

A Step Forward

Traditionally, the people have mattered little of nothing to planners and administrators. In their scheme of themes, it is still quite common to consider them last of all, often as an afterthought. Government agencies in the capital often decide on programs for the people on their own, notifying their leaders later only in the case of their labor is needed for some construction activity. Control and authority, rather than support and equality has been used to formulate and implement the development project. And by their very nature, centralized government structure in Nepal is tending to keep local people out of the decision making processes. Some of the development activities are written on good papers and discussed at the Five Star Hotels in Kathmandu which is broadcasted by the national as well as international media. But at the same time local people do not know what is happening to their villages. Secondly, donor agencies regarded socio-cultural factors as of less concern to their work. The constraining influences of these factors led to many failures in reaching the poor. The poor live in societies which are highly stratified with castes and classes clearly demarcated in a rigid hierarchic order. Religion, language, ethnicity and other sociocultural forces divide the poor and undermine a unified challenge to the position of powerful elite groups.

Using knowledge of structural and sociocultural variables, it is important to formulate guidelines to emphasis on understanding the culture of the local group, introducing projects in terms of needs as the people perceive them, adapting traditions to new circumstances, respecting indigenous knowledge, and communicating development ideas in a language that the people understand. Development agencies also need strengthening in their use of sociocultural inputs

needed for inducing participation. Without a change in the orientation of bureaucracies, the likelihood of sociocultural knowledge influencing development decisions remains remote. A major factor that contributes to success is to find out a comprehensive investigation of the life and culture of the target groups. It is also very important to consult local people for inputs to the project design and implementation. Sustainability without involvement of local people throughout the project activities is not achievable. Sustainability without social justice and empowerment of socially and economically disadvantaged groups in all aspects of life is impossible. And sustainable development would not be possible if we could not break the existing feudal social structure of Nepali society. To some of us such ideas may look too romantic. However, many ideas tend to appear romantic till they are put into action. To some people the idea of having a democratic system of governance could have appeared romantic during the Rana and Panchayat regimes. The quest for new possibilities both for society and for the social sciences should not be given up.

Conclusion

Development aid in general is expected to empower the socially and economically disadvantaged groups and lead to self-reliance but looking at commonly reported outcomes, it shows that often it leads to more powerlessness and dependency. Aid operated projects may help to curb short term human suffering but may be a factor in a long term for unfair distribution of benefits and even it may be a factor for future human suffering.

By examining the overall economic condition of the country in general, and Rapti-IRDP in particular, it can be stated that foreign aid has been unable to alleviate poverty and underdevelopment in Nepal. The practice and concept of IRDP strategy in Nepal has failed to improve the quality of rural poor. On the contrary, foreign aid has rather created dualism, widened the gulf between rural and urban population within region and created inequalities among regions. The gap between rich and poor has remained unchanged or even widened during this time (Baskota 1983; Khadka 1991; Devkota 1992; Mishra and Sharma 1983, Subedi 2001) Employment structure in most cases has remained more or less constant. The increasing or the constant trend of seasonal and permanent migration in Rolpa, Rukum and Salyan and Pyuthan districts shows that there has not been any particular relief in the state of employment or underemployment. In income trend as well no particular improvement was noticed when considered in terms of gross average household income. The trend of institutional services such as credit, fertilizer, improved seed, health and education have generally remained biased favoring the rich families and the accessible areas. In face of these situations, the performance of Rapti IRDP so far cannot be considered satisfactory. The conditions of the poor have always been highlighted for justification to get more aid. But once the project is actualized, the major share of the benefits goes to the international consultants and donor-expatriate patronage, national and local elites with the poor receiving only marginal shares. The Rapti – IRDP is a typical case to illustrate. This cycle has tended to repeat itself because it has successfully served the interest of the elite and bureaucracy. It also favored the creation of a vested interest group of elites and techno-bureaucrats and contributed to the continuation of the present system of government in Nepal. Using foreign aid and labor of the poor, the elite have been having a joy ride because they are the integral part of the decision-making system and have the resources to ensure its continuance. Willingly or unwillingly foreign aid has danced to their tones, and probably rightly so because even they would not really know what else to do! For many IRDP districts, the inflow of huge amounts of funds has killed the spirit of self-reliance, even in

areas where people had traditionally depended on their own efforts and skills. We must look at why the development programs are not functioning properly in Nepal. There are problems in planning as well as implementation in the development system. In my opinion, it is the political system, the economic system and the bureaucratic system that fail to involve people. They do not allow opportunities for the poor people to make changes.

An important precondition to bring about change is a new approach of Aid agencies to work on partnership. The foreign aided projects should focus on strengthening the internal capability of generating resources, increasing investment in activities which complement the foreign aided projects in expanding the productive base of economy and ensuring effective utilization of aid.

Thus I argue that aid should attempt to help develop the resource base of the local population and capacity building. This requires a change in attitude among the donors from looking at the recipients as "passive recipients" to "active partners" who have immense indigenous knowledge and management practices. The more such conditions are created the more is the possibility of attaining sustainable development. The present attitude of thinking in terms of "I" should be transformed to "WE". The individualistic approach of present day should be changed in terms of collectivistic approach for tomorrow. Can one be convinced about this? Of course, it is an issue and, I realize, it has ideological and philosophical connotation, and our duty is understanding and changing this country by social, economic and political transformation. The development of Nepal is not possible without the structural transformation of Nepali society.

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SUSTAINABILITY OR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

Shambhu Prasad Kattel

General Introduction

The essay discusses the concept of sustainability and adaptation pattern of the Kumals of Tumlingtar in different situations as well as the fruitfulness of the concept of 'sustainability' in understanding different dimensions of adaptation among human population. The essay is divided into four sections. First section gives general introduction of the concept 'sustainability' and 'adaptation'. Second section presents some arguments to clarify the concepts dealing with different aspects of sustainability and dimensions of adaptation. In the third section, I have presented a case material from Arun Valley based on my field experience and finally the last section holds conclusion of the essay.

Introduction: Background to the Concept

Sustainability or sustainable development is among the frequently used term in the present development literatures. Their main focus is the present rate of environmental degradation, increasing human population, their demand, growing pollution of air and water and its probable present as well as future solutions. The concept 'sustainability' alerts human beings to make a balance between natural resources and population and to manage the resources towards the betterment of environment, health, economic growth and equity, in which situation maximum population can manage good quality of life (Wikan 1995). This concept became famous in the public discourse after the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development of the United Nations. It was known as Brundtland commission (1987). It stated that sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generation to meet their needs (cf. Sach 1997). The definition gives the meaning that sustainability is the situation where human needs are fulfilled without disturbing the future.

In ecological anthropology, the discourse came as a human-environment relationship. Environmental threats to human health and human threats to the environment are a major source of concern throughout the world. The problem of how to live sustainably in different types of socio-cultural and physical context is widely recognized as one of the most daunting challenges today (Milton 1997). We can see various plans in the name of environmental management, bio-diversity conservation, and sustainable development and some programs are implemented for the betterment of the local people. On the contrary, the objected groups are forced to change their basic economic activities. For example, Malagasy responded as, "the next time you come to Madagascar, there will be no more Malagasy. All the people will have starved to death and a lemur will have to meet you at airport (Kottak 1997). They mean that donors are worried about the lemur, plants and the environment instead of the human population. Thus, sustainability is an ambiguous concept, with different meanings and dynamic situations, the situation changes due to other factors such as population growth, exploitation and condition of renewable and non renewable resources, development of technology, socio-cultural changes and according to the changes of human needs.

To understand the discourse on sustainability, we should understand the present world in general. The world is divided into developed and underdeveloped. The underdeveloped countries are facing problems of health, food and shelter and the population depleting natural resources for their survival, producing more children for the help to their future (Meadows et. al. 1992). The developed nations have different needs, produce vehicles, chemical fertilizers, pesticides, weapons, plastic utensils etc., which play a vital role in increase air and water pollution and in the degradation of environment as well.

Human beings need energy for their survival and continuity of life, which they get from the environment. Natural resources are limited where as human needs are unlimited. Growth is possible only up to the limit. Carrying capacity is concerned for us, which means availability of suitable conditions for living determines what population of an organism can exist in an environment (Hardesty 1977, Hawley 1986, Moran 1969). Human beings are expanding facilities through technology so high level of degradation in environment and natural resources is taking place. When bottleneck situation of human appeared due to degradation of environment, shortage of natural resources and problem of water and air pollution, the concept "sustainability" came into discourse among the scholars concerned to the issue and in human ecology. There are various views in ecological anthropology regarding sustainability (will be dealt in conceptual argument).

However, I found the concept "sustainability" more ambiguous and obscure. Some questions strike my mind regarding the concept of sustainability. What is sustainability or sustainable development? What type of sustainable development, for whom and how? What are the aspects of sustainability? Are they same dimensions of human adaptation? Does it help to understand human adaptation?

What is the meaning of micro and macro level adaptation or sustainability?

I will seek answers to these questions from my own fieldwork of the Kumals community of Arun Valley in Eastern Nepal. I had carried out the fieldwork two times in 1997 and 1999. Altogether I stayed in the field about 7 months and collected the information using anthropological methods like observation, progressive contextualization, key informant interviews and focus group discussions. I participated in most of the family as well as community decisions, discussions, socio-cultural functions and in fairs and festivals. From human ecological perspective I found fascinating data due to rapidly changing socio-cultural, economic and environmental circumstances of the Kumals. Competitive behaviour among the Kumals and between Kumals and non-Kumals, shortage of common property resources, obstacles in traditional occupations, influence of modern money and market, introduction of development activities and so on are the distinct characteristics of Arun Valley. In this article, I will present the case material of Kumals, their present challenges and their effort to cope with the changing environment on the way to sustainability.

Conceptual Arguments

Sustainability as a concept carries the meaning of sound ecological, economic, political and socio-cultural development of an area or of a group of people. I argue that ecological sustainability means better environment for any given population with sufficient natural resources, unpolluted air, water and sufficient resources not disturb regeneration. Population under carrying capacity of land and resources is ecological sustainability. Economic sustainability means sound distribution of means of production among community members, maximum equity and management of economies without disturbing the environment for future.

Regarding political sustainability I agree with David Pearce (1997) that it is life of the people without fear. Socio-cultural sustainability means the knowledge, skill and capabilities of people with rights to expression, right to learn, sharing, participation and equality of opportunity.

Sustainability as a concept gives a broad meaning and it is not possible to achieve all aspects at a time. Different scholars argue with their own aspects and point of view. Haaland et al (1979) and Storaas (1997) use the term viability and show ecological, economic and political linkages between farmers and pastoralists, which is similar to the term sustainability. David Pearce (1997) mentioned that sustainability must be measured by progress along the vector made up of attitudes that include improvement in income and its distribution, in health, education, freedom and access to the resources. In my view, sustainability is the better balance between human population and available resources and relatively better environmental situation, fulfilling maximum needs of human beings adapting easily in the environment.

For Hawley adaptation is a collective process. Human beings struggle to be sustained in an environment through association of organism: the family, tribe, state, etc. as a social unit (1986) thus, focuses only on behavioral adaptation. An individual always tries to adapt in natural as well as social environment (Barth 1984). In deed, sustainability also has two aspects, i.e. biophysical and socio-economic. Biophysical means the relationship with the environment, the earth, forest, water, air, etc. and socio-economic means the human needs or culturally constructed things. Adaptation is a self-regulating process affected by micro and macro orders (Rappaport 1979). I have used the term micro and macro level because in micro level, an individual/household interacts in the environment through his biological, socio-cultural, political, and

economical abilities. According to Barth, these are the dimensions of niche that affect the human adaptation (1984). Sometimes, adaptation of an individual/household is negatively affected by the national and international level decisions. At other times, these macro level decisions appeared as maladaptive in micro level, which might be adaptive in macro level.

Haaland (1991) case material proves that helps of government and donor agencies work negatively to the locals. This is an example of macro level decision and its impact on the locals. According to him, Beja community of Western Sudan was self-sufficient, sustained, and able to cope with the environment even though they hit by drought frequently. As earlier, drought hit Derudeb of Savanna-Sahel zone of Sudan in early eighties. As a result, donor agencies came to help the victims. Government also introduced various environmental management and poverty alleviation programs with the support from the donor agencies. On the contrary, forest/green land changed into desert and environment became harsh due to over population and their activities. Market economy influenced the Beja and they get involved in cutting trees for making charcoal to earn money. As a result, the Bejas who were sustained in the environment for more than 200 years became maladaptive from the macro level decisions of state and donor agencies.

An anthropologist, Unni Wikan (1995), very interestingly describes sustainability, not from natural perspective but from cultural perspective. She studied some poor families of Cairo, a capital city of Egypt, and dealt the concept, "sustainable development". Leaving the general trend, she described sustainable or adaptation strategy of city dwellers. According to her, rural poverty may be a threat to natural resources, but urban poverty seems to be even a greater threat to social and cultural resources. Sustainable development in the city means growth of cultural and social as well as

material assets. According to her, all the poor families of Cairo regarded themselves as poor, and other people also treated them as poor. During her study she found out that all the poor families were trying to sustain themselves by developing cultural competency. She argues that if sustainable development means to maintain legitimate needs then the poor family of Cairo trying to manage good food, shelter, health, environment, etc. for the future then certainly the poor families of Cairo were developing cultural competency towards sustainable life.

The poor were acquiring knowledge, skills, attitudes, and institutional practices as copying mechanisms. Like preservation and improvement of natural resources the poor families are considering cultural values and competency as a part of their life and managing day-to-day life as middle class families. Similarly, making future for the children is an important aspect of sustainability. Mothers of new generation are educated, teach their children at home which helps in reducing tuition fees. From the mothers children also learn politeness, obedience, good language, and respect to their parents and elders. Marriages are made with an individual decision. After marriage the new couple settle in a new house and started saving for their future for better food, clothing, equipment and so on that helps them to uplift their social status. Instead of bride price, the groom lives in the girl's house. Ornaments of the wife are used to buy household goods such as refrigerator, washing machine, television, etc. since material (fixed) assets are considered more valuable in cities. People want to gather fix assets as much as they can because they want to show the society their status. Saving and investing for future is an economic aspect of sustainability, where all poor actively participates in saving clubs which provide them interest free loan that they invest in building and other assets. Neither a woman drinks in the back stage nor a man is intoxicated because they keep in view of their

children's future. Each household member has a feeling, 'I'm better than others' and always think that what they are doing is for their children's sake, and emphasize that one should do it.' The neighbors do not quarrel as before instead they develop a social network among themselves. Thus, Cairo's poor families are maintaining life coping with the current environment and building competency towards sustainability. Based on these perspectives, I am going to describe the present coping strategy of the Kumals of Arun valley towards sustainable future.

The Kumals of Arun Valley: Struggle for Sustainable Development

Arun valley is situated in the eastern hilly region of about 500 kms east from the capital city Kathmandu, Nepal. This valley is located in the lap of the Arun and Sabha rivers. The Arun river is known as Koshi in Terai. The valley has various climatic zones, different species of plants, birds and wildlife. A beautiful flatland, Tumlingtaar, is situated in the valley in between the Arun and Sabha rivers. Tumlingtaar is situated at an elevation of about 700 to 1200 meters above the sea level. At present about 600 Kumals are inhabited in Tumlingtar. The valley is known as *Maj Kirant*; a main habitat of the Rais. After the unification of Nepal, all *Jat* or *Jatis* (caste groups) arrived and settled in Tumlingtar. Here, I want to focus on so-called low caste group, the Kumals, and their efforts to cope with environment in sustainable way under different circumstances.

The Kumals are pottery-making *Jati* (caste), who came with the conqueror group during the unification, and settled down in Tumlingtaar as state representatives (tax collectors and administrators). Tumlingtaar having a fertile land covered with dense forests and some clay mines useful for making pottery, the Kumals soon attracted towards making pottery and agriculture, which was

possible because of accessibility of enough natural resources. They became famous around the surrounding area because of pottery and continued doing it for more than 200 years and attain sustainability. With the establishment of development activities and introduction of market economy the people lost their land, traditional occupation, natural resources, traditional practices and thus resulting a loss of sustainable life (Kattel 2000). In this state of instability, they are facing high competition with other groups but are still trying to sustain in various ways.

Development Activities and Changing Sustainable Life of Kumals

Tumlingtar airport was constructed confiscating Kumal's land in 1965. Arun III project office was established in Tumlingtaar buying about 20 hectares land of Kumals. Other high caste peoples were also attracted towards this place so they came here and settled down buying land, where only Kumals and Majhis used to live earlier. After the establishment of Makalu Barun Conservation Area Project (MBCAP) and introduction of Makalu Base Camp for Makalu mountain expedition, the valley became a tourist area. As a result, Tumlingtaar developed as a business center. This accelerated flow of migration to Tumlingtar and established hotels and lodges, groceries and retail shops. The area came under Khandbari municipality soon, developed amenities like telephone, drinking water and electricity and some offices also established. During the process of development Kumals lost about 70 percent of their land, traditional pottery occupation, forest and clay resources and traditional practices. The new migrants were powerful econo- mically and politically and privatized the common resources, especially the forests. They constructed well-furnished wooden houses in the bazaar destroying the surrounding forests. Some of the clay mines were closed during the airport construction while the

new migrants restricted the rests. This forced the Kumals to accept new lifestyles. Fast foods, modern technology, and uses of plastic utensils displaced them from their traditional niche and sustainable life.

Kumals realized the situation a little later when their ancestral occupation pottery stopped and faced daily hand to mouth problem. Under this situation, they developed new values adapting new circumstance, which is described below.

Nature Culture Relationship and Sustainability

There are various theories in anthropology regarding nature culture relationship (Milton 1997, Ingold 1992). In the community of Kumals, I found deep relationship between nature and culture. They had five forests in the surrounding area and some clay mines. They believed that they should use only one forest and one mine at a time i.e. per year, which they were doing in practice. They believed that if such restriction is not followed then the forest deities will get angry and various natural calamities will happen. They worship forest deities twice, before and after the use of clay mines and forests and sacrifice animals. They also offer some portion of new crop to the deities after harvesting. Besides this they have the belief that the herbal plants that grew in the forests should not be picked or chopped except the shamans. Although this kind of beliefs seemed to be traditional and old fashioned this has greatly helped in protecting the environment and unnecessary use of natural resources.

As I mentioned earlier, because of the thick settlement almost all the forest land changed into shrubs and bush land due to which the Kumals had faced shortage of forest products. This was because of the new settlement and improper used of forest products and natural resources not following the local beliefs. More than any other

groups, Kumals were affected very badly due to shortage of forest resource. After sometimes, they realized their situation and weakness and formed an organization of Kumals in 1999 in the leadership of some literate Kumals. They also formed community forests in their leadership[1] and started protecting the forest. Thereafter, nobody is allowed to enter the forest without permission of the committee members. Grazing is totally prohibited in the community forest. Some of the Kumals also joined the neighboring forests. They protected local sources of water and made cemented wells and taps. Plantation is done in the forest area as well as near the water sources. More than seven households have drinking water in their own houses now. All women of the community are well aware of sanitation and health. Many families have planted Sisau (Dalbergia Sissoo) and timber trees in their private land, which is also used as fodder for the cattle. As before, they have started worshipping forest in the name of *Sansari Pooja*, *Udhauli* and *Ubhaunli* which shows that Kumals are concerned in gaining the greeneries and water resources for their better future.

Local Knowledge and Practices towards Sustainability: In the past Kumal families raised pigs, goats, sheep, and oxen as a earning for living. Children and elders looked after the livestock whereas the youth performed the other activities. Few families still have shift camping to look after the livestock. The majority of the Kumals are grazing their livestock in the surrounding pasture of riverbanks these days. The pasture is not sufficient during winter so they have reduced the number of their cattle and involved in portering and other occupation for survival. In earlier days, herdsman got involved in other activities in winter, like carrying salt and grain and chemical fertilizers from Terai, clay from mines, collecting fuel wood from forest for the rainy season etc.

Similarly, Kumals are involved in farmland cultivation from May to September and December to April is for pottery making where as October and November is marked for celebrating different festivals. Dashain festival is one that falls during October and November, which is celebrated for ten days. Traditionally, most of the pigs, goats, sheep and chickens raised are slaughtered in this festival honoring to different gods and goddesses. The meat is shared with relatives and neighbors. The strain of continuous and heavy working days for five months is regained during this festival. Similarly, energy lost while carrying clay from mines and selling pots are also regained eating delicious food and meat and with enjoyment.

Soil Management

The pottery making occupation in one hand or other helped in maintaining soil fertility. Tree leaves are obtained as fodder, the green twigs are used in fencing and during winter it is use for drying potteries. Thus produced ashes act as fertilizers and shifting of terraces each time while drying potteries make the land fertile. Similarly, shifting of livestock-shed is also shifted due to which the manure also acts as fertilizers and leaf litters used as animal bedding also becomes manure.

The Kumals along with raising livestock also takes up farming which has several positive linkages such as investment, manure, fodder, food, etc., (See Haaland et al. 1979). This kind of linkages and soil management helped them for long -term sustainability.

Improving Socio-cultural environment

As I mentioned above Kumals are considered as a low caste group because of their occupation and socio-cultural practices. As high caste Hindus, they do not take menstruated women as impure or

dirty. They do not use Brahmin priest in their rituals. They do not have hard and fast rules on touchability and untouchability. Regarding the death rituals it ends up with a feast slaughtering pigs attended by close relatives, neighbours and mourners. In addition to this, it looks like a practice that without a cup of local brew a Kumal does not open his eyes in the morning and close in the evening. So, high caste people satirically characterized them as "Bhadau Lagyo Kumale Teda-Teda Bat, Chaitra Lagyo Kumale Purporo Ma Hat". It literally means Kumals cannot speak due to over drinking in the harvesting season and regret in May when finished all cereals (cereals are used to make home made wine). But after the formation of Kumal organization they have now decided to stop drinking brew, making clay pots and follow their traditional culture and practices. On the contrary, all Kumals agreed to follow the high caste values/cultures and practices. Nowadays, Kumals are identified by clan names, used Brahmin priest to carry out various rituals, stopped bride price practice, and alcohol drinking to gain the social, political and symbolic capitals[2] as other high caste groups. Nowadays, people cannot find the Kumals at Tumlingtaar because none of them identify as Kumals and have started writing their clan names such as Halide, Phathake, Dudhpau, Mudula, Bhattarai, etc. As other groups, they perceive menstruated women as impure, do not receive bride price. As in high caste Hindus, Brahmin is accepted as their priest. During my stay in Tumlingtaar I found that five of the Halide families performing the *Shradda* (worshipping the ancestors which is performed annually) as high caste groups. Nowadays, social seclusion and caste disparity has been decreased in Tumlingtar.

Furthermore, all individuals of the Kumal community, even though they are not their own kin, have started giving fictitious relations like Mama-Maiju, Kaka-Kaki, Hajurba-Hajurama, Didi-Bhinaju and so on and are living in a group. Kumals have made this

relationship to strengthen their group adaptation because one can help other during troubles. This type of relationship developed among the Kumals also helps to attain sustainability.

Improving Economic Condition and life Style:

Almost all Kumals are aware of the value and importance of money. They do not depend only on agriculture and pottery making as before. Most of the youths are known as good porters. They carry heavy loads for the local shops and groceries as well as for the tourists. Some youths have gone to Gulf countries to earn money. Two of the families have installed teashops. Some farmers started producing seasonal vegetables and supply it to local hotels and market. Old generation blame the new generation as money minded. The new generation do not drink brew, do not celebrate festivals and do not play card as the old generation. Instead of drinking local brew of millet they sell it in the market and buy tea and sugar. A seventy-six years old man, Lalibung Kumal, said about his property "all this land and property was mine but my son does not allow me to drink brew instead he gives me a cup of tea, all my son needs is money, not culture". On the contrary, the young generations say, "we have to buy everything now, the clothes, spices, foods and fertilizers and also spend money for schooling children so we need money". Drinking brew is not also good for health. They started family planning for a better future of their children. Most of the Kumal men worked as porters, wage laborers and so on whereas women are involved in vegetable and poultry farming and producing as well as selling local wine in the local market. Nobody stays without doing anything. An NGO, Rural Reconstruction Nepal, has helped in forming various women saving and credit groups. I found that about 70% of Kumal women were involved in such groups where they save money in a monthly basis and also get loans at a cheap interest rate. In Non-Kumals' view,

Kumals have changed a lot. They do not drink beer, do not wear traditional clothes, send children to school, work hard to earn a living. All these activities of Kumals are towards a sustainable life.

Learning Middle class culture

Cooperation and mutual help is increased within the Kumal community. Children from all houses have started going to schools. Houses and yards looks neat and clean, wash utensils daily and use toilets as other people of the surrounding does. Young generation does not speak Kumal language. They wear modern clothes as other people of so called upper caste wore. Now politeness and cooperation became a part of the Kumal culture. Everyone speak very politely with strangers. At the first meeting, they say, Namaste to a stranger (Nepali word for greeting) and ask, "Shall I help you?" Actually, Kumals learnt this culture from the contact of tourist and outsiders. Some of the Kumals are even elected in local political organizations as ward chairperson and ward members. The main aim of these elected politicians is to solve local problems of their community.

Among the Kumals they have various forms of cooperation like *Sagaune*, *Guhardine* and *Parma*. One helps the other during marriage and death rituals which is known as *Sagaune*. Similarly, providing help during building houses and labor work is known as *Guhardine*. Parma is a labor exchange system, which is mostly used in farming. Thus, at present mutual help and cooperation become common practice in Kumal community. However, Kumals have developed cultural competency to cope with the present situation. They have modified and adopted the present strategy (competency) disturbing their traditional and cultural practices. Indeed, some of them proved to be maladaptive and migrated from the area when came into contact with development interventions and non-Kumals. To be adaptive in the changing environment the remainders of

Tumlingtaar decided to change themselves. In my view, all these activities of the Kumals at present are for better future or sustainability.

Concluding Remarks

From the above discussion, it is cleared that the term sustainability gives the meaning of fulfillment of maximum needs of human beings at present as well as for future without disturbing the environment. Achieving sustainability seems almost impossible because of various reasons in present situation of the world. In spite of the obstacles that might come reaching our destination we can work towards a better future and can prevent hazards to some extent. Therefore, I conclude that sustainability means a good balance of human population, their needs and the environment in a long term. We can see that the concept of sustainability is used differently by different scholars. I think, more or less all scholars are in the consensus that sustainability is situational and it is the state of maximum balance of the demands of population and fulfillment of their needs without disturbing the environment. A similar balance between population and their environment is often portrayed in anthropological studies of adaptation.

We should not be concerned in only one aspect i.e. environmental/ ecological sustainability. To keep a better balance between population and resources, socio-cultural, economic, and political aspect of society should also be considered. Therefore, at present various scholars have raised issues of socio-cultural, political and economic sustainability (Pearce: 1997, Sotras: 1997, Wikan 1995). I would like to conclude the case of Kumals considering different aspects of sustainability.

According to Haaland, local pre-modern societies followed some local rules and practices to protect their environment and manage

their life sustainably even in hazardous situations. The case of Kumals also proves this saying. The Kumals have developed socio-cultural, economic and political practices towards sustainability through their experiences. Development activities and modern facilities of Tumlingtar alienated the Kumal community from their land resources, occupation and traditional practices but with extreme effort they were able to achieve sustainability. From these cases, we might say that pre-modern societies and their adaptation patterns are more sustainable than the modern external factors affecting societies at micro level. In communities, national and international decisions on political economy has introduced dependency among the people in various aspects of their lives. By nature human beings try to cope up in different environments by developing new socio-economic and cultural values but sometimes they may not succeed. For instance, in the new situation, the Kumals tried to get sustained in various ways but some families were not able to manage to do so and were displaced from their habitat.

Sustainability at macro level might not be similar as in the micro level. The case of Kumals indicates of such. Let me elaborate this with another example. The Makalu Barun Conservation Area Project was established in Arun valley by the state with financial support from ODA for the conservation of endangered wild animals and birds. This program might be sustainable at macro context of the country or at a global level but at the same time because of this many families were forced to migrate from there. This resulted in losing their traditional pasturelands and their crops destroyed by the wild animals. Besides, about ten to twenty individuals were reported to have been killed every year by wild animals.

According to Unni Wikan, we are led to think that sustainability is not always related to natural environment. City dwellers are trying

to develop their capacity (the knowledge, skill and social values for their survival) and also trying to build cultural competency. Through cultural competency people have improved their standard of living towards a sustainable life. Sustainability is oriented towards future. The same situation is found among the Kumals of Tumlingtar. When they identified the development, market economy and the new migrants as cultural competent the Kumals formed an organization, educated their children, learned high caste values and practices, adopted new values, established various cooperative groups, formed community forests and identified themselves by their clan names instead of caste. Thus, Kumals have changed a lot to cope up with the present socio-cultural and natural environment. So, a stranger cannot find out a Kumal in Tumlingtaar nowadays by talking only for a short period because the Kumals have not only changed their lifestyle but their occupation, dressing style, language as well as other behaviors and practices.

Finally, I conclude that the concept of sustainability is ambiguous and situational. It has a fluid meaning although it is fruitful to further improve our understanding regarding human adaptation. The aspects of human adaptation are the dimensions of sustainability and each affects the other.

End notes

[1] The Kumals took initiative from forest user groups in their own leadership when they realized the shortage of forest products.

[2] Bourdieu P. (1985) defines various capitals such as social, cultural, political and symbolic capitals

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DO MALES ALWAYS LIKE WAR?
A CRITIQUE ON FRANCIS FUKUYAMA AND
HIS HYPER MASCULINE ASSERTIONS ON
"FEMINIZATION OF WORLD POLITICS"

Youba Raj Luintel

Background

Francis Fukuyama's article in *Foreign Affairs* (Fukuyama, 1998) has, once again, glittered intense debates over the issues on women, gender, demography and world politics. Drawing arguments from a wide range of fields, such as archaeology to psychology, demography to primatology, Fukuyama ensues on the evolutionary psychology to explain the international politics of the contemporary and the future world. He portrays that women are "incapable" to venture in the realm of politics that has always been "male-friendly": aggressive, competitive, tough and force demanding (Fukuyama, 1998:32).

Fukuyama's arguments have made many feminist scholars to respond to and react against his "grossly untenable ideas," some of which are spurious while others unsupported. The *Foreign Affairs* has published some of them (see Ehrenreich, 999; Ferguson, 1999; Jaquette, 1999; Pollitt, 1999; Tiger, 1999). In this paper, I would try to appraise Fukuyama's main contention on human nature and critique on it bringing different feminist arguments together.

Fukuyama's Main Contentions

Fukuyama's academic writing commences from his earlier and the much debated article "The End of History?" (Fukuyama, 1989), published in "the neo-conservative" Washington quarterly *The National Interest* (Knutsen, 1991). In that article Fukuyama acclaimed the triumph of the West and the Western liberal democracy with the end of the Cold War. At that time, Fukuyama used to work as State Department of US Government. Knutsen, a strong critique of Fukuyama, argues that as a young employee in the US Government, Fukuyama's philosophical inquiry on the nature of historical change attracted immediate attention, not only in the US but also abroad (Knutsen, 1991:78)[1]. In the second time, he chose *Foreign Affairs*, "another conservative journal" to publish his article (Knutsen, 1991).

While the first article (Fukuyama, 1989) was published as an immediate response to mark the end of Cold War, the second article (Fukuyama, 1998), however, was published in the context of world politics characterized by violent wars in Afghanistan, Bosnia, Georgia, Liberia, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, etc. Simultaneously, this is also the period when the liberal democracy and neoclassical/market-oriented economy have been reinforced. Thirdly, this is the period that has given wider recognition to feminist movements. It is in this global context that we can understand the hidden agenda of a migrant scholar like Fukuyama for writing article like this. Ling argues:

> "...Fukuyama is targeting precisely...markers of difference [such as race, class, culture, nationality] to rehash a racialized neocolonialism under the seemingly less incendiary rubric of "men vs. women." Moreover,

...Fukuyama's reactionary masculinity – i.e., his *hyper* masculinity – stems from his own subaltern position as a Japanese-American male in white-male dominated America" (Ling, 2000:3. Italics original).

Fukuyama has organized his article into eight subheadings. First, he cites two stories of chimp behaviour,[2] and says, "chimps, like humans, are intensely social creatures whose lives are preoccupied with achieving and maintaining dominance in status hierarchies" (Fukuyama, 1998:25). According to Fukuyama, a) politics is based on violence, and b) violence and coalition-building are primarily the work of males. His argument such as this has been based on underlying sociobiological assumption of human nature; i.e., males are purely instrumental, calculating and political in their alliances, while females are emotionally attached (Fukuyama, 1998:25). However, without giving sufficient reference, he concludes, "...male bonding is in fact genetic and predates the human species" (Fukuyama, 1998:26).

Criticizing some of the common beliefs that the savage were noble and that violence comes not from human nature but from civilization, Fukuyama reacts "war [among the savages] was actually more frequent and rates of murder higher, than for modern ones" (1998:26). He further claims:

> "The problem with the feminist view is that it sees these attitudes toward violence, power, and status as wholly the product of a patriarchal culture, whereas in fact...they are rooted in biology...*What is bred in the bone cannot be altered easily by changes in culture and ideology*" (Fukuyama, 1998:27, italics mine).

In the third section of the article, Fukuyama tries to refute "social-constructionist" views put forward by social anthropologists, like Emile Durkheim, Herbert Spencer, Franz Boas, Margaret Mead and Ruth Benedict. Instead, upholding the evolutionary and neuro-physiological ideas, he attempts to demonstrate sex psychology as biologically determined. Sex differences, according to Fukuyama, are "genetically rather than culturally rooted...and extend beyond the body into the realm of mind" (1998:30). "Stereotypical gender identities," he goes on to say, "associate men with war and competition and women with peace and cooperation" (Fukuyama, 1998:33). It is, therefore, primarily men not women, who a) enjoy the experience of aggression, and b) revel in the ritualization of war (Fukuyama, 1998).

For Fukuyama it has two apparent implications, so far as international relation of the world politics is concerned. First, only the feminization of world politics would lower societies' overall rate of violence. Fukuyama says, "Only by participating fully in global politics can women both defend their own interests and shift the underlying male agenda" (1998, 34). For example, by so doing, women can contribute to make "*now aggressive*" states such as the United States "*less inclined to use power* around the world as freely as they have in the past" (Fukuyama, 1998:35, italics mine). Secondly, feminization of politics is most likely to occur in the "democratic zone of peace" than in the "authoritarian states" of the South. It is, therefore, Fukuyama's main concern that in the future, the non-US, the non-European states would be aggressive (due to their politics led by the hotheaded young men and less female participation). But, politics in the states of "democratic zone of peace" would have gone by then to the hands of peace-loving, cooperative women who are genetically "less supportive of defense spending and use of force abroad" (Fukuyama, 1998:34). This would be a situation very undesirable to scholars such as Fukuyama.

In the sixth part of his article, Fukuyama demonstrates his bleak hope that feminization of world politics has certain constraints also.

According to him, "there will be limits to how much international politics can change" (Fukuyama, 1998:36). Fukuyama then goes on to say that since the "democratic zone of peace" will have to deal with "those parts of the world run by young, ambitious, unconstrained men" such as "Mobutu, Milosevic,[3] or Saddam," at least *masculine policies* will be still required (Fukuyama, 1998:36-37). Again, although women can hold politics, they, however, cannot penetrate other key sectors of strategic importance, such as military, that need "male bonding" and "unit cohesion."

Fukuyama projects some interesting demographic trends in the seventh part of the article. Given that the trend of population ageing continues in the West, it is highly likely that elderly women will form "one of the most important voting blocs." They will "help elect more women leaders" less inclined toward military intervention. On the contrary, says Fukuyama, people in agriculture countries will be still inclined to military causalities. Furthermore, the future sex ratio of the population in agricultural countries will be in favour of male due to abortion of female fetuses (Fukuyama, 1998).

Finally and importantly, Fukuyama offers political solutions. He says, "... accepting the fact that people have natures that are often evil, political, economic, and social systems[4] can be designed to mitigate the effects of man's baser instincts" (Fukuyama, 1998:39).

Fukuyama on Gendered Terrain of Human Nature

Biologists describe human nature as something imbedded in the ways they study organism (Hubbard, 1990). Fukuyama's conception of human nature too is not beyond it. He has tried his best to demonstrate that human nature is the outcome of biology, not of culture or civilization. Fukuyama shares the line of reasoning, as did Darwin, Freud and Wilson. The opening stories of chimp

behaviour indicate sufficiently towards his belief on "biologically based psychological differences between sexes" (Fukuyama, 1998:26).

For him male are by nature always aggressive and violent, seeking a "dominant" position in the status hierarchy.[5] Referring to crime statistics but not presenting any of them specifically, he concludes, "crimes are overwhelmingly committed by young men" (Fukuyama, 1998:32). Unlike males, according to him, females are emotionally attached, conciliatory and cooperative. Here, Fukuyama shares the idea of Herbert Spencer that women are altruists (Spencer, 1884, as quoted in Sayers, 1982). It is due to their altruism that female can favour the weakest members of society (as in voting). What implies is that, in future, the states in the "democratic zone of peace" will have a) more elderly women in politics, and b) they will be hesitant in using the force to keep the South under control.

Thus, Fukuyama builds his arguments on human nature based on the legacy of Darwinian concept of "sexual selection," Bagehot's concept of "natural selection" and Geddes and Thomson's concept of "katabolic vs. anabolic metabolism" of the two sexes (Sayers, 1982).

The feminist scholars, however, have long been challenging such a "circular" way of explaining human behaviour. Ruth Hubbard, for example, says, "Because sociobiologists posit that stubborn kernel of human biological traits, honed over eons of evolution, their human-nature theories are *conservative* (1990, 118, italics mine). Hubbard denies the claim that all human societies have competition and dominance hierarchies.[6] She argues, "there is no reason to believe that biology determines the ways different societies are constructed" (Hubbard, 1990:118).

To say that male always like war is a kind of over simplification of the reality. Very few men can make themselves hard to shoot directly at individual enemies (Ehrenreich, 1999). Fukuyama cites only the names of "hard-wired" leaders, be it Margaret Thatcher or Saddam, Melosevic or Mobuto. He never cites war-disliking, peace-loving leaders such as M. K. Gandhi, Olaf Palme, Willy Brandt, Martin Luther King, but to name a few (Ehrenreich, 1999). If male are really "hard-wired" it is not necessarily because of biology, but because of socialization. There are widespread taboos on female handling of weapons, but at the same time, male are encouraged to do so cross-culturally right from the initiation rites (Ehrenreich, 1999). Does not it support that gender behaviours regarding war and violence are shaped and perpetuated culturally?

We have many examples *to refute* Fukuyama's assertion that women do always like peace, not violence. The mythological warrior-goddesses that some religions of the world have today do attest the fact that human society has recognized aggressive and violent women too.[7] We come across many news reports that in many guerilla-style fights, women fighters have been given the responsibility of forefront.[8]

To sum up, first, war cannot be explained by any individual impulse. Genetic roots of analysing human behavior are therefore untrue (Pollitt, 1999). Secondly, evolutionary psychology is not *the* only theory that should be picked up, and ignoring others, to analyse the cause of gender role differences. Finally, if women are more inclined to negotiation than on war or violence, what difference does it make (Jaquette, 1999:129)?

For the moment, even if we accept that male are really aggressive and violent, is there anything that their aggression and violence have contributed for human progress, other than wars, struggles, inter-tribal conflicts, and most importantly nuclear threats? May be,

their violent aggression was functional in some "savage" ages; it is useless in modern world (Learner, 1986:19). These sorts of reasoning are "reductionist" and "ahistorical" for they try to reduce larger social phenomenon to biology, say gene, and they do not take into account particular society as reference. According to Hubbard, substantial physical and psychological changes in human behaviour are possible through major political and economic transformations of human society (Hubbard, 1990). Modern human society is not in a state of nature; it is now very much a part of cultural inventions and innovations.

Gender Implications

In this article, Fukuyama has presented his views on gender relations between men and women very tacitly. Given the "aggression of men" on the one hand and "emotional attachment of women," on the other (Fukuyama, 1998:25), the gender relation at the interpersonel level is universally unequal. Men are dominant while the women submissive. At the institutional level of gender relations, Fukuyama seems to be selective. He says that some sectors such as military need "gender segregation" (Fukuyama, 1998:38). Likewise, violence and aggression are basically the domain of men, not of women. Fukuyama says, "In no area is sex-related difference clearer than with respect to violence and aggression" (Fukuyama, 1998:31). Although politics is never women-friendly (Fukuyama, 1998:32), Fukuyama suggests, let it be feminized so that threats of violence and war can be minimized (1998:34).

Fukuyama very sharply differentiates the world into two major parts: the authoritarian South, and the democratic North. Although Japan falls territorially within the South, her demographic reality, according to Fukuyama, does match her with the North. Likewise, due to the differential rates of fertility and immigration, even the

European countries have different kinds of demographic trends than that of the US. Given that contemporary trends in demography and politics both are unequally gendered in the North as well as in the South, Fukuyama speculates a very surprising scenario of international relations in the future. According to Fukuyama, the world has three major demographic trends:

First, there is "precipitous fall in fertility rates" across the developed world. As a result, population aging will be more rapid in this area. This trend will have pronounced impacts more on particular regions, such as Europe, whose rates of immigration are very low. Fukuyama speculates that given the growing size of elderly population, their votes will go to the female candidates.

Secondly, due to the popularity of small family norms in the advanced countries, the future child will have to grow up "with no cousins, siblings, aunts or uncles." Fukuyama observes, when compared to "the surpluses of young, hotheaded men" in the agricultural societies of the South, children of the advanced countries would be "more leery of military casualties."

Thirdly and on the contrary to the points mentioned above, the high rates of abortion of the female fetuses in the countries of the South will shift sex ratios there "sharply in favour of men." So, it implies that risk of leaders such as "Saddam, Mobuto or Meloevic" coming in power in future cannot be ignored (Fukuyama, 1998:36).

According to Ehrenreich, "...the female, and hence over-kindly, heads of the states" that arise in the northern democracies "will be a poor match for the macho young males" whom Fukuyama expects to dominate the south (Ehrenreich, 1999:121-122). Fukuyama's main concern is towards the implication this phenomenon will have in US foreign policy and national security issues (Fukuyama, 1998:34).

In this point, Fukuyama may seem relatively logical. However, the deeper we analyse his arguments, the more he appears as "conservative." First, it is not always that individual qualities determine the inter-state relationship in international politics. Usually, voters do not make foreign policy, they are the old leaders (yes- usually male) who decide it (Pollitte, 1999). Second, it is really surprising to speculate that women leaders of the North who come in power in the future will be transforming American foreign policy ("against the will of those now in control," such as, for example, Bill Clinton) (Pollitte, 1999).

To sum up, it seems that the non-white men of the South and the white women of the North, as Fukuyama tacitly speculates, are the two potential threats. The "historically unprecedented shift in the sexual basis of politics" in these regions can lead to a change in international relations (Fukuyama, 1998:36). Fukuyama's only bleak hope rests on the speculated possibility that "gender segregation in certain parts" such as in military, seems to him not just appropriate but necessary (Fukuyama, 1998:38).

Conclusions

As a Professor of public policy it is natural for Fukuyama to write on policy level issues. First he wrote on the failure of communist states as an "end of the history." This time he wrote on the issues of increasing threats to the political hegemony of US. The first kind of threat is internal in nature. The simultaneous trends of population ageing and the increased participation of women in politics in the northern democratic states pose risk that future leaders of these countries would be women who are "biologically conciliatory." The second category of risk is external in scope. Given the practice of aborting female fetuses, according to Fukuyama, the sex ratio of the population of the South will go in favour of potentially the "hotheaded" young men. For Fukuyama, the nature of problem is

serious; because "biologically determined sex difference" has made the problem complicated. So, the implication is, both White House and Pentagon should formulate strategy in such a way so that political hegemony of US can still be maintained.

The way of Fukuyama's writing is very strong and persuading. We find, nevertheless, a number of shortcomings, frauds and contradictions. First of all, the basic and underlying assumption upon which Fukuyama's main thesis has been based (that gender behaviors are biologically rooted) is spurious. It immediately posits question on Fukuyama for the validity and reliability of his arguments. Secondly, he is very selective --and therefore biased-- in his examples and cases. For example, he repeatedly cites the name of Saddam, but never cites other exemplary names such as M.K.Gandhi, among others. His subject matter of discussion is very much prejudious. Thirdly, and corollary to the second, Fukuyama's article has some methodological problems. His references are very vague without proper citation and/or quotation.

One can understand why is Fukuyama so worried about the nature of white women and non-white men, but one cannot understand why is he so silent about white men and non-white women? Nowhere in the whole article has Fukuyama cited time-specific and space-specific cases so that verification could be made. Fourthly, his arguments are self-contradictory. Fukuyama, for example, claims that social, political, and economic institutions in the North are well effective. But, in the case of the South, he observes, biological predisposition is extremely influential. It reflects no other things but Fukuyama's academic servitude towards them, for whose interest he wrote this article. Finally, when we compare all of these frauds in the light of Fukuyama's personal position, it helps us to formulate epistemological charges against his *hyper*masculine, imperialist, and racial prejudices (Ling, 2000). Fukuyama's

methodological and epistemological fallacies one the one hand, and his analysis based on spurious assumption and selection bias (of cases, references, and subject-matter) on the other hand, put his entire thesis under question.

End Notes

1. Knutsen Torbjorn was Assistant Professor at George Mason University at that time. Coincidentally, Fukuyama joined the same university as Professor of Public Policy, later.

2. Fukuyama presents the cases of captive chimp colony at the Berger's Zoo in The Netherlands and the Gombe National Park in Tanzania to show that the chimps, like humans, have "proclivity for routinely murdering peers" (Fukuyama, 1998:24-25).

3. Slavodan Milocevic, defeated in the election of 2000 by his pro-Democracy rival, was from the Eastern Europe, not from the Third World.

4. For Fukuyama, these systems are nothing but liberal democracy and neoclassical economy, as opposed to "utopian" socialism and feminism (Fukuyama, 1998: 39-40).

5. "Boys are" Fukuyama says, "more aggressive, both verbally and physically, in their dreams, words, and actions than girls" (1998: 31). Their domination extends from politics to war.

6. Ferguson (1999) even argues that chimpanzees do not routinely murder their peers, as claimed by Fukuyama, until they are undisturbed. According to him, both the Burger's Zoo and the Gombe Park represent the disturbed habitat for the chimpanzees cited.

7. In the Hindu religion, for example, *Durga Kali* is one of the female goddesses portrayed as a very brave fighter. She is depicted as having several hands, weapons in each. Riding on a huge and roaring tiger, she has worn garland not of flower but of human heads.

8. In conflict-ridden countries such as Peru (especially during 1990s) and Nepal (since the last one decade) where "peoples' war" instigated by Maoists has come out, women trained in guerilla warfare are reported to be having a very strong proclivity on fierce face-to-face fighting, atrocious killing, and group war with the enemies (government security

forces, in particular). Recently in Nepal, for example, women warriors from Maoist side are in deputation at the frontline of the war especially in big and strategic attacks. There are separate female battalions as well. Keeping this into consideration, the Royal Nepal Army, too has initiated recruiting women and girls into army force since 2004, targeting primarily on war widows, both for their livelihood support as well as for retaliation attacks.

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