

OCCASIONAL PAPERS IN  
SOCIOLOGY & ANTHROPOLOGY

VOLUME VII

Central Department of Sociology and Anthropology  
Tribhuvan University, Kirtipur  
Kathmandu, Nepal  
2001

OCCASIONAL PAPERS IN SOCIOLOGY & ANTHROPOLOGY VOLUME VII (2001) TU

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Volume VII

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May, 2001

## Occasional Papers in Sociology and Anthropology

### Published by

Central Department of Sociology and Anthropology  
Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu

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### Year of Publication 2001

### Volume VII

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Kathmandu

**Computer Typesetting :** Academic Computer Center, Kirtipur  
Krishna Karki & Ram Sundar Sharma  
Tel. : 331887

### Printing

Modern Printing Press  
Kantipath  
Kathmandu  
Telephone : 246452

## EDITORIAL

Anthropology and sociology have 'come of age' in Nepal. During the past two decades, anthropologists and sociologists trained both indigenously and exogenously have made untiring and sincere efforts for the academic and professional growth of both disciplines. With the change of development paradigm in the contemporary social world, anthropology and sociology have assumed the paramount importance -- a function of the realization that social, cultural and institutional aspects are no less important for the sustainable development. And this has been equally true in the context of Nepal. It follows as a corollary that every year thousands of students have shown their academic interests to pursue M.A. in Anthropology and Sociology. In fact, a strong and rigorous academic background in both the disciplines has helped a large number of people to carve out their much - coveted "niches" in the agencies working for the development of Nepal. However, both disciplines have also a great challenge of producing high quality manpower needed for the developmental efforts of Nepal. It is in this context that the present volume of *Occasional Papers in Sociology and Anthropology* has been published for students, teachers and development practitioners. It is easier said than done. There has always been a problem of the collection of articles and under such circumstance, it is a herculean task to maintain the continuity of its publication. However, a few teachers of the Central Department of Sociology/Anthropology and a few others from outside have contributed their articles to the present volume. The editorial board duly acknowledge their laudable contribution.

Let us have a glance on the themes of the articles of this volume. Prof. Reshikeshab Raj Regmi elaborately discusses the need of anthropological insights in the delivery of health services in Nepal. Prof. Kailash Pyakuryal has contributed a course-based theoretical article which elaborately discusses the concept of social stratification according to the model of Max Weber, an eminent German sociologists. Dr. Padam Lal Devkota critically

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presents the native perspective on the anthropology, society and development in Nepal and stresses the need for the *Nepalization* of the discipline. Mr. Laya Prasad Uprety presents an overview of the population dynamics and environmental degradation in Nepal. Mr. Binod Pokhrel critically analyzes the gender roles and development activities among the rural households of eastern Nepal. Dr. Samira Luitel critically assesses the social world of the Nepalese women with case study evidences. Mr. Youba Raj Luitel logically presents the *pros* and *cons* of the debate on the women's property right issue in Nepal by contextualizing the discussion in a theoretical framework. Mr. Dharendra Bahadur Parajuli presents the cultural dimension of pasture resource management from the northwest Dolpa. Dr. Philip Tanner critically traces the development of participatory processes and policy in Nepal's development over the past 40 years. It also examines briefly the development in international social research and emerging knowledge on the subject of participation and empowerment concepts that may influence the direction of social research in Nepal.

Prof. Dr. Reshikeshab Raj Regmi  
Laya Prasad Uprety  
Binod Pokhrel

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## ANTHROPOLOGICAL INSIGHTS IN THE DELIVERY OF HEALTH SERVICES IN NEPAL

Dr. Rishikeshab Raj Regmi\*

### Introduction

Indigenous practitioners like herbalists and spiritualists used to practice traditional medical methods until 1950 in Nepal. A multiplicity of medical traditions are found among the various caste/ethnic communities of Nepal. Since Nepal is a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural country, there is a variety of cultural differences and similarities in primary health care practices. Beliefs, concepts and opinions are different among different communities. Concepts of health and hygiene, disease and illness also differ from culture to culture.

His Majesty's Government of Nepal had the policy to provide good health services to the people of Nepal by 2000 A.D. There is a proliferation of foreign and development programs on health care system. Many INGOs and NGOs are working under various health activities to fulfil the aspirations of about 21.5 million population of Nepal. But despite their efforts, no improvement on the quality of life of the people is noticed.

Health has always been a major concern of community development. It is a basic requirement not only for the fulfillment of people's aspirations but also for the enjoyment of the people for a better quality of life.

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The author is thankful to Prof. Kailash Nath Pyakuryal for his comments and suggestions to finalize this paper.

The accessibility and availability of alternative curative and preventive measures of health care are the prerequisites to change the traditional health beliefs and behaviour of the people. The rural people go to the faith healers because they are the only persons available to help them in the time of ailments. The health posts in many parts of the country are not functioning properly. There are no doctors, no nurses and no medicines available in many remote health posts and sub-health posts. Therefore, there is a need to improve primary health care (PHC) in several rural areas and make available the modern methods of health care. Attempts should be made to bring changes in the people's health concept and health behaviour through persuasion. In this direction anthropological research outputs could be of immense help. The changing of attitude and behaviour of the people is not a simple task where many socio-cultural elements are intermingled. Medical pluralism is found among the practitioners of health care system. Even the people with a good economic status and education and belief in modern medicine use alternative traditional systems of healing, when the modern medicine fails to help them.

### Research Need

General researchers in Nepal who are not accustomed with anthropological methods and the implications of socio-cultural factors and local languages have given some discrepancies in their use of data. It is because respondents give one answer to the survey interviewees and it is the interviewer's error. Therefore, cross-checking of data obtained from survey is also useful and essential. Now-a-days, there are few studies done on ethnomedical aspects of rural and ethnic people. But for an in-depth understanding of the problems and biocultural or ecological process that affect health, holistic and contextual systematic studies are necessary. It is now clearly established that while the need for economic growth is imperative, no less is the need to obviate indiscreet assault on environment that affects adversely our life and living. The need for environmental protection being unquestionable and non-negotiable, development activities must not be allowed to outstrip the

assimilative capacity of our ecosystem as well as culture. Contemporary scrutiny of our concept about health is needed here.

The constitution of WHO describes "health" as "a state of complete physical, mental and social well being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity". But the definition of health still appears to be less than satisfactory, and its measurement in consequences lacks precision. Not infrequently a clear line of demarcation between health and diseases is readily recognisable and transition from one to another occurs imperceptibly.

Factors determining the status of health or disease are susceptible to changes, induced by a wide variety of circumstances, endogenous and exogenous. Candidates to be designated as healthy or diseased on the other hand, are regulated by a host of factors, genotypic and phenotypic, disclosed and undisclosed, and handle the disease producing processes or agents in a manner not too predictable. Defence mechanism is acquired in these candidates; their character, activation in response to the external stimuli are not always amenable to prior estimation. Disease attributable to ineffective agents, bacteria, parasites, viruses, fungi etc. depend on a complex succession of events before they attain the level of criminal recognition as disease entities in a given individual. The abundance distribution and availability of ineffective agents in nature are governed by a wide range of environmental factors too. Exposure of individuals to these agents, its extent and frequency are conditioned by their socio-economic status, environmental sanitation, health education, social, cultural and religious practices and occupational pursuits.

Classical epidemiologists generally try to explain why and how a disease occurs in an area. But very few attempts have been made to understand why and how the disease fails to occur in an area, where opportunities for transmission of infection are readily available. Therefore, the problem should be studied by means of multi-disciplinary ways. Every culture, irrespective of its simplicity and complexity has its own notion regarding health and health seeking behaviour, and this is often referred to as

"Health culture". It is an integral component of the overall culture of the community. The health of any community, by and large, is a function of the interaction between socio-culture and socio-biological practices, the genetic attributes and the environmental conditions. The widely varying prevalent health practices, use of indigenous herbal drugs, taboos and superstitions are also responsible for determining the health behaviour and health status of the different ethnic groups and other communities. Many studies done by several anthropologists in Nepal, India and other developing countries reveal that socio-economic factors, socio-cultural variants like nutritional practices (food habits) are interrelated with socio-biological norms such as mating pattern, preferential alliances, age at marriage, etc., have tremendous impact on the fertility and morbidity pattern. The impact of environment and genetic factors are further additive one which complicate the situation. Some of the studies done by some anthropologists also reveal that non-availability of safe drinking water, proper sanitation and hygiene coupled with primitive health practices breed a number of diseases leading to higher mortality and morbidity rates. It is thus apparent that health is not the exclusive domain of medical sciences. It needs a co-ordination between social scientists and medical practitioners to deal effectively in both prevention and cure of diseases. As a matter of fact, more anthropological studies and sociological studies covering the different aspects of primary health care are urgently needed to understand some of the realities of health problems, particularly of rural societies. The importance of socio-economic and cultural factors in health and disease and their implication on modern medicine and public health programs can be understood only when both medical professions and social scientists collaborate with one another.

### **Development and Change**

There has been a perceptible change in recent years regarding the focus of development policies and priorities. In Nepal, development goals are no longer defined in terms of economic growth exclusively but between the development factors required for the well-being of the people. The vital link

between development process and health is being increasingly recognised and an attempt is made to reformulate policies, and programs accordingly. Investment for better health is not viewed merely as a social service, but as an investment in human resource development, contributing significantly to the process of development.

Exposure to disease producing organisms, deficiency of certain micronutrients (such as iron, vitamin A, calcium and iodine) as well as the inadequate intake of calories and proteins remain important reasons for the lack of better health. Environmental factors are barriers in achieving better health, It is estimated that only less than 56 percent of Nepal's population have access to potable water and only 3 percent have basic sanitation facilities. There are conditions compounded by cultural, taboos and ignorance. For example, in Hindu and Buddhist culture of Nepal, abortion is, by explicit dominant values, considered a great religious sin. Many women in rural Nepal are reluctant to discuss family planning and abortion. Sexual activity is surrounded with notions of ritual pollution, strict privacy and an atmosphere of utmost reservation. Pregnant women in rural parts of Nepal are not given extra calories and proteins they require because of the belief that increased food intake during pregnancy results in larger babies culminating in difficult labour. In certain parts of rural Nepal infants are not generally given water to drink. Consequently, dehydration following diarrhoea claims many lives which could have, otherwise, been saved through proper dehydration. Other critical factors influencing health status of the communities are the quality and quantity of health services, including curative medical care, as well as preventive promotive and rehabilitative services. Availability of these facilities and their accessibility-geographic, social and economic have an important role of particular relevance to health in the status of women that they enjoy within the home and community. This gives them the liberty to decide important family issues with health consequences-how much of the family income should be spent on food, when and where to take the child for treatment but unfortunately in Nepal women are less educated and are more

bounded by religion and cultural values. Changes in the attitudes are very slow and need of women's education is very high.

### **Health for all by 2000 A. D. on Primary HealthCare**

It is not uncommon to hear health personnel, irrespective of the capacity in which they are involved, or at any level of service delivery, dismiss "Health for all by 2000 A. D. and primary health care" as a 'jargon'. Perhaps, this stems from the definition of health which is not merely the absence of disease, but a state of positive well-being on one hand, and the practical impossibility to ensure the absence of disease on other. "Primary Health Care" is interpreted in more than one way. To some, it means only "first contact care" - which, then, would imply a conceptual frames for health planning and health service delivery which defines facilities to be provided to people in different geographic regions, when they require it. It also implies the provision of referral services for those who need more intensive health care. In Nepal, "Primary Health Care", is an approach and a philosophy for planning organising and delivery of health services. It is based on certain concepts and principles, such as accessibility (geographic, economic and social) of services as close to homes of people as possible, continued availability, provision of all components of basic health services, providing referral services at secondary and tertiary levels for those who require intensive care, reaching vulnerable groups (such as mothers, children, those socially and economically under privileged), integrated development to ensure maximal impact of various development programs and involvement of the community in healthcare.

These concepts and principles require translation into policy and program objectives. Further, resource allocation has also to be accordingly made, if these objectives have to be achieved. There is an urgent need to define the facilities (in terms of categories of manpower, their skill, diagnostic and therapeutic facilities, equipment drugs and supplies etc.), that needed to be provided at divergent levels, in order to institute streamlined referral services and avoid duplication of effort.

Studies have shown that there is paradoxical under-utilization of existing resources, in a situation where there is inadequate coverage by the health infrastructure.

There is a need to acquire managerial skills by medical and paramedical workers. The changes in "system elements" for incorporating better management practices have to be identified and instituted, if management of health service is to improve. Supervisor practices may be enlarged to include guidance and facilitation and also concentrate on qualitative aspects of health care. Another aspect and a philosophy for planning, organising and delivery of health services.

### **Research**

Research in health includes a wide range from fundamental laboratory studies, clinical and community trials to health system research. Research in health systems may improve the efficiency of existing health services, generate factual information for decision-making and provide a base for objective health planning and programming. Research in health systems includes the assessment of health needs, and studies the production and distribution of resources for health care, the organisation of these resources, their management and economic support as well as the actual delivery of services. The services must be organised to provide adequate care as close to people, as possible, and also simultaneously develop system to ensure utilisation of services at each level. This necessitates an enquiry into (a) what quantum and range of services are to be provided at primary, secondary and tertiary levels (village, Ilaka and district levels) (b) what facilities and commodities will be required at different levels to support the defined services (c) what human resource development polices and programs and institutional capacity must one has to achieve (d) to develop mechanisms to ensure community participation and support in planning and management, as well as perhaps the rendering of certain service.

The need for researches in health related problems are increasing. An effort should be made in Nepal to develop a meaningful Management Information System for monitoring the health care programs. Several researches should be carried out

(a) to streamline the collection procedure and reduce the load on workers (b) to evolve a mechanism of feed-back to various levels of health personnel (c) collect information which may be used for planning and monitoring services and (d) to relate it to services provided to the population.

Other important areas for research include the study of tropical diseases, fertility regulation and infertility, cardiovascular diseases, cancer diarrhoeal immunity and vaccine development, mental health and malnutrition. Most research efforts to day require multidisciplinary expertise and collaborative effort. Research costs have increased. Scientists are not sure of the continued availability of funds. There is a shortage of trained manpower for research. What is required is a purposeful balance between fundamental and applied research.

### **Community Involvement for Health Care**

It is increasingly felt that for sustainable improvements in the quality of life of the people, community awareness and participation have pivotal and enduring role. Several contemporary, well-intentioned development programs have brought only transient changes. Some of these unsuccessful outcomes are attributable to the imposition of programs without adequate understanding and recognition of community process. The entire effort towards health care should endeavour to build on what the communities have and 'adopt' modern medical and technological advances for use by people not merely undertake programs which people must 'adopt'.

If the greatest results are to be achieved in terms of coverage, effectiveness, and efficiencies, we must encourage at grass-roots, extensive health related activities, by the people, for the people, as self-help effort. This primary health care approach should require relatively little support from outside sources. The people should be free to organise for themselves as best as they can, with appropriate encouragement from the national health authorities. Undertakings like that of village maternity centres, village pharmacies, Village Development Committee (VDC) health posts, VDC cleanliness campaigning by village people could play a leading role. Mothers, women's organisation, co-

operatives, youth and village actions group can be deeply involved in the health of the people. Community participation for health care theoretically requires the promotion and inculcation of a value system which is based on mutual concern for members in the community. Villages in Nepal are not homogenous entities (where people are aligned according to caste/ethnic and kinship groups) and efforts to organise people must take cognizance of this feature. Who is to organise who, for what, remains the central point. The critical operational aspect for promoting community participation is the identification of areas where people can participate, and what can be done by whom. The mechanism for community involvement have to be developed in accordance with their resource and culture.

### **Information, Education and Communication**

The process of self-learning and the demystification of medicine are key factors in building up the capacity of individuals and communities to look after some of their own health needs. With the advent of new channels for communication and increase in the out-reach of media, one of the most important issue is designing and implementing a relevant and comprehensive information, education and communication strategy for health. Information should include the following:

- (a) Etiological and causative aspects of disease, especially those of public health importance.
- (b) Health related activities which may be instituted by people themselves in relation to this, and
- (c) Existing health care facilities to promote better utilization.

In addition, both formal and non-formal education may also be promoted. Appropriate technology, both hardware and software component, should equally be used. Several institutions are involved in research culminating in the incorporation of less costly and more feasible ways in health delivery services.

### **Anthropology as a Tool**

For every scientific concept that appears in our theoretical statements there are likely to be a number of

alternative procedures available for observing or operationalizing the relevant phenomena. The anthropological holistic approach is applied in the study of particular institutions. This is the principle of multimeasurement research. Such studies or researches in Nepal have been done on the level of illness and primary health care. Qualitative in-depth study has helped immensely in many researches along with quantitative technique.

In order to make intensive observation field-work method could be of great useful in different ecological zones of Nepal, where day to day activities are practiced according to the traditional medicine as well as with the modern allopathy methods. Therefore, anthropological field workers need to have a number of different research tools in their "field kit" unlike the situation in the pure science. Unlike the situation in the pure science research tools in social anthropology involves relatively in the way of "hardware" and gadgetry but require great sensitivity and self awareness on part of the researcher. The field worker is his own principle research instrument, and the various methods of investigation are alternative techniques for objectifying and standardizing the field-worker's perception.

For understanding the culture factors inhibiting the development of awareness of rural people in Nepal, every field-worker should be constantly alert in/on the possibilities of developing new modes of observation to supplement the standard items. In the context of Nepal, a corollary of this statement is that in practically in every instance of field research the techniques employed whether questionnaires, modes of information interviewing - must be adopted by the field worker to the requirements of the local cultural context. However, there are no ready made instruments. Researcher must be very careful in his observation.

At present, a growing number of social anthropologists involved in "traditional" research have turned to health related and development issues that the culture of the development should become a new area of anthropological inquiry is argued by anthropologist Judith Justice. Her book about Nepal, entitled, *Policies, Plans and People*, focuses on the integrated community health program which was gradually transformed in primary

health care. Central to this book is the question : "How comes that information on socio-cultural "realities" is generally not used in planning health program ?" She argues that bureaucracy in Nepal has not understood the role of social scientist, especially the social anthropologist. Usually planners have preconceived notions, impressions and misunderstandings about anthropologist. They think that anthropologists are interested in studying only traditional medical practices and practitioners. But many anthropologist share with planners an interest in providing effective health care within a cultural milieu and solving the problems faced by rural health workers. There are two examples of the anthropological works done in Nepal which cast more light upon the issue of how to collect information about local societies.

Linda Stone (1986) also inquires into primary health care (PHC). She shows that there is a gap between written intentions (that contain vague motions) and the actual procedures. Though her project emphasised "Community Participation", the researcher was hardly happy and was doubtful whether her aim was really achieved. She argued that the project encountered problems due to three reasons in Nepal.

1. PHC fails to appreciate villager's values and their perceived needs. In particular, PHC is organized primarily to provide health education, whereas villagers value modern curative services and feel little need for new health knowledge.
2. PHC views rural Nepali culture only pejoratively as a barrier to health education. Alternatively, local cultural beliefs, usages and practices should be viewed as resource to facilitate dissemination and acceptance of modern health knowledge.
3. In attempting to incorporate Nepal's traditional medical practitioners into the program, primary health care has mistakenly assumed that rural clients passively believe and obey traditional practitioners. In fact, clients play active roles and are themselves in controls of the therapeutic process.

Linda stone indicates that very little is known to the donor side about people's actual knowledge, perceptions and attitudes. Burghart (1988) inquires into the cultural knowledge of hygiene and sanitation that he sees as the basis for health development in Nepal. He concentrates mainly on the complex issue of "water" : on the criteria people use to evaluate drinking water ; classification of water sources ; forms of domestic storage of water, indigenous methods of water sources ; forms of domestic storage of water, indigenous methods of water treatment and knowledge of water related diseases. While discussing the adequacy of local knowledge of hygiene and health, Burghart examines the notion of "culture" that guides developmental interventions. While addressing the problem of getting planners to translate their concerns on to the understanding of local people, he stresses that policies cannot be successfully implemented and taken up by a people if they don't acquire positive meaning in terms of their local culture. These factors necessitate the use of key methodological aspects of holistic paradigm of anthropology.

### Conclusions

Most of the participatory research practices in Nepal have mistakenly concentrated on measuring tangible goods rather than helping people in the transformation process to create their own institutions and ideas. This has served ill to the people. With the goal of improving the quality of life and fighting against mass poverty, many rural development strategies including PHC have been implemented in Nepal. Nepal has tried many development models, both capitalistic and socialistic, borrowed from many countries, but development experiences have not shown increase in the quality of life, increased economic opportunity and increased public consciousness, etc. The flow of foreign aid started in 1952 have not given expected substantial benefits to people who mostly live in the remote rural villages of Nepal. They are all the more suffering from poverty, malnutrition, hunger, diseases and social injustice. People have slowly been losing their faith in development project because the programs used to be imposed upon them from government. Thus, nothing is gained, and many food qualities in Nepal society and culture are lost (Stiller, 1979).

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## WEBERIAN MODEL OF SOCIAL STRATIFICATION -A VIEWPOINT-

Dr. Kailash Pyakuryal\*

In this paper, an attempt has been made to discuss the concept of social stratification according to the Weberian model. The first section deals with explaining the various concepts such as economic class, social status and political power (party). The second section discusses the inevitability of social stratification and finally, in the last portion, Karl Marx and Max Weber are compared with regards to their views on social stratification.

Social stratification has been viewed by Weber in three dimensions (Weber, 1947): economic class, social status, and political power (party). Each of these dimensions has its own stratification: the economic, represented by income and the goods and services which an individual possesses; the social, represented by the prestige and honor he enjoys; and the political, represented by the power he exercises. According to Weber's scheme, class, based on the economic order, would be no more than one aspect of the social structure (Stavenhagen, 1975). Power is the main element in this model. Power has been viewed as the chance of a man or of a number of men to realize their own will in a communal action even against the resistance of others who are participating in the action. Power gives social honor. Economic power is not identical with power because mere economic power and especially naked money power is by no means a recognized basis of social honor. Nor is power the only basis of social honor. Power, as well as honor, may be guaranteed by the legal order. But legal order is not the primary

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The author duly acknowledges the comments made on this article by Professor Chaitanya Mishra in its earlier version.

source of power. It is rather an additional factor that enhances the chance to hold power or honor: but it cannot always secure them.

Weber understood law as a system that is effective because people orient their action to it. In addition, it is provided with an enforcement apparatus consisting of a staff of men. Weber was particularly interested in the factors and types of people that shape the law, as well as in the creation of law, especially natural law.

### Economy

Weber understood economic action as instrumental to the peaceful exercise of the power of control which in its intended meaning is oriented towards meeting the demand for goods and services. His primary interest was in capitalism, which he dealt with in its relationship to the genesis of the modern state and the formation of state monopolies: in his opinion, monopolies originally promoted capitalism, but later on they hindered it. To Weber, the factory was --- regardless of prevailing economic order --- a workshop with a division of labor and a type of work oriented to machinery. It is especially important to Weber that the outcome of competition, in spite of chance and fate, leads to the actual selection of those who have the necessary personal qualifications in greater measure than other qualities such as devotion to superiors or demagogic talents. This is said without implying the value judgement that the victors in the competitive battle are for that reason more valuable from an ethical or some other point of view (Honigsheim, 1968).

### Status Groups and Classes

Weber used the term "stand" (status group) to refer to such groups as junkers, industrialists, and German civil servants (Bendix, 1966). In imperial Germany, stand designated the social rank of an individual and of his group. This rank consciousness was a complex phenomenon. Weber emphasized that the collective actions of junkers as well as of farm workers could not be understood in economic terms alone. It also was necessary to analyze the ideas derived from the sub-culture of each group --

in Weber's terms, its "style of life" which interred into the evaluation of its economic interests.

The significance of this concept of stand or status groups becomes apparent in the contrast Weber made between it and class.

The term "class" refers to any group of people (who have the same typical chance for a supply of goods, external living conditions, and personal life experiences, insofar as this chance is determined by the power to dispose of goods or skills for the sake of income in a given economic order --- "class situation" is, in this sense, ultimately "market situation" (Bendix, 1966; Lasswell, 1965). For Weber, as for Marx, the basic condition of "class" lay in the unequal distribution of economic power and hence the unequal distribution of opportunity. But for Weber, this economic determination did not exhaust the condition of group formation. In contrast to the economically determined "class situation," "status situation" is designated as every typical component of the life fate of men that is determined by a specific, positive or negative, social estimator of honor ... In content, status honor is normally expressed by the fact that a specific style of life can be expected from all those who wish to belong to the circle. Linked with this expectation are restrictions on social intercourse (that is, intercourse which is not subservient to economic purposes). These restrictions may confine normal marriages within status circle (Krauss, 1976).

Stratification by status group goes hand in hand with a monopolization of ideal and material goods or opportunities. Besides the specific status honor, which always rests upon distance and exclusiveness, we find all kinds of material monopolies. Such honorific preferences may consist of privilege of wearing special costumes, of eating special dishes, of taboos to others, of carrying arms, etc. The decisive role of "style of life" in status "honor" means that status groups are the specific bearers of all conventions. Economic actions are oriented towards a rationally motivated adjustment of interests. In status order, men are grouped by their prestige and way of life. All actions based on the consideration of status are oriented to the feeling of the actors that they belong together. To safeguard

status, men will oppose all suggestions that wealth as such is a valid basis of prestige. Otherwise, a rich man could claim more honors than one with distinguished family lineage and this would undermine the status honor.

Barber (1957) defined a stratified society as one in which the population has been separated into categories that are unequal in social evaluation. The greatest the inequality among categories or the less the likelihood of their becoming equal, the more highly stratified the society is said to be.

Weber's conception of status stratification consists of the division of society into distinct communities, separated by social distance and mutual exclusiveness. The epitome of a status stratified society and its most extreme case as described by Weber, is a society with a caste system (for example, Hindu society) (Weber, 1958).

The members of a "status group" interact with one another as a rule: each status group has its own set of conventions, laws, and rituals: each has its own "style of life," which Weber defined as a pattern of use of consumer goods. The observation of social strata as defined by Weber requires study of patterns of behavior and interaction rather than of abstracted qualities or properties of people.

Obviously, the more nearly a society reaches a caste system in its organization, the easier it is to study its patterns of social stratification as Weber defined them. As a society becomes more homogeneous in conventions, rituals, and style of life or less discriminating in association and marriage patterns, it becomes increasingly difficult to study its patterns of status stratification. In a completely homogeneous and undiscriminating society (if such can be imagined) there would, of course, be no status stratification at all.

Social stratification involves society as a system of hierarchical categories. Hierarchies may be formed for any of an indefinite number of referents or for any graded value. Barber defined a stratified society as one in which there are unequal categories of people. In contrast with Barber's categories, Weber posited communities. Weber defined stratification as the division of a society into distinct communities, which have

varying assignments of "status honor" or prestige. Although each community has distinguishing characteristics, they are secondary to membership in the community as criteria for assigning persons to social strata. These two concepts require different techniques for empirical observations.

Michels (1962) believed that social classes, as they were found in the early nineteenth century, were a necessary evolutionary stage in social organization as it moved from a master-slave to a communistic stage. In the Master-slave State, the ascendant masters controlled the slaves' activities and literally possessed them as private property. In the ultimate communistic state, which Michales believed would be characterized by complete economic and political democracy, each man would be his own master. In the transitional period, the slaves had been freed but the unfortunate, the inept, and the inadequate, as a class, found themselves dominated by the fortunate, the shrewd, and the capable (Bogardus, 1960).

For Karl Marx, the important feature of social classes was their economic self-interest. He envisioned all history as the story of the struggle for subsistence and material goods. The revolution in methods of production of material goods had produced two quite divergent ways of securing subsistence: (1) owning the machines and factories and asking payment for ownership in the form of profit on goods sold; and (2) operating the machines, working in factories, and asking payment for labor in the form of wages from the owners. Marx felt that conflict between these two classes -- capitalists and workers -- was inevitable since both must draw their subsistence from the profit earned. The capitalist, Marx believed, had a definite upper hand as long as he could fix the price of goods produced, and also fix the workers' wages.

He thought that the day was bound to come when the competitive market and the greed of the capitalists would lead to a revolution of the workers. In this revolution, the workers would gain political control in order to confiscate the means of production. Then, as both owners and workers, they could themselves have control on income. Ultimately, the need for

political government would wither away and the remaining worker-owner class would, in fact, constitute no class at all.

The independent criterion for class distinction in the Marxian two-class system is eminently clear. Stated simply, it is: does the person in question relate himself to the productive system as (1) an independent producer of goods who may, if he needs or wishes, employ others by purchasing their works; as (2) a worker whose manpower is for sale?

Wilfredo Pareto held that at any given period of time in every society there are two classes of elite persons--one in political power and the other out of political power. He defined elites as persons who possessed intelligence, character, skill, and high capabilities. He believed that the elite did not produce enough elite children to produce a continuous upper class, but that the lower classes produced elite children to replace the old elites. Instead of a succession of a communist society without class as Rodbertus and Marx predicted, Pareto and the fascists foresaw the continued existence of upper and lower classes with upper class-- or a fraction of it--always dominating the lower. Pareto did not believe in inherited aristocracy but that superior people--"natural aristocracy," as Thomas Jefferson put it-- as a class would always dominate inferior people as a class.

Michels (1962) further believed that the circulation occurred without need for a massive change in elites; that the "old" elite offset its natural tendency to decline in power by incorporating the rising elite persons into its organization.

The most remarkable difference in the conceptualization of social class in early industrial society between Weber and that of Marx, Pareto and Michels is that Weber denied the "community" of social class. For Weber, a class was a category of population with similar "life chances." By "life chances" Weber meant opportunities for acquiring or maintaining a characteristic range of material goods and life experiences. Weber contrasted "class" used in this sense with "status group" (which he did see as a real community with recognized prestige and "style of life," and "party"--- a power group struggling for domination) (Lasswell, 1965; Tumin, 1970).

Weber further viewed status from two distinct concepts: (1) class status, and (2) social status.

Weber's concept of class status dealt primarily with the ability of the individual to control his economic environment, but he modified this definition by considering the individual's reaction to such ability or lack of it. Social status applies to a typically effective claim to positive or negative privilege with respect to social prestige so far as it rests on one or more of the following bases: (1) mode of living, (2) a formal process of education which may consist of empirical or rational training and the acquisition of the corresponding modes of life, or (3) on the prestige of birth or of an occupation (Lasswell, 1965).

Max Weber has been criticized by Oliver Cromwell Cox (Cox, 1970) when he writes, "Max Weber is not clear on class." One part of Weber's discussion is too much in outline form and another is almost an economic philosophy of class (political class). Class is conceived as a function of the market. Indeed, the author (Weber) speaks of "class position" as "market position." Weber recognizes many types of classes: "possessing or property class," "earning or income class," "social class" and subdivisions of these, but here class becomes a classification rather than a sociological concept.

### Is Social Stratification Inevitable?

Inkeles maintains the following strata: ruling elite, the superior intelligentsia, the general intelligentsia, the working-class aristocracy, the white-collar workers, the well-to-do peasants, the disadvantaged workers, and the forced-labor groups (Inkeles, 1950).

Davis and Moore (1945); Bernard (1957) and various others maintain the functional necessity of social stratification. Individuals have to be placed in different positions in the social structure. If the duties associated with the various positions were all equally pleasant to the human organism, all equally important to societal survival, and all equally competent in need of the same ability or talent, it would make no difference who got into which position, and the problem of social placement would be greatly reduced. But actually it does make a great difference who

gets into which position, not only because some positions are inherently more agreeable than others, but also because some require special talents or training and some are functionally more important than others.

Also, it is essential that the duties of the positions be performed with the diligence that their importance requires. Inevitably, then, a society must have, first, some kind of rewards that can be used as inducements and, second, some way of distributing these rewards differentially according to positions. The rewards and their distribution become a part of the social order, and thus give rise to stratification. Social inequality is thus an unconsciously evolved device by which societies insure that the most important positions are conscientiously filled by the most qualified persons. Hence, every society, no matter how simple or complex, must differentiate persons in terms of both prestige and esteem and must, therefore, possess a certain amount of institutionalized inequality.

Where knowledge and skill accumulate, as they do in human society, specialization and therefore, differentiation seem inevitable. Insofar as stratification is a result of social differentiation then, there is not much scope for eliminating stratification. It can be concluded that some system of stratification is a functional requirement of societies.

### Marx and Weber Compared

No one in the history of social thought has made the struggle between competing social and economic classes so central a feature of society and so dominant a source of social change as Karl Marx. The history of existing societies is the history of class struggles, according to Marx. According to Marx, classes develop on the basis of the different positions or roles which individuals fulfil in the productive scheme of a society. The key concepts for Marx are the modes of production such as agriculture, handicraft, industrialism, etc., and the relations of production--- the major levels of status in the economic enterprise. As Marx saw it, men in different relations to the means of production naturally have opposed interests. The capitalists have the control over the means of production. There

are three more concepts in the Marxist approach to the study of stratification: (1) class consciousness, which refers to the consciousness of being exploited and deprived of the "surplus value," (2) class solidarity, which refers to the extent to which workers act together to achieve political and economic aims, and (3) class conflict, which refers to the unconscious or conscious and deliberate struggle between two classes when the workers become aware of the historic role and act collectively to improve their situation, and ultimately, to take over ownership of the instruments of production.

For Marx, under the "proper" circumstances, the workers would develop an awareness of their situation and would act collectively upon it. He also introduced the concept of "false consciousness" (Giddens, 1977; Tumin, 1967).

Weber agreed with certain fundamental features of Marxist thought, particularly with the crucial significance of the economic aspects of stratification. For Weber, as for Marx, control over property was a basic fact in the determination of the life-chances of an individual or a class. In contrast to Marx, however, Weber added to the economic dimension of stratification two other dimensions: power and prestige. Weber viewed property, power and prestige as three separate though interacting bases on which hierarchies are created in any society. Property differences generate classes; power differences generate status groupings or strata.

Marx and Weber differ on the question of how likely it is that members of the same economic class exercise united effort in seeking to achieve common purpose. Weber also differs from Marx about the probability of true class-consciousness and class struggle against the exploiting system.

Weber recognized that many kinds of class actions are possible, only some of which seek to change the basic forms of the prevailing system of property relations. Marx, too, showed this awareness when he spoke of workers acting with false consciousness, and acting in ways that fall short of trying to overthrow the existing system of property ownership.

Weber says explicitly that while economic classes do not normally constitute communities, status groups do. Status groups

are formed on the basis of common amounts of socially ascribed prestige or honor. Usually, Weber says, status stands in sharp opposition to the pretensions of property. Both the propertied and propertyless can, and frequently do, belong to the same status group. However, along with Marx, Weber recognized the essential significance of property differences in the formation of status groups and in the ultimate hardening of the lines of distinction and privilege among them. He differed from Marx in the importance that he ascribed to status groups and, in the lesser likelihood, that he assigned to the development by members of an economic class of a sense of community and a commonly felt need for concerted action against the system as such.

The third form of association to which Weber gave prominence is the party. Party differed significantly from economic classes or status groups. Weber's emphasis was on the role of the political party as a separate dimension of the reward structure. It draws attention to an important issue; namely the relationship between class inequality and mass political parties designed to redress the balance of advantages in favor of the subordinate class (Parkin, 1976).

To sum up, Weber's approach is a view of society containing three kinds of social aggregations. Thus we have the economic focus of classes, the honor basis of status groups, and the power center of parties (Tumin, 1967).

Marxian model of stratification is a useful tool in the understanding of stratification more in a capitalist society where class formation is distinct with two distinct income groups, the rich and the poor, creating a class based social stratification. In such societies, conflicting class interests clash and new relationships are established. But Nepali society is a semi-feudal and semi colonial society where inequality and stratification are created by a combination of variables such as age, gender, income, ethnicity, caste and class. The society is more closed and social status is ascribed. Weberian model of social stratification thus fits better in contemporary Nepal in the understanding of social stratification.

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## ANTHROPOLOGY, SOCIETY AND DEVELOPMENT IN NEPAL: A NATIVE PERSPECTIVE

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### Introduction

Anthropology is a neglected discipline in Nepal. Most anthropologists in the country confine themselves to teaching at the universities rather than reaching the people en masse at the grass-roots level of the country. The relevance of the discipline to nation-building is not fully recognized by the state. Despite these obstacles, students of Nepalese anthropology have recently engaged in digging new foot-steps to the discipline in the country. This paper is one of the efforts to such foot stepping. The purpose of the paper is to provide readers a precise vision on anthropology, society and development of Nepal. The paper is divided into three sections. The first section sketches the history of the development of the discipline and sets out a new focus and framework for the discipline and sets out a new focus and framework for the study of Nepalese society and culture. The second section examines the concept of 'state-centric' development in relation to the existing theories and practices of anthropology in the country. Finally, a brief conclusion is drawn with a set of proposals for future homework.

### Descriptive Ethnography and 'Soul Searching' Innovation

Development of anthropology as a discipline of study, teaching and research in Nepal has a short history. The credit goes to early writings of missionaries and travelers, for example

: Kirkpatrick (1811), Hamilton (1819), Hodson (1874) and Oldfield (1880) who inspired for the development of anthropology in the country. The later period is marked with the massive production of descriptive ethnographic accounts most of which concentrate attention on the elaboration of various aspects of Nepalese society, culture and social institutions. Some examples of these types of studies are : Haimendorf (1964, 1966, 1975, 1986), Hitchcock (1966, 1976), Gabbrieau (1972), Pignede (1970) and Nepali (1965).

The focus during this period was upon religion, fatalism, shamanism, rituals and many other wonderful aspects of human life. These were considered to be the most relevant subject matters of anthropology in the eyes of those western scholars. The first seminar on "spirit possession in Nepal Himalaya" held in mid-seventies itself justified that the dominant anthropological trademark of the period was 'Soul-searching' through spirit possession (Hitchcock and Rex 1976).

### Euro-centric Traditions and Cultural Romanticism

The period prior to mid-seventies is marked with the production of vast descriptive ethnographic accounts on Nepalese society and culture. The dominant anthropological approach was cultural romanticism brought into the country by the scholars of the western countries. This approach was 'Euro-centric' and pays no attention to the high cost people pay as the providers of their cultural clues for nothing but to meet the practitioners' needs of personal romanticism and professional development. It is unfortunate that this tradition of cultural romanticism is still firmly footed in our intellectual structure, order and disciplinary practices. Thus, Nepalese anthropology has been still highly dominated and overshadowed by the conventional approaches, methods and practices most of which have been borrowed from the western countries. The country of shan-gri-la is a most favourite place for romantic field work to those western scholars, whose social life is tired with material abundance (Galtung, 1982) in their own countries.

The super-imposition of powerful theories of 'soul-searching' and methods of 'cultural romanticism' from western

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scholars (See Fisher, 1987, Devkota, 1983) and renewal of the noble concept of 'fatalism and development' (Bista, 1991) inside the country, force anthropology of Nepal to stay at the cross-roads of intellectual colonialism and cultural romanticism.

### **Social Change Studies and Elaboration of Western Theories**

Anthropological studies which focus on social change as the unit of study have been undertaken by Caplan (1970,1975), Caplan (1972), Macfarlane (1976), Iijima (1977), McDaugal (1968) and Poffenberger (1980). These scholars concentrate their efforts upon testing and elaborating the theories and concepts of social change mostly originated in the west on the Nepalese socio-cultural setting (Mishra, 984). The efforts have been made to identify the forces of change and their consequences on the present condition of social life. The long historical processes involved behind the origin of such forces of social dynamics, acceptance, resistance in the fabric and framework of glorious traditions, and, deep-rooted socio-psychological sentiments and pragmatic interpretations of cultural practices have been swept under the carpet of superficial description of acts and facts of the phenomena under the study. In these studies, the underlying patterns and processes of change and transformation have remained discrete, descriptive, highly localized and historically less informed. Some native scholars (Regmi 1971; Bista, 1991; Nepali, 1965 and Mishra 1984) have made their excellent contributions to these areas than those of the western scholars.

### **Applied Anthropology and Documentation of Good Practices of People**

Application of anthropological knowledge for nation-building was a forgotten concern to most of the scholars prior to mid-seventies. New trends gradually began to emerge when a few scholars (Wake, 1980; Justice 1986 and Messerschmidt 1995) diverted the discipline to influence state policies and practices. But these studies also lacked a full understanding of history, culture and issues hidden inside the core of the social structure. The major efforts in these studies were put to harness

the resistance aspect of the culture under the specific context of modernisation, technology transfer and other mal-consequences as resulted through the process of state-centric planned interventions. Most of these studies regard culture as the major constraint in development and anthropological 'first-aid' is suggested to check up the fragile failure of 'show-case' scheme of 'state-centric' development. These studies hardly pin-point the ills of existing development system and ignore the fact that without a full understanding of these ills, anthropological 'first-aid' could provide only a short term relief. However, a detail documentation of good practices of the society with special reference to local knowledge system is the major strength behind these studies.

The review provides a clear vision that most anthropological writings on Nepal are heavily dominated by western scholars and scholarships. The major trends still revolve around the grand idea of 'fatalism and development' which ultimately leads us to the world of cultural romanticism, the existing practices and intellectual romanticism. The existing practices and intellectual trend within the discipline forces us to infer that anthropology of Nepal has been almost the anthropology of the foreigners. True, there have been voices of protest. As Mikesell noted that:

For scholars in Nepal, it is essential not to accept sociology and anthropology according to the dominant definition as handed from western countries, especially since most powerful voice most easily transfer themselves to Nepal, however, inappropriate their grafts (Mikesell 1992:6)

New visions among the native anthropologists have been gradually emerging and attention is being paid to explore the fundamental bases of Nepali society and culture. Voices have been raised in the line to Nepalize the discipline (Bista, 1987, Sharma, 1989) and display the disciplinary relevance to the service of the people and the state (Mishra 1984, Devkota 1992). But these voices are either ignored or manipulated by giving new meanings and definitions to the context under debate by the powerful masters of the discipline (Fisher, 1987). Attempts to institutionalize the discipline within the country is in gradual

progress, but the road is still not free from risk and challenges. In his overall assessment of the sorry state of anthropology in Nepal, Mishra says:

We are unable to explore on the essential coherence of our social life. Unable as we are unable to deal with the whole, we make a virtue out of dealing with parts. Even worse, many of us mistake the parts for the whole. In a process what we loose is a certain meaningfulness, a certain coherence. What we gain is a misrepresentation, a distortion (Mishra 1985 : 5)

### **Incomplete Homework under Divided Mentality**

The vast stock of micro-level accounts which resulted through conventional descriptive ethnography have been left over there without much use by the state for planning and policy purpose. The native anthropologists hold conflicting views on the use of this stock of sitting knowledge. Some suggest (Regmi 1992, Dahal 1983) the need for a detailed analysis of these studies to come out with a macro-level theoretical framework which could be used as a model for the analysis of the Nepalese society and culture. Some others (Bista, 1983 Sharma, 1989) argue that the time is ripe to renew the discipline in the line of the development of a separate school of thought for the study of Nepali society and culture. There are some others also (Mishra, 1984, Devkota, 1982) who advocate that the discipline should move along with the wheel of time to address the burning issues of Nepalese social structure. Whatever issues native anthropologists raise or advocate, too little has been achieved on the prospect of Nepalization of the discipline. The homework is left pending with a hope to be pursued once again by the foreigners.

### **Society and Development in Nepal**

Nepal is a Himalayan Hindu Kingdom of complex and rich syncretic religious culture developed in the course of her long and free history. The social universe of Nepali society is paraphrased as 'Car-Varna' and 'Chhattis-jat' (lit. Four colours and thirty-six castes). Religious harmony alongwith social integrity has been always observed among various sects of ethnic groups in the country.

The rural society is characterized with rapid population growth, low level of living and health conditions, widespread worsening poverty and increasing threat from environmental deterioration. The high population growth with her low GDP have been matched with the dual objective of growth and equity. The various facets of poverty which flourish despite the rich cultural heritage is a major challenge before the nation.

The forces of change and practices of development do not match with each other in the country. The policy inconsistencies observed under frequent changes in development strategies (Banskota, 1989; Devkota, 1992) make the achievements more fragile and frustrative. The national economy is running through foreign-aid dominated gift economy. In connection with the impact of foreign aid in the country professor Fisher argues:

.... The open secret is that most foreign aid benefits primarily Nepalese elites, and one can define "development" not without reason, as the process by which the wealth of poor people in rich countries is transferred to the rich people of the poor countries (Fisher, 1987: 31).

As a result, the market economy has penetrated into no-market economy, participation has been sustained through political paternalism, self-sufficiency is measured under narrow indicators of economic abundance, self-reliance is identified under state-sponsorship, and thus, local autonomy has been framed under new and better imported institutions. Moreover, decentralization and self-governance are justified through centralized planning and decision making and sustainability is evaluated in terms of patchy and fragile achievements.

### **Anthropology and Development in Nepal**

The broader agenda of national development as defined under state-centric 'fixed-it' model and current theory and practices in anthropology confront with each other. The 'State-centric' development model based on the noble idea of central control over planning and grand design of 'trickle-down' effect at the societal level do not meet the promised goals to uplift the quality of life of the country men. The scheme is characterized

with its several unique features, such as: top-down, uniformal, result-oriented, target bounded, delivery of tangible goods and services from centre to peripheries, static structure and framework and replacement of old with new and better ones. Often the planners interact with structure, with the framework rather than with the beneficiaries. Such a practice of development hardly cover the felt needs of people at the grass-roots level. The overall consequences of this type of 'state-centric' development practices can be observed at the various levels of state domination over regional affairs and regional domination of societal affairs (Mishra 1984). The situation could have been improved if it would have been otherwise. The existing practices of 'State-centric' 'top-down' development is leading society from a pillar of self-sufficiency to the post of dependency and domination.

### **Anthropological Visions and Development Practices in Nepal**

Development is a relative term. Different people are looking it from their own perspective. Humanistic economists draw their attention more toward the development of small scale technology suited to local context and condition (Schumacher 1975) and development of human beings than those of the things (Fromm 1979) based on the philosophy of good work which combines both spiritual and material side of production activities (Schumacher 1979). Kothari (1988) draws our attention more toward the human survival side and recommends the need for global peace and harmony to make possible existence of mankind as a whole on this planet. John Galtung (1982) argues that development should be viewed from the humanistic psychology and holistic ecology to the 'Gandhian practice to liberate it from the straight jacket of economics'. Indian political economist Vrajendra Raj Mehta (1978) refers development in the multi-dimensional context of man and society bound under a integrated pluralistic system of 'wholes' within wholes.

Anthropology of development provides a vision that development should start on the most important people on the ground (Fisher, 1987). The knowledge and experiences obtained

from the field of anthropology tell one that efforts to be directed to match interventions tell one that efforts to be directed to match interventions with the local culture and value system (Foster, 1962, Spicer, 1952), people based institutions (Taylor, 1965), indigenous knowledge system (Brokenoa, 1953) and basic innovation (Barnett, 1953) resulting into desirable cultural change and societal transformation.

It is evident from the above discussion that development is more a process rather than matter of a state. The process is slow, gradual, bottom-up, building from below, innovative, time consuming, people-centered, realistic, democratic, participatory, liberal, pragmatic, small scale, invisible, praxis-oriented, reflexive, humanistic, holistic and long lasting.

But the noble desire of 'State-centric' development in Nepal is highly motivated to achieve immediate results from development intervention to please the donors rather than to meet the real needs of own country people. Thus, anthropological visions to direct 'development from below' naturally becomes a unrealistic phenomena to the planners and policy makers. Under some conditions, anthropologists are blamed as persons who intend to violate fundamental principles of national integrity for their practices on the local communities and culture. The administrators sometimes perceive them as the 'water-loo' creators and the "trouble-makers" of all odds, Few bureaucrats put label as the 'patron-king' of culture and some others see them simply as 'cultural-romanticists'.

In Nepal, anthropologists are not desirable persons to planners and policy makers. Anthropologists' involvement is mostly avoided in many important stages of national planning and policy making events. This notion of avoidance compels anthropologists to become more articulated and even critical to those 'state-centric' development planning processes, policies and practices. Thus, the gap between planners, policy makers and anthropologists is further widened in the country.

The only choice left to the anthropologists was either to confine to teaching at the university or reaching the people through the blooming foreign aid NGOs and INGOs all over the country. Their involvement in these NGOs (Non-Governmental Organisations) and INGOs (International Non-Governmental Organisations) is mostly on short-term basis based on a contract of

'hired and fired' conditions. The role they perform in these agencies include: facilitators, match-makers, watchdogs, cultural brokers, change agents, interventionists, mobilizers, interpreters and report-writers. Involving anthropologists in development programmes indicates not a belief in success but deeply rooted fear of failure.

Most of these NGOs and INGOs operate under state defined system of development framework popularly known as 'going through the system' philosophy followed by the powerful donor agencies. The intention behind such a philosophy is clear: to strengthen the hands of 'state-centric' development mechanism and machinery that functions high above and beyond the knowledge and reach the ordinary people. Their interaction with high structure and abstract framework compel these NGOs and INGOs to forget the important people on the ground. The penetration of foreign aided NGOs and INGOs all over the country has increased public expectations and dependency without doing much to those who have suffered generations of hunger, poverty, domination and deprivation.

### Conclusion and Proposal

Whatever ideal goals Nepalese anthropologists may set to go ahead and actual task at hand they may engage, but the time has now come for them to assess what is being achieved and what has been left behind for the homework, in the course of the history of development of the discipline in the country. The anthropology of Nepal requires a coherent body of theory, concepts and methods for searching the pragmatic answers to the issues of national importance and societal significance. There is an equal need to tilt the discipline more to the service of the weaker section of society and to address the core issues of social structure manifested under the present context of its cultural dynamics. It is necessary to combine theory with practice in order to comprehend a coherent visibility or multi-dimensional context of human conditions and make disciplinary knowledge accessible to policy formulating bodies and institutions.

The foremost need is to Nepalize the discipline by breaking the barrier of producer-consumer, provider-receiver, patron-client, and leader-follower relationships between native and western anthropologists. Continuity of cultural heritage, nation building and unity of diversity are some of the areas to be emphasized by the

future studies. The widespread and worsening poverty among people is a challenging social reality. The broad social, political, ideological, economic and humanistic context of poverty and its visible consequences should get priority over the disciplinary unit of analysis. Moreover, the conservation of Himalayan environment and preservation of our common cultural heritage are the left over homework before Nepalese and Indian anthropologists.

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## POPULATION DYNAMICS AND ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION IN NEPAL: AN OVERVIEW

By Laya Prasad Uprety\*

### Prelude

This paper, in general, makes an endeavour to demonstrate how the population growth in Nepal has been conducive to the environmental degradation. More specifically, this paper is intent on dealing with four objectives, viz., (i) to assess the trends and causes of the population growth; (ii) to assess the increasing demands of growing population on the environment; (iii) to assess the environmental degradation resultant from the population pressure, and (iv) to assess the impact of environmental degradation on the agrarian economy of Nepal.

### Trends and Causes of Population Growth: A Glimpse of Population Dynamics

In Nepal, population has been unprecedentedly growing. Nepal's population which was only 5.6 million in 1911 increased to 18.4 million in 1991. According to the national census of 1991, the population has now been increasing at 2.1 percent per year. Presumably, this rate of growth continues to rise even in the future if the government does not formulate and implement effectively some practical population policies and programmes to curb the population growth. Many independent variables such as economic value of children in Nepalese agrarian economy, reduction of infant mortality and morbidity owing to the medical treatment facilities (though in limited extent), malaria eradication in the *Tarai* (shifting of the destination of hill

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migrants from India to the *Tarai*), rurality of population in composition, immigration from India, early nuptiality, unavailability of birth control advice and contraceptive devices in the outlying parts, illiteracy/lack of education, fatalistic attitude, etc; have been contributing to this rapid growth of population. Never in the history of mankind have as many people populated the Himalayas as today and there will be more tomorrow (Rieger, et al. 1976). In order to have a clear understanding of the trends of population growth in Nepal, we have to look at the longitudinal demographic data as presented in the following Table 1.

Table 1 : Population Size and Growth, Nepal, Census Years 1911-1991

Census Years	Population Size	Geometric Growth Rate
1911	5,638,749	-
1920	5,573,788	- 0.13
1930	5,532,574	- 0.07
1941	6,283,649	+ 1.16
1952/54	8,256,625	+ 2.30
1961	9,412,996	+ 1.65
1971	11,555,983	+ 2.07
1981	15,022,839	+ 2.66
1991	18,491,097	+ 2.08

Sources : CBS 1985 - Intercensal Changes of Some Key Census Variables, Nepal 1952/54 - 81. p.13 and Population Monograph of Nepal (1995) and Statistical Pocket Book, Nepal (1998).

The above table provides the population data from 1911 onwards. However, quoting several foreign authors, V.B.S. Kansakar (1989) notes that before the 1911 census, the population was estimated at 3,661,200 persons (Fraser, 1920), 4 million in 1850s (Oldfield, 1880), 5 million in 1879 (Husain, 1970) and 5.2 million to 5.6 million at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Vansittart, 1906).

Though Nepal has a long history of census enumeration, the scientific census enumeration started only in 1952/54 with the establishment of separate organization. The censuses before 1952/54 were taken by local revenue agents for various

administrative purposes. The population of Nepal decreased by one percent between 1911 and 1920 and similar trends can be clearly observed between 1920 and 1930. The absolute decline in population size between 1911 and 1920 may be attributed, among others, to : (a) the effect of world wide influenza epidemic in 1918 which had also passed through Nepal and took the lives of a large number of population, and (b) the heavy loss suffered by the Nepalese men serving with the allied forces during the First World War (CBS, 1985. 7-8).

In the 1930 census, the population decline can also be attributed to the under-enumeration due to the lack of separate organization and the apprehension of being conscripted into the army for possible war against Tibet in 1929. There was 1 percent per annum population growth rate during the intercensal period 1930-1941. This modest growth was followed by high rate of 2.3 percent growth rate during the intercensal period 1941-1952/54. Improvement in the management of census taking, return of men serving with foreign armies after the second world war and better coverage were some of the contributing factors to this rapid increase of population (CBS, 1985).

Between 1952/54 and 1961, the population growth rate was 1.6 percent per annum. Though not plausible, Nepalese experts on population studies have argued that this decline might be due to the over-enumeration in 1952/54. After 1961, the Nepalese population has been rapidly increasing. During the intercensal period of 1961 and 1971, the population growth rate was 2.07 percent per annum. The unprecedented population growth rate, that is 2.6 per annum, can be observed between the intercensal period of 1971 and 1981. But the annual growth rate between 1981 and 1991 is a little lower, that is, 2.1 percent.

Historically, Nepal's *Tarai* region was densely forested and was highly infested with malarial diseases. But the soil is highly productive and whoever went there in search of cultivable land was fallen into the prey of formidable malarial disease. Hence, this *Tarai* region was known by the name of "*black waters*". Very few of autochthonous tribes who had genetically developed resistance against malaria were found in scattered

settlements. But in the 1950s, a USAID - sponsored malaria control program started the spraying of DDT (Dichlorodiphenyl-trichloroethane insecticide) in malarial areas and the fatal malarial disease was almost controlled. Then, this *Tarai* region, being the most fertile, began attracting a large number of migrants from the hill and mountain regions.

Since 1970's, BCG (Bacillus Calmette-Guerin) immunization began to be provided to all the children under 15 years of age which substantially reduced the tuberculosis incidence. Diarrhoea has been drastically reduced due to the availability of *Jivan Jal* (oral rehydration powder) even in the outlying parts of the country. Smallpox is almost eradicated through vaccination. Cholera is also being controlled. Leprosy, gastrointestinal disorders, etc. have also been reduced due to the medical facilities to some extent. Although Nepal is still poor in medical field compared with many other Asian countries, modern medical facilities have been working for lowering the infant and adult mortality, increasing the life expectancy and thereby contributing to the population growth.

Besides the gradual development of hospital-based medical care, the government is also setting up *Ayurvedic* clinic and small health centers to serve the needs of Nepal's dispersed populations. These small health centers have been staffed by health auxiliaries and paramedical personnel. According to the national census of 1991, the life expectancy of males and females has risen to 55.0 and 53.5 years, respectively (CBS, 1995). Thus, substantial achievements have been made in reducing the morbidity and mortality.

Before malaria was eradicated in the *Tarai* of Nepal, both mountain and *Tarai* regions had low density of population. People of the hill did not like to risk their lives in the hot and malarial *Tarai* although natural increase of population in the hill areas was placing tremendous pressure on the arable land whereas ample land was unused in the *Tarai*. Earlier government of Nepal tried to attract the immigrants from India to settle in the *Tarai* and achieved modest success. But the people of the hill, due to the population pressures, started used to emigrate to Assam, Darjeeling, (both being parts of India),

Sikkim (before a semi-protectorate of India but now annexed to it), Burma, and Bhutan. The coal and tea industries developed in many Indian provinces offered the job opportunities to Nepalese unskilled labour forces (Regmi, 1978). Besides these, many adult males of the hill region of Nepal were employed as mercenary soldiers in British East India company.

Prior to the 1961 census of Nepal, many hill Nepalese used to emigrate to India but after that there has been a considerable decline in the net emigration. Banister and Thapa argue that the main reason why the long-term migration of Nepal-born persons became less pronounced in the 1960's is that the destination of many migrants leaving the hills of Nepal shifted from India to the *Tarai*. This change was due primarily to malaria control and sudden availability of good agricultural land in the *Tarai* (Banister and Thapa, 1981: 78). All this contributed to the rise of Nepalese population after 1961.

Children in Nepalese agrarian economy have very high economic value. Older children take care of younger siblings and thereby help free their parents to be involved in various productive activities. Analogously, they also look after their livestock and fetch water and firewood. Besides these, older children also help their parents in various agricultural activities. Children in Nepalese society are considered as the main economic security during the old age. In discussing the fertility-related attitude, Poffenberger demonstrates the economic value of the children in the following way :

In a country where until recently labor was a scarce commodity, the economic value of the children was great. Traditionally, one of the clearest determinants of how much land a family controlled and how wealthy it was, was the number of family members available to bring land under cultivation and work it ... Certainly, the association between many children and wealth of security is a strong one among virtually all the hill cultures of Nepal ... (Poffenberger, 1980 : 84).

Desperately poor people still think that more the working children a household has, the more economically viable it gets. Birth of a child is considered to be a blessing but not a curse.

In the patrilineal Nepalese society, there has been a culture of giving preference to sons. In the orthodox Hindu culture, sons are needed to conduct various ritual activities after the death of parents. Traditionally, it is the duty of a man to get married and produce at least one son before he dies which helps him in paving the path to reach '*Swarga*' meaning 'heaven'. Because of this 'son preference culture', people still hope to produce a son even after the birth of half a dozen daughters. Another reason of giving 'preference to son' is that girls leave their parental home after they get married and it is only sons who live with the parents and work as economic security during the old age. Sons also keep the 'name' of the family and inherit the parental property. All these traditionally-embedded notions also contribute to the rapid growth of population.

Early nuptiality, being universal in the Nepalese socio-cultural tradition, also contributes to the rise of population. The legal age at marriage with the approval of parents is 18 years for the boys and 16 years for the girls and that without the consent of the parents is 21 years for the boys and 18 years for the girls. Despite this legal provision, early marriages are still held in the rural areas of Nepal.

According to 1991 census, the literacy rate for males and females is 54.4 and 25.0 percent respectively so that marriages are held earlier because they do not have much choices to do as educated people do have. Since the population is also predominantly rural in composition, marriages are held earlier than the urban population. Birth control advice and devices are inaccessible in many parts of rural Nepal and therefore, there is low level of contraceptive use. Uneducated rural people are also fatalists. Put in another way, they think that their fate determines their course of life. So people accept that having many children is also determined by their fate. This is also responsible for the rise of population.

Thus, the decline of mortality and morbidity without corresponding decline in the fertility rate, stoppage of permanent migration from hill to India and consequent internal migration to the *Tarai*, early nuptiality, low level of literacy, rurality of population in composition, lack of family planning devices and

advice in most of the outlying parts of the country, fatalistic attitude, poverty, immigration from India, etc. have significantly contributed to the increase of Nepalese population which has, in turn, had the adverse effect on the fragile ecosystem of the country.

### **Increasing Demands of Growing Population on the Environment**

Population growth has placed more increasing demands on the forest and pasture resources so that they are fast being depleted. Many beautiful hills of Nepal are getting extinct at present. It is estimated that the area under forest land had decreased by almost 40 percent in the last 30 years (Bajracharya, 1984 : 113). In 1963-64, a total of 6.4 million hectares forest accounted 45.5 percent land of the country. Though the Master Plan for Forestry Sector (1988) has written that Nepal has 37 percent land under forest cover, scholars on forestry estimate this percent as low as 29 percent. This shows that deforestation has taken place at an alarming rate in Nepal. Forest ecosystems have developed over long periods of time and get adapted to certain climatic and other ecological conditions. This balanced system suffers irreversibly when there is growing encroachment by burgeoning human population.

There appears to be a close correlation between the depletion of forest resources and the growth of population in Nepal. For example, population in the Eastern *Tarai* districts of Jhapa, Morang, Sunsari and Siraha during the period 1952-1971, doubled while the forest area was halved (Gurung, 1981 : 8). Increasing demands for cultivable land, firewood, fodder and timber have been responsible factors for the drastic forest reduction. In other words, deforestation is the function of the demand for firewood, timber, fodder and new cultivable land. The increasing demands of growing population on the forest environment have been succinctly discussed below.

### **Increasing Demand for Cultivable Land**

Nepal has overwhelmingly an agrarian economy so that land is an important factor for growing food in order to feed the

rapidly increasing population. As stated earlier on, Nepal has 18 million population and 45.5 percent of the total population of 18 million lives in the hills where only 0.6 million hectares of land is cultivable. Most of the forest and private pasture areas have already been encroached by the land-hungry population. In other words, the population of the hill exceeds the carrying capacity. Thus, the hill agriculture does not support the growing population so that they seek the alternative of their survival and the hill land hungry people have been migrating to the *Tarai*.

These hill migrants have ravaged the forest mercilessly in the *Tarai*. The problem of illegal squatters has also contributed a lot to the depletion of forests. Illegal settlement in the *Tarai* has been a problem for the government. As the ratio of population between the hills and *Tarai* goes in favour of latter as has been the trends in recent decades, forest cover in *Tarai* is and will increasingly be threatened. Some estimates claim that over 90 percent of the total forest cover has been encroached in the *Tarai*. If migration and consequent encroachment on forest land is the problem in the *Tarai*, in the hills, the problem is that of ever-increasing population pressures, leading to increasing demand for cultivable land and consequent deforestation (Bhatta, 1976 : 23). In the hills of eastern Nepal, there is now little jungle to break or virgin land to bring under cultivation. Given the existing level of technology and pattern of cultivation, the land is unable adequately to support the population (Caplan, 1970 : 6).

Both hill migrants and Indian immigrants from the states of North India have destroyed the *Tarai* forests. It is clear that one indirect effect of deforestation in the hills is the drastic reduction of the *Tarai* forests by immigrants seeking land for settlement and cultivation. Both squatting and legal settlement are dependent on forest clearance, while the growing population is placing increasing demands on the dwindling forests (Seddon, 1987).

The population pressure per cultivated land for hill region is 9.6 persons which is very high (CBS, 1995). In the hills, the average size of holding is 0.77 hectares compared with 1.26 hectares in the *Tarai* (CBS, 1994). Thus, growing

population is putting increasing pressures on forest environment for growing food. In discussing the implications of rapid population growth : Blaikie, Cameron and Seddon write :

The implication of (The) rapid growth of Nepal's population had become painfully clear, for the predominantly agrarian economy had shown itself only able to keep with the increase in population and its requirements largely through the cultivation of less productive land in the hills and the opening up forest in few plains. The first of these led to the development of widespread erosion following the massive destruction of the forest cover, while the second provided only a temporary safety-valve for surplus population from the hills .... (Blaikai, Cameron and seddon, 1980 : 11-12).

Thus, the rapid growth of population has been a significant factor contributing to the depletion of forest resources.

### Increasing Demand for Firewood

Closely associated with the foregoing point of population pressure is the increasing firewood demand which has been one of the principal factors of forest degradation in Nepal. Wood has remained a dominant domestic fuel for rural people. Firewood at present provides nearly 80 percent of the energy in Nepal (CBS, 1998). Per capita consumption of fuelwood for the hills is 640 kg and while for the *Tarai*, the figure is 424 kg (Subedi, 1995).

Nepal lacks coal and other petroleum resources. And she has not been able to harness water resources despite the high potentiality. Hence, people have to depend on firewood. Although forest is a renewable natural resources, the way in which it is used makes it non-renewable. The growing demand for bio-fuel from the forest is attributable to population growth in Nepal.

### Increasing Demand for Fodder

Nepalese agrarian economy is dependent on livestock-raising. Hoffpauir is of the view that cattle and water-buffalo are the key links in the ecosystem as providers of manure which, composted with wild vegetation, is used to fertilize the fields. The male cattle are necessary for ploughing the terraces and the

buffaloes are used primarily as manure machines, but can also occasionally produce milk and offspring (quoted in Poffenberger, 1980 : 47). Livestock is usually held in excessive numbers in the Himalayas, partly for religious reasons, partly on account of the low yields of cattle, and partly because of the need for animal manure. Livestock makes demands on the forests in two ways. First, the forest is used for grazing all the year round, and leaves and twigs of small trees. Second, the leaves and twigs are lopped for cattle feed by the population... (Rieger, 1976 : 18). Livestock-raising is entirely dependent on fodder resources. Forest and pasture are the principal sources of fodder. Forest-fodder supply is very important source of livestock food in hill areas. Estimates place amount anywhere from 40 to 60 percent of the total fodder consumed (Macfarlane : 1976. 45).

The rural people feel that the importance of the forest is to provide fodder to livestock. One of the simple reasons for the forests near the villages being misused is that very many peasants have no alternative source to get their fodder. According to the 1991/92 national sample census of agriculture, Nepal has 7.37 million cattle, 3.12 million buffaloes and 5.52 million goats. Analogously, there are 602,800 sheep and 495,800 pigs (CBS, 1994). This places her among those countries with the highest livestock population per unit of land.

To sustain this present livestock population, Nepal needs more than 90 million tons of fodder per annum. The agricultural economy of Nepal is entirely based on the bio-mass extraction from the neighbouring forest. The utilization of animal manure is possible to the farm lands only through the exploitation of fodder resources from the forest ecosystem.

The excessive livestock population is raised in order to meet the nutritional requirements of the rural poor people. Environmentalists hold the opinion that overgrazing by the excessive herds of livestock population has been one of the principal factors of ecosystem degradation. Very often the individual farmer does hardly to safeguard, take care of, utilize the few fodder species. Thus, a farmer who uses the forest today as his fodder sources may be the one destroying it at a rate faster

than would like to believe. The damage left behind by the migrating herds of *Chories* (a variety of cow found in high altitude) in search of fodder can be devastating to the forest in the cooler areas. The pressure of man and his animal population on the forest and pastures have reached its saturation point (Pandey, 1976 : 19).

### **Increasing Demand for Timber**

The rapidly growing population places increasing demands of timber on forest for building houses for shelter. People exploit timber more than their actual demands. Regarding this, Mauch writes that in the central Himalayas about 70 cubic meters of valuable wood is logged per house, although less than 20 cubic meters would suffice if properly and efficiently used (Mauch, 1974 : 9).

### **Environmental Degradation in Nepal**

The rapid depletion of forest resources due to unprecedented population growth has caused a serious environmental degradation in Nepal. Eckholm writes that there is no better place to begin an examination of deteriorating mountain environments than Nepal. In probably, no other mountain countries are the forces of ecological degradation building so rapidly and visibly (Eckholm, 1976 : 76). It is obvious that the destruction of hill forest, through the destruction of the previously balanced environment, is indirectly resultant in the destruction of the forests in the *Tarai* for the growing population is placing increasing demands on the dwindling forests for cultivable land, firewood, fodder and timber (Rieger, 1976). Conclusively, forest plays a significant role in maintaining the ecological equilibrium. The deforestation adversely affects the previously balanced ecology and consequent are the environmental problems. The main environmental problems of Nepal are discussed hereunder.

### **Denudation**

Denudation, an appalling environmental problem, means taking away of tree covering from the land. The problem of denudation has been universal in many hill regions of Nepal.

But the problem of denudation is not new in Nepal although its pace has been accelerated in the recent decades. Large areas of far western hills have been denuded of forest... however, deforestation especially the removal of forest cover from the tops of ridges and hills in many areas has presumably lessened the moisture retaining capacity of the soil, a critical factor in this region which has low and uncertain rainfall (McDougal, 1978 : 3-4). Denudation is the consequence of the increasing pressure of human population and ruminant populations on the forest resources.

### **Soil Erosion**

Closely associated with the problem of deforestation is the problem of soil erosion. Every year Nepal faces the problem of soil erosion. The main reason of rapid increase in soil erosion is the massive exploitation of natural resources of the country owing to the overpopulation. In Nepal, unrestricted and unscientific terraced cultivation, deforestation and the excessive overgrazing have been conducive to the tremendous deterioration of the environment which, in turn, have been increasing the rate of erosion. Soil erosion is a great ecological hazard which has negative impact upon the lives of human beings. Soil erosion destroys the normal equilibrium in the relation between man and nature.

There is also the natural erosion but man-made erosion is relatively dangerous. Deforestation and soil erosion are inseparably linked with each other. Nepal is predominantly an agrarian economy and the soil is highly precious for the production of the basic necessities of Nepal. But this goes unnoticed during the monsoon. Soil erosion is Nepal's most precious export, for which it receives no compensation. An estimated 240 million cubic meters of soil are lost every year (IBRD, 1974 : Annex 6 : 2).

Soil erosion in Nepal, as in many other countries elsewhere, is caused by the pressure of large rural population

which only understands and practices primitive and destructive methods of cultivation. Land is cultivated to the limit of production without thought being given to its preservation and improvement. Vast number of generally inferior cattle and goats are allowed to wander freely and everything within reach, whether this is in the form of pasture, grasses, shrubs or young trees. Everywhere, in the hills, the trees, whose fodder value is considerable, are lopped not according to any systematic cropping pattern, but in the most hapazard and destructive manner possible where small patches of forest or shrub still survive are subjected to lopping (Willan, 1967 : 15).

Many studies have shown that Kosi (one of the biggest river of Eastern Nepal) catchment of Eastern Nepal is one of the most eroded areas in the world. Soil erosion has been a direct challenge to the people of Nepal. Soil erosion is almost to the point of no return. It is apparent that the continuation of the present trends may lead to the development of semi-desert ecology in the hilly regions (Quoted in Eckholm, 1976 : 82).

### **Landslide**

Landslides are often frightening experiences. They occur when a great mass of soil lying on steep slope becomes saturated with moisture and slides over the underlying rock surface. There may be natural landslide too, but human intervention on nature (especially on forest ecosystem) has increased the frequency and gravity of landslide. Mountainous country like Nepal faces the problem of soil erosion. It has become an inescapable economic problem. Every year, during the period of monsoon, landslides have taken the toll of human lives and of cattle and have destroyed houses. The long cause for the landslides is the expansion of agriculture up to steep hill slides and the progressive defoliation of the hill slides that should have left with trees. The hillsides are highly unstable when tree cover is removed (Schoader, 1977 : 133).

## Siltation

Siltation has been another environmental problem in Nepal. Because of erosion and frequent landslides, the rivers are filled with heavy load of silt in the summer. When the rivers emanating from the snow-capped mountain reach the Terai belt, their movement is slow so that silt is dropped and thereby the river beds are raised. River beds in the Terai are rising at the rate of about 15-30 centimeters (6 inches to 1 foot) a year (National Planning Commission, 1974b). This siltation causes further heavy floods during monsoon season and thereby diverts the usual river beds and all of which contribute to the destruction of irrigation canal structures and heavy toll of human settlements.

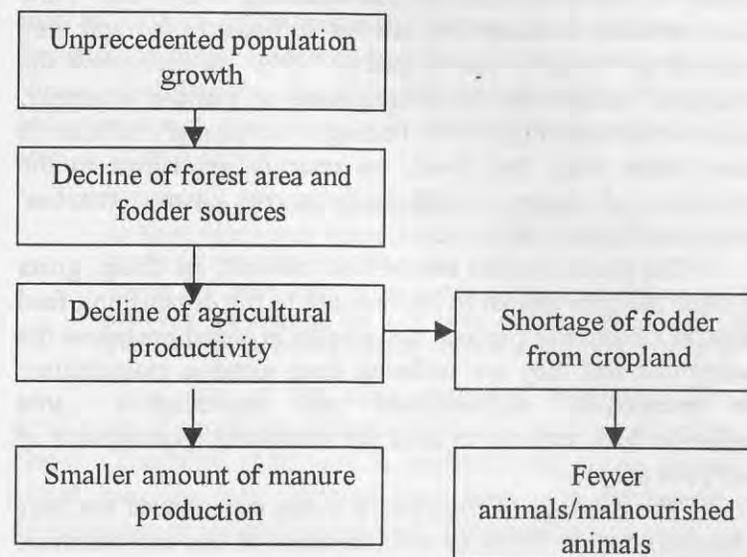
Thus, the rapid growing population has placed increasing demands on the dwindling forests for cultivable land, firewood, fodder and timber for the construction purposes. And consequent is the environmental deterioration which has ultimately worsened the economic base of the poor country, Nepal. Besides these above-mentioned environmental problems, the gradual process of desertification in some parts of hill and the *Tarai* has become another serious problem.

## Impact of Degraded Environment on the Economy of Nepal : A Glimpse of Agrarian Change

Nepal has predominantly an agrarian economy supported by livestock-raising. Livestock-raising is the fundamental component of Nepalese farming system. Agriculture and livestock-raising are inseparably interrelated but the latter is totally dependent on the forest fodder and forest grazing lands. During the recent decades, fodder from private pastures (disappeared due to excessive ruminant population) and forest has declined considerably due to the uncontrolled population growth, overgrazing, and uncontrolled and haphazard method of lopping. As a result, the number of livestock has started either to

decrease or get malnourished and thin. All this has resulted in the decline of agricultural yield of the villages of Nepal. Decline of agricultural productivity means decline of the by-products of agriculture which are also used as feeding resources. This fodder shortage has had the negative impact on the peasant economy of Nepal. Diagrammatically, this negative impact is as follows :

FIGURE 1 : IMPACT OF POPULATION GROWTH ON THE PEASANT ECONOMY



Discussing the fodder shortage and its impact, Poffenberger writes that the question of fodder shortage is crucial and cannot be understood, for without fodder, fertilizer cannot be produced, without fertilizer, the already infertile soil which is often made to support as many as eight to nine people per area will become less fertile and production level will inevitably decline (Poffenberger, 1980 : 40). Many scholars have attempted to describe the increasing imbalance in the hill agro-ecosystem. Hoffpauir is of the opinion that agricultural productivity is directly related to the quality and quantity of wild vegetation. If the wild vegetation continues to deteriorate, fewer

animals will be kept, small amounts of manure will be produced, crop yields will decline and people will have less to eat. Lower crop yields also result in less straw fodder, which means further limitations on the number of animals and an added force driving this downward spiralling system (quoted in Poffenberger, 1980 : 53).

Milk yield among the peasant households has already started to decline due to the shortage of fodder resources. Income from clarified butter has almost become a day dream for most of the households although very few are having it till now. Quantity of milk production is also declining every year. Now animals are thin because they are not sufficiently fed and they cannot give a desired yield (Upreti, 1986). In discussing the shortage of fodder and its consequence on peasant economy, Caplan writes that villagers are finding it increasingly difficult to obtain fodder from the forest, an essential ingredient in the production of butter which supplements many families' economies (Caplan, 1972 : 35).

The practice of the sale of meat animals, i.e. sheep, goats and pigs, has also started to decline due to the diminishing feed resources. Forty two percent households in Nepal are below the poverty line and they are suffering from extreme malnutrition. The excessively malnourished and unproductive cattle population does not help to meet the nutritional requirements of these poor people.

The shortage of firewood is being experienced not only in the hills but in *Tarai* as well, because of the deforestation. Today it has been apparently clear that the firewood shortage is one part of wider ecological crisis that has gripped Nepal. Firewood collection was previously an easy task. One bundle of firewood could be collected within one or two hours but now it takes the whole day to collect the same quantity of firewood. Illustrating with an example of the firewood shortage in Karnali Zone (one of the 14 zones of Nepal), Bishop writes,

It is the rule, not the exception, that in most of the central and southern Kamali zone, the collection of a load of firewood requires one-day round trip from the household. A generation ago (18+20 years) such a trip would require only an hour or two. Projecting this rate of deforestation, the wood supply for many villages soon will be

more than a day away. The villagers will not be able to afford the increased time required for obtaining wood. They will be forced to burn dung as is now done in lower regions of Nepal. ... Thus, negative chain reaction will take place (Bishop, 1970 : 33-33).

This above case demonstrates that when the shortage of food grows worse, the negative feedback increases. When there is local shortage of fuelwood, dried dung has to be used as fuel energy. As a result, there is less manure available for agriculture and this, in turn, has a negative effect on soil and results in declining crop yields because this type of feedback demands are automatically placed on the forests and pastures. Therefore, another vicious cycle naturally shows its ugly head. The depletion of forest resources has aggravated the soil erosion in Nepal which has the crippling effect on the animal husbandry and subsistence agriculture. In discussing the effect of soil erosion, Robbe writes :

It seems extraordinary thing that in a poor mountainous country such as Nepal where every foot of soil is precious and required to produce the basic necessities of life in the shape of food and shelter, the brown soil-laden rivers go unnoticed during the monsoon, and the fact they are carrying the very basic of life of the people mean nothing at all to the vast majority (Quoted in Eckholm, 1976: 81).

Thus, soil is the most important ingredient for the production of cereals in a characteristically agrarian economy of Nepal. Therefore, if the soil is washed away, rural people of Nepal lose the very basis of their lives. In discussing the deterioration of hill agro-ecosystem, Enke writes :

Visual evidence of already existing over population includes deforestation, erosion, and silting. Within the last decade, wooded hill tops have been cut down or severely depleted, terraces have been extended to the tops of hills and cattle have had to graze further away, hill-top terraces have leached out, have been abandoned, and have started to collapse on terraces below. Villagers often have to go much further to cut fodder for animals. The complex interaction of wood for fuel, cattle for manure and draught, and manured terraces for rice etc. is becoming increasingly vulnerable to overcrowding of the hill areas. If conditions worsen, areas now cultivated will have to be abandoned (Enke, 1971 : 20).

Thus, the environmental degradation, a function of population growth has had a collapsing effect on the subsistence agrarian economy of Nepal.

### Concluding Remarks

Now Nepal has experienced an unprecedented population growth, that is 2.1 percent per annum. It is the function of a multiplicity of factors which comprise the decline of mortality and morbidity without the corresponding decline in the fertility rate, malaria control and stoppage of permanent migration from hill to India and consequent internal migration in the *Tarai*, early nuptiality, lack of education, economic value of children, rurality of population in composition, unavailability of contraceptive devices in outlying parts, poverty, fatalistic attitude and immigration from India. The population growth has been conducive to generate the grave environmental problems such as deforestation, denudation, soil erosion landslide, siltation and flood havoc. The population pressure is expressed in several ways which include increased demand for cultivation, increased livestock population and increased use of remaining forest to meet rising fodder, fuelwood and timber demands. The degraded environment has negative effect on the agrarian economy of Nepal. Nepal, the unexcelled land of beauty in south Asia, has already experienced the shortage of firewood, fodder, timber and new patches of cultivable land because of population pressure. Consequently, the subsistence agrarian economy is increasingly being vulnerable due to the deterioration of the environment. Based on the analysis, the author would argue that the environmental plight of Nepal can be healed if government adopts the following programs forthwith :

(i) develop alternative sources of energy such as exploitation of perennial water resources to generate hydroelectric power, develop solar power, wind power and bio-gas technology; (ii) develop and disseminate the technology of improved stove to save energy consumption in villages; (iii) create awareness among the farmers to plant fodder trees in the private land; (iv) expedite the implementation of governmental strategies for massive reforestation, afforestation and forest protection

programs with people's participation; (v) formulate national level policies to divert the under-utilized labor force of hill agriculture to other sectors such as agro-based industries as an incentive to check hill to *Tarai* migration and thereby halt deforestation in the latter; (vi) provide basic environmental education to the rural population regarding the conservation of nature; (vii) introduce programs to raise the socio-economic status of households by providing education so that the fertility rate would be lowered (because the recent positive attitude towards family planning is pronounced more among the urban educated and relatively economically prosperous elite circles); (viii) accord top priority in Nepal's family planning program to make birth control measures available to households of remote villages on a regular basis with adequate follow-up programs and (ix) regulate the open border between Nepal and India with the objective of checking the Indian immigration.

The author would believe that if these programs are still timely executed, the deteriorated mountain environment of Nepal would be reverted and the future generations would not be deprived of the right to exploit the environment on sustainable basis for their physical survival. Then, the age-long practiced saying, "Green forests are the wealth of Nepal", which is now obsolete, will be again a realistic saying.

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## GENDER ROLES AND ACTIVITIES AMONG THE RURAL POOR HOUSEHOLDS: CASE STUDIES FROM HILL VILLAGES

Binod Pokharel\*

Biologically, human societies are stratified into men and women dichotomies. All the known societies are unequally distributed. In small food producing societies, the inequality is limited to dyadic and non-categorical prestige bases (Pathy, 1987). There is some sort of identified division of labour between male and female in every kind of society. But, Marx stated that every form of society presupposes some rudimentary division of labour. Likewise, Mair (1999) views that the biological division of human into male and female is the basis of the most elementary social stratification everywhere. The division of labour means the fact that women bear and suckle children, and are tied to the domestic sphere for much of their lives. Wolf considers social inequality not as phenomena *sui generis* but as an accompaniment of the working out of determinental modes of production (quoted by Pathy, 1987).

After 1990s, the gender relationship between male and female has emerged as one of the major issues in Nepal. This issue draws the attentions of scholars, professionals, politicians and public and policy makers. Gender is defined as socially and culturally constructed accepted behaviours and relations between male and female. Behaviours and relations are structured in the society. In other words, most of the behaviours and relations are deeply rooted in social, cultural, political, economic and religious frameworks. In some traditional societies, the gender roles are more rigid than in urban and industrial societies. The

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gender roles also vary between and among the classes, castes and ethnic groups.

Gender is a new paradigm but it is deeply rooted in the women movement and feminist movement of 1950s. In this regards, Lorber(1994) states:

*The concept of gender, however, has been theoretically grounded in sexuality and procreation. This conceptualization undermines the feminist focus on the relational aspect of women's and men's social status and the political aspects of gender inequality. She argues that gender inequality is located solely in the structured of gendered social practices and institutions. Procreation and sexuality are constructed as conditions of subordination within the social institution of gender, the social institution of gender is not built on procreation and sexuality. Human sexual reproduction is universal, but gender inequality is not. The gender status of women affects the social construction of sexuality, fertility, pregnancy, childbirth and parenting not the other way grounded....*

The history of women movement is not very old. Early women movement and feminist thought paid little attention on socially constructed differences between male and female. After 1970s it took a momentum as a social issue. Several theories and empirical studies have been propounded on gender relations, equity and inequality after 1970s. The past literature on gender widely covered the various aspects of gender and inequality. Here attempt has been made to review some of them. Gender is not biological concept but this ideology is highly influenced by feminist paradigm. Feminist paradigm emerged from the radical thought of the 1960s (Keller, et.al., 1996). Judith (1994) notes that gendered people emerged not from physical or sexual orientation but from the exigencies of the social order, mostly from the need for a reliable division of the work of food production and the social reproduction of new members.

Mair (1999) states that in those societies where the economy is one of subsistence production, that is, people get their food and other needs by their own labour from their immediate environment, large share of the work of agriculture

falls on women. Murdock notes that biological differences between men and women form the basis of sexual division of labour in the society. However, he does not suggest that men and women are directed by genetically based predispositions to adopt their particular roles (cited by Haralumbus, 1997). Mair (1999) views that men's tasks are those that call for extra physical strength and ability and that take them away from home for warfare, hunting, herding cattle, sea fishing, etc. Likewise, Lee suggests that hunter gatherers typically get their food more from hunting and that women contribute more than men to subsistence (cited by Ember et. al., 1993).

The neoclassical economists view that economic-man postulates a single notion of rationality. This rationality implies that persons are constructed as individuals who are self-seeking, they are maximizers and calculating agents (Kaplagam, 1994). Feminist economics challenges the conceptualization of the gender division of labour in neo-classical micro-economics, as the outcome of free choices of economic agents specializing according to their innate comparative advantages (Evans cited by Miller et al., 1998). Marx viewed that social relations are governed by laws which are specific to each mode of production, and that the mode of production is the primary determinant of inequality (cited by Pathy, 1987). Kalpagm (1994) notes that the basic Marxist paradigm has been more useful incorporating gender analytically, though this exercise is far from complete, and despite all the difficulties is far from complete, and despite all the difficulties faced with regard to the hairsplitting debates on the political implication often engaged in by dogmatic Marxists. Almost all Marxists assumed that property as main source in creating inequality. For functionalist inequality is indispensable for the maintenance of social structure. Individuals lie on different social strata as per their ability and capacity. Therefore, social stratification is imperative and valuable to any social system (Parsons, Davis More quoted by Pathy, 1987). Dahrendorf and Bottomore severely criticized the functionalist approach for over emphasizing consensus and considering stratification as universal and permanent.

Lorber (1994) observes that gender roles are changing today. Fathers are taking care of little children. Girls and boys are wearing unisex clothing and getting the same education. Women and men are doing at the same jobs. Although many traditional social groups are quite strict about maintaining gender differences, in other social groups, they seem to be blurring.

Slyter et. al (1993) state that in Africa, Asia and Latin America suggests the burdens of the destruction of natural resources falls most heavily on women in poor households who must struggle to survive.

Seddon (1995) points out that in Nepal, women play a full and active role in the domestic economy. In some ethnic groups and social classes, their roles in the economy goes beyond the domestic sphere as when Thakali women are involved in the hotel and catering business, or when educated Gurung women have positions in the private and public sectors, or when women from laboring households and from the so called occupational castes work as field labourers or porters for others. Acharya and Bennett (1981) studied the status of women in Nepal. They noted that women in the more orthodox Hindu communities who are largely confined to domestic and subsistence production display a much less significant role in major household economy decision than those in the Tibeto-Burman communities where women participate actively in the market economy. Strishakti (1995) observes that men are predominantly the ones who interact with the outside world, while women's major sphere of operation is within the households. It is said that Nepali girls and women work for more than boys and men, spending 25 percent to 50 percent more time on household tasks, economic and agricultural activities.

Past literature on gender focused on various aspects of male-female relations on the basis of theoretical paradigm and some selected indicators. Both theory and literature gave little attention on class based gender relations. In Nepalese context, we can categorize women into several strata on the basis of their general characteristics such as rural and urban women, literate and illiterate women, caste and ethnic women, rich and poor women and so on. In urban area of the country, women no

longer devote most of their productive years in household chores. The social relations of male and female in gradually changing in the urban areas. The past literature also focused on the relations of subordination and domination between male and female. They also considered the females as a homogenous group and highlights similar capacities, vulnerabilities, needs and crisis of women. However, women can be stratified into several strata on the basis of their socio-economic characteristics, eg. rural and urban, educated and uneducated, rich and poor, powerful and powerless etc. High class and urban elite women have more access to power, politics, economy and other social privileges than poor rural-based women. There is the relations of subordination and domination between high class women and poor women. In Nepal for last ten years, most of the women's development activities have been implemented between and among the urban elite women than rural poor women. We have several examples of the countries in South Asia ruled by women. However, the position of women ruled countries is the same as male in the ruled countries. In class-based society, the power is exercised by a particular class group and fulfil the needs of one's own class, not whole mass of the people. In Nepalese context too, number of high class or elite class women activists are working in the field of gender, advocacy, social work, politics, etc. Most of them have been holding better position in national and international organizations. These women have better position than general people. Here, my argument is that we should consider the class position of individual to analyse the gender. Because most of the male female relations are highly associated with class position of the society.

### **The Study Area and Research Methods**

This article is based on an earlier field study conducted in late 1996 and early 1997. Three VDCs (Amarpur, Nagi and Panchami) of Panchothar district were selected for the study. The study areas were heterogeneous in terms of caste, class and ethnicity. More than sixteen caste and ethnic groups were noted during the field visit. The dominant group was *Limbu* followed

by *Brahmin, Chhetry, Rai, Tamang, Newar* etc. All nine wards of Panchami and five wards from Nagi and Amarpur VDCs were chosen for the study. The total number of households of the sample wards was 2742. Among them 776 households were the rural poor households. The total population of the rural poor was 4239 of which 2097 were females and 2142 were males. The average family size was 5.46. Of the total population, 48.74 percent of the rural poor lived at Panchami and 28.02 percent and 23.24 percent lived at Amarpur and Nagi respectively. All the wards of Panchami VDC were covered for the study. Therefore, the number rural poor is the highest in Panchami.

The data for the study were gathered using sociological/anthropological and participatory techniques. In the first stage, rural poor households were identified by using well being ranking. The households which were ranked as the lowest were considered as rural poor and were taken for the in-depth study. Gender analysis tools, formal and informal interview, focus groups discussion and case study method were used to generate the information. In addition to these, continuous consultations were made with male and female about the gender relations in the poor households. A series of observations were made in both poor and well-off households to find out the class-based gender roles. Likewise, settlement-wise focus group discussions were held which had yielded numerous benefits to understand the male-female position in the poor households.

### The Rural Poor Households

In this article, rural poor is used as a relative term. Food sufficiency and land holding size were the major indicators to distinguish the well-off and poor households. The rural poor have less than 15 *ropanis* of upland. The average farm size is 8.41 *ropani*. They produce little food and get involved in wage labour for survival. The food sufficiency is for less than six months. Therefore, they largely depend on agricultural and non-agriculture wage labour. Low productivity, insufficient food, inferior quality of livestock, indebtedness, small houses which are insufficient for sitting and sleeping, lack of oxen, small size of landholding, relatively large family size, lack of technical

skill, no service holder in the family, etc., were the major socio-economic characteristics of the rural poor.

There is some sort of co-operation between and among the caste, ethnic groups and classes during the time of natural calamities, hardship, etc. Cross-cultural and intercaste marriages have began to occur in the study area. There are several instances of *Limbu and Brahmin, Limbu and Rai, Limbu and Majhi, Rai and Shepra* cross-cultural marriages.

It was observed that the cultural norms and religious values have influenced the economic behaviour of the poor. To celebrate the fairs and festivals they sell their animals and property. They even mortgage their land and take loan to perform the death anniversary and marriage ceremony.

*Parma* is a non-formal labour organization of both well-off and poor households. It is based on reciprocal exchange of labour among the community members during peak agricultural seasons to prepare fields for sowing and later for transplanting for the crops. Generally, high level well-off families hire the labour during agricultural reason. But, some well-off and poor rely on *Parma*. In the study area *Parma* organization form the basis of neighbourhood. The *Parmas* is mainly determined by geographical proximity and kinship. The rural poor prefer wage labour to *Parma* because they have small piece of land which requires small number of labourers.

Many rural poor cultivate the land as share-cropper or lease-holder. The share croppers have to pay fifty percent of the production to the owners. Those who cultivate the rented-in land should pay fixed quantity of crops which is determined by two parties. In the study area, the share-cropper does not claim tenancy right due to the social relationship. If landlord is not satisfied, he may change the tenant. In case of share-cropping, the landlord has to share the seeds and peasant uses his muscle for production. In case of lease-holding the lease-holder is obliged to pay fixed quantity of grains regardless of the crop failure. If the relationship is good between the landlord and peasant landlord can provide his oxen to the tenant during cultivation.

Some of the rural poor keep their children at well off homes as domestic servants. This tie makes food availability at poor households during the time of stress.

In the study area, the well-off and the poor have some sort of social tie. The poor receive loan from the rich people during the time of hardship or stress. The loan may be in cash or kind. The interest rate of the loan depends upon the relation between the poor and the rich. It was reported that when there is food stress or famine, the poor ask for food grains from the well-off. In this case, well-off people provide some inferior quality of grains free of cost. If the relationship is very close between the well off and the poor, the former provide meals to the latter for a couple of days during the time of hardship. In return, the poor provide short term free labours when well-off households require. Sometimes, the women of poor households have to wash utensils during fairs and festivals. In lieu of their services, the poor women are provided rice and some grains.

### **Women in Rich and Poor Households**

The women of the poor households have double roles at the same time. They are involved in both household chores and wage earning activities. However, most of the women of well-off family are mainly engaged in housewives' roles. Some of the daughters and sisters of the rich family have jobs such as school teachers, social workers and the like. Both boys and girls from the well-off families get chance to go to school. On the contrary, very few cases of school enrolment are found among the poor families. Because of reading and writing skills of the well-off families, the local level government and semi- government jobs fall in their hands. Not only does this skill help to get the job for them at the local level but it helps to keep the poor in subordination position.

Both rich and poor women in the study areas are involved in agricultural works and household works such as digging, fetching water, collecting firewood, etc. Unlike poor women, the rich women do not carry the load in public places (markets) because of their social status. Sometimes, women of the well-off families go to market to sell agricultural

commodities and vegetable foods. In this case, they make the poor to carry the load of the commodities to be sold.

Except few service holders, all of the women of well-off families make no contribution to cash income. On the contrary, the poor women earn something in cash or kind through wage labour. The poor women can use their earning to buy personal items (bangle, tika, tobacco, cigarettes, etc.) without their husband's consent. However, they are forced to consume their income to buy food-stuff. In the well-off families, whatever the decisions are made by the males are accepted by the women. In course of field visit, a woman reported that she hardly knew her husband's decisions after a long period of times. Unlike rich families, the poor families' decisions are open not only within family but also in the community. Because a poor should explain every-thing and his future strategy before getting the loan from the local money lenders.

In the study areas, recently some development activities like drinking water, irrigation canal, income generation program, health awareness program and non-formal education program have been started through the NGOs, INGOs, VDC and DDC. These organizations have provided local level job opportunities to some of the well-off women who have possessed required level of education. The employed women involved to mobilize the women as well as poor women are through the participatory approach. The poor women could not get involved in such development activities because of their hand to mouth problems. They feel lucky if they get a few days wage labour job within the village rather than to participate in such development activities.

Sometimes, female-related jobs and scholarships come to villages. These opportunities mostly go to the hand of well-off families. The well-off families not only use the power to control the poor but also use their capacity to grab new opportunities available at the local as well as national levels.

### **Division of Labour**

In every society, there is some sort of division of labour between and among the male and female. A division of labour by sex exists among rural poor households. In the poor households,

ploughing, roofing, climbing the trees to lop the fodder, threshing rice, sowing, making bamboo baskets and bamboo mattress, manufacturing agricultural implements, etc. are the major tasks of the males whereas transplanting millet and paddy, grinding maize and millet, husking and winnowing of crops, cooking rice and washing utensils are the female's works. Digging, wedding, harvesting and carrying load are common for both sexes.

Mothers usually nurse the infants. Mothers have major role for infants' caring which is also supported by grandmother and sister. If there are older children, the role of infant caring is also their role. If there are no grandmother and older children at home, the mother carries the infant at the back or puts the baby in the cradle during working time. Sometimes mothers leave their infants at neighbours' house if there are no persons to look after them at home. After two years of age, the children of poor houses receive very little care and attention. However, in well off household, children are cared properly up to five years. If males have leisure time and female is busy, the males also care the baby. It was observed that some males attended the community level meeting with children wrapped up in a shoulder.

As mentioned above in the poor households, food is always scarce. They fulfill their food demand hardly 0-6 months from own production. Therefore, they are always seeking wage labour within and outside of the village. Both male and female get wage labour job during the plantation and harvesting time of the crops. Males get job for cardamom farming, too. In the village, wages are not the same for all workers and works. Adolescent and women receive lower wages than adult men. Carrying big load, ploughing, roofing and mason work generate high wages than digging, rice planting and harvesting. Males charge more wages than females for the same type of works. Therefore, the employers prefers female workers in digging, harvesting and transplanting because of low wages.

For winter crops, females are involved more than males. During this time, labour opportunity is scarce within the village. Hence, most of the males go outside of the district to seek labour opportunity. Usually, males migrate in the month of Nov/Dec

and come back in April/May. Women workload is increased during the time of male seasonal migration. They have to devote their time to sowing, weeding and harvesting of the winter crops. Generally, the rural poor have no oxen. Therefore, they hire oxen along with plough man. For summer crops, they hire oxen only and males, plough the land. In the case of winter, both oxen and plough man should be hired. Usually, the poor households can not pay the charge of oxen. Therefore, they exchange their labour services for the oxen owners. In the study area, one should pay two male labourer or three female labourers for one pair of oxen power a day. Very little women migration was found during the field visit. The women of the poor households sometimes get the job of grinding, flouring, husking and cleaning vessels at the well-off households.

Two modes of payment are found in the study area. Generally, women workers would like to take grain or agricultural produce in lieu of their service. But males generally get their payment in cash.

In the study households, there is relatively small amount of grinding and flouring work because of low amount of food production. When they earn some money through wage labour, they buy ready made rice, maize and flour. Likewise, they have few utensils for cooking and eating. Little attention is paid for washing utensils and cloths. They wear the same clothes until they are worn out. Then others are made or bought. Unlike well-off, they perform their rituals and rites in short cut manner due to lack money. However, they have to spend some money for death and marriage celebration. Most of the *Brahmins* and *Chhetris* of the poor households gave up to observe the death anniversary but such type of practices are still prevalent among well-off households. Field observation shows that the women of well-off households are more involved in household chores,, ritualistic practices than poor women.

Similarly, the women of well-off households pay more attention to their husbands in comparison to poor women. In the poor households, gender roles are little bit flexible than in well-off households. During the field visit, men were observed fetching water, washing clothes, grinding corn and doing many

other household activities. In some cases, females are involved in the male-related job, too. In this regard, here is one interesting case study taken from Amarpur VDC.

Manmaya Majhi, a permanent resident of ward nine, Amarpur VDC of Panchthar district, is 39 years old. She has a husband, one daughter and three sons. Her family has three *ropanis* of upland. The production from the land is hardly sufficient for three months. Manmaya was born in a Majhi family. She got married to a Limbu family. Because of cross-cultural marriage, she could not live along with her mother-in-law. She was separated from her mother's-in-law along her husband. She made a small hut in the village. For the survival of the family, she began to saw wood. She sawed the wood within and outside the district with male partners. Usually, she operates the saw by sitting on saw-pit. She aims to join NFE class but due to time constraint, she has not joined yet. When she heard about family planning devices, she began to use Depo-Provera. Now she advises her colleagues to use the family planning devices. In course of discussion, she said that she was interested to provide a good education to her children so that they would not have to face the hardship their mother was facing.

In the study households, some flexibility was observed with respect to male female division of labour. Because of poverty, both of them have sub-ordinate position in the society. In the same case, discrimination is created by outsiders. Below is a case from Nogi VDC of Panchther district.

The people of the poor households of Nogi have bad remarks about the health assistant of Tharu VDC's sub-health post. During the discussion, it was reported that the fee for the health assistant for delivery case depends upon the sex of the child. He claims Rs. 1500 to Rs. 2500 for male child born and Rs. 500 to Rs. 1000 for female child born.

The above discussion shows that women of the rural poor households also earn cash or kind through their labour. Flexible gender roles are found at the poor households. In the case of vulnerable houses, both male and female should go for wage earning throughout the year. They live in the state of

deprivation, weakness and isolation. In such a case, division of labour is less significant than their survival.

### **Daily Work Routine**

The present study has tried to get an idea of the activities of male and female do during one day in poor households. This information was collected in all ethnic and caste groups. There are some similarities in daily work routine between and among the caste and ethnic groups. Usually, both male and female start their work at six o'clock. However, wake up time varies from one household to another. Generally, all family members get up between 5 and 6 o'clock.

### **Daily Routine of Female and Children**

Women's routine starts from fetching water and then they sweep the house. They begin to prepare meal around seven o'clock. If it is a joint family, mother-in-law prepares morning food and daughter-in-law collects fodder and firewood in the morning. If there are the oldest children, they also help in collecting fodder and firewood and then come back at nine o'clock. Women prepare meal up to ten o'clock. After the morning meal, women clean utensils, vessels and go for outside work. If there are school going children, they go to school at 9:30 and come back around 4:30. Although, most of the children of poor households drop out from school after completing three class. The enrolment of poor children in the primary schools is reported as being low. In primary education the enrollment of both boys and girls is more or less the same but higher number of girls were reported dropping out during primary school than boys. This is probably due to female responsibility for domestic chores inside the house and an attitude that education is at little value for women who are destined to marry and raise children in their husband's households. Almost all boys, too, drop out after completing primary education. When they are 9-10 years, they often go with their fathers for wage labour or portering. Some boys of the same age group work as domestic servants in the well-off houses. Those children who do not go to school either go for animal herding or assist their parents. If females go for wage labour, they come back around six o'clock at the evening.

Those who have the oldest children, the children start to cook evening food. When their mother comes she handles kitchen works and children become free. Usually, evening meal is ready around seven to eight o'clock. After washing utensils, women go to bed at 9.30 p.m. Males go to the bed little bit earlier than females.

### Male Daily Routine

As mentioned above, most of the males of the poor households migrate seasonally for six months of a year. When they stay at home, they start their work at six o'clock. If they have milking cow, they get up earlier than others.

At the community level, males play significant role than females. Males are considered as the chiefs of the family. If children and women make some mistakes, males should be responsible for their mistake. Loan taking and giving is done through males. The money lenders give loan only to males. Community believes that only males can fulfil the commitments but females do not. In fact, males have direct control over his land and other property. Only males can keep the land in mortgage. Similarly, the local shopkeepers do not give goods on credit to the females without consensus of the male partners. In this regard, a case study has been taken from Nagi VDC.

Ram Hari Giri is a permanent resident of Nagi VDC. He is 42 years old. He has a grocery shop at the village. He supplies goods, clothes and other items. He sells both in cash and on credit. He does not give the goods in credit to the females without consensus of the males. He says that the dealing with females and children is not fair. Because they do not earn cash. If their male partner deny to pay the loan he would in a great loss.

Similarly, the decisions of the males are considered more important than that of the female at community level works. If a woman takes some decision for community level work, the other community members ask again to the husband for final decision. Males prepare food stuff for cattle, milk the cow, clear the cowshed and shift the animals at open space. The

children provide fodder to cattle. If males have no morning duty, then they visit the well-off houses and get a cup of tea. In lieu of tea they help in shifting cattle at open space, splitting log, and providing fodder to cattle at well-off house. This kind of relationship makes sure to the rural poor to get loan from well-off at the time of hardship and food scarcity. Around nine o'clock a man comes back at home and then takes meal. After morning food, male leave for work. Males usually come back at five o'clock at the evening.

### Household Decision-Making Process

Decision-making is not a matter of debate at poor households. Generally, decisions are made on the basis of consensus. Minor decisions like selling of poultry and buying small items are made by females too. But decisions of taking loan, marriage of sons and daughter are made by both males and females. Usually, females actively involve in the decisions of buying and selling of animals. But during the time of hardship, males play significant role than females. As discussed above most of the male of poor households rely heavily on selling their labour and working outside their communities in order to ensure food security. Therefore, males participate to a lesser extent in a day to day household decision making process. Assignment of daily work for children is largely made by women. Women send their children for work like fodder collection, firewood collection, fetching water, herding, etc. They also divide the workload to her children on the basis of their age. Borrowing of small items like salt, food-grains and other spices is done by the females. In the case of borrowing bigger amount of money and buying larger quantity of food-grains, decisions are jointly made.

In the study area, some development activities are recently started in the field of community forestry, drinking water and irrigation. These activities require voluntary labour. In this situation community seeks male decision on labour contribution. Some of these activities need the physical strength such as carrying big load, cutting rock, etc., are undertaken by males. Therefore, community would like to take the consensus of the males before the development works. The above discussions

show that females can play significant role at household level but not at community level.

### Access and Control Over the Resources

In the study households, there are some flexibility and autonomy of own's earnings. However, because of the deprivation, their work and earning is so important for survival. Usually, women do not earn cash income from their wage labour. They receive their wage in kind which is used for day to day survival. Males, generally, receive their wages in cash which is used to pay loan, buy manufactured items (utensils, quit.), cloths, food, etc. Some of the poor households produce cash crops (bean, pepper, grams, etc.) in very small amount and sell at local markets. But it is not excess of their needs. Such items are generally sold by women. Income from the selling is used to buy salt, oil seeds, spices etc. Some portion of income is used to buy bangles, ritual marks, and bracelets. Both males and females have equal excess to animals, land and other property but socially and legally, land is controlled by males. Women have access and control over the kitchen gardening. The men enjoy doing bamboo works such as basket-making and rope making. The women have more access and control over the ornaments. In the time of severe food scarcity, ornaments are also kept as collateral. However, without female's consensus, male can not do it. It was reported that in the absence of the male household head, the female members are given considerable power and have influence in the allocation of household income, labour and the surplus so as to manage the farm efficiency. In the poor households, the concept of *pewapat* got less importance, because the whole family has face economic hardship and stress. Except the land right, the women enjoy equal control over on the resources and there is not sharp variation between the male-female role play in the poor houses.

### Conclusions

The past studies on gender conducted by both native and foreign scholars and researchers used mostly macro-level data to understand the male-female relations. They analyzed literacy level, age at marriage, life expectancy and some other socio-

economic indicators to find out the male-female status. Likewise, the past studies were either based on quantitative data or confined to high caste groups such as the *Brahmins* and *Chhetries*. We can summarize their conclusions in the following points :

- Women work more than men.
- Women have no say in major decision-making.
- Women have no control over the property.
- Women have no equal access resources education, power etc.
- Women are in sub-ordination positions.

What they generalized is partially true. Because such studies visualized only the picture of well off and culturally dominant groups. In the poor family, there is no dispute and conflict with regard to the control of the resource and property. Unlike high class or well off groups, there is no hard and fast rule of gender role. In the poor households, both male and female have similar vulnerabilities, needs and crisis.

This study is based on the poor households of the mid-hills. The economy at the household is heavily dependent on wage labour. Males are the major actors of the outside wage labour. And females are responsible for household works and wage labour within the community. The traditional division of labour is more flexible in poor households. Females have little works in the household chores in comparison to the well-off women. But females of the poor household should take male's responsibility also during the time of male absence from the home. Overall work load of the females is higher than males. The concept of access and control over on resources has little importance in the poor household because the whole family is in a state of deprivation and poverty. Both male and female earnings are used for maintenance of the households.

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## EXCLUSION, THE POLITICS OF LOCATION AND WOMEN'S PROPERTY RIGHTS DEBATES IN NEPAL: A DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF POLITICAL ACTIVISM

Youba Raj Luintel\*

The issue of women's right to parental property had sparked much controversy since the Bill was first presented in parliament. Advocates of the Bill and women rights groups had taken out a series of demonstrations demanding early passage of the Bill. Activists had gone to the extent of chanting slogans inside the House of Representatives and were thrown out by security personnel. They had even dragged the then Speaker out of his car at Singhadurbar gate. Opponents of the Bill have claimed that the country at present is not ready for such a move that would bring sisters into property disputes that traditionally is limited to brothers.

- A news report in *The Kathmandu Post* (September 7; 1999).

### The Context

The relationship between gender and property<sup>1</sup> is one of the gateways to understand the crux of women's subordination. Women's property status in any society is one critical issue deserving due attention in order to understand the specificities of gender relations in that particular setting. This is, therefore, one of the crucial political arenas of women's empowerment process.

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I would like to thank Dr. Saskia Wieringa and Dr. Brigitte Holzner for their comments on an earlier draft of this paper

<sup>1</sup> The term "property" refers to all productive resources and assets that a man or woman requires for his/her existence, subsistence and wellbeing. In the agrarian economies of South Asia arable land is the most valued form of property for its economic as well as political and symbolic significance (Agarwal, 1999). In this paper, however, property has been defined in a broader perspective, so we do not focus only on land.

A struggle for gender equality in command over property, therefore, needs to occupy a central space in women's struggle for egalitarian gender relations (Agarwal, 1999). In Nepal, a daughter does not have a full inheritance right over property. It is in this context that women's movement during and after 1990s has focussed its central attention on women's equal rights to property.

The Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal guarantees equal rights to property for both men and women. In 1990, Nepal has ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) without any reservation. The country has also accepted the 12-point program formulated in the fourth women's conference in Beijing. Hence both national and international legal tools bind Nepal for ensuring that women along with men will have access to and control over productive resources including land without any discrimination for one gender against another. However, in practice, this has never been materialized. The conservative Civil Code, called the *Muluki Ain, 2020* (1963 AD), does not allow a daughter to have a full (property) inheritance rights. For example, a daughter's rights to inherit property have been secured only if she remains unmarried till the age of 35 years, a phenomenon rare in Nepal.<sup>2</sup> In case she gets married later on, she must return the share (NPC, 1997). A married woman is recognised not as an independent citizen but as a co-parcener to her husband, she, therefore, cannot claim a share over the property "in his lifetime" (Malla, 1998).

In exceptional conditions such as polygamy, cruelty or denial to provide foods and other essential requirements, she has a right to ask for her share in property. Still there are several barriers. First, the so-called "essential requirements" have

<sup>2</sup> Since late marriage or non-marriage are a rare phenomenon in Nepal, due to social discouragement or stigmatization attached on it, and since the concept of single mother is culturally very alien, not only that marriage is near universal, but also the age at marriage is quite low. The legally sanctioned minimum age at marriage is 16 years for the girls and 18 years for the boys. The census data (1991) show that about 63.2 percent women of the age 10 years and above are married (CBS, 1993:97).

nowhere defined in the *Muluki Ain*. There is a scope for case-specific manipulation. Second, to be entitled for a claim on property, it must be at least 15 years of marriage. Third, a divorcee even cannot claim a share in property from either husband or her father side. She will be provided a "maintenance cost" up to a period of five years from the date of divorce (FWLD, 1999a). Fourth, a widow at her age less than 30 years and without a son (even daughter is not mentioned) is neither entitled to take a share in property nor to live separately. Finally, even for the tenancy rights, an unmarried daughter and/or widow daughter-in-law should cross 35 years of age (NPC, 1997).

This paper has relatively a narrow focus. It looks at the ongoing struggle for and the debate on women's property rights<sup>3</sup> in Nepal. I would attempt to approach the issue from the perspective of the post-modernist feminism. I first problematise the issue of women's property rights in Nepal. Drawing some of the theoretical concepts on public sphere, exclusion, power and discourse, I would outline an analytical framework to look at the issue as a form of exclusion. I argue that negation to women's property rights issue at its various levels has a socio-political and ideological embeddedness at the very configuration of Nepalese society that is overtly patriarchal. I also argue that pending of the bill on women's property rights in the parliament for the last four years is one of the manifestations of this patriarchal embeddedness. So long as this patriarchal embeddedness is not deconstructed, just challenging it will never bring a substantial change in gender relations, irrespective of the fact of the approval of the bill by the parliament in the near future.

### Framework of Analysis

Public sphere is a space of civil society where citizens deliberate their common affairs. It is a site of production and circulation of discourses that can be critical to the state (Fraser, 1995). For liberalists, public sphere means a space or issue which is state related, accessible to everybody, of concern to

<sup>3</sup> By "property rights" we mean men's and women's institutional access to and control over the productive resources and assets. This is something more than a legal recognition to claim over property.

everyone, having common goal and shared interests (Fraser, 1995). For them, sexuality, private property and such other familiarised and personalised issues fall outside the realm of public sphere. Post-modernist feminists are, however, critical to such essentialist divide. Accordingly, there is no natural or a priori boundaries between so-called publicity and privacy (Fraser, 1995). The rhetoric of domestic privacy tends just to exclude some issues and interests from the debate. For public sphere to be effective, social inequality should be removed. On top of that, not exclusion but inclusion, not inadmission but admission of issues and interests (of women) should be ensured. Fraser notes three counter-assumptions against liberal conception of public sphere:

- first, acknowledgement that participation parity requires not merely bracketing but elimination of social inequality;
- secondly, multiplicity of mutually contestatory publics. For the post-modernists, there cannot be a single public sphere, there should be parallel discursive arenas, called "subaltern counterpublics;"<sup>4</sup> and
- finally, inclusion and admission of those issues and interests that were excluded or not admitted before (Fraser, 1995:291, 295).

Jodi Dean (1996) categorically describes how are women's issues and interests excluded from public sphere. She distinguishes two kinds of exclusion: practical and constitutive. Institutional (such as legal) and cultural (interpretative) barriers cause to practical exclusion. Such exclusion prevents some of the issues as sexuality, childcare, domestic violence, property rights, etc. from entering into political debate. Women's functional position in the household, and their reproductive (biological) characteristics are projected as pretensions to block their involvement in public places. These are practical forms of exclusion.

<sup>4</sup> "Subaltern counterpublics," Fraser says, emerge in response to exclusions within the dominant public, when members of subordinated social groups repeatedly feel it advantageous to constitute alternative publics. They are parallel discursive arenas where members of such groups reproduce and circulate counter-discourses (Fraser, 1996:291)

On the contrary, constitutive exclusion refers to the notion that publicity, justice and rationality are male attributes while that of privacy, the good life and emotionality are female attributes (Dean, 1996). The distinction of public-private itself is based on the male gaze and the masculine experiences. These conceptions cannot serve as ideals for women. So long as such distinction persists women have to conform a set of masculine standards in order to participate in the public life. Therefore, a theory of civil society that includes women, argues Dean (1996), cannot be based on a distinction between the public and private. It must be reformed to allow for the expansion of "communicative rationality" that would allow multiple, inter-connecting and discursive spheres.

Once we accept that there should be multiple public spheres (see fn.6), and that the exclusive and oppressive public-private divide cannot serve the specific and particularistic needs and interests of women, we then challenge the dominant power discourse that surrounds us. Foucault argues that power is not imposed from the top of a social hierarchy, nor is it derived from a fundamental opposition between rulers and the ruled. For him, power is relational, that operates in "capillary fashion" from below (Pringle and Watson, 1992). Power finds a shifting and unstable expression in networks and alliances that permeates every aspect of life (Pringle and Watson, 1992:55).

It is also said that there has been a relational, historical and precarious character of realities<sup>5</sup> (Pringle and Watson, 1992:64). Identities are constituted in language while subjectivities are produced through discursive practices. Hence, it is discourse that constitutes reality. Pringle and Watson conclude, "(i)n post-structuralist account of state, 'discourse' and 'subjectivity' rather than structures and interests become the key terms" (1992:65).

<sup>5</sup> Postmodernists refuse to accept that there is *the* (a single) reality. There are in fact multiple realities: one that is a true reality for one may not be the same for another. So realities are a social construction, an output of discourse and knowledge. All discourses and knowledge production have been a masculine business. Therefore, women must deconstruct all forms of (masculine) realities at their respective levels and produce counterrealities, called the "subaltern counterpublics."

Such a notion of power and reality has multiple implications so far as feminism is concerned (Pringle and Watson, 1992). First, state is not accepted as a unified reality but is challenged as a byproduct of struggles. Secondly, once we accept that power is produced and derived from discursive practices, thereby, we recognize that we ourselves can deconstruct and reconstruct power. Finally, it is also accepted that we can assert our agency, articulate our voice, and create our subjectivities.

But there exist some ambiguities that call for a due attention. The traditional basis of feminist solidarity does not exist now. (The so-called global sisterhood based on the white, heterosexual, bourgeoisie and middle class woman has been challenged severely.) There is no identified feminine "we" and masculine "they" (Mohanty, 1995). When we do not have a single voice, a common interest and a shared identity, how can then we create a sisterhood? It is in this context that postmodern feminists argue for a politics of difference. It is accepted that since we are not only embodied but also embedded in our contexts, there is no universal sameness, no automatic affinity, and no ontological unity. Instead of seeking artificial sameness and common affinity, we recognise our differences. Once we accept differences, it can be a basis for a further negotiation. This is what Mohanty (1995:68) called the "politics of location." This kind of politics reflects our differences. Therefore, our new solidarity will be a "reflective solidarity," our coalition will be a "rainbow coalition."<sup>6</sup>

### Women's Property Rights Discourse in Nepal

For a long, gender discrimination regarding women's property rights did not bring notable resistance at the public level. It is with a petition filed by a (female) lawyer that it challenged many laws (including the *Muluki Ain*) as

<sup>6</sup> Phillips quotes Iris Young as referring to the American idea of "rainbow coalition" based on "heterogeneous publics" in which groups can work together but retain their identity. Groups' identity should not be swallowed up in a unified approach for the "rainbow coalition" (Phillips, 1991:83-84).

discriminatory against women.<sup>7</sup> In 1995, the Supreme Court gave a verdict declaring that i) the existing provisions to inherit parental property are "conditional" for daughter [so are discriminatory against them], ii) the government should within a year introduce a bill reviewing all the laws related to property rights (Malla, 1998). Although the decision of the Court was not so straight forward, still it insisted a heavy controversy, enormous debates and strong reactions, explicit or implicit, from every walk of life. It gained not only wider support but also insisted mass protests and counter-arguments. What the Supreme Court verdict eventually contributed is: first, it helped diffuse the debate from an elite circle of politicians and academia to a wider civil society; and second, it created a strong and vibrant solidarity and networking among the feminist activists and women's organizations to safeguard the "little achievement." Women's organizations up to the date were split into ideological and other differences so much that the movement itself was very weak and indecisive<sup>8</sup> (Shrestha, 1998). Meanwhile, as a result of pressures from NGOs, donor community, and activist women's organizations, as a fulfillment of its commitment during the

<sup>7</sup> The case is popularly known as "Meera's case," since Meera Dhungana, a female lawyer, filed it in the Supreme Court (see *Nepal Law Journal*, 1994).

<sup>8</sup> Here I would like to cite the creation of Women's Security Pressure Group (WSPG) that vividly reflects the point. As an immediate response to incidents of increased rape and other forms of violence against women, just after the introduction of democracy in the country, the WSPG was developed as a network of 96 women's organizations and NGOs on an *ad hoc* basis. Immediately, it became such an effective forum that it made fulfilled a need of a consolidated political movement of Nepalese women. Quickly after its formation – led my women's wings of two rival parties (Nepali Congress and the Communist Party of Nepal, UML) -- WSPG became an integral part of women's movement with much more vigour and recognition. Now WSPG's exclusive concentration goes on women's property rights issue through awareness campaigns, demonstrations, public discussions, political activism, etc. For a detail discussion on WSPG see Shrestha (1998).

parliament election government introduced the Civil Code, 1963 (the Eleventh Amendment) Bill, 1997 in the parliament.<sup>9</sup>

While the bill was under the consideration of the Human Rights Committee of the parliament before going to a discussion in the full house,<sup>10</sup> unfortunately, on 15 January 1999 the House of Representatives was dissolved (due to other political reasons). Consequently, the legal status of the bill was lapsed (Pro-Public, 1995:30). Despite the fact that a new government of Nepali Congress with a clear majority in the parliament was formed after the mid-term election (1999), the government did not show its immediate interest to revive the pending bill. The highly contested bill has been registered in the parliament second time in 2000.<sup>11</sup> However, since the subsequent 19<sup>th</sup> session of the parliament has been in a standstill situation due to power tussle between the ruling and opposition parties, there is very little hope that the property rights bill will be under discussion and consideration during this session.

Besides parliament, the Supreme Court decision also faced a wider response from men and women from all walks of life. Several NGOs, activist women's organisations, women's wings of political parties, professional organisations and the mass media equally get involved in the debate. Primarily their focus has been either to raise awareness towards property rights

<sup>9</sup> The bill -- prepared by the Ministry of Law and Justice (MLJ) -- was registered on 31 July 1997 in the parliament during its 16<sup>th</sup> session (Malla, 1998). The government did not consider a fresh draft prepared by the Ministry of Women and Social Welfare (MWSW). It reflects the contradictions inherently built within government system on issues like this.

<sup>10</sup> The controversial bill had stirred debate between women rights groups and the parliamentarians. A series of protests by the activists on the one hand and over 150 applications for amendment to the proposed bill delayed voting and adoption of the bill as law (see *The Kathmandu Post*, 17 July 1999).

<sup>11</sup> This time, the parliamentary Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Committee has been busy seeking suggestions and information on the controversial bill. Members of the committee had travelled to all the 14 zones to collect suggestions so that the voices of the common people to the intellectuals were included in the bill. This was the first time that such a massive job had been undertaken to solicit suggestions from the grassroots, that is effected the most, by these laws. (*The Kathmandu Post*, 9 February 2001).

issue and create public pressure on government to implement the verdict of the Court earlier or to oppose it and make an anti-property rights sentiment. To draw a glimpse of this debate, below I would cite some of the prominent issues that have been surfaced. To bring the discussion within the scope of this paper I would confine myself in two sources: the first is based on the findings of a field survey (see FWLD, 1999b), and the other is based on a seminar discussion (see Dali, 1997).

A field study conducted by the Forum for Women, Law and Development (FWLD) reveals that of the total respondents, only 30 per cent felt that a new bill ensuring women's inheritance rights should be introduced (FWLD, 1999b:18). Fifty-five per cent of the respondents surveyed were in favour of a "will system" (that is, rights to property based on parents' will), followed by 15 per cent who were supporting very much the existing system of property inheritance (FWLD, 1999b). The study shows that majority of the respondents are in favour to change existing inheritance system. It is ironic, however, that they are not willing to allow women to inherit property. The respondents perceived the following consequences that a system of equal property rights might bring:

- problem of land fragmentation and management,<sup>12</sup>
- no guarantee that the husbands would not misuse their wives' property;
- equal access to education, employment and opportunity as more important than rights to property;
- in a country where a majority of households is below the poverty line, equal property rights to women is not a meaningful question;
- trouble to the elderly and the disabled parents (because the daughters also will take the property but it will be son alone who will have to take care of the parents, etc.).

<sup>12</sup> The similar argument appears elsewhere in South Asia. According to Agarwal (1999:284), patrilocal marriages in distant villages make it difficult for women to directly supervise or cultivate land they may inherit in natal village.

Likewise, a seminar organised for the intellectuals and professionals by a women's publication house also brought more negative than positive arguments (Dali, 1997). Some of them are:

- devaluation of daughter. (Not their proclivity and "beauty" but property becoming valued);
- out-flight of property to India due to inter-boarder marriages. (In the case of Northern India which borders Nepal there is no property rights to women);
- encouragement for men and women living single;
- encouragement of son preference in the society. Promotion of sex-selective abortion and/or infanticide of female child (because daughters will be seen as economic burden);
- increased rate of divorce, family break-ups and problems of broken home children;
- hardship for poor girls to find partners, therefore increased anxiety, stress and depression to them, etc. (Dali, 1997).

Through these arguments both common people and intellectuals show that they are still reluctant to allow women to have equal property rights. In a recent news-report, for example, one of the (female) members of parliament was quoted as saying that issue of property rights was not suitable to her society.<sup>13</sup> Another newspaper reports that the then Minister of Law and Justice was ridiculed by women's activists at a talk program when he did not favour the property rights issue.<sup>14</sup> Likewise, the Chief Justice was quoted in a news who argued that both son and

<sup>13</sup> Ms Renu Yadav, Member of Parliament, was quoted in a news report saying, "we have typical reality in our village [of Terai]. It's not yet a high time to provide women property rights. First, we should make the rural women at the grassroots level fully aware, only then we can think on it" (Shrestha, 2000).

<sup>14</sup> Taranath Ranabhat, the then Minister of Law and Justice said: "The movement to bring forth equal property rights (to women) is just superficial; to really achieve the 'equality of right' the activists would have to reach the grassroots level...Law can be enforced any time but that would not be practiced and hence would not serve the purpose ("Women rights activists ridicule law minister," *The Kathmandu Post*, 3 June 1999).

daughter should not be given any legal right to inherit parental property – implying that the will system should be introduced (*The Kathmandu Post's* editorial, 4 November 1999).

All these expressions clearly reveal patriarchal reluctance, ambivalence and social contradictions embedded in the Nepalese society at large. Nevertheless, issue of women's property rights has grasped momentum and the campaign has already appeared as a part of vibrant civil society movement. In the section that follows it, I would attempt to look at the issue through the lens of some concepts summarised earlier in this paper.

### Denial to Property Rights as a Form of Exclusion<sup>15</sup>

Nepalese women are deprived of many rights including basic citizenship rights.<sup>16</sup> They are recognised not as political citizens but as "altruist citizens" (see Philips, 1991). Their citizenship is devoid of political nature at the cost of mothering, morality and civic virtue. Since the political-ideological configuration of Nepali society at the macro level is very much influenced by modern and liberal school of thought, the discourse of fraternity predominates all discourses.

As a result, a large segment of population still thinks that sexuality and property issues are private issues, in which state is not supposed to intervene. Intra-familial debates in property and sexuality are so detached from public concerns that even close community and neighbours are supposed not to respond to in anyway. Since men have exclusive and monopoly command over household property, and wives' sexuality, women's position has always been characterised by economic and emotional subordination. When we look at this issue from Fraser's standpoint (1995:295), we can find three distinct features:

<sup>15</sup> According to Kabeer (2000), economic exploitation, marginalization and deprivation are the three basic forms of economic exclusion.

<sup>16</sup> For instance, Nepalese women can get citizenship only through father or in the married case through husband. She cannot register her newly born baby on her name, without showing a social father. She should produce permission from her (male) "guardian" to apply for a passport, etc.

- There is economic inequality between men and women, which is considered as "natural" under liberal fraternal discourse.
- Economic activities have been largely an androcentric activity that has always marginalised women's economic needs and rights.
- Women's economic issues and interests are excluded and treated as "inadmissible" into the dominant public sphere.

Following Dean's framework (1996) of exclusion, we can see three forms of economic exclusion of Nepalese women from both mainstream economic activity as well as discourse.

First, there are certain "situational obstacles" that restrict Nepalese women from entering into public economic institutions. The existing legal barriers clearly restrict them from having rights over property. The Civil Code, 1963, discussed above in this paper (see section 1.0), is a burning example as a discriminatory legal mechanism that does not recognise women as *bona fide* citizen to have rights over property. Efforts to amend it have created tremendous debate and controversy in and around the Supreme Court, the parliament and feminist organisations. This is an instance of exclusion of women's interest in a weak sense of the term, because it is based on traditional legal barrier(s).

Secondly, women's inclusion in property system has been paralysed due also to cultural and religious orthodoxy. Being a Hindu Kingdom, the juridical-ideological make up of Nepali society is primarily masculine.<sup>17</sup> As a reflection of it in the daily life of common people, every male is supposed to be the procreator and protector of female and femininity. On the contrary, women are always posited as "satisfiers" to "male

<sup>17</sup> Hinduism is a body of cults and sects that commonly appreciates phallic power. The cult of *linga puja* (literally "worshipping penis"), for example, is a clear manifestation of phallo-logocentrism of Nepali society. Male and female devotees worship *linga* (penis-like image), which is supposed to represent the real penis of Mahadeva, the god of the destruction. This shows the symbolic and ideological bias of Nepalese society underpinned at patriarchal values.

needs" in terms of food, pleasure and sex. "Men produce, women cook" is the mythical social ideal. Logically, those who "produce" also own the required resources and have command over them. This is the cultural interpretation of economic inequality along the gender lines. In this sense, it is women's exclusion in its strong sense.

Thirdly, there is something inherent within Nepali society itself that prevents women's full inclusion in the property system. The very conceptualisation of male as "breadwinner" and "head" of the household, while female as domestic "supporter" operates at the conceptual-theoretical level. This clearly marks the public-private divide of social sphere. Given the strong control over women's autonomy in terms of mobility, sexuality, reproduction, and gender division of labour, women are absolutely confined to domestic sphere, a sphere that is unrecognised and undervalued. Under this ideology, women are not recognised as subjects deserving property entitlement so long as they are under "male protection." Hence, it constitutively excludes women from enjoying full citizenship rights to own, inherit and control property among other things.

### Politics of Location: Creating Space through Counterdiscourse:

"Two decades ago, the question: 'Do women need independent rights in land?' was not admitted in public policy discourse in most part of South Asia. Today the question is admissible, but the discussion on it is limited and the answers to it disputed."

-Bina Agarwal (1998:2)

Lack of ownership and control over productive resources is a constraint for Nepalese women through which they have been suffering the most. They are deprived of not only command and control over property but also access to it. A socially recognised form of women's property is only *daijo* and *pewa*<sup>18</sup> in

<sup>18</sup> *Daijo* refers to a package of gifts from maternal and paternal relatives that they give it in or after marriage to the bride. *Pewa* comprises of self-acquired property by a woman before her marriage plus gifts from in-laws after marriage. They are, however, not property in its real sense. They have a symbolic value than any economic viability.

which they have a relative autonomy, but not complete freedom. Its economic potential, however, is so limited that *daijo* and *pewa* cannot ensure them from any economic vulnerability.

Until recently planners and policy makers in Nepal, as elsewhere, used to think that woman's economic needs can be accommodated adequately within the household. However, counterdiscourse on women's property rights that Nepalese women did create over the years has successfully challenged this notion. It is through this challenge that, women's property rights issue has begun to receive a minimum space within legislative, executive and judicial institutions in Nepal.

Nepalese women have created a counterdiscourse on their property rights through simultaneous and vigorous efforts in many fronts. They initiated an alternative dialogue through programmes such as "meet the rural women," legal literacy, and political activism at the grassroots. At the center, they concentrated their efforts in challenging the discriminatory laws (such as the Civil Code, 1963) in the court. They also tried to sensitise journalists and other professionals. They got involved in lobbying with international donor agencies such as the World Bank, the Asian Bank, USAID, etc.

Alternatively, through a series of mass demonstration, they asserted a kind of moral pressure on the government and political parties to respond to the issue. Now it has become a ritual for each new government to renew its political commitment that it will table the Civil Code amendment bill to ensure women's equal property rights in the parliament. It is a reflection that the official economic discourse has recognised the validity of the issue. Property rights issue has also become one important agenda for political parties during at least in the elections. It has become a means to demonstrate their "progressive" face by mentioning it in their manifestos. While there comes the time to materialize this commitment, all of them show a massive scale of reluctance.

An equally important development associated with property rights campaign is that great many women's organisations are involved in building coalitions and creating networks. Existence of several coalitions and networks reveals

that women's movement in Nepal has learnt how to situate its campaign based on their political location and politics of differences. It is in this point that I would like to mention WSPG once again (see fn. 6 also). It is a network of 96 women's organisations: some are political others social, some are community-based voluntary organizations, etc. They came into dialogue for a common cause, recognised their political and ideological differences, and accepted it as a basis for negotiation. The WSPG has now become a pride for the activist women. I would, therefore, argue that WSPG is a "rainbow coalition" that represents the common interests of Nepalese women. It has created a sense of solidarity – the "reflective solidarity" – among them that would make certain change in a near future. It would, I hope, deconstruct the oppressive public sphere that has constitutively excluded Nepalese women, their needs and interests from entering into the mainstream deliberation.

Finally, I would like to make a point of caution to women's organizations that they are giving excessive attention on property rights issue, as if it is the only cause of female subordination. I argue that excessive dependence on single agenda of political activism might be strategically counterproductive in the long run. Even in the West, during the suffragist movement of 1960s and 1970s, women's economic independence was one of the highly contested terrains propagated much by the liberalists. After its promulgation, however, what they realized was that economic independence alone was a very insufficient cause so far as bringing meaningful change in women's livelihood was concerned. It has to be viewed from two parallel fronts: First, that economy has a political embeddedness. It implies that property rights to women will have a limited potential of women's empowerment within the patriarchal social structure (a lesson that socialist feminists learnt). Second, that right to inherit property will have differential meanings for those who own property and those who do not (a lesson that liberal feminists learnt in Europe and in the USA). Women's activism in Nepal should be aware of those limitations of women's property rights movement.

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## THE SOCIAL WORLD OF NEPALESE WOMEN

Dr. Samira Luitel\*

### Introduction

The social situation of Nepalese women is complex and cannot be explained with a single paradigm. The differences are demarcated by the geographical region, economic situation, cultural and caste variations. However, the position of a woman in a family is a determining factor to decide her status in that family in particular, and in the society in general. Thus, the social world of a woman is the picture of her position in each household. To make it clear—the mother, mother-in-law, daughter, daughter-in-law, sister, sister-in-law, etc. have their particular roles and responsibilities and enjoy different status in their particular family. All the women play their roles associated with a particular relation to each individual. Thus a single woman would be playing multiple roles relevant to the relation with the particular individual. There might be individual differences but in general it is learnt or is taught by the system through the process of socialization. One can observe the world of women and men quite distinguished and different rather complete in itself that emphasizes in maintaining the patriarchal values of domination and subordination where some are seen more powerful than the others. Although it is very difficult and also problematic to explain and assess the social status of women from a single perspective, it is also important to look at the relationship among women within the household to see how their single world looks like. I have tried to sketch here how these relationships among women have played roles in creating the subordinate position of women and have victimized a large number of enthusiastic and creative women in return.

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In our hierarchical system, a person who is in the top profile in the relation holds most of the decision-making power due to the respect given to that position. This criterion implies to womenfolk also. So a mother or the mother-in-law usually holds the top position in a hierarchical family network among the women and withholds the authority and power in the family. Being her child a daughter always enjoys the total freedom and liberty. A daughter-in-law on the other hand has less liberty and freedom but more responsibility as the mistress of the household. One can observe the role of a mother and mother-in-law quite different for the daughter and the daughter-in-law and vice-versa. The most crucial role of a woman is seen in being a daughter-in-law where most of the important part of her life is spent. It is found that in most of the cases she is exploited by the authoritative members of the family whether male or female in the new family. The most interesting part is that a daughter-in-law who is legally the authoritative mistress of the household, in practice is not given the full power immediately after marriage. She is rather given only the duties and responsibilities to look after the household and the family members. She becomes only the nominal mistress of the household without power and prestige. This is the hardest time for most of the women in their life where they hardly get liberty of choice in work or in their personal life. A daughter-in-law has to compromise with the interest of her in-laws to fit in their system in the new family. It is like having rebirth and learning the ways of living and dealings as expected from her in the new family network. In most of the cases the daughters-in-law begin their socialization process following the tradition of oppression and injustice as taught by their elders to adjust in the family. In a system of early marriage a woman has to bear all these hazards throughout her life from the very young age. So she begins and ends her life blaming her fate in being a woman as her predecessors did. She then herself becomes an oppressor in her turn, in this way the cycle is completed and rotated which makes up the system of a particular society. Education has hardly changed such tradition and the thinking of the individuals where the educated women are also facing the same problem of oppression even today as

Bista (1991) observed. Here I would like to present a case of a daughter-in-law in an extended Nepali Brahmin family.

Durga holds a graduate degree and is married at the age of 20 in a middle class Brahmin family. She is the eldest daughter-in-law and now the only daughter-in-law in the family. Soon after her marriage is given the responsibility to look after the household chores. As a benevolent and dutiful daughter-in-law, Durga gets up early in the morning at 5 a.m. or even earlier, and starts doing her daily routine works. First of all she goes to toilet and then takes bath, changes her dress, and washes the clothes she wore last night. She then sweeps the floor, enters into the shrine and cleans the room, makes all the things ready for pooja for her father-in-law and mother-in-law. She then goes into her room, combs her hair and gets ready herself and then arranges the room. After that she enters into the kitchen, prepares tea for all the family members and serves each of them. There is a maid who is kept to help her but most of the time she would be doing outside jobs e.g. cleaning the courtyard, doing the dishes, tending the animals, etc. After tea, Durga starts doing the preparation for morning meal which has to be cooked for about 20 people. She makes the vegetables, dal and rice ready, cleans them and takes to the kitchen. She then brings a bucket of water from the tube well in the court yard to prepare food. By nine o'clock she gets the food ready to serve her sisters-in-law and brothers-in-law who go to school. The other family members who stay home would not eat the food until 11 a.m. They would be frequenting in the intervals so she has to wait for each of them to serve the food. She serves the food for the household servants or keeps it aside if they come late. In the last she eats the cold and left over food which she shallows with water to fill her belly rather to enjoy it. She then cleans the kitchen, takes the dishes outside to wash which is done by the maid. By the time she finishes her morning duty it is 12 to 12.30 p.m. If she does not have other works e.g. washing the clothes, drying the grains or stitching the clothes she will take rest until 2. p.m.

She enters the kitchen by 2 p.m. to prepare the snacks and tea for the family members and serves it by 3 to 4 p.m. After that she gets started with her evening duty to prepare the evening

meal. By the time she finishes doing her evening meal it will be 10 to 10.30 p.m. She goes to bed at 11 p.m. and shares some time with her husband to enjoy her married life. Durga pretends to be happy with her husband only to please him as he is the sole authority to sanction her stay in this house. Another main and hidden purpose is to give birth to a son to keep on his lineage which is the strong support to establish herself in this family. These are the most common routine works of her everyday life besides other additional works which come occasionally e.g. treating the guests or sick people and taking care of children or tending the animals or working in the vegetable garden etc.

After three years of her married life Durga gave birth to two daughters. Now, besides her daily routine works she has to take care of her two babies. There is no rest period in her life except in the night when the babies are asleep. Sometimes she has to wake up in the middle of the night to change the dippers or to feed the babies. Durga feels herself a perfect housewife and is happy in her home, however she has seldom been able to please her in-laws. The birth of two daughters made the total family upset, which was not in her control. Now, quite often she listens the words of dissatisfaction in her household works and dealings from her in-laws, especially from the female members. Besides this, they also blame her parents for not giving enough dowry, compare with other daughters-in-law in the neighbourhood as nice and hospitable than her. All these taunts make Durga more sick mentally besides her physical work loads. Often times she desired to leave the house but found no alternatives thinking of her husband and children. She could not think of going to her parents' home as it would be to bring conflict between the two families. Durga expressed her desire to her husband if she could hold a job but he was not in favour of it until the children were grown up. Another obstacle was that his parents would not allow it as it was not prestigious to work outside home by a daughter-in-law. This is a single case and there are many more cases of women in our society which needs in-depth case study to understand the situation.

Durga and her husband have the same qualifications but hold different status (power and prestige) in the family. One is

the most respectable and powerful person in the household and the other is almost a slave who possesses nothing of her own and is only recognized by the name of her husband. If her husband also looks down upon her then she will have no place in this family. A woman's life is always at the mercy of a man who is her husband, and only this relationship is able to provide her the power and prestige in the family. If he is the authority then his dictatorship in the family and patronage provides her the privilege to enjoy some power through him. Either the father or the son, who holds the authoritative position in the family as the earning member or as the care taker of the household is the sole authority in the household. His wife then enjoys the privilege and power in the family and exploits that power to control other women folk. A woman who has no strong support from the male e.g. from the father, from the husband or from the son is thus prone to lead a miserable life in our social network. The following conditions can be considered to understand the situation of women:

- a barren woman
- a widow woman in an extended household
- a women giving birth to daughters only
- a woman who has co-wife
- a single woman with small children whose husband is away from home to earn a living
- a daughter-in-law in a large family whose husband is not earning
- a woman in a poor family with many children and a drunken or sick husband

We can provide thousands of such examples which put women in the most vulnerable position when there is no strong support from the male counterparts. Our patriarchal system believes that men do the right things and provide right judgment to all, so they are made strong and powerful both physically and mentally through socialization. Education has been a powerful means to make the patriarchal system even stronger. Men are given the responsibility to use their wits and physical fitness. Whereas women are trained to be benevolent, submissive and obedient to match the strong man so that the family harmony is

maintained. Therefore education was/is denied for women which is supposed to bring conflict in the mutual relationship of husband and wife as well as in the family. In the past it was also believed "women who learn to read and write become witch". This was due to the reason that an educated woman might be a threatening to the patriarchy. The partnership of the strong man and the feeble woman automatically demarcated their social field. That is why women were/are given only the household responsibilities that required manual work and physical labour than the brain. The planning and management responsibility of the household is also taken by men leaving women the housekeeping job only. The society has not thought women as capable of managing and planning for the betterment of the household whether educated or not.

The general feeling is that a woman is solely responsible for the ups and downs of the family and is considered as ignorant if something goes wrong in the household affairs. Whereas the males are considered as free from the household bondage and free to move as they wish, they are bestowed upon with the responsibility to control the family affairs and patron the women and the society at large. The total organization of our social system is such that women in majority are the owners of household without power and prestige and men hold the power to control the women. Whether educated or illiterate, women must be within the control of men. Just to be a man is important whether illiterate, disabled or moron. The legal system is also based on this ideology which thinks women the weakest person and does not rely on them in providing the rights to property or in any decision making of the household or of the self as long as the male person is there to safeguard her. The family system, social system and the national system all work in a hegemony to make the women the weakest person and exploit her to the extent it could. Not only her labour, and physical potential but even her flesh is used for the benefit of men in the humane world of mankind. That is why young girls are sold in the sex market as commodities before reaching to puberty. There is no value of women's life in the "man made world" of oppression and injustice. Since our history, women have not been able to live a

dignified life and it has not been long that they were forced to burn in their husband's funeral pyre. Even the rule of female has not been able to change this situation due to the impact of male dominated culture and that of male dominance in powerful positions.

### **The Reality**

The Nepalese socio-cultural environment is far from congenial to the holistic development of a girl child. She is unwittingly branded as inferior even before she is born. The gender-linked disparity in pattern and practices of child rearing in the early years affect adversely her personal development (RIDA, 1991). The practice of rejoicing at the birth of a son and lamenting at the birth of a daughter is quite common in most of the communities. In such a situation even the mother regrets the birth of a daughter as the mother having many daughters is placed in a lower status, and if she does not give birth to a son she is likely to get a co-wife. On the other hand a woman having more sons enjoys a higher status in the family (Bennett, 1981). This is why when giving blessings to a married woman, elder people usually say, "Be blessed with sons." Most of the women who only have daughters also keep fasting in the desire of a son. The birth of a son is regarded as opening the door to heaven or getting salvation according to the Hindu philosophy. All these attitudes make women feel inferior to men and they lament throughout their lives for being born as women. The whole circumstances before them make them feel that they are not complete without the association of men and that their life will only be successful by giving birth to a son.

Women were kept in ignorance for long, and education was not considered as good for women. The belief that "women who get education become witches" was made widely popular in the society keeping them in complete ignorance. Until 1950 modern education was not sanctioned for the public by the autocratic rulers, so the general public had no access to education. Whereas the Brahmins had the culture of education it was available to men only for the purpose of conducting the rituals. Books like *Badhusiksha* which is the teachings for the

daughter-in-law, composed by the renowned poet Bhanubhakta was popularly read in the Nepalese houses. This book was enough to provide teachings how to keep the daughter-in-law in control. Women's values were confined to only house-keeping and child bearing. Some ancient texts described a woman as equal to a Sudra (an untouchable) with no access to rituals, and the contents of Manusmriti (a Hindu code of conduct) says "For women no sacramental rite is performed in sacred text : women who are destitute of strength and destitute of knowledge of Vedic texts are impure as falsehood itself" (cited in, Luitel, 1992).

Poverty is another issue that has direct effect on women. Girls in the poor family begin to work as early as the age of 6 and by the age of 6-9 they work four to seven hours a day (RIDA, 1991). They care for siblings, clean utensils, fetch water and firewood and tend animals. Their work burden increases with their age and even more profoundly after their marriage. These women who work hard and produce children in the very young age generally have poor intake of caloric diet. Due to this reason many women suffer from malnutrition, anemia, goiter etc. Sex trade has also made many young girls victim of AIDS. The cultural norms, economic condition and preferential attitude of parents towards the boys (RIDA 1991) all lead to create vulnerable condition of women. A girl child is neglected from the very childhood. This situation in later life leads them to suffer from malnutrition, emotional insecurity and inferiority complex (Acharya S. 1981). Uterus prolapsed and death among women due to complication of pregnancy is common among the Nepalese women. Early marriage and repeated pregnancy in early age gives rise to health risks leading to an increased rate of neonatal and post-natal mortality rates. Malnutrition, diarrhea and other communicable diseases are common among women. This is why Nepal is one among the only three countries having low life expectancy for female (52 years for female and 55 years for male) and high infant mortality rate 107 per 1000 live births (Census, 1991).

In my Ph.D. fieldwork which was done in Siraha district it was found that almost all of the respondent were married in early age 12-15 and they were engaged in the household chores

from the very early age. Their main work at their parents' place was to herd the cattle or buffalo, fetch water, look after their young brothers and sisters, and do dishes. The women regarded that even though they had to work in their parents' home it was not difficult as they were not obliged to work and could deny to do so if they wished. But at their husband's home they have to please everybody by their work and there is no rest till the end of the day. In their opinion to be a daughter-in-law was the worst part of their life.

Seclusion of girls is maintained in the higher caste groups both in the Tarai and in the hills which keeps girls away from many benefits. In addition to this in the Tarai region due to dowry and parda system girls are married at the very young age even before puberty which has put them far behind other social groups. The status of women study (1981) has shown the status of Maithili women as the lowest among the rest of the communities in our society.

Daughters of higher castes have different situation. In the higher caste Brahmin and Kshatriya family a daughter's earnings is not accepted and so they hardly allow their daughters to participate in the paid labour force. It also becomes their prestige to live in the earning of a daughter. Only in a very miserable condition would the parents live on the earning of their daughters. A daughter is rather expected to take care of her brothers who are supposed to look after her (not necessarily), when they grow up. This is why parents are reluctant to educate their daughters which has no return. Boys on the other hand are the future bread earners of the family and so are given the privilege and the chances as the parents could.

### Major Issues

The Nepalese social system is based on patriarchal Hindu philosophy that empowers men and subordinates women. It is therefore that women are weak and dependent on men and derive their social status (including inheritance right, ritual status and access to property) from their fathers, husbands and sons. Her only property in her home (where she is married) is her ability to work. The more she works to sustain the subsistence

economy the more prestige she gains in the family. Bennett (1981) in her study of Parbatiya Women has shown a woman's power in the family as:

- her continuing relationships with her maiti (natal home);
- her sexuality which encompasses both her ability to bear children and to give (or withhold) pleasure to her husband;
- her ability to uphold or tarnish the honour/reputation (izzat) of the family in the community at large;
- her own labour and ability to contribute to the productivity of the affinal family.

Likewise, she emphasizes that a woman in a small nuclear family which depended on her agricultural labour to meet its basic subsistence needs, might, other things being equal, have more say than a woman in a large, fairly well-off extended family where her agricultural labour was either not required or could be replaced by the wage labour of others.

Some studies have shown that even though women generally represent the oppressed group in Nepalese society, in some communities women play a major role in decision making process. The Newar women of Bulu (Pradhan 1981), the Tharu women of Dang (Rajure 1981), the Kham Magar of Thabang (Molnar 1981), the women of Baragaon (Schular 1981) have been presented as treated as equals in their community. Similarly, equality and freedom among the Rai women have been described by Mc Dougal (1973); among the Limbus by Jones (1976); among the Sherpas by Haimendrof (1964); among the Rana Tharu of Kailali by Bista (1967) and among Tamang by Holmberg (1989). But all these women described by the writers are very hard working. Though women have a say in their household chores and farm-work it does not mean that the main economic decision in the disposal of property or in buying economic assets are done by women.

### **Women and Empowerment Issues**

Women empowerment issue has been a hot cake at present. But there does not seem any significant difference from the welfare approach of the programmes conducted during the

Women's Decade. After 1975 was declared as the women's year women's issues were formally addressed. The Sixth Plan (1980-85) proposed strategies to be implemented by government and non-government agencies and institutions in the fields of education, health, employment, agriculture, forestry, cooperative development, and legal system. It also called for increased recruitment of women at all levels in extension and administrative fields through the program of incentives and quotas (UNICEF, 1987). The Seventh and Eighth Plans (1986-1991 and 1992-1997) also recognized women's importance to development but no specific measures were made to involve a maximum number of women in development process.

The Women's Decade made significant efforts to address women's issues at the national level. The Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Health, and Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, Ministry of Education each contained a Women's Development Cell to coordinate their own programs focused to women. In addition, the Women's Development Section (WDS) was set up in the Ministry of Local Development in 1982, to promote, initiate and supervise activities to integrate women in development activities. The Production Credit for Rural Women (PCRW) program was initiated through this ministry to enhance women's ability to generate subsistence and market income.

Quite recently the government has advocated for the empowerment of women. But the programs it has introduced is not different from the ones already started by WDS way back in 1982 which focused to enhance the economic condition of women. Even now women's contribution in the subsistence economy has not been considered as economic activity. Women are also neglected in the planning and implementation of development projects. Women who are already burdened by the household works are overburdened by the economic enhancement programs, as they have not been able to generate much income. The reality is that men have been benefited more than women from women's economic activities in a male dominated world and are enjoying more leisure. The economic programs have not liberated women from their traditional roles

as house wives. They are still underrepresented in politics, at both local and national levels. However at the national level the present government has made provisions to ensure that each party has 5% of women while contesting the election which is not made compulsory. At the cabinet level there is a single woman minister who is also given the charge of Ministry of Women and Social Affairs limiting her to her own field.

The National Code (Mulki Ain, 1963) brought about significant changes in family and property law and the legal status of women, providing equal rights for both sexes. The constitution also guaranteed that there will be no discrimination against any citizen in the application of general laws, as well as in respect of political and civil rights, on the ground of religion, race, sex and caste. However a son is given the right to the inheritance of property while a daughter is not. The whole fate of a girl lies in this very discrimination where she is denied from the basic human rights. While the son is regarded as the master of the house by birth, the daughter is left at the mercy of that master for her life. The more crucial aspect is that women have not been considered as equally competent to men although the constitution spells there is no discrimination based on sex. Imbalances between rights of men and women persist both in the legal provisions, particularly for property, and in the interpretation and application of the law. Even where legal provisions stand in favour of women, they often lack the resources, skills, and social support to ensure the enforcement of their legal rights (Bennett, 1981). Who is to blame for creating such situation of the female sex? Unless the constitution is changed the attitude towards women does not change and the position remains the same. In such a situation the programs that are aimed at empowering women, without changing their situation would just be a political propaganda rather a tool to benefit them.

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## CULTURAL DIMENSION OF PASTURE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT IN NEPAL: A STUDY OF GUMBA SYSTEM OF THE NORTHWEST DOLPA

Dhirendra B. Parajuli\*

Along the evolution of human civilization, the agro-pastoral societies have developed a diverse set of resource management ranging from simple to complex. This is mainly because of intimate and intricate knowledge of local physical and socio-cultural environment. The simple pastoralism is based on seasonal mobility of stocking herds towards high and low elevations in terms of seasons. In the same way, the complex pastoralism regulates the herds' movement by strict formal schedules, restriction on numbers and type of animals, reserving or deferring pastures, assigning members to particular pastures and controlling the amount of time spent in one pasture (Nimar:1995:245).

The agro-pastoralists of Nepal Himalayas including the Dolpo practice diverse set of natural resource management systems and to a large extent that differ from the practice of other parts of the World and the Nepal Himalayas as well. In the last few decades, the herders of North-west Dolpo have been adopting the complex system of pasture resource management. However, that is not modern and run in an indigenous ways. Being guided by the Bonpo philosophy, the system is functional only to the Gumba area managed by the Lamas which is typical

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in nature. Perhaps this system was first developed in the Tibetan plateau bordering to Nepal Himalayas and entered into the territory of Nepal Himalayas along the people's seasonal migration with the migratory herding. Over the periods and generations, among others, the systems of migratory herding and pasture resource utilization practices became the part of culture of the local people in Nepal Himalayas. This has been a constituent and identical part of socio-economic and cultural life of people with substantial inter-linkage to the resource use, livelihood and the environment as a whole.

The Gumba area, located within the Shey Phokshundo National Park (SPNP) area of the Dolpa district, is one of a few areas of Nepal where the local knowledge based indigenous systems of pasture resource management pattern is found being practiced by the people of Bonpo culture in the Pugmo village, especially under the Gumba system. Having cultural determinism in pasture resource management, the study of Gumba system of this area, among many others, possess high sociological and anthropological significance. Therefore, based on the primary data, this paper has aimed at highlighting on how is the status of the pastures and sub-pastures of the Gumba area and how the people of the Pugmo village under the local cultural context of the Gumba system have been locally managing the pasture resource with reference to migratory herding and local practices of medicinal plants harvesting.

### **Overview of the Study Area: Pugmo Village and the Gumba Area**

Pugmo village is the studied village, which is one of the major settlements of Phoksundo VDC within the SPNP. The village lies in the upper part of the lower Dolpa region at an elevation of 3000 m. It is located in a steep, narrow valley of the Pugmo river which runs from upper Pumphu watershed of north-west aspect to lower area of south-east aspect. Despite the steep slopes surrounding the village, the village area is flat enough and surrounded by a small area of terraced agricultural lands where one school and some monasteries are also present. The south-north facing landscape of Gumbadanda, located just across the

Pugmo river and opposite of the village is covered with the dense forests of different tree species; Pine, Juniper, Spruce, Birch etc. In the winter season, the domestic herds are grazed within the forest grounds, pasture lands and agricultural terraces located around the village. Pugmo peoples' daily needs of timber, firewood and others forest products are fulfilled from the patches of forests lying in the homestead area. The hours of sunlight are short in the valley due to the steep sides and the wind is heavy during the day (Mcknight: 1997:13).

The village includes four wards of the Phoksundo VDC and has a total of 30 households. Moreover, this village contains a total of 159 inhabitants with 73 male and 86 female. All the people of the village are of Tibetan origin and are the followers of the Bonpo religion<sup>1</sup>. This village is not inhabited throughout the year because the people migrate to Koiru village, a secondary village, which lies at an hour up from Pugmo village for about two months during the peak of winter season. Such seasonal migration is their adaptive strategy for protecting themselves from the severe cold. Furthermore, a few families stay in Punikha and Gumba villages throughout the year whereas at least two individuals or herdsmen of almost each family seasonally stay at Kunasa and Pumphu areas for about five months in a year while grazing their livestock in the summer.

The village or villagers' economy is largely dependent on agro-pastoralism. Almost all the people are small farmers who have less land and that is also less productive as being steep sloped terraces and stony soil composition. Thus more than 80% households are under food deficiency by their year round production and they are highly relying on the income derived from external sources: livestock raising and trans-Himalayan trade. The livestock raising is acknowledged as the backbone of their village economy that is based on high grazing practice on the pasturelands.

<sup>1</sup> Bonpo religion is the pre-buddhist religion of Tibet. After the spread of Buddhism in Tibet, it was incorporated under the Buddhism. The Pugmo people consider it as a separate religion (wing) and religious philosophy. At present, the Dalai Lama recognizes it as being one of the sects (parts) of the Buddhism.

The Gumba area is one of the major aspects is managed by the people of the Pugmo village and it lies in the western side of the village, just across the Pugmo river. It encompasses thousands of hectares of land within the Pugmo village management area<sup>2</sup> (PVMA) including the Kunasa summer pasture and Pumer and Punikha winter pasture areas where the Pugmo people seasonally graze their herds, in some areas cultivate crops, and harvest various pasture products (medicinal plants, firewood, forage, timber, etc.) for their daily resources need. This area was also clearly defined with a certain territory spreading from the Gumbadanda and Pugmo khola in the east, Sellathuan lek in the west, Jardum lek in the north and Bhupa lek (south back of Bankal and Talgera pastures) in the south. The Lamas have reported that in the past this territory of Gumba area was much larger than the whole PVMA. The territory could not be well-controlled and managed in the succeeding years of its demarcation and thus gradually lost.<sup>3</sup>

At present, in Gumbadanda, the focal point of the area, there are three Gumbas (monstries) named as: Youngdung-chhungmo, Tasheding, and Tshekchhing-rakkaling. Of these, the later one is communally owned and is the village Gumba

<sup>2</sup> The are which is traditionally demarcated by the Pugmo people for the pasture/forest and other natural resources use is referred here as the Pugmo village management area. It includes a wide range spreading from Sunduwa, Kuma, and Karbo pastures in the east, Kunasa valley (Kagmara lek, Sellathuan lek, Yambo Singlathuan Himals) in the west, upper Pumphu valley (white, black, and blue lakes), Perinakpo and Jousbatha pastures in the north and Bhupa lek in the South. Within this PVMA, the Gumba area is one aspect, smaller in size and located in the North-west sides.

<sup>3</sup> Previously, in the time of first *Lama*- Teton Sikyal Sangbo, the Gumba managed area was wide spread including the places; Tripurakot, Kaigoan, Jagdulla, Bagala, Medok la (way to Shey Gumba), Chhokarpo (inside Pumphu) and Suligad. At the time of 5th *Lama* Thungton Namgyal Scrap Gyaljan, this territory remained only areas; Phaparbari, Polam, Pungphu, Jaralung lek and Sellathuan lek. Similarly at his time, except for Gumba (present Gumba area), and Sunduwa all other areas were gradually lost. In the same way at the time of the great grand father of present *Lama* (Shree *Lama*) Sumduwa was lost and only the present village management area remained and the area was again separated as village management area and Gumba area along with the inception of Talukdari system in the Pugmo village area.

(monastery) and the former two are individually owned, therefore, are private Gumbas. But within the Gumba area, there are a total of 9 Gumbas situated in different places and ownership title. The Tabas, and nuns are rotated in each Gumbas for both educational and religious purposes where the Lamas provide different kinds of knowledge to them about the resources, environment and the Bonpo religious philosophy. Thus the area is known as a 'holy land' or 'Lama land' managed by the Lamas of Bonpo religion follower where killing of any domestic animals and wildlife species is considered as sinful and thus strictly prohibited. In this area, the Lamas with special involvement of local people operate year-round religious and educational activities. Besides, the Lamas have been controlling and maintaining the land and other natural resources: forests and pasture in this area over the generations.

### History of Pasture Resource Management Under in the Gumba Area

Nobody knows the antiquity of human settlement in the Pugmo area, as authentic historical studies are not available. The available facts reveal that the history of this area dates back 1000 years (Miller: 1993:a). Perhaps since that time or before the area might have been inhabited by the people belonging to Tibetan ethnicity. The Pugmo people particularly know that their ancestors of 10<sup>th</sup> generation back had lived in the area.<sup>4</sup> So the history of pasture resource management of this area can be associated with the history of settlement of the Lamas. The Lamas were not only religious heads and most knowledgeable people in the society but also dynamic agro-pastoralists and Trans-Himalayan traders. In course of that, they had traveled all accessible nooks and corners of the area and gained the precise knowledge of geo-physical structure, climate, resources and the local environment as a whole. On the other hand, the Lamas

<sup>4</sup> The name of late *Lama* lineage heads include: Teatton Sikyal Sambo, Tetton Chhewalg Chhuldin, Tetton Mollam Gyaljan, Tetton Namkha Gyaljan, Thungton Namgyal Scrap Gyaljan, Thengton Gekor Rinchhen Gyatjan, Thungton Serap Nyima, ...and Grand Father + Father of Shree *Lama* (present *Lama*).

under the Gumba system have been controlling and managing the land and other natural resources. Therefore, the pattern of pasture resources management is found attached with the history of Bonpo cultural development, pertaining knowledge of the Lamas and changing experiences of historical phases.

In this study the Gumba System of resources management has been taken here as the system of control and operational management of natural resources by the Lamas who reside in the Gumbadanda of Pugmo village. Perhaps this is the typical system common in the Phoksundo VDC and Nepal Himalaya, which is based on the philosophy of Bonpoism. Initially, the system was so simple that the Lamas used to control and manage the resource, collect the nominal royalty in the form of cash and kinds from the users of resources and fine from the encroachers of forest and agricultural-lands. They used the collected cash, grains, etc in the religious activities that used to take place in the Pugmo village. But later on, the Lama Tetton Molan Gyaljan (Lama of 3<sup>rd</sup> generation) had made the system more systematic with new arrangements of rules (Chapter: 3.4) and Lama hierarchic system with attributed responsibilities for the control and operational management of resources, which can be observed in the Table 1 given below:

Table 1: Lama Hierarchic System and Attributed Responsibilities to Each Hierarchy

SN	Lama Hierarchy	Status	Numbe	Major Responsibilities
1.	Chhabi Lama	Main Lama	One	The overall responsibilities of religious activities and control and operational management of land and other resources: forest and pasture.
2.	Lajung Lama	Assistant Lama	One	To assist main Lama in his tasks regarding the natural resource management and religion.
3.	Kerkha Lama	Junior Lama	One	To assist main Lama and assistant Lama in their tasks identified already.
4.	Tabas	(Beginner Students/A ssistants)	Many *	To assist all senior Lamas in religious and natural resources management activities.

Source: Field survey, June, 1998.

\* There were 16 Tabas in the Gumba area during the field study.

The hierarchic system revealed that the Lamas were the people having higher status in the community. Of them, the main Lama occupied the most respected position with higher responsibilities followed by the junior, assistant Lamas and Tabas. Such responsibilities and status were meaningfully attributed to the senior Lamas as they were the most educated and knowledgeable people as compared to other junior Lamas. The main Lama was primarily responsible for public health care, religious functions, public education, conflict resolution, public security, resource regulation and management, Gumba management, construction and repair of bridges and beaten tracks. Past experiences revealed that the Lamas performed their responsibilities in such an effective way that there were no complaints in their tasks, duties and decisions. However, in course of performing their responsibilities, Lamas used to control public land encroachment by people, firing in the forests and pasturelands, tree felling, haphazard rotation of herds in the seasonal grazing pasture, commercial pasture product harvesting, outsiders encroachment and wildlife poaching within their territory. Similarly, other Lamas and Tabas were generally responsible to assist main Lama while performing all the responsibilities. Apart from these, the assistant and junior Lamas had additional responsibilities of handling the whole natural resource control and management system and performing all other responsibilities of main Lama in his absence.

This system was not formal and officially attributed to them but was of local level, mainly based on the Lamas' pertaining knowledge guided by the Bonpo culture and past experiences. Thus, controlled from Gumbadanda monastery, this system was commonly effective in the very past in the Pugmo village and entire Pugmo village management area. However, along with the extension of Talukdari system and District Land Tax Office (Mal Adda) after 1911 A.D, this system became confined only in the Gumba area. Thereafter, local revenue

collection rights were transferred to the Mukhiya even in Gumba area (Phu, Punikha, Gumba and Kunasa agricultural lands).

Even after the establishment of SPNP, the park policy has guaranteed indigenous peoples' use rights on land, forest and pastures. But, only a few old traditions like Lamas' authority of granting permission for harvesting timber has shifted to the park authority. Similarly, timber product export to outside the park boundary was completely checked. However, all other regulations of old Gumba system are existed even today. Thus, the grazing and pasture product harvesting practices for household needs within the park area including the Gumba area are smoothly going on as previously.

### **Management Pattern of Pasture Resource Under the Gumba System**

The Indigenous system of rangeland or pastureland management includes various aspects or techniques such as rotational grazing, deferred grazing, plant and animal performance indicators, carrying capacity estimation and livestock number reduction, etc., which are also common in western (European) range management. But in the east (Asia), these aspects or techniques, however, are not adopted in the same way as they are in the west. In the context of Nepal, indigenous rangeland or pasture resource management system relies on common senses, habits and traditions developed by the resource users of preceding generations and handed to the subsequent generations (Parajuli, 1996: 25). In some areas, cultural and religious influences become more detrimental and more effective than the system or practices of any other areas. Keeping these things in mind, indigenous management system of pasture resources in Kunasa area that is mainly guided under the Gumba system of the Bonpo religious culture was examined with common senses, traditions, habits and practices which includes; status inventory, resource allocation, consumption

pattern, existing operational rules, decision making, labor mobilization and conflict resolution process.

### **Status of Gumba Area Pasture and Sub-Pastures**

Within the Gumba area, the Kunasa is the largest and major summer pasture that is seasonally utilized by the herders of the Pugmo village including the Punikha, Pumar and Gumba village. It is a typical pasture with agricultural land in the high altitude area. Historically, it was only the place where herds and herders used to reside in the plain ground in the night, in the temporary shelters but over the generations, with changing time and increasing demand for agricultural lands, the herdsmen not only constructed permanent houses of stone structure but also extended the flat area as the cropping land. At present, the name Kunasa is of great meaning as it describes both an area and a specific place. The specific place indicates the agricultural land and the settlement areas: Pandang and Lhaye including the nearby grazing grounds. Similarly, the Kunasa area indicates the collection of many pasturelands and their grazing units, adjoining forests, rocky slopes and snowing mountains in the upper Kunasa Khola watershed. However, the specific Kunasa place is not only the settlement area with agriculture land but also the central point of other neighboring pasturelands from where the rotational grazing and pasture harvesting activities are particularly operated. It is, therefore, the herdsmen who have classified the specific Kunasa place including nearby grazing units as the main pasture and other adjoining pasturelands with semi-permanent shelters as the sub-pastures. Based on their classification, in this study also, the status inventory information of Kunasa pasture and sub-pastures (Bankal, Talgera, Kungathang and Pangjauwa) of the Gumba area can be stated in a tabular form as follows:

Table 2 : Status of the Pastures, Sub-pastures and Grazing Units of the Gumba Area

Pastures & sub-pastures	EAH	Alt. Range	SD <sup>1</sup>	SD <sup>2</sup>	Category	Name of the grazing units
Kunasa Proper	75	3900-4100	5-10	W-E & N-S	Summer Pasture	Chemjungthang, Baijangthang, Rukduithang, Tsmjungthang, Pangdangthang, Lhai-thang, Pangjauwa ridge, Urjukthang, Ghoyour.
Kyungathang	100	4000-5000	5-15	W-E	Summer Pasture	Leju, Thendi, Rapka, Guttingtong, Uralba, Rugdui, Chhalchhap, Tsumik, Ngyabo-chhya, Ngyabo-choyne, Dhupuk-mumba, Dhupuk-taptap, Korbothang, Thalachusya, Behu, Sahuche, Ngingtong, Tsumik-ringmo.
Talgera	120	3900-4500	5-15	S-N	Summer Pasture	Chairi, Tharchang, Talgera proper, Talgera Lhai, Langdang, Thansam, Khogmochhe, Taktak-kogma, Taktak-hogma, Japantima-khasa, Kappataitong, Rugdi
Pangjauwa	250	4300-5000	5-15	N-S	Summer Pasture	Lama Chumik kogma, Lama Chumik hogma, Soitoriya, Ngingri, Baijangthang, Beritong, Ngingtong, Dharaksawa, Lhaitang, Pangjauwa proper, Pangjauwa Lhai, Madalthang, Penhri-chhemu, Yamahiulsa, Yujajang, Upper Ghoyur, Suibutong, Lower Ghoyur, Urjuk.
Bankal	130	3800-4500	5-15	S-N	Summer Pasture	Phusingtong-hogma, Phusingtong-kogma, Pangpho, Dhawopenhri, Uiri, Chhulung, Lhai-kogma, Lhai-hogma, Laundanda, Taksep, Buksep, Thangsep, Chhoijom-nyaltsa, Saun-kogma, Saunparma, Saun-hogma.
Punikha	100	3600-4300	10-20	N-S & W-E	Winter Pasture	Ghyamlung, Shugri Nyishar gomba, Pho gomba, Takpakogma, Sittihi, Pholtak.
Pumer	50	3500-4000	10-20	N-S	Winter Pasture	Sikyal penhri, Nilma suhsa, Settonh penhri, Dhangnak, Penhridhunh, Shukpajongong, Solajosa, Sittige, Dhonwabesa.

Source : Field survey, June 1998.

Note : EAH = Estimated Area in Hectare, Alt. = Altitude, SD<sup>1</sup> = Slope Degree, SD<sup>2</sup> = Slope Direction, W-E = West-East, E-W = East-West, S-N = South-North, N-S = North-South

As presented in the table above, the Kunasa pasture and its sub-pasture of Gumba area are located above 3500 m. and

spread to 5000 m. Almost all these pastures are of large size with more than 100 hectare grazing lands. On an average, the slope degree of the Goths residing parts of the pastures and sub-pastures range between 5-20 degree but adjoining grazing grounds are more sloped upto 60 degree. The slope direction is similar to that of other high altitude of Nepal that the pastures are S-N, N-S, E-W, and W-E faced. Each sub-pastures contain more than 10 grazing units which are the core livestock grazing areas named either culturally or on the basis of gro-physical structure of the pastures. Except for the winter pastures: Punikha and Pumer, all others are the aspects (sub-pastures) of the Kunasa summer pasture.

So far as the matter of grazing intensity and forage status of the Kunasa pasture and sub-pastures of the Gumba area is concerned, there is high grazing intensity in the main Kunasa pasture (Kunasa Proper) as the herds are grazed there intensively in June and October, the periods of entry and exit, respectively. But in other sub-pastures grazing is not so intensive and pastures' forage status is relatively good as the pastures are deferred more than 10 months each year and the herds do not remain and graze so intensively. These sub-pastures are rich for medicinally and commercially valuable plants like Bhultey, Yarshagumba, Sunpate, Katuko, etc. especially in the rocky slopes of the grazing units, so grazing movements of livestock is not much harmful for the regeneration and growth of these plants. Similarly, fodder grasses of different species are abundant in these sub-pastures, thus the carrying capacity of them is relatively high. These pastures and sub-pastures are utilized by the herders in various ways.

### Pasture Resource Utilization Pattern Within the Gumba Area

The utilization pattern of pasture resource is guided under its allocation practice, which includes both individual and communal modes. In individually owned lands of the Pumer,

Punikha, and the Kanasa areas individual resource allocation is present whereas in common pasture areas, the communal system of resource allocation is found. Accordingly, pastures resource utilization patterns is guided in this area which can be characterized as a complex set and that includes two major ways: rotational and deferred grazing, and pasture harvesting. This pattern differs from pasture to pasture and therefore is described here with reference to sub-pastures also.

### **Rotational and Deferred Grazing**

The livestock grazing is the most common mode of pasture resource consumption in the area. The livestock species such as yak, chauri, cattle, goats, horses, etc, are mainly raised under high altitude grazing system. The transhumance, this system includes grazing of livestock in the higher elevation during the summer season and grazing in the lower elevation during the winter season. Within the Gumba area, the Kunasa and its sub pastures are the summer pastures whereas cropping fields, forests and pastures of homestead areas of Pugmo, Pumer, Punikha, and Gumba villages are the winter pastures. Except the Pugmo villages all others are located within the Gumba area. Mainly, yak, chauri and cattle are the livestock species, grazed in the summer pastures whereas along with these livestock, goats and horses are included and grazed in the winter pastures. A total of 442 livestock of different species are raised by 27 households of these villages commonly known as the Pugmo herders. Only 3 households of these villages are do not have livestock -less. The herders of 21 households of the Kunasa group which utilizes the Gumba area pastures have 206 livestock of different species including yak, chauri, cattle, etc., representing 7.63 livestock per household. Over generations, for systematic and sustainable grazing in the summer pastures, the people of the Gumba area have been maintaining an unique systems of rotational and deferred grazing especially in the Kunasa summer pasture and its sub-pastures of the Gumba area

which can better be understood under different phases: first, second and third.

Shortly after the completion of 6-7 months' grazing practice in the winter pastures, the first phase of grazing in the summer pasture starts generally at the beginning of June. The cropping activities are almost completed at that time and the seasonal herders move to the Kunasa pasture areas with their herds and essential food materials. Under mutual understanding among the herdsman, the date to follow the route to Kunasa pasture is decided and they generally reach there on the same day. While grazing their livestock at the Kunasa, the households are again segmented into two groups known as Lhaye and Pangdang groups which are formed representing the upper and lower Kunasa settlements, respectively. Following their own areas, the herds are mainly grazed in the peripheral grazing units of the Kunasa pasture rather than in the cropping land as it is closed for livestock grazing until harvesting of cultivated crops (mustard, wheat, barely and potato) in October. The herds of Lhaye group are grazed on various grazing units; Mathllo-ghoyour, Lhayathang, Chhulungthang, Baijangthang and Panjauwaridge, located above the Kunasa agricultural land and the settlement area. Similarly, the herds of the Pangdang group are primarily grazed on other grazing units such as Chemjungthang, Pangdangthang, Tsumjungthang and Kulysathang located just below the settlement area. While grazing in Kunasa pasture, all other sub-pastures are generally closed or restricted for grazing during the month of June<sup>5</sup>. Before the departure to other sub-pastures in June, the herdsman and Lamas perform 'Kyulsa Puja' (worship) for the betterment of

<sup>5</sup> Such grazing restrictions on pasture and sub-pastures are general norms (but not so sharp) because there is the lack of safe boundary between the sub-pastures, the herds sometimes enter into the restricted territory. In occasional cases, there is no system of punishment to the herders but the herdsman are fined as rule breakers if they graze their livestock there intentionally ignoring their traditions.

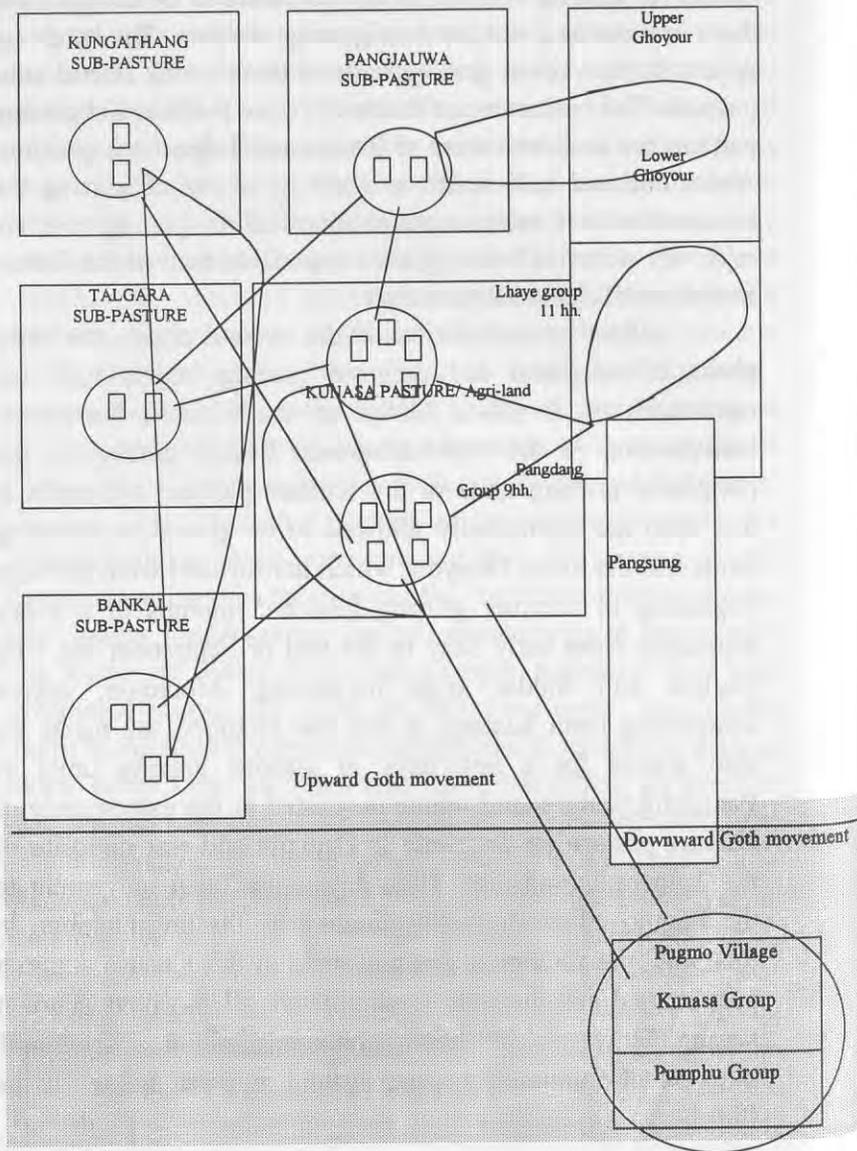
pasture land, climate, livestock and herdsman's health, social unity and against the evil eyes in these regards. Such division of grazing areas are divided into two groups and cultural association to the resources seem more scientific in terms of pasture resource allocation for livestock grazing and social cohesion. These traditions are not only systematic and sustainable but also represent the pertaining knowledge of pasture resource management in a conflict-less and religious ways. The livestock grazing time schedule is similar to that of other high altitude areas in Nepal's northern belt and is mainly during the daytime. In the morning, the livestock are chased outside in the peripheral grazing units and in the evening brought back to keep in the temporary sheds. In Kunasa pasture, livestock are grazed for about one month especially during June.

Similarly, the second phase of the rotational grazing in Kunasa area starts along with the movement of livestock Goths from Kunasa pasture to the sub-pastures, Bankal and Talgera, in the early July. Thereafter, Kunasa pasture and sub-pastures like Kungathang and Pangjauwa are restricted for grazing as the herds cannot remain there as per the traditional grazing norms. The groups formed earlier are still maintained and accordingly the herds are driven to the sub-pastures following their own traditional routes. The herds of 'Pangdang group' are directly taken to the Bankal sub-pasture and grazed in its various grazing units. In the same way, the herds of 'Lhaye group' are taken to the Talgera sub-pasture and grazed in its grazing units. The daytime grazing and the nighttime residing in the sheds is also common there. But, the period of stay of livestock Goths in these sub-pastures depends upon the carrying capacity of each. However, these two sub-pastures having similar area and carrying capacity can carry out the pressure of livestock grazing for about one month during July. Then one grazing cycle within sub-pastures - Bankal and Talgera is completed with the movement of livestock Goths to other neighboring sub-pastures; Kungathang and Pangjauwa.

When the herds reach Pangjauwa from Talgera and Kungathang from Bankal, another grazing cycle within sub-pasture level begins. Then, Talgera and Bankal sub-pastures are closed for grazing because all the herds are to be shifted from there in order to avoid the over-grazing problem. The herds are grazed in the various grazing units of these newly shifted sub-pastures. The herdsman and livestock reside in sheds and grazing patterns are similar to those of Bankal and Talgera sub-pastures. About one and half month is spent in course of grazing the livestock in these sub-pastures as almost all the grazing units are relatively richer in fodder grass composition than in the former Bankal and Talgera sub-pastures.

After the completion of the second phase, the third phase of rotational and deferred grazing begins with the movement of livestock Goths to the Kunasa homestead area/pasture, in the mid-September. Beside grazing in the peripheral grazing units of the Kunasa pasture, the herds at this time are additionally allowed to be grazed in cropping lands and the lower Ghoyour which is restricted from the very beginning of summer grazing (about 5 months in a year), especially from early May to the end of September for wild Garlick and fodder grass harvesting. Moreover, before descending from Kunasa, in the late October, the herds are also grazed for a few days in various grazing units of Pangsung pasture land which is located in the eastern side of Kunasa pasture on the route to Punikha and just opposite of the Talgera sub-pasture. Then downward Goth movement to the Pugmo village is made effective by the mid-October. In this way, the rotational grazing cycle in the Kunasa summer pasture and sub-pastures is completed till the next summer season. However, for better conceptualization a schematic diagram of rotational grazing system is given below in the Fig. 1.

**Figure 1: A Schematic Chart of Rotational Grazing System in Kunasa Pasture and Sub-pastures of the Gumba Area.**



### Pasture Harvesting

Unlike grazing the pasture harvesting is another way of pasture resource consumption, which is mainly concerned with various livestock and human needs including the healthcare. Collection of various pasture products: firewood, fodder grass, thatching materials, animal bedding and medicinal plants are some indicative ways of pasture harvesting. These ways also contain with their own methods, time period, significance, etc., and accordingly local Amchis and people of this area do both the harvesting. It is mainly based on the rules of the Bonpo culture (Section 3.4) and regulated as well as maintained by the Lamas under the Gumba system as a whole. A detailed view of the traditional cultural dimension on methods and ways of pasture consumption by harvesting the pasture products is given below.

### Medicinal Plant Harvesting

Medicinal plant collection from the high-elevated pastures is the most popular mode of pasture harvesting. It concerns both livestock as well as human health. Because modern health facilities are lacked in the village and people are dependent on medicinal plant based on treatment system. However, inside the park collection of medicinal plants for commercial purpose is prohibited. Since with the granted use rights of the resources for home consumption, the harvesting of medicinal plants from the pastures and sub-pastures is common even after the establishment of SPNP. The people and Amchis have their own knowledge and traditions of harvesting various medicinal plants from the different pasture lands; Kunasa, Bankal, Talgera, Kungathang, Pangjawa and others. They also know the medicinal properties of hundreds of plant species found in the area, out of them, Sunpate (*Rhododendron anthopogan*), Katuko (*Picrorhiza schrophulariiflora*), Bhultey (*Nardostachys grandiflora*) and Yartsagumbo (*Cordyceps sinensis*), are some medicinally and commercially valuable plant species. Mainly, there appears a good and varied distribution pattern of these plants in the summer pastures of this area including in Kunasa pasture and its sub-pastures. The general people often harvest the plant indiscriminately which is not a

sustainable way of harvesting. But this study reveals that Lamas/Amchis follow many sustainable ways of harvesting the medicinal plants and plant parts. They, sometimes, also guide general people about the rules and ways of sustainable medicinal plant harvesting which are based on the Tibetan calendar and medicinal texts.

Certain cultural processes regulate the harvesting time of various medicinal plants in this Lama managed area. The specific auspicious period is already determined according to the Tibetan medicinal text and calendar that is informed to the public by the Lamas. The 'Thanshing Richi' is the specific period of three days in which nutritional rainfall is believed to occur and then medicinal plants including fodder grasses are supposed to be well nourished by the rain-fed water. Thereafter, the medicinal efficiency of various plants is relatively higher than earlier and later periods or stages. Therefore, general people and Amchis of this area harvest medicinal plants only after the 'Thanshing Richi'. In this regard, it is to be noted that prior to the collection of medicinal plants, the Lamas perform a ritual, namely, 'Menlha Puja', which is made by two words; 'Men' (Medicine) and Lha (God). Etymologically, it means the Puja (worship) of the Medicine God (Buddha). The Lamas have also reported that in other areas of upper Dolpo like Bijer, Saldang, Karang, Birija, Komachhi, Namtor, Dho-Tharap, Chharka, Barpong, Kingdu and Tibetan pleatue, the local Amchis harvest medicinal herbs after the period of 'Thanshing Richi' and also perform the 'Menlha Puja'. Sometimes, Amchis also employ horses in harvesting the medicinal herbs, to maximize their activity during the peak maturity of the plants and plant parts. But this case is not applicable to all plants or plant parts which may be harvest far before or after the 'Thanshing Richi'.

The Pugmo people have their own harvesting techniques for various medicinal herbs. Generally, uprooting, cutting, picking, collecting, washing, drying (sunlight + shadow) and packing are the common techniques that have been adopted by the Pugmo people. If the roots of plants are medicinally valuable, uprooting is done when other parts; bark, seeds, fruit, flower, wood, leaves, etc., are needed; Collecting, cutting and picking

ways are generally adopted which differ in terms of species, plant parts, and time. However, for the better examination of the tradition of medicinal herbs harvesting, a detailed information about the harvesting ways of different plant parts, ways and time for each was obtained and is presented in the Table 3.

Table 3: Traditional Techniques and Ways of Medicinal Herbs Harvesting Pattern.

S.N	Plants/ Plant parts	Traditional ways of extraction for harvesting	Harvesting time(months)
1	Roots	<u>Uprooting</u> : From the area where the plants are dominant	Late Oct.
2	Wood	<u>Cutting</u> : From the trees in which branches are thick and the area where the trees are dominant	Jan.-Feb.
3	Bark	<u>Picking</u> : From the large & matured trees with good interval between each branches.	Mar.-Apr.
4	Leaves	<u>Picking</u> : From matured cluster of leaves with certain interval in each branches.	Early May
5	Fruit	<u>Picking</u> : From matured cluster of fruit with certain interval in each branches.	June and Oct.
6	Flowers	<u>Picking</u> : From the matured trees where are dominant (less than 50% of the total)	June-July
7	Seeds	<u>Collecting</u> : From trees in which matured seeds are seasonally available.	Sept.-Oct.

Source: Field survey, June, 1998

There are varieties of methods in drying the extracted medicinal plants or plant parts. Generally, the extracted herbs are washed and put in a clean place to dry. But the methods or ways of drying vary in terms of use category of the particular medicinal herbs. First of all, the collected medicinal herbs are identified and categorized as the herbs used in the cold and hot / temperature related disease or problems. If the herbs fall in the category of use for the cold related problems/diseases, are locally called as 'Tangba' and generally dried in sunlight. Similarly, if the herbs fall in the category of use for hot / temperature related problems/disease are locally called as 'Chhaba' and are dried in

shadow. The Lamas have also reported that outside these two categories of diseases or problems, the herbs are generally dried both in sunlight and shadow with certain alternatives. While drying in sunlight and shadow, a crucial attention is paid towards the ventilation need and the herbs are kept in a well-ventilated condition. And only then the herbs are packed or stored.

### Fodder Harvesting

The fodder harvesting includes both fodder grass and fodder leaves from the pastures and forests, respectively. This is the common mode of pasture harvesting concerned to the seasonal domestic livestock feeding practice. The pattern of fodder leaves harvesting is not so common here as the fodder trees are very nominal whereas the fodder grass harvesting is common but generally of small quantity and less intensive as the livestock raising system in this area is mostly based on grazing rather than stall feeding. The fodder grass harvesting is done to meet the needs of forage to feed the livestock during rainy days and intensive cropping days in the summer season. In general, a total of 5-10 Bhari (Weight of about 40 kg) fodder grass is harvested by each households. Lower Ghoyour, Purungchhang and Pangsung are the main pasture lands for fodder grass harvesting which are left ungrazed and restricted for immature fodder harvesting. Also in other sub-pastures; Talgera and Pangjauwa, fodder grass is harvested only from the steep slopes where fodder grass is abundant but the site is not accessible for livestock. The harvesting is done mainly on individual family basis but at the same date and time jointly announced by the Mukhiya and Lamas. Like medicinal plant harvesting, this practice is also generally held in late September or October, especially after the 'Thansing Richi' of the Tibetan calendar. Similar harvesting of fodder grass is done even in the cropping lands and pastures of Punikha, Gumba and Pugmo village areas in the season. However, the Hay making pattern of this area is traditional and not so systematic as the people have little knowledge and less interest about it.

### Fuel-wood and Timber Harvesting

The Kunasa area located above 4000 m, is basically the treeless zone but in some south-north faced slopes of Bankal, Talgera, Pangdang and Pangsung pasture lands a few patches of forests are existed. The timber and firewood are extracted from these patches of forests and further low elevated forests of Phu and Punikha monastery areas. Mainly, the tree shrub species like *Betula utilis*, *Rhododendron campanulatum*, *Cedrus deodara*, *Abies spectabilis*, *Pinus wallichiana*, *Salix* species., *Potentilla peduncularis*, *Juniperus squamata*, *J. indica* etc. are utilized for firewood needs. The collection of timber is not frequently done as the repairing and construction of houses and sheds is needed only after long periods of years. But firewood collection from the forests and bushes is quite frequent for daily needs. In different sub-pastures such firewood collection is done separately in each. Thus, the harvesting intensity is not in a particular area but remarkably scattered in different pasturelands. In this area, an approximate 30-40 Bhari (a bundle of 40 kg = 1 Bhari) of firewood is collected and stored by each family in the season. According to the Lamas, for construction purpose timber is obtained from dead trees that are either naturally dead or uprooted by landslide and snowstorm. The collection period is not specific but the herdsman collect these things along their arrival at Kunasa for cropping in the late May until their downward movement to the village in the mid-October. During this period, the time of collecting these things is not also tentative but largely depends upon their leisure while grazing the herds in the pasture and sub-pastures especially in the day time.

### Thatching Material Harvesting

The harvesting of thatching materials is done mainly for repairing and roofing the houses of Kunasa settlements and semi-permanent sheds of sub-pastures. The repairing of houses is not done yearly but the sheds are to be roofed yearly, therefore, thatching materials are mainly harvested for sheds roofing purposes. Under this harvesting pattern, primarily barks, leaves, and small timber are harvested before the rainy season, especially before the livestock Goths shift to sub-pastures by the

end of June. The barks and branches of *Betula utilis* are widely extracted for roofing the sheds from the adjoining patches of forests of the pasture and sub-pastures. The herdsmen who utilize the summer sub-pastures of Kunasa pasture mainly do this type of pasture harvesting. As the existent system of joint housing and roofing a shed by 4 -5 families, the need of thatching materials is naturally of small quantity and not intensive.

### Operational Rules of the Gumba System for Pasture Resource Management

The Lama Tetton Molan Gyaljan, known as the Lama of high knowledge regarding the landscapes, climate, biodiversity, natural resources and the environment as a whole, had made various rules and regulations for the better management of natural resources including the pasture resource. Over the generations, these rules have been in operation but not much modified since they are well adapted to such a geo-physical and climatic condition of the areas. During the field study these rules were not found in written form, but the Lama, and more elderly herders of the Pugmo village who seasonally graze their livestock in the Gumba area know the traditional rules of the Gumba system. According to them, most of the rules were existed even today which are transmitted from generations verbally. Some of the traditional rules enumerated by the Lamas and elder people are as follows.

1. To graze the herds only in the particular pasture areas and sub-pastures where the herdsmen have been grazing their herds over the generations.
2. Not to dig out the land in the communal pastures and sub-pastures if the herdsmen are not constructing temporary houses or sheds for shelter.
3. Not to extend the individual land areas in the communal pastures for agricultural purposes.
4. Not to set fire in the pasture lands in order to protect pasture products; forage, trees, medicinal and other various plant species and wildlife.

5. Not to whistle and cry loudly in the pasture and sub-pastures for not disturbing the wildlife.
6. Not to cultivate medicinal plants in the community owned pasture lands for the individual purposes.
7. Except for basic household need, various species of medicinal plants should not be harvested from the natural ecosystem and if they have to harvest the plants, areas where the plants are dominant should be selected.
8. The fodder trees and other palatable bushes if they are present in the community owned pastures are not to be cut down.
9. Not to cut down tree in the forest/pasture lands, during the restricted period that is from 15 March to 15 December, for the healthier germination and growth of plant species
10. For timber extraction, a formal permission is to be asked with the Lamas specifying the purpose, tree species, quantity needed and including the Raita (small piece of cloth that is religiously offered to the gods and Lamas) royalty for that<sup>6</sup>.
11. To worship trees with offering the food grains and Raita prior to fell the trees from forest pasture areas as to show cultural and religious respect to forest/pasture resources.
12. The Lamas should generally allow to cut-down the dead trees especially in the area where the specific species are dominant.
13. The Tabas are to be sent out for cross-checking, whether or not the applicants' are performing as per the permission.
14. To check and control the entrance and encroachment of outsiders within the Lama managed Gumba area, for livestock grazing and pasture products harvesting.

<sup>6</sup> Generally the royalty was pre-determined as Rs.1 for small trees and Rs.5 for large trees. Those who lacked cash money could deposit utensils for certain period (after paying the royalty utensils could be returned) and offer food grains instead of cash money. The fund created by such royalty collection, used to be spent in performing religious tasks in the Gumbas and other social services; beaten tracks and bridges construction and Gumba repairing etc.

15. The herders should create good understanding and cooperation among themselves while grazing the herds in the pastures and sub-pastures and using the resources.
16. To graze the livestock only as cross-out in the pastures and sub-pastures of the Goth moving routes such as Kunasa, Pangsung and Talgera.
17. The herdsmen should report to the Tabas and Lamas if any users whether insider or outsider violated the norms regarding the pasture resource management.
18. Grazing in the cropping and other pasturelands should be made effective only when the harvesting of crops is completed and restriction on pasturelands is opened.
19. To ask permission with the owner for resources use (Fodder, firewood, thatching materials etc.) in case of the resources are located in the private lands.
20. To determine the date of upward-downward and inward-outward movements of livestock Goths at the herdsmen level and at the appropriate time.
21. The harvesting of pasture products, fodder grass, tree fodder, medicinal plants, etc, are to be done only when the Lamas announce the date for public harvesting: that are especially after the 'Thanshing Richi' in the months of September.

Regarding the rules, the Lamas have informed that they can make new rules of control and maintaining the resources even today if they thought essential. For instance, since three years they made a new rule to restrict the 'Dama Ban' for grazing the herds between October-February for substantial regeneration of plant species, as there were signs of overgrazing. The rules mentioned above are primarily operational, regulative, and prohibitive types in nature. Presently even after the implementation of SPNP and end of the Talukdari system, most of the rules are existing and are maintained indigenously by the Lamas with the help of Mukhiya and people.

### **Decision-Making**

The decision making, within the communal pasture resource management system is one of the key aspects as it

affects the whole system both in short-run and long run. Keeping this fact in mind, the Pugmo herders carefully make decisions only in less effective issues to others or the system. If the issues are of communal types where to graze the herds, when to graze, when to enter and exit in a particular pasture area and sub-pasture, where from the pasture harvesting, when to perform Kulysa and Lamachhumik Pujas etc, the farmers see and wait for mutual and informed persons' decisions that are made in assembled group level. But on the contrary, if the issues are related to individual households such as; how much and which species of livestock to keep, where to live, which member goes for summer grazing, to whom to ask for help for the herds grazing etc, the farmers make decisions either individually or at household level.

The farmers have also reported that gender awareness and non-discrimination is remarkable in this area and therefore, the decisions are not made on the basis of gender. However, there are a few tasks generally identified for women like household chores, summer herding, fodder grass and firewood collection, helping Lamas while collecting the medicinal plants etc., and in such issues, the females themselves make the decisions. Similarly, in the tasks generally identified for men, such as shed making and repairing, thatching material collection, roofing, timber harvesting, cropping management, etc., The decisions are made by the males. If there is absence of household head in a particular family, the decisions about such issues are naturally made by the immediate elder persons and the gender discrimination is considered minor and often neglected. However, the role of Lamas and Mukhiya in overall decision-making in the village especially in common issues are considered significant. This is because they are expected to guide and help the people. Their advisory decisions are respectfully followed and obeyed by the people who think of them as the most knowledgeable people in the society. At present, the formation of Sisters' Group has empowered the women of Pugmo village. Thus, they have started to involve themselves in decision making process in the communal and social issues getting ahead of household and family level.

## Labor Mobilization

The labor mobilization for the tasks related to the pasture resource management is generally based on the leisure, capacity and knowledge of the individual members of a given family or the community as well. In this area, the division of labor is less defined in terms of gender in a family. So the free members from the farming, income generating activities and household chores are drafted to do pasture related tasks. But those individuals of specific skill and knowledge like shed makers, medicine maker Amchis etc., are particularly expected to contribute their labor and knowledge to the wellbeing of families and society. Besides, the labor mobilization pattern can be characterized in terms of seasons and levels that are; summer grazing management and pasture harvesting. The summer grazing management related tasks are the routine tasks so in it regular type of labor is mobilized. The females especially girls, at least one person from each livestock owned households are usually mobilized to the Kunasa summer pasture area. In question why they primarily mobilize female manpower? Their natural answers were; the area is safe geographically, Holy Land regularly guarded by Lamas and Tabas, and also because of the lack of male manpower being involved in Trans-Himalayan trade. However, one or two males among from the herders remain there for the assistance to the females.

In the same way, for pasture harvesting in the summer pastures, the labor use pattern is different, as the Lamas are mainly involved as informed persons. The women remain in the high elevated Kunasa pasture for grazing their livestock in the summer season, assist the Lamas in their harvesting activities. Such labor mobilization is not their routine work but are seasonally needed in the summer months and therefore, is always intensively required for few days with 10-15 hours time spent in a day. Notably, the trends of employing hired labor for such tasks or activities were not found in the study area. But cooperative labor use is commonly asked with relatives and neighboring herdsman if a particular family has less manpower supply. This system of labor mobilization is typically done on voluntary basis but in return substantial foods like flour of

wheat, potatoes etc., are provided as the gift to the herders by the livestock owners.

## Conflict Resolution

Under the control of Lamas, within the Gumba area, there appears good cooperation and understanding among the Pugmo herders hence pasture consumption and management related activities are running smoothly. Even so, the area is not free from disputes and conflicts regarding the pasture resource management because in the past, people have experienced some disputes and conflicts. Primarily, the conflicts or disputes have occurred there either by the outsiders' intervention into the Pugmo territory or pasture consumption and management related issues: grazing, harvesting, rule breaching etc. As per their traditions and knowledge, the problems were resolved with the mutual role of Lamas, Mukhiya, Tabas, Toremas and people. With the changing issues or problems the resolution measures or processes were refined and modified over the generations which have been their traditional norms and values by which aroused conflicts are resolved at present also.

The internal process of disputes or conflicts resolution regarding the pasture resource management in this area is quite systematic even in absence of formal institution. As in well-developed institutions, hierarchic power structure and step wise process are adopted for the conflict resolution. Generally, the disputes occurred at individual as well as user group levels are amicably negotiated among the herdsman themselves. If negotiations do not materialize or the people are unable to settle the cases themselves that is referred to the Lamas of Gumba, Pugmo village, for the final resolution. The then Lamas in consultation with the Tabas, Mukhiya and concerned herdsman, examine the case with blaming and claiming issues and solve the case at the assembled group level with certain naming. While setting the case, the Lamas base their decisions under the rules made by their ancestors regarding the natural resources management. As a result, the real offender is either excused or

fined as per the nature and severity of crime<sup>7</sup>. In this regard, it is to be noted that if the main Lama is absent in the village, busy in religious functions and other tasks, the conflicts are resolved in the mutual leadership of the Assistant Lama, Junior Lama and Mukhiya, by adopting the same process. But the resolution process in case of outsiders' intervention within their territory is a bit different that generally, all people including Lamas and Mukhiya protest against the intervention, dialogue with the encroachers and maintain understanding. The Lamas have reported that previously in the Rana regime few influential persons of Tripurakot and Mustang had entered within the Gumba territory for wildlife poaching but they were returned back without doing such activities because the Lamas and locals showed their traditional rules against poaching the wildlife there. Similarly, the Saldang herders were chased with their herds while entered there for grazing their livestock into the territory. However, even after the inception of SPNP, the park authority has not experienced the violation of park regulations by the Pugmo people and therefore, no action against violation were recorded.

### Conclusions

This study area has a traditional religious organization for control and maintaining of natural resources which is known as the Gumba system. The system is existent with its operational rules and the control system of Lama hierarchic structure. Being guided by the Bonpo religious philosophy and having cultural associations with the landscapes, forests, pastures, and other plant resources, the people utilize the natural resources including the pastures resource under the cultural and religious contexts: permission, respect and limitations. Therefore, the studied Gumba system of pasture resource management of this area is largely effective. So there is not an urgency of formal

<sup>7</sup> Generally fine is levied; Rs.100 for both insiders and outsiders in general cases, where whereas in repeated cases the amount is doubled (Rs. 200). Similarly, in severe cases; such as firing, fire felling the trees hunting by outsiders and other rule breaching etc., fine is levied 500 Rs. for initial cases and in repeated cases, the fine is doubled (1000 Rs.) and so on.

organization like the users committee. But the study area being located within the SPNP area the park has been implementing its rules, restrictions and development programs and thus, in the future the park might make further intervention and the existing religious and cultural sets of norms, values, rules and regulations might be disturbed. Consequently, there may be a situation of park and people conflict. To avoid the possible tension situation and give continuity to the effective Gumba system of pasture resource management a special consideration in preserving its traditional norms, values and philosophy should be made for successful achievements. On the other hand, the Gumba system and its rules of rotational and deferred livestock grazing with specific herder's groups and specified access of each group in the pastures, and Amchis' knowledge and cultural dimension of medicinal plants harvesting are systematic and sustainable from equitable resource allocation and utilization perspectives. Thus these patterns of grazing should be maintained. Such a system is not only unreported before but also unique example of cultural dimension of pasture resource management in Nepalese as well as world's context. Therefore, the system and rules are to be regarded while making any management plans for this area and brought to the knowledge of the conservationists and the general people by the media for illustrative overview.

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## EMERGING METHODS IN RESEARCH PARTICIPATION AND EMPOWERMENT PROCESSES IN NEPAL

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### Introduction

This paper is divided into two discussions. Firstly, it traces the development of participatory processes and policy in Nepal's development evolution over the past 40 years. Secondly, it examines, briefly, the developments in international social research and emerging knowledge on the subject of participation and empowerment concepts that may influence the direction of social research in Nepal.

### The Emergence of Participation in Nepal

At the time of Nepal's emergence onto the global scene, over 93% of its population earned its livelihood from the land. The new rulers, after 1951, were eager to project themselves as the champion of the poor, the downtrodden and the oppressed (Lohani, 1978) and discussion of "democracy" abounded. Struggling to develop a comprehensive development plan, it was clear that most effort had to focus on rural and agricultural development programmes. However, by 1979, a study on Nepal's agrarian problems described the strategies and programmes for their solution as "merely a survival strategy" (Blaikie, M, Cameron, J & Seddon, D., 1979). Clearly, the efforts of the state were not directly manifest in field practice. Generally, there was acceptance in Nepal's academic and government community that rural development efforts

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(principally through RD and IRD approaches) had failed to show positive results (UN, 1990). Large influx of monetary support and development assistance realized success in isolated pockets but there was no “breakthrough”. For the first two decades in Nepal’s development programme, therefore, something was clearly missing.

The investigation into Nepal’s basic needs strategy, by Integrated Development Systems/Nepal at Tribhuvan University suggested that programmes must aim to provide the deprived and poor with the means to escape from their deprivation and poverty...through their own involvement in the process of development...and control over the conditions under which deprivation and poverty are generated (Integrated Development Studies, 1985). The authors were not only pointing out the deficiency in Nepal’s development programme (there being, until recently, very little tradition or history of planning in Nepal, before 1951 – Shrestha, 1989) but were also pointing a finger at the limited commitment of the Nepal government to this type of approach (Blaike et al., op cit:25).

Blaikie et al., centred on Marxist dependency theory in an effort to point out the exploitation of the peripheral regions of Nepal by Kathmandu, asking the question, “will the centre permit villagers to enter into the development process (Ibid, 1979:42). Shepherd (1982) raised similar questions and pointed out the principal failure of participation as the absence of rapport and understanding between local people and the officials in government. While the rhetoric was relatively new, the notion of “participation” has not been a recent phenomenon in Nepal; although it has been manifested in varying ways. Nepal’s planning era began in 1956 and has had 8 planning periods of 5 years that have emphasised rural development, local development and participatory planning, to varying degrees. It is helpful to look at the early evolution of participatory planning and policy in Nepal, between 1956 and 1980 (looking specifically at the 5-year plans) and then the changes between 1980 and the present, which paved the way to Nepal’s modern practice of democratic and decentralized development policy.

## Policy Change

Some of the critical paths taken in participatory methods and policy, strode hand-in-hand with both academic development around the world and current political and academic trends in Nepal, itself. These developments were particularly evident through the first 5 development plans undertaken in the Kingdom. As early as Nepal’s first development plan (1956/61), there was also the first official statement that separated “village development” from a macro development strategy for the country as a whole and emphasised the active involvement and cooperation of the people in rural development. Rural development (RD) plans were set into motion and co-operatives were, in particular, stressed as important to the RD objectives. However, the achievement of the first plan was considered very poor, viewed as ambitious and with no clear objectives and policy (Pokharel, 1980). Pokharel referred to the plan as an “arm-chair plan,” with no facts and figures and no field research to evaluate progress. By the second plan (1961/65), a radical political change had occurred in the country. The King had assumed all political powers and dissolved the parliamentary constitution. It was at this point that the Panchayat system was introduced together with a greater degree of control of organizations and institutions throughout the country. Rural development ceased to be treated as a separate entity and was, instead, considered synonymous with agricultural development. In essence, this shifted the emphasis from a programme-oriented area approach to the sectoral approach of rural development. People’s participation was again on the agenda, although tightly controlled by the government. The village panchayats, heavily politicized, were the local institutions available for local people, acting as the political and developmental unit at the grassroots level. In 1962 the constitution had specifically supported “participation”, stating that “development of the country is possible only...with the active co-operation of the whole people, and embodying the principles of de-centralization” (Shrestha, 1981:172). The constitution sought, in theory, to “make the general public vigilant and conscious through gradual de-centralization and to

provide for maximum participation in the economic uplifting of the country (Joshi, 1983:85).

The Third Five Year Plan (1965/70:273) focussed the notion of "people" even more clearly. It stated that, "all citizens may have equal opportunities and facilities to develop their personality and to enhance their economic progress." The Panchayat system was maintained as the best vehicle for people to achieve this goal and necessary for the political, social and economic growth of the nation (Pokharel, 1980). Rural development again took a side-line to the overall plan, making reference only to "regional development" (no doubt a pre-requisite for rural development), "boosting food production in the Terai", "horticulture in the hills" and "animal husbandry" in the mountains. The Panchayats were entrusted to conduct local development throughout the nation.

It was, perhaps, during the Fourth Five Year Plan (1970/75), that the most serious changes in rural development and people's participation occurred. It was during this period that one of the first Integrated Rural Development (IRD) programmes was introduced in the form of the "Jiri Multipurpose Development Project.: a package of inputs to improve the economic and social life of the rural poor (Lohani, 1980:4<sup>th</sup> Plan:263). The fourth plan placed high emphasis on regional planning without specific reference to rural development. It mentioned people's participation in the policy section, stating that "attempts will be made to get the panchayats of various levels involved more effectively in the process both for plan formulation and implementation, in order to make the participation of the people in the local development work more active and dynamic (4<sup>th</sup> Plan:254).

The Fifth Plan (1976/80) was aimed at utilizing human resources, placing renewed emphasis on people's participation and calling for the involvement of the local people in development projects (controlled and conducted by the local panchayats) However, in the absence of a well-defined institutional framework to enlist the participation of the beneficiaries, the various rural development efforts did not

successfully achieve the desired results (UN, 1990:19; Joshi, 1980, in *Rising Nepal Newspaper*). Since 1976, several IRDP's had been implemented across the country, leading to increased involvement of people in infrastructural projects, skills training programmes, distribution and experimentation. However, by 1985/86, the National Planning Commission (NPC) indicated that 43% of rural poor were still below the poverty line and malnutrition remained a serious problem. The principal reasons for the failure of IRDPs was (a) the government did not allow the panchayats to determine local priorities, (b) beneficiaries were not aware of target activities, (c) while de-centralization supported local institutions (in theory), the policies and priorities and budget were determined at the centre and dictated, (d) poor completion of technical projects, chosen by the poor, created a suspicion in rural communities that the government was ignoring their demands and (e) the benefits of development were being exploited by the powerful (particularly those involved with the panchayat institutions (UN, 1990). The basic premise, therefore, was that while participation was growing in the official rhetoric, there was no real chance of seeking full participation in the present political climate of the country. In particular, low-caste farmers were reticent to antagonize high-caste farmers. While the government spoke of closer cooperation between the panchayats and local people, insufficient power was given to them and what little power they had, they tended to wield over the poor rather than facilitate improvements for them (Gautam, 1987).

Until the end of the Fifth plan (1980), several key policies had been implemented, despite their apparent deficiency is addressing the key issues related to local development and participation. These were: the Local Administration Act of 1966, the District Administrative Plan of 1974 and the Integrated Panchayat Development Design of 1978. The latter defined "rural development" under the auspices of "Panchayat Development" (Shrestha, 1981), and emphasised popular participation and exploitation of local resources. This was the first policy implementation which laid out the objective of participatory involvement in development affairs and a new

position of Local Development Officer (LDO) was created to facilitate development at the grassroots level. However, at this time, the government was reluctant to concede de-centralization as a means to the purpose of local development (Poudyal, 1987). It was not until the De-centralization Act of 1982 that the two notions were pulled together into a singular policy initiative (Ibid., 1987:16). The Act aimed to ensure participation in development initiatives and to maintain and improve capabilities for the institutionalization of development activities (Poudyal, 1991). However, that is not to imply that participatory activities did not exist before the De-Centralization Act. Indeed, case-studies can be found in the literature concerning various hill irrigation projects which involved farmers in the development, operation and maintenance of irrigation systems (See, Martin & Yoder, 1983: Case-studies "Thulo-Khola" Irrigation System, *Halung* and others; Integrated Development Systems/Nepal, 1986). It was not until the de-centralization act, however, that the government recognized that people's participation was both a method and an objective (means and end) of rural development programmes in Nepal and that it can be facilitated through a policy of de-centralization (Shrestha, 1981:171).

### **Academic Rhetoric – The Local Reaction**

Increased activity by Nepal academics was also indicative of the country's recent emergence into the global community and modern development practice. The poor use of field research and practical study was a hinderance to government policy as there was little local, academic resources upon which to draw. As late as the mid-1970's, sociological research in Nepal was often described as "patchy and sketchy" (Bista, 1972). Speaking at a conference in 1973, Bista remarked that up to the mid-1970's, anthropology was totally unknown and few empirical works had been done. In addition, local studies had tended to focus on central and Eastern Nepal, leaving the greater part of the Western Region largely unknown and unexplored (Furer-Haimendorf, 1973). While geography and topography played a role in this selection, some Nepali scholars (Bista, 1973; Shrestha, 1971; Mishra, 1984) suggested that there

was also influence due to inherent biases between groups in Nepal, which often inhibited Nepali scholars (most of whom were High caste) from studying in communities that constituted predominantly low caste groups. The 1973 conference conceded that there was, at that time, more benefit to be attained from foreign researchers transcending cultural and traditional norms and carrying out this type of scholastic work. However, such research did not get underway until well into the late 60's and early 70's and even then, Nepali researchers complained that the results of the research were often taken away from the country and provided very little feed-back or useful data that may have been applied to policy or implementation initiatives (Thapa, 1973). In addition, foreign research brought its own interpretations and biases to Nepal.

### **Academic Rhetoric – The Foreign Reaction**

The claims of neo-classical economists that they could theoretically demonstrate efficiency, equity and stability outcomes from the operation of market forces, were central to the 1980's practice of the IMF globally, and more importantly for Nepal, the World Bank and many bilateral official development agencies (Cameron, 1994; Lipton, 1987) played key roles. The Nepali state was primarily seen as a problem to, not an agent of development. Intervention by the Nepalese state in restricting the operation of free market forces (some neo-classical economists suggested) was arguably the primary obstacle to the Nepalese people finding their natural position in the global economy. However, limitations on the neo-liberalism of the late 80's revolved around the replacement of the non-measurable goals such as quality of life and human development. These goals were consigned to the subjective judgement, not accessible for policy consideration (Cameron, 1994). These limitations are discussed extensively by O'Connor (1987), Blaikie, Cameron and Seddon (1979), Higgins (1987) and Sen (1987). The popular struggles in the 1980's and early 1990's, therefore, brought a sense of opportunity and optimism to the post-modernists. The alternative approach, arising in global and local forms, expressed dissatisfaction with the methodologies and

epistemological framework of earlier debates. Fragmentation, as an approach to social reality in the 1990's, was celebrated, rather than the previous totality theories (Cameron, 1994:78). This approach essentially set the stage for theoretical debate and practice on "specific issues, localised experiences, cultural dimension and power relations (Cameron, 1985).

Nepal has certainly felt the pressure and has experienced the change of shifting international fashions in development theory over the past 20 years. Cameron (*Ibid.*) describes these changes as altering the "development focus", giving a new image to Nepal. The progress through the early 1980's, he states, has been more "sound and fury" than particularly useful. However, the changes in Nepal's political and social environment since the mid-80's is significant and its impact on the role of people in their own development is equally impressive.

### **Policy Meets Rhetoric**

Under the new system of de-centralization, from 1982, participation in Nepal began to be recognized as an active process, meaning that the groups in question could "take initiatives or assert their autonomy to do so" (Rahman, 1981:3). Both the academic world and policy makers were becoming more vigilant about participatory rhetoric in the 1980's and a number of local studies began addressing the deficiencies in people's participation, despite the wide-sweeping reforms, and also suggested remedies (Lohani, 1980; Pokharel, 1980; Joshi, 1983; Gautam, 1987; Shrestha, 1981). By 1984, it was becoming apparent to foreign and Nepali academics and officials, that participation was a process that accelerated if the poor become conscious of their rights and privileges and could build up faith and confidence in themselves. Integrated Development Systems/Nepal, 1985; Shrestha, 1989). In other words, success would be based on democracy and de-centralization of power (Malhotra, 1990). By the end of the 1980's period, the literature on Nepal reflected that for development to be self-sustaining, initiatives in rural development must come from within the communities (*Ibid.*, 1990:10). However, until democracy, in 1990, there was little

institutional support to nurture the process that had struggled to emerge through the last 15 years of development efforts in the country.

Hobley (1996) indicates that practical experience in the forestry sector of Nepal shows the close relationship between the emergence of democracy as a form of governance and the growing demand for its application to the management of forest resources (see also, Lohani, 1978). She goes on to state that "forestry" is significant in illustrating the 3 major trends in Nepal which have led to true and equitable participation. First, there was systematic alienation of the general population. Second, the environmental degradation became extremely severe and led the government to exclude people and implement strict protectionist and nationalization policies (Hobley, 1996; *Op. Cit.*, 1978:146). Thirdly, lack of control over the resources and an inability to resolve the environmental problems under the centrally controlled regime, led to an accommodation between the state and the people (see also, Bartlett, 1991 and Ingles & Gilmour, 1989). In short, participatory programmes would involve the people and yet allow a level of government involvement in the process. This final stage, leading to participatory involvement, is characterized by (a) an assertion of people's rights, (b) institutionalized expression of these rights and (c) a challenge to the current development paradigm, where demand for rights is a pursuit of power but linked to responsible land use. This was also pointed out by Dunsmore (1988), concerning mountain environmental management in the Arun River Basin of Nepal.

In a wider context, throughout the 1970's, however, concern was raised over finite global resource availability and notably non-renewable energy sources after a sharp rise in oil prices. The prioritisation of the ecological dimension also promoted examination of value systems and thus, the cultural dimension of development (Cameron, 1994:76). According to Cameron, these concerns altered the agenda for North-South discussion on development as well as for national development strategies, notably for Nepal which scored high on all the ecological vulnerability indices. Project documents outlined the need for participation, user-groups and local institutions, for

successful environmental management and sustainable production. However, the success of the institutions in Nepal now depends on equitable, participatory relationships, which can only be sustained in a democratic and responsive political environment. Beneficiaries, it is recognized and accepted by the government, should be involved in the decision-making process. This was stated as a major cause of failure in the "Swayambhu Area Development Project in 1986 (Malla & Rajbhandari, 1986). Despite the massive infusion of foreign aid, it became accepted that this aid would not result in development unless the individual farmer decided that it would (Miller, 1990). In essence, therefore, King Mahendra's speech in December of 1981 was being put into action; decision-making should be given to the "lowest units of our social structure".

### Recent Trends

With the introduction of a democratic constitution and constitutional monarchy in 1990, parliament passed the "laws of local governance". In May 1992, democratic multi-party elections were held for local authorities and 45,000 persons were directly elected to village and town councils throughout the nation. Since that time, the process has continued to strengthen and develop with the support of the government and financial backing of many development agencies, giving the mass of people the opportunity to make locally-based decisions concerning development matters. There appears to be a general acceptance in the government for the principle of "voice" and "choice", as operational norms. Voice referring to the right to criticize the government's handling of development design and implementation. Choice referring to the liberalization of development, providing people with alternative options to choose external assistance as well as to implement projects (e.g. government or non-government sources of assistance).

The official justification for decentralization in Nepal has been to increase local participation in planning and implementing development strategies, to mobilize local resources and to increase accountability of officials to citizens. The phrase commonly used in agency project (Tanner, 2001)

documents is a variation on the theme of "empowering" local people by enabling their right to participate freely in decision-making processes. Officially, this is accomplished through the delegation of power to local administrative agencies. However, due to weak cooperation among ministries at the national level, local rural development policies are often undermined and local participation, according to Beinen *et al.* (1990) is still participation controlled by the higher levels of authority.

The devolution of power to local authorities is strongly supported at the present time. Under the country's eighth plan (HMG 8th Plan, 1992-97: 652), the government recognizes that a centralized approach to development planning has not been effective and is not the best way to achieve economic development in Nepal. Instead, HMG has outlined very clearly that the public should be mobilized for participation and be allowed to implement programmes at their own pace; including opportunities for decision-making. "The local people themselves need to be involved more actively both at the planning and execution level" (op cit.:575). Through a strategy of delegating authority to popularly mandated village and district authorities, the government hopes to (1) promote sustainable economic growth, (2) alleviate poverty and, (3) obtain regional balance. The main activity is to implement a sustainable and participatory approach to rural development encompassing "economic, political/governmental, social, cultural/religious, and educational dimensions". In HMGs 8th Plan (op cit: 579), the fifth objective for local development is:

"To create a base for sustainable development by maximizing peoples' participation in rural development works."

The districts that have the support of agencies like UNDP, have been institutionalizing a participatory and multi-sectorial oriented planning and monitoring system for management of district development (e.g. Management Information Systems and Geographic Information Systems). The apparent success in these districts has been reflected in the promotion of improved information sharing from the local level up to the national level. The planning approach has created an environment for better coordination of sectoral efforts and resource management in

which (a) needs are identified by the communities themselves (through local institutions, preferably) and, (b) projects are selected through a process of prioritization. These activities are coordinated by the DDC in collaboration with the sectoral agencies. One of the first of-springs of this plan was manifested in the "Build-Your-Own-Village" campaign, introduced in 1995 with a budget of three million Nepalese Rupees (USD 53,571) per annum to each VDC. The purpose of this programme was to (1) reduce the dependency of the VDC development process from the "central-oriented" control of the DDCs, (2) provide moral support for more effective participation of the VDCs in the deliberations of the District Council (3) enhance local level decision-making, (4) use local skills and resources and (5) bring about a much needed awareness that the people should take a lead in their own development. Ideally, this budget was not "tied" and VDC committees could use it in any manner without the consent of higher bodies. Although the amount of funds allocated may not be sufficient to make substantial improvements in entire VDCs, it does create a psychological "perception" of control within the VDC development regions. While we will not discuss the positive or negative sides of this scheme, it is important to note that this "perception," perhaps, has contributed the most to empowerment of these regions. In addition, small projects and rehabilitation schemes could be undertaken without the bureaucratic requirements associated with most development initiatives.

Since the beginning of the 1990's, the focus of community development and social work literature has shifted to the individual as "subject" of investigation. Nepal has been no exception to this trend. Pokharel (1980) and Manandhar (1992) had argued that the "outside view of villagers is different from the inside view of themselves", Shrestha (1989) discussed the need for giving a "voice" to individuals, Pokharel (1980) introduced the concepts of "faith", "confidence" and "effectiveness" building in order to solve local problems and Miller (1990) discussed the importance of understanding the process of decision-making for "heads of households" in order to grasp the roots of decision-making within an individual's and

household's life-space.<sup>1</sup> Integrated Development Systems/Nepal (1985:4) published an article which called for studies in Nepal that "seek to complement the de-centralized efforts and to raise people's awareness of opportunities," describing consciousness as a "function of action."<sup>2</sup> Manandhar (1992:35) went further to explicitly state that the main task of development in Nepal must be to "nurture the individual," encouraging involvement and participation. The individual, he states, should be at the "centre."

Manandhar's philosophy on the individual stemmed from the early rhetoric of Mahatma Gandhi, which had great influence over much of the Hindu populations. Gandhi argued in favour of self-reliance, through peaceful activism. His ideas, in particular, targeted the "individual" and his "community." The development of India, he said, was supported by the development of thousands of small villages across India. To govern the individual, is to govern the community, is to govern the region, which is to govern the state (in, Manandhar, 1992:35). However, Gandhi was similarly influenced by the even earlier movement of *Swaraj*, which was based on the premise of beginning with the "individual" and moving to the "state." To this end, some academics within the newly democratic environment of Nepal, have initiated studies which examine "attitudes", "priorities" and "perceptions" of individuals in village communities. In addition, there has been an obvious shift in the changing roles of technical expertise from outside and in Nepali experts and, in the methods employed to conduct field research. Findings indicate (Chambers, 1991) that rural people can manifest greater analytical capabilities and can effect positive developmental change. The technology now most needed is "methodological" – to change personal attitudes, demeanor and methods. There is a wealth of literature on this subject, furthering the notion that the individual stands firmly at the centre of development policy and initiatives.

<sup>1</sup> The latter work is a somewhat earlier version of Friedman's (1992) discussion of household economies and empowerment structures.

## Future Directions

It could be said that the advent of capitalism and modernity replaced all structures that were based on "subjective," or "irrational," elements, with "objective" and "rational" science (Vandergeest & Buttel, 1988). However, this view is changing in both rhetoric and practice. Many schools of thought have firmly centred on the methodology of the "individual" as the object of social inquiry. Weber stated that it was only the individual who could be studied "meaningfully". This is evident in his method called *Verstehen* (Parkin, 1982). The premise of *Verstehen*, which centres around social actors who are faced with choices, was proposed as a means of understanding historical events through the eyes of the actors in an empathic manner. In this way, the researcher identifies why certain paths are followed based on a reconstruction of situational choices and constraints that face individuals (see also Friedman, 1995). The decisions that are taken are based on the actor's perceptions that are weighed and assessed as the research progresses. In "profit-maximization", there is both a behavioural content (motivation of the household) and technical- economic content (farm economic performances as a business enterprise). However, the former is usually only inferred through investigation of the latter (Ellis, 1988:64).

Parkin (1982) points out that Weber's *Verstehen* proceeded from the principle that people are generally aware of their perceptions and subjective thoughts. If these perceptions are truly integral to social conduct, then, as Parker asserts, they must be accepted as "givens" in their own right (Berger and Luckman, 1966, describe them as "social facts"). This does not appear to leave room for Marx's concept of a false consciousness. Marx stated that true perceptions and meanings are largely congruent with an individual's class interests but that due to the intrusion of the bourgeois ideology, the average individual's perceptions tend to be quite faulty. Thus, viewing reality through the actor, in the way posited by Weber, would provide a false or twisted version of that reality.

Durkheim differs from Weber (as does Marx) in that he emphasizes the need to study the collective. He states that studying the individual motives and perceptions, as principal objects of inquiry, would be to forfeit everything of sociological interest (Parkin, 1982). Weber, in contrast, feels that it is the role of social science to penetrate the subjective understandings of the individual, to get at the motives for social action. Collectives, he feels, must be treated solely as the resultants and modes of organization of the particular acts of individual persons. To put it more simply, the process might be compared to a chemical reaction in which one party views the resultant compound as important in itself, while the other party examines the importance of the ingredient elements.

## The New Sociology of Knowledge - Methods in Research

Lewin (1946) recognized, 50 years ago, a need for a novel approach to research in the social sciences which would simultaneously solve problems and generate new knowledge. These ideas have helped initiate the new field of applied social psychology, action research and more recently, participatory research; which now play an important role in helping us to define social issues (Yeich and Levine, 1992) and which appear to take issue with the traditionalist school of development theory. This approach to sociological research emerged as a result of two broad forces: (1) researchers found that the classical research paradigm was insufficient, oppressive and elitist (Gaventa, 1980; Hall, 1981); lacking the necessary insight and sensitivity to human issues which is increasingly characteristic of the new discourse, and (2) recognition of the continuing potential for exploitation of the many, caused by the monopoly of knowledge by the powerful few (Toffler, 1990).

Knowledge has rapidly emerged as a significant influence in the new paradigm. In the past, concentration of knowledge in the hands of the few has led to the occlusion of power from disenfranchised groups. With the advent of alternative development methods, we are now seeing the reversal of this trend, placing emphasis on knowledge in the hands of

those suppressed groups and bringing such knowledge to "awareness"; thus allowing people to become conscious that they indeed have the necessary skills and insight to exert themselves and become self-sufficient. Friere (1973) made a significant contribution in this regard, maintaining that marginalized people will remain dependent on others for as long as they fail to be conscious of their own power to address problems. In addition, he emphasizes that these people *are* capable of critical thought and can engage in the dialogue surrounding their own development. This latter assertion has become an important assumption in the discussion of empowerment theory and supports the notion that the individual is an important subject of inquiry and social action. Illich (1976:148) argued that the concept of underdevelopment, in addition to "physical impoverishment", was also a state of mind. Many would agree that understanding underdevelopment at that level is important to bringing about change. A commitment to contemporary processes, such as "Participation", arose out of the changes in the last several decades, requiring, implicitly, attention to the constraints and contextual barriers facing the resource-poor – it also implies "powerlessness" or an inability to exert influence to shape one's livelihood.

### **Empowerment Emerging from the New Discourse**

The "project", as most field officers who were interviewed reported, tries to breathe "empowerment" into the community. This does not mean that the project empowers the community but rather that it facilitates approaches that lead individuals to become empowered. The struggle to re-design development programmes to address these concerns continues with heavy emphasis on the role of the resource-poor in the development process. The classical theories of development are not discarded but are modified in order to envelop concerns that had hitherto been inferred or ignored.

Since the 1980's, theories have arisen which retain study at the individual level but with a new premise and methodology. In addition, case studies have assisted in the construction of a more

coherent view of empowerment that takes into account, (a) community issues, (b) structural/ institutional aspects and, (c) individual-community dynamics. These studies have led to the development of what has been called, *Learned Hopefulness Theory*, demonstrating that people can work towards social change despite seemingly insurmountable obstacles. The latter work examines the process of mobilizing individuals and groups for purposes of creating socio-structural change to benefit oppressed people (Yeich & Levine, 1992). This notion implies a recognition of structural forces which affect, if not cause, social problems, instead of resignation to an oppressive environment by the masses. The objective is to identify the problems within and outside the community (Yeich & Levine, 1992; Zimmerman, 1992; Zimmerman, 1990; Wandersman, Florin, Rich & Chavis, 1990). This latter objective may direct the focus of research to the positive consequences of exerting control (through participation). Examination could also be made of the process of learning and utilizing problem-solving skills (acquired during participation), which result in the achievement of further perceived or actual control. Studies indicate that efforts to exert control through participation, should increase one's sense of empowerment through a responsive framework; in other words, enhancing the individual's ability to understand and increase his/her control over the environment through interaction.

It is critical, when considering the above statements, to note that the process goes beyond traditional notions of human deficits. The principle goal of complete empowerment research today - an essentially psychological state in its primordial form - should include (a) developing an awareness of a 'social construct of reality' in the actors, (b) a recognition of the oppressive nature of the social construct, (c) an acknowledgment of the necessity for skills and tool development to effect change and, (d) an awareness of the multiple layers of interaction which occur within and outside the community which will affect the way that its members relate and participate within that community.

The methodology described above is based on several additional key assumptions and provides a platform upon which this research is based:

1. People generally know what is best for them (cf., also, Oakley, 1983).
2. All people are experts in certain areas of their lives (including Indigenous Technical Knowledge).
3. All people have strengths on which to build.
4. All people have skills to be learned and shared (often through local institutions). (Torre, 1989; Zimmerman & Rappaport, 1988)
5. People have the ability to think critically about world affairs (including local, regional and national issues) and to ascertain their own position within their environment (Friere, 1970).
6. People can take reflective action, directed toward responsible social change. This involves the development of necessary skills to interact and respond, in relation to the political and economic environment.

In general, it is evident that empowerment and learned helpfulness theory revolve around several important themes. The latter theory relates to (a) people's ability to develop and their ability to become educated, (b) the nature of education within the development process, (c) the importance of personal associations, formed either purposely or by happenstance (these associations have been referred to as mediating structures and collectives; Torre, 1989), (d) the relationship between personal associations and macro system structures (political, economic and social systems) and finally, (e) the nature and use of power within the empowerment process. It should be acknowledged, of course, that not everyone adheres to the "Frierian" notion of an "educational" prelude to people being able to look after their own destiny. Others have argued that people are perfectly able to express needs and do something about them, if given the opportunity (see Curtis in Neilson & Wright, 1995). Friere's concept of education is widely held in non-governmental circles, however, and it is in this circle that much of the "alternative development" literature and concepts are revived and implemented.

In short, the goals of empowerment have changed from the deficit-oriented methodology of learned helplessness, to a

fuller understanding of how an individual's perceptions /cognitions interact with events in his/her environment to enhance or inhibit his/her control over the "factors" that affect his/her life (Zimmerman, 1992). These latter may range from coping with personal problems and decisions affecting the household to those wider activities relating to community or state issues. The described goals relate directly to the way in which individuals, communities or ethnic groups attempt to express themselves or exert their influence within their environment. Most important in the notion of empowerment and learned helpfulness theory is the protection of the valuable knowledge already extant in the individual or group to (a) a blossoming awareness of that knowledge, and finally (b) "putting that knowledge to work" (through positive and non-violent initiatives).

### Comments

At present, there are limited reliable or tested means by which participatory and empowerment project implementation and the new subject of study (the individual) can be evaluated; particularly in "subjective" project planning and implementation. With the evolution from strict "blue-print" guidelines for project implementation (in which "rigidity" does not allow for flexible project planning and hence, tools), to a more "process-oriented" approach, development tools to monitor and evaluate every step within the project framework, becomes ever more important (Tanner, 2000).

It was noted earlier that much research is conducted to the benefit of the researcher. Nepali scholars, also, have noted that this has been a difficult problem in their country (Bista, 1973; Thapa, 1973). Pure research often does not involve people and it contributes only a little sympathy and interest in the host country or for the community(ies) studied. For the most part, the people in the sample groups do not understand what is being done and have no direct part to play in the process or end product. It is a fault of many aspects of research, in general. The results of many studies are not obviously relevant to a farmer's way of life, nor is it always apparent how s/he is

involved or may benefit from either the process or results of a study. However, this should not nullify or preclude the need for research to advance methodology. Rather, it should place the onus on the researcher to determine the studies purpose and result; whether it is geared to mobilize people, achieve specific outputs, is the basis for future policy, or makes some contribution to the corpus of knowledge on a given subject, which may lead to any of the above.

Social research may not always lend itself to immediate, practical usefulness but the results do point to critical areas that could be of interest to policy-makers or those involved in experimental processes. In areas where scientific-style research can not offer complete explanations for the sources of dynamic and change within social relations, the need for social research obviously increases. The ultimate questions, therefore, to determine where ideas, values and idealism, altruism and cooperation, come from are, perhaps, beyond scientific reach. As Uphoff states, they have elements of both randomness and order, much the way market [commodity] price patterns or political conditions have. How individuals relate to their community and vice versa will create a cause and effect relationship, which create outcomes that are both predictable and indeterminate. However, they are not completely random. If they were, there would be no point in acting purposefully and no point in studying the area. Perhaps, therefore, the best that one can hope for is to understand the dynamics of behaviour within the limited framework of the "new (social) science". We accept the inherent "chaos" (Uphoff, 1992) in the patterns studied and attempt to apply qualitative and quantitative approaches to triangulate an approximation or probability of behaviour.

Within the above framework, it is clear that the importance attached to "scale" is important, because it breaks from the reductionist presumptions of conventional science that the whole is simply made up of its parts. Instead, wholes should be seen in relation to their parts, which are themselves wholes to be viewed in relation to their own part, and so on. This is not dissimilar to Ghandi's proposition that India's development is

based upon the backs of individuals: Understanding the individual helps us to understand the community, which helps to understand the region and thus, the state. In the same vein, the study into empowerment and participatory activities may not begin with the assertion of macro-empowerment dynamics, although these levels exist. Instead, it begins with the individual and then branches out to the household, the community, the region and the state.

Nepal, as a nation, has generated invaluable data to advance the discourse in methodology and project implementation addressing participatory planning and empowerment of people. However, much of this data is externally driven and influenced by the pressures of outside schools of thought. There is a wealth of experience and data, though, that may be tapped and utilized to generate theory or partial theory by Nepali scholars and to contribute to the corpus of knowledge already extant in the international literature.

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