

**Occasional Papers
in
Sociology and Anthropology**

Volume 2



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Central Department of Sociology and Anthropology
Tribhuvan University
Kathmandu, Nepal

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**Editor
Stephen L. Mikesell**

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INTRODUCTION

Since technological changes are linked with social upheaval, it must be a sign of the times that the combination of a computer breakdown and upsurge of the movement delayed the publication of this issue by several months. Finally, however, in the midst of nightly curfews, a computer was located and the second volume of the Occasional Papers has been completed.

In the previous volume, the contributors were searching for a proper direction for anthropology in Nepal. There was a question whether it was legitimate and appropriate to pursue romance in a country with such endemic problems as are found in Nepal. Since then, drastic and astounding changes have occurred in states all over the world. While old regimes have fallen and new combinations of interests have arisen, both the practical ones among us and the more romantically inclined have been forced to critically reappraise our positions.

At the time of this writing, Nepal also is clenched in the midst of its own upheaval. Despite the euphoria that comes with struggle, rumors are rampant, violence is escalating, and no one has much of an idea where things will end up. Even though many of us would like the leisure to be romantic, history has upstaged us. Contradictions which once may have been brushed aside are now thrust in our faces. Many of our colleagues, students and family members have been jailed, others have died, and yet others are underground.

Although the university has been open much of the time, there have not been any classes since the commencement of the movement. The departmental faculty met to discuss a reorganization of the anthropology and sociology program, but the changes have been postponed until next year. Those of our students who were residing in the university hostels took refuge in Kirtipur the night of the 6th of Falgun. Tipped off about this, some 300 policemen entered Kirtipur in the dead of night and searched house to house, arresting some five hundred students. After being jailed and tortured for several days, most were released. On March 20th, the police arrested a large number of faculty and students who were attending an interdisciplinary speech program sponsored by the the University Teachers Association Coordination Committee entitled, "The Situation of the Country and the Role of Intellectuals." Although most of them were released within a week, the outrageous police action ordered by

governmental officials apparently politicized many intellectuals who previously had remained scholarly and professionally aloof.

In one way or another, most of us have been dragged into the movement. Our problem is no longer a disciplinary one of what a particularly Nepali social science should consist. Sociologists, anthropologists, and other intellectuals, in addition to working out the day-to-day details of struggle and survival, now have the task of contributing to the reshaping of the state to serve the people as a whole, rather than a small group of special interests. Given the intimate interlinkages of Nepal with the rest of the world, this is a "world historical" program.

Consequently, the editor and myself feel that romance must be put aside for awhile, and that penetrating and critical analyses, accessible both to scholars and to a much wider public, are urgently needed. Much of what has passed for romance in the anthropological literature has turned out to be an apology for the perpetuation of an extremely violent and totally immoral regime in the palaces and class domination and exploitation in the countryside, things that simply cannot be condoned any longer. It has been significant that large numbers of peasants and particularly women who have been so often described as embracing traditional values and institutions turned out to play courageous and active roles in the movement. Many institutions which have been described with detached objectivity here would be called slavery elsewhere in the world. Now it is time to let the myths die hard and give a new life to our people by their empowerment. In order to prevent a potentially progressive or even revolutionary movement from being turned aside by reaction from any quarter, we feel that it is imperative that the domestic and international forces and interests at work be disclosed for what they are, even and especially if the movement seems successful.

Nevertheless, the lack of romantic pieces in this volume is not the result of any sort of weeding and winnowing on our part. It just happened that nobody submitted such articles. That the articles which are published here have not directly addressed the movement is only because all the contributions were submitted prior to its commencement. However, all the articles expose to some degree symptoms of the serious problems which contributed to the movement. I hope therefore that we will not be judged too unfavorably from the standpoint of the new perspective that the movement has given to us.

It will be the job now of the next departmental chairman and editor to oversee the publication of these critical studies in the next volume.

Kathmandu, April 1990

R.R. Regmi,
Department Chair

Stephen Mikesell,
Editor

AN EMERGING FIELD OF STUDY IN NEPAL

Om Guring

Background

Sociology and anthropology have a relatively short history in Nepal. Nepal was virtually closed to outsiders until 1950, and it was practically impossible for foreign scholars to pursue studies about the Nepali people, history, and culture. Consequently, information about Nepal and the Nepali people written prior to 1950 is scanty and scattered, mainly taking the form of the historical and descriptive writings of Capuchin missionaries, travellers, traders and British civil servants. Notable writers were Father Giuseppe (1856), W. Kirkpatrick (1811), F. Hamilton (1819), B. Hodgson (1874), and N. A. Oldfield (1880). They were not sociologists or anthropologists by training, yet their contributions are of great sociological and anthropological value.

After 1950, Nepal followed an open door policy, and as a result Nepal became a fertile field for sociological and anthropological studies. Comprised of a multitude of linguistic, cultural and ethnic groups living in a relatively small area of land, Nepal has attracted unprecedented numbers of scholars and students, mostly of Western countries and Japan, during the past four decades. Nepal is now fortunate to have a considerable number of books and research reports covering multifaceted dimensions of Nepali society and culture. Fisher (1985a), in a precise summary of the works of foreign scholars, writes that,

one of the remarkable features of anthropology in Nepal is that those foreign scholars who have conducted research studies in Nepal have tended to follow their own national trends. Thus, the British anthropologists, such as Caplan and Caplan (1970, 1972) have evinced strong interests in traditional concerns of social anthropology, land tenure, social structure, and politics. Americans have pursued various theoretical interests ranging from the symbolic (Ortner, 1978) and psychological (Paul, 1982) to ecological and economic (Fisher, 1985b). Similarly, Germans have shown strong interests in cultural history (Oppitz, 1968)

and material culture (Schmidt, 1975), while the French have tended towards detailed ethnographic accounts (Pignede, 1970). While pursuing their research studies, foreign scholars and researchers have covered all branches of anthropology: linguistic, social cultural, medical, ecological, psychological, political and developmental. Although the concern of Nepali anthropology reflects a wide spectrum of interests that characterize anthropology as a field, the foreign scholars have tended to concentrate on those aspects of life which seem to be particularly conspicuous and unique from the Western point of view.

Dahal (1984) classifies the major studies conducted by the foreign scholars in Nepal broadly into three groups:

- (1) General ethnographic studies: prominent ethnographers include Haimendorf (1956, 1960, 1964), Hitchcock (1960), Pignede (1970), Gabriean (1972) and Messerschmidt (1976);
- (2) Social change studies in relation to two or more institutions: prominent anthropologists include Caplan (1970), Caplan (1972), Roser (1955), Haimendorf (1980), and Fisher (1985b);
- (3) Development and social change studies by Macfarlane (1976), Wake (1980), and Blaikie, Cameron and Seddon (1980).

The contributions made by Nepali sociologists and anthropologists are no less important than those of foreigners. Professor Dor Bahadur Bista's book *People of Nepal* provides general ethnographic descriptions delineating cultural groups among the Nepali people. It serves as a basic guideline to those researchers who are particularly interested in studying Nepali peoples and their histories and cultures. Additional studies and research are those of Professor Gopal Singh Nepali (1965), B. K. Shrestha (1971), Khem B. Bista (1972), B. P. Upreti (1975), T. S. Thapa (1974), Shyam Pd. Adhikari (1980), D. R. Dahal (1973, 1975, 1977, 1985), Navin Rai (1973, 1975, 1985), C. Mishra (1985, 1987), R. R. Regmi (1971) and D. P. Rajauriya (1975). There are also several scholars and researchers, although not trained in sociology and anthropology, such as Tulsī Diwas (1973), P. R. Sharma (1971, 1972, 1973), Soyambhu Lal Joshi (1971) and Satyamohan Joshi (1973), whose works are nevertheless of anthropological value. However, the latter studies (mostly ethnographic accounts) have not contributed much to the development of sociology and anthropology as a distinct subject in Nepal.

Institutional Development of Sociology and Anthropology

Sociological and anthropological studies and research, which from the start existed side-by-side, were engaged in by foreign researchers at the close of the 19th Century. However, their institutional base within Nepal was established only in 1972 by the Vice Chancellor of Tribhuvan University (Macdonald 1974). He initiated a separate programme in sociology and anthropology in the Institute of Nepal and Asian Studies (INAS) of Tribhuvan University under the technical support of the British Council.

Initially, the program was primarily designed for both teaching and research. Professor Ernest Gellner from the London School of Economics was invited to train and supervise Nepali researchers in the field of sociology and anthropology. A few Nepali students received M.A. Degrees by dissertation in social anthropology. Unfortunately, this program was discontinued shortly after its initiation because of frequent changes in the policies and programmes of the university, changes in the status of INAS from a degree granting institute into a purely research center (now Research Center for Nepal and Asian Studies, then called CNAS), and other technical and administrative deficiencies (Dahal 1984). All these factors collectively obstructed the institutional development of sociology and anthropology in Nepal.

It was only in 1981 that a formal Department of Sociology and Anthropology was established in Tribhuvan University at the graduate level (M.A.), and later in 1985 at the undergraduate level (B.A.).

While the traditional dichotomy of sociology and anthropology is customary in most Western universities as well as in India, in Nepal the two disciplines are collapsed into subfields in one combined department. There are several reasons for this combination. Nepal consists of a large variety of ethnic communities with different languages, cultures and religions, but similar sociopolitical and economic structures. Geographically, Nepal is a small country, where both sociologists and anthropologists take the same groups as the object of their studies, even if their methodologies and theories may differ. Last, financial, administrative and technical limitations preclude the separation of the subfields into two departments.

Since initially there was no undergraduate programme in sociology and anthropology, admission at graduate level was open to all students from the liberal and professional sciences. The department's goal is to provide a broad interdisciplinary introduction to the two fields of sociology and anthropology, emphasizing the common theoretical roots and disparate methodologies that characterize the two fields. The department makes every effort to relate its curriculum

and field research to the needs of Nepal. The ultimate purpose is to provide students with theoretical and practical tools that will enable them to assist in the development of the country as planners, administrators, social researchers and teachers.

In order to meet this broad objective, the existing curriculum has been recently revised, and some new courses have been developed. In the first year, a common course on the theories and research methodologies of sociology and anthropology were given, while in the second year more advanced courses on population, ecology and development were offered. Students are provided with an M.A. degree in both sociology and anthropology. Demographic, ecological and developmental problems are major concerns of present day Nepal. Therefore, these critical issues have been given an utmost priority in teaching and research in the department.

Thesis writing or, alternatively, a field study and field report is compulsory at the graduate level. The students are encouraged to write theses dealing with current problems covering a wide range of subjects concerning population, economy, ecology, culture, poverty, health and sanitation, animal husbandry, agricultural productivity, forestry, tourism, migration and natural resource management systems. In order to encourage the timely completion of theses and contribute to academic excellence, the Human Resource Development Division of Winrock International, Kathmandu, has been providing financial support in the form of small research grants.

The Department of Sociology and Anthropology has developed steadily in a short span of time, although inadequate physical facilities and insufficient educational materials for the growing number of students are still major constraints on teaching and research. In terms of numbers of students enrolled, the Department of Sociology and Anthropology is one of the largest graduate level departments in Tribhuvan University. Since the subject is quite new and has a relatively wide scope of job opportunities, the numbers of students increases with each new academic year (from 54 in 1981 to 152 in 1989). Students have ample opportunity to meet foreign students and scholars, as several overseas university programmes, notably of the University of Wisconsin and World College West, are affiliated with the department. The department's teachers are widely trained and educated in various universities of the United States, Europe, and Asia. All faculty members have ongoing research programmes, which are frequently funded by national and international development agencies. The department has a working relation with various universities and research institutes. In order to strengthen the institutional capacity, the department encourages foreign scholars to work together with the faculty members.

Sociology and Anthropology Towards Development

Particularly after the Second World War, sociologists and anthropologists have been playing significant roles in planning in developing countries. They have provided often highly reliable data that facilitates the implementation of programs. Their evaluation studies of past programmes have also helped improve development policy. Sociologists and anthropologists, as *social and cultural interpreters* between planners and the people, have long been concerned with the exploration and interpretation of sociocultural potentials for development, and through it, they have attempted to contribute to the development of new programs and policies.

Sociology and anthropology in Nepal have had a slightly different experience in development plans and programs. For the past few decades, sociologists and anthropologists were uninvolved in development, therefore their roles within development programs were limited. Although a small number of sociologists have been training and administering different sectors of the government, a large number pursue their own independent research, focusing mainly on purely ethnographic problems.

However, during the last few years, the academic thrust of Nepali sociologists and anthropologists has been diverted slightly from more orthodox problems to more development oriented ones. From the beginning of the Fifth Five Year Plan (1975), the government of Nepal has adopted the *Integrated Rural Development Programme* (IRDP) as a key strategy designed to improve the socioeconomic conditions of rural people. Nepali sociologists and anthropologists have been playing major roles in these programs by providing feasibility studies prior to the implementation of programs and evaluation studies after their completion. Because the government has not yet properly realized the importance of sociological and anthropological studies, and because it has emphasized administrative structure more than functions, sociologists and anthropologists (to say nothing of the people) are rarely incorporated and consulted in development programmes. Therefore, the application of sociological and anthropological knowledge in development remains limited.

In addition to the Nepali government, a large number of development projects are sponsored by the World Bank, U.S. AID, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, IRDP, ESCAP, ILO, and other bi-national and multinational development agencies and interests. These projects have dealt with, among other problems, population, family planning, health and sanitation, education, community development, forestry, agricultural development, livestock development, pasture or range management, and natural resource conservation and utilization. Nepali sociologists and anthropologists have begun to work on short-term

contract bases with the various programs as advisors, consultants, researchers, educators, and trainers.

Their roles in these programmes have been to provide information to the donor agencies and motivate the communities to accept the implementation of the programs. Their feasibility and evaluation studies have been immensely helpful to the agencies in implementing and expanding programmes. Because Nepali sociologists and anthropologists are working primarily to serve the interests of funding agencies, they have been unable to develop a particular Nepali theory of development. Nevertheless, though their roles have not yet been instituted (which has its own benefits) their involvement in development programmes can be considered a modest beginning for our field.

Future Trends in Sociology and Anthropology

Sociology and anthropology in Nepal are still in their infancy and likely to face many changes before they fully establish themselves. The foremost challenge has to do with substantive issues. Although Nepal is endowed with many cultural peculiarities, of which one can easily choose one as an exclusive field of study, there are aspects of life that need immediate attention. Thus one problem lies in the selection of the subject of study.

In the present social, political and economic context, what should the subject of a particularly Nepali anthropology be? Should we continue to study communities as though they exemplify peculiar cultures? Or should we shift the focus to political, economic and social conditions? Should we concentrate on ecological, demographic or developmental issues? Furthermore, sociology and anthropology are afflicted with their own theoretical and methodological weaknesses. Should we follow the traditional evolutionary and structural-functional theories and methods to study our culture and society or shift to critical and historical theories and methods? Because of these problems, sociology and anthropology in Nepal are in a dilemma.

Of course, sociology and anthropology, as disciplines in the study of humanity, should concern themselves with the multiple problems of the Nepali people. However, at the present, development oriented sociology and anthropology are essential in Nepal. Unfortunately, this is complicated by the theoretical and conceptual problems faced by a developing country. Because we are still confused by different development models, including whether to pursue a socialist, capitalist, or some other road, we are unable to define, classify and conceptualize our problems within transcendent theoretical premises. We tend to understand development only in economic terms.

forgetting or ignoring other important social, political, ethical and historical dimensions.

Sociologists and anthropologists, with their broad comparative and disciplinary frameworks, can initiate development studies by means of historical methods covering multidimensional aspects of our people. The problems of Nepali people should not be understood merely on a cultural basis, since this is just as limiting as an exclusively economic or political one, for example. We should understand problems in a broader perspective. Therefore, Nepali sociology and anthropology should not merely be interpretive, rather they should be political, economic and historical in their nature.

Even if we study the cultures of our people, our attempts should be to articulate the potentials within these cultures that can contribute to the people's development. We know that our communities are rich in traditional cultural resources (e.g., *guthi* system among the Newars, *dhikur* association among the Thakalis, *nyogyar* among the Gurungs, and the *kipat* system among the Rais and Limbus). These are cultural resources that can be mobilized for their development.

With the exception of Seddon et al. (1979), Blaikie et al. (1980) and Seddon (1987), very few anthropologists and sociologists are interested in development studies, and their studies serve primarily their own national interests, if not individual ones. The foreign scholars and researchers are quite often geographically biased and culturally ethnocentric about our people. Their studies cover mainly the hill and mountain people who seem ecologically and culturally romantic to them. Very few are interested in Terai peoples and cultures. Their studies are also rather shallow historically, if not ahistorical and sometimes overemphasized, grossly simplified and romanticized, without proper historical groundings. They mostly confine their studies to small geographical areas or communities, and on the basis of these try to generalize about entire populations (if not the entire country) which have been defined a priori as significant. Their theoretical orientations have been conventional and eclectic rather than original and ground breaking (Fisher op. cit.; Mikesell 1988).

Therefore, the time has come to develop our own theories and methods of sociology and anthropology. We should develop these as they suit the needs of our country, acknowledge its history, and address the position of its people in the national and world communities. Our theories and methods should be able to identify the problems and forces facing our people, while attempting to further their aspirations. We should study our people in their social, historical, political, economic, and ideological perspectives, where our own discipline is seen as arising from these. This necessitates a renewal and reform, if not transformation or revolution, of the

theoretical models and, especially, premises of our sociology and anthropology. Accordingly, we should develop a curriculum that is at once broad and deep. If this common responsibility is shouldered by all Nepali sociologists and anthropologists, we can make our own mark on both the discipline and our peoples' lives.

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THE PAST AND FUTURE OF SOCIOLOGY IN NEPAL

Bishnu Bhandari

Establishment of the Department

The formal teaching of sociology in Nepal began with the inception of the Village Development Training Center (now called the Panchayat Training Center) in 1953. It was at that time that the Village Development Workers (VLW's) were given training about Nepali society and culture to help them to understand the dynamics of social change taking place in the society (Thapa 1974:45). The courses known by the name of rural society were confined to the training syllabus.

Because of the growing popularity of sociology in the universities abroad, its absence was felt in Nepal, especially after the episodes of social change brought out in the aftermath of the 1951 movement. Consequently, the Vice Chancellor of Tribhuvan University expressed a desire for the immediate establishment of a department of sociology and anthropology in the university. As a result, Professor Ernest Gellner, a short-term advisor from the London School of Economics, visited Nepal under the auspices of the British Council in September, 1970 in order to prepare a feasibility report on establishing a department of sociology in Tribhuvan University. Subsequently, a Department of Sociology/Anthropology was established at the Institute of Nepal and Asian Studies (INAS) (MacDonald 1974; Dahal 1984). The primary objectives of the Department as mentioned by Macdonald were mainly to:

1. carry out, encourage and, on occasion, supervise systematic social research in Nepal,
2. train Nepali scientists and researchers,
3. act as a clearing house and point of contact, coordination and cooperation for the various researches carried out in the past, present and future by Nepalis and foreigners [Macdonald 1974:27].

Gellner was appointed as a Professor of Sociology under a joint agreement between Tribhuvan University and the British Council. He

also became the head of the Department of Sociological Research at INAS in 1973 for two years. His primary duties and responsibilities were as follows:

1. to train post graduate assistants and students,
2. to supervise and set their research projects,
3. to help them personally in the field, and
4. to assist them with the writing up of their material in view of publication in the form of Ph.D.'s or M.A.'s [MacDonald 1974:28].

Also, projects for the M.A. by dissertation, Ph.D. degrees and the examination were been drafted in collaboration with the dean of INAS to submit to the Faculty Board, which approved it immediately. As a result, three activities were done immediately in INAS. These included (1) the regular seminar on "The sociology of spirit-possession in Nepal" held on a weekly basis in the first semester of 1973, (2) recruitment of three researchers, Navin Rai for research on the Chepangs of Makwanpur and Chitwan districts, Drona P. Rajaure on the Tharus of Dang-Deukhuri and Surkhet Valley, and Dilli R. Dahal on the Athpahariya Rai of the Dhankuta District, and (3) admission of two Nepali students for M.A. degree, who were awarded degree-by-dissertation by INAS.

Thus, in 1973, the cornerstone of the Department of Sociology was laid down and the basic infrastructure established by INAS. However, the tradition of granting degrees by INAS did not last for long. There were changes of advisors, and the degree granting status of the institute was transformed into a the research center for conducting research. The name of INAS was changed to Research Center for Nepal and Asian Studies (CNAS), and the institute was deprived of granting degrees to students. The department of anthropology and sociology had to thus be kept alive by the people of CNAS.

It was not until several years later that moves were made to establish a new department. In 1977, five Nepali students were sent to India by Tribhuvan University on scholarships for masters degrees in Sociology and Anthropology. The following year, in 1978, the courses of study were prepared by the Institute of Humanities and Social Sciences. These moves paved the way for the Department of Sociology and Anthropology to be opened under IHSS. The primary functions of the newly established department, as laid down in a department brochure were:

... to provide a broad, interdisciplinary introduction to the two-fields of Sociology and Anthropology, emphasizing the common

theoretical roots and the disparate methodologies that characterize the two fields. ... makes every effort to relate its curriculum and field research to the needs of Nepal. The ultimate purpose is to provide students with the theoretical and practical tools that will enable them to assist in the development of the country as planners, administrators, social researchers and teachers [DAS n.d.].

Since its inception, the department has been offering courses only on the master's degree programs in sociology and anthropology. The students seeking admission in the department should have a bachelor's degree with a specialization preferably in one of the following subjects: sociology, anthropology, economics, political science, history, geography, psychology, home science or culture (Bhattachan 1987).

The first M.A. degree in sociology and anthropology was granted by the department in the year 1985. As of 1989, six batches of students had already graduated from the department.

The teaching of sociology is not confined to the masters level only. Other campuses offer sociology courses at the undergraduate level. These are the Patan Multiple Campus at Lalitpur, Tri-Chandra Campus at Kathmandu, P. N. Campus at Pokhara, and Mahendra Morang Campus at Biratnagar. The ten other campuses which have been authorized to offer courses on sociology and anthropology at the undergraduate level include (1) Padma Kanya Campus, (2) Bhaktapur Multiple Campus, (3) Thakur Ram Multiple Campus, Birganj, (4) Dharan, (5) Janakpur, (6) Palpa, (7) Bhairawa, (8) Dang, (9) Nepalgunj, and (10) Bajhang.

Besides instruction in sociology at the faculties of humanities and social sciences, some courses are taught in professional and technical institutes too. For example, some courses on medical sociology are being offered at the Institute of Medicine, and a few courses on rural sociology and urban settlement are being taught respectively at the Institutes of Forestry and Engineering. The Institute of Agriculture and Animal Science has indeed established a full-fledged department of Agricultural Extension and Rural Sociology in Rampur, and it offers about eight courses on rural sociology and the sociology of economic change, including a course on survey research methods at the bachelor level in agriculture. A course on the sociology of education is taught at the faculty of Education in Kirtipur.

The department in Kirtipur has also made some arrangements to provide Ph.D. degrees to qualified and competent researchers selected by the university. The department grants Ph.D. degree by dissertation to students. At the moment, there are three students enrolled in the Ph.D. program under the guidance and supervision of the department's faculty members.

Courses of Study

Some fourteen faculty members are currently engaged in teaching in the department. The outline of the course of study offered by the department for its M.A. students is as follows:

First Year Courses

Paper 1. Foundation of Sociology/Anthropology

Paper 2. Theory in Sociology

Paper 3. Theory in Anthropology

Paper 4. Methodology of Social Research

Second Year Courses

Paper 5. Nepali Culture and Society

Paper 6. Specialization Course

Paper 7. Specialization Course

Paper 8. Dissertation Writing

Each year the department offers two out of the eight courses in each area of sociology and anthropology. The decision over the topic of the specialization courses depends upon the availability of teaching manpower and the number of students enrolled in the course.

Research Affiliation

Over the course of nine years the department has attracted over 1,000 students into its masters degree program. As mentioned above, three students have already joined the Ph.D. program. The department also has some foreign students from the United States, Bangladesh, India and Shri Lanka.

In addition to its regular teaching program, the department has established research affiliation with more than seven universities in the United States (Wisconsin, Cornell, Chicago, Michigan, Colorado, Seattle and Minnesota), the University of London in England, the University of Zurich in Switzerland, the Universities of Bergen and Oslo in Norway, the University of Helsinki in Finland, and the University of Tokyo in Japan. Graduate Students come from these universities to research Nepali society and culture. Also, bachelor level students come every year from the University of Wisconsin-Madison to stay for one year as part of Wisconsin's College Year Program in Nepal, which is also affiliated with the Central Department of Sociology and Anthropology in Tribhuvan University.

Many Nepali scholars in the field of sociology and anthropology go abroad to pursue higher studies under the auspices of programs such as the Wenner-Gren Foundation, WINROCK International, F/FRED, Ford Foundation, East-West Center, America-Nepal Education Foundation, The United States Education Foundation, etc.

As mentioned elsewhere, sociology is a nascent subject in Nepal. However, its significance has been gradually realized in research and academia. Because of its youthfulness, it has confronted a tremendous number of problems in becoming an established discipline, some of which are elaborated below.

1. Inadequacy of Trained Locals

As mentioned above, the discipline is in its infancy and in the process of developing inwardly as well as outwardly. Because of this, it has established few career opportunities yet. Salaries are unattractive and working conditions discouraging. The majority of sociologists are employed by the university, where they share heavy teaching loads hampered by the unavailability of texts and reference books. All these reasons make for a brain drain to foreign and private agencies, to consultant services within Nepal, or to jobs abroad.

2. Lack of Text Books

Generally, books are either in English or Hindi, with a dearth of Nepali books dealing with Nepali problems. This problem of unavailability has been further aggravated by instruction in English and the citation of foreign examples to the exclusion of Nepali ones.

3. Lack of Funds

There are insufficient funds to conduct either basic or applied research. Unless funds are made available, new knowledge and information cannot be generated for use in teaching and research. The shortage of funds prevents sociologists from traveling to different parts of the country for independent research. There is a crisis in the generation of knowledge, and the priorities for knowledge are set by well-funded foreign researchers.

4. Lack of a Theoretical Framework

A great deal of studies have been done on Nepali society and culture by both foreigners as well as local scholars. These studies are of a descriptive nature and apply simple statistical techniques. The general feeling is that they have neglected history and concentrated only on the present, using simple causation to explain problems.

5. Lack of Commitment

Commitment to the discipline is lacking, resulting in a failure to make the discipline into one with a specifically Nepali character. The professional sociologists — few in number as they are — are most of the time engaged in consultancy, private projects, etc., funded by foreign or private agencies. Research projects conducted by researchers paid

by others set agendas irrelevant to the national discourse. They are of low academic quality, and certainly not of an international standard. Also, due to this problem of commitment to the intellectual development of the discipline, neither can the best students be attracted nor the qualified professionals be found working in the discipline. Those who wish to pursue their careers in sociology need to be supported by scholarships, research grants, and grants to attend local and international seminars. Funding agencies must be tapped and priorities of research should be fixed.

6. *Lack of Professionalism*

Along with the problems mentioned above, there is a lack of association to facilitate interaction and communication among trained professionals. There are few forums to share experiences, knowledge, and information. The only association, the Sociological Anthropological Society of Nepal (SASON), is inactive. There is no systematic attempt to publish material. Emphasis should be given to organize seminars, symposiums, conferences, etc. The professionalism should be developed so as to develop a well-established linkage with other professionals in the region as reference groups. There is also little activity outside the country, which has kept our profession academically isolated. Great changes must be made to develop an independent and autonomous full-fledged profession.

Agenda for the Future

The agenda of sociology is of great breadth. However, the means to attack the different problems are limited. Thus, some sort of priority must be given. The following are suggestions in this vein.

1. *Enhance Awareness About Sociology*

Sociology is a nascent subject in Nepal. It is in a stage of great innovation. A majority of people do not know about sociology or what role it has in society. Thus, people need to be made aware through the publication of scholarly and popular books and articles, public speaking, and brochures.

2. *Create More Career Opportunities for Graduates*

Places of employment should be explored by the department so as to attract serious and talented students. University careers alone are insufficient and undesirable to absorb the growing number of graduates.

3. *Define Research Areas to be Covered*

Potential areas of research by the discipline should be identified in order to better utilize limited resources, funds, and manpower. In light of the current situation in Nepal, potential areas may include poverty, regional inequality, class formation, agrarian class, people's participation, social problems, basic needs, decentralization, women's studies, land tenure systems, population, environment, prescriptive research, the state, etc.

4. *Adopt Inter-disciplinary Approaches to Study Problems*

Use the nascent condition of sociology to our advantage by redefining it to suit Nepal's domestic and international situation.

5. *Revive SASON*

As mentioned above, SASON seems to be in a state of dormancy and needs to be reawakened to develop the contacts and sharing of information, experience and knowledge between members of the profession.

6. *Publish a Regular Professional Journal*

A forum is needed to systematically share research findings and ideas. At least a bulletin, but preferably a journal or both needs to be published.

7. *Utilize More Types of Data and Information Sources*

At the present, researchers tend to limit themselves to survey, library, and census data.

8. *Establish a National Institute for Social Science Research*

There is a need for an autonomous, non-profit national research institute to sponsor scholarly activities and coordinate activities.

9. *Shift the Focus of Research from the Descriptive to the Prescriptive*

The large body of knowledge that has resulted from "exploration and description" of the Nepal situation is insufficient to make the discipline a complete science. There is a need for explanation and a shift from asking "what" and "how" to "why" and "what must be done."

10. *Strike a Balance between the Quantitative and Qualitative*

Qualitative as well as quantitative information are the two sides of complete research work. Research in Nepal tends to be heavily

biased in one aspect or another. Studies that overemphasize the quantitative can be interpreted in many different ways and consequently used to justify almost anything. An overemphasis on quality often is not taken seriously. Work should be balanced between the two, and grounded simultaneously in rigorous empirical data and theory.

11. *Move Towards Institutionalization*

A forum should be provided to provide greater opportunity for inter-disciplinary and inter-sectorial interaction between professionals. Periodic seminars, refresher courses, and conferences should be organized to upgrade the discipline. Various kinds of support such as scholarships, research and publication grants, travel grants etc. are necessary.

12. *Making the Discipline Indigenous*

While an identity is important for advancement of an autonomous discipline and its interests, departmental compartmentalization and professional chauvinism hinder the "inter-disciplinary as well as multidisciplinary" efforts and autonomy. Borrowed modes of theory often adulterate the society and culture and prevent understanding our own society and its problems. Sociology has a national character in other countries, so why not here? (Bista 1980, 1987a and 1987b).

There is a need to develop methods and techniques suited to local conditions. To achieve this, teaching and research problems must be reoriented. Nepali examples should be given in the classroom. The medium of instruction should be in Nepali, and educational materials need to be made available.

13. *Determine Ideological Courses of Action*

The future course of action should be defined by the discipline so as to identify the areas of research. Target groups, areas, etc. must be identified. Research should be practically oriented. The level and standard of research needs to be maintained, and accompanied by the development of an academic culture encouraging professional ethics and honesty.

Appendix: Chronology of the Department

- 1953 Rural sociology is taught in the Village Development Training Center for low level manpower
- 1970 The Vice Chancellor of Tribhuvan University expresses concern about the absence of a sociology department.
- 1970 Professor Ernest Gellner visits Nepal to prepare a report on establishing the Department of Sociology/Anthropology
- 1973 Establishment of the Department of Sociology/Anthropology in the Institute of Nepal and Asian Studies
- 1977 Five students are sent to India by Tribhuvan University to obtain M.A. degrees in Sociology and Anthropology
- 1978 The dean forms a committee, IHSS, to explore the possibility of opening a Department of Sociology/Anthropology
- 1979 Formation of a curriculum Draft Action Committee to prepare a course of study for an M.A. program
- 1981 Establishment of the Department of Sociology/Anthropology
- 1984 Formation of the Sociological Anthropological Society of Nepal (SASON) Ad Hoc Committee
- 1985 Undergraduate level sociology and anthropology courses begin at four campuses
- 1985 Registration of SASON with HMG
- 1985 Election of the First Executive Committee of SASON with Professor Dor Bahadur Bista as its first president
- 1985 First M.A. Degree granted by the department
- 1986 Department of Anthropology/Sociology renamed Central Department of Anthropology and Sociology
- 1986 Publication of the first issue of the SASON Newsletter
- 1987 One day seminar on "Sociology/Anthropology and Development" held to mark the first anniversary of the department
- 1987 Publication of volume 1 of *Occasional Papers in Sociology and Anthropology* by the department

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SOME SOCIOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS ON DEVELOPMENT

IN THE EASTERN HIMALAYAS

Gopal Singh Nepali

Development is a type of social change which is caused by the conscious efforts of humans to improve their material, social, cultural and spiritual life. Implicit in its philosophy is the belief that human happiness can be maximized by the greater and greater control of the material environment in the service of man. This is a concept based on the materialistic-mechanistic philosophy born of the west which has immensely progressed due to enormous development in the fields of science and technology. This philosophy is the natural outcome of the historical development of the western society, and it is well integrated into it. It is now being accepted by societies in the non-western world, where the material, social and spiritual are well integrated and the spiritual is a living part, in order to improve the conditions of their peoples. In these societies, the economic part of the society interacts with the non-economic part in mutually reinforcing one other. Thus to separate the economic part and to look at it from the western materialistic point of view creates more problems than it can solve.

Another important feature of the development concept is that it has a national framework. It is again a western contribution. No item of development, however laudable it may seem as regards the interests of a group for whom it is meant, can be approved and implemented if it goes contrary to the overall national interest. A third feature is that the development concept is defined, conceived and implemented by a central authority which determines the priorities as well as the areas and strategies of development, no matter how the people for whom the development programme is meant feel about their needs. All these have complicated the problems of development in the third world.

Major efforts in the programme of development have been in the direction of economic development which is to be assisted and supplemented by the introduction of such changes in the non-economic sectors of social organization as to bring them more in line with modernity. But societies are not inanimate things. They react and refuse to be interfered with indiscriminately. They have their own

natures, which have to be understood if we want any modification in their material and non-material parts. One instance of such continued resistance by traditional features is the circumvention of the Indian democratic process by caste, especially in the rural areas. Despite a total commitment to the abolition of caste, it is as pervasive as before in many areas, and, further, it has also crept into new areas of our life.

Both the ecological and social framework will determine how a particular item of development will be useful or accepted in a community. There are examples from cross cultural scenes to support this contention. To take an example from the tribal world, according to the late Professor Guha, the improvement in the house structure of the Andaman Islanders led to an increase of diseases among them. Likewise, Dr. Mazumdar points out that the introduction of the values of civilization into tribal societies has resulted in the cultural disorganization of the tribal peoples of India, leading to incidences of crime, gambling, prostitution diseases, and the disappearance of tribal institutions which shaped their personality. These instances can be multiplied without number to show that the changes introduced from the outside do not always produce the desired results; on the contrary, they lead to such unintended consequences that may create more misery for the community than they were intended to remove.

It is also fairly clear, on the basis of several studies, that a community is selective in the acceptance of an alien innovation or cultural trait. For example, the Newars of Nepal, who have a very high degree of material culture, who have excelled in technological skill, craftsmanship, and metalwork, and who are traditionally known also for their skill in agriculture, still by and large shun the use of the plough. They stick to their digging hoe, although the plough is an advanced technology in comparison to the hoe. Side by side, the Chhetri would be using the plough in adjacent fields. Since they are excellent craftsmen, it cannot be said that the Newars are ignorant of the plough. The reason is that, if the Newars take to the plough, they are excommunicated by their society. But the Newars have willingly accepted the hand tractors which have been introduced from Japan. This serves to show that if any cultural item is negatively defined in a community, it is not accepted however much it may benefit the community economically. Social structure exerts its own pressure on the acceptance of an innovation from the outside.

So with regard to the acceptance or nonacceptance of a cultural trait, it is necessary for a planner or his agents to know under what social circumstances particular kinds of alien culture or innovations will be accepted by the people for whom the development scheme is to be introduced, since the planned development scheme is another name for bringing about the contact between traditional culture and the scientific technological culture borrowed from the outside.

It is therefore necessary to understand the nature of culture. The sociological-anthropological approach regards culture as an integrated whole in which the parts do not consist of a simple aggregate. They are interrelated and interdependent, forming a functional system, and the change in one part is reacted upon by the other parts and vice versa. It is because of this integration into a system, that the existence and continuity of a society is sustained. Whenever the basic existence and continuity is threatened, the cultural system reacts and develops defense mechanisms. It is this view that can explain why an innovation — be it a value, norm, behavior pattern or a material item — is not accepted by a community, however rational and beneficial it might appear.

But to say that culture is an integrated whole is not to say that its various parts are in perfect harmony. There are many stresses and strains resulting in changes in some parts or in some elements. But the tendency is towards reaching harmony which, however, never happens in the perfect sense of the term. There are internal causes of such a change such as changes in the demographic features of the population, innovation within the community, imperfect copying across generations, as well as between individuals with regard to their social behavior pattern, natural calamities, and clashes of class and group based interests, as Firth has pointed out. These are auto-genetic changes. Given a relatively integrated community, the imbalances created in the functional system of culture are manageable, since the adaptive changes take place in the other parts of the system.

The other factor of change is external, arising from conquest or contact with an alien culture. Here the situation is different. The impact of the forces of change is quick, continuous and pervasive. This is likely to disturb the internal balance. The status and role of the individuals may become confused, leading to a disorganization of the society.

In view of the above, problems of development of the Himalayan region may be better understood if we look at them from such an angle. The communities and tribes that live over these areas are more or less independent cultural wholes with the exception of the Nepalis who have developed the caste system. These communities and tribes have been living somewhat in isolation from the mainstream of the Indian civilization on the one hand and from one another on the other, because of the difficult terrain and the absence of modern means of communication.

These communities and tribes are almost autonomous in their cultural life and are largely dependent on their natural environment for eking out their livelihood. With the exception of the Darjeeling hills, the density of population in the mid-eastern Himalaya is small.

Moving higher and higher from the south to the north, it becomes yet smaller. Thus the density of the population per square kilometer is 45 in Sikkim, 24 in Bhutan, 6 in Arunachal Pradesh, while it is 214 in the Darjeeling hills (Census 1971). Such small concentrations of population that are confined to certain areas can hardly be amenable to modern development and to the kind of distribution of skills needed for the supply of manpower.

Another important feature which should not escape our eyes is that from the ethnic point of view these people are divided into a number of linguistic and cultural groups of endogamous nature, and separated from one another not only by geographical isolation but also by the rigidity of cultural traditions as is reflected in their respective social organizations. Broadly speaking, they occupy different altitudinal zones ranging between the alpine zone on the north and the tropical foothills in the Tarai. The higher mountainous regions are occupied by the Tibetans and the Tibetan-like peoples who either practice dry farming or combine it with pastoralism and trade with Tibet. The peoples of the middle zone (i.e., who live in the lower hills and the mountainous valleys) belong to Hindu communities or semi-Hinduized groups of Mongoloid origin. They practice irrigated cultivation, trade and animal husbandry, while those who live in the tropical or subtropical regions also live on wet cultivation and domestic trade. A basic feature of the entire region has been that the majority of the people depend upon agricultural and forest products. Because of the comparative absence of roads, marketable produce is unable to find easy outlets. At the same time, the domestic market is very much limited because of the small populations and low purchasing powers of the local people.

The environment of the hills has imposed its constraints on the people to which the communities have adjusted. Thus each culture group along with its social organization has adapted itself to the environment which, when looked at from the point of view of the mainstream culture of Hinduism, is a life of hard misery and material and economic poverty. The predominance of spiritual and magical institutions, as in the case of the people of Sikkim, Bhutan and Arunachal, is an anathema to the scientific, technologically oriented planners of the country.

And here lies the rub. To the people, these beliefs and practices play an important role in their social, political and economic life. How to meet these spiritual bases of the society, while introducing modern technology and rationality without doing damage to their existence is a fundamental issue. The property system, clan system, lineage system and economic system are all intertwined and interdependent with the religious system. So to replace their traditional economic institutions with modern ones would mean undermining the very existence of these hill peoples.

The manner that development leads to the imbalance in the local society can be found in the case of Sikkim. The people of the Nepali ethnic groups, being hard working and skillful cultivators, were imported into Sikkim to develop agriculture and trade in that country. But the cost is also great. Because of high fertility among the Nepali people and their continued in-migration, the Bhutia Lepcha population is on the way to becoming extinct, and their culture has been supplanted by the Nepali one. The rapid rise of the Nepali population and Sanskritization of the Lepchas, who live intermixed with the Nepali people in the southern part of the country, has led to a change to Nepali marriage customs and language. The political and economic integration of Sikkim into the Indian republic has been entirely due to the Nepali ethnic groups as a majority community who voted for the merger of that country. Development creates such unintended consequences which have to be foreseen from the beginning.

In Bhutan also, the population dynamics of the Bhotiyas, the Nepali people, and the people of Indian origin may, in the long run, result in favour of the numerical superiority of the Nepali ethnic groups. Although sociological data with regard to Bhutan are meagre, it is guessed that Bhutan has a sizeable population of Nepali ethnic groups of perhaps 30 to 40 percent. They have settled in the southwestern part of the country.

As the Nepali people are said to be efficient laborers, and have the physiological capacity to quickly adapt themselves to different kinds of climatic and environmental conditions, they have a tendency to displace or assimilate the Tibeto-Burman tribes everywhere. Their marriage and family organizations provide them a lot of freedom to take wives from other communities besides of their own caste. Being patrilineal, the children born out of such mixed wedlocks are affiliated to the father's group. Besides, the fertility of the Nepali women has been found to be greater than that of the Tibeto-Burman or tribal communities, as shown by studies from other regions. From the point of view of traditional marriage ideology, the Nepali people have been polygynous whereas the Tibeto-Burman tribes have been polyandrous. This single factor had in the past helped the Nepali people to multiply their population to such an extent that today in the Himalayan region as a whole, from western Nepal to Sikkim, their population overwhelms those of other groups.

Bhutan, as a developing nation, must modernize itself, if it is not to be continued to be called a backward country. Its industrialization and modernization, besides serving its own prosperity, is a function of world pressure. There is a need for greater manpower to man the different sectors of the country's trade, economy and administration. Such a massive supply of skilled manpower is beyond the capacity of the Bhotiya population, especially because of the country's religio-social-political system. The identity of the Bhutanese culture and the

society is co-terminus with the existence of monastic institutions and their predominant importance in the overall society.

But the existence and continuity of the monastic institutions, and thereby of the Bhutanese culture, may not be compatible with the increased demand for skilled manpower to match the much needed pace of development. It must make a grim choice either to cut back the pace of development or to draw upon the people of Indian origin for supplies of skilled manpower with a view to not impede the regular nourishment of monks and nuns. In the long run, the inter-regional migration, which as a matter of ethnic policy is not permitted, may have to take place if Bhutan is to desire for the elimination of regional imbalances in its development. In the greater part of the country, especially in the higher hills, development has been negligible. But economic rationality may lead Bhutan to make equitable distribution of its resources to exploit the wealth of its natural environment. Even for the scientific development of agriculture and animal husbandry in the upper region, the Nepali skilled labor force may be economically necessary, as the people of Indian origin will not be ethnically predisposed to migrate to the higher regions on climatic grounds. Thus the rising population of the efficient Nepali laborers may be forced to migrate to other places, where today they are not allowed, resulting in changes in the ethnic dynamics of the country while at the same time ensuring a greater pace of development.

To a certain extent, the Bhutanese ethnic manpower necessary for meeting the requirement of development could be augmented by diverting some of the labor of monks and nuns to the purpose of development. But it is the differential birthrate quality which will ultimately decide the ethnic dynamics of the country, if we assume that greater health care is available to all the communities, making the death rate uniform, and that the migration from Tibet is negligible.

Therefore, the problem of development in the hill region of the Himalayas is one of preserving indigenous culture and society, while at the same time ensuring the material and the social development of the region to enable the people to partake in the fruits of the modern achievements as an industrialized nation.

Another anthropological concept which we can apply with profit for development in the Himalayas is the concept of the sub-cultural world. In the Eastern Himalayas as a whole, we may take each of the ethnic groups and the tribes as an organic whole. Because of the effective functioning of each of the ethnic groups and tribes as a separate sub-cultural world, the personality development of the individuals in each of these groups may not be identical. The capacity of learning, the attitude towards change, and the eagerness to accept a particular innovation may vary between the peoples of the sub-cultural worlds. This is of vital importance when we introduce change. We

must have developed plans like micro-hydroelectric power schemes which can be managed by groups of families or clans.

The concept of subcultural world may be useful still in another way, especially among the Nepali people among whom caste is the basis for dividing people into hierarchic groups based on ritual consideration. If an innovation is introduced at the higher point on the social ladder, the chances of its acceptance by the community may be enhanced as it gains the prestige value of higher groups and thereby becomes an object of imitation, under the process of sanskritization, by the lower castes.

Another important concept is the differentiation between form, function, and meaning. Every culture trait has a form, function and meaning. An item of culture or innovation may not be identically perceived by the individuals of different culture groups. Horner Barnett has pointed out that the form which is the overt expression of a trait, appears to take precedence over the other two qualities as determinant of change. If the form is differently perceived in the value systems of two different cultures, it will be differently accepted by the prospective recipients. But if the form can be reinterpreted to conform to the patterns of meaning of the recipient culture and retain essentially its original functions, it may be accepted. Only on this basis can we explain the reinterpretations of the aboriginal gods as higher gods of the Hindus. Such syncretic process has become very handy in the spread of Christianity in Africa among the tribes. Thus an innovation may be acceptable to the culture groups of the hills — be they caste or tribe — if it can be reinterpreted to conform to their own value systems. This is the technique we may employ to overcome the traditional resistance to change in the Himalayas.

Again, the inter-ethnic conflict or inter-village conflict is another dimension of the life of the hill people. These conflicts may be reinforced and supported through mythology, assumed historical events, and village festivals and rituals, resulting in their overt expression in the day-to-day life of the inhabitants of a region. Such sentiments of conflict could be manipulated to the advantage of the developmental purpose. Thus the sociological significance of the various structural levels of cooperation and conflict is important, as these reveal the reality of the local social structure.

Given the range of change permissible by the structural functioning of a group or society, the success of the developmental efforts depends on the leadership tapped to influence the people to adopt the change. Here again the subcultural training of the administrative personnel, their moral status in the recipient community, and their image in the total traditional social hierarchy could do much to influence the people. In the hill areas, the traditional leaders still control the decision-making process of the local society.

Any lack of cooperation between the administrator and the local leadership may create mistrust and conflict. For example, concepts like 'environment' and 'ecology' do not evoke the same reaction as felt by the governments and aid missions. Forestation and taking care of the resources do not belong to the 'dharma' of the peasant. Theirs is the 'Raj Dharma'. Hence, the spread of new ideas and the implementation of programmes of development largely devolve onto the active cooperation of the local village or clan leadership. A study from Nepal shows that among the Tibeto-Burman tribes, the traditional leaders still control the masses, and in matters of the solutions and interpretations of crisis situations, they still follow their traditional leaders blindly. In the places where the hold of the magico-religious leaders is still strong, a development strategy that neglects these leaders will have negative impact on the authority of these leaders. And this is surely not likely to evoke the generation of local support. The strategy should be to assimilate such local leadership into the development efforts to bring about successful results.

To sum up, the Himalayan communities and tribes should be regarded as organic wholes which have different cultural and mental capacities to absorb the ideas, behavior patterns, institutions and material and social skills brought from outside as items of development. Second, the introduction of developmental inputs must take account of the internal imbalances that may be created as a consequence, in as much as the traditional fit between the religious, social, political, economic, and environmental becomes disturbed without having achieved a new fit. To prevent disorganization, as in the case of the tribals of the plains of India, some positive steps in the way of interrelated bunches of innovations may be introduced to counteract the dysfunctional consequences arising out of the development efforts. Third, each tribe or ethnic group and its mental and social ability should be born in mind while implementing the development programs. And finally, the local leadership and the traditional technology may be of immense help, both for further improvement and for an effective use to manage the specific programs that yield immediate benefits to the local population.

ECONOMIC MODERNIZATION IN A CHEPANG VILLAGE IN NEPAL

Ganesh Man Gurung

Introduction

Among the various approaches to the study of change, "modernization" is a popular term in the social sciences. Various social scientists have attempted to define "modernization" (e.g., Lerner 1958; Rostow 1960; Moore 1966; Levy 1966) since the late 18th century when industrialization arose as a dominant force in western countries. The concept of modernization is also a concern of Indian sociologists and social anthropologists (Srinivas 1966; Dube 1966, 1970; Pandey 1976; Sachidanand 1976; etc.) in the Indian situation. By using their approach, a few foreign scholars (e.g., Tisinger 1970) have studied Nepali society.

Modernization means a process of rapid social change which has been used recently for understanding social phenomenon. Besides, this term is defined as "what is involved in modernization is total transformation of a traditional or pre-modern society into types of technology and associated social organization that characterizes the advanced economically prosperous and relatively politically stable nations of the Western World" (Moore 1965: 95). In other words, modernization has connoted industrialization. It has generally meant a process of sociocultural change in which less developed societies come into possession of characteristics common to more developed ones. So the basic theme of discussion about modernization is the change in the economic aspect as well as the cultural one.

Since the concept of modernization has been constructed to address the process of development in underdeveloped societies, it is unsuitable for primitive tribal societies. This is because primitive economy diverges qualitatively from the money and market economy of complex society. Tribal peoples are considered as living in unapproachable forest and hill areas, having therefore experienced less interaction with other peoples. The "modernization" process has a different meaning among these people. It means to raise their economy to a subsistence level, including the introduction of a certain amount of technology and the modification of the culture to adapt to the new economy.

Whereas in underdeveloped societies modernization is considered as indicated by the development and change up to the standards of industrialized, modernized or, in other words, "Western Societies," in the tribal world, it indicates the development and change of tribal societies up to the level of an underdeveloped stage.

The basic objective of this study is to analyze the process of modernization of the Chepang, a tribal people living in the middle hills west of Kathmandu. Nearly thirty-two thousand people in number, the Chepang are distributed in some of the hilly regions of the Dhading, Chitawan, Gorkha and Makawanpur districts.¹ They live along the steeper slopes of the Mahabharat range at elevations between 2,500 and 4,000 feet above sea level.

The study takes into account various agents of modernization, such as the impact of roads, marketing centers, the Proja Development Programme, new means to communication, education and so forth, to analyze processes and stages of change from forest life to that of a peasantry, and from a primitive to a pre-modern stage. The data were recently collected from Ghairang Village of Mahadeo Panchayat in the Dhading district.² It is about a three hour walk from Malekhu Bazaar on the Prithvi Highway.

The Modernization Process

In general, the socioeconomic structure of the Chepangs is markedly different from that of neighboring non-Chepang peoples, especially that of the Brahmins and Chetris. The main features of the Chepang economy are as follows:

- (a) They have a forest and stream based economy. They still carry on the natural economy as a form of their primitive survival.
- (b) Their technology is simple and indigenous.
- (c) The unit of production and consumption is the family. It acts as an autonomous unit.
- (d) There is an absence of profit-motive.

Like many tribal peoples in the world, the Chepangs lived a semi-nomadic existence, marked by hunting and gathering, fishing, and slash and burn cultivation. They used a variety of indigenous tools to glean their subsistence, including bows and arrows, snares, traps, baskets, hooks and nets, and poisons. Previously, their staple food consisted of honey, wild grains, wild bananas, and forest roots and tubers.

They toil not, neither do they spin ... but living entirely upon wild fruits and the produce of chase ... They have bows and arrows of which the iron arrow-heads are procured from their neighbors but almost no other implements of civilization and it is in the very skillful snaring of the beasts of the field and fowls of the air that all their little intelligence is manifested [Hodgson 1948:45].

Even today, the Chepangs consume the fruits of *chiuri* (*bassia butyracea*), *khania* (a kind of fig tree), and *Newara* (a kind of fern from which the young shoots are eaten).

They collect leaves and fruits of *nettles*, *tangis*, *koirala* flower (name of a tree, *Bauhinia* variegate), *githa* (the plant-*dioscorea Sativa*) *Byakur* (kind of creeper, the roots of which are eaten), *chungia* (the stem tendril and root are eaten), *odal* (*stercuria villosa*), tree from which fibre is obtained) and *Bharlang* (the shoot of which is a spiny shrub, the root is eaten). *Ghitha* bitter in taste, has to be boiled in ashes once and washed thrice to make it edible. And *Bharlang* which is poisonous has to be boiled thrice in ashes and washed seven times to make it eatable" [Varya 1972].

The Chepangs presently still collect insects to eat along with honey and wax. They collect *nyank* (a kind of wasp), *aringal* (hornets) and *ngol* (a poisonous insect). They are conversant with the use of bows and arrows, and their hunting consists mostly of trapping and snaring animals with the assistance of dogs which accompany them on their wanderings. The animals which the Chapangs like to hunt are *ghoral* (wild Himalayan goat), *mirga* (deer) and *banel* (pig). They kill *yasva* (wild fowl), *rutava* (black crested pheasant and other small birds such as *lingsherva* (jureli), *brit* (koter), *manvanga* (phista) and birds. Being good fishermen, the Chepangs fish throughout the year as a vital part of their subsistence economy.

They serve their food on the leaves and *taparis* (small plates made of leaves). This is interesting to note that they divide their food equally among the family members even to children. When they distribute their food they even count the foetus or unborn baby too, whose share goes to the mother [Thapa 1974:78].

All of these characteristics reflect the primitiveness of their economy. However, after the construction of highways such as the Prithvi Rajmarg to the north, the Mugling-Bharatpur highway to the west, the Tribhuvan Rajpath to the east, and the East-West highway to the south, the Chepang region lost its isolation. Nowadays the Chepang region is connected by highways running through it which enable them to visit roadside bazaars such as Malekhu, Mugling,

Bhandara, Manahari and Bharatpur. Consequently, their historically ecologically balanced society is undergoing rapid change.

The local people say that up to a century ago, the Chepangs were nomadic and wholly dependent on hunting, gathering and fishing. In this regard, Gaughley et al. (1971:77) writes that "the Chepangs started agricultural life only ... recently. About 120 years ago ... they used to live partly in the forest and caves." Hodgson (1948:45) notes that "they toil not, neither do they spin." Upreti (1967:29) estimates that they have been doing terrace cultivation for about 80 years. Rai and Chaudhary (1976:12) observe that the Chepang hunters and gatherers must have been compelled to begin a settled life due to the problem of deforestation. In any case, their settled agrarian life is hardly a century old, resulting most probably when they came into contact with agrarian castes. On the other hand, the vanishing scope of hunting and gathering in increasingly exploited jungle made them into simple cultivators. Consequently, their natural economy was increasingly replaced by simple agriculture.

The characteristics of the Chapangs observed by Hodgson (1948) are gone today. Their economy is passing through the transitional phase from a natural economy to a simple agrarian one. However, the Chepangs living in *Kachhar*, the inaccessible interior, still preserve their traditional pattern of economy, since they are left free from interference by so-called "civilized people".

The Chepangs of Ghairang Village differ in many ways from the others of the *Kachhar* area, such as those of Tapang, Loling, Majhkharka and Brushubang. In the latter locations, hunting, and slash and burn cultivation play a significant role in the lives of the villagers. But the Chepangs of Ghairang are in a better position. They have changed from shifting to sedentary cultivation.

Mahadeo Panchayat has a population of 5961 in approximately 985 houses. The households are divided into the following categories:

CHEPANG	259
BRAHMIN	82
MAGAR	83
CETRI	43
NEWAR	10
GURUNG	29
TAMANG	452
UNTOUCHABLE	37

In Ghairang Village there are 92 Chepang, 3 Chetri and 4 Untouchable households.

It takes about three hours to walk on a narrow and rough footpath constructed by the villagers to Malekhu Bazaar on the Prithvi

Highway. Malekhu Bazaar is the main marketing center. The Chepangs of Ghairang generally go there to sell their agricultural produce, including oranges, *chiuri*, *amba*, *chaksi*, bananas and seasonal vegetables such as tomatoes, cucumbers and so forth. They also purchase their daily needs there. They come into contact with non-tribals in the marketing center, from whom they learn about the larger world. For all these reasons the marketing center is an important part of their daily lives.

Agriculture is the main occupation of the villagers. There are several reasons for the central importance of agriculture in their economy. First, for a long time now they have been in contact with Brahmins and Chetris. Second, the Chepangs of Ghairang purchased paddy fields on credit from the Brahmins who were migrating into the plains area. Later, they paid the cost of their land from their agricultural income obtained by selling fruit, fowl, goats and vegetables. According to my observation, only five households out of 92 possessed no land and continued to practice their traditional patterns of subsistence such as gathering in the jungle. The rest of the Chepangs are agriculturalists and even hate their age-long traditional food gathering practices. However, they sometimes hunt deer in groups. Most of them possess both paddy fields and dry lands for maize and millet.

The Praja Development Programme was launched in 1977 for uplifting the Chepangs of Nepal. A field office of the Praja Development Programme of Dhading district is located in Mahadeo Panchayat near Ghairang Village. The Praja (Chepang) Development Office supplies the villagers with seeds, goats for hybridization, fruit plants, insecticides and chemical fertilizers. A primary school was also built in Ghairang by the program. It has 35 students and two teachers. In spite of their difficulties, the villagers share a positive attitude towards the education of their children. The problem of drinking water has also been solved at the present. Thus, the Praja Development Programme has made some significant contributions, but not without weaknesses.

Presently, agricultural production and domestic possessions are the main sources of income. However, five Chepang men received carpentry training, and eight women were trained under the Praja Development program. Two Chepangs work as postmen in the Talti Post Office of the Mahadeo Panchayat. Sometimes the Chepang find courage to go to the plains area and the roadside for employment. Thus they have show an interest in wage and salaried labor.

Due to their contact and interaction with the non-tribals of Mahadeo Panchayat, the Chepangs of Ghairang have abandoned shifting cultivation and adopted settled cultivation. The economic structure of the Chepangs of Ghairang is based essentially on agricultural production. The emergence of a market economy there resulted from

the construction of the Prithvi Highway and the growth of marketing centers such as Malekhu and Bardanda. These are contributing both to agricultural production and to occupational changes among the people.

Their sale of agricultural commodities and purchase of daily needs has led to a change from an immobile economy to a mobile one, and from one oriented towards subsistence to one oriented towards money. Gradually an eagerness towards earning income from various means without depending essentially on agricultural production is emerging among the Chepangs of Ghairang. Due to the improvement of the communication system, including mass media and transportation, the establishment of primary education and the introduction of the Praja Development Program have all been able to contribute towards the path of modernization, acculturation, and the transformation of the social structure.

Summary and Conclusion

The major findings of this study can be summarized as follows:

- (a) Much change has taken place in the traditional economic structure of the Chepangs as a result of a long period of interaction with non-tribals. They are now selling their products in the market. This interaction with outsiders leads them further in the process of modernization of their occupation and economy.
- (b) Responsible factors for the modernization and gradual change in the Chepang region are construction of roads, growth of marketing centers, establishment of educational institutions and introduction of the Praja (Chepang) Development Programme.
- (c) The traditional economic structure of the Chepangs is gradually proceeding towards a dynamic economic structure.

From the above discussion it has been found that the process of change presently taking place among the Chepangs is not modernization. It is simply a change in the horizontal line from one place to another. Because of it, conflict and unrest are common features among the Chepangs of Nepal.

Notes

¹According to the record of Praja (Chepang) Development Offices, the numbers of Chepang by district are as follows:

Chitawan	13,210
Makawanpur	10,000
Dhading	6,480
Gorkha	2,200

²I am grateful to Jeanet, who with great interest visited the Chepang areas for three days, for her comments in the preparation of this paper.

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CULTURE AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT FOR SUBSISTENCE:
AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

Bhanu Timseena

The Problem

There are a variety of resources on the surface of the earth which were not produced or made by humans. These exist as a part of nature; hence they are called natural resources (Malla and Shrestha 1983:1). While people have used natural resources from the dawn of civilization, technological development is the major variable in conversion of natural resources into human resources. One could say that land is the basic resource, since most natural resources are inseparable from the land. Humans need the soil for their existence (F. Trewartha and others quoted by Malla and Shrestha 1983: 2).

Resources are of two types: renewable and nonrenewable. Resources such as water, forests and pasture are renewable. Others, such as minerals are non-renewable and cannot be used again once consumed. The consumption of environmental resources such as land, soil, water, air, minerals and energy are increasing throughout the world. Unfortunately, humans often irrationally use their natural resources to the extent that they endanger themselves by destroying the means of their existence. By understanding the nature of their impact on the environment, humans can learn to change and repair the face of the earth in a rational and constructive fashion (Thomas quoted by Malla and Shrestha 1983:3).

The present need is an integration of environmental management with development. The concept of environment needs to be not only a development oriented one, of resource exploitation, but also one of resource management (R. Bharadvaj and D. V. Ramana quoted by Malla and Shrestha 1983:6).

Resource management has been around much longer than the formal term for it. In Nepal, the various ethnic groups had their ways of conserving, sustaining, and reproducing the resources that provided the base for their subsistence according to each one's culture. Each ethnic group has developed a specific mode of production from the land. This mode of production results from a long history of development of technology and ideas and relates each group of people

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to the natural resources and social conditions. Because the mode of production relates people to their natural environment, its development also implies ecological change.

This paper is an attempt to describe the traditional hill dweller's culturally defined patterns of resource management for economic activities. Broadly, culture has been found to be a deterministic component of rural economy, by which various ethnic groups of Nepal have experienced and managed their communal as well as other economic capital resources for a long time.

Historically, the various hill ethnic peoples controlled many resources and properties communally, such as the *kipat* lands of the Rais, Limbus, Sherpas, Tamangs, Majhis and so forth. These groups had their own identity due to their cultural practices and other numerous characteristics. But social processes brought them into contact with other groups, and these diverse groups intermingled with each other in a sort of melting pot of cultures.

While aspects of this intermingling were beneficial and functional for the society, after the abolition of communal resources (*kipat lands*), the intermingling process created tragic economic hardship among some ethnic groups. This hardship resulted from the introduction of social and cultural hierarchy, which introduced economic differentiation within and among the various groups. Ultimately, upper class or privileged peoples obtained more chances than other lower stratum groups in various aspects of life.

This paper focuses on these problems as they were experienced by the Majhis of Amchaur, in the Kabhre Palanchok District of the Bagmati Zone. The Majhis have been influenced by their natural environment since their origin. They have depended on the river, and the river has been the center of their culture. This culture has been the group identity and a resource for subsistence. But with social changes such as the fall of the Ranas, the introduction of the Panchayat system, and other social reforms, the Majhis have been losing their traditional privileges.

The Majhis live mainly in the Tarai and hills, but not in the Himalayan region. They have adopted a specific type of life-style. They traditionally practiced boating, fishing, and agriculture. They are influenced by the natural environment and surrounding groups. As Sherpas of Solu and Pharak are able to grow winter crops of wheat and potatoes, the Majhis also grow winter and summer crops like rice, wheat, maize and vegetables for their subsistence.

The Majhis of Nepal believe in the Hindu religion, but they are Mongoloid in their features; in this way they are similar to the Tharus of the Tarai and the Magars of the hills. They are dark skinned and muscular, with semi-oblique eyes. They have resource management

patterns appropriate to their subsistence and life style. They distinctly differ from other ethnic groups in various ways, although the number of Majhi speakers is disappearing, and the Nepali language is increasingly becoming the first language.

Majhi culture is a minority culture. As the Majhi people are scattered over the countryside, they intermingle with people of other cultures. They base their subsistence on the resources at hand and adopt the cultural values of the locality.

This paper is based on traditional anthropological research methods. The primary data were collected through intensive fieldwork. The secondary data were collected from the available literature. Some key information was taken from experts and research scholars who had made contributions about various hill ethnic groups in Nepal. This is a descriptive explanation of the culture and subsistence activities of the Majhi.

An Anthropological Perspective on Resource Management for Subsistence

Anthropology, as the most holistic of the human sciences, studies humans in their totality. Therefore, it studies also the economic aspect of human life. Traditionally, economic anthropology was the study of the economic life of primitive peoples. It focused on the economic conditions of preliterate, preindustrial, unmechanized and nonpecuniary societies.

This is a rather old conception of anthropology. In fact, the broader definition of anthropology is that it is the study of humans in all times and places. Economic anthropology studies both preliterate and modern economies. Until 1940, anthropologists ignored the economic aspect of society. Afterwards, anthropologists started to study it in detail. Economic anthropology focuses on the appropriation of nature, human subsistence requirements, and the mode of production of any primitive or modern society.

Anthropologists have long distinguished three main types of subsistence economy: hunting and gathering, domestication of animals (herding), and agriculture and animal husbandry (Mair 1984:161). According to Herskovits (1974:68), subsistence economy means the ability of people with simple techniques to manipulate their resources effectively (Herskovits 1974:68).

Every society has its own type of subsistence, even though not all are specifically subsistence economies, as defined above. They all have specific ways of producing food, shelter, clothing and income. "Most of the preliterate societies had an economic deterministic style. There is no society without methods of production, distribution, consumption and some form of exchange" (Herskovits 1974:143).

Formally defined, each society has a method of rational allocation of scarce means to competing ends. Economic anthropology focuses on this problem of how people exploit or manage resources for their subsistence.

Cultural Patterns and Resource Management Activities of Majhis

The Majhis of Nepal have long been scattered over the country. They occupy the three main ecological regions of Nepal—the mountains, hills, and Tarai—which has led to different cultural traits and management patterns reflecting the dominant ones of each region. This study focuses on Majhis of the hill region, which is inhabited by a mosaic of ethnic and racial groups and is characterized by a variety of resource management patterns. The study area is Amchaur (also called Anpchaur by the local people), a ward of the Chandeni Village Panchayat. The Panchayat lies in the northeastern part of the Kabhrepalanchowk District.

Amchaur has been home to a Majhi community for two and a half centuries. There is one Chetri household within the village and a Brahman village nearby. The Majhis have their own characteristic way of life. They have nuclear, joint and extended families, though the nuclear family is prominent. Marriages are for the most part arranged, monogamous and patrilocal. Their houses distinctly differ from those of the neighboring Brahmans and Chetris. Six types of Majhi clans inhabit the study area with three types of kinship systems: consanguineous, affinal, and ritual (*mit*). The Majhis worship all Hindu gods and deities and celebrate all common Hindu festivals. They consume common foods and drinks in the manner of other *matwalis*. Both traditional and modern types of dress and ornaments are found in Amchaur.

Except that the Majhis celebrate a death ceremony called *pitara*, their life-cycle ceremonies are similar to those of other upper caste Hindus (Brahmins and Chetris). They have no priests in the manner of other castes. The priestly work is performed by the head of each household.

The Majhis lack education. Few can even sign their names. Young children only know the alphabet. There is no health post for the sick and diseased, and no sanitation programs at all. Some households have utilized family planning schemes to limit the size of their families. Their native language has completely disappeared due to long-term sociocultural interaction with non-Majhi peoples. Every aspect of the culture is undergoing change.

Types of Resources and their Contribution to Subsistence Economy

The rural area of Nepal is endowed with various kinds of natural resources, and the patterns of their exploitation also vary according to

time, place and culture. Most of the Majhi people work for mere subsistence and suffer from poverty, although they have some sorts of natural resources. Predominantly, they practice agriculture, but this does not fully supply their needs. Although the Majhis are agriculturalists, they are forced to supply agricultural labor to their Brahmin neighbors because of the scarcity of their own land, capital, and other resources.

Fifty Majhi households depend upon 163 *ropants* (8.15 ha.) of land. Previously, their forefathers practiced boating for the mail service along the Indrawati River from Dhulikhel to Chautara, but this has been stopped. Some of them go to Kathmandu and elsewhere in search of work. They earn more from laboring and less from their parental land, animal husbandry, poultry and portering. Porterage, animal husbandry and poultry raising are subsidiary activities. Now some Majhi families have started stone grinding mills or *Ghatta* on the Indrawati River side. One household has a hand loom. None of the Majhi of Amchaur are in governmental service, but young boys work as peons in Kathmandu city. Other boys and girls work as cooks and house servants of officials in the city.

The following table shows the types of resources and the average contribution of each to subsistence.

Table 1. Average contribution of various types of resources to subsistence in Majhi households of Amchaur

1.	Agriculture	29
2.	Animal Husbandry	10
3.	Agricultural Wage Labor	41
4.	Fishing	2
5.	Boating	1
6.	Porterage	12
7.	Service	3
8.	Small Scale Cottage Industries	2
Total		100

Source: 1986 Field Survey.

The Majhis are an old and established tribe of Nepal. Like the Rai, Limbu, Tamang, Chepang and Lepcha, they held their land communally on a *kipat* tenure. The Majhi communities received the land as *jagir* in compensation for their boatman services. Presently, their landholdings are greatly decreased because the Indrawati River has flooded their *kipat* land. What land they still have, they cultivate in a traditional way. On the average, their land only provides crops sufficient for four months out of the year. Like elsewhere in Nepal, the productivity of their land is decreasing. Therefore, the agricultural sector is insufficient for the Majhi economy.

To assist their land resources, the Majhis of Amchaur have adopted other resources as well. For the last three decades or so they have practiced animal husbandry. They have some cattle, goats, pigs and poultry. They receive these animals from their rich neighbors and raise them on a share basis. The animals provide meat, manure, plowing oxen and some money income. There is not much profit in animal husbandry for the Majhis, because the share basis is in practice exploitative, and they own no cattle.

Miner resources include the *ghatta*, a water-driven stone mill, and the recently adopted hand loom. But these also are insufficient for their livelihood. A stone mill does not make much profit when the people have little corn to grind. The hand loom, adopted by only one household, also runs irregularly. It contributes little to the loom owners.

These Majhis are extremely exploited by the neighboring Brahmins in many ways and aspects of their lives. Culturally, they are of lower status. They have to show respect to their higher caste neighbors. They supply the bonded labor and herd boys to the Brahmin moneylenders to reduce the exorbitant interest rates on their loans. The *Theki Koseli* and *Dhyake* interest systems never allow them to rise above their debts. In effect, they are slaves.

Various aspects of cultural patterns and economy will force change onto the Majhis. Yet their poverty is so severe that it is difficult to bring positive change without an effective economic program. The Majhis are struggling under extreme economic hardships. Although they have adopted various types of livelihood, such as fishing, service and porterage, these alternatives fail to alleviate their hardships. The main thing is that recently they have become increasingly conscious of their backward status and condition. This downtrodden status is due to illiteracy, lack of economic means, and the existing hierarchy of castes.

The overall findings of this study suggest that the Majhis are suffering from extreme poverty, illiteracy and economic backwardness. Their conservative cultural values also pull them down. These social evils are negative forces in the Majhi community. Therefore, they should be eradicated. The economic, social, and cultural backwardness gives a clear picture of the Majhi future. Since transportation and communication are completely lacking in Amchaur, they must be provided with additional resources for generating income and employment opportunities with which they can uplift themselves economically.

Glossary

<i>Bari</i>	Dry unirrigated and non-terraced slope land
<i>Dhyake</i>	The exorbitant interest rate that prevailed in rural areas. Each day, one rupee is charged as interest against 100 rupees
<i>Ghatta</i>	A small stone mill powered by water through wooden turbine-like devices
<i>Khet</i>	Irrigated paddy land
<i>Khoria</i>	Slash and burn upland where shifting cultivation is practiced
<i>Kipat</i>	Category of communal land tenure allotted to various hill and Tarai Mongoloid ethnic groups by the state
<i>Matwali</i>	People who drink liquor
<i>Pitara</i>	Funeral ceremony practiced by Majhis one year after a death
<i>Theki-Koseli</i>	A traditional ritualized exchange system between moneylenders and creditors characterized by exploitation of the latter by the formals

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A SOCIOECONOMIC PROFILE OF THE PORTERS IN THE CENTRAL MID-HILLS OF NEPAL¹

Kiran Dutta Upadhyay

Introduction

No reliable estimates of unemployment and underemployment exist in Nepal. Lack of proper data as well as definitional and conceptual problems have contributed to this situation. One set of data that does exist, a survey carried out by the National Planning Commission in 1977, showed that the rate of unemployment is highest in the hills. At this time, 65 percent of the economically active population of the hills was underemployed (NPC 1978:57). The proportion of underemployed individuals per household is even greater than that of unemployed. For Nepal as a whole, the proportion of unemployed to the total labor force in rural areas stood at 5.52 percent in 1977. Breaking this rate down by gender, 5.47% of the men and 5.68% of the women were unemployed (Jain 1980:3).

Small subsistence farmers predominate in the Hills of Nepal. More than 60 percent of the hill households own less than one hectare of land, and the average size of such holdings is less than 0.5 ha. While the hills and mountains support 65 percent of the total population of Nepal, they consist only 43 percent of the cultivated land. This comes of an average of 0.12 ha. per person (CBS 1987:vii-ix). Increasing crowding of the farmers and declining shares in the total land clearly indicates that the size of the holdings of the lower 50 percent of the households has decreased over the last three decades. The evidence shows that the population is also increasing. The average size of households in the hill districts of Ramechhap and Sindhuli is 5.4 and 6.1 persons respectively (CBS 1984).

Transportation and communication difficulties in the hills have largely been responsible for poor socioeconomic integration of the hill households, resulting in semi-isolated regional pockets. One of the basic characteristics of the employment structure in Nepal, particularly in the hills, is the nearly total lack of sectorial mobility. Land available for agriculture is severely limited by topography, and its productivity has been deteriorating rapidly because of improper land-use practices caused by the mounting population pressure.

Due to such of this difficult socioeconomic milieu, a majority of hill dwellers are always in search of alternatives in addition to agriculture for sources of income. Since other sources of income are scarce, many people have no other choice than portering, an extremely strenuous form of work.

One contributing factor to the growth of the numbers of people involved in portering is the Nepal Food Corporation. The Nepal Food Corporation brings rice into the headquarters on the basis of People's participation. For instance, the Nepal Food Corporation of Ramechhap brings rice into the headquarters in this way. A porter receives 30 kgs. of rice for carrying 100 kgs. from Sindhuli, the headquarters of the adjoining district, to Ramechhap. In this case as in most instances, a porter carrying an average size load of 60 kgs. takes about three days to reach Ramechhap from Sindhuli.

Objectives of the Study

This article is an attempt to document the socioeconomic profile of the paid porters belonging to one of the weaker sections of Nepali society. Portering, particularly in the hills of Nepal, is overwhelmingly an activity contributing to the earnings necessary for its existence of the weaker sections of the population. Seddon et al. (1981:90) have also opined that portering as an only or dominant source of income is almost unknown.

The daily behavior of the porters is organized to balance production, income and consumption of resources through the division of household labor, both within and without the home. These balances are referred to as survival strategies. They also encompass a range of responsibilities among family members. These arrangements are essentially normatively or socially defined, and they are modified according to changes in the surroundings or other circumstances, be they economic, social, or ecological.

Methodology Employed

Ramechhap and Sindhuli Districts, of the central mid-hills of Nepal, were purposely chosen as the location for this study. One Panchayat in each of the districts was chosen for survey. The survey was carried out during the month of January, 1988.

Based on the nature of the problem, the headquarters of the districts, Ramechhap and Siddheswor (Sindhuli) village Panchayats, were selected.

The methodologies include both quantitative surveys and in-depth micro-level observation.

Study Sample

Due to the lack of a data base, the researcher applied a judgmental sampling technique preceded by a prior consultation with a few key informants from both of the Panchayats. It was decided to interview ten percent of the total estimated porters from both Panchayats. Thus, in Ramechhap, 35 porters were interviewed. Likewise, 33 porters were interviewed in Siddheswor (Sindhuli). Of the total respondents interviewed, 20 percent in Ramechhap and 25 percent in Sindhuli were females. The names of the respondents were randomly selected.

It is expected that the sample size was sufficiently large to be statistically representative and to indicate the trends and patterns of the porters and their socioeconomic environment. Despite a fairly large sample size, every effort was made to capture indepth qualitative information on the living condition of the porters and the socioeconomic environment in which they operate.

A simple problem-oriented questionnaire was used to gather primary information. In addition, observation and group interviews were used to solicit the relevant information.

Analysis and Discussion

Family Size

The families of the majority of the porters consisted of 5 to 8 members. In Ramechhap and Sindhuli this size range represented 51.43 and 57.57 percent respectively.

The average family sizes in the Ramechhap and Sindhuli Panchayats were 7.28 and 6.69 respectively (see Table 1 in Appendix 1). These averages are larger than that characterizing the districts as a whole. The reason for the larger family sizes of the selected Panchayats might be in the nature of the respondents. Poorly educated, they lack knowledge and access to family planning. It is also predictable that they may feel that the number of children they have makes no difference in their lives.

Farm Land

In Ramechhap, the majority of the porters (37 percent) held an average of 0.50 to 1.00 ha. of land. All of them held marginal *bari* lands (unirrigated upland). This *bari* was fragmented into many parts with an average size of 0.74 ha.

In Sindhuli, more than half of the sample respondents (52 percent) held 0.25 ha. or less of farmland. The average size was 0.35 ha. (Table 2).

This small size of the landholdings has been a crucial factor forcing the people to seek other sources of income.

Ethnic Composition

In Ramechhap, 25.71 percent of the people were Brahmin or Kshatriya. Tamangs represented the next largest group (21.37 percent). The majority of the Tamangs work as porters. In Siddheswor (Sindhuli), most of the residents were Tamang (40 percent), making the second greatest contribution to the total labor (Table 3).

In Ramechhap, the Tibeto-Burman Tamang, Hayu and Kasai groups represented the majority of the porters, with distributions of 29, 23 and 22.8 percent respectively. Among Tamangs and Kami, men and women were equally engaged in portage, while among the Hayu, the male to female ratio was 60 : 40.

In Siddheswor (Sindhuli), the majority of people (30.3 percent) were of the Sarki untouchable or occupational leather worker caste. The male to female ratio among the Sarkis was 1 : 1. The Tamang were next in number (24.2 percent), again with equal numbers of men and women engaged in portage (Table 4).

From these findings, it is clearly evident that both males and females engage in portage. The significant difference is along caste lines. The upper caste Brahmins and Kshatriyas are negligibly involved in portage. Our fieldwork indicates that alternative sources of income and higher socioeconomic status were significant factors. To some extent these groups were more literate and educated than the other castes. This placed them in a position to obtain other jobs in the village and elsewhere to contribute to household income. On the other hand, the majority of the lower caste and Tibeto-Burman groups engaged in portage from their early teenage years in order to survive.

Food Deficit Situation at the Household Level

In both of the Panchayats surveyed, all the porters interviewed experienced food deficits from March until August, especially June through August. This indicates that the only immediate option for these households is portage. The people's greatest need arises during the monsoon season (Tables 5 and 6). The fieldwork showed that Ramechhap is food deficit, and that much of Sindhuli suffers floods. According to the porters, they are relatively idle from

December to March. During these months there is even little of their marginal agricultural work.

Detailed investigation on food availability and sufficiency for different groups within Nepali society has rarely been carried out. This is unfortunate, because malnutrition affects all castes and ethnic groups in the pre-monsoon months from March and May. The condition of the people in this study was no exception. The principle factor is inadequate landholding, leading to insufficient staple food crop production and an inability to earn cash to buy extra food.

Sectorwise Employment Structure and Wage Rates

In Ramechhap, the majority of respondents (42.85 percent) experienced only three months of employment in the agricultural sector. However, 25.71 percent obtained 6 months employment in the nonagricultural sector. This employment situation was similar to the case of Sindhuli (Table 7).

In both Panchayats, men and women received different wage rates. In Ramechhap, the government daily wage rates were Rs. 24.00 and Rs 20.00 for men and women, respectively. The daily wage rates were lower in Sindhuli, where men and women received Rs 20.00 and Rs 16.00 respectively. The workday is generally 8 hours long. However, the skilled laborers and the group leaders receive slightly more than the others. The rates for skilled labor depend on the nature of the work involved.²

In the private sector and in the household, discrimination between men's and women's wages exists. In Ramechhap, the daily wage rate for men was Rs 20.00 per day with three *manas* (approximately 1.5 kgs.) of available food grains. Likewise, women received Rs 15.00 per day and the same quantity of food grains. In Sindhuli, the differential of wage rates for female and male labors at the household level resembled that of Ramechhap. The researchers observed that in both panchayats, the food grains or snacks received as part of the wages contain millet and maize. These wage rates were general, but varied according to the type and nature of the work done. In most cases at the household level, the working day was longer than 8 hours.

Field observations support that even in the agricultural sector, the majority of the respondents had to work as wage earners on fields owned by others. In the nonagricultural sector, portage represented the major source of income. This was especially true for Ramechhap. Ramechhap dwellers had to transport their consumer goods by foot from the headquarters at Sindhuli. Because of the nature of employment in the non-agricultural sector, this sector is uncertain. Additionally, the carriers remained idle during the monsoon months.

In Ramechhap proper, unlike Sindhuli, the majority of the residents are engaged in portage. They receive only Rs 6 to 7 for each dharni (2.5 kgs) of goods carried from Sindhuli to Ramechhap:

Consumption Pattern of the Porters at the Household Level

Since food is the primary human need, this study was also directed to observe and document the consumption pattern of the porters. It was noted that maize is the staple diet of the respondents, occupying the top position in the regular diet of 98 percent and 70 percent of the porters in Ramechhap and Sindhuli Panchayats, respectively. Other more frequently consumed grains include pulses (horse gram and masyang) and millets (finger millet and buck wheat). The least frequently consumed grain is wheat (Table 8). However, it was difficult to observe whether the porters had the opportunity to consume rice.

The reasons given by the respondents for these consumption patterns were:

1. Only maize is grown on their marginal *bari* lands, since these are only suitable for maize.
2. Maize has been in their regular diet since their early childhood.
3. Because of their economic limitation they have to survive with maize.
4. Maize serves a dual purpose: human food and livestock feed. Maize is mainly consumed in the form of grit. During the process of grit making (milling³) the flour comes out as a by-product which is fed to livestock. Livestock raising is an integral part of the household farming economy. Maize grain can be used for making local beverages such as rakshi and Jand Rakshi. Jand making and drinking is quite common among the porters in the hills of Nepal.

Concluding Remarks

Although evidence is sparse, it can be safely stated that paid portage has existed for a quite a long time in Nepal simply to meet the basic needs of society in the arduous hill communities of Nepal. However, an inadequate data base prohibits the exact measurement and analysis of these activities. These activities largely lie between the boundaries of the usual rural versus semi-urban or urban culture, and between agricultural and nonagricultural categories. These classifications inevitably involve a degree of arbitrariness since they

impose a single dividing line on what actually contains a continuous spectrum of situations in the contemporary hills of Nepal.

Population pressure, subsistence farming, low productivity, and lack of transportation and communication facilities are among the reasons forcing the bulk of the hill population into this strenuous form of labor for their living. This section of the hill society supplements its household expenditure with porterage, which is the only viable alternative source of income.

However, a fuller assessment of the significance of this nonfarm income for the rural poor must await the results of research into rural wage and market structures. This will be of particular importance to the landless or near landless farm households—i.e., the poorest of the rural poor in the hills of Nepal. What is important here is that any reduction in the dependency on porterage and the consequent increase in rural income among these vulnerable low-income groups will depend heavily upon the growth of demand for rural labor outside agriculture. For instance, through the provision of social and economic infrastructure to the hills, a substantial impact on the development of local nonfarm activities can be made.

Small manufacturers, services and crop-processing enterprises, for example, are among the primary beneficiaries of rural electrification. Roads in the hills enable new nonfarm activities. Hill roads also give these groups greater access to education, health, and many other social amenities, and thus they are an important factor to be considered for investment programs.

However, Seddon et al. (1981:104) concluded that porterage is merely a symptom of underdevelopment. The author of this article visualizes that in the present hill context of Nepal, paid porterage serves hill society. It provides basic needs on the one hand, and it is a major source of livelihood for a bulk of this vulnerable section on the other. Nonetheless, it is rational to infer that the impact of modernization in the agricultural sector, as well as in other developmental activities, is not as unilinear as might be expected. Hence, to minimize the miserable conditions of the people, the overall development is most acute in the hills of Nepal. In spite of many sincere attempts, the policies, programs and projects have not contributed adequately to the poor, and their situation has shown little or no improvement.

In this article, an attempt has been made to provide a small data base for porterage. Porters are wage earners about whom little is known, but they are an integral part of the hill communities of Nepal. This study provides basic data to researchers and policy makers.

Appendix: Tables

Table 1. Family size of porters in Ramechhap and Siddheswor (Sindhuli) Panchayats (in percent)

Family Size	Ramechhap	Sindhuli
Less than 5 persons	22.85	18.18
5 to 8 persons	51.43	57.57
More than 8	25.71	24.25
Average Family Size	7.28	6.69

Table 2. Size of lands held by the porters (in percent)

Farm Size (ha.)	Ramechhap	Sindhuli
0 - 0.25	18	52
0.25 - 0.50	25	28
0.50 - 1.00	37	17
Larger than 1.00	20	03
Average Size	0.74	0.35

Note: Less than 5 percent of the respondents owned *khet* (wet lowland) in both Panchayats.

Table 3: Ethnic composition of the Ramechhap and Siddheswor (Sindhuli) Village Panchayats (the study area)

Composition	Ramechhap ¹	Sindhuli ²
Brahmin/Kshatriya	25.71	25.0
Tamang	21.37	40.0
Hayu	11.08	-
Newar	14.05	15.0
Kasai	11.79	-
Magar	11.00	5.0
Sarki/Kami/Damai	5.00	10.0
Others	-	5.0

Sources: ¹District Panchayat and Village Panchayat, Ramechhap.

²Pradhan Pancha, Siddheswor Village Panchayat.

Table 4: Ethnic composition of the porters and the ratios of men to women engaged in paid portering

Composition	Ramechhap ¹			Sindhuli ²		
	%	Men	Women	%	Men	Women
Tamang	29.0	50	50	24.2	50	50
Magar	14.3	70	30	3.1	60	40
Kasai	22.8	50	50	-	-	-
Hayu	23.0	60	40	3.0	-	-
Kami	5.2	40	60	6.1	40	60
Sarki	2.8	50	50	30.3	50	50
Newar	2.9	80	20	6.0	80	20
Kshatriya	-	-	-	12.0	75	25
Gharti	-	-	-	12.1	50	50
Brahmin	-	-	-	3.2	95	5

Sources: ¹District Panchayat and Village Panchayat, Ramechhap.
²Pradhan Pancha, Siddheswor Village Panchayat.

Table 5: Number of food deficit months among the porters at the household level (by percentage of households)

Deficit Months	Ramechhap	Sindhuli
3	5.71	0.00
4	5.73	15.15
5	25.71	24.24
6	20.00	18.18
7	20.00	12.12
8 and above	22.85	30.31

Table 6. Acute food grain deficit months faced by the porters by numbers of households (in numbers of households)

Months (n=35)	Ramechhap (n=33)	Sindhuli
April/May	30	32
May/June	34	32
June/July	33	31
July/Aug	29	9
Aug/Sept	8	5
Sept/Oct	4	6
Oct/Nov	3	6
Dec/Jan	5	8
Jan/Feb	22	20
Feb/Mar	27	26
Mar/Apr	33	32

Table 7. Employment structure of porters by sector in terms of number of months employed (in percent)

Number of Months	Ramechhap		Agri. Sector	Sindhuli Non-Agri. Sector
	Agri. Sector	Non-Agri. Sector		
1	8.57	-	33.33	3.03
2	17.14	5.17	18.18	3.03
3	42.85	8.57	36.36	9.09
4	17.14	14.28	12.13	3.03
5	8.57	8.57	-	24.25
6	5.73	25.71	-	15.15
7	-	5.73	-	9.03
8	-	17.14	-	9.09
9	-	14.29	-	24.24

Table 8: Food consumption of the porters at the household level

Food Item	Ramechhap Rank*			Sindhuli Rank*		
	1	2	3	1	2	3
Maize	33	1	1	23	9	1
Rice	1	3	12	3	4	24
Pulses (Horse gram and masyang)	1	23	6	4	11	14
Millets (Finger millet and buck wheat)	-	7	8	7	22	1
Wheat	-	-	2	-	-	7

*Rank: 1 = Most frequently used; 2 = Frequently used; 3 = Least Frequent

Notes

¹This article arose out of research carried out by the author on the "World Food Program" assigned by UNDP/FAO, in January-February, 1988.

²The information on the wage rates and working day is among government employees is based on discussions at the District and Village Panchayats of the study area.

³An indigenous stone grinder called a *janto* is used for milling.

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EMPLOYMENT, WORKING CONDITIONS AND MODE OF LIVING:

THE CASE OF THE NEPALI WATCHMEN IN BOMBAY¹

Phanindreshwar Paudel

Introduction and Methodology

Nepali laborers in Bombay are engaged in various economic activities. They are employed in many different industries and occupations. Among these, the job of watchman employs quite a sizable number of Nepali laborers in Bombay.² By and large, the Nepali watchmen are employed to guard blocks of offices, banks, factories, commercial complexes, residential colonies, private buildings, and the like.

This paper attempts to highlight the employment, working and living conditions of the Nepali watchmen in the city of Bombay, with an emphasis on the relation of these issues to a few selected background factors. It was hypothesized that the employment, working and living conditions of these people improve in relation to their personal and employment backgrounds. The hypotheses related to these issues have been tested against primary quantitative survey data collected in the field in 1988.

A quota sample design and snowball sampling procedure were used to draw a sample of 58 watchmen from three sectors of employment, namely, public institutes, industrial and commercial enterprises, and housing cooperative societies. Data were collected by means of interview and observation techniques. The data were analyzed with the help of univariate and bivariate tables prepared on machines. While univariate tables were interpreted on the basis of percentage distribution, the trends in the bivariate tables were ascertained by using the chi-square (X^2) test. The hypotheses were accepted or rejected by considering the value of chi-square (X^2) at a 0.05 level of significance. However, the non-random sample design and small sample size have been admitted as the major limitations of the study.

Background

Most of the Nepali watchmen in Bombay come from the hill areas of the Far Western Development Region (FWDR) of Nepal, particularly the Doti, Achham, Baitadi and Dadeldhura districts. The economy of the hills of the FWDR is mainly characterized by a scarcity of farm land, low agricultural productivity, little non-farm employment and short- and long-term labor migration (See CBS 1987; EIU 1981; EIU 1982; Dahal, Rai and Manzardo 1977).

On the average, the people of the FWDR are poor and indebted. In order to meet their household expenses and make payments on their loans, they have to look for work outside the area. Due to the lack of road and transport linkages with the rest of Nepal, they have little exposure or contact with other parts of the country. The small size of the industrial sector and the scarce non-farm employment elsewhere in Nepal (CBS 1987:197), coupled with massive underemployment among the rural and agricultural labor force in the country, discourages workers from remaining in Nepal to work. Relatively more exposure to the Indian border and extensive road and transport facilities in India gives the Nepali laborers much easier access to the big towns and cities of India. Bombay, because it is highly industrialized and has many Nepali immigrants, particularly appeals to them.

Since the Nepali immigrants are rural, poor, and for the most part young, they come to Bombay with little or no education and no non-farm experience. Thus it is extremely difficult for them to get access to skilled or technical jobs in the city. On the other hand, their reputation as "the brave, sincere and honest Gurkhas" has made it easier for them to find jobs as watchmen, chowkidars and guards. These people are the most trusted and, therefore, most preferred candidates for such jobs. In the city of Bombay, the job of watchman has been stereotyped as that of 'the Gurkhas'. The term 'Gurkha' is usually applied to all watchmen, even if they are not Nepali. This stereotype suggests that the watchman job is easily accessible to Nepali people. Besides, the old workers make jobs more accessible to the latter through the chain of contacts between the old workers and new arrivals. They provide information about job opportunities, vacancies, etc., and make recommendations to prospective employers.

Sector of Employment

In Bombay, Nepali laborers work as watchmen in the following sectors of employment: (1) public institutions, (2) manufacturing and commercial establishments, (3) housing cooperative societies, and (4) independent or private buildings and shops, in which case they are called 'street watchmen'.

The employment and working conditions of watchmen are different in each of these sectors of employment. Although the employment and working conditions in private institutes are strictly regulated by rules and regulations, these may not be practiced in the manufacturing and commercial establishments. In the housing cooperative societies, rules and regulations may not exist at all. The employment and working conditions of the 'street watchmen' employed to guard individual or private buildings and shops during the night are the least regulated legally (Sinha 1977:5).

The average duration of stay³ of Nepali watchmen in Bombay is about ten years. Those who stay longer are generally older. At first they start work in housing societies. As time goes on, they shift from housing to private industries, and then to public institutes. Similarly, the young watchmen start in the housing sector, while the elder ones settle in the public institutes. The rationale behind this pattern is that the younger immigrants begin work in the less organized and regulated housing societies. More experienced and older workers accumulate market exposure, information, and contacts with natives, allowing them to join more organized and better regulated establishments.

Education plays an insignificant role in obtaining jobs. The watchmen do not significantly differ in their educational background, which is little. They do not receive formal education in their work, even in the public industries and institutes.

Employment and Working Conditions

Initially, the only occupational experience of the Nepali watchmen in Bombay is that of owner cultivators or agricultural laborers. In Bombay, many have taken a variety of jobs in addition or prior to that of watchman. These include domestic servant, peon, factory worker, plumber, helper, cook, hotel boy, and milk boy in commercial and industrial enterprises. They leave their jobs one after another, mainly to return to Nepal for visits.

The reasons for the unsteady character of their work reveal two interrelated characteristics of employment conditions in the private sector. These are lack of job security and leave facilities on the part of the employers, and lack of commitment to particular jobs on the part of the watchmen. Due to the temporary, ad hoc nature of employment and working conditions, the Nepali workers seek employment for supplementary income for their households in Nepal, not as a career. Their attachment to their family in Nepal is still primary.

The average watchman has been working on the same job for the past seven months or so. He draws an average salary of Rs. 757 per month. Past job experience does not seem to improve present

salaries. This may also be a contributing factor in the frequent job changes, since there is no inducement to remain at the same job. The primary reason for changing jobs is to go to Nepal. When the laborers return from Nepal, they take whatever job is available, irrespective of the salary. Often, the salary of the next job is less than that of the previous one.

Watchmen in the public sector enjoy greater job security and benefits than those in the private sector. They work a fixed 8 hour workday, with weekly holidays and leave facilities. They are provided equipment such as truncheon and torch, rain coats or umbrellas, warm clothes, boots and uniforms appropriate to the hour and the season. They enjoy fringe benefits and facilities, such as increment, provident fund, medical facilities, and housing. The housing, unlike 'free accommodation', may be either consist of rent-free quarters or a housing allowance. Watchmen in the public sector usually do not work overtime, and, if they do, they are reimbursed with overtime pay equal to or greater than their regular rate of pay.

Employment and working conditions in the industrial sector vary from organization to organization. Watchmen working for manufacturing industries, especially those in the public sector, are permanent employees with a fixed 8 hour workday, weekly holidays, and leave facility. However, even those with an 8 hour workday usually work 12 hour days, seven days a week, in order to earn overtime pay which between one and two times the usual wage rate. The kinds of equipment supplied to the industrial employees include various combinations of truncheon, torch, umbrella or raincoat, warm clothes, boots and dress. The same goes for fringe benefits and facilities such as increments, provident funds, bonuses, and medical and housing facilities.

Commercial employees receive less benefits than industrial ones, especially in the private sector. They are generally employed temporarily with twelve hour working days. They may or may not receive weekly holidays and leave facilities.

Watchmen in housing cooperatives are also employed temporarily. They have twelve hour working days and seven day workweeks. They enjoy no holidays, leave facilities or fringe benefits other than increments to their monthly salary and housing facilities in the form of 'free accommodation'. Unlike rent-free quarters, the 'free accommodation' is, informal and ad hoc. These workers do not work overtime, and, among the various categories of watchmen, they are the ones who most commonly take odd jobs in addition to their watchman job. In the mornings they usually clean the automobiles of the residents of the colony for which they work. For this they are paid Rs. 30 to 40 per car per month. They also do domestic work for the residents, usually for tips.

The employment and working conditions of the Nepali watchmen in Bombay are poor, especially in the housing cooperatives where the benefits and facilities are the least. Generally, working conditions⁴ seem to be positively related to the sector of employment and the personal backgrounds of the watchmen. Public institutes provide the best working conditions, and after them the industrial sector, while housing societies provide the worst conditions. Aspects of the personal backgrounds that seem significant are age and present tenure of employment. Older watchmen and ones who have been working longer at the same job enjoy better working conditions than younger or more recently employed ones.

As Nepali immigrants grow older and work longer in Bombay, they tend to shift from the worst sectors to better ones. They initially work in the housing sector, then in private industry, and finally in the comparatively strictly regulated public institutes. Due to the better regulation and more permanent character of the jobs in the public institutes, the Nepali watchmen there tend to remain for longer periods. The longer duration of employment facilitates the further betterment of their conditions.

Education and previous job experience as elsewhere seem to be insignificant factors, either for obtaining jobs or bettering their working conditions. Generally, the people who are searching for watchmen jobs are not greatly differentiated by education anyway.

Mode of Life

On the whole, the way of life of Nepali watchmen in Bombay is unsettled, disorganized, and ad hoc.

For housing, many watchmen live as frugally as possible in rent-free but inconvenient and informal shelters provided by the employers within the work places. These include small huts, rooms under stairs, hardware storerooms, water pump shades, and open sky garages. Shared by co-workers, including friends and relatives, these shelters are small, congested and overcrowded. Consequently, the watchmen in these quarters cannot think of bringing their immediate families to live with them. They cook in the shelters and sleep in the verandah or similar spaces in their work place, such as in a garage.

Some watchmen live in rent-free quarters within the work place. These are either *kuchha* or *pukka* houses (buildings). The *kuchha* houses are small and congested. The *pukka* ones seem to be the most convenient of all the housing types. These quarters, unlike the free accommodations, more or less satisfy minimum housing needs. The workers living in these are relatively organized, more settled and permanent. The watchmen in the *pukka* quarters are found with their families.

Some watchmen rent space outside their work place in tiny, congested huts, usually in the slum areas.

For food, the watchmen arrange tea and two frugal meals a day, lunch and dinner. Breakfast is uncommon. They share their food with the other people in their quarters, depending upon the type of arrangement.

The watchmen like to rest during their leisure time. This is not surprising, considering their long workweek. In addition to resting, they gossip, go to the cinema, play cards, visit friends and relatives, listen to the radio, and read books. Two characteristics may be noted about their leisure time. They do not spend money, except at the cinema, and their activities center on their co-workers or families. Only viewing the cinema can be described as a specifically urban characteristic.

In the manner of the watchmen's working conditions, their living conditions⁵ seem to be positively related to their personal backgrounds, including age and tenure of stay, and the sector of employment. Older watchmen live relatively more settled lives in Bombay than the younger ones, and ones who have been there longer live better than those who have been there only a short time. Ones who work in public institutions are relatively more settled than those in industries, and those in cooperative societies are the least unsettled. Again, education does not seem to be a factor.

Again, the relationship between the two factors can be drawn. Those who live more settled lives have been in Bombay longer, and those who have lived and been employed in Bombay longer work in public institutions. In conclusion, the sector of employment determines the level of life. As the watchmen remain in Bombay longer, they shift from the housing sector to industry, and then to the well-regulated employment in the public institutions. A possible implication is that the watchmen cannot or do not stay a long time in Bombay on an ad hoc basis. Either they manage to settle themselves, or they leave the city for their homes in Nepal.

Summary and Conclusion

The Nepali watchmen in Bombay are characterized by an unsettled, unorganized and ad hoc way of life in the city. Newcomers are generally employed in housing cooperatives and experience the worst conditions. As they grow older and spend more years in Bombay, they shift their employment to the industrial and public sectors, where their working conditions improve respectively. The sector of employment seems to be the most immediately determining factor in their conditions of employment and life in the city.

Education and previous job experience do not seem to be so important.

However, changes are taking place. Unlike a few years ago, it is much more difficult to find jobs in the well regulated employment sectors such as public institutions and industries. Provisions regarding age, educational background, occupational background and, in some cases, even nationality have been introduced. For example, the most preferred candidates for watchmen in banks or manufacturing are those with some education and military experience, especially army retirees.

The newly arriving younger Nepali immigrants are confined to either housing cooperative societies or industrial commercial establishments run by the private sector. This indicates that in the future, if not now, young immigrants with little or no education, and occupational backgrounds limited to owner-cultivation or agricultural labor as characterizes the vast majority of Nepali people, may have little access to the job of watchmen, except under the poorest and least regulated conditions, dooming them to pauperism.

Notes

¹This paper is based on fieldwork carried out in 1988 for the project report submitted to the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Bombay for a Postgraduate Certificate in Research Methodology.

²There are no data available regarding the exact numbers of the Nepali laborers working as watchmen in Bombay.

³The duration of the stay in Bombay does not necessarily mean a continuous one. The overall period is a more or less net stay in Bombay in the sense that it does not include any stay in Nepal for one year or more from the first migration to Bombay.

⁴Working conditions as a variable represent a composite quantification of employment, working hours, holidays, leave facility, protective equipment, and fringe benefits and facilities in terms of their operational measures. The overall index or score of working conditions was divided into a trichotomy of low, moderate and high, mainly for the purpose of comparison.

⁵Living conditions as a variable were quantified and taken compositely in the form of housing conditions (types of house, house status and staying arrangement), food arrangement, and leisure time activities in terms of their operational measures. The overall index or score of living conditions was divided into a trichotomy of low, moderate and high, mainly for the purpose of comparison.

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**TELEVISION AND THE CHILD IN NEPAL:
 AN ASSESSMENT OF VIEWING PATTERNS**

Dyuti Baral

Television was initially introduced into Nepal from the fourth of Fagun, 1041 B.S. on a trial basis. Regular transmission commenced from the 14th of Paush, 2042 B.S. Now, with the transmission of morning programs, in addition to the evening ones, from its studio in Singha Durbar, Nepal Television (NTV) broadcasts four and a half hours a day.

The establishment of the Biratnagar television center allows television programs to reach a much larger audience, especially in the Central and Tarai region.

The morning transmission in Kathmandu starts with a religious program consisting of devotional songs (Bhajan) and discourses on Hinduism and Buddhism (Pravachan). This is followed by news headlines. Then after a light variety program, the morning program concludes with a bulletin of news in Nepali.¹

In the evening transmission, the regular programming includes an educational program for children, news bulletins in Nepali and English, and the current affairs program "Aath Baje" (Eight O'clock). Besides these, there are entertainment programs, including telefilms, dramas and serials, and weekly programs on current international events called "Viswa Ghatna."

Among all of the programs, the ones with the highest rate of viewing among children are the children's educational program "Srijana Ko Adha Ghanta," the English serial "The A-Team," and, more recently, the serial epic "Ramayana."

An average child from a middle class family² in Kathmandu watches about an hour of television daily. He or she may view continuously or in two or three phases of about a half hour each — the average length of a program.

This study focuses on the middle class child for the following reasons. Children from upper class families can be expected to be exposed to both television and video, with a usual preference for the

latter, since there is a greater number of programs and options, and a wider flexibility of viewing times in comparison to television. Children from the lower class may not have direct access to television in their own homes, although they may be able to watch television elsewhere. Unlike middle class children, therefore, they do not constitute a category of regular television viewers. Moreover, with the steady increase in the availability of televisions within an affordable price range, middle class families are rapidly becoming major purchasers of television sets — both in black-and-white and in color, though the preference is for color. Television is thus becoming an adjunct to the middle class life-style.

A fundamental reason for the growing popularity and importance of television lies in the combination of both audio and visual mediums. The programs are easy to understand, impressive, and attractive. Indeed, it is an established psychological fact that children find it easier to understand gestures and lessons accompanied by photos or visual presentations, than a mere monologue by a teacher. They find it easier to identify or establish links between elements that they have seen.... This formation of associations and identification is possible through the child's observation and socialization.

The above feature of audiovisual communication helps overcome, to a certain extent, the problem of illiteracy. Also, the majority of the programs on NTV are telecast in Nepali, which is understood by over ninety percent of the Nepali population, even if not all can converse fluently in it. Only some serials, special programming, advertisements, and news bulletins are in English. Furthermore, if the programs are in color, they portray a real life dimension (after all, nature abounds in color) which by its attractiveness contributes to effective communication of messages and makes the audience more interested in and receptive to the programs.

This attribute of "receptivity" has been capitalized on by countries such as Great Britain, the United States of America, Germany and, recently, India to "teach" basic lessons in mathematics, language and general sciences to children of preschool and school age. There are also advanced level courses for senior students. Children have given a positive response to such programming. In India, the University Grants Commission programs are quite popular among the more academically inclined children.

In Nepal, too, there are plans to expand the television network and include remote, inaccessible rural areas in the transmission area. Suggestions for establishing community television sets in rural areas to enable larger numbers of people to watch the presentations have also been met with approval. The achievement of these aims, plans and policies is being framed, and the budget allocation for the development of mass communication is being seriously assessed. At

the state bureaucratic and academic levels, urgent need has been expressed to develop Nepal's mass communications systems in the rural areas, since over 85 percent of Nepal's population resides in them.³

The Child

Before embarking on an assessment of viewing patterns, it is important to define what is implied by the term "child" in the present study. For the purpose of this study, all young viewers falling into the age group of five to twelve years, inclusive, are categorized as children. This study excludes those below five years of age, as their mental development, awareness and interest in the outside world, and their ability to rationalize are still in the initial stages of development. Their primary concerns are their demands for food, games, ablutions and sleep. Those above twelve years are in a transitional phase in which the human individual undergoes a series of physiological and psychological changes. Moreover, new interests, values, and friends are established. Life activities are not confined to the homes of the individual or of nearby friends, as when younger, but extend outward....

Those between five to twelve years of age begin to evince a well defined interest in new events and items. Their level of intelligence, concentration and response to the environment is also increasing. Their thought system is becoming more coherent and logical. Comprehension of the native language further facilitates them to communicate their thoughts and opinions to others.

At the same time, it is in this period that the child's mind is most impressionable, receptive and therefore vulnerable. Certain events and experiences have a deep influence on the child's mind and may be responsible for a change in his personality, behavior patterns, responses and thoughts. It is in this context of "receptivity" of the child's mind that television viewing assumes importance.

Objectives and Method of Analysis

The objective of this study was to access the viewing pattern to ascertain which programs interested children, how regularly they watched these, and the process of selection of the programs. The children also were asked to briefly explain what they had understood in a particular serial, and to summarize and indicate what aspect of the serial they found interesting. Their explanations and preferences provided clues to the nature of programs preferred, and from this, possible implications could be worked out. Children were interviewed along with siblings and friends, if they were also present, since they were more free and frank than when alone. The presence of others provided them with some sort of moral support.

Although a list of sixteen questions was prepared beforehand, many of these needed to be modified in order to obtain more comprehensive answers. For example, the question "How many hours in a day do you spend watching television?" was modified into two questions: "You do watch television, don't you?" and "Which programs do you generally prefer watching?". The answer to the last question enabled calculation of the total time spent watching television.

Parents were also interviewed to find out their interest in television programs, their attitude towards television, and whether they have any role in determining their children's viewing preferences.

Within the time period of three months, viz. July, August, and September, in which the study was undertaken, some programs were discontinued and others introduced. This change allowed for a certain comparison of viewing patterns for different television shows.

Comparisons were made on the basis of interest shown, regularity in watching the shows, levels of concentration with which the shows are watched, and the relative preference given to different shows. From the information gathered through the interviews, almost all of which were conducted in Nepali, each extending over thirty minutes, a descriptive report could be made on which basis an assessment was possible.

In particular, the study focused on the following programs: the children's educational program, the variety program "Srijana Ko Adha Ghanta," the English serials "The A-Team" and "I-Spy", and the Hindi serial "Ramayana."

Areas in which the interviews were taken are Jorpati, Siphel and Gyaneswar. There was a total number of 205 children and 70 parents interviewed.

Viewing Analysis

Television viewing may be said to involve the processes of observation, cognition, comprehension, interpretation and retention.

As in their everyday life activities and interactions, children make use of their observation facilities to perceive and become conscious of phenomena, events and actions occurring in television programs. Knowledge of the language in which the program is telecast assists both perception and comprehension. However, does the lack of understanding of a language seriously hinder children's comprehension and interest in a television show? If not, then why not? This problem was also dealt with in this study.

The manner in which the children interpret a program also provides clues to their "level of understanding" of the program. Their interests also may be discovered by assessing the items or aspects of a program they select. On the basis of the information about the nature and content of interpretation, a general idea about the types of programs preferred by children is obtained. This idea may be useful in formulating policies for children's programming.

Not all aspects of a program are remembered by children. Even those scenes which they found entertaining may be only vaguely remembered on the following day. However, repeated telecasts of the same show or shows with similar themes may assist children to remember certain details which they would normally not remember after only one broadcast of a show.

The morning transmission hours rarely had regular child viewers. A few children did "glance" at the television if it was switched on during the morning, but only out of curiosity, not interest. The children's favorite programs were telecast only in the evenings, so "glancing" never developed into a more intensive form of viewing.

In the evenings, if the television was switched on by 6:30 P.M., the children would be among the first to sit down to watch the children's educational program. Even if it was not switched on by then, the children would persistently request their parents to switch it on. A few (eighteen) of the children confessed to having switched on the television themselves in their parents' absence or if they were otherwise engaged. In 103 cases, the television was kept in the parents' bedroom, which made it easier for children to watch than if it was kept in the sitting room, since the presence of adult guests often implied "no television" until the guests left. In the remaining three houses, the television was kept in the spare-cum-guestroom, which again did not hinder the children's viewing.

Educational Programs

The educational programming included "Ramailo Sanjh," the cartoon film "Smerfs," "Look, Learn and Try"⁴ and occasional cultural programs.

The children liked the characters "Chante-Pante" in the program "Ramailo Sanjh." A few even indicated their style of speaking.

The popularity of the English cartoon film "Smerfs" provided insight into an interesting feature of television viewing. Children could easily understand and enjoy simple and comical actions, irrespective of the language that the program was telecast in..

Similar responses were found with respect to two other English serials, "The A-Team" and "I Spy." Furthermore, other English serials (which used to be shown prior to the two above) like "Street Hawk," "Knight Rider," and "MI-5" were also found to have been extremely well-liked by the children. In comparing "The A-Team" and "I Spy," the former had a much higher popularity score, with 191 out of 205 preferring it over the latter. The other 14 children liked both of them equally well. A main reason for this was the content of the serials. "The A-Team" had more action, much of it self-explanatory, while "I Spy" had more dialogue, which made it difficult for the children to follow. Besides, watching "The A-Team" hardly required any analysis or conceptualization, as the program was one of sheer entertainment. The protagonists Murdock and B.A. were the most popular of all the characters. Many children liked watching "A-Team" because of these two characters.

In the "Smerfs," Papa Smerf's appearance was greeted with shrieks and knowing smiles by the children, especially those below nine years of age. Even if all the conversation was not understood, some dialogues were understood because the children all knew key words in them, such as "Thank you!", "where is Papa Smerf?", and "Time for morning exercises!". (Incidentally, all children were found to be attending English medium schools.)

The program "Look, Learn and Try", whenever shown, evoked a positive and immediate response in many children. Some clapped their hands in anticipation of the program. Some quickly took out their drawing papers and colors and closely followed the drawing lessons.

The cultural programs were found to be more popular among girls than boys. If certain songs which children knew came during a program, many joined in the singing along with the television.

The quiz program had a low rate of appeal, since not all young children could answer the questions asked in the quiz. The elder siblings, however, did watch the program sometimes.

"Srijana Ko Adha Ghanta" was enjoyed by the girls in particular as it included dances, songs from popular movies, and other similar items. However, many would sometimes get up and go out to drink a glass of water. Or they might stop watching the program for a while and talk to their siblings. Thus this program, unlike the "Smerfs", was not always watched with full concentration.

Besides these, some other programs will be mentioned briefly.

The news and the current affairs program "Aath Baje" were not watched at all, except when the children were sitting in front of the television with nothing else to do.

The Pakistani serial "Aasman" did not hold much interest either. The only redeeming feature for children was the repeated presence of some especially entertaining actors such as Haku Baba and Yulzari. The Nepali serial "Roopmoti" rated slightly higher than the Pakistani one since it was in Nepali and because it dealt with social values and customs which the children identified with. For example, during the rites of passage of the newborn baby, the marriage ceremonies, and the Dasain holiday, children knew what was to expect, and they could understand the events.

In general, however, serials were not watched so enthusiastically as other programs. Serials required that children remember occurrences from earlier episodes and relate them to current developments. The children seemed unable or uninterested in doing this.

Santosh Pant's "Na Risaanus Hai" also reached the "highly viewed" status. In this case, the comedy style, the comedian, and the real life aspect appealed to the children.

The telefilm "Pari Aayen" was also well liked by the children, since it dealt with a theme of fairies and fantasies which is integral to children's stories.

The children watched the Hindi serial "Ramayana" avidly, especially after the first two episodes. This was because after these episodes child characters (Ram, Lakshman, Shatrughana and Bharat in their childhood) entered into the story. Thus, until there was some aspect that the children could directly relate to, the program was not watched with any great interest.

Whatever the program, watching demanded time, concentration and involvement. Children were found to be totally absorbed while watching their favorite shows. Some did not even blink for long periods, others had their mouths agape, and almost all had expressions reflecting the nature of the action occurring in the program. For example, when somebody cried, the children would frown at the "evil doer," or their faces also would show distress. This revealed that children were being affected by some of the events in the television.

Other less dramatic scenes would find their faces animated and excited, as during the "Smerfs" or "A-Team" telecasts. Like in "Variety-Variety," a circus program shown earlier, the "Smerfs"

excited the children and invoked their sense of humor. One could hear children laughing while watching "Smerfs." Children hated to be sent on errands during this time.

Some programs even invited their censure. The voices of the puppets "Chante-Pante" were criticized as being too nasal by the elder children. They logically pointed out that children do not normally have such nasal voices. This discrepancy lowered the popularity of this program and its authenticity for many of the elder children. The younger ones, however, enjoyed every minute of it.

The *viewing pattern* was thus seen as characterized by one side or the other of the following categories: sporadic or regular, intense or light hearted, continuous or with breaks. The less favored programs were watched irregularly, casually and sometimes with breaks. This highlighted another dimension of viewing: if unpopular, certain programs, even if regular, were watched irregularly. Aath Baje, News, and the morning shows all fell into this category. In contrast, some television shows, even if irregular, were popular and watched whenever shown. For example, "Gillette Sports," "National Geographic" specials, football, and local sports shows were watched whenever they were shown.

In addition to the amount of time spent watching the television, the nature and pattern of television programs, their content, and style also affected viewing patterns.

Selection of programs, their interpretation and their reception was found to be influenced by certain factors, among which 1) siblings and friends and 2) parental viewing pattern were found to be significant.

Children were observed sharing views and interpretations of serials and of their favorite programs during playtime or at the bus stop in the mornings while waiting for the school bus. Animated discussions about a serial or program would be made, with some children imitating a gesture or style of dialogue or delivery of an actor. During such discussions, the opinions of elder siblings, as the "group leaders", were seen as having a subtle but sure influence on others. The younger children either echoed the sentiments of the elder ones, or they were seen to be modifying their opinions. A case in point, a younger viewer interpreted as mad Murdock's insistence on petting an imaginary dog and pulling its leash. The next day, however, while waiting at the bus stop for the school bus, the elder siblings and other friends negated the idea of "madness" and said that Murdock did such actions to irritate B.A. The younger children, after exclaiming, "was that so," then pondered it briefly and finally accepted it.

Friends would remind each other of a program that was going to be telecast that day, as for example on Tuesdays they would remind each other of Santosh Pant's program or on Wednesdays of "The A-Team."

In the case of "Ramayana," parental viewing patterns reflected on their children. It was the parents who first acquainted their children with the great Hindu epic, the Ramayana, and introduced them to the characters in it. The children perceived the concentration with which their parents watched the serial. The parents allowed and even encouraged their children to join them. Moreover, the children found the serial interesting, making it an exception, since they generally preferred not to watch serials.

The children were highly impressed with the bows and arrows of Ram and Lakshman. They made their own bows and arrows of wooden sticks and killed imaginary "rakshas" (demons). Many even murmured before "shooting" an arrow. When asked what they were doing, they replied that they were reciting "mantras" to make the flight of the arrow stronger and surer.

The games that children played thus reflected on their interests and daily experiences. Given this, a persistence of certain patterns and themes could affect their general behavior and thought. Aggressive or destructive play could become a dominant personality trait of the children and, later, of the adults into which they develop.

Excessive television may lead to stunted mental development as television does not require analysis or exercise of the brain. Caution should be taken by the parents not to let the children watch television continuously. There is also a need to allow children to watch only certain programs, and to prevent as much as possible the child from watching programs meant for adults or having a high degree of violence. For this purpose, not only at the family level, but at the institutional one as well, definite policies for children's programs should be made.

Indeed, realizing the need for such policies, countries such as Britain, West Germany, France, Russia and the United States, to name a few, have specific policies for television programming for children. Studies have also been made to assess the impact of programs on the child audience. These studies have shown that programs with violence and murder have a high level of impact on children and their personality development. Some people even attribute homicidal tendencies and actual crimes to the indirect instigation of television programs.

Nepal can avoid such adverse impacts of television viewing. The country can take hints from the experiences of developed nations to provide for programming which will assist children in their development. Programs on science, culture, sports techniques and so forth are bound to have tremendous positive impact on the mental development of children. However, it would be wise to continue with cartoons and similar programs which will make for "balanced" television programming.

Some positive steps were seen taken by parents during examinations. They would ban television during the week or two before the commencement of examination in order to make sure that their children concentrated fully on their studies.

However, though such control is welcomed, a comprehensive television policy for children is necessary, a need which has yet to be fulfilled. Thus, even if it is still early to talk of an "impact" of television on children, predictions can be made. After all, as television is definitely here to stay, we might as well make the best out of it.

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Notes

¹This study was conducted in the months of July, August and September 1989, and the programs mentioned here refer to that time period.

²Class status as used here is defined by income. A middle class family's earnings range from about three thousand to six thousand rupees (Nepali Currency) per month.

³This was brought out in a recently conducted seminar from September 26 to 29, 1989 on "Mass Communication" in Kathmandu.

⁴"Hera, Seckha ra Gara."

MERCANTILISM AND DOMESTIC INDUSTRY IN WEST-CENTRAL NEPAL: SIGNIFICANCE FOR ANTHROPOLOGICAL STUDY OF THE COMMUNITY¹

Stephen L. Mikesell and Jamuna Shrestha

Introduction

The country of Nepal was never formally incorporated into the boundaries of the British Empire. Accordingly, based on state records, ethnographers have assumed that the community and domestic production remained relatively autonomous until 1951 when the Royal family regained control of the country from the autocratic rule of the Thapa and Rana Prime Minister families.

Our work, focusing on the merchant town of Bandipur in west-central Nepal, uncovered quite a different picture of domestic production and rural economy. We based our historical work on 200 years of business records stored away in the musty cupboards of the shops of merchants. These records include ledgers, letters, purchase orders and receipts, railroad freight bills, shipping insurance documents, court and other litigation records, and tax and land records. They also include many bundles of promissory notes recording, in addition to loans, credit given to the villagers for purchases of fabric from the merchants.

Previously, the usually accepted sources of documentation about the state have been official government records, ancient and not so ancient engravings, and so forth. But if the state is considered in terms of a combination of interests struggling with each other for hegemony,² then official records are biased by the particular interest or alliance of interests in control of the state. They show the struggle of the divided "subaltern"³ or opposition interests, with their own counter-hegemonies, from the standpoint of the dominant interest mainly by inference. The merchant records, while generally not "official" documents, provide documentation for the extension and rise of a major new form of state representing the global dominance of capital, as it was experienced in Nepal. Importantly, the documents give insight into the struggle of capital to establish its control and legitimacy in the countryside. For Bandipur and other Newar bazaars, and the surrounding villages that came under their influence, the

documents show the content beneath ethnographic descriptions which have too often remained on the level of appearances.

These promissory notes record in increasing detail from at least one and a half centuries the nature of commodities traded, credit and loans, rates of interest, forms of collateral, names of the shopkeepers and their stores, and the names of villager buyers and their villages. In addition to the kinds, values and volumes of cloth sold, the rates of surplus (or exploitation) and profit indicating the changing relationship of labor and capital can also be calculated from the ledgers. The self-conscious ideological form of the new hegemony is indicated in the wording of contracts between the producers and the merchants. The letters between the various merchants present a picture of the complex trade relations within Nepal. Letters between Nepali merchants and commission agents in India indicate the manner and extent to which the Nepali merchants were integrated into the bazaars of British India.

The picture painted by the documents is, first of all, that from the early 19th century, fabrics from the factories of Britain were already entering into the Nepali countryside from British India. And, while one can presently see the extent of the merchants' landholdings in the west-central region of Nepal, the records show that the usury and expropriation of wealth and land involved in the trade of the industrial fabrics increasingly established the merchants as an important force in the state, but in the form of the hegemonic interests of the state and caste ideology, not of their merchant capital. The merchants displaced the control of Chetri landlords over landed property, entered some of their sons in the government as officers, used their wealth to influence other officials, and based their legitimacy in notions of Hindu Dharmic suzerainty in alliance with Brahman priests. The assertion of a national bourgeoisie class from its base in the bazaars in British India during the last three decades of British rule (Ray 1988) gave birth to a transformation of scale and content of merchant activity in Nepal as well.

While the merchants did not until recently directly apply their capital to production in Nepal,⁴ their trade in industrially produced fabrics imported from British and, later, Euro-American, Japanese and Indian factories meant that they no longer existed autonomous from production in the manner of mercantile capital prior to the industrial revolution. Rather, their trade and, through it, production in Nepal became increasingly subordinated to industrial capital and its reproduction. These points have been overlooked when the merchants are analyzed in their own terms—for example, of "survivals" of Newar culture.

Lewis and Shakya (1988), as a case in point, write that the industrial fabric trade "has reduced many Newar trading families to being *mere* middlemen supplying imported goods" (*italics added*),

when by definition traders *are middlemen*. The difference between the trade of precapitalist domestically produced commodities and those of industrial capitalists is that in the former case the merchants were merely middlemen who traded goods between various relatively independent communities without themselves controlling production in these communities. Their profits came by exploiting the communities through the trade itself: purchasing cheap and selling dear. In the latter case, the trade becomes the last stage in the circulation of commodities represented in the production process. It is through the merchants that the value of the commodities produced in the factories is realized as money for the factory owners, who then purchase new machines, raw materials, and labor power to begin production again on an ever increasing scale. The merchant profits come to the merchant as a share of the surplus extracted from the factory workers in the labor process. For the factory owner, these surpluses that he pays out to the merchants are just another cost of doing business. As we will see, a destruction of domestic industry that Lewis and Shakya want to emphasize resulted from this subordination of the merchants — and through them, the countryside — to large-scale industry.

While this new kind of trade did not destroy the community in form, allowing anthropologists to describe it in terms of a hypothetical traditional culture, by the 1930s (two decades before the so-called revolutionary opening of Nepal to the west) their trade had essentially ruined most cloth production in the surrounding villages. This separation of industry and agriculture implied that consumption of cloth and other goods, and therefore production and reproduction within the village, had become incorporated into the circulation of industrial production.

The Gharelu under the Ranas and the Saraswati Factory in Bandipur

It was in this context of a domestic industry devastated by foreign commodity imports, that in the early 1930s the Prime Minister of Nepal, Juddha Shamsher Rana (reigned 1932-44), instituted a last ditch program to save this domestic industry (Prasad 1975). In a futile effort to develop a measure of economic freedom and self sufficiency, and to salvage the collapsing hegemonic basis of his regime in landed property and the village community, he initiated a range of programs aimed at reviving production in the countryside and laying a basis for large-scale industrial production.

In 1939 the Prime Minister formed a "Cottage Industry Department" (*Gharelu*), which was to organize and develop both old and new village industries. This program was to ostensibly serve the interests and promote the economic well-being of the villagers by reviving the once flourishing cloth weaving industry which had disintegrated in the onslaught of imported fabrics. The Cottage Industry Department was to supply raw materials and mechanical

looms to the villagers at cheap prices and on easy payment terms. The villagers were to then sell back the finished products. They were to be organized in industrial cooperative associations which would provide the raw materials, tools, and marketing facilities.

Four prominent families of Bandipur took advantage of Juddha Shamsher's cottage industry program to build a textile weaving factory. The district subba Bishnu Lal Pradhan, the clerk Harka Man Shrestha, the fabric retailer Krishna Kumar Piya, and the brothers Hira Lal and Shyam Krishna Pradhan (representing a large textile import house in Bandipur) combined in 1942 to build the Saraswati Factory.⁵

Bishnu Lal Subba (Pradhan) was admired by the people of Bandipur, and he seems to have been sincerely motivated by the goals set out by the Prime Minister for the Cottage Industry Program. But his choice to combine with the three merchants and use their capital to build the factory meant that he had asked people representing the same interests that had brought the demise of industrial production to rebuild it.

According to letters sent between his wholesaler brothers, Shyam Krishna and Hira Lal Pradhan, the merchants were interested in the factory because the Nepali government had imposed quotas and was supplying subsidized thread to the villagers in order to encourage the development of domestic production. The letters document how the merchants used their connections, influence, and wealth to obtain bulk quantities of the subsidized thread. Simultaneously with the construction of the textile factory, they were struggling to receive import quotas and gain control over wholesale and retail markets for imported cloth in the surrounding countryside. They were also hoarding fabrics controlled by quotas to force prices up. The textile factory was part of their strategy to "make money any way you can," as reiterated in their letters — i.e., to make profits and reproduce capital. This also included black marketeering, currency manipulation, and hoarding of commodities.

The clerk, merchants and district subba presented their factory as a cooperative association meant to educate the villagers and encourage the development of indigenous production, as indicated in the factory letterhead and receipt (illustrations 1 & 2), but they themselves took the surplus in the form of profits. This was perfectly legitimate according to the logic of Juddha Shamsher's program, which was aimed at developing an industrial capitalist class. However, his intent seemed to have been to develop this class from the producers themselves and not to strengthen the already existing mercantile capitalists.

**Saraswati Cloth Factory
Bandipur**

In this factory, whomever wants to take the training and, if after training, they want to have a loom in their own home, they will be trained without fee. Whomever wants to work in the factory, they will get paid monthly, according to the factory rules. In this factory, you can get different kinds of domestically produced cloth and printed Damar Kumari Sari, and many kinds of thread are available.

Pieces	Name of Article	Yards	Cost	Amount
Total				

Cashier's Signature

Illustration 1. Translation of the receipt of the Saraswati Cloth Factory

In this factory, whomever wants to take the training and after training if they want to have a loom in their own home, they will be trained without fee. Whomever wants to work in the factory themselves, they will get paid monthly, according to the factory rules.

In this factory, you can get different kinds of domestically produced cloth and printed Damar Kumari Sari, and many kinds of thread are available. Look at the sample and try to contribute to the factory.

Manager—

Bishnu Lal Subba

Illustration 2. Translation of the letterhead of the Saraswati Cloth Factory

The partners hired a master weaver, Hari Bhakta Shrestha, from Chetrapati, Kathmandu to build the looms and oversee production. Now a small *kinara* owner, he describes how Bishnu Lal Subba was originally inspired by a government run factory in Kathmandu in 1942. He used his position of subba to elicit the aid of the government and organize the factory. It took the four families the year of 1942-1943 to construct the factory building. It was an approximately sixty meter long, two story brick structure with a series of rooms opening onto a long porch in front on the lower level (half of which remains). The second story similarly opens onto a long covered balcony which makes

the roof for the porch. The weaving master built 37 flying shuttle peddle looms (25 *chaakune* and 12 *pitaa*) which were placed in the long series of rooms on each level.

Hari Bhakta brought six craftsmen who trained the labor force for several months and then returned to Kathmandu. All the laborers, except two Brahmans from Chiti, were from Bandipur.⁶ Initially, the numbers of men and women were about equal, but by the time the factory shut down, nearly all of the fifty workers were women.

Production in the Saraswati Factory lasted from 1943 to 1945. The fabric was sold both from the factory and from outlets already controlled by the merchants in the surrounding countryside and in the Lamjung hills to the north. Production was stopped in the summer of 1945 due to the Nepal government's reluctance to supply subsidized thread,⁷ combined with the desire of the dominant share holders, Shyam Krishna and Hira Lal Pradhan, not to share profits with other two families.⁸

Appeal.

Sarkaar [Government]. Everything is OK here. About the factory, because of the shortage of thread, it is difficult to keep the factory operating. The thread is nearly about to finish, so that we will have to close the factory. To close it, we have to send away all the workers. If the thread comes, it will be difficult to get them back. To bring all the workers together, it takes a long time. If we do not terminate them, but give them salary without work, it is difficult for the factory. We have written about this many times to the Gharelu [Cottage Industry Department], but up to now we have not heard anything. If you cannot supply a full supply of thread, then you can just give two to four months supply so the factory can keep on going. If you could arrange this thing, it would be very helpful so the factory may not be closed. If I write something wrong, please forgive me.

Na. Subbaa Bishnu Lal Pradhan

2002 Bhadra 4. [1945 A.D. August 20]

Illustration 3. Appeal from Subbaa Bishnu Lal Pradhan to the government about the Saraswati Factory

For some reason, the Nepal government was hesitant about supplying the thread. An appeal in August, 1945 (Illustration 3) to the government claimed that, without the subsidized thread, the merchants would have been unable to continue operating the factory. As yet we have not found the resolution of that problem in the letters. The weaving master claims that the factory was running extremely well, but the partners fell at odds, disbanded the factory, and divided the looms among themselves in proportion to their shares. The letters of Shyam Krishna and Hira Lal Pradhan show how they

continued to connive to obtain subsidized yarn and continue production in their own houses into 1947. For example, the following series of references are found a series of letters in 1947:

... The price of thread has gone up, so I am not planning to send it. And if you ask for the control thread to weave in Bandipur and sell, they will give it to you. To sell the thread is not permitted now. So, we should take 20 to 30 loads of the thread to weave. If you send them now, because of winter you can save 10 to 15% on the porter's wages. The government will give you a 10% discount in the weaving cloth too. If you calculate all these things, it is profitable. If you send this thread in the summer, it is not profitable. It takes many days. It may get wet. Because of that, I am thinking of taking this thread. What is your idea? Please let me know soon. If you run 8 to 10 looms, the time will not take so long. I will take the permission to sell the cloth in Bandipur ...⁹

... The thread is coming continuously. Our cloth is little, but growing...¹⁰

... But in India, from the fifteenth of January or the first of Maagh, they are going to discontinue to control system. It is in the news of the Indian government. What is going to happen, nobody can say. Whatever happens, take profit and sell whatever you have. That would be the best idea. Even if they abolish the control system, you may not get goods soon. And again, we may not even get (the things) at the same price, because they have increased the price of raw cotton. Therefore, you do not have to sell the goods at a loss. From India, they are going to abolish the control system. But here, they have increased the prices of all the goods. I cannot understand anything.¹¹

... About the control thread, they have sent an order from Nepal to Pokhara to sell it. You may get the news from the post or from the Gorkha Patra.... And the wage for *dharni* is 5 paisa per mile. So count the miles carefully. The rate of thread they will fix from Nepal....¹²

... please send me two copies of the finger prints of you left and right hands to get the application for the thread.¹³

Once the Congress Government came to power in India, it soon forced the Nepal government to end the quota system on fabric imports and stop the thread subsidies, allowing again an uncontrolled flood of foreign and, especially, Indian textiles into Nepal. The letters of the Shyam Krishna and Hira Lal indicate that they liquidated their previously hoarded textile stocks in anticipation.

... Nowadays the things are not like before. Sell the things that you have at home soon and make a profit. Do not keep in stock. We do not know what is going to happen. The Congress government is trying to break the quota system. Mahatma Gandhi is trying his best, and I do not think that it will take a long time to break the control. If it takes a long time, it still will not last more than two to three months. But even if the control breaks, and then you will not be getting so much material from India because there will not be enough booking on the train. There may not be so many things coming from India. So it is better to sell what you have at home. So sell all the thread too.¹⁴

... Sell the cigarettes ... It is not profitable just to keep them. After the cigarettes from Thori arrive, the price of cigarettes is going to fall. Now you do not have so many customers, so I did not think it was such a good idea to send a lot of goods. Now there is rumor that the control may break. The quota things will all be in the market again. That is why we just cannot take the material for Maagh and Phaalgun now. If you can sell things, then I will send them to you. A lot of goods are coming from Lhassa. It does not appear that the price will go up. So it is not a good idea to take things now and keep them. Just take the profit and sell the things you have now. Nobody can say anything tomorrow. The Congress Government is going to break the control. And the quota controlled things will be distributed in the villages pretty soon. After a month you can get 2 and 1 numbered things. After the quota things come onto the market, you will not be able to sell any of the black market goods....¹⁵

... The cloth Controls were abolished yesterday. But from one region to another. In Nepal [Kathmandu], they are still giving by the quota system. Even if the quota system were to break, you would not get the goods. Maybe after one or two months, you can get them. But even if you can get them, you cannot take them from one to another region. And the price may even rise one and one-half times. We got the things at the control rate. The merchants of this place also think the same thing. Even if the control is abolished, it will not make any difference for Nepal [Kathmandu]. But I think that after four to six months, something will happen. So whatever you have, try to sell and get out of stock. The quota goods we have, we will not lose anything on that.... The goods we have, try to sell soon. But do not discount them. Even if the control is abolished, you cannot get the things, and it seems that the rate is going to be higher than the control rate. Again, they have not controlled fully for Nepal. So think this over, and work accordingly from it.¹⁶

They were joined in this by all the other large wholesalers in Bandipur. The prices dropped, and the merchants saw larger profits

in the fabrics imported from the large factories of India, Europe, the United States, and Japan, if not the futility of continuing their production.

Discussion

Blaikie et al. (1980 — see note 5) were essentially correct when they attributed the failure of the Bandipur textile factory to foreign commodity trade and industry, though they did not sufficiently emphasize the merchant participants' willing collaboration in this.

For the merchants, at least, if not Bishnu Lal Subba, the construction of the factory was not an attempt "to revive the once vigorous cotton-weaving industry of Bandipur" (Blaikie et al. 1980:126). Weighing potential surplus against the capital invested (the rate of profit), and not the goals of the Gharelu program, at all times seemed to determine the merchant participation in the Saraswati Factory. Thread subsidies and strict quota controls over imports made it profitable. They had no interest in developing the autonomy of the Nepali countryside as envisioned by Juddha Shamsher. In practice, they were shifting production from the household into the direct control of capital, using the Gharelu program as its basis, and thereby attempting to transform their indirect mediation by trade of textile commodities into a direct one of wage labor as a commodity.

As noted above, the labor force eventually came to consist mostly of women. Thus, the factory in particular and the Gharelu in general not only shifted textile production into the domain of capital, but it took a sector of production controlled by women and shifted it over to the control of the patriarchal interests and relations which already characterized merchant capital indigenously and industrial capitalism globally. The production and knowledge of the women entered into the control of male owners and managers, and their products as commodities came under the control of male merchants. The factory owners apparently eventually took the gender relations within the household and domestic skills of the women as their basis.

The new gender mediation of women in the Saraswati Factory underlines the significance of the destruction of the domestic textile industry in undermining women's autonomy. In recent decades, this has turned out to be a double edged sword in Asia. While transnational corporations have presupposed the same conditions as the basis of recruiting a vulnerable and unorganized female labor force in order to destroy organized labor in western Europe, the United States, Japan, and now in the Newly Industrialized Countries, the women of Asia and elsewhere in the third world have begun to organize, often far more militantly than their male counterparts.¹⁷

The historical experience of capitalism globally has been the expansion of the domain of capital from the products of industry to industry itself, from the products of labor as commodities to labor itself as a commodity, and from mediation between communities to the basis of community. That the bazaar merchants of Bandipur were unable to transform themselves into a national industrial class resulted because their trade presupposed and based itself on already developed industrial capital elsewhere. While the large merchant houses of India such as Birla, Tata and so forth used the bazaar as a basis to take the opportunity of global crises in capitalism to enter into direct partnership with foreign capitalists (Ray 1988), the Bandipur merchants only expanded their trade with India (while the palace has been trying to fill the role of state monopolist).

Their expansion of direct control over the countryside continued to take the form of expansion of landholdings and usury, not of capital applied directly to production. The mercantile capital presupposed the same direct peasant production assumed by the landed ruling interests of the state. By the time that Juddha Shamsher attempted to implement his Gharelu and other programs, the interests represented in the industrial class development in India and a dependent form of mercantile class development within Nepal were already too far developed.

Another important structural difference of the Saraswati factory from domestic production was its dependence on imported thread. Thus, from the viewpoint of Indian factories, the Saraswati factory and, for that matter, the Gharelu program, consumed the thread as the last step in the commodity circulation represented by industrial production that was shown above to have characterized the merchant trade. This point is emphasized by the immense trade of both quota and other threads into the countryside that was being carried out by the merchants simultaneous to and after the Saraswati factory, as documented in their letters. In the latter period, the merchants were constantly calculating whether they could more profitably weave the thread on their own looms or just sell it in the villages.

The significance of this discussion for anthropologists is that community and culture in Nepal cannot be analyzed in their own terms. Even prior to the entry of industrial capitalist interests in the form of mercantile capitalism into Nepal, the state contained various interests which controlled peasant surpluses. These included, at the least, merchants and the hegemonic landed property groups. After the rise of industrial capitalism in western Europe, the community in Nepal became increasingly mediated by the bazaar and merchants representing foreign industrial capitalist interests in the form of industrial commodities and mercantile profits, usury, and rents. By the 1930s this was a process that even the Rana rulers of Nepal were forced to acknowledge as they found their hegemonic basis eroding

away. The subsequent change of regimes and development of the state and community have been shaped by this growing dominance. Anthropologists cannot analyze the community in isolation from this larger totality; they must understand the latter theoretically. While every particular analysis need not be a study of the totality, the anthropologist must understand Gramsci's (1971) riddle that the part contains the whole.

Notes

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²The term "hegemony" is used in the sense of Gramsci (1971) to mean where the ideas of the ruling class are internalized into the institutions of the society, that the ruled participate in their own domination.

³The subaltern classes, by definition, are not unified and cannot unite until they are able to become a 'State': their history, therefore, is intertwined with that of civil society, and thereby with the history of States or groups of States.... (Gramsci 1971:52).

⁴Control of land as landlords and usury cannot properly be considered as application of capital or investment into production, rather, it merely asserts rights over surpluses without changing how they are produced.

⁵Blaikie et al. (1980:126) write, "Around 1940 attempts were made to revive the once vigorous cotton-weaving industry of Bandipur and skilled workers were imported from the Kathmandu Valley to operate the looms, which at one time reputedly numbered around 250; but a combination of disputes among the shareholders of the company concerned, and enormous price increases of the cotton yarn with restrictions by India on its export to Nepal, brought about a rapid decline." The date, numbers of looms, and origins of the workers are corrected in this text. We also differ somewhat from the assessment given by Blaikie and Seddon regarding the significance of the rise and decline of the textile factory.

⁶This contradicts Blaikie et al.'s (note 5) description of the workers as specialists brought from Kathmandu. Rather, the factory owners assumed the already transformed conditions of the people and their domestic skills, especially of the women, to provide a wage labor force from the Bandipur locale. Indeed, the project was presented as a revival of production.

⁷Rising prices of the thread given by Blaikie et al. (note 5) seem to have only been a factor some years after the factory had been disbanded by the merchants.

⁸There are other examples of attempts by families in Bandipur to organize joint corporate ownership but to have them fail as individual family interests overrode the collective one. Presently capital is also organized in the framework of *sangai* "together" (or inappropriately "joint") families, which similarly introduces a contradiction into the tendency of capital to concentrate ownership and production when the families break into *chuttai* "broken" (or inappropriately "nuclear") families. As Marx pointed out, this is a dialectical contradiction, because it eventually leads to greater

concentration as the smaller divided capitals of the *chuttai* families are absorbed by larger ones.

⁹Mikesell (1988), Appendix D, Letter 8, Paus 3, 2005 B.S. (1947 A.D.), Shyam Krishna in Thamel, Kathmandu to Hira Lal Pradhan in Bandipur.

¹⁰Mikesell (1988), Appendix D, Letter 10, Paus 10, 2005 B.S. (1947 A.D.) Shyam Krishna in Bandipur, to Hira Lal Pradhan in Devghat, Chitwan.

¹¹Unpublished letter [09/04/89:1], Paus 14, 2005 B.S. (1947 A.D.) Shyam Krishna in Kanpur, India (Add.: Purusottan Das Ganapati Ray, Kanpur) to Hira Lal in Bandipur.

¹²Mikesell (1988), Appendix D, Letter 11, Paus 28, 2005 B.S. (1947 A.D.) Shyam Krishna in Birganj to Hira Lal Pradhan in Bandipur.

¹³Mikesell (1988), Appendix D, Letter 16, Aasaadh 22, 2005 B.S. (1947 A.D.) Shyam Krishna in Bandipur to Hira Lal Pradhan in Kathmandu.

¹⁴Mikesell (1988), Appendix D, Letter 2, Maagh 10, 2005 B.S. (1947 A.D.) Shyam Krishna in Kathmandu to Hira Lal in Bandipur.

¹⁵Mikesell (1988), Appendix D, Letter 3, Maagh 11, 2005 B.S. (1947 A.D.) Shyam Krishna in Kathmandu to Hira Lal in Bandipur.

¹⁶Unpublished letter [8/16/89:2], Maagh 7, 2005 B.S. (Postmarked Jan. 22, 1948 A.D.) Shyam Krishna in Kanpur, India (Add.: Purusottan Das Ganapati Ray, Kanpur) to Hira Lal in Bandipur.

¹⁷Discussed in detail in Swasti Mitter (1986).

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