

DILMAYA'S WORLD

THE LIFE AND DEATH OF A GURUNG WOMAN

Notes to accompany films made between 1988
and 1995 in central Nepal

Trial version 1.1



Sarah Harrison and Alan Macfarlane

The films on DVD and on the Internet, to which
these are notes, are dedicated, along with this
book to

The memory of Dilmaya Gurung and to
her family

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PREFACE

The nature of this book

This is an experiment. Out of a particular relationship with my 'sister' Dilmaya Gurung, and the interest in film-making and particularly the film interviews I had been doing with academics in England, I decided in 1992 to undertake an extended set of interviews with Dilmaya Gurung about her world. I split them into sessions of about 20 minutes each and they were filmed on her verandah, often when she was doing something else.

Through these I hope to allow her to speak in her own words about her world. Dilmaya was illiterate, so her autobiography is a spoken one. In this book I want to join her own account of her life and thoughts with a number of films which show that life in action. The first ten of the eleven interviews were originally translated by Anita Gurung and revised by Alan Macfarlane.

Dilmaya's World

(Written on 7 December 2006)

My "sister" Dilmaya has been dead for nearly twenty years.

She died suddenly, at the age of forty-two, on 7th April 1995. We heard of her death two days later in England. I wrote in our diary.

Sunday 9th April 1995. [Alan]

The second half of the day suddenly turned very grey when Judy Pettigrew rang from Nepal to say that Dilmaya died two days ago. We were both devastated. Realized she was Nepal – the heart of warmth, grace and kindness. Not just a sister, friend, adviser, tower of strength, loving mother, dancing partner, cook, companion, but so much more. Words cannot convey how close we had come, both of us, to her. Our grief, though, nothing to that of Surje, Premkumari and others; suffering. Numb. Unable to weep – though Sarah did so. Many memories, films, experiences of sadness & gladness flashed past our eyes – and all gone. With all the people in the world to choose from – why Dilmaya! Suddenly the world drained of part of its meaning. And our little family in Nepal suddenly much more vulnerable with no epicentre. Everything here suddenly an effort & pointless. Found it hard to concentrate & even my book, which I've been reading through, no consolation. Oh, Dilmaya, we miss you – dreadfully.

Monday 10th April [Sarah]

In the background for both of us all day was the aching sadness – the loss of someone very dear to us, & the shock of unfairness that she of all people should die. ...

*

How is it that across the vast abyss of space and cultures, between peoples of such different backgrounds, I should feel this?

Dilmaya was a woman – I am a man. I was ten years older. I am hyper-educated, with four degrees including two doctorates, while Dilmaya could not write and hardly attended school. Dilmaya spoke no English.

Dilmaya had never been beyond the local town of Pokhara, and even within Pokhara had not ventured far. She had hardly any knowledge of a wider world and little of politics, while both were part of my life.

Dilmaya had worked enormously hard for almost all of her life in the grinding toil of hill agriculture. I had worked almost entirely with my mind.

Dilmaya had frequently been ill, when I have usually been well. She had lost her mother when she was eight and been rejected by her stepmother and hence had been brought up in an uncle's house. My parents had not seen much of me after I had been sent home at the age of five from Assam, but they had both lived.

Dilmaya could not drive, work a computer or camera, swim, shoot or use a telephone, all of which were things I had learnt and some of which I spent a lot of time using.

Dilmaya had been desperately poor from her early marriage through to the time when we started to share our lives when she was about 35. I have mostly been well off and not often worried about money.

Dilmaya's house started as very small and never reached beyond a simple two-room, smoke-filled village home with no running water or electricity. I had always lived surrounded by comfortable furniture, electricity and running water. The only time I had known anything of the deprivation and harshness of her home was at my early boarding schools.

Dilmaya lived in a world of ancestor beliefs, forest spirits, godlings, witches, ghosts and a landscape infused with magical power. I had been brought up in evangelical monotheistic Christianity, with an increasingly distant God. Any residual magic from my childhood receded in my late teens.

My ideas had often come to me through television, films, newspapers and books and I had been trained from eight onwards to analyse, weigh, judge, separate facts and fiction. Dilmaya's ideas had come entirely through the spoken and sung word, and with no formal training in logic, rhetoric, argument, writing, mathematics, and language.

I had a large library; Dilmaya had no books at all in the house, except those of her children. I went round with the philosophers and poetry and literature of the west ringing in my head and a rough map of human history and geography. Dilmaya had none of this, though she knew the wisdom needed to coax a living from the hard mountain environment and to placate the spirits.

I had many clothes, as much food as I needed, a cupboard of drink and another of medicine. Dilmaya had few, and often worn, clothes, often little food and no medicines.

I had never gone through the shock of pregnancy and childbirth as Dilmaya had done, four times. I had not had a laparoscopy and walked up the high mountain the same day. I had not been eaten alive by leeches, or stung by the lethal mountain nettles. I had not, unlike Dilmaya, suffered from the constant cuts and thorns on normally bare feet, cracked with hard work.

I had not learnt to carry my own body weight of wood or grain or manure up and down thousands of feet of steep mountain along rocky tracks. I had not steadied and milked large animals or been constantly soaked by monsoon rain. Nor had I carried a small child on my back as I bent over for hours weeding or planting rice.

I had not grasped and cut the hard mountain grasses or grains, or hauled wood from the steep hillsides. On the other hand, Dilmaya

had not had her nose broken in rough sports, and never played team games or acted in plays or sung in choirs, or been on a train or plane journey.

I had never scooped up animal manure with my bare hands or pounded rice at three in the morning for several hours each day or ground millet in a stiff quern. I had never watched a year's work on my fields swept away by a few minutes of hail or a landslide.

I had never, until I went to the village, seen dead human bodies or smelt human flesh burning on a funeral pyre. I had never lived for more than a day or in a world without toilets or toilet papers, where there was no central heating and no window glass to keep out the cold Himalayan winds.

* * *

Short of finding the very remotest of simple hunter-gatherers in an Australian or African desert, it is difficult to think how our worlds could have been further apart – mentally, morally, spiritually, economically, politically, educationally, or in terms of clan, gender, wealth, history or culture. Everything seemed to be at opposite poles.

Yet this is the story of a sister and brother, which is what we became. And it is the story of how we grew together and seemed to leap across those huge ravines to stand together in love and friendship. I came to love her in the wider sense as closely as my dearest family. I came to admire her life and character, her mind and spirit, more than I admired than that of almost all those I have known from far more privileged backgrounds.

What I found, as I have found in other ways with cross-cultural friendships, as well as with certain children, especially my beloved children and grandchildren, is that the anthropological belief that humans are linked by some psychic unity seems true.

Cultures or politics may make us strangers and even enemies. We manufacture differences in order to exploit, oppress and even kill. Yet if we open ourselves to the other and take care to meet and

sympathize, then we discover that all the things I have listed – the wealth, health, life experiences and so much else are just on the surface, small waves on a deep ocean.

Within that ocean there is so much in common, humour and a sense of the bizarre and ridiculous, rhythm and the joy of music and sounds, delight in children and in other beauty that suddenly shines out of daily life. There is a shared logic and ability to argue, classify, differentiate, weigh and assess, to discriminate and judge which is not dependent on formal education.

Natural intelligence and indeed wisdom, a sense of fairness, organizing ability, intuition and sensitivity to the feelings of others, all of which Dilmaya had in great measure, have nothing to do with going to school, with travel, with worldly experience or with wealth. Dilmaya was clearly as intelligent, thoughtful and rational in every way as many of my distinguished colleagues at Cambridge University.

* * *

What I am groping towards saying is not only that I liked, even loved, Dilmaya very much. Not only that I deeply respected and admired her extraordinary ability to use her body and the simplest of tools to wrest a living and to provide for and nurture her growing family of four children and a gentle, subdued, husband. But also that I found in the give and take of everyday life, the jokes, the zest, the curiosity, the exchange of information and the desire to share and explore the world together, a basis for a sustained and growing friendship.

Dilmaya was very good companion, a person whom Sarah and I enjoyed spending hundreds of hours with through long days and evenings as she cooked us rice and uncomplainingly added responsibilities for an extra pair of people to the load of her other five close family members.

Sarah my wife not only tolerated our intimate and close relationship but also loved Dilmaya with a slightly different but

equal strength as one strong woman respects and loves another in whom she recognizes so much of merit.

Sarah and I deeply trusted Dilmaya. We learnt this trust over the years not only because in all the cross-currents of intimate village life Dilmaya never betrayed us, criticized us or hurt us in any way. She was never angry or exasperated with our mistakes and blunders (that we noticed), she did not use or manipulate our relationship for her or her family's purposes, though there must have been great temptations to do so. She trusted us to come back, she did not put pressure on us to give, and she protected us against the importunities of others.

* * *

In the many hours of film which I took of her, she comes back to life and many of Dilmaya's virtues as I appreciated them come out in her role as the subject (or object) of my filmmaking. She is clearly good-looking, perhaps not strikingly beautiful but certainly with a handsome face and a graceful and well-shaped body which moves precisely and rhythmically in work or dance. Her demeanour is full of poise, self-confidence, but never overbearing or arrogant.

She had just the right sense of self and self-possession without any desire to be the centre of things, neither shrinking nor thrusting. She was very patient, and if things had to be repeated, or she had to make extra efforts for the camera, she never complained or showed that she was stressed or exasperated.

Dilmaya very quickly lost any sense of shyness or embarrassment. She did not act up to or over-act. She was not self-conscious or camera shy. She never asked me not to film something because she felt that it was intrusive or time-wasting, though there must have been occasions when she thought both of these things. She did not show off in front of others, boast or use the filming to elevate her status. Nor did she ever give in to what pressure there must have been through gossip and envy to dampen down the filming.

Dilmaya acted perfectly naturally, explained things clearly to the camera, and was aware of the needs of angle, light and distance in an intuitive way. She basically treated the camera and me as she did her own children. She expanded our worlds and guided us towards a deeper understanding in our growing lives.

Dilmaya alerted me to what needed filming and made sure that I was well placed to film. She smoothed away obstacles, whether fierce dogs, timid or wary subjects, and all this in a dignified and humorous way which established to those around that she approved of what I was doing and valued it, and they should do the same.

* * *

Out of the relatively high gender status of a hill woman, even if from a poorer background; out of the equal gender relations of this society where there are few traces of honour and shame; out of the brother-sister relationship; out of the chemistry of two people who liked each other, I was let into her life, not just the surface, but whatever I wanted to explore.

She trusted me with the intimacies of female life, which in many parts of the world would have been taboo between a woman and an unrelated male member of the society, or even a relative, let alone a stranger. And she described everything in simplified Gurung so that I could understand; intuitively understood questions and expanded them so that they became more interesting.

Dilmaya also generously shared her friends and particularly her children, above all her growing daughter Premkumari, with us. It takes trust to let an unrelated adult male from another culture become very close physically and emotionally to your one and only and most beloved little daughter between the ages of two and twelve, filming, cuddling, playing games, gaining their love and affection and explaining carefully to them what had happened when, every year, we would suddenly disappear for many months.

Through the trust and love of the mother encompassing these feelings in the little child I was able to set up a second rich filming relationship with an equally different and alien-seeming film subject, a young girl growing from infancy to puberty in a remote Himalayan village. So Dilmaya allowed this, as well as encouraging our love for her sons and husband.

All this was achieved while she looked after us physically and stretched her mind and body to the limits in the gruelling efforts of agriculture, which strained every muscle and sent her exhausted to bed night after night. She lived on a low-calorie and vitamin diet and was sometimes unwell and worried about the future of herself and her children. Yet she did not let this dampen her warmth to us.

The real sign of a combination of love and sensitivity, which I have noted to this degree in only a few others, was her ability to anticipate our needs. She did this for us, not only as people living in a strange world whose customs and etiquette we only dimly grasped, but in relation to the film-making, whose purposes she only roughly understood and whose technical details and needs she had little training to grasp.

* * *

So against the apparently superhuman odds, against all the fashionable theories which suggest that only women can study and film women, against the views that cultures are mutually incomprehensible, or that all we study is a projection of ourselves and that the 'other' is unknowable, we came to understand each other. Against the view that the colonial arrogance of power stands between the observer and the observed, that linguistic barriers are too great, that we cannot understand an experience which we have not shared, that different mental worlds cannot be mediated, against all these and many other apparently insuperable obstacles, we became close. So I learnt to believe that all these perfectly logical, philosophically irrefutable and downright obvious arguments were wrong.

Dilmaya showed that we can understand up to the limit of our language skills, feel, share and communicate across worlds, that we can enrich each other's lives. She showed to me that we are all human animals, all filled with potential, with wonder and with as much subtlety, energy and intelligence as each other.

Dilmaya with Alan



Dilmaya with Sarah



Exchanging presents



It is always difficult to know what to give as presents, but here we see the exchange of clothing between Dilmaya and Sarah. Only now, thinking about it, do I realize what a large sacrifice of very scarce money Dilmaya was making in buying a gift for Sarah. Our main presents to each other, of course, were friendship and time spent together, to which we were able to add support for the children's education, and, from time to time, money to buy animals or small parcels of land.

The diary for this day (28 May 1992) reads:
Decided to give Premkumari and Dilmaya the clothes we had bought for them. Premkumari's dress fitted well and looked nice. Dilmaya did her hair with a pink ribbon so she looked particularly smart. Of course, she insisted (with no resistance from Dilmaya, I should note) on wearing it all day. How long it will remain pristine, I don't know. We gave Dilmaya another lungi and shawl. Hope she likes it. The first question is always, "how much did it cost?" As we never remember, we can only say we bought it at Mahendra Pul.

Dilmaya and her family

I first visited Nepal in December 1968 at the age of 26. I went with my first wife Gill to undertake fieldwork for a Ph.D. in anthropology among the Gurung peoples of the Annapurna Mountains. As a historian of England, I wanted to experience what it was like to live in a pre-industrial society.

Among my first friends in the village of Thak was the family of a retired British Gurkha Lieutenant, Bhuwansing Gurung, whose house was just below the one in which we decided to live. Bhuwansing spoke reasonable English and took us under his protection. He arranged for a visit in our first fortnight to the higher village of Siklis for the Gurung New Year and invited us to meals and picnics. In times of difficulty he advised us and lent me money when funds were short.

During the course of the year our relations became sufficiently close for him to suggest that I become adopted as a fictive son, to take my place alongside his other children. We went through a small ceremony and after that I called him 'father' (aba), his wife 'mother' (ama), and his children by their birth-order names, nani, kaji and kancha. We remained very close friends and when his older son Nandalal died tragically young, I replaced him and was one of the four closest relatives who lit the ritual fire at the funeral of Bhuwansing's wife.

As I came to learn about the family, I discovered that the other girl in the household was called Dilmaya, aged fifteen when we arrived. She had been adopted into the family because her father was Bhuwansing's older (middle) brother, whose first wife, Dilmaya's mother, had died when Dilmaya was eight. Dilmaya's father had married again but the new wife had not liked the children of the first marriage, Dilmaya and her older brother Subana, so she had not been kind to them. To protect Dilmaya, Bhuwansing had brought her into his house, while Subana had gone abroad.

Dilmaya was treated as different from the two other real daughters. In December 1969 I noted that that 'though adopted into Bhuwansing's family [Dilmaya] is still called 'nani' (oldest daughter)'. According to Dilmaya's own account, and what happened to her in her early years, it is clear that she was given less

support, and expected to work harder in the household and family farm than her sisters, though Bhuwansing was always personally very kind to her.

This was the shy young teenager whom I first encountered, but hardly got to know, as my fieldwork notes reveal. She was filmed carrying straw up to the village, and this gives my first glimpse of this important person in my life.

Dilmaya aged 14, putting down straw, autumn 1969



The only photographs of her at that time are at the wedding celebrations of Bhuwansing's older son. I also noted her as one of the helpers at the ritual dance or Ghatu at that time. Otherwise she was on the periphery during my first visit.

Nandalal's wedding - 6.12.1969



Bhuwansing (holding Kaji) and Nandalal standing, Minprasad, Dilmaya, Nansumari, Sunkumari and Dankumari sitting.

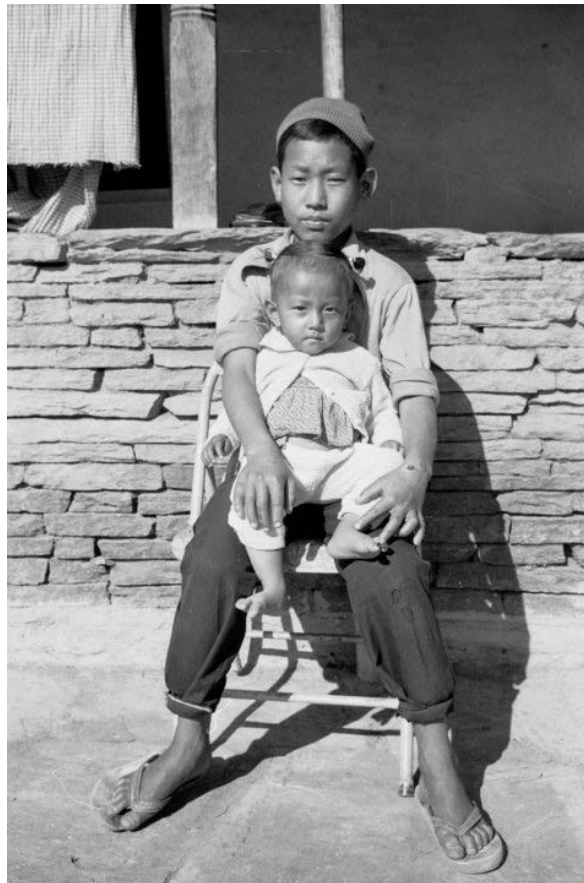
Dilmaya, aged almost 15, at Nandalal's wedding



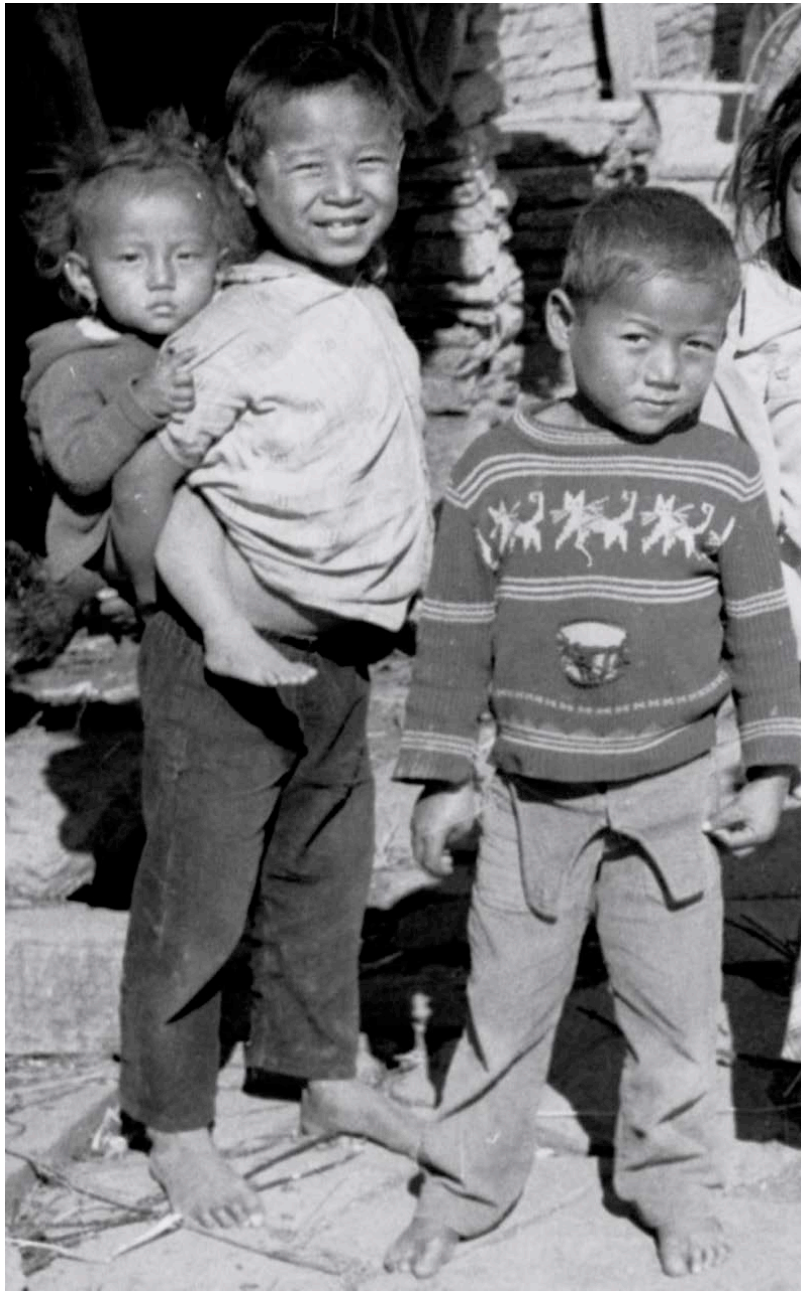
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When I returned with my second wife Sarah in December 1986, we lived briefly in a room in the house above where Dilmaya was then living. This house had been where she had spent part of her youth. It was now occupied by Bhuwansing's sister, my aunt ('antheba' in Gurung). When we decided we would like to walk up to the higher village of Siklis and needed a guide, it was suggested we take Krishna, Dilmaya's oldest son, then aged about thirteen. We found him an endearing, intelligent, boy with some ability in English. For the next six or so years we contributed towards his education, clothing and welfare.

**Krishna and his one year old sister Premkumari in
1986**



Krishna's two younger brothers were Om and Syana -
1986



Dilmaya in 1986, aged 32; sitting in front of her
small thatched house



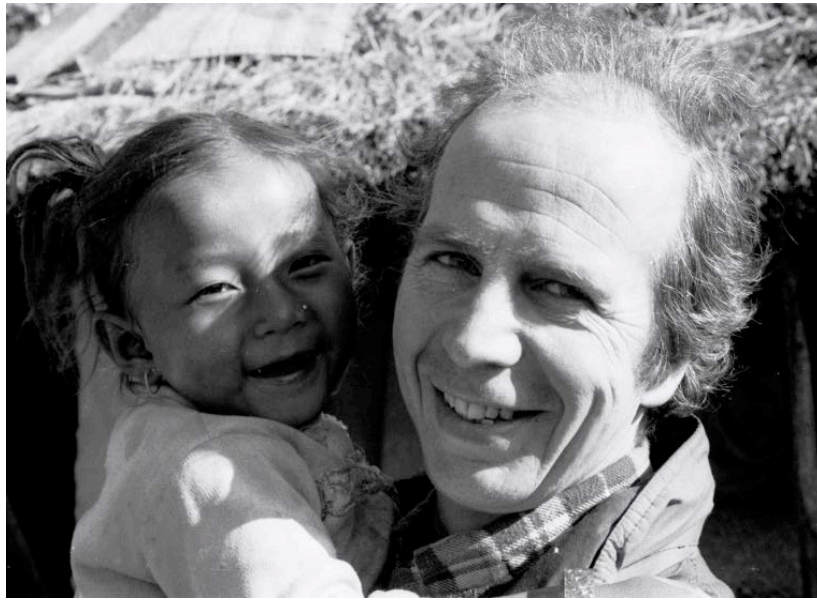
Dilmaya's house in 1987



The first visit was for only a couple of weeks, so it was only on the second, when we spent three months in Nepal in 1987, that we began to get to know Dilmaya's family properly. They often came up to Antheba's house in the evening and our notes show how the bond between Alan and Premkumari, the youngest child and then aged two, blossomed.

Premkumari was very shy, but inquisitive and affectionate, and I formed a relationship of trust and affection with her towards the end of the period.

Premkumari and Alan in 1988



Premkumari and Alan in 1991



The nature of the growing closeness with the family, and particularly with Dilmaya and Premkumari, is shown in notes taken when we arrived and left the village in various years. Just one account will suffice here.

On 21 March 1990 the leaving is described thus by Sarah:

Inside Dilmaya's house we had the first, most moving leave-taking, with her. We were both in tears. She is such a courageous person, hardworking and resourceful as well as charming and graceful. Will miss her. Alan felt very sad about leaving Premkumari who was resolutely not thinking about him going, but thinking about the bubbly gum she knew he'd bought. Nevertheless, cuddling him and clearly loath to leave him. We measured all the children on the wall before we left the house to check on their growth next year.

Another neighbour, who also adopted us as fictive kin, was Badrasing Gurung, the next neighbour along the terrace from Bhuwansing's house. He suggested that if we were intending to come regularly, it would be more satisfactory to live in our own house, rather than in Antheba's spare room. So we devised plans and sent money to Bhuwansing to arrange for the building of a small house in the yard of Dilmaya's house, just a two room stone house above a buffalo shed.



When we came back the following year in 1988 we returned to live in Dilmaya's yard. This arrangement, which has lasted ever since, meant that we would sleep and work in the little house, but have all our meals with Dilmaya's family. The routine consisted of a small "breakfast" at about 8 am, then a full meal at about 11, then a small snack at about 4pm, and a drink of local millet whisky and a second full meal at about 7 pm.

Each evening we would enquire what the family planned to do the next day. Depending on these plans, we might arrange to go with one or more members of the family, often Dilmaya, to accompany them on whatever they were doing. Or more often we stayed around the house and observed everyday activities. Over the meals we discussed the events and relationships in the village.

The year 1988 was a turning point, not only through living with the family, but also because it was the first time that I had been able to take out a proper moving film camera, a Video 8 standard, which while not as high quality as would later become available, with sound, zoom, low light, and I had several hours of film to use, rather than the very limited and expensive three-minute reels of my first 8mm film camera.

In that year I started to film more seriously and took 138 sequences of film, though only a dozen of these short pieces were of Dilmaya and her family. I was obviously searching for a theme for my filming, and it was only in 1990 that I really realized that in

Dilmaya and her family I had before me the perfect connecting subject for my filming. I now realized the virtue of filming their life and activities, and in particular, having become close to Premkumari in 1987, I should concentrate on the relationship between Dilmaya and her growing daughter. I sensed that living in such close proximity, and with a new recording device, I was in a unique situation in which to watch a child growing up in such a world. I also began to appreciate what a remarkable person Dilmaya was.

We were now increasingly involved in various practical ways with the family in what to some extent an overlapping economy. As Dilmaya was my sister, and they were struggling with only one piece of poor maize land of their own and a growing family, we were able to help them with the education of their children, the buying of some rice land, and various utensils and clothes for the house. Sharing every morning and evening in conversation over food, and going on expeditions and work together with them, we became very close.

Dilmaya and Premkumari in 1988



The filming in 1990 reflects the shift in emphasis in the filming. I took much more film – over 1100 sequences – of which several hundred were of Dilmaya and her family, including accompanying her to cut grass and leaves in the forest and many activities around the home.

THE FAMILY IN 1990

Surje



Krishna



Om



Syana



Premkumari



*

Meanwhile in Cambridge I had been doing an increasing number of film interviews of British academics and filmed my own family, so it was natural to film interviews of Dilmaya and her husband Surje talking about their life and family. Dilmaya was particularly articulate and this was the background for the eleven interviews which we did together in 1992.

In 1992 I had moved from Video 8 to Hi-8, nearly double the picture quality, and the interviews were made on Dilmaya's verandah over a number of days. We had got to know her very well over a period six years. This was our sixth visit since our return in 1986 and we had spent over six months in the village. We had been involved in family decisions and shared a great deal in our

discussions and work together. We had shown our evident affection for all of the children. So it was a close brother-sister relationship of trust and deep affection, cemented by constant returns.

After the 1992 visit, when I had filmed more than a thousand sequences, particularly about the family, we came in 1993 and 1994 for a further four months. In 1994 we were present in the autumn for the Dashera celebrations and in particular for the Bhai Tika ('Brother Tika') ceremony, that is the ritual where brothers and sister's honour each other. Sarah had become Dilmaya's husband Surje's adopted sister (joining the ngobje lineage, while I was of the kebje lineage into which Dilmaya had been born). So there was a double brother-sister ritual which we were able to film.

It all looked set for many years of participant-observation anthropology and film-making around the family, but it was not to be. As I recount elsewhere, I received a telephone call from my student Judy Pettigrew on April 9th 1995 to say that Dilmaya had suddenly died two days before. The description of her death is given in an interview with her sister-in-law Harimaya which is translated later in the book.

It is clear from the interview with Dilmaya herself that she had some medical condition affecting her heart and was on medication. For various reasons she had been unable to continue with the pills. After a particularly strenuous day's work, fetching buffalo fodder from the forest and a long bout of cooking, she had had a heart-attack, sighting a couple of times and then immediately dying.

We were all distraught, as the diary, quoted in the previous chapter, shows. She was one of the innumerable casualties of poor medical facilities combined with grinding hard work in the contemporary Third World and throughout thousands of years of history.

We went back for the three-day memorial service in late November 1995 with our younger daughter Astrid. Sarah and I performed the ritual duties of a brother and sister-in-law. Since then we have continued to keep in touch with the family, returning for a further nine visits up to 2014. The last one was to attend the memorial service for Dilmaya's widower, Surje.

I hope to write a second book which will follow the lives of the wider kebje clan into which I was adopted, that is the life of Dilmaya's children, husband, sister-in-law, adopted father and

other kin and neighbours as well as my other adopted father and main informant Badrasing. In that volume what happened after her death will be sketched.

In particular, we have been working closely with her youngest son Syana (or Bikash as he is known), who has acted as our research assistant for some ten years, and with whom we have shared many adventures. We are now involved with him in his cultural tourism business ('Dilmaya Treks and Tours') and his further plans to expand knowledge of Gurung culture.

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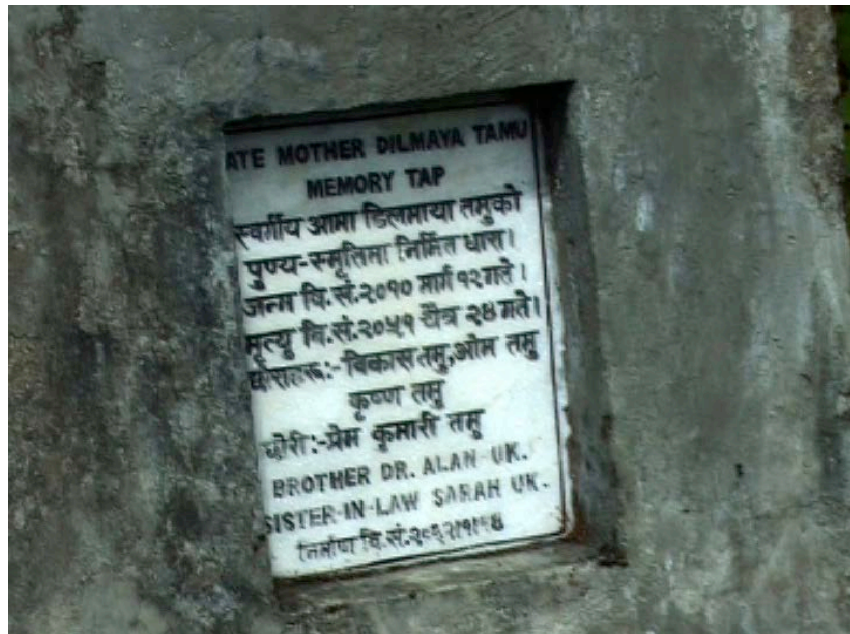
The family are all-proud of their remarkable mother and she is honoured with two memorials. One is a small plaque at the entrance to the village of Thak.



The other is in a subsequently constructed 'cautara' or resting platform, an elaborate construction which includes a water tap fed from the high forests where Dilmaya went so often.



The memorial resting place made by Dilmaya's family



So Dilmaya's life continues in her children and now her delightful grandchildren, Milan, Nishal, Pretimaya, Rupina and Prajit who, in turn, we are involved with. Our two families have been intertwined for over 45 years, despite being from opposite ends of the world. We have been the greatest beneficiaries of a remarkable cross-cultural friendship which I will elaborate on below.

So this is an experiment in recording a relationship and intertwined lives. Others have tried to conjure up the special nature of anthropological involvement and in particular the privileged access into other lives. In Nepal alone, there have been several ethnographies attempting to enter the lives and hear the voices of hill women, Broughton Coburn, Nepali Aama, *Portrait of a Nepalese Hill Woman* (1982), Kathryn March, *"If Each comes Halfway"*, *Meeting Tamang women in Nepal* (2002), Ernestine McHugh, *Love and Honor in the Himalayas* (2001).

This book is another attempt to show what happens when worlds meet, by using the new possibilities which enable me to fulfil my dream of bringing Dilmaya back to life through the films we made together over the years. In this small way, as with the

beautiful cotton wool (cotinus) tree in our garden which was by chance planted on the day of her death before we heard the news, her spirit lives on in various ways. It does so in 'soul village' (plah naasa) which lies far beyond the great Himalayas in the lands from which the Gurungs migrated thousands of years ago, as well as in her children and grand-children. Now she has found yet another resting place, on that virtual cloud all over the world where all our lives and imaginations are being recorded in this new digital age.

An earlier short interview with Dilmaya in 1990



*My name is Dilmaya Gurung
I don't know my age - I think I am about thirty.
My lho (astrological year) is the Year of the Horse.
I don't know how long ago I married - perhaps 20 years ago.
I was aged about seventeen or eighteen when I married.
I am of the Kebje clan.
I married before my father died.
My father was Maila - the second son. Bhuwansing is Kancha
(youngest son).
I did not dance the Ghato - but I was one of the assistants
(Sarishaw). That means that I helped and assisted the dancers.
My children are called Krishna, Om, Surna and Premkumari.*

At the moment we are carrying dung, hoeing the fields, planting maize, fetching wood, carrying water. We will prepare the rice fields and plant the seeds.

In the house I cook, sweep, feed the buffalo, milk the buffalo, wash clothes.

Premkumari only goes to school occasionally.

I have been ill twice recently – all the body aching and with a fever. Premkumari is occasionally ill – with a fever. She had a leech in her nose and we took her to the hospital in Pokhara. She was only cured when I put something in her nose when I brought her back to the village.

We have three buffaloes and three oxen.

I didn't go to school. I can't read or write.

I haven't been to Kathmandu – and indeed I have only been to the near part of Pokhara (to Mahendra Bridge).

[Dilmaya is cuddling her young daughter Premkumari]

THE PERSONAL WORLD

ORIGINS AND CHILDHOOD



My name is Dilmaya Gurung.

I belong to the Kepche clan.

I was born in Kwi (Bee hive) village, that is my parental village.

I do not know my exact age. I think I am around 35 years.

My father's name is Kumba Singh, my mother's name is Chaibiri. I am not sure whether my mother's name is an astrological name or a given name by the villagers.

I stayed with Bhuwan Singh in my early childhood because my mother had died and my father brought in a step mother. Our step mother did not like me or my elder brother. She used to scold us.

My brother got married and went to India to work, along with his wife. The first daughter of my brother died. They did not return home for 17-18 years. They come occasionally now. I miss them very much.

Now they do come and go.

Bhuwan Singh, with whom I stayed, is my father's younger brother. I stayed with Bhuwan Singh because he as well as his family liked me. I started to work there.

I never went to school as they never encouraged me. I was only told to work. I had already started to work when I was 12-13 years of age because I had no parents.

I used to work when I was very young. The work was to fetch firewood, collect grass, to accompany my mother while bringing snacks for fellow workers. Because I was small I could not work in the field, however I used to fetch water, clean the kitchen utensils and bring them back home.

Yes, you and I used to talk together when you came for the first time to this village. You spoke some Gurung but your wife spoke very little. When I was 15-16 years Bhuwan Singh Father chose Kanchha for me and married me to him. Everybody was happy with this marriage. I was too.

EARLY LIFE



At my wedding they gave me one set of utensils including a dinner plate, bowl, water vessel, pan, scoop and spatula as a dowry. They also gave me a few clothes. From my husband's side, a few used and worn utensils were provided which are now unusable. Now we have no problem of kitchenware because Father Bhuwansing gave us things and as we also purchased some from our earnings, the money made by Krishna's father from sheep work. Similar is the case for clothes. Bhuwan Singh also gave me 10 grams of gold [1 tola] and these earrings also. Krishna's father (my husband) did not have anything, neither did he obtain his share of the ancestral property. So he could not give me anything. Father Bhuwansing gave me everything.

I did not have a house. Krishna's father had a small house above the house of the shaman [poju]. However, we did not stay there. Kale's

mother and father used to live in that house. They sold that house later.

Most of the time we stayed with Father Bhuwansing. Then we moved to Bal Kumari's house at Holo. We lived there and worked there. After some time we built a small house about the same size as this one with only one room at Phayar. That house was made by a village work group [gola]. However, the place was prone to landslides and lack of water and friends. So finally we came back to the original village. Again we started to live at Bhuwan Singh's place.

Later Bhuwan Singh's family migrated to Pokhara. So we stayed at their home and looked after their buffaloes and household goods. After some time Bhuwansing's sister bought that house and we bought this house for seven hundred rupees. This house is yet to be registered although we bought it at a very cheap price.

When Krishna was very young his father and I worked very hard. Krishna's father used to plough carrying Krishna on his back because we did not have anybody to look after him, neither grandfather nor grandmother. I used to transplant rice. We used to bring our chicken and buffaloes to the field while working. Little Krishna sometimes used to walk along with me covered in a plastic sheet when his father did not carry him on his back.

We do not have wet rice land. We only have upland (a field named Phayar) where maize production is low, only about 2.5 muri (200 kg). We hold land by share-cropping. We get about 3 muri of millet from my brother's land and about 1 muri (250 kg) from the land in front. We get altogether about 4 muri (300kg).

CHILDREN AND CHILDBIRTH



We have Krishina, Om, T'surna and Premukari. I do not know how old they are by their years. But by their lho (birth year in Gurung), Krishana is Chyu lho, meaning Rat year, Om is Sapri lho, meaning Snake year, T'surna is Yokara lho, meaning monkey year and Prem Kumari is Mye lho, meaning cow year.

I like my sons and daughter equally. I gave birth to three sons first. We always wanted a daughter and at last we got one and we are happy now. Four or five months after the birth of Prem Kumar I went to Pokhara for family planning (laproscopy). In Pokhara, Father Bhuwansing took me to hospital for treatment. After treatment, I stayed for 10 days in Pokhara and had an energy diet. The diet was provided by Father Bhuwansing. The diet was eggs,

meat and ghee. Then I returned home. There was a pain in the wound.

Initially I was afraid of family planning. But Father Bhuwansing, my mother and sisters encouraged me to do family planning. It was painful. I could not come back for 10 days and stayed there. Altogether I took rest for about 25 days at Pokhara and at home. Then I started to work gradually. Later it stopped hurting.

The labour pain was great while giving birth to Krishna and Om. My body was swollen at the time of T'surna's delivery. I used to work with great difficulty. It was not so painful at the time of Prem Kumari's delivery. Krishna was born in Pokhara, Om at Phayar, T'surna at the house above and Prem Kumari at this house. During delivery Kale and Parsingh's mother helped me greatly.

CHILDREN AND HUSBAND



My first son was bright and was able to work at anything and also was good at studying.

My second son, Om, is very helpful to me. He supports me in all my work. He stays at home, he goes to school and he does various work. He is a very good person. From his early age he started to cook food such as rice and vegetables. He speaks little and I don't understand all of what he says. He does not go out with girls and he is still young. I think for 2-3 years to come he probably will not go out with girls. Om has now started to speak a little bit. He is intelligent.

Kaja, Tswana, is talented. He studies well. He does not want to stay at home. He always wants to go to school and does not want to be absent. He goes to school regularly and does not do much

household works. Only he take bullocks for grazing and does not want to work. It may be due to his youth. School going and bullock grazing are the only work he does. He does not like to do other work.

My daughter, Prem Kumari, is still very young. She likes to play very much. If she does not feel lazy, while she is at home she does some household works. From this year only has she started to go to school. From now onwards she goes to school and helps in some of my works. She is intelligent.

My husband, Kanchha, is getting old. But he does all kind of work. He is intelligent. He did not get a chance to study in his childhood. He can write letters in the Nepali language. But he is a little bit slow. He does not quarrel with others, does not play cards, he drinks little alcohol, he does not get angry, does not talk much with other people, works slowly and smoothly and overall he is a nice man. I love him very much.

An interview with Dilmaya's husband Surje in 1990



[the sound and picture not completely in sync]

I am Surje Bahadur Gurung. I am 44 years old.

I was born in a house above this. I then went to live at Payar for three years. Then I lived in the house above. My father died 24 years ago.

I am of the Khi Lho and my clan is Ngobje.

At the moment I am ploughing, cutting wood, hoeing fields, I am working on the water tank for the village (for which I get 250 rs a month).

I work as a priest - pujari. I sacrifice chickens and goats. I do Deorali puja, Bhaiar Puja, Debi Puja, Mae Pulo Puja. I don't get money for this - but get some grains.

*I have a very little rice and maize land. My rice field is Naide.
My maize field is at Payar.
I have three buffaloes and two oxen and chickens.
I hardly have any education at all.
I used to go on the sheep medicine work. I carried loads for six or
seven years.
I don't do Poju (shaman) work, though I believe in their work.
I do the ancestor ritual (pwelhu) and become possessed during
this. I started to go into possession after my father's death.*

Dilmaya demonstrating to her children



Most of the teaching of her children was done by Dilmaya through demonstration. There was little formal exposition, but rather the children would be encouraged, from about the age of four or five, to start to emulate adult activities. I never saw Dilmaya sternly admonishing the children, but rather she guided them and corrected them gently when they did something wrong. They learnt by observing.

CHILDBIRTH



I have four children, three sons and one daughter. The daughter is the youngest. I had 3-4 hours labour pain while giving birth to a child.

I always had labour pains at night. It is very painful. Sometimes I fear death while giving birth. I have my husband's elder brother's wife, my sister in law Harimaya, to help. At the time of my labour pains with Premkumari, Dhan Bahadur's mother and Tularam's mother helped me. Harimaya helped me very much at the delivery of my three sons. After giving birth to a child I sleep. At the time of labour pains my husband becomes very anxious. He walks in and out. He calls the neighbours for help but all the neighbours don't come. Children also become

anxious, they began to cry, some of them sit outside and some sit inside the house. There is no problem if the man of the house cares for his wife but we don't allow other people to come in.

I always gave birth at night. The labour pain starts at 8 or 9 o'clock then at 11 or 12 o'clock the baby was born. It is very painful. I was very afraid and all the family as well. Harimaya and my husband took care of me at this time. My husband cooks food for me, he kills a chicken, and moves in and out. Children do nothing, they stay with me. They also cry. We bury the placenta in the soil of our land. My husband does this throwing away.

We allow a baby to suckle for up to four years. If the mother gets pregnant within 4 years, she stops breast feeding after three years. If the gap is for several years then she continues breast feeding for 3 – 5 years. But if the gap is only one year then the time of breast feeding is only one year.

Some people start to give some solid food when the baby is 5 – 6 months old. Some people give them rice directly while some give lito. Lito is a baby food made from flour of roasted rice and soybean cooked in water and some ghee added. If there is a gap of many years and the mother's milk is sufficient, they continue only breast-feeding for 1 – 2 years. Sometime it is painful when the baby sucks the milk.

I do all kinds of work from the starting month of pregnancy. I never take a rest. I work all the ten months. If I take a rest then

who will do my work? I have to do all my work. Krishna was born in Pokhara and the other three were born in this village. Some couples (husband and wife) sleep together and others do not sleep together after 5 or 6 months of pregnancy. When the size of the belly increases they do not sleep together. And the pair do not sleep together after giving birth to the child for 3 -5 months. After giving birth, the mother eats rice, ghee and chicken curry. Some mothers do not go outside from the room for 9 days and some do not go for 3 days after giving birth to a child. Then they start to go out. If there are serious labour pains then people go to the hospital. In the time of pregnancy they receive treatment as well. They also do family planning.

FAMILY PLANNING



I did family planning because we have four children. We waited for a girl; we have three boys and at last we have a girl. Some suggest us to have a daughter and some suggested family planning. After having a daughter I did family planning immediately.

MENSTRUATION



During menstruation, people used to refrain from touching men, cooking food, offering pure water to the god, purifying the house etc. Nowadays very few people do so. In this period the women do not purify the house, the cooking area, they do not light incense, they do not put pure up water and they do not worship. I also do not do the above things in this period. My husband does not do worship because this time is impure time. We do not have another woman for cooking so I cook.

In the period of menstruation, some people have backache, body ache but not much pain. In this period women insert a piece of cloth. When the bleeding has stopped they wash the cloth. Some women do not put even a piece of cloth. Nowadays the girls wear

panties and they use a piece of cloth. Some women who do not put in the piece of cloth make their dress dirty, they make the path dirty and all the people can see. Do women use a pad in your country? Does not it make the cloth dirty? We do not have that type of thing here. In my case bleeding happens for six days. Some have three days and some four days. During the period, the couple do not sleep together because it is dirty.

OTHER QUESTIONS



[Alan] Do you dream?

I dream dreams. They are of unknown people and places. I walk around with people, through forests and rivers and see bad things sometime. I only dream occasionally. Dreams mean nothing.

Do you like Pokhara?

If you have money you can buy anything – nice clothes, plates and bowls, foodstuffs. During the hot weather I do not like it there. It can be very smelly and I feel sick.

What do you like about the village?

I like everything – everything is fine. But you have to buy many expensive things from Pokhara. The rivers become swollen in the wet season – so it is difficult to bring things.

What makes you unhappy?

When people die, when things are hard – when there is too little money, hard work, when my children are sick.

What makes you happy?

Not many things – everything is hard. Children are helping now so things are getting a little easier. When strangers come I am happy – when you come, but when you go I am unhappy.

How many children are there at the school?

Perhaps 30 or 40 – there are five classes.

What do they study?

I don't know at all. If children go to school, they cannot help me. Just at the week-ends they can help.

What school things are there?

I don't know really. Not many books – a few benches. They wear out.

Thanks very much indeed for the interviews. I will ask you more when I come next time. I have filmed you a lot – only you have been filmed in this way. You have spoken very well.

Dilmaya combing her hair



Dilmaya often relaxed by combing her long hair on the verandah or yard. This was also important as the hair could easily be infested with lice. It was also often washed. It was not a private or secret activity, as my filming shows.

THE PHYSICAL WORLD

THE YEAR'S WORK



From mid-December to mid-February the villagers' main work is collecting fodder and firewood from the forest, preparing straw mats and some harvesting and storing of millet. From February onwards also some go to the forest to collect fodder and firewood. Those women who do not prepare the flour of maize and millet and those men who do not do bamboo work mainly go to the forest for fetching firewood and fodder.

Those who have low lands begin to prepare land for maize planting and for plantains and clearing weeds. During the first to second week of March people carry compost and manure from the cattle sheds to the fields. From the last week of April people start to plant maize. From mid April people begin to spread manure for paddy seed bed preparation. Then towards the end of April they do various types of preparatory work in the maize fields. Some also collect large firewood

for the monsoon. Then they prepare seed beds and nurseries for paddy and millet. This month is very busy.

During mid-May to mid-June people start to plough, weeding, (clearing terraces), the second weeding of maize, fencing maize fields and planting soybean. Some also start planting millet .

From mid-June to mid-July mainly the transplanting of paddy is done. Some also transplant millet.

From mid-July to mid-August there is weeding of millet that was planted in mid-May to mid-June. Some also plant late season millet.

From mid-August to mid-September there is weeding of paddy and late-planted millet.

The celebration of Dashain festival starts in late September to early October. For this people begin to plaster their houses with soil brought from forest. There are lots of leeches in the forest. We harvest a little bit of millet. This is a lean period for work.

From mid-October to mid-November the harvesting of early rice and soybean is done. Mid-October to mid-December is a peak period for work due to the harvesting of rice, millet, threshing of rice, and so on.

At the full moon of November we worship the goddess Buje Deurali(grand-mother goddess). A large radish is sacrificed in this worship, not goats. An offering (prasad) is prepared from the radish. Goat sacrifice is not allowed during this period.

Bundling monsoon wood - 1990



It is very difficult to collect wood during the four months of the summer monsoon as the forests are wet and leech-infested and the wood also soaked. So large supplies have to be cut over the winter and piled up, as in this film, preparatory to being carried down to the village. Each household needs many bundles of wood and it takes weeks to cut it, then bundle it with bamboo cords, and finally to carry it down to the village.

Carrying wood bundles - 1991



The carrying down of wood is usually done in the spring, before the monsoons. People often work in teams, as in this film, and even children help. Each load can weigh up to 30 kg or so, and people climb up over a thousand feet to where the wood is temporarily deposited, then carry it down the thousand feet of very rough path to the village. They will do this half a dozen times in a day, punctuated with only a small snack in the midst of the day.

The session of wood-carrying in this film took place on 13 April 1991 and the wood had previously been carried half-way down from the forest to a high ridge called Garedi. This was about a thousand feet above the village and used to be the site of the old village.

Fetching wood from the wood-pile for the family fire



The very large wood-pile in this photograph was taken at the time before the monsoon began. Families would characteristically pile up at least fifty bundles of wood for the wet season. Each day half a bundle or so would be taken into the house for burning, the fire seldom being left to go out entirely. The fetching of the wood through the day was mainly done by Dilmaya.

THE DAY'S WORK



I sometime got up at 4 o'clock and sometimes at 5 o'clock. Then I make tea, sweep the house and floor and sometimes I plaster the house floor with a mixture of mud and cow dung.

Nowadays we don't have to use the foot pounding machine (traditional huller) as milling is done by machine. In the past we used to get up at 4 o'clock, followed by lighting the fire, making tea and pounding. Then we used to grind millet. We grind millet sometimes in the traditional water mill and sometimes in the quern (traditional grinder).

Nowadays, in the morning I prepare tea, give the children breakfast, sweep, plaster and then I cook food. I milk the buffalo and I give food to the family. After that I go to the field to work.

Work is sowing millet and rice seed, sometimes collecting firewood and sometimes weeding maize. I do so many different kinds of work in different days and seasons. Sometimes I also cut grass and collect fodder for livestock. Sometime I stay at home and wash clothes. I also bathe children and herd oxen.

In the evening when I come back home, I start to work on food preparation for the family as there is nobody to help me in my work. Sometime I distil some home-made alcohol after dinner. I go to bed only after 9-10 p.m. I have difficult tasks. Sometime I make you afternoon snacks.

RICE AGRICULTURE



For the preparation of the rice nursery bed, ploughing is done followed by weeding (as you and Sarah and I did together), breaking of clods, levelling and preparation of the raised seed bed, sowing as you saw me planting seeds and covering the seed with a thin layer of soil. Then we make a water channel with a small hoe which you have seen.

After completion of the preparation of the seed nursery, the first ploughing of rice land is done. Women never plough.

After ploughing the work of the men is finished. Then there is an exchange of labour for other work, such as weeding, which is done equally by men and women. After weeding, some plant millet while others plant rice. After completion of millet planting, all engage in rice transplanting.

For the whole month of Ashadh (mid June – mid July) people are busy transplanting rice. They put on water on the land, men do the digging, ploughing, preparing the wall of the rice terraces (aali) and levelling of land while women uproot seedlings for transplantation and they transplant those seedlings on the prepared land.

After finishing rice planting, in the month of Srawan (mid July to mid August) some again plant millet while some weed millet which was planted in Jestha (Mid May – Mid June). Then maize harvesting is done. There is a lot of work in Srawan (Mid July – Mid August) such as, pulling out maize stalks, millet weeding and so on.

In the month of Bhadai (mid August to mid September) people do the weeding of millet that was planted in Srawan (Mid July – Mid August) and the first weeding of paddy fields that were transplanted in Ashadh (mid June – mid July). Weeds from the paddy field are collected and the roots are trimmed. Weeding is mainly done by women.

In the month of Ashauj (mid September to mid October), weeding for millet that was planted in Srawan (mid July – mid August) is done. This month is relatively a slack period. In this month people bring earth from the forest, similarly fodder and firewood during sunny days. From this month onwards people go to the forest as the leech intensity decreases. This month passes with plastering house walls with mud and celebrating the Dashain festival.

In the month of Kartik (mid October to mid November) early rice starts to mature (in the middle of month) from our

field at Naide. From this time onwards is the peak period for rice harvesting and storing begins from the lower paddy lands. I cannot carry rice from the field. Carrying of rice is mainly done by men. Kanchha as well as other wage earners carry rice from the field. Women generally do not carry rice from the fields.

In Mangsir (mid November to mid December) women mainly do household chores and cut paddy while men bring rice from the fields. Such harvesting operations are done through the labour exchange system. Men also thresh the rice from rice plants, then make the stacks with paddy and later tread the straw.

After cutting the rice, the plants are left for drying for three days followed by collecting at one place, called a Kunyo (stack of paddy with straw). Have you seen these stacks? To prepare the straw stack men are required. Women collect and prepare the bundles and men carry them to the threshing floor. All this work is done at the field itself. Then men thresh the rice and the straw is trodden by oxen. The rice grains are then collected in sacks and bags and brought to the house. In this way, rice harvesting and storing work is completed.

We store rice in a large basket. Then rice is taken out from the store followed by drying in the sun; de-husking is done by a foot-pounding machine or in the rice mills. Then the unhusked rice grains are cleaned. Then we cook it.

I have rice land only in Naide field and not at the low land. But Kanchha is share cropping a little rice land.

Clearing the field and ploughing



The first stage is clearing the lands of old stalks, weeds, fallen branches and other litter. The banks also often have to be repaired and the ground levelled for sowing. This is done by a mixture of light ploughing and hoeing.

This expedition to prepare the fields was filmed on 11th May 1992. The diary describes the expedition thus:

Stopped at Darmakote and saw the strange sight of Kancha feeding a small dove with maize he'd chewed in his mouth, out of his mouth. His wife gave Dilmaya some 'genowa', the best rice seed. Don't know whether this was a gift or not. The land they were working belongs to Dilmaya's brother and they 'ade lava' [sharecrop] it. A lot of work. The fields had had a first ploughing by the time we got there, the banks had been repaired and weeded. Women, Bolbahadur's sister and daughter, were weeding with 'kodale'.

After this weeding, Krishna ploughed the fields again, making a deep furrow in the centre, all along. Then the earth was smoothed, the lumps broken down, and a good trench dug down the middle, all sides and across to carry the water for irrigation. We tried weeding with 'kodale' - not easy for out backs. After the field was smooth, Dilmaya broadcast the seed, then Kancha carefully covered it with earth from the trench. These are the seed-beds. They lie above the fields so they transplant downhill. Very hot there - as hot as Pokhara, they say.

Preparing rice fields and sowing



Then a small part is made particularly clean and the rice seed is planted there. When it has grown to a small size it will be ready for transplanting to the flooded terraces.

This work used to be done by work groups of several families, but here we see a smaller groups working together.

This film was taken on the same expedition.

Transplanting rice



Once the monsoons have begun and there is enough water, the main rice terraces are prepared. This involves ploughing, harrowing (with a small drag-harrow on which the operator stands), and finally the rice seedlings are brought in bunches and carefully sown in rows. Small children learn to do this job, as in the photograph. Finally the banks are made firm and the flow of water through each successive terrace to the next adjusted. It is very intense work and often the families will go down and spend a night or two in the lower fields working on what is known as ‘Asar lava’ (Asar being the name of the month of June/July). They live in small shelters and cook simple meals there.

Another enormously time-consuming stage, the first and possibly second weeding of the rice, has been omitted here as I do not have film of it. Again it is back-breaking work and requires families to camp down in the fields.

Rice harvesting



Rice is cut when it is dry, using a small sickle. It is cut very low down as the stalk is also useful as fodder for animals. It looks simple enough, but when we tried to cut we found that the stalks are extremely tough and it took great energy and skill to do this work. It was impossible for us to do more than a few minutes as we could not bend over in the way which is so essential to many Gurung tasks. It was also hot and insect infested and was grinding work, only enlivened by occasional breaks for light food and drink and some laughing and gossiping.

Taking food to the workers in the field



When people were working on Dilmaya's land, part of the payment would be in the form of a mid-day meal, eaten in the field. This would be cooked in the house and then taken down by Dilmaya and shared with the workers, as in this film.

Harvesting straw



The straw which remains after the rice has been threshed from the stalks is piled up to start the drying process. Then it is carried in huge bales up to the village to be fed to the buffalo or oxen. The harvesting is done by all members of the family, just using their bare hands and no special implements.

Taking rice off husks with pounder



The extremely laborious work of releasing the rice from its outer covering is mainly done by women, who traditionally worked long hours doing this as explained above. Again it is made to look quite easy by those in these films, but having tried it several times it requires huge effort and perfect timing to do properly. To do this for a couple of hours every day to produce enough husked rice for a family was a crippling burden on women. The recent arrival of diesel mills around the village from the 1990's has been one of the most significant improvement in their lives, even though there are costs, both financial, and probably through the milling off of some of the important outer shell of the rice which contains vital vitamins. Over-milled white rice has been a serious problem in many parts of Asia.

This film was made on 15 March 1990, after Dilmaya had already been busy at various tasks throughout the day.

Drying and winnowing rice



Even when the rice has been beaten and separated from the chaff, there is much work to be done. It can easily become mouldy unless dried several times in the sun, and further dirt and chaff needs to be removed by expert winnowing with a large winnowing tray, as in the photograph.

Maize

“The cultivation of maize allows many families to feed themselves while waiting for the rice to ripen. The fields are cleaned at the beginning of April; the walls of the terraces are repaired. Then the ploughing and the sowing succeed each other during the several light showers at the beginning of spring. The heat is not too great and the earth is soft. From mid-May, the maize plants are cleaned and earthed up. A second hoeing takes place when the millet is transplanted in the shadow of the maize. The cobs are taken off between the 15th August and 15th September. In the fields planted with millet, the stems are cut close to the earth. In those where the millet is only transplanted after the harvesting of the maize, the stems are pulled out. The cobs are carried to the villages in large back-baskets. The stems that are still green are given to the cattle.”
(Pignède)

Clearing fields - 1990



As with rice, the fields have to be cleared of the last years stalks, and of other matter, which is burnt. Terraces have to be repaired and the ground levelled carefully before spreading manure and planting can begin.

In the diary for 8th March 1990 we note:

Went up to Surje's maize land, where the buffalo is kept. There had been a landslide, thankfully small, last year, and the banks had to be repaired. First he broke away the slip with a crowbar, then broke it up with a small hoe ('kodale'), pulling out weeds and stones at the same time, then he spread the soil over the terrace. Dilmaya came down with a basket of dung. The terrace below had a few areas where there was no dung, only piles of leaves and weeds. These she set light to, carefully taking out any larger sticks and putting them in her basket to take back to the house. Alan filmed and I took some photos, then it started to rain and we hurried back, just in time as Dilmaya had laid out rice to dry. Luckily, Om, Surna and Udebahadur from above, were beginning to put it back in the sack, and together we did it before it got soaked. Dilmaya had pointed out to me earlier that it was already sprouting.

Clearing fields and spreading manure



The manure is mainly used on the maize and millet fields. Without such fertilization crops would quickly decline. The older methods, used until the middle of the twentieth century, of slashing and burning on the higher hillsides are no longer done except in remote villages. There is considerable work in spreading the manure since no kind of rake seems to be used.

The diary notes for 3rd May 1992:

Surje was off to plough in Naide mro today. We went down slowly with Dilmaya as she was not feeling very strong after three days of illness and no food. All she carried was a 'khun' [plough] for Surje. There was a lot of activity in and around Naide with three ploughs in action, including Surje's. Binkumari, Bolbahadur's sister, was helping to break up the piles of dung brought down by Surje and the boys. Dilmaya started, but without her usual energy. I found my stick could be used as a rather poor rake, but managed to shift several piles and spread dung over the fields. Alan filmed. It was pleasant to be down in the fields. One can sense the camaraderie among the working groups. The views and climate lovely at this time of year.

Ploughing and planting maize - 1990



“The ploughing of springtime is always preceded by the repair of the walls of the terraces which water undermines and rapidly destroys during the monsoon. A swing-plough is used made of a plough-beam, a handle and a massive wooden plough-shear, covered at the thin end (shoe) with a protective iron point. The swing-plough is pulled by a pair of small black oxen, bearing the yoke in front of their withers. The furrows are made following the curves of the level ground, parallel to the walls of the terrace. The operation consists of turning the plough at the end of the field, often made difficult by the narrowness of many of the terraces. The ploughman must lift the swing-plough above the terrace below, like a flying buttress, which he does on the outside edge of the field.

Maize is sown by hand by a person following the plough, in the furrow which will be covered over by the next passage of the plough. The sowing of millet is done with great precision. The earth is turned over by hoe, then broken up and levelled by hand, checking the irrigation channels for the flow of water. The grains are sown by hand, evenly spread and then covered with a fine layer of earth. To keep the soil fresh and damp, the seedlings are often covered with fern leaves.” (Pignède)

Maize - weeding and thinning



After a few weeks not only the maize has grown, but many weeds in between the stalks. These have to be systematically removed, though they may be useful to feed to livestock when carried home. It is precision work with a small hoe, since any damage to the growing maize must be avoided.

The diary notes on 18 May 1992:

Alan went off to the upper maize field with Dilmaya, Om and Surna, to film Om weeding. This was the first time that Surna had been weeding and he went at it with too much energy so that he's exhausted. Alan noticed that was a deep fissure in the terrace where the buffalo hut is built, caused by yesterday's rain. Dilmaya fears it will slip in the monsoon, the buffalo stall will fall, and the maize will probably be covered. She said that it was disheartening to weed maize that looks so poor already - stunted by lack of rain and damaged by hail.

Harvesting maize



The maize is harvested at the end of the monsoon, once it has dried out a little. The cobs are broken off the tall stems and collected and carried back in baskets. The stems are then cut and collected for fodder.

De-husking maize



“Generally the covering of six cobs is taken off and they are tied together (only the best cobs are chosen). Then, the bunches of six cobs are hung across strips of wood, fixed horizontally to the ceiling of the ground floor of the house, to dry. They can also be hung outside. For this, long bamboo poles are fixed vertically in the ground and joined together at about 2.5 m. from the earth by horizontal strips, then the bunches of cobs are piled up over the strips. When the construction is finished, it is covered with a thick roof of thatch and leaves. Thus protected against the rain, the cobs are kept without rotting. The other cobs are immediately shelled and dried in the sun, then the grains are stored in the granary of the house.” (Pignède)

This film shows the process of taking off the outer leaves, and some loosening of the grains by beating them within a sack. Both are hard work as the maize is firmly attached to its cobs.

Sending maize off to the mill to be ground



The only way to turn the maize into flour is by using a strong mill. It is not really possible to do so with a hand quern. Traditionally the mills were driven by water. The nearest were about two miles away at the stream on the border between Thak and Taprang. A sack of maize is here being sent off with the middle son Surna, a young teenager, to be milled. A part of the grain would have to be paid to the owner of the mill.

Millet

Sowing and transplanting millet



“ The sowing of millet takes place in the first half of the month of May and from the beginning of June. The plants are transplanted in the shadow of the maize stems from when the first rains of the monsoon fall. This operation takes place during the months of June and July and ends at the beginning of August. The land is carefully weeded, the grasses are pulled up and the millet plants are transplanted out with their stems in the earth, which makes them easier to hoe. The harvest takes place between 15th September and 15th November, depending on when the millet was transplanted, and the temperature and the degree of humidity in the surrounding air.”
(Pignède)

Weeding millet



After the maize has been removed, the millet remains, but so do many weeds. So there has to be one or more weeding to allow the millet plants to flourish. In amongst them are planted other vegetables, soya, lentils and other useful plants which also needed to be weeded.

Harvesting millet



As with rice, the millet is harvested with a small sickle. It is not quite as back-breaking work as rice harvesting for several reasons. The millet stems are not as difficult to cut, and only the heads are cut off as in this film. So it is not necessary to bend right over. Yet having tried it, it is still precise and tiring work and a great deal of labour goes into producing a small amount of millet seed.

The diary for 14 November 1194 notes:

Went with Dilmaya to Tayikon to cut millet. I worked alongside her cutting three smaller 'pih' [basket] fulls which she transferred to a larger 'pih'. We cut about three-quarters of a terrace. Surna came down and cut the stalks behind us for buffalo fodder. He was slow and obviously found it tedious work. He said he preferred doing exams to doing this

PULSES

(Lentils, soya, beans)

Harvesting lentils



While rice, maize and millet provide much of the carbohydrates and some vitamins, the various pulses (soya, lentils, beans) which families grow along the banks of the grain fields are absolutely essential for the diet. 'Masa ta' (lentil soup) is a staple with almost every meal and without the vitamins and other protein in the pulses, particularly in the absence of much animal protein, villagers would not be able to survive as they do. It is deceptively easy work harvesting and processing these pulses, however, for they are contained in hard shells, and even cutting them off the banks is tough work. They also often have to be ground before being made into food, another long and tedious task.

Harvesting pulses - 1994



Some of the hard work of harvesting the pulses, often in hot weather with many insects and flies around, can be seen in this film.

Preparing pulses



As noted above, even when they are taken out of their bods, the various pulses have to be carefully cleaned and sorted before they can be used.

FARM ANIMALS



I have got two buffaloes, one mother and one calf. I also have one buffalo that I have rented out to the Kanchhi of Deurali on a fifty-fifty share basis. That buffalo has got a calf now. Milk and the first calf are their share. Then the next calf and the buffalo will be brought to me. I have also rented out a small buffalo to a Tailor. This arrangement is called mol garne (valuation). When the buffalo gives a calf it will be sold and money is divided equally.

A buffalo is taken for grazing if possible. If not, it is given fodder or grass collected from the forest. In the morning,

cooked flour (kundo) is given to it followed by fodder or grass and then it is milked. Then the shed is cleaned and again grass is given. This will be enough until mid- day. At two o'clock drinking water is given followed by grass. In the morning cooked flour is given to a milking buffalo but not to the calf. In the evening at about 5-6 o'clock fodder or grass is given again. This is enough for the whole night. That's all about the work for the buffalo.

Nowadays we have one litre of milk a day, not enough. In a week I make 500 ml. of ghee from the milk. If the milk has a high fat content, 500 ml. of ghee can be made and if the fat percentage is low only 250 ml. can be made.

We have two oxen. We don't have to do hard work to look after the oxen. It is easier to look after the oxen than the buffaloes. We give them fodder. On a ploughing day in the morning fodder is given, then they plough the whole day. Nothing is given during the day. After ploughing we bring them in the evening and fodder is given. We don't give them skimmed milk. Salt is given once a week or once in four days and water is given when needed. That's all about the work of the oxen. The work is slightly easier than the work for buffaloes.

We had 10 chickens. Some of them we offered to the god, some we ate, some died of diseases, some we gave to the white visitors. (Of course, you are Gurung). Now we have only six chickens. Sometimes they lay 3-4 eggs a day. These are not hybrid chickens. They are local. Poultry feed is given to them. But in the case of hybrid chickens the balanced

poultry ration should be given. They don't eat local poultry feed. It is easy for local chickens. They eat everything such as maize, rice, millet, bran with water, etc. Then water is given. If it is possible water is given thrice a day if not twice a day to the chickens.

Keeping chickens



“Each house has a hen-coop in a cavity under the verandah. Every evening, a plank is slid in front of the opening to shut in the fowls during the night. There is considerable consumption of chickens by the inhabitants, either at the time of family religious ceremonies, or on feast days. Cocks, hens, and above all the pullets have two great enemies: the fox, which slips through the village in the shadow of the high plants which grow in the orchards, and birds of prey, buzzards or falcons, which, after gliding for hours above the village, suddenly swoop to seize a pullet and carry it far away, despite the clucking of the mother hen which tries to put her young under cover. The guard dogs of the village will not directly attack a fox, but give warning. Thanks to the barking of the dogs, one can find out the track taken by the fox in the orchards. Men armed with guns make a drive and very often the fox does not leave alive. Its fur belongs to the person who killed it. Such a capture always causes a great gathering of villagers at the place where the fox was killed.” (Pignède)

Chickens are important because they can largely subsist without feeding except on left-over scraps and what they can find by foraging.

They are important as a source of meat and eggs for poorer families. They are also the most important animal for sacrifices in the various family and shamanic rituals, the body then being eaten after the sacrifice. Periodically a chicken disease decimates the village flocks, but gradually the numbers build up again.

Buffaloes



“In front of most of the houses, buffaloes are attached in the evening to stakes stuck on the terrace. All day they wander freely in the north part of the village, mainly on an unfertile stretch of thicket, and in the part of the fields left fallow. At about 3 o'clock in the afternoon, they come back near to their stakes, waiting for someone to tie them up and bring them grass, maize stalks, etc. They provide dung for the orchards and a little milk (1 litre per day) for daily consumption. From time to time one is killed for the village to eat. “(Pignède on Mohoriya in 1958)

Buffaloes are a pivot of Gurung economy, for they are the machine which turns one of the main products of the high forest, leaves, into three highly useful sources of protein, vitamins and carbohydrates – milk, meat and manure for the grain fields. Unlike all other domestic animals, because of their huge stomachs, they can digest the rough fibre of leaves. The cost is the huge amount of time and effort in fetching fodder, milking and carrying and spreading the manure.

Cutting and fetching buffalo fodder



In the past, buffaloes were mainly kept up in the forest where they could forage for themselves, using their massive stomachs to convert leaves into protein, milk and manure. During the second half of the twentieth century, buffaloes were increasingly stalled in the village, which meant that people had to go up to the forest above and cut the leaves for them. This involved a walk up 1500 feet for an hour and a half, then several hours of climbing, cutting and binding the leaves into a bundle. Finally the bundle would be carried for an hour or more down the rocky path to the village. Such a bundle would last at the most for a couple of days or so, thus making such work necessary several times a week. Much of it was done by women, who would spend half of a day on such a task.

In the diary for 26th January 1990 we wrote:

We had breakfast at Antheba's. All the others had eaten, and the children gone to school. We ate jungle cock caught by a Chetri yesterday, and bought for 80rs. As usual, followed with buffalo milk. We had to leave very fast as Dilmaya was waiting to go up to the forest to cut leaves for the buffalo, and Alan wanted to film

there. We met others walking up, including the Budibahadur poju's wife and a daughter of Jusbahadur. Kamiri from above also with us, and a small girl [Debikumari, House 42]. We went far, passed a 'pro' where sons of Tilochan watch buffalo and make 'cugu'. Then down again into thicker undergrowth. It took us two and a half hours to get there. Legs rather wobbly. They cut and cut, climbing into trees and hanging over cliff sides, for two hours and ten minutes, then Dilmaya decided it was time to return. Kamiri said she had only a small bundle as she'd had less time than usual, but Dilmaya was concerned that we shouldn't be bored. Just wished we could have done something useful instead of feeling utterly useless. No way we could have carried to weight of the leaves without breaking our necks or backs. The walk back took two hours twenty-five minutes, laden as they were, but mercifully much of it downhill. Dilmaya then went into the house and produced 'prokeh' - 'chura' and tea, and now I expect she is cooking supper.

Oxen



Oxen are central to Gurung agriculture since they are the only plough animals which are used. They are relatively cheap to buy as compared to buffaloes, and easier to keep since they are driven out in the mornings to graze for themselves. But apart from pulling ploughs they have no other function. As far as I am aware, the Gurungs do not eat them and though they produce a little manure, it is far less than a buffalo. They are used in pairs, and households will often borrow an ox or a pair from other families. The simple wooden drag plough which they pull is shown in the picture.

GARDEN WORK



If the kitchen garden is big we plant maize in the half portion, then plant some cucumber in different places, sponge gourds, egg plants, chilli plants, garlic, beans, bitter gourds, black mustard, tomatoes, spinach, radish etc. If the area is large and if we can manage we can plant various types of vegetables and fruits. But I have a small kitchen garden. I talked to my Aunt (Antheba) to buy some of their land, she responded positively but she said the decision depends upon their sons. I don't have many fruit trees in my garden, we only have three banana plants which have started to have fruit, a peach tree and one plum tree which you brought.

Planting vegetables between the maize



The fields where the main cereal crops grow are extremely important also as a multi-cropping area where other vegetables and pulses can be grown. They are sown in between the growing crops, which give them shade, and along the otherwise unusable embankments. Much of the protein for many families come from the soya and lentils grown here, and the plantains and other vegetables are much used as the main course alongside rice or millet in the meals.

Weeding radish



The large white radish (lobu) is a very important item of Gurung diet and almost every meal is accompanied by slices of radish. This is similar to what happens in Japan and other rice-based diets and it is partly because of the flavour, and partly because there is an important enzyme in the radish which helps the body to convert the starch in rice into energy.

Working in the vegetable garden



Dilmaya had a very small vegetable garden below her house, part of a single terrace. Here she grew an assortment of vegetables, including spinach, cauliflowers, cabbages, onions and occasionally tomatoes. It was difficult to keep it watered, though later the use of a rubber pipe helped. It was also subject to constant attack by chickens. Yet she was able to produce enough to go alongside the main rice or maize meal through much of the wet season, which is when gardens were at their most fruitful.

Searching for wild root vegetables (teme)



Sweet potatoes or teme as they are known, tend to grow wild both in the fields and around the houses. When a tell-tale sign of their presence is discovered, people dig them up, as in this film.

HOUSE WORK



When cooking food at home, the rice is first cooked, then we cook pulses.

For cooking vegetables, first vegetables are chopped into small pieces then fried in oil. After that salt is added according to taste and some tomatoes, chilli, some meat spices are added. To make dal, onions and garlic are fried in a little ghee then the pulses are added. The vegetables we cook are cabbages, cauliflower etc. That's all about cooking food.

My next task is to sweep the floor. I wake up early in the morning and I light the fire, I wash my face, I make tea, I sweep, I plaster the cooking area, I light the incense, I worship, I wash the vase (from in front of the shrine)s and fill it with pure water. I have lots of work in the morning.

After worshipping, I cook food and eat the food then I wash the dishes and other utensils. Then I work for the buffalo. After this the children go to school and I go to the fields to work. Then I return from the field at 12 - 2 o' clock. Then I make tea. If there are people working in our field I make snacks for them and I eat as well.

MAKING OIL - AND MILLET WHISKY



Don't you make ghee yourself from milk at home (in England)? Here, in the morning we milk the buffalo then keep some for tea, some for the children and all the remaining milk is put in a small wooden pot (theke). Again in the evening we do the same. In this way we put the milk in a small wooden pot for four days. After four days we churn it, the ghee is made and then we take out the ghee from that pot and we boil the ghee. After boiling for some time the pure ghee is made and we put it in the containers.

Sometime I make local distilled millet whisky or wine. The process of pa making is difficult and tedious. For this process, first of all water is boiled in a big pot and two or

three pathi of millet is put in the pot. When the millet is steamed or cooked a bamboo mat is put on the floor and the cooked millet is spread out on it. When the millet is cool, the yeast powder is added and mixed with the millet. After this the millet is kept tightly in a bamboo basket (dalo). Some people put fire in the millet and cover it with a jute sack. Some people put in a sickle and some people put in a spatula (dabilo).

In the bamboo basket the millet is kept for three days. After three days the millet is shifted to a big earthenware pot from the bamboo basket. In this pot the millet is kept for 15 days to one month. Then the undistilled liquor (jaad) is taken out from the pot and put in a container. Above this container another pot is kept, inside this pot a small pot is put to collect the alcohol, and above the big pot another pot is placed to pour the water. Then we put it on the fire. When the water of the top pot is heated it is replaced with cold water. The process of taking warm water and pouring cold water is continued several times. Making wine is a difficult and boring task. If the collecting pot is bigger there will be 4 - 5 bottles of wine if the container is small there will be 2 - 3 bottles. If the undistilled liquor (jaad) is in good condition 5 - 6 bottles of wine can be made from one pathi (a brass vessel measuring eight manas) of millet. If it is not good it is very hard to make even one bottle of wine.

Milking and making buffalo oil (cugu)



Traditionally the Gurungs were herders and hence the processing of milk was central to their economy. The main transformation is the making of purified butter, ghee or as it is known in Gurung, cugu. Buffalo oil is used and whipped up so that the cream separates as with the device shown in the picture. This separated cream is then boiled and made into oil. It is used in cooking and occasionally for oiling the body or hair.

The diary for 15 October 1994 notes: *Surje was churning milk for 'cugu' when we went into the house. They are getting a lot of milk and make enough 'cugu' to be able to sell quite a bit. 1 mana sells for 25rs. and they make it every 3-4 days. This year Dilmaya sold two tins of 'cugu' for 200rs each. They have four adult buffaloes and two babies. Two of the adults are 'ade' [share cropped] to Chandrabahadur and Birbahadur. They sold a small buffalo for 900rs. Today a very good milking female cost 10,000rs., a medium 7-8,000rs. A lot of the village-made 'cugu' is sold to rich people in Pokhara. Surje said that Brahmins adulterate theirs with the 'moigi' - the whey. Dilmaya makes little hard blocks which children chew from the whey, the rest is given to Untouchables.*

Making millet whisky (pa)



Millet whisky (pa) is of great significance to the Gurungs. It is the chief offering to the spirits and it is the main social drink apart from tea. It is made by a process of distillation, water being heated in a large pot, over which a smaller pot is placed which heats the millet. The exhaled liquid is then caught in a third small pot suspended below the top one. It can take several hours to make a bottle or two.

[The film of Gunga Gurung, who married Surje after Dilmaya's death, is fuller and clearer, so has been used here, rather than the briefer and less clear film of Dilmaya herself doing the same process. The setting is the same.]

Weaving a straw floor mat - 1993



Gurungs do not traditionally tend to sit or sleep on raised furniture – beds, chairs, stools. They sleep on rice mats, gundri, and also use these for sitting on. Here a rice mat is being woven in a way not dissimilar to ordinary weaving, though no particular tension is needed as in the back-strap loom. The straw is woven back and forth and a large mat can be made in a few hours, though with the wear and tear of daily life they will only last a few weeks in a busy household.

The film was made on 6th April 1993, and the loom was set up just below the house. During the process, where Sarah was also shown how to weave, Premkumari was stung by a bee.

Cleaning house and yards



The Gurung houses are half domestic dwellings, half the yards for farms. Hence they quickly become very dirty and the surfaces of rooms crack. They need constant brushing and the application of a mixture of mud and animal dung to re-stabilise the floors. This work is done for an hour or so each day, mainly by women and sometimes, as in this case, by children.

Repairing floors and walls with mud



The walls and floors need constant attention, both inside and outside, especially during the monsoon season.

Storing vegetables



One perennial difficulty has been that when a crop is harvested it can only be gradually eaten. This applies to all crops, many of which are dried (as with meat also), but in the absence of bottles or deep freezes there is a particular problem with green vegetables. They are useful throughout the year, and here the Gurungs use an ingenious way of beating and storing them in long bamboo tubes with some added salt. They can then be retrieved and re-hydrated when being cooked later in the year.

Preparing vegetables and spices



Even after vegetables have been collected, there is further work in getting them ready for human consumption – peeling, cleaning, shredding and so on. Thus meal preparations are often quite protracted affairs, not merely because it takes a good deal of time to cook rice or maize or millet porridge.

Cooking



The small open wooden fireplace in the central room, with a metal tripod standing in the middle for placing the cooking pots, is central to a Gurung house. The fire should traditionally be kept alight all the time, though buried embers are often the only sign of this. In it a small godling resides to whom a small sprinkling of the meal to be consumed is offered before eating. Around the walls are some simple implements for cooking, though in this case a more expensive thermos flask is visible as well. The smoke goes out of the window or up the stairs, but the rooms are very smoky. The cooking can be done by men or women, children or adults, but is usually done by the senior woman, who, as in the picture, grinds salt and spices and then fries the main course, the rice having been prepared before.

SHOPS AND TRADERS

Shops in Thak



Most villages have a small shop selling a limited range of goods - sweets, batteries for torches and radios, matches and cigarettes. In large villages the stock will generally include sandals, cloth, sugar, kerosene, rice, oil, noodles and even soft drinks for tourists. One can often get a cup of tea there, and sometimes a cooked meal and a bed for the night.

Thak co-operative store



This shows a short-lived experiment by Alan and Sarah in the late 1980's. A certain amount of money was given to the village to start a co-operative store which would sell some of the necessities which families would otherwise have to bring up from Pokhara individually; rice, salt, kerosene, as well as the usual biscuits, sweets and cigarettes and other smaller items sold by village shops. It was housed in the community former 'night school' and manned by an ex-Gurkha. It failed after about three years largely because it was impossible not to let people have goods on credit, which they could then not honour.

Buying potatoes and oranges



Some specialized items not found in the village are brought round by travelling peddlars. One of these is potatoes. There are some potatoes grown in Thak up near the forest, but not many, so people are here buying supplementary potatoes. Potatoes are also exchanged for grains. Oranges are also bought from travelling sales persons.

CLEANING AND WASHING

Fetching water



Every household needs a huge amount of water, partly because of the need to provide a large amount for the stalled buffaloes, but also for cooking, washin and so on. Water was traditionally collected in large copper pots called gowris. These would hold large amounts, yet several were needed a day. In 1968 there was one intermittent water pipe and I reckoned each household needed to spend an hour or two a day to gather water. Now there is a tank above the village and a larger pipe and individual rubber pipes to a number of the houses. But there is still often shortage, breakages and other disruptions.

Washing and drying clothes



The hard manual work and earth and dust houses and yards mean that clothes very quickly become dirty. They have to be washed every few days, either, as in the picture, at a nearby small spring about a quarter of a mile from the village, or at the village tap or in bowls in the courtyard. Rough soap is used for this purpose.

Washing - body, hair and teeth



The hard, sweaty work and life in mud and stone villages means that the body very quickly becomes covered with 'dirt'. The Gurungs are a cleanly people and make considerable efforts every few days, when work allows, to wash. Here a mother meticulously washes her small daughter. Washing the whole body is difficult in public space so girls often go off to local springs or rivers to wash.

Washing daughter Premkumari



Particular care is taken in washing children, especially when they are young. The care and attention Dilmaya pays to washing her young daughter Premkumari, as in this film, is impressive.

Washing dishes



There is little or no hot water for washing up and, of course, no washing machines. So every meal, which will produce a pile of greasy dishes and fire-blackened pans, requires a period of washing with cold water and earth or ash. This is done by men, women and children, though usually by the main woman in the household who has cooked the meal.

Combing Premkumari's hair



Grooming each other by combing and brushing hair is a frequent activity in the village, as in this photo of Dilmaya combing her daughters hair. Sometimes, with children, a band or ribbon is put in the hair after this. Sometimes oil, either bought or buffalo oil is added to the hair.

DIET AND FOOD



In the month of Mangsir (mid November to mid December) we store some rice (kynoba) and continue eating till the month of Falgun (mid February to mid March). Then we start to buy food. We eat a half portion of paigo (millet) and half rice during other time and in Dashain again we eat rice. We do not eat too much rice. I like rice. The children do not like millet, but they love rice. The people who have enough rice their children do not eat millet for four or five years. The people who do not have enough rice their children start to eat millet from the age of one year

I used to eat buffalo meat. My husband eat mutton and chicken since his childhood. But he does not eat buffalo meat. I used to eat buff meat when Krishna was very young. Nowadays I do

not eat it. Nowadays I eat chicken and mutton only. I do not like meat very much. We seldom eat meat. Sometimes we eat once a month, sometimes we eat once in four or five months. Sometime we do not get meat at all. Sometimes it is very expensive, we can not afford it.

We get a small quantity of meat for one hundred rupees. It is just for one meal. Sometimes they kill animals when we do not have money so we do not buy it. We sometimes eat it if we have the money. We eat enough in Dashain. We eat three or four hundred rupees of meat in a year. All the family drink buffalo milk. They eat milk with rice and tea. We drink milk once in four or five days. If the vegetable curry is not delicious we add milk in rice and eat.

We make vegetable curry of from radish. We plant the seeds of radish in Bhadau. From this season, we start to plant cucumber, sponge gourd, bitter gourd, egg plant, in the rainy season. After this we get *masyan* from our land and we eat it. We also eat lentils. These are the vegetables that we can get in our village - not many varieties. I like to eat cow pea, bean, sponge gourd, cucumber, and egg plant. We eat hen eggs but not frequently. We eat three to four eggs in a month. Our hens lay eggs but we do not sell them. The hens lay two to three eggs then we collect them and eat when it is sufficient for each.

We cook rice in a *dekchi* or *kasaudi* or *tasala* according to the family size. We cook 750 gms of rice for three persons. And we cook fifty percent of *dhido* (millet).

The cooking process of rice is first we put rice in an utensil then wash it in the water, then change the water and we keep it on

stove and cook in fire. The process of cooking curry is first we chop the vegetables into small pieces, then keep the pan on the stove, put some oil in, let it heat up and put some pieces of chopped onions and garlic. Then we put vegetables and fry for sometime. Then we add salt, turmeric and keep for a while. Then it is ready to eat.

I do not drink alcohol. I do not feel like drinking alcohol. If I drink I get a headache and body pain. The children also do not drink alcohol. My husband drinks not a lot. He drinks two or three glasses only.

Dilmaya and family eating



I discovered early in my fieldwork that eating is a very private matter. People did not like strangers watching them eating. Thus Dilmaya's trust and help in allowing me to film her and her family eating is remarkable. The film of this process is important, but it should be remembered that it is a very private occasion. Eating, of course, is done with the hands, with senior members of the family eating first, then the children, and finally Dilmaya.

CLOTHES



My daughter (Prem Kumari) has one set of school dress (one shirt and one skirt) which we had made in Pokhara. She has another style of two skirts, one of these is torn and out of use and another one also is getting old, this can be used only one time. She has only two clothes which you sent with Dr. Paul. She does not have enough clothes. She does not have a raincoat. She has one sweater that her father bought from Pokhara. She does not have shoes; she has slippers.

My husband has one sweater that Sarah gave him last year. He bought one pair of trousers which he wears when he goes to the office, not at home. Actually he bought it for Krishna but he did not like it and his father started to wear it He has two shirts.

He wears a wrapping cloth (kash), he has one wrapping cloth of these, two pairs of shoes and a raincoat.

Om our second son has one set of school clothes (one shirt and shorts). We have not bought a new set for him yet because of the shortage of the money. He is wearing last year's shirt. We bought shorts for him. We have not bought his school shoes yet. He had two pairs of trousers but they were torn. He needs to buy some. He does not have enough shirts. He has two sweaters.

Krishna has old one. He has asked us to buy him some shoes and trousers. He has two old trousers, two shirts, a raincoat (given by my sister in-law, Sarah) and a pair of school shoes.

I have three lungi including that given by my sister in-law, two blouses (choloos), one tikisa, a cloth tied round the girdle (patuka), two shawls, and petticoat. I have enough now. I do not have shoes or a raincoat. I have one nose-ring (phuli) ear-rings and a necklace (tilhari).

TOOLS



Tools for household works that we have are three sickles, three spades, six dokoos, two axes, a hoe etc. For ploughing we need plough (kohr), plank, khargu, a string (nara).

We not have enough bed -clothes because we can not afford them. We have old sets that were given by Bhuwan Singh. We have two beds, three quilts, three pillows. The children sleep but are cold. We do not have enough quilts and beds so that Om and T'surna sleep together, Prem Kumari and her father sleep together, Krishna sleeps separately because he is married.

Kitchen utensils wares that we have are the alcohol making big pot (taulo), rice cooking pots such as tasala, kasaudi, six dinner plates, (one for each member) pan (tapke) for cooking curry, one kettle for making tea, water jug, small vases for keeping pure water, bucket and gagri (vessel) for carrying water etc.

FLORA AND FAUNA



There are many kind of trees in this village or forest which we use for fodder such as T'ofu tree, Podlu tree, Lapsi tree, Tarkalai tree, Pleta tree, a kind of berry (Kimbu tree), Krauri etc.

The trees that we use for furniture and firewood are Chanka tree, we use this tree for making doors. This tree is very good for furniture. Other kinds of trees are chestnut tree (Katus tree), Seyombu tree, Rudu tree, Mrohe tree, Tose tree, Pagesi tree, Sisi tree etc.

There are also fruit trees such as Malkat, Chutro, raspberry (Aiselu), Hyaljyo etc.

I do not know the names of many birds that are found in the forest. I know the names of very few of them such as the forest hen, Patadi, Malu, Puwa, and Kalau which lives near the river. There are many kinds of fish. I do not know the names of different kinds of fishes.

Mice live in the forest and home as well. Cat, rumiu, yehgu, martin (malchhapro); yehgu looks like a jackal and some what like a tiger, the forest leopard looks like a tiger. The leopards are smaller but bigger than the cats. Ramiu (rats) and mice look like same but there is little bit difference between them. That's all I know about the wild animals.

The insects are maisa insect, mithoya, which live in the wood that cannot be seen clearly, dragon fly, oisa insect, etc. I do not know many of their their names.

The flowers that are found in the forest are such as rhododendron (Pora flower), Syona flower which is white in colour, it has a big tree, Sadi flower this is also white in colour, it has a small tree, Pora flower has a tree also, Malga flower which is slightly smaller this flower is Nir (blue) in colour etc. and found in the forest. This season is not the flowering season in the garden. We have flowers in Dashain. Nahud, Kewar flower which is yellow and red, Nahud is yellow, Lalupate which is red. There are different types of colours of flowers (nine to ten) not many. But in Pokhara there are a lot.

ILLNESS AND PAIN

PART ONE



When I was young I did not have any disease. Nowadays I have a problem of headache, dizziness, vomiting and a difficulty in sitting. All this started to happen when I was 9-10 years old. Half my head feels pains and I feel dizzy.

When I was young this problem was not much great. I did not notice much pain at that time. Nowadays when I have an ordinary cold my whole body is painful. I have to take a rest for many days. I feel pain after have children.

No snake has bitten me yet. Bees sting. Prem Kumari is frightened of bees. When they sting the part they sting is swollen. They live in the hive up there.

Nowadays Krishna does not get ill. When he was very young he used to have diarrhoea and his belly was very big , with a shivering pain in the abdomen. He was very thin. At that time we used to stay in Bhuwan Singh's house. Krishna started to get ill when he was one year old and for three years. All the neighbours thought that he would die but he was cured. At that time I had to work in the fields so Krishna used to stay with my Mother's elder sister. She fed him too much rice, sometimes poor tea and buffalo milk. He did not get a chance to drink my milk because I had to work in the fields. So he had diarrhoea and stomach pains. After curing of that disease, he does not have any illness now. Sometimes he has an ordinary cold .

Our next (middle son Om) was very sick till he was 5 – 6 years old. He had a kind of worm, not the round worm, with a shivering pain. When he was sick, his father took him to the hospital, I did not go with him. His father and my elder father and mother saw the worms. At that time his complexion was black and so thin that he was missing in the bed. He was very serious so all our neighbours thought that he will die but he get rid off that disease. He started to get sick from a young age until he was eight. When he was very serious at the age of 5 – 6 year we took him hospital in Pokhara. In the hospital he stayed for 6 – 7 days. He did not recover immediately after taking the medicine. He took the medicine for a long time and all the worms passed out and he was cured. Nowadays he does not have any sickness.

Our youngest son did not get ill. Sometimes he has a cold, otherwise he does get ill .

Our daughter Prem Kumari, sometime has abdomen pains and an ordinary cold.

Once a nabli (tape worm) entered her nose. At that time we were working on our elder mother's land. In Mangsir we went to make the stack of straw with paddy there. There was a small spring near that land and there were many small leeches and tape worms. Prem Kumari drank water from that spring, taking the water in her hands in this way and the small tape-worm entered her nose. She was very frightened and it was painful. We did not get any medicines in the village for that worm. Then we took her to the hospital. There was a foreign lady doctor but she could not take the worm out. She told us to sit like this with water in the hands and then the worm would come out then she would catch the worm. But it did not work. We stayed many days in the hospital. In the hospital she slept and the drops of glucose water is put into her nose. Prem Kumari did not like this and she was very frightened.

At last I brought her home. Then I put some tobacco in a bowl and add some water. Then I put the water into her nose and let her sleep. After putting this water she felt like drinking wine, and she was afraid that she was going to die. At that time she did not have any food, only slept, she did not speak, was fearful, and her body was very weak. She slept here and I stayed near her. The next day the worm dropped out from her nose. Then she became all right. The worm was this size - much bigger and

longer. If we had not done this treatment, it would have been so big that it could not stay in that space. We were all frightened seeing this condition. That is why nowadays I do not allow them to drink water from that type of source. Sometimes if we have free time we boil water and drink, otherwise we drink the normal water or if it is possible we boil in the evening.

My husband has Gano (gastritis) and Sul (colic) diseases. The gastritis means there is a small ball in the abdomen. When this ball goes down it causes diarrhoea and when it goes upwards it causes vomiting. I do not know about Sul (colic). People say Sul is also like gastritis. This makes the patient very seriously ill. The patient moves up and down, they sweat greatly, the patient cannot sleep and sit properly. My husband was very seriously ill a few months ago. He was so serious that people thought that he would die. People said if we did not do the treatment in time he would die. One treatment was for the shaman to chant and do a ritual. Another treatment was to put a plough blade in the fire, then take it out and drop some water on it and this water is given to my husband to drink. People say that this type of water is medicine for this disease. We did only these two treatments then he was cured. At that time I was very worried. All the neighbours came to visit him. I don't remember the exact month but it happened this year. My elder father exorcised him (chanted and jharnu) also.

Dilmaya ill



As she explains, Dilmaya was intermittently ill with fevers and other symptoms. She was on medication for high blood pressure and heart problems. And it was the inability to buy these medicines and overwork which finally killed her at the age of forty.

This film was taken during an illness at the end of April 1992 when Dilmaya was in bed for several days.

HEALTH: PART TWO



We did not do any medicinal treatment for headache before, Because we did not have A health post and medicine was not available. There was no hospital. There is a hospital in Pokhara, but few people can go to the hospital, and there were not enough medicines in Pokhara, though some aspirin tablets were available. There are not any medicinal herbs (homeopathic medicine) for headache. But I described the medicines before and it is possible in the case of children. If we grind that medicine and put this paste on the forehead and drink water of this medicine, it gives relief.

There are very few persons (a Lama) who make the medicine for toothache. There is one old lady (Purnima's grandmother) she makes medicines for toothache. I don't how she makes it. The patients take 500 gm. of rice, and 1-5 rupees for her. Then she makes medicine tied in a piece of cloth and she moves that piece around the incense and makes a small ball; then the patient wears it in the ear. I do not have that medicine yet. Many old people do that type of treatment.

Nowadays if people get ill they go to the health post or hospital. If there is infection or ache in the throat, the medicine is (fitkiri) alum. Some people believe that if our hair enters into the neck then there is a throat infection. In this case people comb on the neck two times and some get cured and some do not. A kind of flower found in the forest rhododendron (Pora Ta) is also a kind of medicine for throat infection. When I have this infection I eat that flower. It gives cure and relief. It is slightly sweet.

It there is diarrhoea caused by round worms then there is medicine for treatment for both children and adult. For this treatment first of all hot ash (kharani) is taken, then put in the water three times in a pot or glass. Then the ash subsides. After this we filter this water in a clean piece of cloth. This water is very hard to drink because the taste of water is not good. In this way the medicine can be made from the ash. The old people did this treatment but nowadays people eat medicine.

Once I have seen a snake while cutting grass. I was cutting the grass on this side. After that I was going to cut the other side and I saw a snake before reaching that side. The snake was some-what black and light green. I saw only half of its body. It

was moving ahead. I was very frightened and I did not go there to cut grass. It was this thick and long. Then I returned home. Usually the snakes do not bite in the forest. They stay in the thick grass area. They stay in the bottom area of the grass and only their head is upward. When we cut grass this way there is the chance to bite on our hand.

If the people do not get treatment after snake bite they will die. The bitten portion will be infected. In the rainy season there may be snakes in the grass area. There is chance they will bite many people. It is very difficult to get medicine for snake bite in this village. I do some treatment but I get frightened so I do not do the treatment very often. I did the treatment for three persons but another man also did treatment for them. I do not know whose treatment was more effective. Last year my neighbour's son was bitten by a snake. On the first day he came to my house for treatment. His hand was very swollen. I was very frightened. I told them to cut the bitten area or spot and I ground the medicine and put it in the wound and the other half I gave him to eat. Later they told me that the wound would have been cured even without my treatment. It took time to cure. Now his hand is like this much thin.

There is no dispensary in this village except the one you have opened. One man (Ulli Kanchha) works in the health post. If there is medicine, he sometimes gives us some. Generally people do not go to the health post. In my opinion the health post workers do not give good service. There is a rumour that they sell the medicine but I do not know about this. They give very few tablets and it is not very effective. Nowadays medical shops are available from Bajhapatan upwards in Pokhara.

If the patient is very serious they take him or her to the hospital, otherwise for general illness people go to the medical halls. In my opinion the hospital in Pokhara is neither bad nor good. I do not have any idea about the workers in that hospital, because I do not go to hospital frequently. Many people returned home after recovery from that hospital. Some died and some recovered. Babies do not die very often in this village. Some children die at a premature birth. Some die after the safe birth - not many, 1-2. The mortality rate is the same as it used to be.

I fear Tuberculosis. I fear the snake as well. That is why I cut the grass very carefully. If it bites man can die because there is no medicine.

Tigers (chhe) also kill people. A tiger killed a Blacksmith 4 years ago. The tiger picked him up from his bed and ate him. Bears also kill people. They claw a man. The mad dog bites. But it has not bitten a man yet. Last year our neighbour (Sher Bahadur) thought that his dog was mad and they took medicine but it was not. When they took the medicine they got sick. It was very painful for them. The medicine was given by a Newar. They took the medicine in the evening and they did not sleep the whole night because of the pain. Then they recovered. The Newar's medicine is effective for mad dog biting.

Dilmaya administering medicine



There was little medicine available in the village during our early visits, so we decided to set up a small dispensary with some basic supplies in our house. We explained to Dilmaya and other members of her family how to dispense such things as cough medicine, antiseptics, worming tablets and aspirin. In this film I am explaining about the medicines and then, on top of her many other tasks, Dilmaya is dispensing some of the medicines.

THE SOCIAL WORLD

VILLAGE LIFE



All the married women used to weave in this village. But nowadays there are only a few who do so: Keusari Parsingh's mother, Aamchyoo, Aam Saili, Nera Bahadur's mother weave.

We do not have electricity in this village. We use kerosene for light. We have water. We made a tap for drinking water, but the water has not come properly yet, because they have not finished the work. There is a shop in our village. Buddhi Bahadur has that shop. We can buy many things such as biscuits, kerosene oil, rice, sugar, tea etc. We have one school.

I do not know exactly how much water we fetch because sometimes we bring a lot and sometimes less. We bring three or four vessels full in the morning. The buffalo drinks two vessels in

the afternoon. We need three or four vessels in the evening. If we make alcohol then we need five to six vessels full of water.

We need about hundred bhari [bundles both collected and cut trees) of fire-wood in a year. In the dry season, we collect a lot in the morning. People cut sixty, seventy, eighty bundles for the monsoon. So, including both fire wood collected and cut, people make hundred bundles in a year.

No body has a toilet in this village. Only you have. People do not have a toilet that is why they go to the toilet in the stream bed. The very young children go to the toilet on the path, and they make it very dirty.

Landslides occur in this village. Sometimes they are small and sometimes big. In my land also landslides occur. They occur in different places.

We have an election on the 15th of the coming week. I will go either in the morning or in the evening because there is a crowd in the afternoon. There are many political parties such as Congress, Communist, Democratic etc. I do not know very much about it all. Some people believe and some not in political parties.

Nowadays people go to foreign countries such as Singapore, Malaysia, Japan etc. to earn a lot of money. Because people do not have enough food to eat by working in the fields, they have a lot of difficulties; things are expensive, we need a lot of money, after working very hard in the field the hailstone destroys all the crops, the crops are very small, the crop is not enough for five or six months. People go to another country such as Korea, Arabia, Malaysia, Singapore, Japan, Germany, etc. because they get

more money they are sometimes greedy. They buy a small piece of land; they invest a lot of money for buying a small piece.

There are no thieves in this village and I do not know about murderers. I do not know people who do bad work. My husband knows them. One man was killed some time ago.

People very often drink and get drunk.

This year there was a lot of hail which destroyed all the maize. As a result we do not have maize.

Voting in the elections in 1992



Elections were a new phenomenon in Nepal in 1992 and people took them very seriously.

Our diary records on 28thg May 1992:

Today the village is voting in the election for both ward head and district head. Despite their claims that they wouldn't dress up, both Surje and Dilmaya put on new clothes to go down to Mailbort - the village polling station. [About one thousand feet below the village]. Surje reckoned they would get back about 3.00 pm (they left at about 10.30 am).

Village fete and sports (jatra)



In the late 1970's and early 1990's, before most of the Gurungs and other young people left the village, there was an annual village fete or sports event up at the school above the village of Thak. Teams would come from other villages to play in a basket-ball tournament and some small stalls would be set up for those attending. The family including Dilmaya are here filmed attending the event held on 19th February 1990.

Dilmaya looking through glass at small objects



Dilmaya was always interested in the world around her, so when she was given an opportunity by the visit of Gerry Martin to look through his magnifying glass and the home-made microscope he erected, she was very keen to do so, as in this film in 1992.

CASTE AND OTHER GROUPS



There are 12 households of Blacksmiths. There are only three households of Blacksmiths who sharpen and make spades and sickles. The remaining Blacksmiths make the buildings of the school, people's houses, dig water works, make paths, plough, and work on others people's land. They all are poorer than the Gurungs. They do not have land. They have very little land for planting millet or planting rice. They are low caste. We do not touch them. We (Gurung) do not allow them to enter into our houses. If we go into their houses to call them for work we have to sprinkle water on our body before entering our own home. The water is sprinkled by another member of our family. But

nowadays we do not do this much. We do not do marry with Blacksmiths, Tailors and Cobblers.

There are only six households of Tailors. The women who can, sew and make clothes. Half of them can sew and half cannot. Those who cannot sew do the same work as the Blacksmiths. The men go to work for others, digging wells (keu kaba), ploughing, some earn on others' land, 1 or 2 have their own land for planting millet, they do not have rice land. Women sew clothes, cook food, do cattle work, etc. They are also low caste. The Blacksmiths and Tailors are equal. We do not touch them. We do not eat food if they touch it. We sprinkle water. We don't allow them to enter our houses. We let them stay outside. We give them food to eat outside. Everything we give them outside. The vegetables, beaten rice and other things which they brought from Pokhara by carrying on their backs are alright. If they carry us on their back when we are sick, this is also alright. Only they should not enter our houses.

There are only three households of Leather workers. They do the same work as the Blacksmiths and the Tailors. They have very little land. They do not repair shoes.

There are no Tamangs in this village. They live in Khatedanda. We touch them. We did not allow them to enter in the very inner area before. We do not allow them to go into our kitchen. They eat food cooked by us. In the past the Gurungs did not eat food cooked by them but nowadays they eat it. The Gurungs drink water given by the Tamangs as well. We do not have marriage relation yet, but do not what happens in the future.

The Magars and the Gurungs are equal. I do not understand their language. The people who live near Tamang area speak the Tamang language but we do not understand it because there are no Tamang households in this village. Bhadra Singh understands the Tamang language. He lived in Khade Danda before and he had Tamang friends who worked together. So he knows the language.

I do not understand the Bhote [Tibetan] language. Sometimes Tibetans walk through this village. Nowadays a few come to do business, but not many. We touch them also. People say the Gurungs and the Bhote are equal in the past. They are a little bit dirty so we do not like to sit with them. They are not close to us and they are also dirty so that we do not eat food cooked by Bhote. Few foreigners come to this village. They come rarely. If they come with one or two friends they live in people's houses and if they come in a group, they stay in the school. Sometimes they come very frequently, sometimes they come after a long gap. I do not put up many foreigners. They stay in the hotel (Dokan).

I think all the foreigners are not the same in behaviour. Some are good and some are bad. I keep only British people whom I know. I do not put up strangers. Nowadays there are some foreigners resident in the village. I do not what they are doing. I do not understand their work. They will have been here for one year in Asar.

I do not know very well about Songi [the 'Three Clans']. There are Konme, Lamme, Lemme, Ghale clans in this Songi. All the other clans are called Kugi ['Nine clans']. I belonged to the

Kebje clan before marriage; now I am Ngobje. There are Kebje, Ngobje, Layome, Lame, Pachhu, clan in the Kugi. I do not know many clans because for I do not ask about the clans. I think you know more than I. I shall ask you and film your answer!

Dilmaya with lower caste workers and the poor



Dilmaya's day was punctuated by visits from both her traditional workers, usually Blacksmiths or Tailors, who would ask for small gifts and payments. Also there were one or two very poor villagers, such as the one in the picture above, who would ask for charity. Dilmaya was generous in helping them all, even though her own supplies were very limited. They were fed or given gifts on the verandah as they were of a lower caste and not allowed into the house.

FAMILY TERMINOLOGY



In Gurung we call Thagu for the first son, Mahila for second son, Sahila for third son, Kahila for fourth son, and Kaja for the youngest son. Similarly, we call Nani for first daughter, Maili for second daughter, Saili for third daughter, Kaili for fourth daughter and Kaji for the youngest daughter. I have Thagu, Maila and Kaja and only a Nani.

In case of the fathers' generation, we say Aabtheba for the father's eldest brother, Aabmaila for the second brother of father, Aabsaila for the third brother of father and Aabchyon.

Father's eldest sister is called Phane, father's second sister is called Phademaili, father third sister is Phadesaili and the youngest sister is Phachyon.

All older and younger brothers of the mother are called Mama. The eldest sister of the mother is called Amtheba. Then all younger sisters of mothers are called sequentially; for second Ajyonmaili, for third Ajyonsaili, and so on and the youngest is called Ajyonkaji.

We call for all sons of mother's brothers Ngolo and then vice-versa. Similarly, we call Ngolsyo for all daughters of mother's brothers and vice-versa. Similarly, we call Ngolo to all sons of father's sister's sons and Ngolsyo to father's sister's daughters. The Ngolo and Ngolsyo can get married. We consider the children of mothers brother and children of father's sister as equal in such relations. But when they live in the neighbourhood they feel like brother and sister and do not often get married.

Picnic for the Kebje clan



Largely under the inspiration of my 'father' Bhuwansing Gurung, in the late 1980's and 1990's there grew up a tradition of having an annual picnic of members of the Kebje clan to which he, we and Dilmaya belonged. It tended to be held in some scenic spot near to water. On this occasion, on 30th May 1992, it was held on the outskirts of Pokhara, near the road down from Thak.

FICTIVE KIN



People like to make mit or mitini (fictive kin). To make mit or mitini, friends go together, like each other, love each other and they propose to be fictive kin and finally, become mit or mitini by performing a ritual (Chyanba). Mit or mitini are equal to sons or daughters. I have a mitini who lives far away from this village.

COMMUNAL WORK GROUPS



During Asar month we do have Paraili thumai. This is a labour exchange among friends in the village after we sow rice in the seed bed. Those who can provide labour for exchange it is done in that way, while those who can not provide labour in return pay cash (nophom). For one month the Parali thumai seems like family members. All work is done together for each other.

From this month onwards people start to do nogor, work for receiving labour in return. This labour exchange is also done in Chaitra and Jestha months to do work like first ploughing. We call chaite nogor the labour exchange during the for maize work. Similarly, to collect firewood, to weed maize fields and clean weeds from the fields labour exchange is practised. After the

month of bhadra this labour exchange practice is less common. Labour exchange is a common practice for all in the village, at least one member from every household.

We used to have gola system, group work. In this we used to get together to form a team of 15-25 people with representatives from each family. The group would work for a family and the family who gets the labour has to pay in cash. The money collected in this way used to be spent for a large picnic (syogochaba). In Dashain or Tihar people would buy buffalo and share the meat. This system is disappearing nowadays.

FRIENDS AND NEIGHBOURS



Nowadays my friends are not here. They were married out to a number of villages such as Yojur, Chachok, etc. Friends are normally of the same age. I had 5-6 friends, not many. The friends are different in youth and for our latter years. I had only friends in my clan (sixteen clan) who used to be like sisters to each other.

People living close by are called Nhemme, neighbour. My neighbours are Aamtheba, Kopchi, Bahadur. Although they may not necessarily help, they come to see us when we fall sick or we have a problem. Only our relatives support us in work, such as the mother of Bhadra Sing of Kui village, Kale's mother, Bishnu although they live a little far away from us. When we fall sick they come to help us such in fetching water, giving grass

to buffaloes, cooking food etc. If we are too sick they also go to work on our behalf, but not the work in the farm field.

MARRIAGE



Nowadays people do not agree to get married till the age of 12 – 14 years. In the past Blacksmiths, Tailors, Brahmins used to get married at the age of 5 – 12 years. But the Gurungs never did so. Gurungs get married after completing 15- 20 years. In my opinion the proper age is 15 – 16 years. I got married at 15 – 16 years. We call girls who have not menstruated Kolme. Some girls start menstruation at the age of 12 – 13 and some start at 15 – 16 age. In my case it was when I was 14-15.

In the case of marriage, few people have love marriages and most of the people have arrange marriage; the boy's and girl's parents make decision for the marriage. When a couple make a love

marriage we call it *hotelar yaba* (going to the hotel). I did not make a love marriage. My elder uncle arranged my marriage.

My husband did not give anything to me. If the Bridegroom has enough property he gives gold jewellery to his bride but my husband did not have property. If possible it is given, if not it is not a compulsion. My elder father gave me one set of bedding, one set of utensils such as dinner plates, bowl, pitcher, *ankhora*, cooking pot, pan, spatula, scoop, etc.

In the marriage ceremony, the priest and the shaman are not needed. In this ceremony all the relatives of the bride and bridegroom come. It depends upon their wish whether they want musical instruments at the marriage or not. If they want music, then the Tailors are needed for the music. If not only the parents of the pair and the relatives are enough.

After some days the bride and the bridegroom return to the bride's home. This is called *Dulhan Parkaune*. If there is music in the marriage ceremony, 9 – 10 people come to the bride's home as a marriage procession and the next day they take the bride to the bridegroom's home. After three days the pair come to bride's home. I did the same. This must be done by every couple but some do it later. Our son Krishna did not do this because he made a love marriage.

After marriage we stayed there, then another place (*Holo*) , then we stayed in *Kui* village for one month , then in *Phayar*, we stayed in my elder uncle's home and at last in this house.

Sometimes we quarrel with each other but we make it up in a short time. Some couples who completely dislike each other get divorced. If they agree to divorce, there are arbitrators to make the decision about whether which the man or the woman has to pay a fine. Such divorce happens infrequently.

Wedding - 1991



Our diary for 12th April 1991 records as follows:

After breakfast went down to the wedding at House 140. A very jolly occasion. Poor Kancha was serving food, mainly goat meat, all day and did not come back in the night even, though he certainly wanted to.

Tailor's band - main flute players Motilal and Nandalal. Tikeram plays cymbals, Danaram (Jusbir's son), the little kettle drum. The Tailors arrived about 7.30am. this morning and have been playing since.

About 2.30pm. after eating, the village singers started, led at first by Badrasing's older brother who eloped to Chipili. Hadn't seen him since the sheep medicine trip. Durgabahadur's wife danced, then Budibahadur's wife. Alan was a great hit in my sunglasses and Gungabahadur's 'kule'. Then Dilmaya danced. The bridegroom sat all day behind a table receiving money from all the guests. Each was listed with the amount given. 'Kregi lava' just as at Atheba's 'chempa'. These gifts have to be returned at the donors' weddings or funerals. Over 500 have come here including all the chief men.

*Dilmaya dances beautifully - lovely to see her dancing with
Gungabahadur's son. Now both the village and the Tailors are
singing and playing at full pitch, a delightful, exciting cacophony.*

VILLAGE DANCING



When there is a dance performance in the village, sometimes only men or the boys' group and sometimes only women or the girls' group perform the dancing, while sometimes there is a mixed group. When they dance they act and move their hands according to the wording of the song. Hands movements are very indicative, for example, 'when do you go', 'how do you sit', 'friend's village', 'could I have drinking water', 'my life is difficult' etc.

I cannot dance very well. I had danced for some time before my marriage. You also danced with Lumya's mother. Nowadays, we do not have the ghatu [ritual] dance in the village. Did you take a film of the ghatu dance before? Oh, you took only

photographs. In the past there used to be a ghatu dance in this village, you did not have a video camera. Nowadays, you have got a video camera but only ordinary village dancing is available. In the ordinary dancing, mothers do not dance because they do not dance very well. In the dance performance, only nice dances are performed. There is no stage in the mothers' dances. They just move around and neither have good songs nor do they have good dances as compared to the ritual dance performance. The mothers' dance performance does not fit with the song. This dance is just to collect money.

Dilmaya dancing



The image shows Dilmaya in playful mode, imitating a dance in order to accept gracefully a small gift. She was a good dancer, though modest about her abilities, as several snatches show. She sometimes danced at the evening popular dances or ‘Tetera [theatre] sheba’, where a group would assemble and sing and dance for several hours, people taking it in turn to dance. Although very dark, the film does show her dancing in one of these.

RITUAL DANCE - THE GHATO



I do not understand the song of the ghatu dance. Ghatu means Kheonwati – wife of Paseram. Although I used to be the helper for the ghatu dancers, because I was young I could not understand or learn the ghatu song. The work of the helper includes dressing up the ghatu dancers, dressing their hair, and when the 'kusun' go into trance letting them go to sleep on our lap. The dancers are not allowed to move here and there, so two helpers have to escort them when they have to go to the toilet.

The ghatu dance is like this. I never danced the ghatu. Now I am dancing you have to give me money then we will eat buffalo meat! The kusun dance is like this. I get a headache when I try to dance the kusun. The kusun dancers move their head in this

way. When other people try to dance they have neck ache. At that time the god is in their body so they don't feel any difficulty but the god is not in our body so we feel it is difficult.

The Yangjakot Ghato performance in Thak



Our diary for 19 April 1992 notes:

After eating, the girls began to dress in their dance costumes. We followed them up to Badrasing's platform, and there we saw masses of people sitting, standing, on the ground, on all the platforms and verandahs, waiting in expectation. Some juggling with the pressure lamps so that Alan could get the brightest light on the dancers, and then they began - the haunting song. The girls danced beautifully - perfectly controlled. Lovely to watch the entranced faces of the audience who have mostly never seen this dance.

Film sequences

Dancers preparing for the dance

Dancers seated at the start of the ritual in front of the 'guru aba'

Men begin to chant, dancers begin to rock backwards and forwards prior to trance, then sway gently from side to side in trance; Dancers' faces as they begin to sway

Old men chanting - the 'guru aba', also Badrasing; girls in trance, women behind the girls gently steadying their movements - the 'nyelshaw'

Dancers, out of trance, wiping their faces, chanting stops

Dancers dancing with brass water pots

Dancers, finger clicking and with men's hats on

Dancers, then Hima in audience watching, then other girls

Man drumming

Dancers clicking fingers

Dancers seated, swaying

Dancers now standing, new hand movement

Further scenes of the dance and audience

YOUNG PEOPLE'S CLUB



We don't have a Rodhi in this village. I do not know whether there was a Rodhi or not previously. But we used to sit together with our friends in turn in each other's home. We didn't call it a Rodhi. There was this type of gathering in our youth. Nowadays the young people don't have this type of gathering. They don't sing as well. Women don't sit with men and there are not many women. There is no good friendship with one village to another village, and the young men do not have good friends with each other.

Family on an evening with games and singing



We spent many evenings together with Dilmaya and her family. This is a film of one of them, on 3rd May 1992. We had brought some board games for the children, which they enjoyed. Then we were visited by the best singer in the village, Badrasing, and he played and sang, accompanied sometimes by a flute player and by Dilmaya's sister-in-law Harimaya, also a very good singer.

MEN AND WOMEN



In this village some say that men are superior while others consider women as superior. The reason for considering women as superior is that women are mothers. Some say that men and women are equal. In our case, my husband and I are equal. Sometimes the husband is superior and sometimes myself.

Men's work is ploughing, digging, making rice walls during Asar (mid-June to mid-July), basket weaving.

In Asar women do rice transplanting, millet transplanting, cooking, milling of millet, and hand-foot-pounding of rice. Women do not plough while men do not weave clothes. Men's work is not done by women and in the same way the work of

women is not done by men. In some cases, where there is no woman in a family, men do the works of women also.

OLD AGE



When the parents become old their sons do their work and look after them. If the daughter is nearby she also helps and looks after her father and mother. If she is married far away it is not normally possible. The son's wife also looks after the parents. We do almost all the work for our parents because we love our parents very much - for they gave birth to us and brought us up with a lot of difficulty. We feel that we must help our parents in return.

Similarly, when we become old our children will have to look after us. If the daughter is married far away she may not be able to come frequently. Sons and daughter-in-laws will take most of the care.

THE SPIRITUAL WORLD

SPIRITUAL FORCES



We call the spirits of dead people Masan.

It is believed that dead spirits roam in the night time. We have only heard about them but nobody has seen them. Only Pachyu and Klabri (shamans) can recognise them. Similarly, it is believed that Chongor (spirits) are found in the forest.

It is also said that banketa (forest boy-spirits) are found in the forest; they carry a stick and a bag. It is believed that while walking in the forest or elsewhere, if a banketa's shadow falls over us we will become sick and if our shadow falls over him he becomes sick. So it is said but we have not experienced it. My children are not affected until now. It is also believed that only small children see such forest boys, and only rarely.

It is also said that Moh are also found in rivers and streams. These also we can not see. We don't know whether Moh can see us or not. It is believed that if one meets a Moh he or she becomes ill. But we do not know about the type of sickness caused by such thing. It is said that Moh can have a bad effect on people when they go to a river or stream or cross the river. I have never experienced this.

We call the ancestral spirit of the husband's clan Bayu Devata. We offer them rice, roasted paddy, dhwaja (a cloth piece) and chicken on the full moon of Baisakh (mid April-mid May). This is done requesting the spirit to protect our family and home. That's all about this.

Bhut, Pret and Moh are the same.

A witch is a person, but we cannot recognise who is a witch. Only the shaman say that he knows who is witch. We cannot differentiate between a witch and a normal person. They look alike to us. I have no idea who is a witch in this village. I also do not know what witches do. It is said that they cause illness to other people, they play with fire in the night time. But I do not know anything, nor have I seen one. Nobody in our family has been affected by a witch. Sometime my children fall sick but I do not know whether it is caused by a witch or something else. Children get well when the traditional healers do some healing ritual. When a witch causes a person to be ill, sometime the person may also die.

Suspected witchcraft - 1994



The only direct effect of these evil spirits I filmed occurred in 1994 when the local poju diagnosed the sick Premkumari as having been bewitched. The diary account for 25th October 1994 is as follows.

Ujesing (poju) came down to diagnose Premkumari's trouble. He said she'd been bewitched by someone to the south of the house. He took the pulse of both wrists and moved all her fingers after first calculating her 'lho'. Alan filmed. Ujesing is going to make a 'jaantra' for Premkumari later.

Ujesing came down in reasonable shape and made a 'jaantra' for Premkumari. He waved the 'jaantra' over a dish of burning dhup to which Dilmaya had added a little 'cugu', muttering. Then flicked rice from a dish at Premkumari and then put the 'jaantra' round her neck. The cost, 1 mana of rice and 10rs.

Film sequence

Ujesing diagnosing Premkumari's illness
Reports findings to Dilmaya and Surje. Then talking to Alan
Ujesing doing a rite over Premkumari
Dilmaya gets Premkumari to stand up for Ujesing who continues with the rite
Ujesing chatting with Surje and Dilmaya after doing the rite
Surje being sent off to get drink for him, then pouring it for him.
Discusses virtue of types of drink with Alan
Premkumari lying on a pile of rice straw looking unwell
Premkumari combing her hair sitting on the rice straw with an open umbrella behind her
Ujesing doing the 'jaantra' rite for Premkumari
Dilmaya sewing a pouch for the jaantra

MORALITY



If a man does wrong or bad work he or she earns paap. But I do not know where one goes after death.

On the other hand good doings are not to kill other animals, not to lie, not to beg, and good behaviour with other people and the opposite is a paap deed. Those who do good work go to heaven while the wrong doers go to hell after death.

DEATH AND THE AFTERLIFE



I am afraid of death. I used to fear death in my childhood but less nowadays. All children fear death. I don't know what happens after death. I don't know about heaven or hell. I think good works like you have done leads to heaven otherwise to hell. If we can not do good work it is not possible to go to heaven. If a small child dies we feel very bad. We do not feel happy and like to cry for more than one year or even more years.

Interview with Harimaya Gurung about Dilmaya's death
- Autumn 1995



[Harimaya was Dilmaya's sister-in-law and closest female friend]

My name is Harimaya. I am in my fifties.

I knew Dilmaya for many years.

She was a very good person. She looked after children well. She did not angry. She worked well and was good to people. She knew how to speak well and deal with people. She worked very hard and danced well. She sang well, and smiled a lot.

She suffered from a disease. She went to Pokhara for medicine. She brought medicine and used it. Then she went again with Lumaya's mother to get more medicine. The shop did not have her medicine so she came back without it. She she continued her very hard life without the medicine she needed. She worked very hard for her children and went to the forest to collect buffalo fodder etc. After fetching a very large load of fodder she went off

to beat rice with the foot-pounder. She then had to make food for all the family. It was the time of Dashain and so special foods had to be cooked.

After that all the family went to sleep. She breathed very heavily a few times. She lost her breath. I went to see her and felt a very tiny sign of breathing. She was not speaking or responding.

We were all terribly worried and many people came down to the house, asking what had happened. If she had been having her medicine she would probably have been alright. She had been working very hard and become very hot.

She had urged Surje to eat, but had said that she was sleepy and would not eat. She gave a great sigh. Surje could not find a light.

She gave another great sigh. Her eyes were closed. We were called. We tried to resuscitate her but there was not breath.

Surna was here, but they sent for Krishna and Om. 'Dilmaya is dead, Dilmaya is dead. Come quickly.' We were all weeping, distressed and frightened. We sat there through the night crying. I stayed there for a week, feeding the children etc.

She was not bewitched. She had something which made her very hot; she had been working very hard and the cooking had made her extra hot. She had carried a very large load. The doctors had told her that her heart was not good. She should have been taking medicine, but had not taken it for four months. If she had taken the medicine she would have been alright.

Extract from Interview of Surje in 1999 on Dilmaya's death



My previous wife's name was Dilmaya. She died three years ago. She had blood pressure. She died very early – she was only 40. I cried a lot and was deeply upset. The children likewise. I was in a very difficult situation.

I married again and am now alright. She looks after the children very well.

RELIGIOUS RITES

GRANDMOTHER GODDESS RITUAL



We do Deurali puja twice a year, In the full moon of Phalgun (Feb. - March) and full moon of Baishakh (April - May). We didn't do it in the full moon of Baishakh (April - May) so we are going to do this puja in panchami(the fifth day of the lunar night). You will see it. All the villagers do this puja together.

To perform this puja all the villagers take some rice and money as an offering (bheti). For the priest of this ritual the necessary things are: red powder (sindur), cow milk, ghee, rice. After reaching the shrine (puja place) we have to collect firewood. We clean the rice, then making flour from the rice and then making

selroti (a kind of circular rice ring). After making *selroti*, we sweep the shrine, then plaster the place with cow dung. Then we light the fire and make the offerings (*prasad*). The offering is this size of bread. For plastering the shrine both cow and ox dung can be used. After arranging everything for the puja and finishing making the offering (*prasad*), the small pieces of clothes which were brought by the mothers are hung, and we put on some red powder and we wind thread around the shrine (*krekhin*). Then we light some incense.

After this the shaman purifies the goat by putting some rice and *pati* (a kind of plant) on the goat's head. Then the goat is sacrificed. After sacrificing the goat we circle the shrine three times. When we sacrifice the goat, first we offer the blood in the shrine. This is called giving the spirit. In this way, the communal ceremony of *Deurali puja* is completed and then individual offerings are done in the same manner. Sometime only a communal puja is done and sometime there are several believers who offer puja. After the goat is sacrificed, the heart and liver are examined for good luck. If it is good, these are cut into pieces and cooked and served as the offering (*prasad*). This good luck is announced loudly by beating drums by the town crier. In this way, the puja is accomplished.

Grandmother Goddess ritual - 1990



Dilmaya's family did several pujas for Buje Deorali, two of which I filmed. Most of her family participated, even if Dilmaya herself did not attend and only sent offerings. Here is the first film, where Dilmaya's husband Surje officiated and her son Syana and daughter Premkumari were present.

The diary for 16th March 1990 notes:

Day of the Buje Deorali puja. Sunny and warm. So nice after all the cold, wet weather we've had. Ate and early 'prokeh' and went down to watch Surje making preparations. Alan filmed and I took photos. A lovely setting. The 'prasad' - rice, cake, goat's liver and heart, particularly delicious after a diet solely of vegetables.

Surje working as village 'pujari' at Deorali. Kancha has an altar - a few flat cakes made of 'mlasi' and 'chini' set out on a leaf; bowl of 'cugu'. Cooking 'mlasi' under altar on a little fire. Beside him is the smallest goat they could find! On top of the bell stone, by Deorali,

is a leaf with cow dung on it. Cooked rice put on leaf on the top of the altar.

Next he washes the lingam inside the Deorali and spreads cow dung in front of it. Rings a number of small bells before he does this. Goes to a smaller shrine at the edge of the hill and sprinkles water on that. Children bring down plates of uncooked rice. Goes to deorali and puts cotton necklet on the lingam. Smears it and surrounding stones with dots of red powder. The ribbons on the lingam had been put on before. Then he takes the string, makes a circlet by twisting it round his fingers, then puts it on the top of the lingam. Makes two other circlets. Puts red powder on bell. Puts one of the cotton circlets on the small shrine at end. Puts 'cugu' in small dish for lamp and puts inside deorali, in front of lingam. The other circlet is in fact used as the wick - lights lamp. Fries a little rice which he puts on a leaf. Leaf plates of rice and cakes put beside lingam as offerings. Another plate with rice taken from each person's offering, with ribbon and joss sticks, offered to lingam. Ribbon put on it and joss sticks put into dung in front after being lit. Held in both hands and circled round in front of lingam.

More, older women, arrive. Two more goats brought from Yunga. Om down, bagging the rest of the rice. Women take off shoes before coming into the deorali area. Sacrifices a goat inside the deorali, after putting a red powder 'tika' on head, and washing goat. The smallest goat came from Badrasing. Women from Yunga stroking goats as they sit with them, waiting for sacrifice. Headless goat brought out and circled round the deorali three times, so blood sprinkled all round. Children fascinated by the dead goat.

Other, older people arrive including Indrajid and Mansing. Woman from Yunga put headless goat in her bag to take away. Kancha acting as their butcher. The woman removes goat from her bag - the innards have to be inspected. Everyone is interested in the quality of each goat's liver. Kancha is expert in analysing the marks and streaks of fat on the liver. Woman from Yunga then cooks liver and kidneys. This is added to the cakes and rice as 'prasad'. Given to everyone. A little rice should be taken and put on the forehead - not as a tika.

This ritual is to give good luck when planting and to protect livestock. Before this is done, can't plant. Should occur at the full moon (or three-quarter moon) as long as that doesn't fall on a Saturday, in Pawe or Chait. All the heads are left inside the deorali,

round the lingam. This puja started about 7.30am. finished by 9.45am. Surje took the heads.

There was another event occuring elsewhere, so the number of people who came was reduced. The total contribution from the village was a very, very tiny goat - probably because they wouldn't be there to share the meat anyway. Place feels very empty as people aren't supposed to work today, they can't even go to the forest, though I suspect that a number of women have done.

DASHAIN FESTIVALS



There are two Dashain festivals. One Dashain is in Chaitra (mid March - mid April). In the Chaite Dashain people eat goat, if there are no goats they eat chicken, buffalo and a large doughnut ring (selroti) are eaten. A buffalo is also sacrificed in the shrine (Kot). People do not work for two days in Chaite Dashain of which one day is spent for worshipping (puja). People do not work for at least one day. This is all about Chaite Dashain.

Another Dashain is in the month of Asoj (mid September to October). This Dashain is known as Thulo (big) Dashain. This is difficult to manage. In this Dashain people clean and plaster their houses with soil brought from the forest.

On the day of the new moon, all people in the village start to plaster their house with clay. Some sow mixed seeds of barley maize on this day and this is called Jamara. To prepare Jamara, a medium is prepared by mixing soil and manure. Then Jamara is sown in the soil.

On the seventh day of the new moon people do not do any thing. On the ninth day people offer a number of buffaloes and goats to the goddess. But 1 sacrifice sheep. The price of a sheep is about rupees 1,000-1,200. On the tenth day, people go to get a Tika from elderly people such as their father, mother, grandfather and relatives. Then they eat meat and rice and enjoy themselves. Several people drink alcohol and get drunk. Fathers (and mothers) and brothers and their family invite their married-away sisters and daughters from other villages and provide good food including rice, meat and other things. This is all about Big Dashain.

Preparations for Dasain Festival - 1994



Family preparing garlands and decorating houses in preparation for the Dasain festival in Thak, November 1994. Each household would put up some special decorations over the door to celebrate the largest annual festival.

Blessing the animals at Divali - 1994



Part of the Dasain festival, the family bless the larger animals on 3.11.1994

Family ritual at Dasain - 1994



Alan, Sarah and others put rice on the foreheads of members of the family.

BROTHER-SISTER FESTIVAL



After Dashain another festival called Tihar comes, usually in Kartik (some time in October). In this festival, the sisters honour their brothers and put tika on their forehead. This is called Bhai tika. On the new moon day, protection marks for their brothers are prepared out of oil on the threshold. On the same day, people make many large doughnut rings and alcohol. The sisters prepare the large doughnut rings and alcohol and go to different villages and others come to visit their brothers. Some brothers give clothes while some give money to their sisters. On the day of tika, sisters visit their brothers' home, put tika and stay there to enjoy themselves and eat roti and raksi. Some people use the meat

which they have left over from Dashain, if they don't have enough meat they kill chickens, buffaloes and goat. The sisters put tika on their brothers' forehead on the day of tika. Rich brothers give more money, those who are not rich give one shawl or one lungi (long skirt).

In Dashain and Tihar people have fun. In Tihar the brothers who do not have sisters cry and the sisters who do not have brothers cry as well. In this situation they feel sad, unhappy. This festival is very important for brothers and sisters. My brother is in another country and I feel sad. My other brother is not here. Will you please come next year? Then we will celebrate Dashain and Tihar with joy. I will be very happy if you come here next year. Prem Kumari will put a Tika on her brothers' forehead (Krishna, Tarna and Om) and I will put one on for you two. We will celebrate this festival with all the members of our family.

HOUSE PROTECTION RITUAL



Sometime we do the ritual for the protecting of our house from bad spirits [Di Bar Lava]. To perform this ritual first of all we have to consult the shaman for the right day and date. Usually it is good on any Tuesday of Chait (mid March – mid April). If possible this ritual can be performed on a Chait's Tuesday or a Shrawan's (mid July – mid August) Tuesday. It is good to perform this ritual at least once. Things required to perform this ritual are water, millet, half a kg of rice, money NRs 20, 25, 30, 50, or 100 as per people's capabilities, a kind of wood (Chyargu), sand taken from a stream, and a small chicken.

The shaman chants till mid-night very slowly. After this they paste astrological charts (parga) on the door and

windows. Then iron staples are hammered in the threshold as well as at all four directions. This is also done at the Tagaro (traditional gate). Then sand is splashed or dusted all over. I do not do this ritual very often and I do not see others doing it. For this ritual we do not light the fire.

Fire is only lit in pero te ritual. I don't light the fire in the di bar lava. Buddibahadur does the di bar lava, kills a chicken, scatters ashes, sand from the stream. I do not know whether parga is fixed or not in the pero te, but fire is lit. A very long ritual, isn't it? Shaman read the whole day and in the evening a goat or buffalo is killed. They make a small house for the spirit (Moh). Towards the end of this ritual the shaman beats his drum and cymbal and dances. I do not understand the beda (spells) which they recite because I do not do the ritual and I do not participate in other's homes. Only I go there when the shaman starts beating his drums and dancing. The goat and buffaloes are killed at the same time. This will help to protect the house. Then the shaman blesses and prays for the long life of people. This is also considered as a house protection ritual.

Di bar lava or house protection ritual - 1992



Dilmaya was present at two of the Di Bar Lava rituals I filmed, in 1991 and 1992, though she does not appear directly in either. In the second, we can see her husband Surje, and as the film is better, I shall include this one.

The diary for 21 April 1992 notes:

Went up earlier to watch the 'Di bar lava' for a bit. Ujesing and sons sitting - Kancha in the middle. Ujesing was trying to teach him the 'pe'. Went up later to see the circling of the goat over Budibahadur's and Bishnu's family. We were all asked to join the group so sat among the family, each circling with the goat brushing out heads with its hoofs. This incorporated us into the family, and from that moment we were taking part in the 'Di bar lava'. Alan paid for the goat.

Down to the house, but back before rice for the climax of the ritual. As usual, a lot of surprised excitement as they rushed round setting up the frame to hang the chicken on, setting out three plough shares to sprinkle blood on, priming the muzzle loader, etc. In time the climax came. The chicken was hung on the frame and shook after a few minutes. Then cacophony. We had been moved back, but still the egg fell at Hilda's feet. The goat's head was lopped off, the chicken's throat cut, the gun fired, and then the frame broken up. Poju Kaila performed creditably, wearing his poju's hat and belt decorated with cowries, bells hanging down, beating his drum wildly. After this, various persons were allocated to tie wool round the necks of the active participants, including us.

The next stage was the creation of the fire ball which destroys a paper fixed to a long bamboo, dangling above the fire. On this paper were the names of all those who had died a bad death. On the fire was a pot of mustard oil which heats to a point when it starts to burn. The fire itself was set on the terrace where a slab had been removed. The poju first marked a shape like a star of David in the mud, then stood a tripod on it. Under the tripod, short lengths of wood were put until the pile filled the space between the top and feet of the tripod. Then it was lit. Took a long time to reach boiling point. When it did, the poju scooped up some 'pa' in a ladle tied to a bamboo stick about 8-9 foot long. This was not ordinary 'pa' but 'keh pa', 'pa' made with rice rather than millet, which is distilled three times, so it is almost pure alcohol. Its known as 'tin pani pa' or three water pa. The effect was a massive burst of flame which startled everyone. A few minutes before, the women in the front row turned their backs on the fire and all the children were put safely behind them. The poju did this about nine times, though the first whoosh had burnt the paper. Virtually no oil was left in the pot once this was done, so we avoided being smeared with too much oil.

The last act but one was a slow dance by the poju and those helping - Minbahadur and Surje, and the main participants - Budibahadur and Sherbahadur, Alan and IB. Alan danced with the femur of a man fashioned into a horn which the poju had blown earlier. The final act was the blessing by the poju, though just prior to that, Minbahadur did a backwards and forwards, backwards and forwards shuffle with his knees together, feet splayed, legs bent,

while the poju recited. Then the 'sha, sha' by poju and others, and so it ended.

The main pojus present were Ujesing (oldest), Budibahadur (middle) Bopalsing (youngest).

Film sequences

Three pojus reciting 'pe' in a hut
Bopalsing beating a bow-string.
Ujesing trying to teach 'pe' to Bopalsing.
Minbahadur making a frame of bamboo and leaves for the sacrificial chicken to be attached to.
Lomaya standing beside the bamboo matting shelter, Minbahadur tying branches to sticks
Three pojus reciting in shelter, Minbahadur making frame for chicken outside
Pojus reciting, Ujesing in sunglasses with special necklace, Bopalsing beating bow-string
Minbahadur holding a goat while Ujesing chants over the heads of the seated families of House32 and House91
Minbahadur swings goat over heads of families. Budikumari, then children. Ujesing circles heads with lengths of cotton while Minbahadur circles them with the goat
Poju under the shelter at night, pressure lamp in front
IB sitting to left of shelter. Budibahadur, wearing poju's special hat, saying a mantra holding his bundle of porcupine quills. Ujesing saying mantra. Budibahadur puts porcupine quills over each shoulder then in his belt
Pojus chanting
Krishna tapping the bamboo frame with a kukri
Pojus, Budibahadur beating on bow-string
Surje and Minbahadur arranging things in front of the shelter
Preparing chicken for sacrifice
Surje and Minbahadur tying chicken to frame
Krishna and Badrasing with goat beside an old plough
Surje and Minbahadur tying chicken on frame, then Surje holding it still
Chicken flaps, Budibahadur (poju) throws egg at it, gun goes off, Surje hacks and saws at chicken's neck, cuts it from frame, then sprinkles its blood, amidst lots of drumming and beating of cymbals, Minbahadur pulls up bamboo frame. Severed goat's head brought over, blood of chicken and goat sprinkled by post where the bamboo frame stood and elsewhere

Old woman, Koshi, laying hands on Gerry's and Hilda's heads, then
 Sundari does likewise
 Pojus banging drum and cymbals (Ujesing wearing his sunglasses!), Surje
 in foreground
 Surje and Minbahadur opening up the goat to remove its liver, drumming
 continues. Surje carefully cutting liver out of goat's belly
 Surje and Minbahadur examining goat's liver then passing it to another
 man
 Liver passed back to Surje, pojus continuing to drum in background
 Pojus drumming, then stop, Budibahadur resting
 Budibahadur drawing in the earth where a stone slab has been removed,
 with point of a kukri
 He blows over tripod saying a mantra, and places it on drawing. He uses
 kukri handle to tap down tripod then carefully places bits of wood under
 tripod helped by Surje. Ujesing hands a ladle over
 Budibahadur and Surje still placing sticks round the tripod
 Surje making a stake while Minbahadur ties stick to ladle.
 Minbahadur ties ladle to stick
 Budibahadur pouring alcohol ('pa') from a bottle into a cooking pot,
 some discussion with Ujesing and Minbahadur
 Surje breaks a twig in foreground
 Budibahadur smoking, Minbahadur ties ladle to stick, pan to Ujesing and
 Surje breaking sticks. Sticks arranged around tripod
 Surje pushes a bamboo into the ground with a sheet of paper at the top
 Budibahadur mumbling mantra over his beads
 Brass pot on tripod (with oil in it)
 Surje lights match, passes it around pot three times, lights sticks
 Audience of children and adults watch flames, to pojus, to paper on the
 bamboo stick above the fire
 Pot over flames
 Surje feeding fire with Minbahadur. Pot on flames. Surje crouching, then
 gets up, is handed the ladle, cuts off end of stick. Maldosing arguing
 Surje with ladle
 Gerry, Hilda and Sarah smiling. Audience and pojus.
 Budibahadur, telling his beads, to Hilda, Gerry and Sarah
 Pot on fire, audience, pojus
 Hilda and Gerry and Sarah
 Audience, some women already with their backs to the fire
 Budibahadur blowing bone trumpet. Spoons out alcohol using ladle then
 passes it over the heads of the two families, points to the sky twice
 (indicating flames), passes the ladle around pot of boiling oil on fire three
 times while audience whistle, pours 'pa' into pot, which causes an
 explosion of flames, audience yodel.

More alcohol added. In all there are twelve explosions of flame. Paper on bamboo is burnt away, Minbahadur removes pot from flames.
Ujesing start drumming, Budibahadur calls Surje over to play cymbals.
Krishna climbs off verandah smiling, audience, Surje drinks something, Gerry and Hilda. Fire.
Pojus and Surje - Ujesing drumming, Surje playing cymbals, Budibahadur speaks to Minbahadur
Budibahadur turns bone trumpet between his hands, drumming, singing
Drumming and singing, Minbahadur in foreground
Budibahadur and Surje standing, then circle the fire playing drum and cymbals
Budibahadur and Sherbahadur join them, and circle the fire, with Alan holding bone trumpet and Minbahadur holding ladle
Joined by IB. Men circling the fire in the opposite direction, then faster and faster, and stop
Audience shuffling, then rubbing oil from the pot into the hands, hair, faces
Minbahadur doing a shuffling step, backwards then forwards as directed by Budibahadur, who chants, pan to Gerry, Hilda and Alan
Budibahadur laying hands on Alan's heads, then others laying hands on Gerry and Hilda's heads, everyone laying on hands

ANCESTOR RITUAL



Ancestors worship or phai uu is done once a year. It is expensive to do this ritual. If it is not possible to do the phai lu every year the chyoba is done. Some do phailu and chhyoba in alternate years. Chyoba is less expensive than the phai lu. To perform the phai lu ritual the situation of the new moon or full moon is observed. The shaman tells people which day is suitable for performing this ritual. The timing of the shaman needs to be used.

To perform this ritual a type grass called rudu is required. Then the rudu is put in the fire. Then they make the stage to perform the ritual (gho timu) a kaidu (effigy made out of rice) are cooked. Only after firing the rudu, is the kaidu cooked. They (shamans) know the things that are required

for the phailu such as pure rice, pure curry, pure kaidu etc. and they put out small amounts of all the things. They need new wool, and five pathi (approx 12.5 kg) of millet is required for this ritual. The money is needed to put inside the Kaidu.

The shaman begins the process of phai lu. While doing the phai lu a person is asked to help perform the job. This person is called phyo se. About six kg of millet and 25-30 rupees are given to this person. For the shaman 100 rupees and one mana of millet flour is given. Bird's meat and yeast are also required for this ritual. The shaman, in fact, starts reciting his myths after these things are ready for him. Towards the finishing of the myth reading by the shaman, he asks everybody to join their hands together. Then the shaman starts giving blessings for good health and prosperity. I do not understand all of what the shaman says in the blessing, only a few things.

My husband goes into trance. When the pachhu goes into trance it is called kwol, three times he goes into trance. The first two they do not go into trance, only the third time. It is called kle kol when my husband goes into trance. The god takes possession, or comes. I am not afraid when my husband goes into trance because he becomes all right after some time. He was possessed by his family deity so we do not have to be afraid of him. My husband started to go into trance when he was 15- 16 years old. He does not eat buffalo meat. If we only eat mutton, and are possessed by the family deity, eating only pure food then we also go into trance.

Ancestor ritual (Pwelu) 1990



The diary for 2nd March 1990 notes:

Left for Thak at 10.30am. and arrived at about 3.30pm. Found the Taprang poju in the house. They were doing a 'Pwelu', a rite only done in poju's houses for the 'failu', the household god. Dilmaya cooking a vast pot of rice to make the 'kaidu'. Alan filming, though very dark.

Alan began to film the 'Pwelu' immediately. It was still at the rice-cooking stage so had really only just begun. Watched until after supper, at about 8.00pm. Until then, mainly reciting 'pe'. Felt very tired, but decided to get up later when the real work starts.

Drumming, and the squawk of a chicken woke us at 12.30am. We were in time to see the chicken killed, and its blood sprinkled on the 'kaidu', and the heart and liver checked for malformations which would indicate negative results. All well though. The

drumming became more serious. Atasing played it first, then the cymbals. Tejbahadur killed the chicken.

Film sequences

Dilmaya beside fire, poju on the other side with large decorated 'kaidu' in front of him
Poju chanting 'pe' various 'kaidu' in front of him
Dilmaya and Surje on other side of fire, also Sokumaya and daughter, then Premkumari on Surje's lap
Poju naming members of the family, Surje placing lighted joss sticks round 'kaidu'
Premkumari sitting on Dilmaya's lap blinking at Alan; poju shows cymbals and then warms 'ngah'; Dilmaya eating rice while Premkumari nestles in Surje's lap
Poju beating cymbals, another man drumming, and another holding chicken which is then sacrificed
Women visitors including Kowshila, Towchiri, and Budikumari
Poju examining the chicken liver and finding it good
chatting with the women
Poju whispering a 'mantra'
Rubbing porcupine quills, putting on his special cap, taking bits of rice from the 'kaidu' and throwing them away from him, blowing the conch shell into his 'ngah', then beats drum while another beats the cymbals, and starts to chant
Poju's drumming becomes a little more vigorous
women wave strips of bamboo with loops at the end over towards the poju; drum crescendo
Change of drum rhythm
women still waving strips, repeat of earlier crescendo with drum
Waving bundles of lighted joss sticks over the large 'kaidu'
poju drumming, then Surje becomes possessed ('tarava'); man wearing poju's cap circles the 'kaidu' with praying motion, Surje still shaking; more vigorous movement of everyone, women shaking bamboo strips or 'ashee'; at the end of the drumming Surje still 'tarava' and they try to stop him by putting 'dhup' under his nose
Slower drum rhythm, the 'kaidu' is picked up on a winnowing tray and swung gently
poju throws little pieces of rice from 'kaidu', drum and cymbals, poju intones over the 'kaidu' then takes off the decoration
Cutting up the 'kaidu'

poju packing away his paraphenalia; people eating little bits of
'kaidu' as prasad

Ancestor Ritual - Pwelu 1992



The diary for 8th May 1992 notes:

A leisurely walk up - here about 1.30pm. We heard the poju drumming and found that the 'pwelu' in Dilmaya's house had already started.

Film sequences

Poju drumming, chants and sways. Dilmaya lights incense sticks, circles them round the 'kaidu' and pushes them into it. Assistant poju by window 'Kaidu', then just visible, Surje's silhouette
Surje beside 'kaidu', poju resting. Bombahadur plucking chicken, poju watches
Poju muttering a prayer beside 'kaidu', Bombahadur wearing poju's hat
Dilmaya cooking on fire.
Drumming and cymbals.
Surje, with Bombahadur, and poju drumming.
Dilmaya pours out a cup of liquid.

Pojus kneeling and swaying, drumming and chanting by 'kaidu'.
 Pojus drumming faster.
 Surje, Bombahadur and a child. Pojus drumming and chanting very fast and wild.
 Pojus, kneeling, drumming by 'kaidu'.
 Surje crawls in front of camera, takes some 'dhup' out of bag and puts it onto charcoal in a dish.
 Women shaking slivers of bamboo with loops at ends towards the pojus.
 Sound gets increasingly wild again, then calms.
 Women put down their bamboo slivers.
 Majina puts part of a loom onto the rack above the fire.
 Bombahadur lighting incense sticks which he circles on top of the 'kaidu'.
 Bombahadur with palms together moving hands over the 'kaidu'.
 Bombahadur dancing on mat by 'kaidu', Surje shaking next to him. [part omitted for privacy and the dangers of the rhythm]
 Drumming slows, Surje suddenly stops shaking, touches forehead, makes namaste, takes his hat off and wipes his face with it
 Drumming and chanting starts again.
 Extended family sitting on the floor together.
 Bombahadur and assistant poju swinging the 'kaidu' on a winnowing tray towards the chanting poju.
 Premkumari, hands in offering gesture.
 Poju takes top off 'kaidu', and garland.
 Rice broken into lumps and handed out as 'prasad' by Parsing.
 Towchiri eating rice with her left hand.

DEATH OBSERVANCE AND RITUALS



Death figures very greatly in the ritual world of the Gurungs and most of their most elaborate rituals are connected to it. Here are some in which Dilmaya participated and I filmed.

Chempa (Lama funeral)



This is the Lama funeral for 'Antheba', that is my father
Bhuwansing's sister's husband, held from 31 March to 1st April
1991

Funeral feast (bowk tsaba) - 1991



This is the funeral feast for the same Yokbahadur Gurung for whom the Chempa above had been performed.

In the diary for 2nd April 1991 it notes:

This morning they held the 'bow tsaba' for Atheba (Yokbahadur), held three days after his death, and supplemented later by a Chempa (see film). This is a feast of offerings from all households - the usual 'kyuni', rice, meat, curry, 'pa'. The Lama officiates. In front of him is a hollow bamboo tube into which he has put a few pieces of the bone of the dead man. This is wrapped at the top, and stood in a dish of rice in front of him. Above is a paper "flag" with a 'tanka'-type drawing on it. There were lighted joss sticks placed into little piles of dung at the corners of the mat on which the food was laid, and in front of the bamboo tube. After the Lama had finished reading a Tibetan tract, he gave a short sermon in Nepali. I think that he was recalling the life of Yokbahadur, but can't be sure. The speech by an elderly man was exhorting the group to hold the formal ritual, the chemphar, sooner rather than later.

Film sequences

Women bringing plates of food and bottles of 'pa' which are laid out on rugs on the terrace
Belsuba, Chandrama, Lakshmi, Sunkumari, Towchiri, Budikumari and other women and girls sitting round
Lama, daughters, and Antheba looking exhausted with large group sitting round the feast
Sarah taking photos then more people arriving
Antheba pouring 'pa' into a cup as offering
Lama putting some of Yokbahadur's ashes into a hollow bamboo - the 'rhi'
then winding white cloth round it and tying it like a bandage.
Opening up his "book". Yokbahadur's daughter on one side and Antheba on the other. The 'rhi' in a pot in front of him.
Kamiri unplaiting her hair
Then lighting incense sticks
Lama folding white cloth
'rhi' now has paper attached to it
Lama starting to chant, ringing bell
Antheba keening beside him towards the 'rhi'
Pieces of food from each plate being put as offerings into the incense pan by Indrabahadur
Pouring 'pa' from glasses into a large container
Mixing up the food as 'prasad'
Others taking 'prasad'
Lilakumari taking and blessing 'prasad' before eating
Lama handing 'rhi' to Kamiri to keep for the 'Chempa'
Untouchables eating 'prasad' outside the wall of the terrace

Cremation - 1992



The cremation is described in our diary for 12th May 1992 as follows:

Noted that Surje had no sleep last night and won't be able to eat until this evening. Noted also that wood was being collected from Dilmaya for the funeral pyre. Assume everyone gives something. Maldosing was collecting it. Went on up to House 29 at about 10.15am. There were a few men at the house. The lama was inside and had started to beat his drum and chant. Went inside. Found Minbahadur, Tekansing's son, beating the drum while the lama beat the cymbals. Nansuba came in and tied threads round the necks of Kumbasing and the grandson. Even we were 'sha' and told 'a-kroba'. Other women came in and did the same.

Noticed Gungabahadur (Jila) outside. Poju Kaila came in and sat with the lama. Outside, a number of flower garlands had been made and hung with money. In front of the lama was a largish 'kaidu' with six finger holes pressed in it, two by two. On the body

lay a kukri and the lama's ribbons. The body appeared to be lying with knees folded as though it was lying cross-legged.

Became much more crowded. Many Lamme. Rudrabahadur took the 'pwe-lu' and threw it out of the house. Interesting that this Lamme family has a 'pwe-lu' and doesn't eat buffalo. So the priests of both Kugi and Songi have 'pwe-lu'. Poju Kaila now playing the drum, and then the bell, and chanting with the lama. This lama must be a Gurung lama, one that does the 'pae' with poju or klehbri rather than a 'chempa'. When the oil lit next to the corpse goes out, Surje relights it. They find some joss sticks and put them in a lump of buffalo dung by the head of the body.

The 'moh' is the husband of Purnakumari, Gomansing's only daughter by a mother who divorced him. Noted after that she never cried over her father's corpse, which was considered very bad form. The 'asyon' was a man from Siklis and he hasn't come. Gomansing will be cremated. Rudrabahadur, Dilbahadur's son, says burning is better than burying because if you bury, the corpse is likely to turn into an evil spirit. Outside they collect gifts of money, biscuits or rice. The 'ala' is placed outside the front door. None of the participants, except, perhaps, the widow, is looking unduly sad. Lot of chatting about this and that.

At 11.30am., Towchiri asks how long it will take and tells the Lama to hurry up, it will rain later. The daughter and the 'moh' left Moja at 1.00am. to get here. Like Surje, the 'moh' is nodding off. Further chanting, and the Lama sprinkles water on the body with a lily-like flower. 11.45am., we were ushered out of the house so that they could arrange the body on the byre. Women were huddled in one buffalo shelter, men in another, the verandah also full of people. A mat and blanket were laid out on the terrace for the corpse. The Lama came out with his ribbons, cymbals and conch. The byre was made of bamboo - no plough beams here as Pignéde0 drew.

Old Tekansing began playing the drum while the Lama played cymbals. Later Poju Kaila took the drum. The widow came out but she was not weeping like Antheba did. Her hair hung loose. Both Dumbasing and Kumbasing have soot on their foreheads. Other men, Kwonme in the main, stand on the terrace, heads bare, including Agi Kroh and Bolbahadur, Kesap and Jusbahadur. People giving gifts of biscuits, etc.

The body was brought out on the byre - probably arranged by Surje, 'moh', and others. It was laid fully stretched out wrapped in a pink sheet, with a clump of leaves in the middle. Gomansing's daughter rubbed the leaves with oil. Usual manner of keening - several women do this, including Gunga, Jitbahadur's wife, who sobbed a lot. One other woman, Narkumari, sister of Nainasing, sobbed more than anyone else. Women in the shelter also sobbed a bit. By then the widow was clearly weeping. Gunga's daughter pulled her mother away - Gunga calling "Thargu!". The grandson put money on the body, then sprinkled it with water.

The bow and arrows brought out and given to the grandson. Other people give money which is placed on the corpse before being taken and noted by Surje. Some women are unplaiting their hair. Then the poju and lama started to dance slowly round the corpse, followed shortly by Gunga and other women, including Bindu, Uli Kancha's wife, Binkumari, Sherbahadur's wife, and Puspa, her hair down. As they circled, they threw rice at the corpse. Kumbasing took a stake and ring and went to the end of the terrace, out of sight but presumably to spike the ring with the stake. He came back and did so over the body. His neck was tied with many threads.

Bimbahadur brought out the 'gyan'. Dumbasing also had many strings round his neck. Debibahadur also pierced the ring over the body. Then the byre was lifted onto the shoulders of the grandson (who clearly couldn't carry it for long) and others and they started moving off the terrace. The procession was led by Kumbasing carrying the 'ala' and the ring and stake, followed by the 'gyan'. Then men and women carrying wood for the pyre, then the priests, then the corpse, and others - Dumbasing carrying the bow was near the rear with the 'moh'. The route was passed the Sarki houses and over the landslip. The pyre was built down below the path on an outcrop of rock. The 'gyan' carriers formed a semi-circle shielding the pyre from the group of women. The men were on the other side. They placed the byre beside the pyre, took off the pink sheet and the white cloth, then placed the body on top of the pyre and removed the byre. The latter was broken up.

The body was sprinkled with milk, oil and water from the lama's conch. Coins were placed at the four corners. As soon as the money had been put at the four corners a man, a 'sola', scooped it up. He is the person who has built the pyre, and the payment is

called 'sola dhan'. He also gets an 'ashee', an axe, and a small 'kodale'. The body was covered in leaves and branches, then more wood was placed on top. I estimated it took a month's supply of wood for an average family. All this was done to drums and cymbals. Four men - Lamme? - carrying flaming torches, circled the pyre, then fired the four corners with people yodelling. As the flames took the women got up and left. I was sitting above the site, but as they went by they encouraged me to go too.

On the way I had noticed little piles of rice on several stones. On the way back, trailing behind the women, I missed a couple of twigs in the path. Dumbasing's daughter rushed back and took me back to them, and proceeded to flick me with them as a cleansing rite. At the spring, the women all washed their faces and drank, then, as the men arrived, they waited for the women to finish, but with the last few started playful sparring, the women flicking water at the men. The men then washed and drank as the women had done. The final cleansing rite was just at the outskirts of the village. Nansura brought out burning charcoal from the fire and put a little 'dhup' on it. All the women then bent and sniffed it, flicked their shawls over it and their skirts, and went home. The 'bow tsaba' will be in a couple of days.

Film sequences

Minbahadur beating drum, another man plays cymbals, beside the body of Gomansing
 People placing hands on the head of a man. Badrakumari crying.
 Budibahadur (poju), corpse in sheet
 Surje watches, men playing instruments. Poju chanting and ringing a bell
 Basket of grain and coins
 Men sitting on verandah of House29, women sitting under animal straw stack
 Tekansing drumming, another man beating cymbals
 Men in doorway of house preparing to bring out the corpse.
 Men carry corpse out on stretcher, with clump leaves on body
 Corpse in pink sheet with leaves, on rug on the ground. Dankaji watching as men neaten the corpse.
 Woman rubs oil on her hands and then rubs leaves, man blows into conch shell. Gunga comes up rubbing her hands, rubs leaves, weeps.
 Narkumari brings incense sticks.
 Dankaji holding incense sticks. Men bring strings of money. Lama sprinkles water on corpse using a flower.

Debikumari come out of house leading widow, Baikumari, covered in her shawl, weeping.
 Men garland the corpse, add flowers.
 Surje beside the corpse. One woman trying to persuade Narkumari who is hugging corpse and sobbing to leave
 One woman gently persuades woman hugging corpse to move away,
 Dilmaya and others bring flowers to put on the corpse
 Two trays placed on body by Dambarsing.
 Dankaji crying, sprinkles water on the body.
 Dambarsing gives Surje money which he puts on tray.
 Asu handing incense sticks to women.
 People pass Surje money which he places on the head of the corpse then puts on trays
 Chandrabahadur blowing the conch shell, Budibahadur drumming, man playing cymbals led by Dankaji carrying a bow and arrows, circle the corpse while Surje counts money
 Lamme women follow walking around corpse
 People touch Kumbasing's head to protect him after he has pierced a circle of bamboo which he holds in his hand
 People touching head of another man. Budibahadur drumming followed by Tekansing. Debibahadur piercing ring with stake over body, people touching his head. Corpse lifted on stretcher and carried by two men, people follow. Procession files off, down steep path from the house.
 Thatched roof of house beside the path to the cremation ground
 People following the corpse, the 'gyan' in the distance
 Hillside with procession with men carrying the corpse in distance.
 Walking down to the cremation ground, many people carrying wood
 Some people on rock above the site of the pyre, the 'gyan' circling the area where the pyre is made
 Drum and cymbals accompanying chanting. Two men sitting on the ground holding 'gyan' poles while others stand doing the same
 Dilmaya watches with other women, wood pyre with the body placed on it
 People sitting on rocks around the site of the pyre. Man cutting up stretcher, another man preparing body. Dilmaya and other women people watching preparations from outside the 'gyan'
 Man adjusting cloth on corpse, Surje pours liquid on pyre as does Chandrabahadur
 Lamme women, and Dankaji file past putting grain and coins at corners of the pyre. Tekansing, 'sin-eater', picks up the coins. Dilmaya watching with other women from above
 Body is covered with fresh green leaves

Dankaji pours something on the body's head. Drum, cymbals and
 chanting starts. People sitting nearby, pan of surrounding hills. Women
 watching. Man puts wood on top of body, covering the leaves
 Four men, including Dankaji, walk around pyre with burning torches
 The four men light the pyre together, people yodel. Lama sprinkles water
 on pyre with flower. Fire takes by men continue holding fire-brands to
 the pyre, drumming stops. Men walking away from pyre which is
 smoking
 Pyre burning, Minbahadur shaving the head of a man
 People walking back up hill, pan of hillside to pyre
 Tekansing's head being shaved. Valley and distant hills with pyre burning
 in foreground, terraced hillside with Thak village in distance
 Group of men including Motilal and Purna. Bombahadur pours glass of
 water for Budiman, Motilal drinks
 Group of women shaking shawls over a little fire to purify themselves
 Woman bending over fire, takes a little ash and rubs it on her hair and
 face.
 Women take a handful of water ('mara kew') from Nansura, sip and
 throw rest over head, other women do same.
 Dilmaya shaking head-scarf over fire, then Sarah shakes her skirt over it,
 Towchiri prompting, and washes her face with water.
 Dilmaya and Sarah walk down steps to courtyard

OTHER RITUALS

Gairu puja



The diary for 23rd December 1988 notes:

Bhuwansing said that in the old days people had masses of milk, so they would invite people down/up to their 'pro' (animal shed), both family (istametra) and those without milk. There they would have feasted - killing two chickens (one to Bhairu and one to Debi), and having "milk rice" etc. We filmed the shrunken version done by Bhuwansing, in which there was hardly any milk and one cockerel was killed. This puja is always done at the full moon in Mungsir - Ghairu Purne. The ritual includes the children rushing in three times, twice being beaten away, and the third time getting a plate of food (prasad), the first one saying "ka, ka", the second barking like a dog.

Film sequences

Om holding a cockerel to be sacrificed, Surna beside him
Premkumari beside Bhuwansing while he makes an altar and lays out offerings, then Surna arrives with water
Dilmaya arrives with cooked offerings
Bhuwansing circles the buffaloes with incense, then he goes round the outside of the house, Premkumari, Surna (with a jar of water), and Om, with cockerel, following
Preparing to sacrifice the cockerel over the altar, then Bhuwansing sprinkles it with water several times while saying some words over it
Bhuwansing arranging the altar, then putting part of the offerings on large leafs as 'prasad'
Bhuwansing takes a twig, gets Premkumari to sit beside him, then asks Surna to pretend to be a dog, and Om, a bird, and to try to take the offerings while he fends them off with the twig. The second time Om takes the offerings but spills them, then Surna does the same with more success
Bhuwansing finishes the ritual with Premkumari beside him, giving her some 'prasad' and 'si kaba', then the same for Om and himself. Premkumari leaves eating.
'Si kaba' for Surna, then Surna takes off a large dish of 'prasad'
Sarah eating 'prasad' inside our house, then panning round the room

Mae Pulo Puja - 1990



The diary for 26th January 1990 notes:

We learnt that there will be a puja at the little chapel up on the edge of the forest, about 16th-17th March. The place is called 'Mai Pulo'. Dilmaya didn't know what god the puja was done for but thought it was to protect the crops from hail. This area was once lived in by the Gurungs. They say that a king lived on Mailo Dada.

Learnt later that Krishna's father has taken over from his dead brother the role of pujari (the doer of pujas) - possibly a Hindu word, but these are ceremonies to appease the village gods, so hardly Hindu. The doer has to be of the Poju Jat - he is a Ngwobje - and a non-eater of buffalo meat. He says he has to be dressed in white, wearing a 'kas', and very clean. At these ceremonies, sheep or goats are killed depending on which ceremony it is. We hope to see him perform at Mai Pulo in March.

Then the diary for 20th March 1990 notes:

Ate early as today is the Mai Pulo puja, and Surje had already gone to the forest to prepare and clean the little shrine. He is not allowed to eat until the whole thing is done. Before we left, Kalahowti Chetri, wife of Bimbahadur arrived from Taprang way.

Tulsiprasad Brahmin replaces "bell" at the top of the temple. Before, Surje had cleaned it with water and swept out the temple. Brahmins always do the top and Gurungs always clean inside. Dilmaya prepares 'prasad' with a little rice. Tulsiprasad offers leaf dishes at the altar to this lingam - also leaves - chants - little fire lit inside the shrine compound. People leave leaf plates with a little rice and money as offerings. Groups of people begin collecting water from filthy pond to drink. Kancha fries a little rice on the fire. Tailor (Bimbahadur) arrives carrying a sheep. Tailors drumming and playing pipe walk round temple preceded by man carrying sheep. Surje makes cakes of the 'mlasi' Dilmaya has ground, cooked in 'cugu', so yellow in colour.

Bimbahadur brings two little pigeons in a basket. Numbers of others bring birds. Strips of cloth belonging to various people hung on lingam. Budibahadur's father brought one for Budibahadur. Strangers here from Panighat. People come from all round Thak. One man puts in own offering - Brahmin chants. Kancha puts in rice cakes. Old man puts lit incense sticks in dung on other platform at intervals. Lakshmi hands over lit incense sticks, taken inside by old man who asked her name, so incense presented personally.

Most people have gone on to cut buffalo fodder. Totra sits with the two Tailors and Chetrabahadur and friend (who had said they were going to their buffalo 'pro'). Surje also offers the incense inside - sound of two small bells inside, smell of the strong incense that is burnt in a dish - rather more acrid than sweet. Surje puts in leaves with coins on. Dilmaya lights another fire under a tree. Chief men come - Debiprasad, Rudrabahadur - old man washes sheep.

12.05pm. Immense black cloud nearby. Have been warned that it usually hails at Mai Pulo puja. Surje continues to take offerings into the temple, and the Brahmin to chant outside. (Neither Surje or Tulsiprasad have shaved for the last few days - is this

significant?). 12.15pm. Sheep sprinkled with water - it shook - a good sign. Before slaughter, sheep taken into the temple - Surje inside - Brahmin says a few words and sprinkles its neck - also old man - then taken inside and head lopped off. Dragged clockwise round the temple. Tailor drumming madly. Then the birds taken into the temple after being sprinkled with water until they shake - bird by bird.

12.20pm Rudrabahadur starts to cut open sheep. Birds washed before Kancha sprinkles them. Rudrabahadur skinning sheep. Dilmaya cooking rice for Kancha. He can't eat from the beginning of the day until the sacrifice has been done. 12.30pm. suddenly very chill, presages rain. Birds still being sacrificed after washing and shaking. Birds' heads sprinkled with red powder. Old man with two birds circled the temple three times clockwise with the living birds above his head, then took them into the shrine. Looks as though he intends to leave them alive, it being particularly pious to give gift alive to gods. Surje will keep them, won't kill them. 12.35pm. Rudrabahadur examines the sheep liver with Mansing and the Tailor. 12.40pm. We got red rice 'tika' put on our foreheads. Red powder, not blood. Women plucking birds to cook. Puja ends at 12.45pm. Brahmin puts ash on forehead. Another Brahmin examines the liver of a bird that a woman has plucked and opened. She takes the bird home.

Film sequences

Surje cleaning metal pinnacle for roof of Mae Pulo shrine
Dilmaya watching as pinnacle is put on the roof of the shrine and is purified and decorated by Tulsiprasad Brahmin
Dilmaya grinding salt for the ritual
Tulsiprasad preparing offerings for the shrine then putting them inside the shrine while intoning
Debikumari with offerings
Miladebi getting water from a pond in a plastic bag
Tulsiprasad putting offerings inside shrine
Surje cooking rice for the 'prasad'
Bimbahadur Tailor bringing a sheep for sacrifice
Bimbahadur bringing offerings
Tailors circling temple with drum and horn
The goat being carried round
Bimbahadur with pigeon in a basket

Pigeon as offering
Tulsiprasad putting strips of white cloth inside shrine
Tulsiprasad reading from a religious text
Surje taking offerings into the shrine
Dilmaya making a fire to cook Surje a meal
Tulsiprasad making a small shrine under a tree
Surje sprinkling the sheep with water
Tulsiprasad sprinkling the sheep with water
Sheep sacrificed inside the shrine head cut off by Surje
Sacrificed sheep being dragged round temple
Surje sprinkling pigeon with water then putting a little rice on its neck
Surje sacrificing pigeon inside shrine and sprinkling blood
Rudrabahadur cutting up sheep
Men offering further pigeons
Man circling shrine with pigeon held on his head
Men examining the sheep's liver
Women plucking the pigeons
Woman putting the 'tika' on women's foreheads

Satinaran Puja -1991



The diary for 27th March 1991 notes:

Went to a puja at Nidrabahadur's house. A Brahmin officiating. The audience, mainly women. Only old Gomansing and the father of the house were there, with Nidrabahadur occasionally there. The older women are keen to do a 'kajikatara' to raise money for a temple they want to build. There is a leaning towards Hinduism in the village. Surje and Dilmaya are doing a similar ceremony (puja) in a few days, though they still do all the poju festivals - Pwelu, etc. - but the lack of a resident poju ...

This puja [to Satinaran] was being done for a son who is in Arabia and had been there throughout the Gulf War. They had not heard from him for some time, but now they hear he is well and this may be in the nature of a thanksgiving. The son's photograph was in front of the parents throughout.

Stayed until the 'prasad' given out - the first was milk mixed with sugar and something that I suspect was urine.

Film sequences

Dilmaya collecting offerings
Sarah walking off with Dilmaya to a puja at House50
House50 where puja is being done - seen from above
Women going down to the puja carrying offerings
Dilmaya and other women handing their offerings to the Brahmin officiating at the puja
Koshi making offerings under the Brahmin's direction
Photograph of Tsobahadur for whom the puja is being held now in Arabia
Potamkumari handing bowl of cow's urine to Dankumari to distribute
Lomaya and Shita drinking cow's urine and smearing their hands over their hair
Women including Nansura, Lilakumari and Dilmaya drinking cow's urine and smearing their hair and praying
Sunkumari delousing another woman's hair but joining in the puja with appropriate exclamations
Damasing and Koshi standing and circling flaming incense sticks over the puja place
women behind clapping
People passing their hands through flames then touching their faces
Dankumari examining Tilkumari's gold chain and ring
Dilmaya fixing Tilkumari's gold chain and Dankumari putting on her ring
Koshi giving 'tika' and 'prasad' at end of the puja
Koshi making 'tika' on Sarah's forehead
Koshi giving spoonfuls of milk mixed with cow's urine
Sarah having tasted the milk-cow's urine mixture
Dankumari spooning out milk-cow's urine mixture
Brahmin and Sunkumari handing out 'prasad'
Sangita, Ramchandra's granddaughter, eating 'prasad'
Distributing 'prasad' and tea
Dilmaya and others leaving

THE PAE OR MEMORIAL RITUAL FOR DILMAYA - 1995



Introduction

Dilmaya Gurung died very suddenly in the village of Thak aged 40 on 7th April 1995. We were told that her memorial service would be held in late November so we arranged to attend it. The memorial ritual or pae is the most important Gurung ritual. It is designed to take the spirit ('plah') of the dead person out of the village along the path which leads to the village of the dead ('plah nasa'). It is clearly also of great cathartic value for the relatives and friends of the dead person, as we found it to be.

Because I already knew the background well and was not only an observer, but as Dilmaya's 'brother', a central participant, I had a special opportunity for filming the full ritual. I had filmed several 'pae' rituals before, but this was undertaken in far more depth.

We arrived in Pokhara on 28th of November 1995 and proceeded early the next morning to Alan Macfarlane's 'father' (*aba*) Bhuwansing's house where many of the relatives and friends were assembled and ready to go up to the village.

The first sequence of film shows the leaving from Bhuwansing's house, the drive along the river valley, and then the steep climb up to the village of Thak, a journey I had done so many times, but never with such sadness.

We went with two cameras. Most of the filming was done by Alan Macfarlane, but Tek Gurung filmed the *pwelu* on the first evening, the examination of the sheep's stomach, and a good deal of the ritual destruction of the *plah* on the last evening. Astrid Harrison also did some filming of the dancing.

What is a pae?

A visitor in Gurung country in the cold weather may meet numbers of people in their best dresses going to other villages for a memorial ritual called the "pae lava". This rite incorporates and symbolizes much of ancient Gurung culture and is the central Gurung institution.

At a person's death, the body is carried either to a village cemetery where it can be buried or burnt, or down to the river where it is burnt. At this point it is believed that the spirit of the dead person is released and wanders around the village. For the spirit to leave the village, it must be conducted along the 'soul path' to the land of the dead, over the mountains, and therefore it is necessary within a few years of death to hold a "pae lava". The date is set by the priest, hundreds of relatives and friends from neighbouring villages are invited, and a white flag is set up over the dead person's house.

The rituals are conducted by "poju" and "klebre", often several of each. Lamas now do this ritual too, but this is a recent innovation and is generally done without animal sacrifice. The amount of money spent on the "pae" depends on the wealth of the deceased and his family. The ancient rite requires the sacrifice of buffaloes, sheep, goats and chicken. This, and the provision of rice and drink for the guests, means that a "pae" for a rich man or woman can cost anything up to 20,000 rs. (in 1995) - about the cost

of a new house - though half this cost will be returned in gifts brought by the guests.

The ritual opens with the making of an effigy or effigies representing the dead person or persons. The effigy consists of a bamboo frame over which white cloth is stretched. Clothes of the deceased, a jacket, blouse or shawl, or sometimes newly bought clothes, are wrapped round the frame, and garlands of flowers, cigarettes and money are added to make it as attractive as possible. Meanwhile the priests have begun to chant and beat drums and cymbals, and later they will do a slow dance around the effigy. The chanting and dancing continues throughout three days and two nights. The chants are myths which explain to the dead person how he should proceed past various dangers to the land of the dead. The close relatives, particularly the women, weep openly. At intervals animals are killed and everyone sits down and eats rice and meat off leaf platters. Vast cauldrons are used to cook the rice and the meat.

Two of the most dramatic incidents occur on the second day. In one, male relatives of the dead person take a stick and pierces it through a bamboo circle symbolizing the breaking through of the barriers to the land of the dead. A procession of priests, mourners and guests is then formed, following a long white sheet held up on poles representing the road to the land of the dead. They are led to a nearby field where a ritual battle takes place. A relative, if possible the dead person's younger sister's husband, holds a small branch in his hands in which he keeps a piece of bone from one of the sacrificed animals. A battle-dance takes place between him and a "klebre". They circle round each other, advancing and retreating, the "klebre" beating cymbals, dressed in a long-skirted costume with a Tibetan-style headdress, trying to take the bone from the relative. Ultimately the "klebre" must triumph and the dead spirit is symbolically released from family ties.

Towards the end of the "pae" trays of rice cakes, cigarettes, biscuits, fruit and other food and drink are laid on the ground, sheep representing the dead person are forcibly encouraged to eat. It is believed the sheep will eat the favourite food of the dead person first and that when they are subsequently sacrificed there will be no trace of any food in their stomachs. The sacrificed animals all accompany the soul to the land of the dead.

This ritual provides an effective catharsis for the mourners who are gently taken through their grief as the departure of their loved one is enacted. The support and sympathy of guests, the colour and spectacle, and the rhythmic chanting and drumming, makes it a particularly powerful way to cope with grief. It is interesting to see that many of the Gurungs who have moved to Pokhara are still holding the “pae lava” for this very reason.

[For a more detailed description and analysis of the pae as a ritual, please see the volume ‘Spiritual World of the Gurungs’]

The Ritual: November 29 - December 2nd 1995

Notes from our diary

We were supposed to leave Bajepatan by jeep at 8.00am. but it was some time later in the end as the jeep got a puncture. A lot of supplies for the 'pwe' were loaded, together with our rucksacks, on top and inside. The road to Lamkhet is a little less smooth, but still functioning despite the heavy rains this year. Bhuwansing was organising the loading and appears to be well in control. Durga, Mohan, Subana, and a girl who is a relative of Bhuwansing's from Yangjakot, who looks after Bhuwansing according to Mohan, came with us.'

Mohan walked up with Astrid. She managed much better than last year and was not really exhausted when she reached the village. Soon after starting the climb Subana picked some leaves - 'jankripaat' - which are needed for the poju, and half-way up Durga climbed into a small tree, swinging precariously over the drop, to pick the leaves for the 'plah' and 'ala' - called 'chutah'. Just outside the village they hid the bundle of leaves. They will be collected tomorrow for the making of the 'ala'.

It was painful to walk into the village knowing there would be no Dilmaya to greet us. Outside our house stood a bed which will be used for the 'plah'. Alan noticed Surje coming out, but then he rushed into our house in tears. I went in after a little and sat beside him until his sobbing ceased. I went outside to find Alan comforting Harimaya. I cried too, but my emotion was not as great as I feared, partly because of the mixed emotions of seeing other people who were not grieving, who were just pleased to see us, and we them. Just reminded us that life continues, the world doesn't stop for a death, but it has for Surje. He has started to smoke again, and later he told Alan he wanted to smoke himself to death. He was so unhappy he was unable to make a decision of whether to leave or to stay. He didn't want to live in Pokhara, but he didn't want to stay in the house either.

Tomorrow each household should bring wood for cooking - the 'katwalla' called last night to alert everyone. The poju will be coming from Siklis as Surje's family came from Khilang which is in

the Siklis 'yaido'. The Siklis poju - Dewansing - is supposed to be very learned. Went over Dilmaya's death again and learnt that she did go to Pokhara and was diagnosed as having high blood pressure and heart disease. She was told she must have an operation, but couldn't spare the time. Dilmaya's mother died at about the same age. When she was dying she asked Bhuwansing to look after Dilmaya for her. Bhuwansing is keeping a running account of the cost of the 'pwe' which we will be bearing.

All the food which has been stored in our house was taken below to the ox shed, now "STORE". Every bit is accounted for as it makes its way down to the "kitchen" which is in Antheba's garden. The 'moh' went up to Garedi to cut wood and bamboo for the 'plah' and 'ala' - ('nere' - the circle of bamboo at the base of the 'plah'; 'yiera tura' - supporting post in the middle of the 'plah'). Before any of the wood or bamboo is cut they do a puja with 'keh' (doughnut rings) and 'pa'. Durga and Subana then cut bamboo into lengths with thin strips at the end on which puffed rice ('mlasi ngoba'), flowers, fruit and lastly cigarettes were pierced as decorations for the 'plah' and 'ala' - 'lawa chobasae'.

Men carried quern stones down to the kitchen and laid them on edge to stand the huge cooking pots on. The verandah of House24 was used for guests to sleep on and the poju and klehbri were based in Badrasing's buffalo shed. Durga painted signs to indicate all important spots - the STORE was the only one in English, harking back to Gurkha days.

I found parts of the preparations for the 'plah' painful, particularly filling a patchwork bag, similar to that given us by Antheba, with small things like a comb, mirror, cigarettes and matches to accompany Dilmaya's soul. We put in a small penknife that Alan had bought. Tangerines were strung on thin slivers of bamboo like 'mala'. In the inside of the bag ('basa') was a small purse ('taili') into which some money was put. Motilal and others brought bunches of wood for the cooking stoves. Also on the 'ala' was a spindle ('chira'). We were shown five little arrows ('mye') that represent the men of the family with one to spare. These were later put into the end of bamboo sticks so they were the arrow tips that were fired on the last day.

Harimaya couldn't be at the first night as she was the same 'lho' as Dilmaya though 12 years older. She was not to hear the 'tondu' drum. She indicated to us previously which decorations were to go

on the 'ala'. Nainasing, who has returned for good from India, was the 'dhina kleh' - the man who starts the first stroke on the 'ala' pole. The first stroke was made by the 'takhri bhai' - "Panigari Kalu" - who must then break the 'ala' on the third day. Nainasing then had to make a small fire and take a flame to the kitchen, the 'a-syon dhi' and the poju-klehbri house. At the same time as the 'ala' was hit, the 'kehdu' was started by the klehbri in the house. The fires should be kept burning throughout the 'pwe'. Paidu poju gives the time for the beating of the 'tondu'. There were baskets with food in hanging from the 'ala'. These are called 'pirangu'.

There was a formal greeting of the 'a-syon' - Bhuwansing, Subana and another man - by Surje who gave them three leaf cups of 'pa', the residue of which they poured over their heads. There was a half moon. A very small man brought 'shona pa' and 'shona kwe'. He came from Pokhara and would sit for three days in a small 'a-syon' hut. The klehbri arrived and sat in the gateway, one rubbing his drum, the other cymbals, and whispered mantras. They were given 'pa' and 'keh'. The same greeting was extended to the pojus. In all there were six klehbri and six poju though only two of each were significant priests. We were touched to see that Prem had come to join the poju.

The 'pwe' started with the poju beating the 'tondu' death drum and the first blow was made on the bamboo 'ala' pole. This was laid on a 'pyoh' with 'gundri' on top - both of them upside down (they are lain the right way up for weddings). Under the "head" of the bamboo was Alan's pillow. The whole being a symbolic sleeping form with the head away from the house. The image is continued in the bunch of leaves tied to the head as symbolic hair which the daughters oil. As Premkumari was so young there were a number of auxiliary daughters from Bhuwansing's family, headed by Kaji Soba who guided Premkumari throughout the 'pwe'. When the 'ala' was dressed it was lifted into the night sky onto the roof.

Bhuwansing's family were sleeping in the buffalo house below us, and so was Tek. I made no real notes in the following days as there was not a lot of time to write while watching rituals. The following are random thoughts and observations. We missed the chicken shuddering on the door when the soul enters, otherwise I think we managed to catch each stage of the 'pwe' on film. On the first night after the making of the 'ala' there was a 'pwelu' as this is a poju household. Tek got a little of it on film but none of the

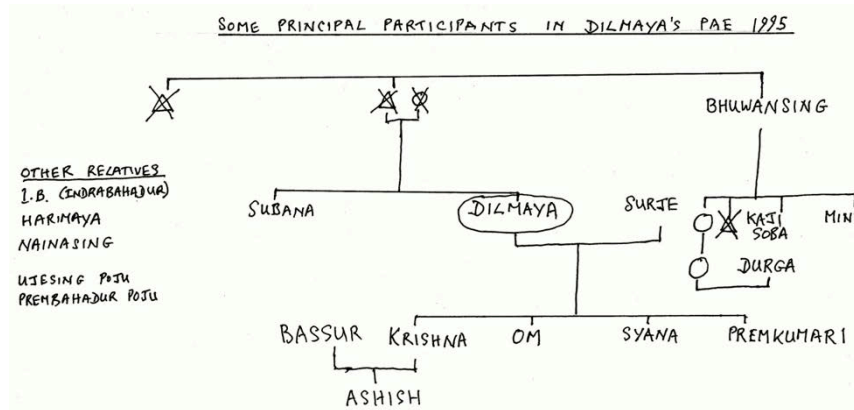
batteries lasted as long as Alan had hoped. As film is so evocative, and as it is chronological, I think it best to index that in a particularly full manner rather than to try to convey the emotion or chart the stages here except briefly.

The second day was the making and dressing of the 'plah', before which the 'ri' is brought and the klehbri chant for four hours. Then the 'yuri sheva' (yard dance), when women circle anti-clockwise with the poju, Bhuwansing and IB in the middle. In the evening there were three rival singing groups, one in Badrasing's buffalo stall (the poju-klehbri hut, but these were Blacksmiths singing), on the platform of House24 - a group from Panighat, of Ngobje in honour of Surje, and on our platform women from Thak, all singing different songs. The Ngobje party had set up a stage and at one time played a tape which was out-sung by the women below, thankfully.

Day three was the 'shirga sheva' and the final breaking of the 'plah' and 'ala'. Although one's emotions were stretched from deep sorrow and tears to hilarity. The 'pwe' has the facility to activate both alternately so that its not unmitigated gloom, but it does provide the catharsis necessary for life to start again for the family. From the second afternoon, goats and then a buffalo were killed, and everybody - guests, villagers, Kwonme and Untouchables all had a chance to eat meat. Surje had given a good female buffalo for Dilmaya, he told us.

The whole thing was elaborate theatre, carefully orchestrated by Bhuwansing and IB, with Durga, a very active and efficient 'moh'. On the morning after the 'pwe', all the actors - priests, 'a-syon', 'moh', and 'tsami rhimae' (singers from Siklis) - were given 'pa', 'keh', and 'si kaba' by the family. We were not feeling too exhausted despite having a 'disco sheba' with very loud music outside our house all the previous night. We are both very glad we came though we miss Dilmaya at every turn. So poignant to see the 'pwe' carried out where she would sit winnowing rice, and even dance. Premkumari managed well though Surje was torn apart by it all.

Relationships of principal actors with photos



Dilmaya



Surjebahadur



Subana



Kaji Soba



Krishna



Om



Premkumari



Harimaya



Bhuwansing



Indrabahadur (I.B.)



Prem



Tek



Alan



Sarah



Astrid

DESCRIPTION OF FILM SEQUENCES

FIRST DAY: November 29th 1995



From Pokhara to Thak.

Dankumari, Sunkumari and various children watching
Bhuwansing doing the accounts
Packing jeep
Small tractor passes, packing the jeep
Bhuwansing giving money to Sardar. Mohan and Nirmala packing the jeep
Bhuwansing and Durga get in and jeep starts to move
Driving on the new road out of Pokhara
Further drive to outskirts of Pokhara
Then up the river road. Pan up to Thak
Arriving at the stopping place at the end of the valley
Budiman, Yemprasad and Manseram arriving with baskets to carry goods up
Walking up through the lower fields
Walking up steep path towards the village; Subana with leaves for the poju ('jankripaat')

Manseram carrying a drum on the top of his basket. Durga adjusting drums on the top of another porter's basket
Porters rest. Mohan and Astrid. Durga and Sarah.
Durga climbed into a small tree, swinging precariously over the drop, to pick the leaves for the 'plah' and 'ala' - called 'chutah'.
Further climbing up the steep hill

Preparing for the ritual in the village

Krishna and Surje with goods on the verandah
Durga and Krishna barter some rice for salt, with others
Durga taking kerosene down to the shed below our house
Bhuwansing with his account book. Bhuwansing and Durga checking food supplies in our house. Bhuwansing checking cloths for the 'plah' and to be given as 'kramu' and 'kregi'. Questioned by Alan and Sarah
Nirmala washing while Subana and Durga clean round the washing place
Harimaya giving 'pa' and 'keh' to Tehbahadur to take to Garedi where he and other 'moh' will cut the wood and bamboo for the 'plah', Tebahadur put it into his 'rhenga' with Durga's help
Subana splitting bamboo for 'lawa chobasae' decorations, with Durga
Men carrying cooking pots down to Antheba's terrace below the house where the cookhouse has been made
Subana and Durga cutting bamboo. Pan round the yard in front of our house
Krishna checking supply list with Budibahadur
Bassur sitting on the verandah threading flowers for a garland, Chandrakumari with her
Men sitting round in the yard, Surje with Ashish
Gomansing with Birmaya's daughter, Manmaya, on his lap; Surje with Ashish
Dibimaya carrying her youngest daughter, Jamana, in a 'pi' basked on her back, her middle daughter beside her going down the path beside our house
Men ('tah'? from Panighat) taking 'pa' and 'keh' down to a bamboo stand; they sprinkle the bamboo ('ri') with 'pa' and throw pieces of 'keh' at it before cutting it down for the 'ala' pole. When the bamboo is cut, they lay it on the ground, pour 'pa' over it, then they drink the 'pa' and eat the 'keh'
'Tah' brings the bamboo 'ala' pole into the courtyard and take it to the side of the house while other men sit watching
Putting up the plastic awning
Chandrakumari threading puffed rice onto bamboo spikes ('lawa chobasae')
Children playing under the plastic awning as it is being put up

The 'kegyan' and 'teju' goats are tied to the maize stack frame
 Jusbir sweeping the courtyard, chatting with other men; A 'tah' (relative)
 from Panighat sweeping the courtyard with a bunch of leaves
 Astrid and Sarah, with Bassur and Nirmala, threading puffed rice onto
 bamboo spikes for 'lawā chobasae'
 'Tah' sitting on the ground in a formal manner with Bhuwansing, drinking
 'pa'; children looking into the camera
 Premkumari looking at photos which Astrid has given her
 Men sitting round the edge of the courtyard, drinking ; giving drinks to
 female guests, mainly Blacksmiths
 Man sitting near the cookhouse with a 'khukuri' ; cooking pot standing on
 three quern stones set on their sides
 Enkumari pouring water over the hands of women who have just been
 drinking; they then wash cups
 Durga giving a bundle of leaves to the 'tah'
 Men putting up a cloth awning on the platform above (House24)
 Mohan, Durga and Nirmala threading bamboo spikes for 'lawā chobasae'
 'A-syon' sitting drinking in the house before taking up residence in a little
 shack above the cooking place
 Water boiling in large cooking pots; men sitting around talking
 Durga writing a notice stuck on the maize frame
 Harimaya and Kowshila filling the bag ('basa') that will hang on the 'ala'; a
 little purse with money is sewn in the side of it
 Woman taking leaves to the house; boys grab some and appear to be
 eating fruit from them
 Harimaya putting personal items into the bag ('basa') for Dilmaya to carry
 to the land of the dead
 Harimaya threading tangerines onto a thin strip of bamboo for a garland
 for the 'ala'
 Durga showing us the five small arrows ('mye') and spindle ('chira')
 A white flower (rajah rani) growing above the courtyard; awning on the
 platform above echoes the shape
 Harimaya and Durga fixing handles to bamboo baskets ('pirangu'); Bassur
 sitting watching them, holding Ashish
 Sardar and Bishnumaya arriving from Pokhara; Bhuwansing organises
 the official greeting of himself and Subana as 'a-syon'. Surje formally
 greeting Bhuwansing and Subana, together with the little 'a-syon' who will
 be sitting in the shack above the cooking place
 Bhuwansing showing Alan a pot with 'shona pa' and a strip of cloth, the
 'shona kwe' which the little 'a-syon' will take to the shack; the latter has
 come from Pokhara

Start of the ritual

Chief Klehbri sitting in the gateway rubbing his drum, his companion with cymbals; another man blows a conch, then Klehbri starts to beat his drum and his companion to clash cymbals. Krishna and another man trying to light pressure lamps. Men watching Klehbri. Premkumari watches for a second, then runs off. Other children watching

Surje crouching with 'pa' and 'keh' which he gives to the Klehbri; all take sips from small leafs, not cups. Surje then gives them pieces of 'keh'. Durga pouring 'pa' into cups for all Klehbri. Bhuwansing talking to the Klehbri, telling to do the 'pwe' well

Surje greeting the Taprang poju with three leaf- fulls of 'pa'; part of which he sips, part of which he sprinkles over his head while muttering words. He then eats some 'keh'. Prem getting a greeting as a poju from Surje. Sips part and sprinkles part over his head

Man weaving a bit of bamboo for a basket for the chick? Surje taking 'dhina pa' and 'dhina shee' into the house

The raising of the 'Ala'

People standing round the 'ala' pole which lies on the ground, men on one side, women on the other. Krishna priming the pressure lamp. Premkumari and Sobadebi sitting on the ground below it, Klehbri chanting in the house

Line of poju sitting on the bamboo platform in the dark, including the Taprang poju and Prem, chanting, with a basket of millet in front of them into which has been stuck a bottle of 'pa' and incense

'Tah' men laying the cloth on top of the 'ala' pole

Women sitting beside the 'ala' pole with their hair loose. 'Tahkri bhai', 'Panigari Kalu', sprinkling the 'ala' pole with 'pa' and milk. 'Tahkri bhai' crouching with a mallet and chisel waiting to make the first strike on the 'ala' pole. A whistle, then 'Tahkri bhai' strikes the 'ala', the 'tondu' starts. 'Dhina shee' sticks lit by the 'dhina kleh', while further holes are made in the 'ala'. Bhuwansing with ash on his forehead, sitting with the women on the other side. Sokumaya has taken Premkumari's place and Surje crouches at the end of the 'ala'. Nainasing, the 'dhina kleh', take a piece of the burning 'dhina shee' to take to the 'a-syon dhi'

Line of poju with Prem beating the 'tondu' death drum slowly while an alternate beat is drummed on another drum, unseen. Then the rhythm is changed so that the two drums beat in unison, then back to alternate

beats. Then Prem beats a fast rhythm on the 'tondu', sound of women wailing elsewhere

'Tahkri bhai' holding a 'kramu' which will go on the 'ala'

Then binding the 'chutah' leaves on the top. Premkumari helped by Sobadebi prepares to rub the leaves with oil ('krasa lava'). Sobadebi starts the ritual keening then she and Premkumari circle the leaves with incense, both weeping. Bhuwansing sitting at the end of the row of women, one old lady, Kowshila, leading the keening. Sobadebi and the 'tah' and 'moh', including Durga, put garlands, a basket, a necklace of tangerines, the 'kramu', the 'lawa chobasae', onto the top of the 'ala' pole

Durga putting and the bag, 'basa', onto the top of the 'ala' pole with baskets of food; the dressed 'ala' lifted in preparation for putting it on the roof

Sarah and others watching; Durga climbing onto the roof, guided by Bhuwansing shouting directions from below. Lifting the 'ala' onto the roof and sticking it through the thatch. At that point the drumming stops. Crowd with drummer on the verandah. Astrid with other camera

The Pwelu ritual

[filmed by Tek Gurung – part only, battery runs out]

Premkumari eating in our house; her hair being tied up while she eats.

Bassur eating beside her

Men inside the house – very dark

poju making the 'kehdu', other poju sitting round. Large 'kehdu' with three twigs in the top rim and oil lamp in front. The 'kegyan' goat held within the house

Poju, led by Taprang poju, chanting with large 'kehdu' in front of them

Surje, Krishna, Bassur and Ashish with others watching. Poju beating cymbals while 'ashee' and bamboo loops are waved. Man wearing poju hat with long plaits with the 'kegyan' goat's head in his mouth dances over the 'kehdu'. He takes two pieces of wood from the top of the 'kehdu' and holds one in each hand. He then waves the goat's skin over the family while still holding the head in his mouth, then leaves the house.

Another poju chants over family, touching heads with his beads, including Astrid

Swinging the winnowing tray with the 'kehdu' over the heads of the family
Taprang poju chanting and throwing rice

SECOND DAY: November 30th 1995



Preparations for the ritual

Klehbri chanting on the platform outside
The 'a-syon' in the 'a-syon dhi' being fed
The cookhouse with the 'a-syon dhi' above; the 'ala' on the roof; pan
down to klehbri chanting on the platform
Outside - men playing the 'tondu' and the side drum
'Moh', Durga and Tejbahadur, collecting the 'ri' from the cremation site;
Durga pouring out a libation of 'pa' and reciting the donors' categories.
Tejbahadur throws some 'keh'
People, including Tek, resting in the buffalo shed beneath our house
Checking stores in the shed below our house; The 'ala' in the roof of the
house. Bishnumaya, Tek, Sobadebi, and others resting beneath our
house

Dance of the Klehbri and Poju

Klehbri and poju come out of the house beating cymbals doing a circling
dance
One of the poju wearing the feather crown. Women join in circling
outside the men's circle; Premkumari watching from beneath the maize
stack

Priests circling, beating drum and cymbals, with IB and then Bhuwansing in the middle

Preparations of the 'plah'

Durga making libation with 'keh' and 'pa' over the bamboo mat where the bundle of bamboo for the 'plah' is lying

Minbahadur playing 'tondu' and another man, a side drum, at the start of the making of the 'plah' ; the 'moh', Durga and IB splitting the bamboo with Tejbahadur. Drum beat faster. Durga making the bamboo ring for the base of the plah. Bhuwansing sitting beside IB

Girls collecting rice from the store in the ox shed

Women in the buffalo shed; Sobadebi cooking and Sardar and Nirmala making 'lawa chobasae'

The frame of the 'plah' nearly finished

Klehbri chanting on the washing platform

Women looking at the photos of Dilmaya; Premkumari looking at her mother's photos, then peeling a tangerine

Wrapping a white cloth round the 'plah' frame ; binding the leaves in at the top of the 'plah'. Bhuwansing folding the 'gyan' cloth. IB holding the end of coloured cloth for dressing the 'plah'

Fixing bamboo poles in the 'gyan' cloth

Harimaya kissing her grandchild; Lakshmi

Lakshmi

Sheep tied to the maize frame

Klehbri drumming on the washing platform; Surje giving money to each of them

'Krasa lava' - Premkumari and Sokumaya oiling the 'chutah' leaves on the top of the 'plah'; Drums and cymbals. Bhuwansing adjusting the leaves again

Sobadebi (kaji soba), Kundimaya and Harimaya begin to dress the 'plah' with 'ngyui' and 'tigisa';

Bishnumaya folding the 'poigi' which is then wrapped round the 'plah' by the others. Harimaya putting a 'chol' onto the 'plah'. Sardar putting a cardigan onto the 'plah', drumming stops.

Ritual round the Plah

'Plah' lifted onto the bed; 'Tondu' drum starts. Decorations added and the framed photographs tied onto the 'plah'. Winnowing tray full of food

and drink on the ground beside the 'plah'. Bhuwansing adjusting the 'pre' while Sobadebi puts necklaces, including her own, over the photo. Kundimaya adds flowers and Bhuwansing, two garlands

Drummers beside the 'plah', crowd above on the platform of House Surje touches the 'plah' and retires weeping, blessed by Towchiri and Bhuwansing, then others; photos of Dilmaya on the decorated 'plah', a small tree behind the 'plah' decorated with fruit Klehbri dressing

Premkumari with Nirmala beside her, sitting in front of the 'plah', ash on her forehead; holds a pink balloon in her hands. Surje sitting beside Premkumari in front of the 'plah', Sobadebi and Kundimaya sitting on the other side, ash on their foreheads Drums and cymbals start and Premkumari is blessed by Sobadebi and Nirmala beside her and Bhuwansing in front; she starts to cry, as do the rest of the women, and is cuddled by Nirmala. Drummers and Klehbri sitting in front of the 'plah' chanting

Sarah looking tearful Women and Premkumari weeping beside the 'plah'; Bhuwansing with Kimbahadur, Subana's son, behind him. Premkumari sobbing in front of the 'plah'; Crowd watching from above

Krishna and Om putting arrows in the backs of their shirt; Premkumari, Sobadebi with the photograph of Dilmaya on the 'plah' behind them. Klehbri drumming and beating cymbals sitting on the ground in front of the 'plah'

Klehbri circling the 'plah' in a sitting position, then standing, anti-clockwise; Nirmala cuddling Premkumari, Sobadebi beside them, as the Klehbri circle the 'plah' anti-clockwise

"Panigari Kalu" with the stake and circle of bamboo leading Krishna, Om and Manbahadur (representing Surna) arrows tucked in the back of their shirts, circle the 'plah' with other men

Alan circling the 'plah' slowly with the men, stopping to put a flower above Dilmaya's picture 110 Men beating cymbals followed by "Panigari Kalu", Surje, Krishna and Om in the circle

Klehbri passing in front of Premkumari who is sitting in front of the 'plah' twisting the rubber of a burst balloon

A small piece of wood put by the gate; man shakes the stake through the bamboo circle at the 'plah' then turns, is blessed, and walks to the gate where he strikes the small piece of wood and is blessed again and cotton tied round his neck

Krishna repeats the action with the stake, this time splitting the small piece of wood in half

Klehbri (Poju Kaila's brother in law) beating drum, leading other klehbri also beating drums and cymbals; Premkumari sitting in front of the 'plah' holding a pile of large leaves. Klehbri standing beside the gate beating their drums and cymbals. Krishna, Sarah, and women waiting on the verandah of our house

Women come out of the house holding bamboo wands followed by the poju, also beating cymbals and drums. (Prem is among the poju); Poju circling in front of Premkumari sitting in front of the 'plah'. Men, including Krishna, Alan, Bhuwansing, Manbahadur, Om and the poju, circle the 'plah' with Sardar, Sobadebi and other close female members with Premkumari beside it

Circling of the 'plah' seen from above the gate with a crowd in front showing the awning above; Klehbri lead the mourners up the path, following the 'gyan'

Rih Teba Ritual

'Ri tebari kibari yaba'; Mourners gathering on the terrace at Puje. Surje. Women arriving with bamboo wands.

Himalayas in cloud; Taprang poju rubbing 'ri' between his hands over leaves lying on a rug while maize is sprinkled on the leaves and mourners wave bamboo wands over him and cymbals are beaten in a steady rhythm. Crowd standing on terraces watching, Himalayas above. Two sheep on a string

Two Klehbri dance with the 'moh', one carrying a sickle, the other, Durga, holding the 'ri'. Both 'moh' dressed in funny clothes

Crowd watching includes Tailors; Minprasad suggesting to Durga that he make it easier for the Klehbri to catch the 'ri'. Dance with 'moh', one dressed as a woman, Durga with moustache, glasses and umbrella, Surje

watching; man holding sheep on a lead. Cymbal players with the large double ended drums lying at their feet, with Klehbri beating their 'ngah' beside them

Final goading and capture of the 'ri'

Klehbri dancing round rug with 'ri' lying on it; Premkumari with a balloon standing in the crowd beside Surje. Women, including Rupa and Sobadebi, throwing offerings over the 'ri', Krishna standing behind with a bow and arrows; 'Moh' (Sokumaya's husband) putting balls of dung at the corners of the mat on which the rug lies

Crowd returning to the village led by the klehbri, two sheep led down with them

Klehbri sit on their platform

The Chado Dance

Bhuwansing leads the drummers down the steps and they beat drums and cymbals in front of the 'plah'; drummers and cymbal players circling the 'plah'

IB giving an announcement in Nepali before a further slow circling dance by the men singing - 'chadu sheba'; poju in front of the 'plah' reading from a text, telling his beads and blessing the 'plah' while men dance cheerfully around him, singing. Dilmaya's smiling photo on the 'plah' with singers and drummers circling. Brief shot of Surje standing disconsolately beside the verandah. Men circling with their backs to the 'plah' clockwise, then change direction in a twisting dance, out and in, getting a little faster

Alan dancing with the men; little boy trying to see the camera while drummers move in front of him. Dancers circling, then seen from above, and then beside them until they stop. The 'ala' above the house in the twilight

Evening Dances and Rituals

Klehbri reading in lamplight in front of the 'plah' ('Shon kwe neva'?).

Small boys imitating the dancers

Dilmaya's photo on the 'plah', now inside the house with poju chanting beside it in the lamplight

Women and men singing in the shelter beside Badrasing's house

Night. 'Tondur' drum being beaten while a Yunga woman dances in front of a singing group in the courtyard in front of House 31 and a group from Panigat dance and sing on the platform above Klehri chanting in front of the 'plah', waving his wooden bird over a chick which is sprinkled with grain. Then the chick is put inside the 'plah' Kaji Soba sitting beside the fire with Surje; Surje prepares an offering of rice on a leaf. Premkumari. Surje sitting by the fire while his families names are chanted followed by those of "Panigari Kalu"

Dancers and singers outside - Tek dancing
Premkumari beside Mohan, smiling at the dancers; Tek dancing
Premkumari inside the house blessing a sheep beside the 'plah'
Premkumari outside again, watching the dancers, and smiling; Tek and a girl dancing Girl dancing alone watched by Tek, Premkumari sitting with Mohan cuddling her, and Nirmala, wearing towels over their heads to keep warm

THE THIRD DAY 1st December 1995



Resting and preparations

Bhuwansing accepting money gifts for the dancers next morning. They have sung and danced through the night and are still doing so.

Man lying asleep on a mat. Woman tentatively tries to wake him by touching his head with her foot

Cook house; slaughtered buffalo being bled by blacksmiths; slaughtered goat being skinned with a 'khukuri'. Head lying nearby. Goat tied to the cook-house post

Men, including Surje, in the cook-house warming themselves and drinking. The 'a-syon' sitting in his little shelter with two other men. Water piped down to the cooking terrace

The Shirga Dance round the Plah

The 'plah' on the bed outside the house, facing towards the gate. Girls untwisting cotton threads on the verandah. Kaji Soba preparing 108 small oil lamps with cotton wool wicks

Women coming out of the house with Durga, and Krishna carrying the bow and arrows. Poju coming out of the house to the beat of cymbals, the Taprang poju carrying a winnowing tray. Poju and other men circling the 'plah' now draped in orange cloth

Kowshila holding part of a weaving loom and Majina, a sickle circle the 'plah' with other women, holding wands, followed by Bhuwansing, Subana, Krishna with a bow, and the women from Bhuwansing's family. Group seen from the gateway of the terrace circling the 'plah'

Dilmaya's photo on the 'plah', poju changing and circling with others
Kaji Soba sitting in front of 'plah', Alan circling with poju and others
The 'ala' on the roof, 'shirga sheba'. Men singing as they slowly circle in front of the 'plah' anti-clockwise

Prem, Bhuwansing and IB, singing as they circle the 'plah'

Men circling seen from the gate, then close in on Dilmaya's photo on the 'plah' and out to Bhuwansing and up to 'ala'

Klehbri sitting on the bamboo frame making 'kehdu', back to singers and up to 'ala'

The 'ala' down to singers, now in two circles, then to klehbri making 'kehdu'

Man dancing, holding a cockerel, pulls feathers from its neck which he throws at the 'plah'; Poju following with winnowing tray throws handfuls of grain at 'plah'

Yam talking with Astrid

Poju with feather headdress beating drum, followed by Premkumari and Bishnumaya, circling the 'plah'

Second circle of men

Poju beating drum, followed by Premkumari, Bishnumaya and Sardar

Lighting of the 108 oil lamps

Large 'kehdu' within a Buddhist crown with smaller 'kehdu' on either side. Standing in front of the 'plah' with oil lamps before them. Poju circle the 'plah' to a short, quick, cymbal beat while the second group

continue singing the 'shirga'. Taprang poju holds the winnowing tray over the oil lamps, chanting, then shakes the rice from it over the 'plah' and rests the tray against the front of the 'plah' and points at the photos of Dilmaya, then finishes. At same time the other circle of men is still singing

Photo of Dilmaya with a winnowing tray. Pan to same in front of plah. Photo of Dilmaya dancing. Lighting a taper, then Om lights the first, larger, lamp and throws rice. Klehbri sit beside the lamps chanting

Krishna, then Surje, then Premkumari and Basur, light lamps, throw rice and leave money. Tek lighting a lamp

Scenes around the village - breakfast

Surje eating with other people beside the cook-house, large cauldrons of meat and steaming rice on a mat. Bassur eating at the cook-house 167
At the end of the meal, women washing plates at the pipe running down from the main tap

Lakshmi waling up the path from Kwi Nasa, addressed by Alan. Alan giving blessing and money to a Blacksmith baby, Airbahadur son of Bimbahadur of House67. Baby held by grandmother, Mungali
Mountains - sound of running water. The 'ala' seen from Kwi Nasa with mountains behind. Scan over the village from Kwi Nasa

Further Shirga Dance

Men doing the 'shirga' round the 'plah' while Klehbri sit on their platform chatting; women, including Sarah and Astrid, doing the 'shirga sheba'

Large number of women doing the 'shirga shebva'. Sarah and Astrid with their heads covered like the other women. Men singing in the 'shirga' circle, Prem singing. Women - Munmaya, Sokumaya, Premkumari, Kowshila - closeup of Premkumari - Bishnumaya, Sardar, Kaji Soba and others. Then Kowshila, Bassur, Sarah and Astrid.

Girls giving flowers, garlands and money to poju; Raila collecting money from women and putting it on a winnowing tray, chatting with Bassur, then Sarah and Astrid put money on tray. Taprang poju, dancing in front of the other polu, Prem behind singing.

Taprang poju leading one group sings and dances with the other group leader alternately. Ujesing has been given a garland of rubbish which he

accepts with humour. Ujesing holding an umbrella over his head as a further accoutrement to the garland which causes much mirth. Another man with rubbish.

Feeding the sheep

Feeding the 'tuh kyu' and 'kwo kyu' sheep. Surje sprinkling the sheep with water, wearing new clothes, followed by Premkumari who is guided by Bhuwansing.

Krishna, with the bow across his back, washes the hoofs and sprinkles the back of the sheep

Om sprinkles the sheep and washes its feet, watched by Premkumari

Durga sprinkles the back of the sheep using a bunch of leaves, then Bhuwansing washes the hoofs and sprinkles the back, priest changing. Kaji Soba sprinkles the sheep, then puts red powder on its head and holds a mirror up to let it see itself while Premkumari combs its hair, then Kaji Soba does likewise.

Surje, Om and Premkumari each hold a doughnut ring ('keh') with a basket of millet in front of them. Krishna joins them holding the bow and arrows and he, too, takes a doughnut ring and waves like them. Bassur joins them. Surje goes and pulls a bit of wool from the sheep which he puts on his head and returns to the basket.

Alan washes the hoofs and sprinkles its back with water. Sarah washes the hoofs, sprinkles the back, then combs the hair while Kaji Soba holds the mirror (only women do this part)

Klehbri chanting. Pan past family waving 'keh' up to audience on terrace above.

Men still circling the 'plah' anti-clockwise in 'shirga'

Klehbri with many rubbish garlands round his neck, removing them slowly.

Kowshila keening to the sheep, watched by two rather bemused little girls. Harimaya joins Kowshila and embraces the sheep, sobbing. Family waving doughnut rings. Premkumari. Manita watching Kowshila, frightened away by the sheep

The family waving 'keh', Premkumari weeping. Krishna, Premkumari, Bassur (head covered), Om, and Surje, in turn

Klehbri changing and beating drum

Family, 'keh' now on the millet (rice?), prepare for next part. Sokumaya and Towsiri with the winnowing trays filled with food for the sheep. Women bringing out winnowing trays of food for the sheep. Premkumari holds incense which Sokumaya lights. Kaji Soba puts another winnowing tray full of food on a rug in front of the sheep. Krishna and Premkumari and then Bassur light incense. Durga (as 'moh') unties the sheep so that they come to the food and start eating. Premkumari watching the sheep eat, then moves away. Sheep eating with many trays of food before them

Women bringing out winnowing trays of food for the sheep

Women circling very slowly, heads covered, in clockwise direction Kaji Soba and Kundimaya watching with Subana standing beside them. Then a woman starts to weep, followed by Kaji Soba, Subana crying too. Bhuwansing kneels down beside the women gives food to sheep. Crowd watching sheep feed.

Bishnumaya watching sheep feed. Men encouraging the sheep to feed, Bhuwansing watching. The 'ala' above the house

Men gathering the remaining food into baskets and clearing away the rug, the sheep are satisfied

Undressing the plah

Majina, Bishnu, Budikumari, and other women looking at Dilmaya's pictures on the 'plah'

Kaji Soba and Bishnumaya taking the photograph of Dilmaya and cloths off the 'plah'. Minbahadur beating the 'tondu' drum while Kaji Soba and others undress the 'plah'

Harimaya tying cotton round Premkumari's neck and then blessing her. Other women do the same.

The 'plah' left with just its white cloth and garlands when Nirmala takes off the 'ngui' (skirt). Durga and Kaji Soba helping. Minbahadur beating the 'tondu' faster and another man, the side drum

Taking down the 'Ala'

Mohan climbs onto the roof to take down the 'ala' followed by another man and then Durga, who begins to dismantle it. A 'garland' of tangerines falls to the ground and a man yodels (bad luck?). Durga and Mohan with another man take off the bag ('basa') and basket and then lower the 'ala' - drumming stops, but there is the sound of chanting by the priests

The destruction of the plah and examination of sheep's stomach

Klehbri, Prem's brother in law, sitting by the 'plah' with Kaji Soba on the far side. Slow beat on the 'tondu'. Dressed klehbri joins the other beside the 'plah'

Klehbri sitting beside the 'plah', shaking it as if to give it life, while chanting. Men yodel and whistle, and Tejbahadur shakes a sickle in front of the 'plah'.

Klehbri sitting beside the 'plah', shaking it and chanting; seen from the gateway

Tekbahadur, the 'moh', examining the stomach of the dead sheep and finding no remains of the food just eaten

Bhuwansing holding the 'ala' behind the 'plah' with Surje, Subana and Krishna beside him. Klehbri shaking the 'plah' while Durga circles Bhuwansing and the others round the 'ala' with the chick that was put in the 'plah' held high over them. Klehbri shaking the 'plah' while Tejbahadur waves the sickle in front of it and indicates that the gateway should be clear.

Klehbri shaking the 'plah'. Man carries the 'ala' to the side of the gate. 'Plah' being shaken on its side pointing towards the gate seeming to be struggling to get away, men whistle and yodel.

Bhuwansing and others holding the 'ala' while women put strings round Krishna's neck and Prem blesses others who are holding the 'ala' with his beads. Women putting strings round Om's neck and then Surje's, and blessing them as they hold the 'ala'.

More urgent beat on cymbals while Bhuwansing blesses other men and is blessed himself, then 'ala' carried to the gateway.

Badrasing and other Kwonme, together with Ujesing, sitting down on the bamboo platform to watch the last part of the ritual

A klehbri followed by Tejbahadur, rush down the path. 'Plah' laid on the ground and held by the 'moh', Sokumaya's husband, Tekbahadur, then klehbri circle it anti-clockwise, beating drums and cymbals.

'Plah' on its side, now klehbri are standing to one side beating drums and cymbals and women are trying to push them back towards the house, waving bamboo wands, and are joined by the poju from the house in a dance, circling round IB now that the 'plah' has been removed to one side. Then poju form one circle (with IB in the middle), the klehbri another (with 'moh' Tekbahadur in the middle) and they each beat their distinctive rhythms. Jostling as poju push themselves out of the house beating cymbals and drums and then circle in one group while klehbri form another.

The tree that stood beside the 'plah' is taken down as the priests drum then they form into a line all beating the same rhythm. The 'plah' is lifted up and Surje holds onto weeping until the women pull him away, then it is carried through the gate with Durga walking behind it carrying the tree and they walk down the steps with women weeping

The poju have not followed the 'plah' immediately and continue to beat cymbals and drums

Throwing away plah and final rituals

Following the 'plah' out of the village with priests drumming. Priests drumming while the 'plah' is broken up. Krishna standing beside the Taprang poju who says a mantra while the others beat cymbals, behind them Bhuwansing, Kaji Soba, and many others watching. Durga and the 'moh' breaking up the 'plah' while the Taprang poju circles and chants. Taprang poju circling and chanting on the path with a large crowd round him. Taprang poju dancing.

Drumming has stopped, Krishna fires an arrow and breaks the bow, then is blessed. Cloth on the ground, klehbri circling it.

Om and Krishna wetting their hair. Atasing shaving Krishna's head by torchlight

Klehbri in dress beating cymbals. Small pot of grain that was thrown away lying on the ground facing back towards the village. An ill omen as it suggests that Dilmaya's spirit is not happy to leave. Preparing to toss other things away, Durga and another man swinging them in a cloth while priests chant, then finally throw

Shaving heads, Om then Surje

Krishna, Om, Surje and another man whose head has been shaved, being given 'kule' (hats) by Subana

FOURTH DAY: 2nd December



Final rituals and departure

Alan, Sarah and Atasing being given 'si kaba' by Surje; Surje giving 'si kaba' and a leaf to the klehbri, then the poju

Krishna gives Alan a little 'pa' to drink in a leaf cup, then Sarah and Atasing. Raila giving 'pa' in a leaf cup to Sarah, then Atasing. Priests chanting. A winnowing tray with money lying on it

Surje giving 'kregi' to Subana, Alan and Atasing, and a 'kramu' to Sarah. Money and 'keh' on winnowing trays. Surje giving a 'kregi' to the senior klehbri and indicates a gift of money. Surje gives money to each of the poju.

Bhuwansing, Subana, Alan and Sarah in the line of 'a-syon'. Surje giving a 'kregi' to a man, inadvertently covers his face with it

Line of poju then klehbri. Krishna gives a man 'pa' in a leaf cup. Money and rice on a winnowing tray with a small oil lamp in the centre. 'keh', 'pa', Krishna giving 'prasad'

Bhuwansing, holding the winnowing tray with rice and money makes a speech and gives it to Surje seated on the ground. Sarah looking very pensive. Surje pockets the money.

'Moh' sitting in a line including Durga and Kimbahadur, Subana's son.
 Grave goods, including bedding that will be sold.
 'A-syon' drinking
 Prem joins the line of poju and Bhuwansing asks where his father is.
 Surje gives 'si kaba' to the 'moh' - Durga and Tejbahadur. Bishnumaya
 with a cloth on her head giving 'si kaba' and garlands to the 'moh' with
 much ribaldry from them and the crowd. Poju and others sitting round.
 Surje giving money to the 'moh', Tekbahadur, who has come late, then
 Bishnumaya gives him 'pa' and rubs flour in his hair and hangs a garland
 of fruit round his neck. Raila pouring 'pa' for the 'moh'
 Krishna talking to Atasing with Ashish in his arms, then hands Ashish to
 Atasing
 Towsiri crying having been given a 'kramu', then Surje puts 'si kaba' on
 Kowshila's forehead and a 'kramu' over her head.
 Baikumari blessing Surje 218
 Lakshmi sitting next to Ritu, Sokumaya's younger daughter, watch as
 Sokumaya is given 'si kaba' and 'kregi' and are given 'si kaba' and money
 themselves. Danmaya Chetri is given a blessing wears Dilmaya's old shawl
 Surje gives 'kregi' to Chetraprasad
 Bhuwansing discussing the 'grave goods'
 Surje giving 'si kaba' to young Ngobje? Women who came to sing
 Young women singing as Raila and Tekbahadur dance, Krishna watches;
 Bhuwansing dances briefly, then the small klehbri dances with two girls
 and a poju joins in. Durga dances, then Tekbahadur
 Chandrakumari watching them dance with her little daughter, Sokumaya,
 on her lap Two little girls watching - Manmaya wearing a waistcoat with
 Namuna
 Premkumari sitting by the wall clutching a balloon pensively watching
 people dance
 Tekbahadur dancing
 Bishnumaya cleaning a saucepan
 Guests leaving, including Mohan, Kaji Soba and Bishnumaya
 Sumitra with Ashish on her lap, holding a balloon
 Girls singing and a poju dancing, then the Taprang poju joins him;
 Drums, then cradle Men sitting round, meat drying on the 'makhai suli'

Videos to accompany this book.

There is a set of DVDs to accompany the booklet which are available in the Gurung society (T.P.L.S.) in Pokhara and at the Gurung Cultural Museum in Siklis, along with other materials.

For those reading the printed version of the book there are three ways to find the films.

On Alan Macfarlane's website:

search for 'alan macfarlane' on the web or go to www.alanmacfarlane.com and look under 'Projects'.

On the Streaming Media Service of Cambridge University:

<http://www.sms.cam.ac.uk>

They can also be found on Alan Macfarlane's 'Ayabaya' 'Youtube' Channel.

It is also hoped that there will be an electronic version of the book, with active links to the films embedded in it. This will be available, along with copies of this book as print-on-demand hard copies on the various 'Amazon' sites around the world.

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Others works in the series

This books is part of a series of video-books about Gurung life. Others include a general survey of physical, social and economic life, and projected works on fieldwork methods and on long-term social change among the Gurungs.