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2016

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NEPAL & THE HIMALAYA



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NEPAL & THE HIMALAYA



Britain-Nepal
Academic Council



Nepal Academic Network



The papers contained in this volume were presented at the **Annual Kathmandu Conference on Nepal and the Himalaya**, 27 to 29 July, 2016, organised by **Social Science Baha**, the **Association for Nepal and Himalayan Studies**, **Britain-Nepal Academic Council**, **Centre for Himalayan Studies - CNRS**, and **Nepal Academic Network (Japan)**.

Not all the papers presented at the conference were submitted for publication; some were published in other platforms while others remain unpublished. The conference schedule is provided in the appendix of this volume. The full list of presentations made at the conference can be viewed at www.annualconference.soscbaha.org.

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Not Women, but Their Remittance is Acknowledged

Women's Labour Migration and Exclusion in Nepal

RAMJI PRASAD ADHIKARI & RISHIKESH PANDEY

Study Context

According to Marwan (2003), globalisation and integration of regional economics have motivated cross boarder mobility of migrant workers; therefore, appropriate management has become a major policy agenda for native, transit, and destination countries as many of them are women (UNDP 2009). The United Nations (2006) identifies the prospects of better earnings to ensure household incomes and the desire to escape the poverty trap as the key drivers of labour migration from least developed and developing countries. In recent decades, the economic boom in the Gulf countries make the region a major block for receiving migrant workers, so the share of temporary workers in the Gulf countries have been rising since the 1970s and the Asian continent alone supplies over 80 per cent of the foreign workers.

Household poverty and the lack of income generating opportunities force Nepali men and women to leave the homeland and go abroad for paid jobs. They have to be separated from their own family and children, and face potential mistreatment, exploitation, and psychological harassment. Housemaids in Saudi Arabia are frequently physically and sexually assaulted, raped, and even sold from one employer to another with a certain amount of commissions.¹ Due to the lack of specific government policy for safe, secure and respectful job markets, foreign labourers are being pushed toward various socio-psychological margins, violence, and abuse. They also lose social integrity in both the labour supplying and labour hosting

1 As stated in a press release of the Nepali Embassy in Saudi Arabia on July-12, 2010.

societies. Furthermore, the patriarchal society of Nepal does not easily accept women's labour migration. However, an in-depth investigation on the issue of remittance contributions of migrant women worker (MWW) and the cost of socio-spatial exclusion, abuse, and exploitation has not been conducted. Therefore, this paper aims to shed light on the status of Nepali MWW in Gulf Countries; explores their contribution to household livelihoods; and examine their experiences of abuse, exploitation, and exclusion during the migration process.

This paper consists five sections. The introductory section illustrates the context and research problems, the theoretical nexus that leads to construction of causal mechanisms of women's labour migration follows the introductory section. Section three presents the methods and materials used in this paper to reach to the conclusion, while section four demonstrates the findings of this research. Lastly, the concluding section discusses the findings in relation to the existing literature and provides policy feedback.

Theoretical Nexus

Over the past decades, several migration researchers have bemoaned the absence of a comprehensive migration theory. Johnston et al (2002) state that migration studies have successfully been integrated with the various theories of economic, societal, spatial and behavioural sciences; however, in fact it has not been theorised. Other researchers see it as a well theorised issue since Ravenstein formulated the laws of migration in 1889. Several attempts have been made to theorise migration, particularly by Lee, Zelinsky, and Todaro. It is very difficult to generalise the causes and consequences of migration; migration related decision making has diverse and complex phenomena, and it is a difficult to separate migration from other socio-economic and political processes. As a consequence, theorising migration is problematic. This may be the reason why scholars think that migration will never have a general theory. This paper also borrows various concepts and theories from the various social science disciplines to form a general theoretical foundation to guide the research.

The neo-classical equilibrium perspective explains migration in reference to geographical differences in the supply and demand of the labour force. The differential wages cause workers to move from low-wage labour-surplus regions to high-wage labour scarce regions. Migration in turn, causes labour to become less scarce at the destination while it becomes scarcer at the place of origin. Contrary to the movement of migrant labour, capital is expected to move in the opposite direction in the form of remittance, for which Harris and Todaro (1970) termed 'factor

price equalization'. The economic theory states that human capital in modern societies, is increasingly been recognised as a crucial factor of economic development (Becker 1962). Therefore, human capital, such as skills, education, knowledge, and physical abilities are fundamental determinants of migration. Human capital boosts economic production through migration.

Structural theory is rooted in Marxist political economy and the World Systems Approach (Castles and Miller 2003), and has a radically different interpretation of migration. Structuralism postulates unequally distributed economic and political power among developed and developing countries as reinforcing further inequalities in economic gain and underdeveloped countries risk being trapped by the cluster of disadvantages, which compels poor people to move in search of the fulfilment of their basic needs and aspirations.

Network migration system theory looks at the influence of early migrants as a driving force. Lee (1966) argues that migration facilitates the flow of information, which facilitates the passage for later migrants. Hence, once a critical number of migrants have settled at the destination, coincidental choices made by pioneer migrants or labour recruiting employers tend to have a great influence on subsequent migration patterns.

The feminist perspective on migration is concerned with the spatial scales and scalar relationships, particularly influenced by social and political processes. In feminism, the migration event is examined for the economic or geopolitical forces that led to the context of migration occurrence and its timing (Massey et al 1998). Feminist migration researchers ask additional questions such as 'whose nation?' while developing an understanding on migrant supplying and receiving countries and or societies. The national scale of migration is produced through social and political processes that privilege particular identities and exclude others as national subjects, producing differential migration streams. They critically examine the ways that the nation is founded on the notions of citizenship that both materially and symbolically exclude women, so men and women are affected and benefit differently by migration policies and processes (Silvey 2004).

The theoretical assumptions on migration indicate that the drivers of migration are many. The Nepali social structure is complex and is passing through a rapid transformation phase. Many of the aforementioned theoretical conditions directly or indirectly exist in Nepali society. Therefore, the issues of remittance contributions of Nepali Migrant Women Workers (MWW) and their socio-spatial exclusion is discussed in reference to the theoretical premise mentioned above, with particular emphasis being

given to the feminist postulation. To arrive at a conclusion, the following methods and materials are incorporated.

Methods and Materials

The Study was conducted in the Pokhara Valley, Central Nepal in general, but no administrative boundary is strictly followed. First the social and educational network of researchers was used and then already established social networks of identified respondents were used to locate new MWW. Chain-snowball sampling was applied, considering Pokhara as a Sub-metropolitan City as the core. Chain-snowball sampling was seen as an appropriate sampling method for this research because there was no official registration of returned MWW. The sampling criteria applied for those MWW who had not gone abroad before 2004 and would be physically available for face-to-face interviews during the field work (May-November, 2012). Finally, 80 respondents were identified and interviewed for the study using a semi-structured interview schedule. Household questionnaires were applied to collect information on the social-demography and economic status of the households of returned MWW, while in-depth interviews were conducted to better understand their possible socio-spatial exclusion, exploitation, and abuse. Information obtained through the in-depth interviews is supported by anecdotes and stories.

As a qualitative study, the analysis is made as per the conceptual theoretical vision of qualitative methodology. Understanding and extracting meaning from the respondents' words during interactions with a quasi-phenomenological method was conducted as required. The data of a quantitative nature was analysed through descriptive statistics, generated using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software and, cross-tabulation and charting.

Results and Discussion

This section is divided into two major sub-sections, namely remittance contributions of MWW and their socio-spatial exclusion.

Remittance Contributions of Nepali Migrant Women Workers

Remittance is the most tangible benefit that labour migration has contributed to Nepal's economy; however, evaluation of the effects on the economy, particularly from the women's perspective, is difficult because of poorly recorded contributors. Remittance leads to change in agricultural and domestic industries that in turn, appear to cause demand-led inflation and changes in consumption patterns. With the increase in remittance

earning associated with foreign employment, economic conditions of many households in both rural and urban areas are improved. Remittance has also been the main source of foreign exchange earnings for Nepal and accounts for around 24 per cent of the GDP (CBS 2011). However, a crucial challenge for Nepal now is to sustain the level of current remittance earnings. The government has signed a formal Memorandum of Understanding with some of the countries in the Gulf region for a sustainable and safe supply of labourers from Nepal, but this has not been effective. The remittance, of course, influences the living standards of people and their livelihoods in least developed countries like Nepal, the cases of the Pokhara Valley in reference to the contribution of MWW is illustrated here.

Sectors of Remittance Investment

Table 1 presents major sectors of remittance investment. Some previous studies (Bhadra 2007), have reported that the remittance sent by migrant women workers is better utilised in household welfare and other productive sectors than remittance sent by men. This study also found a similar scenario as the major sectors of investment the respondents reported are expenditure on household assets, particularly household appliances (42.5%) and educating children (37.5%). Almost one-third of the respondents (30%) repaid their migration related and other debts, and one-fourth of the respondents repaired-upgraded their houses. A notable proportion of the respondents invested their remittance earnings in productive sectors, such buying a plot of land (21.3%), starting small business/entrepreneurship, including vehicles (25%).

Table 1: Sectors of Remittance Investment by Migrant Women Workers

Sector	Number	Percent
Expenditure on household assets	34	42.5
Education for children	30	37.5
Payment of loan	24	30.0
Maintenance and repair of house	20	25.0
Buying land	17	21.3
Business	10	12.5
Vehicle	10	12.5
<i>155 multiple responses from 80 respondents</i>		

Source: Field survey, 2012

Labour migration is a phenomenon which directly or indirectly influences the socio cultural and economic situation in the origin country.

Such influences may be both, positive and negative, like the proverb ‘a coin has two sides’. When people move from one place to another, they may not always have good experiences, as often the experiences can be bad. They also experience a series of economics and social factors along with their movement. It is difficult to ascertain all the socio-economic benefits of their mobility, because many factors affect the computation of the benefits and costs in the course of the movement. According to the majority of migrant women, foreign employment has been the main reason behind their improved economic condition. In this case, if there had been no demand for Nepali workers as foreign labour migrants, there would have been extreme difficulties in maintaining their livelihoods as it is currently (They clearly note during insurgency period). The WMW expressed a positive attitude towards foreign employment from the view point of employment and livelihood support. Likewise, other positive impacts are: the inflow of remittances, increased knowledge and interest in various skills, and transferring social development.

Changes on Household Possessions

A notable increase in the number of households with an increased variety of household possession has been observed, and Table 2 demonstrates the changes in the number of households with different assets. The proportions of household having different possessions increased with every item listed in the questionnaire. The possession of private water taps increased to over

Table 2: Household Assets before and after Foreign Employment (Multiple Responses)

Household Assets	Before Foreign Employment	After Foreign Employment
Water tap	40 (50%)	57 (71.2%)
Television/VCD	34 (42.5%)	60 (75.0%)
Gas oven	19 (23.8%)	46 (57.5%)
Bio gas	8 (10.0%)	22 (27.5%)
Computer	12 (15.0%)	19 (23.8%)
Toilet	54 (67.5%)	64 (80 %)
Motor cycle	10 (12.5%)	31 (38.8%)
Vehicle (Car/Tractor/Bus)	8 (10%)	10 (12.5%)
Land	6 (7.5%)	27 (33.8%)

Source: Field survey, 2012

71 per cent from 50 per cent. The number of gas stoves and bio-gas plants increased to 57.5 per cent and 27.5 per cent from 23.8 per cent and 10 per cent, respectively. Access to a television increased to 75 per cent from 42.5 per cent, whereas access to computers increased to 23.8 per cent households from 15 per cent. A sharp increase in households with four wheeler vehicles was not observed; however, the number of households with motorcycles increased significantly to 38.8 per cent from 12.5 per cent. It is worth noting that remittance invested in buying plots of land to construct houses rose dramatically to 33.8 per cent of the respondents who reported that they purchased a plot of land to construct a house.

Table 2 clearly supports the statement that remittance has made a significance contribution to upgrading household assets. During the field study, the majority of the respondents reported that they mostly bought household assets, such as mobile phones, computers, televisions, and blankets from abroad to bring to Nepal when returning home. It is observed that the respondents are highly influenced by the 'bright lights' of the modern life that they witnessed in their destination countries.

Changes in Land Ownership

Land is often taken as a major asset in the context of Nepal. Among the sampled household, it is found that there is no equal distribution of land. However, the positive impact of the foreign labour migration of women is observed in the case of landless households, they preferred to invest their earnings in land, mostly for house construction.

Table 3: Land Holding before and after Foreign Labour Migration

Land Size	Before Foreign Employment	After Foreign Employment
No land	26 (32.5 %)	18 (22.5%)
Less than two Ropanies	19 (23.8%)	27 (33.8%)
2-4 Ropanies	14 (16.2%)	12 (15.0%)
4-6 Ropanies	12 (15.0 %)	13 (16.3 %)
6-8 Ropanies	2 (5.0 %)	3 (3.8%)
8-10 Ropanies	3 (3.8%)	3 (3.8%)
More than ten Ropanies	4 (5.0 %)	4 (5.0 %)
Total	80 (100.0%)	80 (100.0%)

Source: Field survey, 2012

This partly justifies the increased investment of remittances in land resources. Many other studies have also reported the better utilisation of remittances sent by Nepali migrant women workers.

Changes in Type of Houses and Residential Arrangements

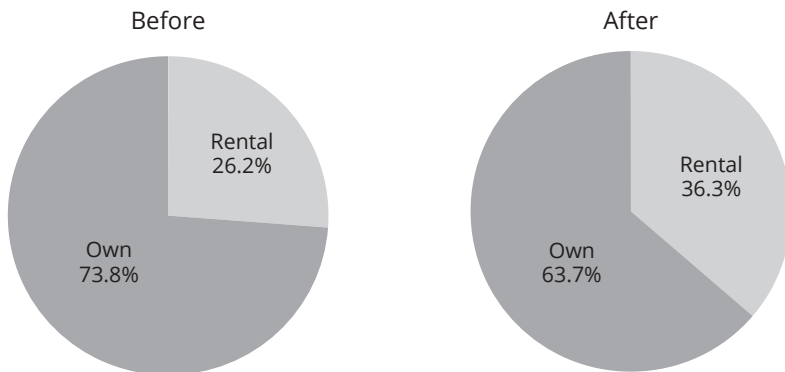
The type of house is one of the indicators of economic status in Nepalese societies, and most adult couples want their own private house so investment in housing has a high priority. However, whenever, the resources are not available to construct their own house, people search for upper graded houses for rental accommodation as an alternative strategy. Both increased investment in building their own houses as well as an increase in the quality of rental houses after migrants return from labour migration abroad is observed.

Table 4: Type of House before and after Foreign Employment

Type of House	Number of Household	
	Before Foreign Employment	After Foreign Employment
Household without own house	19 (23.8%)	10 (12.5%)
Tin/Galvanised sheet roof	30 (37.5%)	34 (42.5%)
Stone roofed	17 (21.2%)	13 (16.2%)
RCC	4 (5.0%)	21 (26.2%)
Thatched roof	10 (12.5%)	2 (2.5%)
Total	80 (100.0%)	80 (100.0%)

Source: Field survey, 2012

Migrant women have reported that they have upgraded their housing through the remittance earnings from labour migration. The proportion of households without a home is decreased to 12.5 per cent from 23.8 per cent, and the proportion of the households with concrete buildings sharply increased over five-fold for returnee labour migrants. The increase in the proportion of RCC and galvanised sheet roofed houses is compared to the sharp decrease in the proportion of houses with thatched roofs and households without housing facilities. The confusing information that seems to imply that migrants with their own houses decreased and rental property increased, is because some of the respondents have temporarily migrated to nearby market centres to enrol their children in better schools and have access to better healthcare facilities. However, there are many other reasons for residing in market centres; for example, after exposure

Figure 1: Residential Condition before and after Foreign Employment

Source: Field survey, 2012

abroad, many migrant women worker prefer to stay in small family units as opposed to joint families. Moreover, they often want to start market oriented enterprises leaving the farming based activities, and sometimes there is an adjustment problem with the people in the communities who never migrated abroad. However, not all returnee migrant women workers relocated to market centres.

Children are Enrolled in Private Schools

I spend two years abroad. On my return, I was ashamed to receive very poor academic reports of my children from their school. Me and my husband decided to move to Pokhara and we admitted our two children in a private school. Now my husband is abroad. My children are doing well. I want to make them skilled and qualified for future so that they will not have to face the problems that we faced.

Debt and Remittance

Debt is the major problem for poor households in rural Nepal. Although, debt in the absolute sense may be slightly higher in stronger socio-economic households as they may have started businesses using loans. However, in relative terms, poor households have no investments and take loans to maintain their day-to-day living expenses. Their indebtedness is a serious issue because they do not have a clear strategy or an income source to repay the debt. Many respondents stated that they choose to go abroad for labour migration because of their indebtedness. As per their expectations of paying back their debt after labour migration, most are somewhat successful in their goal.

Table 5: State of Indebtedness before and after Foreign Employment

Loan (Amount in NPR)	Number of Household	
	Before Foreign Employment	After Foreign Employment
No debt	39 (48.8%)	58 (72.5%)
less than 50,000	3 (3.8%)	1 (1.2%)
50000 -100000	14 (17.5%)	3 (3.8%)
100000 -150000	13 (16.2%)	12 (18.2%)
150000 - 200000	2 (2.5%)	1 (1.2%)
200000 - 250000	4 (5.0%)	4 (5.0%)
250000 - 300000	5 (6.2%)	1 (1.2%)
Total	80 (100.0%)	80 (100.0%)

Source: Field survey, 2012

Table 5 shows the indebtedness of the respondents before and after foreign labour migration. The proportion of households without debt is notably increases to 72.5 per cent from 48.8 per cent after their return from labour migration. In all categories of debt, the proportion of households has decreased. The larger amount of loans are taken to start up enterprises, so it is a form of productive investment from which they are expecting some return in the near future to be able to pay the loan back.

Empowerment and Achievements

Labour migration not only positively affects the lifestyles of people but also increases the empowerment level among the migrants themselves. Women's empowerment, inclusion, and gender mainstreaming are highlighted political issues in contemporary Nepal. Nepalese women have much less access to and control over resources, and have fewer opportunities in decision making affairs (CBS 2011). Some selected multiple variables were developed and administered to migrant women to specifically measure the level of their empowerment, which generally shows some improvement in women's empowerment after labour migration abroad.

Level of Confidence Increased

Migration makes a person familiar with new situations, settings, and people. This experience develops the confidence of the migrant worker. The major variables asked in reference to increased confidence were dealing with familial problems, ability at playing the role of the bread winner; take multiple responsibilities in the household, increased decision making power, and the right to spent money when required.

Table 6: Level of Confidence among Migrant Women after Foreign Employment

Categories	Number of Respondents	Percent
Can handle familial problems	62	77.5
Can play the role of bread winner	56	70.0
Became responsible mother/wife/daughter after FE	66	82.5
Can frequently visit CBOs	29	36.2
Can make own decisions on domestic affairs	26	32.5
Increased right to spend money after foreign employment	50	62.5
289 multiple responses from 80 respondents		

Source: Field survey, 2012

As shown in Table 6, many respondents have stated that their confidence has increased in multiple sectors. Out of all the respondents, 77.5 per cent reported that they can handle household problems easily, whereas 70 per cent reported that they can play the role of the bread winner for the family. It is amazing that although 26.2 per cent felt that they were irresponsible to their family because they migrated abroad, leaving the household problems to those left behind; however, 82.5 per cent confidently state that they have become responsible mothers, wives, or daughters, who can support the family in every aspect. Accordingly, 62.5 per cent exercise their right to spend money (control over their own income) and other 32.5 per cent can make their own decisions regarding domestic affairs.

Level of Empowerment

The level of empowerment is evaluated across different components and asked to the respondents to see if they feel empowered after their labour migration abroad. Empowerment in the form of awareness is seen to have significantly improved; however, many WMW still have not been able to negotiate their experiences and knowledge gained from migration for their betterment.

Among the variables, the ability to make decisions, and voting were enjoyed by the most respondents, 80 per cent and 77.5 per cent, respectively. A total of 57.5 per cent of the respondents enjoyed access to and control over cash and savings. Accordingly, a little over the half of the respondents have become affiliated with Community Based Organisations and have access to

Table 7: Level of Empowerment among Migrant Women

Categories	Yes		No		Total
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	
Right to reproductive decisions	26	32.5	54	67.5	80 (100%)
Equal wage distribution	6	7.5	74	92.5	80 (100%)
Decision sharing	64	80.0	16	20.0	80 (100%)
Involvement in CBOs	41	51.2	39	48.8	80 (100%)
Access and control over cash/savings	46	57.5	34	42.5	80 (100%)
Access to institutional credit	42	52.5	38	47.5	80 (100%)
Vote in last election (time of presence)	62	77.5	18	22.5	80 (100%)
Affiliation to a political party	25	31.2	55	68.8	80 (100%)

Source: Field survey, 2012

institutional credit. Almost one-third of the respondents stated that they make decision about their reproductive role on their own. Almost a similar proportion of respondents are affiliated with political parties. This study found that only 7.5 per cent of respondents have received equal wages for same work; which is still one of the most exploitative sectors that returned migrant women workers experience in the domestic labour market.

Overall, women's labour migration has many positive and negative implications. The ever increasing globalised labour migration and women entering the productive economy would naturally lead to an increase in the flow of women migrant workers from Nepal. However, the risk of exploitation, abuse, and exclusion cannot be devalued. In this context, the next chapter discusses the foreign labour policies of Nepal to understand the policy weaknesses to highlight the areas where policy refinement is required.

Exclusion and Exploitation in Origin and Abroad

Investment and Cases of Cheating

In the past, labour migration of women to many gulf countries was restricted, so mostly the victims of exploitation are women who made illegal journeys abroad. They are often cheated during the process of foreign

labour migration. The primary reasons behind the cheating is the complete dependency of aspiring migrant workers on informal information, weak mechanism of the state (origin), and choosing informal routes to go abroad. The burgeoning manpower agencies mobilised their formal and informal agents to help the individuals, more specifically, many of the innocent and illiterate women fail to distinguish between genuine and fake visas. As they fully depend on the brokers they are exceptionally vulnerable to being betrayed by fake or unscrupulous brokers.

Table 8: Types of Cheating/Deception

Type of Cheating	Number	Percent
Passport loss	4	5.0
Money loss	22	27.5
Took long time	8	10.0
Total	34	42.5

Source: Field Survey, 2012

In the case of deception, 42.5 per cent of the respondents had experienced some form of cheating during the migration process, and the types of cheating are varied. The mass media often reports many cases of passport misuse. Agents sometimes report the loss of passports if visa are denied, or sometimes they work as human traffickers and send different people abroad using other people's passports. The victims do not know if their passport is really lost or being misused by the agents, but they have to renew their passport, which is often seen as a suspicious act in Nepal. Beyond losing your passport, another reported type of cheating is the loss of money that most of the migrant women have experienced. Many of the respondents did not receive a receipt for the payment they made. Often, informal agents take all money at the beginning of the process, and it may be several months, or even for years, before they send the aspiring migrant abroad. This takes a long time so about 10 per cent of the respondents reported being in limbo for a long time as they were cheated by the agents.

Accidental Death of the Bread Winner Resulted in Daughter Leaving school

My husband was a cart wheeler and used to sell vegetables in the streets. Unfortunately, he encountered a road accident, and lost his life. Though I got a small amount of compensation; there was a mountain

of pain ahead of me. I also suffer from chronic back pain. However, there was no alternative but to cover my loss. Finally, I discussed it with my children and decided to send my eldest daughter, Arinuma, aged 19 abroad for work. She had to abandon her studies as she was a student of grade 12. These days, she is in Dubai and has a good income and supports the family...

Date and Place of Departure: One of the serious problems attached to 'illegal migration' is that it covers the transparency of the process. As the entire process is conducted underground, the employers or agents are not obliged to 'divulge' all the information to the workers (Sangroula 2006). Consequently, the migration process is largely undocumented and unhelpful for any legal proceedings if unexpected events occur. This condition is a boon for the people engaged in the 'illegal trade of workers'. In current context of political instability and transition in Nepal, the vulnerability and exploitation of the female women workforce is obvious. The proportion of migrants who have departed in 2007, 2008 and 2009 are higher than previous years. This may be due to the removal of restrictions of female migrant as

Table 9: Date and Place of Departure

Date of Departure	Place of Departure					Total
	Nepal	Delhi	Mumbai	Kolkata	Dhaka	
2004	3 (3.8%)	-	3 (3.8%)	2 (2.5%)	-	8 (10.0%)
2005	4 (5.0%)	2 (2.5%)	6 (7.5%)	-	-	12 (15.0%)
2006	-	-	-	5 (6.2%)	-	5 (6.2%)
2007	10 (12.5%)	-	2 (2.5%)	-	-	12 (15.0%)
2008	9 (11.2%)	-	6 (7.5%)	2 (2.5%)	2 (2.5%)	19 (23.8%)
2009	9 (11.2%)	-	2 (2.5%)	5 (6.2%)	-	16 (20.0%)
2010	6 (7.5%)	-	-	-	-	6 (7.5%)
2011	2 (2.5%)	-	-	-	-	2 (2.5%)
Total	43 (53.8%)	2 (2.5%)	19 (23.8%)	14 (17.5%)	2 (2.5%)	80 (100.0%)

Source: Field Survey, 2012

the Foreign Employment Act 2007 of Nepal provided legal permission for women to migrate. However, the number of migrants in 2009 and 2010 is found to be less possibly because many of them are working abroad, and are yet to return as most of them generally spent 2-3 years abroad before they return. However, if someone does not feel comfortable, or is cheated by the type of work and payment, or suffer from an illness; they often return home earlier than expected. Therefore, the respondents who have gone abroad in 2010 and 2011 are still early returnees; whose number is relatively small.

Because of the many hindrances for women labour migration to Gulf Countries from Nepal, the majority women had previously gone abroad using alternative routes. Among the chosen informal routes, via Mumbai and Kolkata, India, are the major ones, along with few migrants who choose Delhi, India, and Dhaka, Bangladesh. The chosen routes are not the choice of the migrants themselves, but are arranged by the informal agents who send labourers illegally.

Cheating the Already Deprived One

A broker, who came to our village, offered me a job in an Indian restaurant in Dubai. He was able to convince my husband and finally I agreed to go abroad because of the intolerable debt of family. After a week, the broker again visited us and demanded 35,000 Rupees. My husband took a loan from a local money lender at the interest rate of 36% and gave him without any receipt. The broker promised to make all arrangement within two weeks. He was in regular contact with us for one month. Thereafter, we got no information from him. My husband visited Kathmandu to find him, but our efforts went into vain. Later, I contacted a manpower agency and went abroad.

Our broker suggested we cross the border to India from Birgunj. We were six Nepalese women attempting to cross the border and our broker was waiting for us across the border in India. We were just about to cross the border, and some women with two policemen came to us and asked some cross questions. We revealed the secrecy despite the fact that our broker already denied the story. Meanwhile, my husband was called to receive me. We sadly returned home. I and my husband decided to stop our plan of working abroad. However, we had given already 60,000 Rupees to the broker. It was a big amount for us so I was again compelled to drive myself according to brokers plan. In next attempt we were able to cross the border from Nepalgunj and

finally reached Mumbai. This time we were only four women. After 15 days in Mumbai, we departed for our destination. I have lots of bitter experiences of abroad although I earned a little money. Physical torture is common and I heard that one Nepalese woman from eastern Nepal, who was working as housemaid, was burnt and killed.

Experience of Exclusion while Working Abroad

Past studies (Amnesty International 2011; UNIFEM 2008) indicate that women migrant workers face many hurdles in the destination countries. They often have bitter experiences and the trend of such incidents is high among the 'housemaids'. Although these problems occur in the destination countries, the Nepalese government still has a responsibility to intervene and help the victims resolve the problems diplomatically when they arise.

Nature of the Job and Respective Salary: The social construction of gender suggests women's natural behavior is rearing and caring for others. Despite not having specific training for rearing and caring, many rural women from Nepal are involved in household jobs abroad due to the increasing demand of female housemaids and caregivers in the world labour market, the traditional and informal skill that women poses is helping them to be employed abroad. Domestic work worldwide is an unregulated sector of the labour market as no labour laws and standards exist. The present study also clearly corroborates this since more than three-quarters of the respondents were employed in different types of rearing and caring jobs.

As the sector of work varies, their income or salary also differs. Most of the employees, 35 per cent received a salary between NPR 10,000 to 14,000 per month. The other pay ranges are NPR 6,000 to 10,000 (received by 17.5%), NPR 10,000 to 14,000, the highest portion of respondents (35%); NPR 14,000 to 18,000 received by 20 per cent; and NPR 18,000 to 22,000 received by 21.2 per cent, and finally high salary receivers (NPR 22,000 to 25,000, and NPR 25,000 and more) covers 3.8 per cent and 2.5 per cent of the respondents, respectively. The given table also depicts that the formal/professional jobs in restaurants, beauty parlours, caring for elderly people, and gardening were found as better paid jobs and the housemaids as lowest paid jobs (as reported by respondents).

Changed Job type

Though I was assigned a job as gardener before departing, after one week of my arrival and start of the job at the destination, my duty was

Table 10: Nature of Job Abroad and Respective Salary

Salary per month (in NPR)	Nature of Job Abroad					Total
	Child care	Restaurant	Beauty Parlour	Caring for ageing people	Gardener	
Housemaid						
6000-10000	7 (8.8%)	5 (6.2%)	-	-	-	2 (2.5%) 14 (17.5%)
10000-14000	20 (25.0%)	2 (2.5%)	2 (2.5%)	-	2 (2.5%)	2 (2.5%) 28 (35.0%)
14000-18000	9 (11.2%)	-	3 (3.8%)	2 (2.5%)	-	2 (2.5%) 16 (20.0%)
18000-22000	9 (11.2%)	2 (2.5%)	2 (2.5%)	2 (2.5%)	2 (2.5%)	- 17 (21.2%)
22000-25000	-	2 (2.5%)	1 (1.2%)	-	-	- 3 (3.8%)
more than 25000	-	-	-	-	2 (2.5%)	- 2 (2.5%)
Total	45 (56.2%)	11 (13.8%)	8 (10.0%)	4 (5.0%)	6 (7.5%)	80 (100.0%)

Source: Field Survey, 2012

transferred to housemaid, stating that I was unable to handle the job as a gardener. My salary was also reduced...

Discrimination in Salary

My two co-workers in Dubai were from Bangladesh and Indonesia. They were provided 1/3 more salary than me though our duty was the same...

Condition and State of Facilities in Destination Countries: In order to cope with and configure the services, the Government of Nepal enforced an Act in 1985 regarding foreign employment. This Act has subsequently been amended thrice, in 1992, 1997 and in 2007. According to new amendment, foreign employment agencies have to obtain authority from the Government of Nepal stating the countries in which they would supply the manpower. The same recruiting/manpower agencies also have to deposit certain

Table 11: Condition of Facilities Provided at Destination

Categories	Number of Respondents			Total
	Yes	No	Don't know	
Job according to contract paper	48 (60.0%)	32 (40.0%)	-	80 (100%)
Provision of job immediately	70 (87.5%)	10 (12.5%)	-	80 (100%)
Provision of labour insurance	16 (20.0%)	53 (66.2%)	11 (13.8%)	80 (100%)
Amount of salary according to contract paper	45 (56.2%)	35 (43.8%)	-	80 (100%)
Provision of regular salary	69 (86.2%)	11 (13.8%)	-	80 (100%)
Provision job according to Skill	56 (70.0%)	24 (30.0%)	-	80 (100%)
Food facilities	71 (88.8%)	9 (11.2%)	-	80 (100%)
Residence facilities	78 (97.5%)	2 (2.5%)	-	80 (100%)
More salary to foreign co-worker	56 (70.0%)	24 (30.0%)	-	80 (100%)
Overtime payment	14 (17.5%)	66 (82.5%)	-	80 (100%)
Working hour limitation	30 (37.5%)	50 (62.5%)	-	80 (100%)

Source: Field Survey, 2012

*Percentage is based on total number of respondents

amount of money as security for the labourers sent abroad. Similarly, regarding the wages and facilities of the migrant workers, the Foreign Employment Act 2007 annunciates and ensures that the Government of Nepal should try its best to encourage the professions of labour migration to preserve their rights and morality. Although such provisions are made in the Foreign Employment Act, the Government itself seems unable to provide strong protection and safeguards to migrant workers. In contrast to other foreign employees of different countries, Nepalese women migrant workers are exploited and are been underappreciated. Also, Gulf countries do not recognise housemaids as a form of labour so their domestic labour laws also do not protect housemaids.

Many of the migrant women workers received accommodation (97.5%), and food (88.8%). However, 13 per cent did not receive their salary on time, and 30 per cent did not get the job according to their skills. Accordingly, 12.5 per cent did not get the job immediately after arrival at the destination, and only 16 per cent of the respondents were covered by labour insurance policies. One of the worst forms of exploitation was that over 43 per cent did not receive the salary scale for which they signed. As many of the workers were employed in the domestic sphere, there was no limit of working hours so 62.5 per cent of the respondents had to work longer hours and 82.5 per cent did not get extra payment for the extra work. Discrimination in the salaries among the labourers of different countries is also reported by 30 per cent of the women. According to them, Nepali workers were paid less (at least 30% less) than those from other countries.

Forms of Discrimination, Exploitation, and Abuse Abroad: Cheating and exploitation have many forms. Interviewed migrant women workers were asked if they were cheated or exploited during their employment. Here, the Terms of Conditions stated before going, and actual Terms of Conditions they were compelled to accept are discussed to identify the cheating.

Entry of Nepalese women into global labour market has made some significant progress to women's lives in Nepal. They were transferred from dependent/inactive passive agents to having agency and becoming economic actors. However, very few in-depth studies have been conducted to examine the experiences of Nepalese migrant women in their host countries. Some facts and evidence are highlighted by the media regarding the bad experiences of migrant women workers, and the forms of exploitation are varied. In this study, the respondents were asked if they have faced any forms of abuse and exploitation.

In the case of abuse and exploitation in destination countries, almost 50

per cent of the respondents reported that they experienced verbal abuse. According to the respondents, verbal abuse was mainly due to language problems and lacking knowledge of how to handle household equipment and other tasks. Even the children of employee's families used offensive words. In the same category, the percentage of respondents who reported facing severe verbal abuse was 28.8 per cent. They faced severe verbal abuse, such as shouting, threats of physical torture, or kicked out from the job and having their passport seized. Apart from verbal abuse, some of the respondents reported that they have experienced physical assaults in the workplace, 28.8 per cent and 17.5 per cent, respectively. Respondents of this category reported that they suffered from mild physical assaults, such as pushing and touching, throwing utensils and shoes with the intension of physical harm. Some respondents suffered from severe physical assaults with some minor and major physical injuries that required medical treatment.

Table 12: Exploitation at Work Place Faced by Respondents

Categories	Number of Respondents		Total
	Yes	No	
Mild verbal abuse	39 (48.8%)	41 (51.2%)	80 (100%)
Severe verbal abuse	23 (28.8%)	57 (71.2%)	80 (100%)
Mild physical assault	23 (28.8%)	57 (71.2%)	80 (100%)
Severe physical Assault	14 (17.5%)	66 (82.5%)	80 (100%)
Sexual abuse	8 (10%)	72 (90%)	80 (100%)

Source: Field Survey, 2012

A more serious issue is that some of the migrant women workers (10%) reported that they encountered sexual abuse and assaults in the workplace. The sexual abusers were mostly the male adult members and teenage boys of the employers' family, who were often aggressive and physically assaulted the worker with sexual intentions. However, despite the effort made to get data on sexual abuse through interviewing by women enumerators, and using separate anonymous checklist, and storing them in a bag (like a ballot box), the returned migrant women workers did not want to share cases of sexual abuse.

Large Family but Small Mindset in UAE

I was given household work to handle. For me, it was very difficult to understand their language. In the family, there were 10 members

– parents, six sons, one daughter. My work day used to start at 7am and finished at midnight. The teenage children of my master were aggressive. They often hit me with shoes and kitchen utensils. The use of vulgar body language was common. Once I got a deep cut on my hand when they threw a spoon to me. Mainly women and children were responsible for abuse more than the mature male members.

Psycho-Social Cost of Labour Migration

Labour migration has big psycho-social costs, especially for women. The costs are in both the place of origin and in the destination country. Especially for children in socio-culturally different societies is one of the causes of psychological trauma. The socio-cultural practices of Islamic world are very different than those of migrant women workers who are mostly Hindu and Buddhist in Nepal. The migrant women workers miss their usual cultural and religious practices, especially, married women. Therefore, more than three-fourths of the respondents have felt insecurity and loneliness, and missed their own cultural practices. The non-responsive behavior of employees and bitter experience of former employers led them to feel this much more deeply.

Psycho-Social Cost of Labour Migration at the Origin: There are a lot of psycho-social costs of foreign employment at the place of origin upon return. Some families of migrant women workers have easily accepted the ethical and cultural complexity resulting from foreign employment. However, many others see it as suspicious and negative responses from neighbours and the community is found to be another cost for migrant

Table 13: Social and Psychological Cost at Origin

Categories	Number	Percent
Poor rearing/caring of children	34	42.5%
Husband deviated to bad habits	24	30.0%
Husband's extra marital relations	12	15.0%
Broken family/divorce	10	12.5%
Negative attitude of society towards migrant women	25	31.2%
Negative attitude of senior family members towards migrant women	26	32.5%
Husband looks/behaves suspiciously towards me	10	12.5%

Source: Field Survey, 2012

*Percentage is based on total number of respondents

women. The individuals coming from abroad are perceived differently and also they themselves wish to be looked at differently. However, the matter that lies within the two looks, the former is 'negative' and later is 'positive'.

After returning, migrant women reported to be faced with multiple categories of psycho-social costs. Among them, poor rearing and caring of children, husband deviated to bad behavior and habits like excessive drinking/smoking as well as establishing extra marital relationships, broken of familial and spousal relationships, suspicious treatment from society, family members, and husbands towards migrant women were the major reported causes of psycho-social suffering.

Foreign Labour Migration Destroyed the Spousal Relationship

When I revealed the secrecy of being abused sexually abroad, after one month of my return, my husband married another woman (I came to know that my husband had an extra marital affair with her during my stay abroad). And now he lives separately.

Conclusion

Migration has often been seen as livelihood strategy of the poor. The Gulf region is one of the major migrant receiving regions of the world. Cheap and flexible labour required for Dirty, Dangerous, and Degraded professions are often allocated for immigrants in many countries; especially where Nepalese migrant women worker are engaged. Women migrants mostly choose the available informal networks to go abroad. Most recruitment agencies are only based in the capital, so the first point of contact for most migrant workers is a broker, a perceived labour export who is in the 'money making business' rather than facilitating labour migration. Unaware and poorly educated women are often approached by informal brokers and agents, so this process of labour migration provides room for exploitation, abuse, and trafficking. The labour migration of women has many gender implications. They often experience discrimination, abuse, and exclusion. Hence, labour migration is perceived as a compulsion, a last resort for a livelihood strategy for migrant women. Therefore, they suggested pre-departure training, clear information regarding the contract, and as far as possible, invest within the country so women do not have to go abroad for work.

Many migrant women workers have been cheated in different ways during the migration process. Also, the restricted labour migration of women to many Arabian countries until 2004 promoted illegal migration,

a way that exposed them to cheating, abuse and exploitation. Domestic work in destination countries is an unregulated sector of the labour market as no labour laws and standards exist, which makes women vulnerable to exploitation and exclusion. Many migrants women are forced to work long hours without a day-off, provided lower than promised wages, and often abused verbally, and some experience physical and mental torture. In addition, some women were physically and sexually assaulted. The women felt a lot of psychological distress, and were pushed to various socio-psychological margins, violence, and abuse. Being away from their children, but caring for others' children has really hurt many women, and the feeling of the lack of responsibility towards their own children, insecurity and loneliness, and the constant fear of being the victim of physical/mental torture. Upon return to their place of origin, they found poor rearing/caring of their children, husband's deviation towards extra marital relations and alcoholism, broken family/ divorced, negative attitudes of society, senior family members, as well as husbands. The denial of performing religious and cultural rituals and imposing Islamic cultural practices is also a form of exclusion experienced by migrant women workers. Overall, they suffer from multi-dimensional marginalisation from societies and states of both, the place of origin as well as the destination country. The costs of women's migration for work is found to be brain drain and care drain at the origin, which is bigger than the monetary return from the destination countries.

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Gender Dimensions of the Gorkhaland Movement

KUMAR CHHETRI

Context and Background

The Gorkhaland movement is one of the most commonly known ethnic movements in India. It is basically a demand for the separation of Darjeeling hills, Tarai, and Dooars from the domain of West Bengal under the Indian union (Subba 1992; Chakraborty 2005; Chakrabarti 1988). The journey of Gorkha ethnic separatism is more than hundred years old, although it gained its momentum only after 1980s (Sarkar 2011). Demand for the autonomy of region was first placed before the government by the hill people/Gorkhas in 1907 (Subba 1992; Chakraborty 2005; Chakrabarti 1988). The Hillmen's Association, one of the earliest formed organisations of the hill people of the Darjeeling district, continuously placed its petitions one after another to the British government until 1942, calling for the creation of a separate administrative set-up but it did not achieved its objective (Dasgupta 1999). On the 15th of May 1943, a branch of the All India Gorkha League (AIGL) was formed in Darjeeling, which was established by Thakur Chandan Singh in the year 1923 in Dehradun, to look after the Socio-cultural and literary upliftment of the Gorkhas in India. The foremost objectives of the AIGL was to integrate Gorkha society into mainstream India, but it soon emerged as the only dominant political organisation of the Gorkhas in the northern part of West Bengal.

Damber Singh Gurung, the first president of AIGL (Darjeeling), initially came up with the idea of a merger of the Darjeeling hills, Tarai, and Dooars with Assam but later raised the demand for 'Uttarakhand' (Chakraborty 2005; Subba 1992). The decades since the 1940s the history of autonomy movement in the region was marked by the demand for Gorkha Sthaan, comprising Darjeeling, Tarai and some parts of Assam by the communist activists in the Darjeeling district, like Ratanlal Brahmin, Charu Mujumdar and others (Bomzon 2008). Like all other political parties it also failed to

achieved its goal. The most important and crucial phase of the identity movement could be considered as post 1980s, because for the first time the autonomy movement witnessed the massive participation of Gorkhas with a clear vision of a separate state with the name Gorkhaland within the Indian union, they rallied under the banner of the Gorkha National liberation Front (GNLF). The Gorkhaland movement emerged as the '*jati, asmita ra matoko larai*' (movement for Gorkha identity and ethnicity/Gorkha homeland) and turned violent causing hundreds of deaths, the destruction of millions of government properties etc. The GNLF dropped the Gorkhaland movement as a result of the 'Gorkha Accord' and the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council (DGHC) came into being in 1988. The demand for Gorkhaland again resurfaced in North Bengal under the leadership of Gorkha Jana Mukti Morcha (GJMM) in 2007, and it is still active even after the formation the Gorkhaland Territorial Administration (GTA) in 2011.

The most important feature of this movement after the 1980s was the emergence of women and their active participation in the movement. Their visibility as leaders, participants, opponents, and supporters of the movement show that they were the major building force of the movement. However, their participation did not receive much academic attention. Therefore, this paper is an attempt to explore the gender dimension of the Gorkhaland movement. It attempts to explore the vital sociological areas of inquiry mainly drawing from Kuumba (2003), such as what role does the societal gender division of labour play in fuelling or motivating the protest? To what degree were the gender roles reproduced during the movement's actions? Does structural gender inequalities and stratification place women in subordinate positions relative to men? Are women a 'bridge' or 'invisible' category of leaders who played indispensable roles linking the Gorkhaland movement to the masses? At first the present paper discusses gender construction among the Gorkhas of the Darjeeling hills. This section also briefly talks about the impact of migration, colonial modernity, and Christianity among the Gorkhas. Secondly, it deals with the emergence of GNWO and GJMNM as subsidiary units and women's agency in the movement. It further investigates women's mobilisation and gender power relationship in the organisational and structural hierarchy, mainly drawing from field experience and leads to the final summary and conclusion of the paper.

Gender Dimensions of Gorkha Society

Gender is one of the bases of social inequality in Nepali/Gorkha society; however there are spatial-temporal, class, and caste variations. It is

normally understood as the 'parallel and socially unequal division of femininity and masculinity'. This distinction operates at the various levels of family, caste, class, economy, religion, politics and culture etc. The gender dimension of any movement cannot be understood without understanding the 'institutionalised gender relationship' of a patriarchal social order, as according to Kuumba:

Gender, on both objective and subjective levels, significantly impacts social movement recruitment and mobilization, roles played and activities performed within movements, resistance strategies and organisational structure, and the relevance and impact of movement outcome. (Kuumba 2003, 15)

Colonial Economy, Migration and Modernity

The position of women in the hill society of Darjeeling has been highly contested. This is because of the complex Nepali social structure on one hand and its exposure to the colonial economy, modernity, and Christianity on the other. The discovery of Darjeeling by the colonial power led to the establishment of a sanatorium, tea industry, and Gorkha soldier recruitment centre which paved the way for the heavy migration of both national and international people. 'From a sparsely populated hillock occupied by local Lepcha, Mangar and Limbu villages to one of the famous hill station in India, Darjeeling's origins are steeped in the history of the British Raj' (Chettri 2013, 02). The successful establishment of tea plantations in the Darjeeling hills, particularly after 1856, provided a fertile ground for the European enterprises to invest in Darjeeling (O'Malley 1907). In order to fulfill the labour demands, particularly in plantation industries and other developmental activities, the British encouraged migration from eastern Nepal and also employed *Sardars* to meet the labour shortage. In the successive years, Darjeeling received huge Nepali migration, including women and children, as they were suffering from indebtedness, economic suppression, and other problems in their native place. The new colonial economy provided them with a livelihood in a different social set-up that had a far reaching impact on them. Their traditional dependency was decreased because of their shift from home production to wage employment, in which women had direct control over their income. They were strong and capable and did the same work as their male counterparts; however, the perception of them in the eyes of the European planters was weak, dove and feeble because the British planters were only interested in acquiring cheap labour, which came in the form of women and children.

There was also a feminisation of wages and women and children were paid lower salaries than men (Lama 2012, 202).

The British wanted to preserve Darjeeling like all the other hill stations in India, which reminded them of a 'second home: home away from home (Britain)'. They enforced western machine oriented superior constructs upon the non-western indigenous hill people because they always wanted to maintain their supremacy over the natives. This does not mean that the natives do not have traditional forms of knowledge in various fields. They constructed the traditional knowledge of the natives as inferior and western modernity of the colonisers as superior; which is how they maintained a distance between rulers and subjects/ruled. On the other hand, the Christian missionaries entered the region with their civilisation mission and utilised the 'white man's burden' for evangelical purposes, but they soon realised that without literacy it was impossible to preach the gospel (Chatterjee 1997). Therefore, the primary work of christian missionaries in the field of education was inspired by religion rather than the socio-political upliftment of the general masses. They opened many schools for the common people in order to carry out their evangelical mission and they encouraged education for all (Dewan 1991).

Although initially there was resistance from the hill people, particularly by the high caste Nepalis against Christianity, Christian education, and conversion, it unintentionally sowed the seeds of western English education in the region. Over time, many people received education and partially, but did not fully accept Christianity and western ideals. This had a far reaching impact on the life of the hill people in general and women in particular. The modern English education and Christianity brought empowerment to the lives of hill people, especially women, but it also introduced Victorian patriarchy. Eventually, the liberal tribal groups imitated the sharp division of the 'public-private roles for men and women' of English society. Chatterjee (1997) argues that the reforms brought by the colonial government were defined by the benevolent male patriarchs and women participated little in deciding the course of their own progress to modernity (Sinha Roy 2015, 31). The colonial modernity brought empowerment with new patriarchies. Therefore, women had to witness 'multiple patriarchies' in the colonial settings and multiple forms of marginalisation at household and at work (Chatterjee 1997).

Women in Nepali/Gorkha Tradition

The everyday life practices of gender construction among Gorkhas have been deeply inculcated by Nepali culture. 'Kinship structure and family

structure account for some critical differences among societies in the ways in which they operate'. Nepalis belong to patrilineal descent systems which organise marital, inheritance, and ritual behavior and others to varying degree (Dube 2009, 03). Nepali society is patriarchal, patrilocal, and patrilineal with male domination in all spheres of domestic, social, economic, and political life. The Patriarchal attributes and male hegemony is less visible among the Nepalis but its norms, values, culture, tradition, and social structure supports male hegemony and the subordination to women. Women have an inferior role and position within the family. The father is the head of the family, or in case of his absence, the eldest son has to take the responsibility for the whole family. The matter of sexual hegemony is often controlled by men and not by women. The inheritance of property is patrilineal, where the father's property is distributed equally among the sons. The birth of a son is considered auspicious in as much as it enables the parents to receive a birth in heaven, and it is the duty of a son to perform funeral rites of their parents, and women have no such rights traditionally (Shrestha 1997, 184-185). Nepali women enjoy considerable freedom in terms of match-making, sex, divorce, dress, and sometimes being economically independent, but the forces of patriarchy still play a dominant role in terms of property rights, decision making, and politics.

The influence of caste, Brahmanical religion and new religions particularly among the *matwalis*, has been the important factors which tightened the ideologies of the patriarchal norms. However, this society is not as patriarchal as the pan Indian society where violence against women, dowry deaths, female infanticide, and male preference etc., has been very high, nor are they as liberal as the tribes of North east India. The Brahmanical patriarchal attributes are more acute among the high caste Nepalis, particularly the *Bahun*s, *Chhetris*, *Thakuris* and *Jaishis*. They are locally levelled as the *Tagadhary*, or twice born caste, because they are a class of people who traditionally wore sacred threads and do not drink alcohol. The *matawalis*, such as the Rai, Limbu, Yakha, Tamang, Sherpa, Mangar, Gurung, Thami, Mukhia, Bhujel, Newar, Yalmu, Kami, Damai, Sarki and others are much more liberal in their believes and practices. This is because of the fact that twice born castes are more inclined towards Hinduism and Brahmanical form of religious belief and practices; although one cannot deny the influence of Hinduism and new religions among the *matwalis* at present. The conception of son preference, *kanyadan* and *pindudan* has been an increasing phenomenon recently among the *matwalis*.

Gender Dimensions of the Gorkhaland Movement

Movement Emergence, Mobilisation, and Recruitment

The homeland movement of 1980s touched every section of Gorkha society, including the women and children of Darjeeling hills, Dooars and the Tarai. The GNLf as well as GJMM encouraged women to come out of their traditional private domain to participate in the Gorkhaland movement, which led to the formation of Gorkha National Women's Organization (GNWO) in 1986 and the Gorkha Jana Mukti Nari Morcha (GJMNM) in 2007 as the 'subsidiary unit for women'. On the other hand, it was also 'women's agency' that encouraged them to leave the private domain to participate in the ethnic movement. The literature on women's participation throughout the world has often denied women's agency; this may be true to some extent; however, the women themselves are heterogeneous on the basis of ethnicity, class, caste, spatial, and geographical location, and not homogenous group. Women in the gender integrative social movements are often encouraged by men by forming subsidiary units for women; however, one has to be very cautious in understanding women's agency and their active role both in the private and public domain as they constitute a large part of the same society. They are often faced with the same problems and discrimination due to ethnicity and identity than the male members of their society. Most of the studies on women in conflicting situations regard women as in a form of passive victimhood, while discarding their active agency and their different concept of peace. The concept of peace is different for women because they are the actual producers of nations, soldiers etc (Manchanda 2001).

The role of the Gorkha National Women's Organization (GNWO) (women's wing of the GNLf) was very prominent during the course of the entire movement in the 1980s (Chakraborty 2005). A large number of women emerged from the private domain in order to participate in the Gorkhaland movement under the aegis of Mr. Subash Ghising. The entire region witnessed a violent movement fighting for separate statehood in the name of Gorkhaland, and according to government records, there was a loss of 283 lives and 615 were seriously injured (Dasgupta 1999), but oral accounts estimate the number of dead as more than 1200 people in the Darjeeling hills, Tarai and Dooars (Gorkha 1992). Among the dead, a significant number of women and children also lost their lives fighting against the State led Central Reserved Police Force (CRPF) and other paramilitary forces. The region also witnessed intra-group conflict within the Gorkhas under different political banners. The Gorkhas themselves were divided

into the Communist Party of India (Marxist) and the GNLf and there was an ideological clash between the two rival political groups (Subba 1992). In the public domain women actively participated and became part of every violent incident and action in the form of picketing, rallies, social boycotts and so on, and in the private domain they looked after their children, husbands, families and household activities and also took care of those who participated in the movement.

During the 1980s women's roles in protecting men from police atrocities were praiseworthy in the entire course of the 40 day long *bandh* call (strike), which is bitterly remembered by the hill people as '*chayalisko andolane*' (agitation of 1986). Many women were shot to death by CRPF at the Mela ground in Kalimpong on the 27th of July 1987, during a peaceful protest rally organised by the GNLf (Gorkha 1992). Dhan Narayan Pradhan, a 72-year-old GNLf activist, whose 14-year-old daughter was killed by the CRPF in the 1980s, feels that after years of struggle and hardship the Gorkha people were betrayed by their leaders. He said that his daughter's contribution had gone in vain. A similar story was revealed by Ruk Mani Chhetri, who was injured in a shooting and charged with more than 12 crimes; she stated that she was harassed by the state and had experienced immense hardship and suffering even after the peace accord of 1988 just because of her active participation in the Gorkhaland movement. She feels that nothing has been done as promised by the leaders, and their conditions remain the same as before. Numerous rape, murder, and human rights infringements were witnessed by the many people, especially women in the tea estates and rural areas. However, their contribution has never been taken into serious consideration nor has it been praised as deserved.

The demand for a Gorkhaland was resurrected across the entire region under the leadership of Gorkha Jana Mukti Morcha (GJMNM), which was formed on the 7th of October 2007. The GJMNM, a frontal women's wing of the GJMM was formed on the 18th of October 2007, on the initiative of the party president Bimal Gurung, as a 'subsidiary unit' in the Gorkhaland movement. His wife, Asha Gurung, was elected as its president. The major task of the Nari Morcha, as directed by the central committee, was membership recruitment and women's mobilisation. As a result, almost every woman became a member irrespective of their age, caste, religion, and class and actively participated in public protests for the creation of a separate state. Since its inception, the mobilisation of women was very important, and the GJMNM played a vital role in the on-going movement. From the beginning it adopted the Gandhian methods of peaceful protests in the form of hunger strikes, hartals, picketing, processions, road blockades,

rail rokos, jail bharo andolans, demonstrations at Jantar Mantar (New Delhi), social boycotts etc. Women were always at the forefront everywhere the movement protested.

One of the lady GTA Savashad and activist in the Gorkhaland movement stated that Gorkha/Nepali women are doubly exploited; firstly, as 'women' or a 'second sex' and second as a 'subaltern community'. Her participation in Gorkhaland was very important in organising hunger strikes, rallies, and picketing in the Tarai and Dooars. Despite being a central committee member and Savashad, her presence in the decision making body is not significant. Urmila Ghishing, one of the activists of the GNLF led agitation, ironically hinted at the false assurance and motivation delivered to women by the leaders to participate in the movement. The pathetic condition of women has been narrated in her poem '*ma ansan basdaichu*' (I am sitting for a hunger strike) (Ghishing 2011). Her poem reflects the kind of historical gender consciousness which has been missing in most women's perceptions. As happened with one of the zonal secretaries of Nari Morcha, and among many others during my fieldwork; when I reached her house with prior-permission, she asked her husband to respond. She said, 'I am only the participant and I follow the direction of the party's high command'. Her husband, the zonal president of GJMM said, 'Yes... They know little about the Gorkhaland movement. We guide them and they follow us. They have equal position and rights in our party. We are much better than the GNLF'.

On the 8th of August 2013, eight women activists shaved their heads at Chock Bazar in Darjeeling town in support of the Gorkhaland movement. Among the women was Ramayanti Rai, who stated in a local newspaper that 'for a woman, the hair is considered as an ornament, as asset. We have tonsured our hair today to send a message that we are ready to sacrifice everything for the cause of Gorkhaland'. Many of them also sacrificed their lives in the on-going movement. On the 8th of February 2009, three members, in which Bimala Rai and Nita Khawas, member of Gorkha Jana Mukti Nari Morcha were shot dead by the West Bengal police (WBP) in Sibchu (Dooars) while participating in a protest rally organised by the GJMM (Chattopadhyay 2011). A large number of women are also serving in a volunteer organisation called Gorkhaland Personnel (GLP), formed by the GJMM. Although it claims to be a peaceful and non-violent movement, violence occurs frequently and they became an integral part of every volatile and violent incident that erupted during the course of the movement. The sacrifice of lives made by women for the sake of 'Gorkhaland' is reflective of their dedication and commitment towards the ongoing ethnic upsurge.

Many people participated in the movement to achieve their 'class

interest through ethnic collectively' that happened in one of the closed tea gardens. Phulmith Rai, zonal president of the Nari Morcha and one of the earliest families to take membership of GJMM into her garden, stated that the main purpose behind taking membership was to re-open their garden which had been closed for 18 years. She and her husband convinced the workers and demanded the re-opening of their garden collectively through a trade union. They went on an indefinite hunger strike for 8 days in front of the District Magistrate office, Darjeeling, and finally the management agreed to re-open on *sukkha roze* (daily wage). Apart from daily wages, the workers do not receive anything which is laid down in the Plantation Labour Act. However, the situation of the nearby functioning garden is not much better. Almost everyone, from both the gardens participated in the Gorkhaland movement led by the GJMM, but only few women leaders have emerged. This is because of the structural gender constraints that have been associated with women, as they have to engage in production and reproduction of the household in the patriarchal social order. In addition, a large number of participants remain submissive to their male leaders.

Movement's Organisation and Structure

The GJMM is a centralised party with a hierarchical structure headed by the party president and its parent body. It is divided into different frontal organisations, like the Gorkha Jana Mukti Youva Morcha (GJMYM), the Gorkha Jana Mukti Nari Morcha (GNMNM), the Gorkha Jana Mukti Asthai Karmachari Sangathan (GNMAKS), and the Gorkha Jana Mukti Vidhyarthi Morcha (GNMNM) among others. The central committee is regarded as the apex body headed by the party president with five working committee members, and is further subdivided into core and national committees. The central committee is followed by mahakuma, zones, blocks, sakhas and pra-sakhas (lowest). Each committee has its own president, vice-president, secretary, joint secretary, treasurer, assistant treasurer, adviser, and members of the working committee (Achar Sanhita 2007). The Gorkha Jana Mukti Nari Morcha is also organised in a similar hierarchical structure like its parent body. At the top there is a core committee of seven members from Darjeeling, Kalimpong, Kurseong, Siliguri, Mirik, and Dooars, which is followed by the central committee and is further subdivided into mahakuma, zones, sakhas and pra-sakhas. Every committee has its own president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer and executive members, advisers, and observers (Achar Sanhita 2007). All the frontal organisations remain under the subordination of the party supremo and the central committee. The GNLF led movement of the 1980s was also organised in a

similar organisational structure like that of GJMM. The women participants have no voice in the organisational structure and have to follow the direction of the party *suprimo* and central committee.

Post-Movement Arrangements

After a long agitation, a semi-autonomous body within West Bengal called the 'Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council' (DGHC) was formed on the 22nd of August 1988, through the tripartite agreement with the central, state, and representatives of the GNLf. Although their contributions were made rather selflessly, they did not get the attention that they deserved. Their position was denied in the decision making body of the DGHC. There were only three women dignitaries during the first tenure and two dignitaries after the first tenure in the DGHC, out of twenty eight dignitaries (councillors). On July the 18th, 2011, the DGHC was replaced by a newly formed administrative body called the Gorkhaland Territorial Administration. This administrative set up was constituted out a general election held for forty eight seats, but only nine tickets (including two nominated by the chief minister) were allotted to women by the GJMM, and they are representing their constituencies in the GTA arrangement. Women's presence in local governing bodies, both in municipalities and *panchayats* is deplorable. However, their representation has been increased successively after the incorporation of the 73rd and 74th constitutional amendment Acts in which the DGHC and GTA had no role (Chakraborty et al 2005; Dural 2009).

Conclusion

The entire population, including women, have been emotionally involved in the Gorkhaland movement because it is being considered as 'a metaphysical mother' that has been closely related to their identity of being Indian. Therefore, there has been a collective participation of people for the definitive aim of bringing social change to the social order. The participation of women in the Gorkhaland movement is not a sudden or abrupt occurrence, but the culmination of long historical realities. Their emergence in the movement has been largely the raising of their own consciousness; although the historical gender awareness has traditionally been missing. Their public participation has been supported by their male counter-parts by forming 'subsidiary units for women'. As argued by third-world feminists, this has been a common phenomenon across all South Asian countries (Yuval-Davis 1997). Alternatively, there has been strong 'women's agency' that encouraged them to come out of the private domain for Gorkha collectively. They became part of all the

actions across the length and breadth of the movement's mobilisation, but the major decision making activities were dominated by the phallocentric attributes both in the structural and organisational domain. Since 1986 almost all the negotiation processes and post movement arrangements (bipartite and tripartite talks and agreements held in Kolkata and Delhi) were conducted by and represented the male or few elite women leaders. Many feminist sociologists argue that it is because of societal gender role segregation and structural constraints that women have to face in their everyday lives. There was no Gender development agenda in the DGHC and despite having Women and Child Development provisions in the GTA agreement; nothing has been done for women's development. There is no gender development agenda in both the GNLF and GJMM, because the issues that have been raised by them are 'gender integrative' where both men and women have a common agenda and objectives to achieve i.e. Gorkhaland. Despite their collective participation in the entire course of the agitation alongside their male-counterparts, women continue to suffer under patriarchal norms and rules both at the level of family and outside. In the political domain, women fought collectively for a Gorkha identity, but were also playing a vital (dual) role of looking after their families and domestic affairs in the private domain. Therefore, the Gorkha women have to witness multiple patriarchies with multiple forms of marginalisation at the level of family, household, work, and within identity movement despite their strong agency.

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The Gurkha¹ Wives of the United Kingdom

Challenges to Social Integration²

NEHA CHOUDHARY

Women make their own lives (and life histories), but they do so under conditions not of their own choosing.

—Karl Marx, Personal Narratives Group 1989, 5.

*Yo Nepali ko jeevan, lahure ko jeevan ta
bheda jasto jeevan.*

(The life of a Nepali, the life of a lahure is like that
of a herd of sheep.)

(Sangeeta, aged 55³)

Introduction

Although the movement of people across borders in search of better life chances is not something new, migration has become one of the most significant issues in the contemporary world, particularly in Europe, where the political salience of migration has exponentially increased, especially with regard to integration. In the case of the United Kingdom (UK), this is reflected in the rise of extreme right-wing, anti-immigrant parties, such as the UK Independence Party (UKIP), which, along with the mass media has constantly perpetuated the negative portrayal of immigrants as a threat to

1 The ethno-racial term 'Gurkha' is based on the colonial mispronunciation of the word Gorkha, one of the 75 districts of modern Nepal from where men were initially recruited in the British Army. While 'Gorkha' in the present day denotes the regiment in the Indian Army, the popular military nomenclature 'Gurkha' denotes the regiment in the British Army.

2 This paper is based on my Master's dissertation in 2015.

3 Note: All age in years henceforth.

social cohesion, maintaining their distinct culture, and refusing to 'integrate' into mainstream society. Nepalis residing in the UK have been no exception.

The mass movement of Nepalis to the UK in the past few years has given rise to an 'ethnic dilemma' (Favell 1998), which has manifested itself in the form of a certain degree of resistance from the majority population who perceive the distinctiveness of this group as their inability to adapt to the British society. The group of Nepalis in focus here are those who are or have been part of the Gurkha regiment in the British Army and form the largest Nepali group residing in the UK. Following the granting of the settlement right in 2009, the UK saw the large-scale arrival of ex-Gurkhas and their families, who have now settled in several areas across the country. This sudden and overwhelming increase in immigration had not been well-received by local governing bodies, which see the large number of immigrants creating a strain on public services and have also expressed concerns about the behaviour of certain groups, especially the elderly who have been seen rooting through bins or spitting in the streets (Hollingshead 2011).

Despite increasing apprehension, this group has seldom featured in the integration literature,⁴ probably owing to the fact that they are relatively recent settlers. Although Gurkhas have been subjects of several studies, valorising their courage, analysing them as a martial race, tracing their migration patterns, so on and so forth,⁵ the chronicling of the experiences of the wives of these retired or currently serving army men, who have migrated to the UK as their dependants, is largely absent. While they marginally feature in journalistic work as the women left behind (Aryal 1991), not much scholarly attention has been placed on these women who form the majority of 31,000 out of 67,000 i.e. 46.3 per cent of the Nepalis residing in the UK (Office for National Statistics 2015).

This exploratory empirical study aims to fill this lacuna by analysing the social integration of the wives of currently serving or retired Gurkhas i.e. the process by which these women have become a part of the British society. The paper attempts to identify the extent to which these wives have integrated into the host society, and the challenges they face in the process. Unlike the larger feminist literature on migration, which has increasingly sidelined viewing women within the framework of family migration to break away from the dominant image of women as dependents, I have advocated the use of the 'family perspective'⁶ (Zlotnik 1995a), in order to analyse the

4 Barring the report by Runnymede Trust (Sims 2008) and a paper by Pariyar et al 2014.

5 See works of Hutt 1989; Caplan 1991.

6 According to Zlotnik (1995), a family perspective is important for the analysis of female

migration experience solely with respect to the fact that the migration trajectory of these women is shaped by their husbands' migration process.

The first section of the paper gives a brief historical account of the Gurkhas. This is followed by discussion of the qualitative methodology employed for the study. The paper then goes on to highlight the findings of the fieldwork conducted in Aldershot, Hampshire. This is followed by the discussion of these findings, which shows how the settlement experience of these women are contingent upon their age i.e. generation they belong to. Two aspects of the findings are elaborated upon: firstly, language as the primary barrier and secondly, labour market participation as an example of active integration. The paper concludes by emphasising the heterogeneity of migration experiences of women and suggesting that there is a need to revisit the concept of integration in its classical sense and conceive it as a process of constant renegotiation.

Who are the Gurkhas?

Britain shares a long history with Nepal owing to the Gurkhas, who recently marked 200 years of service in the British Army. The current relation between Nepal and Britain was fostered back in 1815 when the British East India Company's army was able to recruit Nepali men following a peace deal in India. The imperial legacy of military service persists until today, with Nepalis forming the largest group of foreign nationals serving in the British Army (Sims 2008). Over the years, the Nepali presence in the UK has dramatically increased from 6000 in 2001 census (Sims 2008, 3) to 67,000 as of 2012-2013 (Office for National Statistics 2015). Many Gurkhas and their families came to the UK after 1997 when the British Gurkha headquarters relocated from Hong Kong. In 2004, the retired Gurkhas won the right to settle in the United Kingdom if they had served in the army for more than four years. However, this provision was only available to those who retired after the relocation of the headquarters. It was only in 2009 that all Gurkhas, who served four or more years after 1948, were entitled to citizenship and settlement rights in the UK. Implementation of this legislation saw a large number of retired Gurkhas

migration because: '1) women are major participants in "family migration" as defined by the governments and although they benefit from family reunification provisions, they are also constrained by them; 2) economic activity is closely related to the needs of their families, so that the choices that migrant women make regarding work cannot be understood without taking into account the situation of their families and women's role within them; 3) women are increasingly becoming migrant workers in order to improve the economic status of their families; 4) women rely on their families to provide various types of support that both make migration possible and condition the outcome' (Zlotnik 1995a, 268-269).

and their 'dependants'⁷, comprising of wives and children under 18, settling in different parts of the UK, mainly around garrisons, such as Shorncliffe and Folkestone in Kent and Farnborough and Aldershot in Hampshire, and re-establishing themselves into civilian life (Sims 2008).

One of the biggest concerns in the settlement process, as pointed out by a report on the group⁸ has been the integration of wives. The same report has cursorily identified language as the biggest barrier to their integration, impacting their access to services and limiting their social networks as well as employment opportunities. Building on the previous study, this paper aims to elaborate upon the degree of social integration, if any, of these women and the key challenges they have or continue to encounter in this process, from their perspective.

Social Integration: A Theoretical Overview

The issue of migrant incorporation i.e. 'how migrants become part of [the host] society' (Castles et al 2014), although mired in what has also been labelled as 'receiving country bias', has been and continues to hold significance amongst sociologists of immigration (Kivisto and Fiast 2010). Mode of incorporation becomes an important theoretical tool to understand this phenomenon as it constitutes the 'policies of host government; the values and prejudices of the receiving society and the characteristics of the co-ethnic community' (Portes and Zhou 1993, 83).

Over the years, social integration has become a more relevant concept to understand migrant incorporation as opposed to assimilation, which was the hegemonic concept for most of the last century. Drawing on the larger functionalist definition of 'integration' as the process by which various elements of the society hold together, either through commonly held values or by interdependence in the division of labour (Turner 1981). Moreover, as the process by which different races come together to have closer social, economic and political relations, 'integration' in the migration literature often refers to a gradual process of adaptation which requires a degree of mutual accommodation from the host community as well as the immigrant community (Brubaker 2010). Assimilation, on the contrary is seen as a one-sided process, requiring the loss of linguistic, cultural, and social characteristics in order to fully adapt in the host society (Castles et al 2014; Kvisto and Fiast 2010). Although, 'incorporation' has become the more preferred term in the discourse of migrant inclusion and exclusion as it is

7 The definition of dependants for Gurkhas has changed to those upto age of 30 on case by case basis effective 2015.

8 See Sims 2008.

considered to be a 'neutral' term with no indication of where the process should lead (Castles et al 2014), this paper will use the concept of 'integration' precisely because it implies a specific idea of where the process should lead. This sense of direction is implicit in the November 2004 European Council agreement on the 'common basic principles' of immigrant integration policy (Joppke 2007), which guides the terms and conditions of country-level immigration policies. While the agreement is inclusive in terms of defining integration as a dynamic, two-way process and ensures equal opportunities for the immigrants to fully participate in the host society as well as respect for the immigrant language and culture, it also mandates a basic knowledge of the host society's language, history, and institutions from the immigrants. Depending on the state, non-compliance often results in negative sanctions, such as financial penalties or the refusal to grant legal residence. Additionally, much emphasis is given to socio-economic participation as a crucial mode of integration. This has shifted the burden of adjustment primarily to the immigrants (Joppke 2007). Integration policies in the UK have, within the framework of 'race-relations', focused on anti-discrimination laws for most of the last century (Saggar and Somerville 2012).

The current policy model in effect in the UK – also labelled as 'liberal coercion' – is loosely framed around the public acceptance that immigrants themselves are responsible for changing their outlook and actions in order to 'fit in' (Saggar and Somerville 2012). Although Britain defines itself as a multicultural state, there has been increasing public as well as political resistance towards immigration. In principle, multiculturalism has generally meant the acceptance of cultural difference on the part of the majority group complemented by state action which ensures equal rights to ethnic minorities and revalorises ethnic identities (Castles et al 2014; Kivisto and Fiast 2010). However, migrant culture is not only viewed as regressive but as a symbol of a 'foreign takeover', and a threat to the dominant culture and national identity. The general sentiment, as Castles et al (2014) point out, has been that 'those who do not assimilate 'have only themselves to blame' for their marginalized position' (Castles et al 2014, 63). Be it assimilation, pluralism, or multiculturalism, all the various modes of incorporation have proved to be theoretically ineffective in accounting for the current flows, leading to a widespread 'crisis of integration' today (Kivisto and Fiast 2010).

Gender and Social Integration

Like general migration literature, the gender dimension rarely features in the larger debate on social integration. Although early theorists have

identified that there are considerable differences in the migration behaviour of men and women (Ravenstein 1885), most studies of migration tend to take a gender-neutral stance and most often, major debates within the migration literature is characterised by taken-for-granted masculine emphasis devoid of contributions from feminist thought (Ganguly-Scrase and Julian 1999). The picture of an 'adventuresome male seeking new opportunities abroad joined later by wife and family or returning to hearth and home with cash in hand' (Kofman 1999, 273) continues to dominate migration research relegating women's experiences to a secondary consideration. Most of the migration models have drawn on neo-Marxist political economy, which have been reductionist, gender-blind, and limited women within the framework of family migration (Kofman et al 2000; Morokvasic 2000; Willis and Yeoh 2000). Until the seventies, the inclusion of women in the migration literature was limited to the 'add and stir approach' (Kofman et al 2000). It was only from the mid-seventies that the migration of women started receiving attention from researchers and policy-makers after a quantitative increase in women's participation in migration flows, and with increasing evidence of these women's high participation in the labour market (Morokvasic 2000). Even when women have been taken into consideration, the focus has largely been on nationals rather than immigrant women. Wherever immigrant women have been featured, they are often characterised as belonging to an undeveloped culture as opposed to the 'modern', 'superior' culture of the host societies, which is seen as the 'natural order' (Alund 1999).

Given that mass population movement is a prominent feature of contemporary society, it becomes important, as Buijs (1993) argues, to uncover the specific experiences of women who constitute 48 per cent⁹ of these global movements (United Nations 2013). It is also imperative to take into account that the process of migration and its impact is gendered. Settlement, in particular, is a gendered process where women are seen to play an active role in almost all spheres of social life, such as health, education, work, and kinship (Ganguly-Scrase and Julian 1999). Most feminist scholarship on female migration has aimed at breaking away from the stereotypical notion of female migrants as passive followers and dependants. However, it cannot be ignored that in many countries, especially in Europe, family migration, i.e. the entry of spouses, children, and other relatives of previous primary migrants, remains the dominant mode of legal entry into states. Women are seen as 'vectors of integration'

9 As of 2013.

and, social integration of immigrant women has been the focus of policies (Kofman et al 2000). However, there needs to be recognition of the fact that the movement for family reunification has become increasingly heterogeneous and Kofman highlighting the diversity may help in challenging the reductionist frameworks into which immigrant women are still placed (Kofman 1999).

This paper aims to overcome this ‘myopia built into migration and settlement frameworks’ where the ‘significant economic and cultural contributions made by migrant women typically go unrecognized’ (Ganguly-Scrase and Julian 1999, 636). Despite the disproportionate attention placed on the integration of immigrant women at the policy level; perhaps owing to their familial role in raising the next generation, female migrants have rarely featured in the integration literature. Much of the literature deals with the identity formation of these women or their labour market participation, but few studies have explored their migration and settlement journey from their point of view. Furthermore, as previously mentioned, although Nepalis constitute a significant number of migrants to the UK, little attention has been allotted to them in the integration literature. Work on the Nepali community, and in particular the Gurkhas, has exclusively focused on the men. Barring a few studies (Sims 2008; Pariyar et al 2014), women’s migratory experiences have been, for the most part, overlooked. This gap perhaps exists because migration of women as dependants of currently serving or retired British Gurkha personnel to the UK is a fairly recent phenomenon, given the earlier legislative barriers as previously discussed. This paper aims to address the scant attention given to the experiences of these women.

Methodological Framework

In order to uncover the migration experience of these women, this exploratory study is grounded in qualitative methodology. Recognising that human experience is gendered, this paper takes a feminist approach to analyse the women’s perspective of their migration and settlement experiences by using qualitative interviews as the primary method of data collection. This not only elaborates the experiences prior to, in the process of, and after migration, but also highlights the ‘significance of gender as a key variable in the experience of migration’ (Kofman et al 2000, 14).

For data collection, a small study was conducted in Aldershot, Hampshire, known to be the home of the British Army. In the past few years, Aldershot has come to be labelled as ‘Little Nepal’ (Hollingshead 2011), owing to the large inflow of Nepalis following the 2009 campaign. As of 2011, 6.5 per

cent of the total population of the Rushmoor Borough, where Aldershot is situated, were Nepalis (Rushmoor Borough Council 2018), and 1 in 10 of Aldershot's 90,000 residents were said to be from Nepal (Hollingshead 2011). Since feminist theory is grounded in women's lived experiences and personal narratives are considered as the primary document for research (Personal Narratives Group 1989, 4), unstructured interviews were used to obtain personal narratives and accurately capture an in-depth understanding of these women's migration experiences from their own perspective. The respondents were 'invited' (Chase 1995) to share their migration stories. Since the UK does not have a clearly defined model of integration, the broad measures for integration utilised for the purpose of probe questioning were language, social networks, participation in ethnic communities, labour market participation, and interaction with the host community.

Given that the goal of the study was to gain a better understanding of the experiences of a very specific group of women, rather than make generalisations, the sample chosen for the study is small. 11 in-depth interviews and 1 group interview comprising of 3 participants were conducted with Nepali women who had migrated to the UK after their marriage with a Nepali male currently serving or retired from the British Army. Recognising the heterogeneity within this broad group, women belonging to three categories were taken into consideration. 4 interviews were taken with young, recent migrants, between the ages of 20 and 25,¹⁰ who migrated after 2009. Seven interviews were taken with middle-aged women, ranging from 45–60 years of age, who migrated after 1997. A group interview was conducted with 3 elderly women pensioners who arrived in the UK after the enforcement of the 2009 legislation, as they did not give consent to be interviewed alone. Within each category snowballing sampling was used. Although the researcher aimed to interview more people in the first and third category, paucity of time on the respondent's side in the former and lack of consent from the latter forced the number of these women to remain small compared to the middle-aged women. Furthermore, an entirely different category of wives; those who had migrated to the UK as dependants of their father but married to a currently serving Gurkha, was not taken into consideration as it did not match the purpose of the study.

The study received ethical clearance from London School of Economics' Research Ethics Committee. The names of the participants have been changed to abide by the ethical considerations of right to privacy and to

10 Note: Age-range of respondents not the criteria of sampling.

ensure confidentiality. Each participant was given a study information sheet explaining the purpose of the study and why they were being asked to participate and were asked to provide written ‘informed consent’ before being interviewed.

Findings and Discussion

Data analysis revealed that people belonging to different age groups had distinctive settlement experience. While age, by-product of the year of migration, was taken into consideration in the sampling process to capture the diversity of the group, one of the crucial finding has been that belonging to a particular age group structures migration experiences. Given the distinct experiences of women belonging to the three groups, the findings will be structured accordingly. There were a few issues which have shaped the migration experience of all three groups. For instance, the migration process of all the groups is directly mediated by immigration policies and rules. All the women are entitled to the settlement right as dependants of their husbands. Additionally, language seemed to be the biggest challenge for all three groups, although in varied degrees, limiting their interaction with the host community, social networks, and employment opportunities. The specificities of the experience of each group and how they negotiate the problems they face will be further elaborated in the sections below.

The Elderly Wives: Everyday Struggle

‘Socheko jasto kei pani chaina yahan’

[Nothing here is like what we thought]

(Nanimaya, aged 68)

The group that was seen to have struggled the most in terms of integrating were the elderly wives of ex-servicemen. They were also the most distinct as ‘outsiders’, strolling around the streets of Aldershot in groups, dressed in their traditional attire. These women were granted entry in 2009 and are entitled to several facilities, such as healthcare, free bus passes, and pensions.

Like the traditional migration model espouses, this group has come to the UK in the hope of a better future for their future generations. Two of the three participants were widows who had succumbed to pressure from relatives to migrate. When asked why they chose to migrate at such a late stage of their lives, they claimed that they had heard that they could sponsor the migration of their children, grandchildren, and other relatives

after coming here. Misguided by this assumption, they took hefty loans to fund their journey to the UK.

The loan was almost 7 lakhs when I came here... with time the interest also increased. I don't even know how much the interest was in the end. It would have been better to be back home. I was duped into believing that I could get my kids with me too. *Lau ta ni ma marein pani chora, naati, panati le garlan bhanera aati haliyo. Auda rin lagyo. Aaye pachi ta tirna karr lagyo.* [I thought even if I die, at least my son, his son, and his son would be able to make something out of it. I had taken a loan to come here. I had to pay it back.] How would I pay it from home? There is pension back home too. But that is just enough to eat. We have lived here and endured all the difficulties.

(Dil Kumari, aged 73)

Living in sparse conditions, they identified their lack of education and language as the main problem to their adaptation to British society. Family backgrounds indicated that they had not received formal education and were only engaged in domestic work back in Nepal. Commenting on themselves they said:

Rati: Those like us, who don't know a single thing, are here. [Laughs]

Nanimaya: When I first came, people had to hold my hand and take me around to guide me.

Rati: The white women are so educated. We haven't even seen a school.
(Rati, aged 66 and Nanimaya, aged 68)

After arriving to the UK with much difficulty, they realised that their adult children did not qualify as dependants as per the immigration rules. Carrying the responsibility of paying back the loan, they have stayed on leading a very rudimentary lifestyle.

For one participant, coming to the UK was the first time she had been outside her village. This lack of exposure has acted as a hindrance to her interaction with the culture of the host community. With the addition of a lack of education and knowledge of English to non-exposure, all of them end up spending most of their time in the familiar and secure environment of the household. They describe their ability to go to the supermarket nearby as their biggest achievement. Visiting the doctor, a frequent activity given

their age, is a formidable affair given their inability to read or communicate in English.

R: We are sick but there is no one to take us for a check-up. Even if we want to go on our own, we can't speak...

D.K.: We don't know which room to go to. So where do we go?We only go when a Nepali is accompanying us. Otherwise... *ka ho ka ho kotha ta* [We wouldn't know the rooms are]

(Rati, aged 66; Dil Kumari, aged 72)

The challenges they encounter on a daily basis are no different from what they faced when they initially arrived in the UK. Although they laughed at themselves when recalling the incidents in their initial days, such as not being able to identify money, it was evident that they seldom interacted with the outside community. These women often congregated amongst themselves when going out of the house, typically to a nearby park where they met each other and shared their tales of their everyday struggles. They were not active members of any ethnic communities either, but they give money to their respective ethnic treasury for support in the event of a mishap.

Two of the respondents expressed a deep attachment with 'home' and longed to go back. They said that they will return once they pay back their loans. One respondent dejectedly said:

Everyone is back home. My children, everybody. What do I wait for here?

(Dil Kumari, aged 72)

Middle-aged Women: Acceptance and Resistance

This group, which was much easily accessible than the other two, had a very different experience. Most of these are women arrived in the UK immediately after 1997 when their husbands were still serving in the army making it a case of family reunification. The majority of these women already had their husbands in the UK and migrated later with their children. Many of them also stated that this was not the first time they had migrated abroad. While a few had the opportunity to experience camp life in the UK, many had lived in army camps where their husbands were posted while in service, mainly in Hong Kong and Brunei.

However, their lives as civilians differed starkly from their lives in the

camps. In Hong Kong and Brunei, they lived a guarded life where they were not allowed to work outside the camp nor travel without a chaperone (which was mainly their husbands). Coming to the UK had opened up avenues for them. One participant shared very proudly her tales of learning how to drive and looking for work; an opportunity which was not available to her back home. All the participants from this group, barring one, were actively engaged in the labour market, mainly as cleaners. Having no formal education or very basic education did not afford them job opportunities back home. When asked what they did back in Nepal, they would describe their role as homemakers. This was also the case in Hong Kong or Brunei. When asked why they work, they claimed that it is because everyone works. One respondent exclaimed:

After coming here, I realised everyone worked here. No one stays idle.
So I had to work because of that. In Nepal one didn't have to.
(Shushma, aged 56)

While some viewed work as empowering, everyone admitted that working was not a matter of choice as they had families to take care of and a mortgage to pay. For instance, one respondent said:

It is a necessity in a way. *Yo bidesh ayyera kaam nagari khanu chaina*. [You can't even eat if you don't work here]. We don't own a house here. You have to pay rent. To work... it is not a matter of choice. [Pauses]... Everyone wants to sit at home and eat. But it is like a compulsion [Laughs].
(Menuka, aged 42)

Another participant when asked whether the decision to work was a matter of choice said:

Not just compulsion but a big compulsion. You have to pay your mortgage, you have to eat. With all that, it does become an obligation.
(Sangeeta, aged 55)

When asked what they viewed as their main struggle in adapting to the British society, they placed special emphasis on language. While concentration in low skilled work is largely because of lack of education, it was identified that not knowing English acted as a major barrier.

For instance, not knowing English limits the possibility of mobility. One respondent said:

When I first got here, I used to have problems with English [language]. Even now I don't know English properly. I don't understand it properly... I have very basic working knowledge... The only problem that I have faced at work is because of my language. I don't have any problem when I go to stores or have to take the bus to somewhere. But I still have a problem when it comes to taking the train. I haven't travelled on the train alone till now to be honest [Laughs]. ...even when I go to hospital I don't understand everything...

(Maya, aged 56)

More importantly, not knowing English is a major obstacle in their interaction with the host community. Some people have tried to learn the language or make do with the little knowledge that they had. One respondent, who was the only one in this group pursuing a postgraduate degree, when talking about her friends said:

Learning a new language at a certain age is not easy. But they have done quite well. I keep looking at my friend's improvement. I recall the first time I met them and when I see them now, they can speak good English. Not really good but, well, not to the standard of the academics but they can converse in English. They might not be grammatically correct, which one doesn't have to be to converse, but they can speak. It's like if you throw someone into the ocean they learn how to swim. So they have learnt it. They have a good laugh about certain incidents. One of them was telling me 'I have used up all the English words in my knowledge but the foreigner still didn't understand what I am trying to say.' [Laughs]... I can see the difference in terms of what she could have been in Nepal and what she is in the UK.

(Rita, aged 45)

However, for the most of these women, incompetence in English has also limited their social networks with fellow Nepalis living in the area. The possibility of extending the social network to include people from the host community is close to impossible given the inability to communicate. When asked who their friends are, one respondent stated:

My friends are mainly Nepalis, to be honest. There are instances where you have to work with others. There are British, Filipinos, and Vietnamese. But those who I share my feelings with are only Nepalis

(Menuka, aged 42)

There are classes, such as English for Speakers of Other Language (ESOL) available for them to develop their English skills. However, only 1 out of the 7 women interviewed was taking the classes. Inflexibility of class timings and high cost of classes were cited as the primary reasons for not attending them.

Classes are there. I took them for a year, but the timing clashed with my work schedule. You have to work here. I did take the part-time classes in Farnborough College for a year. It was two-hour classes twice a week. After the first year, my class times clashed with my work timing. So I dropped out.

(Menuka, aged 42)

Other reasons mentioned regarded the lack of motivation given their age and inability to grasp what is being taught. Some also pointed out how it is difficult to learn a new language for people who have not even attended school.

...if your mind can't take it then what is the point. Your brain should be able to take it. I forget what has just been said to me. Even your age has to support you.

(Sangeeta, aged 55)

All the women belonging to this category claimed to be part of some ethnic or village community, a way of maintaining networks with their 'own people' in case of emergencies or to congregate for various festivals and ceremonies; reproducing the culture from home. In terms of their connection with their homeland, these women were seen to have maintained transnational ties by visiting Nepal at least once a year and ensuring regular communication with relatives through phone calls or the internet. This was probably made possible by the fact that they are economically active and in a better position to be able to pay for such expensive ventures given that in most of the families, their husbands and children were also working. When asked whether they will ever return to Nepal, they argued that that they had migrated to be with their family and they would go wherever their family is regardless of where they want to be. One participant lamented about her life in the UK:

The whole world says, 'Oh so and so is in England'. *Yahan ko dukkha samjhine ho bhane basna mann chai chaina*. [If you were to think about

the struggles here, who would want to come here?] ...We humans try to survive, do things so that we don't have to face any difficulties by the time we die. We have to save... This place is good for the *goras*¹¹. But it is not that good for us. With us... our husbands stayed here because of the army. *Nepal ma ta tara basi khaincha ni haina?* [Back in Nepal we could eat without working]. There are people who work for you. Those who work, work. Here, you have to do everything on your own. Doesn't matter if I am not feeling well or going through some sort of difficulty... I have to do the dishes on my own, work on my own, eat, and pay the mortgage for the house. If you really think of it, life here is not really nice.

(Sangeeta, aged 55)

Recent Migrants: The Bridge

The experience of this group is different to their older counterparts. Most of them are young, educated, and know the basics of the English language, making their migration experience comparatively easier to that of the earlier groups. Unlike the older wives, who had to migrate in order to be with their family, these women had made an active choice to be in the UK by marrying their husbands. Having romanticised life in the UK, they admitted to a certain level of disappointment with their life post arrival.

I didn't know anything [about the UK]. But, I was excited to come to London as we had heard many good things about it, but... I went straight to the village in the beginning... I didn't think it would be like that. We have seen many fascinating things about London in the movies. Well, it wasn't as expected... Then after coming here, I have to work. I cannot sit idle. That's how your life changes. You have to work to live. I wouldn't have if I was in Nepal

(Priya, aged 22)

Like the earlier group, their husbands have been supportive about them working as it brings in additional income, enabling them to lead a comfortable lifestyle.

One participant was working as a trainee in a dental clinic and another was working as a care worker, although she was on maternity leave at the time of the interview. The third participant was still looking for work. The participants, while referring to their contemporaries, said that most wives belonging to this age-cohort were actively engaged in the labour market.

11 Generic informal word referring to the British.

Unlike the middle-aged, majority of the women in this age-group work as care workers, even though many have trained as and were even working as qualified nurses back in Nepal, because of the non-recognition of their degrees in the UK. Having heard that nursing can earn them a good salary; these women take nursing courses in Nepal not realising that it will not be recognised in the UK. They claimed that they have to restart their education from the GCSEs and A-Levels. Very few have the motivation to do so, given the expense involved as the husbands' salary, despite the subsidised housing, only helps them sustain their livelihoods. Even if they decide to apply to university, they have to wait for 2 years after their arrival to the UK to get the residence permit i.e. Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR), which qualifies them for home student fees which is significantly less than what they have to pay as international students. However, one of the respondents, who had been in the UK for almost 2 years now expressed apprehension as there had been talk of change in the legislation which would extend the requirement of stay in the UK from 2 years to 5 years in order to get the ILR. This, according to her, would cause a major disruption to her plans of going back to university to train as qualified dental nurse; a field she had already pursued in Nepal and was willing to start over again after the non-recognition of her degree.

This [non-recognition of degree] has been my biggest challenge. Not just mine but for a lot of people. There are so many people I know, who were trained as dental nurses, if not dental but other nurses, and doctors, who have struggled after coming here. There is someone who worked as doctor in Nepal but has been giving IELTS repeatedly so that she can apply to university here. There is another lady who worked in Nepal as a qualified nurse. But now she has to work at a care home here. In fact, I think, if you talk to sisters who work in care homes, you will see how drastically people's lives change after coming here. They have studied so much in Nepal. Some have studied to become doctors, some to become pharmacists, and some have studied to become nurses. Most of them have ended up in care homes because there is good money there, but there are also a lot of struggles. Dental nursing is a much easier job, which is why I have chosen this line. But it was also because this is what I have been doing. Why go work as a care worker?

(Reena, aged 24)

In terms of the social networks, these women claimed to socialise with their '*numbarnis*', a term used to denote the fellow wives from their husband's

year of intake. This interaction is also fostered by the fact that they are residing in the camp, which holds events such as coffee mornings, annual gatherings, and so on. The respondents did admit that they do not attend all of these events, but there are several people from their intake-cohort that they share friendship ties with. For those working, attending all the events organised in the camp was close to impossible given their long hours of work. One respondent claimed that she deliberately chose a work place where there are no Nepalis so that interaction with people from the host community will contribute to her personal as well as professional growth. However, such conscious effort is still rare.

This lack of effort is not because the absence of willingness, but because of the language barrier. Although this group is able to read, write, and communicate in English having attended formal school back in Nepal, they are unable to grasp the accent and the nuances of colloquial English. The respondents stated that this has led to loss of confidence on the part of the immigrants, who then turn to people from their own community with whom they can communicate without hesitation.

This is also the group which sees itself as least likely to go back to Nepal. When asked whether they consider moving back post-retirement, a participant stated:

I don't think the new generation will go back permanently. Even if they do, it might be on their holidays or something like that. But go back permanently? I don't think so... I don't think we will go back.

(Manisha, aged 22)

Language: The 'Bright' Boundary

The sociologically complex concept of 'boundary', i.e. the feature which mainly differentiates the immigrants from the host community and which can be adapted to represent the parameters of integration, is the best tool to comprehend the experiences that the female immigrants describe, although it has been used to assess the assimilation of second generation immigrants (Zolberg and Woon 1999; Alba 2006). Alba (2006) argues that boundaries, such as citizenship, religion, language and race, 'affects fundamentally the process by which individuals gain access to the opportunities afforded the majority' (Alba 2006, 27), and that these boundaries manifest themselves in distinct ways in different domains.

In the case of the wives of the British Gurkhas, language, as we have seen above, has been one of the crucial barriers in gaining parity with the host community. Although the difficulties faced by this group cannot be

solely attributed to the lack of English language skills, as other studies have shown, language has remained a marker of 'the outsider' who are continuously accused for 'first not learning English and second for not learning the right kind of English' (Kershen 2000, 11). Additionally, the lack of language proficiency not only limits mobility and interaction, but has also been identified as one of the most important determinants of labour force participation (Zlotnik 1990).

Like earlier studies on immigrant communities, such as Jews and Bangladeshi women (Kershen 2000), it was the older female population in this case who had the lowest level of language literacy and subsequently struggled in their day to day lives. However, in the case of the middle-aged women, unlike other immigrant groups such as the Bangladeshis in London (Summerfield 1993), their lack of formal education and inability to speak English did not lead them to spending their lives within the confines of their homes. On the contrary, like Somalian women in Summerfield's study, they were engaged in diverse economic activities. Working as cleaners, for instance, necessitated a certain degree of interaction with the host community and required them to have a working knowledge of English. However, with the rise in the immigration of Nepalis over the years, workplaces are increasingly being filled with other fellow Nepalis. The little contact with the host society which was present earlier, has consequently, gradually minimised. Furthermore, like in Kershen's (2000) study, it was found that women who have no previous educational experience did not 'know how to learn' as adults, which may explain the lack of motivation for the elder and some of the middle-aged women to attend the available ESOL classes.

In the case of the recent migrants, who are more equipped with basic language skills, the issue is more about not knowing the 'right' kind of English. As Alba (2006) argued, with subsequent generations, language gradually declines in significance as a 'bright' boundary hence proving language a redundant parameter for integration. With men still marrying women from Nepal and not the generation raised in the UK, whether this will hold true is yet to be examined.

Labour Market Participation: The Enabler

While language has acted as a barrier, opportunities in the labour market can be viewed as an enabler. When migrants make the decision to move to a new country, they are aware that their lifestyle is going to alter and that becoming incorporated into the new setting requires a systematic and complex undertaking of sifting and choosing – voluntarily or due to external

circumstances - which aspects of one's culture to preserve, which social ties to maintain, and what aspects of the host society to adopt (Kivisto and Fias 2010). Both the middle-aged and the younger group have, to a greater extent, taken what Bodnar (1985) called the 'pragmatic approach' to the larger society's institutions and values. While maintaining ties with those back home by visiting Nepal frequently and actively participating in ethnic communities is common, especially amongst the middle-aged women, active labour market participation is one of the biggest indications of the adaption of host society values as it is not something they would have done back home.

For many women belonging to the middle-aged category, paid work does become a way of coping with the new environment (Willis and Yeoh 2000). Although it is primarily a necessity, several women cited the reason for entering labour market as something natural which everyone did once you arrive in the UK. Most of these women have no prior experience of wage labour. Given their minimal language and education skills, they are limited to the job sector that is an extension of the domestic chores they perform within their household such as working as cleaners or household help.¹²

In the case of the recent immigrants, the policies and differences in education system back in their homeland and the host society comes into play. Most of these women train as nurses back in Nepal; some with the expectation that they will find high paying job opportunities in the UK. However, most of their degrees are not recognised, as was the case with two of the participants. One took the most commonly taken path of downward mobility and began working as a care-worker. The other, one of the rare migrants, has been working as a trainee and waiting to receive the resident permit so that she can qualify for home student fees, which is significantly less than that of international students. Pursuing education while still on a dependent visa can prove to be an expensive affair and is not desirable to many.

In both the cases, what can be seen is what Portes and Zhou (1993) called segmented assimilation. Although the mode of adaptation adopted by this group does not clearly fit into any of the three ideal types the writers have given, what can be inferred is the fact that these women have chosen one segment of the host society as perhaps a starting point of their adaptation process. The situation of the wives of British Gurkhas

12 Zlotnik (1990) identified three strategies migrant women use to enter the labour market in the host society: '1) by meeting the demands arising in the formal sector, 2) by creating their own employment opportunities through the informal sector, and 3) by satisfying a potential demand for services which would otherwise have been met through unpaid family work' (Zlotnik 1990, 379).

can be summarised into what Bodnar (1985) termed, 'an amalgam of past and present, acceptance and resistance'. This situation may have been brought about by the fact that the immigrants in consideration are first generation. For the groups like the elderly, there has been a minimal level of integration. The middle-aged women seem to hold ambivalent feelings about their homeland and the country of settlement. While they have adopted new ways of life, such as paid work, they continue to reproduce their home culture through the active engagement in ethnic communities. The more recent migrants, on the other hand, seem to be more open in terms of accepting different aspects of the host community, such as the language and lifestyle. This group, with their knowledge of English, having acquired education and already working in better jobs compared to their older counterparts, are in a better position. Furthermore, there is also an emerging trend of army men opting to marry women who migrated as dependants of their fathers and were raised or are accustomed to life in the UK.

Conclusion

This paper has attempted to explore the settlement process of Nepali female immigrants through their own narratives as part of a larger project to add this group to the integration literature. As the discussion has shown, migration and settlement are hardly simple processes where one moves to a new place in search of a better life and automatically becomes assimilated. On the contrary, it is a long process which may continue for the rest of the migrants' lives. Furthermore, in the case of these immigrants, the adaptation capacity was seen to be largely contingent upon their skills, mainly language and education that they possess, and this was directly co-related with the age group that they belonged to.

Several inferences can be made from these broad findings. Firstly, migrant experiences are not homogenous. The distinctive experiences of each age group suggest that even a single immigrant group is characterised by a high level of heterogeneity. While age received much attention here, other factors, such as education level and class may have also added further complexity to this group. Recognition of diversity will ensure effective and intelligent formulation of social policies and programmes to assist the incorporation of immigrants to ensure they attain some level of parity with the host community. In the case of Nepali women, the extension of the roles of groups such as ethnic communities or the community of army wives within camps to conduct vocational training and sustained funding for already existing programmes, such as the ESOL, would be one way to

overcome the existing challenges. Additionally, the respondents suggested the increase of support, such as interpreters in public places like hospitals would be, especially helpful for the elderly.

Furthermore, the lack of motivation to integrate into the host community on the part of the Nepali migrants was minimal. What we have seen is conscious effort on the part of the immigrants to engage in the labour market, despite having no prior experience of wage labour back home, language, and non-recognition of degrees acting as major barriers. This demonstrates that migrant cultures are not static but change according to their needs and experiences, which arise with their interaction with the host society. When people migrate, they are, to a certain degree, prepared to be transformed. What is required in the analysis of integration is the move away from the conventional notion of boundary crossing, boundary blurring, and boundary shifting (Zolberg and Woon 1999), towards regarding integration as a more interactive and complex process. This becomes crucial in shaping integration policies and programmes as the host societies are also becoming increasingly multifarious. This recognition will lead to a shift away from 'blame the victim' paradigm which 'assume[s] that immigrant/minority women's culture of origin, their lack of preparation for modern, urban societies and work are responsible for their situation and lack of choice' (Morokvasic 2000, 465), or in this case, their lack of integration. In reality, there is constant renegotiation with different aspects of the host society: the adaptation of new as well as the retention of homeland values may not necessarily contradict with each other. Therefore, 'integration' may gradually subside as an issue of concern with time for this group. However, further studies on the subsequent generations will be required to validate this premature conclusion.

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The Global Fund in Nepal

KAPIL DAHAL, IAN HARPER, REKHA KHATRI & SUSHIL BARAL

Introduction

The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GFATM – abbreviated for the rest of the paper to Global Fund or GF), established in 2001, was set up to increase investment and resources in the management of three specific diseases; AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. It currently invests around USD 4 billion per annum globally. To Nepal it has given over USD 150,000,000. This paper explores the modalities of this disbursement to TB and HIV control work as an example of the development process and the impact that this has on issues of programme delivery.

The Global Fund exemplifies part of a general shift in what has now been termed ‘Global Health’ and its concerns. While this is multifaceted, there are patterns emergent in this trend which have now been identified: The substantial rise in resourcing infectious disease control has been linked to the framing of health, and infectious disease within this, as a ‘security’ issue; the rise of this as a concern for geopolitical relations and tabling these at economic summits; and the emergence of new assemblages of global organisations dealing with these – in particular global public private partnerships – of which the Global Fund is one of the most prominent. Within the development context there has been an associated shift to focus on health related issues facilitated by the rise of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), of which one specifically focused on infectious disease (MDG 6 – ‘Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases’)¹. Central to these shifts has also been a move towards the generation of particular types of metrics, those which are quantifiable and based on evidence based principles (Adams 2016a).

The Global Fund is a financial disbursement mechanism, and is unique in the health development field in that resources are released only in relation to performance. The Global Fund highlighted investing for impact as its core

1 See Harper and Parker 2015 for more on this, and an expanded list of references.

funding strategy for the period of 2012-2016. As an international financial instrument, it focuses on achievements of targets through investments in these three diseases, as well as on 'health system strengthening'. It also demands outcome-based evaluation metrics to link the disbursement of resources to performance in lieu of achievement of clear and measurable results. As Adams suggests: 'In a nutshell the goal [of the Global Fund] was to create new ways of evaluating not simply "what money was spent on" but also on "what targets had been achieved"' (Adams 2016b, 41). This paper explores the implications of how these particular forms of accountability and performance are understood and implemented in the context of Nepal².

Institutional History of HIV/AIDS and Tuberculosis Control in Nepal

Historically, in Nepal, focus on TB and HIV control developed separately and vertically. In 1988 the GoN launched its first National AIDS Prevention and Control Programme; in 1992 set up a multi-sector National AIDS Coordinating Committee (NACC); in 1995 its first national policy which heavily focused on developing public private partnerships; in 2002 a National AIDS Council (NAC) was established – but both are described by the World Bank as non-functional³ (as it has also been in interviews with

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- 2 The data collection for this paper was part of a Wellcome Trust funded project examining the interrelated roles of the Global Fund, Laboratories and HIV/TB co-infection on both TB control, and broader health systems strengthening. For the laboratory strand, we collected data through observation of the laboratories in 17 government and non-government settings in different parts of the country. These laboratories consisted of routine laboratories, reference laboratories and laboratories that housed the GeneXpert technology. We also followed a specific TB REACH project that was rolling out GeneXpert technology, and observed the processes during preparatory phase, and during installation and operation in this time frame. In addition, 30 semi-structured interviews were conducted with key informants, including laboratory staff, TB-leprosy officers, Quality Assurers, and managers of different organisations implementing the TB REACH programme. In the Global Fund strand, over 40 in-depth interviews were conducted with those responsible for implementing the TB and HIV components of GFATM work in government departments, with Primary Recipients, Sub-recipients, and people living with HIV and AIDS and their networks. We also conducted participant observation of meetings, workshops, and interactions related to the GFATM work in the country. TB-HIV: The TB-HIV strand of the study used peer ethnography and semi-structured interview methods for data collection. Two members from the National Association of People Living with HIV and AIDS were recruited and were trained to conduct interviews with their peers. A total of 105 interviews were conducted with people living with HIV and AIDS, with service providers, and also with policy level officials. (We are currently developing more extensive reflections on the methodological implications of this work).
 - 3 <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2012/07/10/hiv-aids-nepal>.

us). In addition, the National Centre for AIDS and STD Control (NACSC) is the main technical agency, and is situated under the Ministry of Health. This agency was responsible for the development of the last National HIV/AIDS strategy (2011 – 16), with the goals to ‘1) reduce new HIV infections by 50%; 2) reduce AIDS related deaths by 25% and 3) reduce new HIV infections in children by 90% by 2016’.⁴ A new National AIDS Council, HIV/AIDS and STI Control Board (HSCB) was designed to respond to the HIV epidemic through multi-sectoral coordination. National Monitoring and Evaluation (M and E) frameworks were being set by the NCASC. There are in addition around one hundred NGOs working in the arena of HIV control, and, again the World Bank describes relations between the government and NGOs as ‘not coherent’. Despite the Bank’s representation of the scenario, activities around the HIV epidemic developed through a particular form of politics, with its concomitant strong rights based approaches to health. The proliferation of NGOs and activism is a particular form of engagement seen here.

In contrast TB control has long been run through the government, with a few INGOs and NGOs involved. This policy and programme has been more influenced by the rise of the World Health Organisation’s DOTS programme and a greater central coordination from the National Tuberculosis Centre (NTC). DOTS service provision is widely available through the Primary Health Care services. Following a joint HMG/WHO review of the Nepal National Tuberculosis Programme (NTP) in 1994, Directly Observed Short-course (DOTS), the WHO advocated management system for tuberculosis was adopted as national policy in 1995, with implementation starting in early 1996. DOTS consisted of: Political commitment; Case detection by sputum smear microscopy among symptomatic patients self reporting to health services; A regular, uninterrupted supply of all essential anti-TB drugs; directly observed treatment (DOT); and Monitoring - cohort recording and reporting, evaluation, training and supervision. It was in 2006 that this was expanded – as part of the WHO expanded STOP TB campaign - to include multi-drug resistance, TB and HIV, DOTS in the private system, and DOTS in the hills and mountains. Focus on TB HIV coordination – from the perspective of the TB control programme - started in Nepal in 2009. The NTP website suggests: ‘TB-HIV co-infection rate (the prevalence of HIV infection among TB patients) in Nepal is 2.4%. Overall HIV prevalence in Nepal is estimated at 0.30% in the adult population and it is categorised as a concentrated epidemic’. A comprehensive approach to this is now outlined,

4 <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2012/07/10/hiv-aids-nepal>.

and crucially requires that the NTPs partners are involved in assisting to achieve their targets of:⁵ ‘1. Reducing HIV incidence among TB patients; 2. Reducing TB incidence among PLWHAS; 3. Improve care of people for people who are co-infected with TB and HIV’. The NTP acknowledges coordination of TB and HIV interventions as one of their key issues.

We explored the issues of the impact of financial disbursement from the perspective of both the TB and HIV components of Global Fund resources. Thus while there are significant differences between the social, political and medical ‘biographies’ of these two diseases (which will require another paper), for the purposes of this paper we explore issues that were consistent across both streams of funding.

The Global Fund in Nepal

Nepal first received Global Fund money in 2002. By mid-2015 the Fund had agreed to the funding of USD 153,635,750 to Nepal, of which USD 64,804,755 is to HIV/AIDS component; USD 52,429,843 to tuberculosis; and USD 36,401,153 for Malaria. This has been through a total of 19 grants, of which 5 were still active as of July 2015 (1 in HIV; 2 in TB; 1 in Malaria).⁶ However, the disbursement until this date was USD 133,457,012. The principal recipients – to whom the monies are legally accountable, and are responsible for the disbursement in country – for these grants have ranged across the government, to a UN agency, INGOs and an NGO, and included the Government of Nepal (Ministry of Health); Family Planning Association of Nepal; Population Services International, Nepal; Save the Children, Nepal Office; and the United Nations Development Programme, Nepal.

The Global Fund itself has a very particular structure.⁷ In country, this consists of the Country Coordinating Mechanism (CCM), also established in Nepal in 2002, which is responsible for the submission of the proposals and nominating the units which will oversee and administer the funding. The Principle Recipient (PR) directly receives the financing, and uses this for the implementation of programmes – which it also passes onto other organisations to do this (these are called sub-recipients, or SRs), through the making of sub grants. It is the responsibility of the PR to make what are called disbursement requests to the Global Fund – on a four monthly basis – and further funds are released based on the demonstration of attainment of intended goals and targets (the performance based disbursement mechanism). Unique amongst funders of this size, the Global Fund does

5 <http://nepalntp.gov.np/index.php?view=page&id=83>.

6 <http://portfolio.theglobalfund.org/en/Country/Index/NPL>.

7 <http://www.theglobalfund.org/en/overview/>.

not have an in-country presence, but uses Local Fund Agents (LFAs) to monitor all implementations and the disbursement requests (or ‘the eyes and ears’ of the Global Fund as they are referred to). This is an off shoot of the financial institution Price Waterhouse Cooper.

For the TB programme, the principal recipient has always been the Government of Nepal, through its National TB Programme (in 2008, Ian Harper worked with the government to set up a programme management unit, a structure within the National Tuberculosis Centre (NTC) to enable them to better report against targets and perform to the standards demanded of them by the Global Fund). In contrast, HIV funding has been through both the government (the National Centre for Aids and STD Control – NCASC – paid for entirely by Global Fund money and was set up in the ministry itself) but also through the INGO, and NGO sector.

All the grants from GFATM have a transparent performance framework and the recipients report their service delivery results against this framework. GFATM regards it as an essential part of its Grant Agreement with the Principal Recipient (PR). It is completed during grant making stage and builds on the modular template submitted with the concept note application. It is a statement of intended performance and impact, to be reported to the Global Fund over the grant term. It includes an agreed set of indicators and targets consistent with the programmatic gap analysis submitted by the country in the concept note. The decision for continuation of funding is dependent on the results reported against the indicators and targets included in the performance framework. It forms the basis for routine disbursements to the Principal Recipient during grant implementation (GFATM 2015).

Save the Children (SCF) has been acting as a Primary Recipient for the Global Fund for the HIV component, since the Global Fund introduced its Single Stream Funding (SSF) (Single stream funding was introduced to replace the extraordinarily cumbersome round funding system, but still focused only on single disease streams. Prior to this, annual rounds of funding were called, and the programmes would just develop aspects of their work with each round; and each round was monitored and evaluated independently). By 2014 it channelled funds to 60 CBOs as SRs in 48 of Nepal’s 75 districts. Many of these are managed by members of the affected communities themselves, namely Intravenous Drug Users (IDUs), Female Sex Workers (FSWs), Men having Sex with Men (MSMs), People Living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA), and migrants. For SCF, as we were told in an interview with their senior management, the main issue was managing the diversity and complexity of the NGOs involved in the sector. The SRs are at the heart

of the programme, and they are aware of the funding issues and the politics of aid.

The difference between the government acting as a Primary Recipient of the Fund and an INGO was one issue that has constantly emerged in interviews. As one NGO director explained of the NTC acting as a PR:¹ 'We get the money four months before the end of the fiscal year... There is no time to spend it'.

The perception of the inefficiencies of the government sector acting as PR for the TB work has been strongly expressed to us. Indeed, staff from several organisations we spoke who were SRs for the TB side of the work had to be laid-off because of the late disbursement of funds. The reasons offered were related to the specific issues around the complex functioning of the government system. That all activities need to be included in the 'Red Book', which is legally binding in Nepal, was a particular issue:

First the money needs to be included in the budget speech then it should be included in the Red Book. Then from the Red Book it goes to the Ministry of Finance then to the Ministry of Health. In the ministry of Health it goes through many processes then it comes to the NTC... The process is too long

Therefore, this cumbersome process was compared unfavourably with that of the INGOs – in particular SCF – acting as PRs in the HIV sector, where SRs described the flow of funds as far more efficient. As a member of the NCASC described it to us, the problem arises because the Office of the Auditor General of Nepal (OAG) has the responsibility for auditing all the government programmes, but the GF has separate demands, and the two systems are not aligned. He reflected that much of their time was 'killed by management issues' and that the OAG does not recognise the format prescribed by the GF. While responsible for the technical support of the HIV programme, this government agency does not have any SRs to directly disburse funds to (aside from the Red Cross), so this does not directly impinge on the work of the SRs.

This distinction between the funds being distributed to TB activities through the government, on the one hand, and through an INGO on the other to the HIV work is a particular issue in the context of Nepal, but one that has implications for possible coordination of activities. None the less, nearly all the NGOs we interviewed praised the speed and efficiency with which SCF are able to disburse the funds.

However despite this managerial issue with government, the turnover

of staff in the NTC is much lower than the HIV sector, and this is seen as positive by many people we interviewed. The National Centre for AIDS and STD Control (NCASC) has had a very high turnover of staff since it was set up, and this was compared unfavourably with the NTC, and its much lower turnover of directors.

Some General Remarks

Clearly the issues that arise from this funding are numerous, and complex. These were perceived by our informants as being both positive, and negative. It would be churlish to suggest that there haven't been significant achievements over the years from both programmes – both are now significantly more 'visible' and the numbers of those affected by the disease identified, and who have been granted access to treatment has risen significantly; many people living with HIV now have greater employment opportunities in the development sector with the increase in resources; that awareness of both diseases has increased significantly, particularly amongst those identified as risk groups; and with this the prevention of significant morbidity and mortality.

The issues we identified include the following:

Firstly, the rhythm of the work is dictated by the release of funds. Delays, both in the selection of INGOs and NGOs and then the release of funds has resulted in much of the planned work having to be completed within limited periods of time, sometimes as short as 4 months. This was a particular problem when the government acted as the Primary Recipient of the money. While it has long been noted that the rhythm of funding cycles dominates much development related work imagined as project, this is now far worse with the expected recording and reporting demanded by the Fund.

Secondly, there is a geographical bias towards organisations located in Kathmandu. Those working and based outside of the centre have lower access to economic and social resources necessary for their activities – frequently they were less well developed administratively, and had greater problems adhering to the rules and regulations imposed.

Third, there is increased complexity as more partners become involved in an overall national programme and its formulation. Although we don't address this specifically, there has been a considerable increase in the amount of

hidden work and bureaucratization;⁸ that with the increased number of partners, and the standardising of national planning it has become difficult to avoid the duplication of activities; there has been a perceived change in relationships between partners, particularly the PR and SRs, which become more hierarchical with the new structure; and complex issues around working relationships between government and NGO staff when NGOs are supporting the government programme become manifest.

Fourth, that there has been an increased emphasis on proving that certain targets have been achieved, and how the criteria of success is defined (particularly around impact); that quality has become subsumed to other issues of performance and accountability, mainly upwards (for example the ability to 'burn the budget'; an increased emphasis on reporting and recording.

Fifth, perceptions of rigid budgetary constraints tied to the activities that have been planned, and a call for greater flexibility. The funding process linked to the centralised planning through the Country Coordination Mechanism, and that it can take years before the funding comes through does not allow for the shifting political parameters, and changing local scenarios where the work takes place. In short, the situation changes, often rapidly, but little flexibility is built into being able to change how to respond.

Sixth, the question of sustainability, as this is directed at the over reliance on NGOs for many activities, rather than the government. However, this criticism is more than just ideological, and stems from practical criticisms from those working in NGOs, who wish to maintain the provision of services that they provide. When the funding stops, who will provide the money for the continuation of the services they provide?

A number of these issues are not specific to GF funded programmes, and have been reported on extensively in the literature (both in Nepal, and more broadly). In the remainder of this paper, we focus specifically on the issue of quantification and metrics; and how impact is understood.

Metrics and the Focus on Targets

On a visit to the NCASC, on the walls to the entrance room fact sheets on HIV infection are displayed in graphs, and locate the geographical reach of the

8 See Taylor and Harper 2014 for a Ugandan comparison.

programmes. As a visit to the NCASC website also demonstrates the impact of the programme is dominated by epidemiological and numerical targets and figures.⁹ This focus on numerical targets has led many of those working in the sectors to consider that this has become an overriding aspect of the work, at the expense of quality. As a regional government representative explained:

Still, the conventional thinking is there and there is no new way of thinking. Intervention is not done with proper planning rather the focus is on quantity instead of on quality. They always try to increase the numbers and prepare the report nicely showing 100% achievement.

Another INGO worker suggested:

In the case of vertical programmes they do not pay attention to the implementation and for them the best place to present implementation nicely is in the report.

There is perhaps nothing new in this, and systematic inflation of figures in the health sector as part of government reporting has been reported before in Nepal,¹⁰ but the need for numerical evidence has increased considerably, and with it the need for verification. This has become essential with the programmatic link made to disbursement of funds. Our interviews and observations point to the sheer increased amount of paper work that is generated in this process. In some cases, larger and better organised NGOs have been contracted by the PRs to collect more community based organisations' data and compile the reports for them. In addition, attempts centrally to move to e-reporting have also led to a doubling of report writing, both online and the more formal paper method as the system introduced and comes up against the limitations of software, internet access, and computer literacy.

In the HIV sector, the work scenario is dominated by rights based organisations. We were told of the particular difficulties of balancing the quantitative based data as required by the GF and the more qualitative based evaluations that they are concerned with. While they would like to focus on the impact, instead they have to report on the activities performed, and the numbers of activities undertaken. The strict rules of the GF means that they are not allowed to deviate from the programmes as originally proposed.

9 See: <http://www.ncasc.gov.np/>.

10 See Onta et al 1996.

Targets versus Impact

We were repeatedly informed that the Global Fund was concerned with ‘impact’, and that this was a core funding strategy between 2012 and 2016. Aside from the Fund’s rhetoric, what does this mean to those involved, and what does repeated concern for what this meant in practice? While some talked of impact in terms of epidemiological parameters (decrease in prevalence and incidence of HIV and TB themselves¹¹), others were concerned more with the *quality* of provision of activities and their effects. As one surveillance officer suggested, this really should be concerned with issues of *change*. He and others repeatedly iterated that impact should not be related just to activities that have been undertaken. It was suggested to us, repeatedly, that the focus on targets, meant that impact was overlooked.

The Monitoring and Evaluation (M and E) system, developed to monitor targets and activities, was challenged on these grounds, as told to us by a member of the Country Coordination Mechanism:

At present, there is no substantial challenge to programme implementation. However, the MandE system has to be strengthened so as to make it able to pay attention not only the quantity aspect of the programmes but also to their quality aspects. Regardless of the mounted efforts to make the organisations accountable, to ensure that they are doing ‘right’, the quality aspects of the activities should be equally monitored.

Senior representatives of NGOs also suggested that there needed to be greater focus on impact:

We are not sure about what are the impacts of such programmes (school health) as there is no impact assessment of such programmes. I would like to strongly emphasise that there should be a provision of impact assessment of the last three years’ programmes.

As one senior member of an INGO stated, their role as PR was at the level of ‘input’, but it was the quasi-governmental NCASC that was responsible for ‘outputs’ and the broader impact of the Global Fund on broader health systems:

11 It would require another paper to explore this issue in more detail, but the epidemiological calculation of disease prevalence is complex and difficult.

Nevertheless, there is little room for the PR to have space to focus on impacts instead of activities/numbers; however, we try our best to manoeuvre. We visit every month for on-site data verification. We also develop qualitative check-list to understand the impacts of the programmes.

And another INGO director:

GF is preoccupied with the nitty-gritty of programmes but has not been able to focus on programme qualities, impacts and realities on the ground. Or, it is not clear about who looks at the impacts of the programmes. It does not pay attention to whether the standard is followed or how it is implemented. The rigorous work is done while developing the proposal whereas such rigor is not reflected in the implementation phase. It looks only at the activities; there are no remarks on quality.

As one NGO member suggested, it is not enough to say that a certain percentage of people with the condition have or are receiving. What, he asked, of the quality of programmes and how can this information inform programme delivery for future planning?¹²

One aspect of impact that was remarked upon by NGOs concerned not so much the provision of services and programmes, but the impact on the organisations themselves. As one NGO director argued - their abilities to run an organisation had improved (they better understood M and E systems; could better define programmatic outcomes; could cost out activities better). Other NGOs stated that they too were better able to sufficiently as an organisation. The demands of the GF had changed their managerial and administrative capacities:

Its effect is on management. It affected recording, reporting, management issues, procurement issues; they asked different things with the Board members. These are the main things that the donors want about HR hiring, procurement issues, how is everything done etc. while donor inspected all these things, the system was developed gradually.

12 An example of this can be found as part of an in-depth review evaluating patients' perceptions of the Direct Observation of Treatment (DOTS) programme. Despite the TB programme reporting excellent treatment completion rates amongst those diagnosed with TB, the patients experiences pointed to extensive concerns with the lack of patient focused provision. Epidemiological parameters alone will not capture this (Harper 2010).

Others reiterated that they were better able to work systematically, and less haphazardly. Once this had been achieved then one network based organisation was then better able to expand and formally develop networks. As David Mosse has pointed out, this is fundamental to how development practices are shaped: 'Less and less by the formal goals (of policy) and increasingly by the organisation's "system goals", which revolved around the preservation of rules, administrative order and relationships of patronage' (Mosse 2005, 17). However, the other side of this is that there are increasing restrictions on what can be done, and that once planned little flexibility in altering these.

Concluding Remarks

This paper has started to explore how a particular logic of performance and accountability embedded in the funding provided by the Global Fund has structured the way that organisations involved in development go about their work. At one level this starkly highlights some of the divisions between NGO and government capacities to undertake certain work (with the concomitant ideological and practical arguments that run with this on the role of the state and civil society), and their particular vulnerabilities and strengths. This may be reflective of broader 'neoliberal' changes in the health and development sector. However, this particular logic of accountability, and 'transparency' was new in the development sector in Nepal as elsewhere: of not giving further resources, till it has been proven – three times a year – that activities have been carried out and targets met. This micro-management on the part of the Global Fund may decrease the waste of funds, the potential for corruption, and increase 'efficiency', but the practicalities of having to undertake them leads organisations to focus on the easily achievable, and the countable. In the wake of these shifts, those with whom we talked complained that the broader idea of impact had become lost in all the paper work and numbers. If your funds are released solely on your efficiency to undertake tasks (for example, numbers of trainings undertaken, or health education pamphlets printed and distributed) and the ability to prove this, then why bother with broader issues? As more and more organisations are asked to provide evidence for their impact, and we see the proliferation of these forms of metrics linked to efficiency to measure these, why would any organisations want to undertake more risky strategies in their approach to work?

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Tamang Dashain Celebrations and the Production of Doxa

An Indigenous Perspective

TEK BAHADUR DONG

Introduction

This paper examines the celebration of Dashain, the most celebrated Hindu festival in Nepal, by the Buddhist Tamang people of the Kavre district. Many ethnic activists and scholars argue that Dashain and its patronising by the state is a continual process of creating a Hindu cultural hegemony in Nepal. Since the early 1990s, indigenous people have also 'boycotted' Dashain as a way of resisting the Hindu state and reclaiming their distinct cultural and religious identities. However, many indigenous and non-Hindu groups, such as the Tamangs of the Kavre district, continue to celebrate Dashain as one of their own cultural events. In this paper, I focus on the ways in which the Tamangs in the Kavre areas have *indigenised* the Dashain festival, and how they debate the festival as contrasting with *Mhening* and *Lhhochar*, the festivals of the Tamang New Year. Drawing on the practice theory of Pierre Bourdieu, his concept of 'doxa'; interviews with different age groups and genders in the study area, a review of social media; and my own observations and reflections from a local village, I discuss how the interplay of peoples' habitus, based on the centrality of kinship, and the ways in which people objectify their social structure through Dashain, and the dominant local cultural interpretations contribute towards the continual celebration of the festival by the local Buddhist Tamangs.

Study Setting

I was born and socialised in a Tamang community for sixteen years in the Chukha village, an area of the Sarsyunkharka Village Development Committee in the Kavre district¹. The village is dominated by Tamang

1 With the implementation of federal structure of government, now this village is located in Temal Rural Municipality, ward number 2 in Province 3.

people, the third largest ethnic group in Nepal, who speak a Tibeto-Burman language and have a population of 15,39,830, which constitutes the fifth largest social group in Nepal (CBS 2011). Nowadays, I only visit my hometown occasionally. The village is located above the Sunkoshi River about 65km to the south-east from Kathmandu and roughly two and half hours drive in a private jeep. The Chukha village consists primarily of three *toles*, namely *tallo tole* (the lower village), *pandhera tole* (the middle of the village with adequate water), and *makhlo tole* (the upper village), but non-local people consider *Chukha* village as more than these three *toles*. All three *toles* are entirely inhabited by Tamang people and Magar, Newar and few Dalit families reside just below *tallo tole*. In the middle of the village, there are three temples, namely: *Panchakanya-Satkanya Devi*, *Setidevi* and *Bhimsenthana*. Among the three temples, *Panchkanya-Satkanya Devi* is the most popular as many people visit this temple to worship the Devi goddess. On a behalf of the community, Tamang shamans sacrifice animals to honour the goddess, especially During the Dashain festival and two full-moons in *Baishak* (April-May) and *Mangshir* (November-December). This study examines with the sacrificial events during the Dashain festival and the significant role of local shaman and lamas, the Buddhist priests.

Dashain Preparation and Celebration

Dashain is one of the longest festivals and holidays in Nepal. Government offices and schools are closed for a month. Private offices also shutdown for at least a week and shopping centres are very busy as it is tradition to buy new clothes, but they also close on the main day of Dashain. In the countryside, people begin to clean their home at least a week before, and pay extra attention to sanitation compare to regular days. In addition, they put white coloured clay on the outside house walls, and paint the windows and doors. Every group member of the same descent also buys a buffalo, which costs in the range of NPR 25,000 to 35,000, and is cared for by one of their household members in their cowshed. Along with a portion of salt and corn flower, each member of the community visits this house to check the buffalo is growing as people want a healthy and big buffalo, so they give extra food and plenty of fodder compared to the other animals in this shed. Additionally, they start to cut down certain types of trees and to make firewood. People wake up early to go to the forests and cut grass before returning home. They visit markets and buy clothes for children and elderly parents.

Depending on their economic status, they also purchase goods and commodities, such as rice, beaten rice, lentils, soap, sugar, oil, and other

daily necessary items, which are purchased in large quantities compared to other times. People return to their hometowns from different cities and countries, but often find it difficult to get transport due to the many people travelling home from all over the country; therefore, some people ride in local jeeps or any other transportation available. All this preparation is called by the Tamang as '*Mhening Khaji*' (Dashain has arrived). Although Dashain preparation is started many days before, it is mainly celebrated from *Saptami* to *Dashami*².

Saptami, popularly known as *phulpati*, is the first big day of Dashain and two important rituals are completed by the shaman on this day. First, local shamans sacrifice animals to the goddess in the belief that the Devi goddess maintains peace and prosperity in their lives. The Devi temple is very busy from morning till noon as many local people bring roosters, pigeons, goats, and ducks as offerings for the Devi goddess which are sacrificed by different local shamans. People also bring flowers, rice, red vermilion powder, and some coins on a plate to offer the goddess. The second ritual is called the worship of *Jhyo-Jhyomo*, recognised as a local king and queen. Normally, every household is required to give half a kilo of uncooked rice and 20 milliliters of cooking oil, which is collected by the senior member of the house. Neighbouring villagers gather and prepare for the ritual by making a white dough figure of cooked rice that represents the king. Since this figure is large and weighs a lot, as it is made from 6kg of rice, people carry it carefully while they head to the ritual site.

The ritual is held in under a big tree where the shaman invites *Jhyo-Jhyomo* to sit on a golden throne. The shaman honours the deities by offering a turban, string of flowers, and eventually places chickens and eggs around the stone image. The shaman bows respectfully and, requests *Jhyo-Jhyomo* to prevent disasters, protect humans and livestock from evil, for agricultural prosperity, and to stop harmful agents. Once the ritual is complete, people distribute a piece of dough as an auspicious gift to each household who participated in the ritual. After both rituals, the shaman returns the sacrificed animals along with a *tika* blessing of the goddess. The people return to their houses and cook a meat curry from the sacrificed animal, and enjoy the first meal of the Dashain celebration with all their family members. It is worthwhile to note here that although the god and goddess of this temple belong to the Hindu religion, local people care for the temple as their own and clean it once a year. For the local Tamang people, it is not matter of a Hindu god; rather, it is related

2 See also Pfaff-Czarnecka, 1990 and 1996.

with the shamans' performance and the completion of rituals during different occasions.

Astami or day eight of Dashain is when almost all age groups, children, youth, men, women, and older people congregate nearby their houses and a man kills the buffalo to honour the goddess Durga. During this event, children and some elders wear new clothes bought by their parents and sons. Each and every lineage has a buffalo which is slaughtered in their family territory. Immediately after the sacrifice, men and women take fresh blood and apply it to the soles of their feet and their children's feet as they believe that this blood helps cure diseases. After cleaning and chopping the meat, they distribute all parts of the meat equally to all the households in their lineage. Most descent groups have more than ten households and each household receives at least 15 kg of buffalo meat to celebrate Dashain. The family who took care of the buffalo at his/her home receives a little portion of extra meat. In the evening, at least one member of each household gathers at a senior member's home to honour their dead relatives. A lama recites the name of the dead people while the members of deceased relative's households show their attachment by offering butter lamps so the dead do not suffer from darkness and wish them a better rebirth.

Day nine is known as *Nawami*, and on that evening people have a different meal than the other days. In addition to their regular meal and meat curry, they also prepare a different meal on a plate which contains half a kilo of beaten rice, a few pieces of fried meat and fruits, especially bananas as in the past they were grown on their land. Each and every family member receives this meal and if their family members are away from home, his or her portion is given once they meet each other during Dashain. Since this is a large serving for a single meal, the left overs are kept and eaten throughout Dashain. This feast is called a *Bhoj* in the Tamang language. Nonetheless, before distributing to their family members, the head male family member takes a bath and worships their clan deity for blessings and the protection of the family from evil.

Day ten is one of the most significant days, widely known as *Dashain*. In the morning, people take a bath and wear new or clean clothes. The household members thoroughly clean the house in preparation for the blessings and cook for those who are coming to receive blessings and *tika*. The *tika* is prepared in a normal bowl or on a plate by mixing white rice and yoghurt, which is different from the Hindu community. Hindu people use red vermillion powder that makes red *tika* symbolising the goddess Durga's victory over the demons, but for the Buddhist Tamang red symbolises

someone's blood and should not be mixed with milk/yoghurt. Tamang people believe that red denotes a father's blood and white symbolises a mother's milk. Nonetheless, during this occasion the younger family members receive *tika* and blessings from the eldest male member, which is practiced within their consanguine and affinal kinship group. Let me insert here one of the famous blessings of my father, who was a renowned local shaman and Tamba,³ and many people appreciated him as he had a distinct style and voice.

In Tamang

Chhe reng tola yo tola

Semshe mhanba dupsi sol
myangtola

Ela dasha grah barjya bibam torse
lapase basi

Marse gangase borsi

Bichari shes tipam meshe chasi

Hai duwai lasi sol myangtola.

Yungpa chungmam dhan drabya
tasi

Sapra chungmam anna panila hong
tatasi

Anna puran goilo chhar lasi sol
myangtola,
hai duwai lasi sol myangtola.

Mar madeshlam latta kapada, tor
bhoichalam sun

In English

May live long time (and) fulfill
your desire

You can have a (meal) consume
you desire

By passing your misfortune from
the top wind

Take a way underneath the river

The remaining part of the middle
one destroyed by fire

Eat enjoy fully and joyfully.

May wish to be gold when you
catch the stone

By achieving omen/trait when you
catch the clay

Eat having stock of food grain
and new clothes, enjoy your meal
joyfully.

The cloth of Madhesh (down
direction), gold and wool of Tibet

3 In the Tamang community, shaman, tamba, and lama are the key pillars of customary social institutions. Lama is the most respectful person who completes the death ritual and rescues the shadow-souls of the dead person into rebirth. The shaman, who often called as bonbo among the Tamang community; recalls lost shadow-souls, raises up life-force and divines. Furthermore, he cures the living and counters morbidity, malaise, and misfortune (Holmberg 1989). Tamba preserves customary rites and customs of the Tamang people who have a significant role in conveying the traditional practices, primarily the marriage ceremony, and often assist the Lama with his enormous knowledge of ancestral culture and tradition.

un, tin sahar nepallam tama kasase ghar bhar	(upper direction), filled up your house with copper and bronze of
bhandarap latola, bastu bahuse khel plingtola,	three cities of Nepal, may sufficient cattle in your
satru satap latasi, mitru jodap latasi, battish	courtyard, your enemy may defeated by you, increase your
lachhinse jukta tatasi, tettish koti dila lase raksha	friendship, with sufficient of 32 types of omen/trait, may protected
latasi, hai duwai lasi sol myangtola.	by lower god of Tettis Koti gods, enjoy your life joyfully.
Hangkang, Bengkang, Japan, Zerman, America la	May you hold currency of Hong Kong,
paisa ela chhyase koltasi, charai rastra la paisa ela	Bangkok, Japan, German, and America by your hand, and by
chhyase koltasi sol myangtola.	dealing the of currency entire countries.
Semse mhanba jun semse mhanba sidda tatasi hai	May fulfill your desire whatever you wishes and consume food
duwai lasi sol myangtola.	in a very relax way.
Bisas saya ayu tatasi, ese hai duwai latasi,	May live 20 hundred of life extent, with relaxation, and being
pradhnmantrila pad ese kintasi sol myangtola.	Prime Minister

The above blessing is also used for different functions and rituals; for example, during wedding ceremonies. During the Dashain festival, the first *tika* is given to three unmarried, virgin girls first, then to the senior most boy and then the senior most girl. The blessing giver wishes the receiver for his/her long, prosperous, fortunate and peaceful life along with delightful meals and wealthy in property. The *tika* ceremony is celebrated until the full moon day as many relatives continue to visit from all over the country. It is a great day where all the family comes together and eats lots of meat. In Turner's (1996) terms, Dashain can be symbolised as *communitas*, where people feel good and there is social equality, solidarity and togetherness, as everybody celebrates Dashain as their own festival. This system unifies people as they do not just gather and celebrate together, but when they

meet their family and relatives, they also exchange gifts with each other. Scholars, like Mauss (1990), believe that gifts are not just an exchange with other family members but also integral to establishing and maintaining social relations in a community. During Dashain, young people visit older community members' houses; married women visit their natal home; and children visit their maternal uncle's home, and all these social visitors are called guest in our broader social relations. During each visit, the guest wraps gifts in a traditional bamboo basket or keeps them inside a shopping bag, which is known as a *dang* in the Tamang community.

The *dang*, which includes fried breads popularly known as *sel roti*, fruit, cooked meat, wine, *ningku* - which is similar to local beer, beaten rice, yoghurt, and other food to offer to the host family. To reciprocate, the eldest host family's members give *tika* on the forehead of all the guests and then give blessings for a long life, prosperity, and peace in their family, and after the *tika* ceremony, guests are offered a meal. During this festival, relatives travel long distances to visit relatives to receive *tika* and blessings from the head of the family. In some families, nephews and nieces also visited their grandfather's and uncle's houses for blessings and *tika*. Therefore, Dashain is a festival where people renew their social relations every year and this custom makes their social relations much stronger. Furthermore, the Dashain festival is not only a custom of visiting people, but can also be seen as a reciprocal social relationship involving gift exchange gift. When guests depart, the host family place some food grains in their basket or bag, which indicates the people are locked into a never ending process of gift exchange, where every individual is obliged to reciprocate gift exchange (Mauss 1990).

In gift exchange, they do not only exchange gifts, but also exchange formalism, feelings, obligations, ideas, self interest, and new hope. For Mauss, as observed in his study in Polynesia, gifts carry a sense of honor, prestige and wealth. Among the Tamang community, visiting without a gift symbolises neglecting the host family and bad luck. Hence, no one goes empty handed; instead, they carry gifts according to their socio-economic condition. Some people bring fruit, biscuits, beer, wine and bread while others also offer clothes, mobiles, cameras or any useable asset. Godelier (1999) argues that gifts form of social solidarity and describes the economic aspects of gifts. He believes that gifts play a vital role in understanding the social relationships of any particular community (Godelier 1999). The gift transaction between visitor and host family members denote their social relationship and *tika* and blessings are only received by consanguine and affinal kin. Non-family members do occasionally visit to receive blessings during Dashain.

To briefly summarise, Dashain appears to be just entertainment, as people eat a lot of meat, visit relatives' houses, wear new clothes etc., but if we look at it from the Tamang people's perspective, they practice four important rituals which they do not want to break. They worship the Devi goddess to please her otherwise evil or harmful things might occur in the village. They offer butter lamps to remember their dead relatives and illuminate the darkness of deceased members, which is completed by a lama. Local people also pray to their clan deity for peace, prosperity, and the long lives of their family members. Finally, they exchange gifts through the medium of *tika* and blessings. Therefore, avoiding Dashain is ignoring important socially structured rules and no one wants to go against these practices because it is socially institutionalised. Once the social norms and values are institutionalised, it is difficult to go beyond social traditions. If I do not celebrate Dashain, my villagers and my relatives think I am antisocial and transgressive. Therefore, even though I have no interest in celebrating Dashain, the social and customary rules bind me to follow all the regulations.

Dashain: Doxa and Habitus

Simply, it can be said that the ritual event of scarifying animals, a long tradition of killing buffalos and the feast and blessing ceremony play a significant role in maintaining the Dashain celebration. As people celebrated Dashain over the years and centuries, it became enshrined as social values and cultural knowledge for the current generation. However, the continual celebration of Dashain by the Buddhist Tamang should not be simply seen as an example of Hinduisation and their acceptance of Hindu cultural hegemony. I argue that we need to understand how Dashain has become 'doxa' through people's collective practices and the meanings people assign to these practices. According to Bourdieu (1977), doxa is a condition where people's thinking and cultural practices fit the objective structure. These cultural practices have not just emerged but are the product of traditions spanning centuries. In my village, people have celebrated Dashain for generations and do not know when Dashain started, but simply consider Dashain as an important and great festival. Each household knows how to perform and complete the Dashain festival practices and rituals as they are continuing what they learned from the past generations. Therefore, I observed Dashain on many occasions and prepared questions for my parents and village relatives in case of any confusion about the rituals. In this sense, Dashain is the consequence of socialisation within a particular community.

While describing *doxa*, Bourdieu talks about people's thinking, representation of the objectified social world, and practices which fit the objective structures. In the structure people do not question their lived social conditions but take them as natural. This suggests a natural attitude of phenomenology where reality is taken for granted and beyond reflection so people practice their culture and social obligations without questioning the system. In the same way the Tamang perceive this as their own festival. They think that Dashain brings not only entertainment and family celebration in their community, but also an opportunity to meet their relatives who live far away, renew their social relationships, exchange ideas with relatives and villagers, and for the senior members of the community to give guidelines to the younger generation. Many families have members away from their homes as they are involved in various professions in different districts across Nepal; however, they visit their home for life-cycle rituals, such as marriage, burials, or special occasions. Compared to those events, Dashain is such an important cultural event that large numbers of people visit their homes, and if they are unable to visit for some reason, they miss their family and relatives. Those who are in the village visit their neighbours' houses frequently to have some *chhyang* (local beer), *airak* (local wine), and eat meat.

Bourdieu explains that the family, culture, and different education create 'habitus', which can be seen in people's thoughts, beliefs, and interests. The habitus is a mental system of the social structure embedded in an individual or collective coconscious. Individuals learn and internalise the structure and reproduce the structure through their practices and representations. Hence, habitus is structuring structure as well as internalised objectification of such structure (Bourdieu 1977). Once an individual embodies the habitus of their social world, the social world becomes naturalised and people do not question or think consciously about practices and representations, but act on them. The individual roles and performance of any member in a society fulfills the objective of the social structure of the social world. For example, the shaman's role during *Saptami* is very important for the people because he sacrifices the animals at the Devi temple on behalf of the community that believe that the Devi goddess maintains peace and brings prosperity to the community.

Similarly, on the evening of day eight, the lama, who specifically completes the death ritual among the Tamang community, offers butter lamps and meals to the deceased's relatives. The ritual is performed at one of their chief descendant's house and every household brings the best buffalo meat, such as pieces of heart, liver, and boneless meat along with *airak*,

chhyang, beaten rice, and flowers. It is one of the most important events to remember dead relatives and is accepted as a fact that by performing the ritual, god helps the dead relatives by lighting their way to heaven. Therefore, during Dashain, one generation of the community complete the rituals while the younger generation observes different activities and learn how their parents prepare the different steps required to celebrate Dashain. The roles and activities of their parents are guidelines for their children and the future of the Dashain celebrations. This way, the social process of Dashain, which guides the thinking and behavior of Tamang people, becomes a natural event every year for the different generations of people in their social world. Therefore, Dashain is a product of past events, current practices, and existing social structure.

In our society, we share our experiences with each other. This experience defines the perception of practices which is called structuring structure. Furthermore, it also carries the meaning of structured structure which denotes that the structure was already in the past (Bourdieu 1984). The four capitals, namely social, cultural, economic and symbolic are part of the structuring process of habitus. Moreover, Bourdieu explains habitus as a system of durable, transposable dispositions and structured structures of practice (Bourdieu 1977). The system of production and system of perception produce practice in the society which called as a practice theory. This theory explains the relationships between human action and social structure by focusing on how social actors create social structure and in turn become shaped by the structure. It studies the dialectical relationship between an individual and the social structure without taking one as the primary or causal relationship. In such an action and system, people know how to act in their daily activities.

The central theme of practice theory is based on mediating the duality of the objectivism and subjectivism in the social sciences. Objectivism emphasises the primacy of structure and subjectivism emphasises how individual perceptions and meanings constitute the structure and connects the individual to the structure. In objectivism, the structural roles of social reality consist of a set of social relations and forces. There are interdependent relationships between people and social structures. It is not only the social structures which are shaped by the people, but also the people are shaped by the social structures. In the context of celebrating Dashain, the festival is completed because of the different roles and performances of people that fulfill the structural goals of Tamang society. Along with the various activities, each and every Tamang is familiar with when Dashain starts and ends and how to complete the Dashain rituals. However, in terms of the

social and cultural significance of Dashain, there are multiple meanings and even a conflicting understanding about the festival. Some Tamang groups want to continue celebrating Dashain as a communal event while others state that Dashain should be boycotted. The younger generation believes that although the government of Nepal legislated public holidays for indigenous cultures in 1994 and declared all major indigenous cultural celebrations as national festivals in 2007, only Hindu-culture is dominant and flourishing in the state and nothing has promoted indigenous cultures. The deep concern of cultural discrimination by the state has made many indigenous people unhappy with state policy.

The gesture of such unhappiness can be seen in indigenous festivals; for example, many Tamang youth shout '*Lhochhar hai-hai, Dashain-Tihar bye-bye*'. I myself feel that the role of national media and Hindu related private media journalists do not highlight the Lhochhar festival and practices of indigenous cultures the same as Dashain, which producing cultural inequality in the nation. There is a lack of acknowledgement for non-Hindu cultures in Nepali society, which denotes injustice and imprisons people in a false and reduced mode of being. This might be created by people or by society mirroring back to them an imprisoning, humiliating, and disgraceful picture of themselves. Therefore, Taylor (1994) recommends cultural recognition to provide social justice in a multicultural society through the approach of liberal democracy. By raising questions about cultural equality, many non-Hindu Nepalese celebrate their traditional festivals, while some celebrate Dashain just for the long holiday and the meaning of Dashain is gradually being lost and becoming unpopular among many indigenous communities. Therefore, the doxic reality of Dashain is now also being challenged, particularly by ethnic leaders, academics, and the younger generation. However, their effort to boycott Dashain and promote Lhochhar as the alternative has largely been unsuccessful at the household level. Despite this fact, many local youths participate in Lhochhar events organised in different venues either in Kathmandu or near their hometowns and work places. The new opinion of celebrating Lhochhar denotes the cultural politics for and against the celebration of Dashain in order to demonstrate cultural equality in a multicultural society and attempt to enlighten the Tamang people.

Politics and Questions on the Doxic Reality of Dashain

The cultural politics of Nepal can be seen as early as the 1990s, and the backbone of these politics specially emerged from the National Legal Code of 1854, which classified the entire population into four hierarchical orders based on the Hindu caste system (DFID and The World Bank 2006). Höfer

(2004), the first scholar who studied the 'anthropology of caste' in Nepal, explains that this civil code was a powerful instrument to assimilate the people towards the ruling culture based on the Hindu caste hierarchical system. In order to create a homogenous Hindu national identity, the *Panchayat* democracy further promoted a one Hindu culture policy in a multicultural society, which seemed to disregard the non-Hindu cultures. Therefore, many indigenous nationalities, such as the Limbu, Tamang, Gurung, and Newar communities revolted against state policies, and gave rise to ethnic activism for cultural identity and the expression of political freedom after the 1990 people's movement (Gurung 1997, 2008; Hangen 2007). Before the 1990s, indigenous political organisations were banned and activists were perceived as revolutionaries, anti-nationalist, and against the rule of law. Tamang (2014) explains that the *Panchayat* system encouraged all other social groups to abandon their original traditions and identities and assimilate into the language, religion, culture, and traditions of the hill high caste group that signify not only the misrecognition of various identities, but also despised and mistreated them by branding them as antinational elements. As a result, these active members were compelled to flee from the state. A few Buddhist monks were sentenced to exile while some were given the death sentence (Holmberg 1989), which reflects how indigenous culture was intentionally pushed towards the limit of almost vanishing (Pfaff-Czarnecka, Stokke and Manandhar 2009).

Holmberg, who studied the ritual life of Western Tamangs, states that Dashain was seen in the village as a small part of greater polity of the Hindu state and legitimated the headmen's local dominance under national authority. During the Dashain period, people sang and danced in the local headman's house, but before that the local headman had to visit military commanders to receive the *tika* blessing. Although general Dashain celebrations continued, the practice of singing and dancing at the local headman's house stopped after the death of the headman in 1993. With the contribution of urban leaders of ethnic and indigenous movements, people gradually thought that Dashain was 'their' festival or one of the Hindus (Holmberg 1989). Similar arguments can be found in the writing of Pfaff-Czarnecka. By examining the emergence of the Nepalese Durga Puja, or Dashain, she writes that Dashain is not only a religious occasion but also has a political component because it is emerged as a state ritual. She argues that political system required the rulers to maintain their superiority over their political rivals and local elites were forced to substantiate their positions (Pfaff-Czarnecka 1990). Chemjong (2016) explains that people were forced to celebrate Dashain during the expansion period of the Hindu state. In

1786, King Rana Bahadur Shah announced orders and traditional laws to celebrate Dashain. Just after the Dashain festival, a few officials were sent to local people's houses to observe the bloody finger print from a buffalo, which has to be stamped on the door or wall.

This kind of information was also shared by my local informants in the Kavre and Dolakha district in 2014, which confirms that the orders and traditional laws of the state were circulating in Nepali society. Anyone failing to celebrate Dashain was punished by the state. Upreti (2014) adds that in Limbuwan, Shadus visited every Limbu's house and reported to the state those Limbus who did not celebrate Dashain, and they were penalised by the Hindu kingdom. Seizing '*Kipat*', communal land and killing Namrihang Athpahariya and Ridama Athpahariya both priests in the Dhankuta district, are examples of the severe punishment. Pfaff-Czarnecka argues that as the Dashain festival was forcing on non-Hindu people as a symbol of the Hindu domination to the Tamang community, the young and dynamic leaders of the Tamang community wanted to change Nepali society (Pfaff-Czarnecka 1996). Hangen (2007) further argues that the Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities and Mongol National Organisation encouraged people to reject high-caste Hindu culture and revive their own languages, religions, and other cultural practices. She illustrates that after 1990, people began to boycott Dashain and the issue was even discussed at various academic conferences and in publications. Abandoning Dashain was seen in Kathmandu and eastern Nepal (Hangen 2007).

Today, Facebook and other social media has become an important medium to share ideas and feelings, and sometimes informed discussions regarding conflicting contemporary issues. I found a few reflections about Dashain and Lhochhar on social media sites from different personalities. The facebook status of some Tamang individuals reveals that although many indigenous people celebrated Dashain in the past, nowadays they do not celebrate this festival as it is a Hindu festival. They express the view that the Dashain festival demolished their ancient cultures and created injustice in the multicultural societies. Some individuals write in their Facebook status that 'the Tamang do not celebrate Dashain but celebrate Lhochhar'. Another person narrates their liberal thoughts:

We are the Tamang of the Tarai region. We agree with what was suggested by the hill Tamang. We celebrated Lhochhar and we also boycott Dashain. But now I am surprised that they suggest we celebrate Mhening instead of Dashain. How can I celebrate it? I am 30/35 years

old now and according to my parents, I am fourth generation in this region. My grandfather and father did not teach it to me and I have not heard about *Mhening*, it's very confusing.

I also found that few non-Hindu academics and scholars, namely Krishna Bahadur Bhattachan (2016), Novel Kishore Rai (2016), and Dambar Chemjong (2016) write about their feelings of Dashain. On the online news site called 'Esamata', they argue that Dashain is not a festival of indigenous people; rather, it was forcefully assimilated by the Hindu state policy. Although Bhattachan and Chemjong are in favour of boycotting Dashain, Rai's view is very impartial. Rai says that he does not put or receive *tika* during Dashain, but if someone invited him for a meal, he participates. Despite this discussion, Professor Dahal argues that Dashain makes stronger social relations and it is a medium to recognise Nepali people, especially in diaspora societies (Dahal 2016).

There are dual perspectives on Dashain among the Tamang people. One group of Tamangs is strongly against the Dashain celebration, while other group believes that Dashain, particularly *Mhening* in Tamang mother tongue, is a Tamang festival, which does not belong to the Hindu community. The former group, which is largely supported by Nepal Tamang Ghedung,⁴ and its affiliated associations and networks and some academics (Holmberg 2016; Tamang 1998; Tamang 2007) explain that Dashain was imposed by the state for cultural unification and the Tamang people were forced to follow the Hindu culture and festivals over the years, and traditional Tamang cultures gradually vanished. Some parents are even concerned as their children follow Hindu culture and are not familiar with their own culture. Therefore, the Dashain boycott movement is against the destruction of Tamang culture, and to revive and promote it. For the latter group of Tamangs, *Mhening* is similar to the Boasian idea of cultural relativism, which highlights the local principle of beliefs, practices, and values. This group of Tamang argues that *Mhening* has to be understood in its own context and should not be connected or compared with Dashain. According to them, *Mhening* and Dashain are both different. *Mhening* is a traditional festival of the Tamang community where Tamang people worship *Jhyo-Jhyomo* (king and queen of the land), *Neda Sipda* (protective deity), clan deity, *Shing-la* or *Chhyore Lakma* (two sisters and goddess of farm land) and *Khepsung* (ancestral worship) (Bal 2016⁵; Gole 2016).

4 Nepal Tamang Ghedung is the central organisation of the Tamang community, which encourages preserving and promoting Tamang language, culture, traditions and focuses on social, cultural, and political awareness issues of the Tamang people.

5 This literature is based on the personal communication between Hiranman Bal and

In the Tamang community, they believe that *Jhyo* and *Jhyomo* gave food grains which helped them to survive in their environment and this is one of the most significant features of the Tamang people. Hence, the celebration of *Mhening* is closely connected with agriculture, nature worship, and in memory of Tamang ancestors. Agreeing with this view, Shrestha (2016) further extends that Dashain was indeed an agricultural and common festival of indigenous people. He explains that it was known as *Mohani Chad* by the Newar, *Ashok Bijaya Dashami* by Buddhists, and *Chhath* by Madhesh indigenous communities, but later this agricultural festival was named Dashain by the Hindu state. He argues that Dashain would have been acceptable to all indigenous people if the state did not force them to celebrate the Hindu Dashain festival and permitted celebration of their own festivals. His analysis claims that the Hindu state did not only ignore indigenous cultures, but it was also a gradual disappearance as a result of Hindu assimilation. As critiqued by Bal (2016), Dashain is a festival of war between god and a demon and on that day people give and receive red *tika* believing that the goddess Durga killed Mahishasura the demon; but this is a myth and Tamang people do not have such a celebration on the occasion of winning a war. Indeed, Dashain was incorporated into the Tamang *Mhening* festival after the unification period of Nepal; therefore, now the Tamang people are confused while they celebrating their *Mhening* and they feel like they are celebrating Hindu Dashain⁶. Highlighting this, Bal further argues that celebrating another's culture is similar to a girl who elopes with a boy which signifies a girl accepting another's culture and she loses her specific identity and her religion, customs, culture, and language. Now, the above explanation reflects that *Mhening* was initiated by the followers of the Bon religion who belong to animism, the oldest belief system of spiritual and supernatural perceptions.

Here, I reemphasise an earlier sentence - because if the Tamang people are reviving their own traditions and culture for cultural identity in the present days, then the *Mhening* festival and *bonbo* tradition also represent salient features of the Tamang community. Unfortunately, the *bonbo* tradition is currently decreasing. In my village, there were six *bonbos*, four of them have passed away with only one actively providing his services.

Budhhiman Tamang at the residence of Budhhiman Tamang dated Ashoj 27, 2070 B.S.

6 There are several examples of mixing Hindu culture with Tamang culture. The Hindu festival, such as Janaipurnima and Mangheshakranti are mixed up in Gonengya and Lhochhar festival of Tamang. Furthermore, wherever the Buddhist holy place is placed, there is also a small Hindu temple constructed which symbolises evidence of the Hindu suppression in Nepal.

The present scenario indicates that the new generation is not interested in *bonbo*, which reveals the decline of *bonbo* practices among the Tamang community in my village. Nevertheless, many Tamang people still follow the faith of the Bon religion, but all Tamangs do not believe that *Mhening* was initiated by the Bon religion, but rather many of them highlight Buddhism. However, Buddhism is a pure Lamaism or lamaic Buddhism, whereas Tamang Buddhism is a unique synthesis of Lamaism, tambaism, and shamanism. This shows the conflicting view among the Tamang people while explaining the Mhening and Dashain festivals. Nonetheless, both groups agree that the tenth day, or *Vijaya Dashami*, does not belong to the Tamang community and it was a Hindu adoption and forcefully put into practice by the Hindu state. Therefore, like the Tamang, other indigenous people were also unwilling to celebrate Dashain as the state was forcing them to celebrate an inauthentic cultural practice (Hangen 2013). In my village, there are only few young people who wanted to boycott Dashain; however, they still celebrate the Dashain festival in their own way. As mentioned previously, they also participate from *Saptami* to *Dashami*, but the blessing uses white *tika*. In Bhattachan and Chemjong's view, this is also way of boycotting the *Dashin* festival, whatever the colour of *tika*.

Regardless of whether Dashain is a Hindu festival or festival for all Nepalis, the feeling of Dashain should be developed from inside the people, and as Gurung (1997) recommended, the country requires polycentric nationalism in which Dashain can become a great festival for all Nepali citizens. Furthermore, indigenous cultural practices should achieve equal status in a respectful way by avoiding the practice of discrimination, continuity of discrimination, and the creation and re-creation of different forms of humiliation in society, the media and the state itself, and endorse social respect (Dong 2016). As Nepal is one of the good examples of multiculturalism, every person feels dignity, respect, and ownership while they celebrate their culture. If these issues are undermined, Dashain is only a great festival of the Hindu community, while for others it remains only a great festival in literature and the media. For me, all Nepali cultures are important and each culture is constructed through the distinct human relations. Avoiding Dashain or disregarding non-Hindu culture denotes the breaking of human, social, and cultural relations with Hindu relatives.

To sustain the diverse cultures of Nepali society, each culture must be perceived as equally important in the social world. Turner, who focuses on cultural diversity for social existence and cultural recognition, argues that society and a group of culture are fully contemporary participants in a common historical present which reveals that all cultures are equal and

no culture is superior or inferior. In other words, cultural difference no longer carries the temporal and evolutionary difference. All cultures were developed one at a time (Turner 2004). Therefore, the origin of Dashain and non-Hindu culture is from the same time of the human evolution. The only difference is that Dashain is celebrated by the large number of Nepali people throughout Nepal, but Lhochhar is celebrated by only indigenous nationalities, namely Tamang, Gurung, Sherpa, Thakali, and Hyolmo (See Holmberg 2016). If Lhochhar, and all the festivals of non-Hindus, are respected and recognised, people would feel social justice and help to create a new humanity and social dignity in the development of New Nepal.

Lhochhar: New Habitus and Doxa

Lhochhar⁷ is a great festival of the Tamang people. It is also known as New Year because '*Lho*' refers symbol of animal or year and '*Chhar*' denotes new. In other words, it is a system of changing different animals every year in a 12 year cycle. The Tamang people also call it *Chhar Ding* or *Lho Poba*. There are 12 different animals; beginning with the rat, ox, tiger, cat/rabbit, dragon, snake, horse, sheep, monkey, bird/rooster, dog, and ends with pig/boar and every thirteen years, the same *Lho* is repeated. This tradition is known as *Lhokhor Chyungi* which is used to count someone's age. A large number of Tamang communities in the rural areas do not ask someone their birth year but they ask which *Lho* they represent. This way, everyone becomes one year older every Lhochhar from his/her birth. Below, I am going to describe how the Tamang community celebrates the Lhochhar festival and through their collective practice in cities and different villages, how this cultural event produces a new habitus which eventually creates a new doxa among the Tamang community.

During the Lhochhar festival, Tamang people worship at home, visit different monasteries and receive blessings from Buddhist priests. Buddhist temples, shrines, and gumbas are decorated with prayer flags and pieces of cloth covered with good fortune messages for happiness, wealth and longevity. It is believed that when the prayer flag is blowing in the wind, the message of peace and prosperity spread throughout the world. Tamang people are dedicated to the worship of different deities and

7 This festival is also celebrated by Gurung, Sherpa, Hyolmo, Thakali, Magar, Jirel and other ethnic groups (Holmberg 2016, 306). Although Lhochhar meaning is same; it is celebrated on different dates with different names among the different ethnic communities. Gurung people call it Tamu Losar which is celebrated between November and December while the Sherpa community and few Tamangs call it Gyalbo Lhochhar which falls between February and March.

pray to them for release of sinful actions that were performed during the past year and wish for almighty for peace, prosperity and healthy life until the next Lhochhar. Celebrating happiness by sacrificing animals is against Tamang culture; therefore, they do not slaughter animals rather they receive blessings from their elders and priests and exchange greetings with their friends and relatives. Eventually, they enjoy Tamang *selo* and Damphu songs (Tamang 2007).

Lhochhar festival was not seen as a public event until 1990 and ethnic social organisations were banned and considered against the Hindu nationalism. The 1990 constitution declared Nepal as a multiparty democratic system as well as an inclusive country by stating Nepal as multi-ethnic and multi-lingual in the constitution, which permitted all communities the right to preserve and promote their languages, scripts, and cultures. After that, many ethnic social organisations were established to endorse and to revive their own cultures and traditions (Hangen 2007; Tamang 2007). Several ethnic social organisations began to discuss bringing an alternative to the Dashain celebration that highlighted the revival of their genuine culture. In this context, Nepal Tamang Ghedung focused on the Lhochhar celebration; however, it was not a huge occasion until 2006. Holmberg (2016) states that the first public Lhochhar, at the village level, was only celebrated after the end of the decade-long Maoist's insurgency and the signing of the comprehensive peace agreement in 2006. After 1996, some literature on Lhochhar was published and '*Lhochhar Parampara*' (Lhochhar Tradition) by P. B. Tamang in 1996, was the first book of cultural guidelines.

Nowadays, the Lhochhar celebration is an important festival to educate and unite different regions of Tamang people, especially through the event held in Tundhikhel, Kathmandu. On this occasion, the ground is filled with different personalities and different age groups from the Tamang community. Most of them wear traditional hats while many girls and women also dress in traditional jewellery. Both lamas and *bonbos* pray to the gods and goddesses and perform dances. The dance programme is further extended by the live musical programmes and singers, dancers, and actors who demonstrate their presentations related with Tamang culture, including traditional and modern dances, and DJ session. The guest speakers including ethnic leaders and caste groups represent from different political parties wishing for peace and prosperity for the Tamang people. Tamang leaders, who work and are associated with different Tamang organisations and institutions, express their thoughts, which is crucial for Tamang people. They not only highlight the Tamang role in reviving and promoting their culture and tradition, but also deliver their speeches on how the Tamang

people were excluded historically which pushed them into poverty despite being the nearest citizens to the capital.

Furthermore, they encourage all the Tamang to connect to a single goal and put pressure on the government to achieve Tamsaling⁸, an imagined homeland of the Tamang people as an autonomous federal province. By inviting Tamang artists and singers, the Lhochhar festival is also celebrated in different Tamang villages as well as the diasporic Tamang community in the USA, the UK, Australia, gulf countries and India, which illustrates the global connection between Tamang people through Lhochhar events. In their invitation cards, they write 'let's preserve our unique culture and traditions' and 'let's go to participate to understand and learn about Lhochhar'. There are a few points to be emphasised here: participating in Lhochhar events is helping people learn new things. Children learn and observe Tamang culture, traditions, and practices, which includes dress styles, food and cuisine, the Damphu⁹, Tamang Selo dance, and the distinction between the lama, *bonbo* and *tambas* practices. In addition to these salient features, youth and elder Tamangs also have the opportunity to learn more political issues related with Tamsaling and the state's discrimination policies which affected Tamang culture and traditions. This socialisation process I call political socialisation through which Tamang people demonstrate a distinct identity. By this social gathering, the Tamangs are united every year to revive, preserve and promote their own cultural traditions and developing their attachment to the Lhochhar celebration. This way, Lhochhar is enlightening Tamang people every year and producing new knowledge, which brings an alternative idea for celebrating Dashain or support for boycotting Dashain.

Now, the Tamang understood that Lhochhar is not only a fun-related cultural event, but also a socialisation process among the Tamang people, which teaches and guides the Lhochhar celebration. Over time, when it is constantly celebrated; it becomes a natural occasion for the Tamang people and develops certain rules and regulations to fit the structural goals of Tamang society. In Bourdieu's term, such socialised norms and values are called *habitus*, and *habitus*, as guiding behavior and thinking, helps the deep attachment with Lhochhar. For Bourdieu, *habitus* is the internalisation of the social world and begins with the family, society, and academic institutions, which construct perception, thought and action (Bourdieu 1989). However, in the context of Lhochhar, *habitus* is created through social

8 'Tamsaling' word is composed of three words. 'Tam' refers to the language spoken by Tamang people, 'sa' denotes to the land, and 'ling' signifies to the territory.

9 It is a traditional small, round drum covered with goat's skin on one side.

organisation, society, and literature. Perhaps by this the reason Holmberg (2016) argues that Lhochhar is producing Tamang solidarity and national and international leaders from the top down approach. He also mentions that Nepal Tamang Ghedung frequently distributes a set of instructions for the Tamang people to celebrate Lhochhar in their homes and after 1996, few literature was published related with Lhochhar (see Tamang 2012; Tamang 1998; Tamang 1996; Tamang, 2007). When Lhochhar is taken for granted by the Tamang people and they practice without questioning the Lhochhar rules and regulations, it produces a doxa among the Tamang people. Doxa, as explained by Bourdieu, is a set of shared opinions and unquestioned truths.

Bourdieu states that habitus is the product of history and it produces individual and collective practices (Bourdieu 1977). Individual practice starts from each member and every household, however, Lhochhar is a learning process of individual practices and still a large number of Tamang people do not know the proper way to celebrate Lhochhar. Despite this fact, now Lhochhar is spreading from city to villages and from one country to another where Tamang people live and work. This way, the Tamang people are constructing a history in their social world. This year, I noticed Lhochhar was organised at Lamagaun, my neighbouring village of the same Village Development Committee. Unfortunately, I could not participate as I was travelling outside of country, but the photos and videos posted by some individuals reflected a big celebration that invited Tamang artists, political leaders, lamas, *bonbos*, and *tambas*. Artists were dressed up in their traditional attire, but compared to Tundikhel in Kathmandu, very few people wore Tamang clothes and hats, but they were in clean clothes. Near the Lhochhar programme, a welcome gate was built by hanging a banner which was tied to banana and bamboo tress. The banner displayed that 2853th Jya Lho (Bird Year) and Sonam Lhochhar Cultural Program 2073. On the banner, Buddha's image and 12 different animals in a single circle associated with particular years were also printed. The venue was decorated with Buddhist prayer flags, the figures of Buddhist deities and a tent set up with loud speakers and a sound system. Through this cultural event, Tamang people are creating their new identity by performing their dance programme in the Tamang language, custom, and culture.

The context of such identity is also produced through ritual action (Shneiderman 2015). By conducting an ethnographic study on Thangmi identity, she argues that it is formed throughout ritual action which is the combination of practice and performance. For her, practice is basically ritualised within Thangmi, a group-internal epistemological framework, and mediates between the human and divine world. On the contrary,

performance which is completed within a primary framework but also carried out within a broader discursive context created by political, economic and other issues. Performance appears in open and public domains with people expressing themselves and others. Shneiderman's analysis of performance helps us understand the trend of Lhochhar and Lhochhar becoming a practice for people after a couple of years. However, such performances can be seen from the early 1990s in Tamang songs, videos, films, and literature, which help increase awareness of the Tamang people. Over the last decade, such consciousness among the Tamang people is largely widened through different social dimensions. The use of Tamang songs in public transportation and mobile ringtones, wearing Tamang dress and hats during wedding ceremonies, public places, Lhochhar, occasions, and programmes, and writing Tamang related words in their business professions are features of this rising awareness. The most recent book, which might be the first book of the Tamang contribution to tourism, mentions three Everest climbers, namely Pemba Tamang, Kitap Sing Tamang, and Karna Bahadur Tamang who wear Tamang hats, hold the Damphu, and the flag of Nepal Tamang Ghedung during their ascent of Mount Everest (Tamang and Tamang 2017). This shows the feeling of 'Tamangness' and how they are deeply connected with the Tamang identity.

Currently, one of the most important concerns is how to develop the Lhochhar festival as a common national event. There are three key dates relating to the Lhochhar context: Tamang people started to celebrate the Lhochhar festival from 1990, the government of Nepal gave a one day national holiday from 1995 and the Interim government of Nepal declared it as national festival in 2007. However, many still people think Lhochhar is just like a regular holiday and it is not as popular as normal Hindu festivals in Nepal. A few years ago, I wrote that only a small number of Tamang people know about Lhochhar and that this occasion is their own festival. However, a day before the Dashain holiday, there is a trend of exchanging Dashain greetings between teachers, students, and guardians of school premises, but there is no such tendency for the Lhochhar festival at schools (Dong 2009), nevertheless, with the growing number of Lhochhar celebrations in different villages of the Tamang community, and the countries where they work and live, Lhochhar is gradually developing as a national festival of Nepal among the Tamang people, and non-Tamang people are also familiar with Lhochhar.

In addition, a few years ago the Trekking Agency Association of Nepal (TAAN) has also started celebrating a one-day Lhochhar programme as a cultural tourism product by performing the traditional dances of Tamang,

Gurung and Sherpa communities, and made further entertainment through live concerts of modern dance music. During this event, not only Tamang, Sherpa, and Gurung people enjoy the cultural dances and performances, but also all interested trekking and tourism entrepreneurs participate. This way, Lhochhar is becoming famous among the tourism entrepreneurs. The state can also develop a significant programme to endorse Lhochhar, but unfortunately the state seems to be silent, as the state expectation is that all people celebrate Hindu festivals. The state has also not developed a concrete national cultural policy yet, which indicates the continuation of cultural discrimination and the state is not thinking of the well-being of Lhochhar. If the state behaviour remains the same, the Dashain festival might become more hated among the ethnic people of Nepal. The new constitution of Nepal is going to implement a federal structure of governance from the existing unitary structure, where local bodies have authority to develop their cities and village councils. I expect there will be more chances of budget allocation to develop the dominant cultures of particular regions and districts, like Lhochhar, at least in the Tamsaling province.

Conclusion

This paper discussed Dashain, Mhening and finally the Lhochhar festival and how each festival signifies the distinct cultural identity in Nepal. One of the central themes of this paper was that Dashain celebrations within the Tamang community are the result of a long held belief that it was their cultural event. For the Tamang, Dashain is not only a social transaction of gifts for renewing social relations and uniting people, but also explains why it is celebrated over a long historical period. The paper argues that Dashain becomes doxa among the people of the Chhukha village with the continued collective practice of different generations over centuries. The four days of ritual events became naturalised among the Tamang community, which guides their children to follow the rules of Dashain and this way of socialisation pushed them to celebrate Dashain every year. They do not consider Dashain as a Hindu festival, as they celebrate it in their own way. However, over time, Dashain became a long holiday for many indigenous people of Nepal and was interpreted as a festival of Hindus due to the significant contributions of ethnic-activist scholars, ethnic movements, and their own awareness of cultural practices. The state itself broadcasts contradictory illustrations of Dashain highlighting it as a festival of Hindu people, while the media and radio stations emphasise Dashain as a national festival of Nepali people.

For Tamang people, *Mhening* is different than Dashain and it has to be understood from the Tamang perspective and their practices. Similar to the Hindu tradition, Bon-Buddhists also sacrifice animals, but the Tamang celebration of *Mhening* is different, especially the practice of a three-day-long festival in which they honour their deities, remember dead relatives, and worship their clan deity and enjoy varieties of meat and other cuisine. One of the most significant differences is that they do not have a tradition of giving *tika* and a blessing ceremony, but it was later assimilated by the Hindu culture. They argue that the Hindu Dashain festival was celebrated in the month of Chaitra (March-April) which mixed with the Tamang *Mhening* by Hindu rulers during the unification process of Nepal. *Mhening* overlapped with the Dashain festival and was celebrated according to Hindu state's guidelines, and for over a century their children also followed and learned the Hindu way of celebrating Dashain. In developing the Hindu culture, there were involuntary contributions of the Tamang elites and *bonbos*. The Tamang leaders had a responsibility to attend military camps where they gave blessings to villagers during Dashain. Furthermore, there had to be bloody finger prints on their house walls to prove that they celebrated Dashain in their home according to necessary sacrificial rituals of the Hindu state. Similarly, the local *bonbos* sacrifice animals to honour different deities, but it does not mean that *bonbos* are Hindus. Since *bonbos* worship deities like Devi, Kali, Shiva, Parvati, and Ganesh, many people are confused. The performance of *bonbos* clearly shows the distinct identity of the Tamang people who recognised themselves as non-Hindus. Therefore, Tamang people celebrate *Mhening*, but when they communicate in the Nepali language with non-Tamangs, they said they are celebrating Dashain. The way of celebrating *Mhening* signifies one of the important features of Tamang identity, although there are few contradictions between *Mhening* and Dashain in the context of cultural history.

Tamang identity is further extended by the Lhochhar celebration, which is related with the demand for recognition in a multicultural society. One of their major voices is the imagination of 'Tamsaling' where Tamang people want their ancestral homeland with the right to self-determination in the federal government. Although Tamang culture has been reconstructing since the early 1990s, through the medium of Tamang songs, literature, films, videos, and dramas, the Lhochhar festival is a huge social, cultural, and political festival where thousands of Tamang gather in Tundikhel, Kathmandu. Now the trend of Lhochhar is escalating in different places where Tamang people live and work in Nepal and beyond, which indicates how they connect with Lhochhar and their homeland culture. It is a way

to keep their Tamang culture no matter where they are and they want to demonstrate who they are. The performance of different artists, *bonbos*, lamas, and political speeches of Tamang leaders during Lhochhar does not only raise awareness of their ancient traditions, but also enlightens and produces a new habitus and develops a new doxa among the Tamang people, which eventually challenges the Hindu Dashain celebration. There are few distinctions between the Dashain, *Mhening* and Lhochhar celebrations. Dashain and *Mhening* are the continuity of a past festival which is related with blessings, the exchange of gifts and varieties of meat, but Lhochhar is more than these practices. Lhochhar is associated with reconstructing their identity by reviving and promoting their ancient culture, and a socialisation process for making their own history and a distinct identity.

In conclusion, the Dashain, *Mhening*, and Lhochhar festivals are constructed by us and represent the national cultures of Nepal. These cultures are alive because of the social relations and interconnection with society. As human beings, we understand cultural diversity and the best practice of respect in the world. Respect, in the sense that every human being, their culture, practices, thoughts, and beliefs are meaningful. Failing to acknowledge this creates the dimensions of humiliation, misrecognition, and dishonour. Cultures vary according to different caste/ethnic groups, but they are not different in terms of their cultural significance. Each culture is unique in itself and displays the trait of a particular community. In this sense, all cultures are equal and the state has the responsibility to make cultures equal through social justice. Therefore, either Dashain, or all the festivals of Nepal should be framed as national festivals of Nepal, or none should be. If there is cultural politics, neither Dashain nor Lhochhar become great festivals, but only become great festivals within their respective communities. If the state only gives priority to Hindu Dashain, large numbers of disadvantaged groups feel the existence of cultural discrimination even after the removal of the constitutional Hindu kingdom.

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State Recognition and Emerging Trends of Modernisation of Tibetan Medicine in Nepal

GAURAV LAMICHHANE

Introduction

Tibetan medicine has spread far and wide into various cultural milieus ranging from the territories in the Indian and Nepali Himalayas to the urban spaces of the US, Europe, and Asia. One of the reasons it is gaining popularity might be due to its holistic approach of body, mind, and health. The primary text upon which Tibetan medicine is based is the *Gyushi* (Tib. *rGyud bzhi*¹), or the *Four Tantra*. The *Four Tantra* defines the principles of body, health, healing, disease and their etiology based upon the description of the subtle body as described by tantric Buddhism² in the Highest Yoga Tantra (Meyer 1995; Donden 1986). While spreading and adapting into numerous, sometimes disparate, cultural contexts, Tibetan medicine has also encountered the forces of global modernity; therefore, modernisation of Tibetan medicine takes a different trajectory according to the place into which it has been transplanted. How it is practiced in a particular place is shaped by both local and global dynamics. Depending on the places where it is found, its legal status and clinical practice also vary widely. Known as *Sowa Rigpa* (Tib. *gso ba rig pa*) in Tibetan, which translates to the ‘science of healing’ (Adams 2001a, 553), it is even known by different names in different places: Buddhist medicine in Bhutan, Mongolian medicine in Mongolia, and *amchi*³ medicine in Ladakh.

1 I follow Wylie (1959) system of transliteration of Tibetan terms.

2 Hereby, Tibetan Medicine and Tibetan Buddhism are intricately interwoven even though some of its contemporary practitioners might promote Tibetan Medicine as a secular science in itself.

3 *amchi* is a Mongolian loan word in Tibetan for medical doctor. See Besch (2006) for details of its etymology.

In Nepal, Tibetan medicine is known as amchi medicine⁴ and its practice is widespread mostly among the ethnic communities belonging to Bhotiya⁵ category who reside in the northern Himalayan regions like Dolpo, Mustang, and Rasuwa. Tibetan medicine is also practiced by Tibetan doctors⁶ in various modern Tibetan clinics in Kathmandu. This distinction between the types of practitioners is important to note, as my paper specifically deals with and differentiates between the causes and effects of state recognition of amchi medicine as historically practiced within the Nepali state's boundaries and Tibetan medicine which has its roots in exile-Tibetan population. Despite the presence of Tibetan medicine in both rural and urban centres, the Nepali state does not officially recognise Tibetan medicine as a distinct medical system yet; for the state, it is only one of the many inchoate indigenous healing systems found in the Himalayas. This is a deliberate action on the part of the state, whose recognition has different consequences for the patient, practitioners, and the state. Therefore, this paper investigates the effects of the lack of state recognition of Tibetan medicine in Nepal.

Although scholars have investigated the relationship between Tibetan medicine and state institutions (for e.g., Adams 1988; Janes 1995, 1999), biomedicine's impact on the practice and development of Tibetan medicine (for e.g., Adams 2007; Schrempf 2007; McKay 2007, 2010; Craig 2007, 2008, 2012), extensive discussions on the different trends of modernisation of Tibetan medicine induced by the lack of state recognition is missing in the current scholarship.

This paper is based on the ethnographic study (participant-observation)

- 4 During my field research, I found that some Tibetan doctors, especially those based in Kathmandu, disapproved of this name and hence wanted their practice to be recognised as Sowa Rigpa instead. After the opening of the medical programme in 2016, which I discuss below, Tibetan medicine is recognised as Sowa Rigpa. Since this change did not occur until after the completion of this study, I have retained the previous name for the sake of consistency.
- 5 *Bhotiya* is derived from the word *Bhot*, which is the Nepali name of Tibet. Bhotiya is a category comprising of the 'indigenous Tibetan-speaking people of Nepal' and might include other ethnic groups such as Sherpas, Gurungs and Tamangs (Ramble 1997, 379). Therefore, Bhotiya is a Nepali term for the people from the ethnically Tibetan areas that the Gorkhali Kingdom had annexed during the late 18th century. The term *Bhotiya* is better understood, according to Ramble, by Höfer's term 'Tibetanid' which denotes 'groups being Lamaists or followers of the Bonpo religion and speaking a dialect closely related to High Tibetan' (Höfer 1977, 391).
- 6 Kloos (2010) calls Tibetan medicine practiced outside Tibet by the Tibetans in exile with a term exile-Tibetan medicine. In Nepal, there are amchi from Bhutan and exile-Tibetan amchi from India practicing in private clinics in Boudha. I use the term Tibetan doctors to denote amchi from both the countries and distinguish them from the amchi from the Bhotiya community in Nepal.

of three Tibetan clinics and a 10-day training course in Tibetan message therapy (called *Kunye*) in Boudha, Kathmandu, conducted from the second week of February until the last week of April in 2015. A total of 17 interviews were conducted with the doctors and the clinic staff, and other relevant actors; local and foreign patients and officials of the organisations promoting Tibetan medicine in Nepal. The interviews were based on structured, semi-structured, and unstructured question as well as informal discussions.

Himalayan Amchi Association and the Struggle for Recognition

The Himalayan Amchi Association (HAA) was established in 1996 by the amchi from the Himalayan regions as a professional umbrella organisation to bring all the amchi in Nepal under its purview and promote the amchi's agenda for obtaining the government's support and recognition. Its board members primarily comprise of the amchi living in different hill regions of Nepal, mostly Mustang, Dolpo, and Rasuwa. It has conducted numerous workshops and training on Tibetan medicine in the past and conferred certificates to the trainees (Craig 2007, 2008, 2012). Nevertheless, when I visited their office during my field research, I found it to be in a sorry state. The office is housed on the second floor of a building that stands by a narrow busy street in Boudha, and remained closed during the entire time of my field research. Later, I came to learn that the office has only opened three times in two years.

Nonetheless, I was able to contact and meet Amchi Bista, who is the Vice-Chairman of the organisation, while he was visiting Kathmandu from his home in Mustang. After a long discussion with Amchi Bista over a meal in a restaurant in Boudha, I came to understand that due to various factors, such as the Nepali state's longstanding discrimination and neglect of ethnic communities, commitment to Hinduism and homogenisation of cultural differences by imposing the Nepali language and *Parbatiya* culture, and a discriminatory medical policy that actively promotes biomedicine and Ayurveda while militating against recognition of other alternative indigenous medical systems, Himalayan amchi are striving hard to sustain their practice and are; therefore, actively seeking state support in order to survive. In this constellation, space plays a key role as the urban-rural divide also being one of the stakes involved in the lack of recognition. Since the state does not officially recognise the traditional lineage system of amchi education, the amchi have had to transform their medical knowledge by aligning with the state's policy of what makes a proper medical system, which is based on the biomedical model of healthcare; this

requires the amchi to modernise their practice by institutionalising and professionalising amchi medicine. One way that the amchi have done so is by forming the HAA, and in the case of Amchi Bista, by opening a medical school, Lo Kunphen Mentsikhang, in Mustang.

Some of the reasons that Amchi Bista thinks Tibetan medicine was neglected by the state for so long are: the lack of enough representatives of Bhotiya in the state bureaucracy,⁷ who can lobby strongly to garner support for Tibetan medicine, and a lack of a significant number of Tibetan medical practitioners trained under the state system, and therefore can negotiate with the state bureaucracy. Therefore, one of the main agendas behind his opening of a school in Mustang is to create a new generation of amchi who will be able to maneuver through the current state apparatus that is oblivious to amchi medicine. He is hopeful that 'if [Lo Kunphen] can produce many amchi then maybe the government will listen to [them].' As until the HAA started championing for the cause of amchi community in 1996, the state did not take any notice of Tibetan medicine. According to Amchi Bista:

[B]efore the establishment of the Himalayan Amchi Association, the government had no clue about what amchi meant; whether it is a bird, or a fruit found in the forest. But now the officials in the government also know what amchi is; they know that amchi medicine is like Ayurveda. Ayurveda and our medicine are very similar; for example, in Ayurveda they have the concept of *kapha*, *vata*, *pitta* and we have *rlung*, *beken*, *tripa*...

However, presenting amchi medicine merely in comparison to Ayurveda only works against amchi medicine as the state officials could mistake amchi medicine as merely an offshoot of Ayurveda. This has happened in Ladakh where the Ladakhi amchi struggled against the government's reluctance to see their medicine separately from Ayurveda (Blaikie 2014). Amchi Bista also hints towards similar dynamics operating in Nepal when he says he has a hunch that it is the people in the Ayurveda council who are

7 For example, from earlier data we can see that while the representation of Brahmin and Chhetri in the parliament (House of Representatives, HOR) increased in the duration of 10 years since 1991, representation of the hill communities plummeted instead: 'The number of Brahmin in the House of Representatives increased from 39 per cent in 191-94 [sic] to 44.4 per cent in the second (1994-99), and 46.3 per cent in the third (1999-2001). Chhetri has similar record 17.1 per cent in 1991, 18.5 per cent in 1994 and 17.1 per cent in 1999. The representation of other hill ethnic groups declined from 16 per cent to 11.7 per cent to 12.2 per cent in 1991, 1994 and 1999 respectively' (Baral 2006, 19).

blocking the recognition of amchi medicine: 'There are a lot of supporters and *thulo manchhe* ['big shots'] of Ayurveda in the Ministry of Health; it is them who are reluctant to support the amchi medicine... They might support acupuncture, homeopathy, unani and allopathy [biomedicine] but they will not support amchi medicine.' Since the state apparatus has long been occupied and operated by the *Parbatiyas*, it is not surprising that the officials in the Ayurveda council and the Ministry of Health are biased toward amchi medicine. According to Ramble (1997), this bias comes primarily from the deep seated contempt for the Bhotiya in general, and in the case of Ayurveda practitioners occupying the Ayurveda Council, it might also come from the perceived sense of threat through competition to their own profession; one of the strategies to mitigate that threat is to not acknowledge amchi medicine as separate from Ayurveda.

However, Amchi Gurung, who has worked as the Vice-Chairman and Secretary of the HAA in the past, provided me with another dimension into why I had found the HAA's office in Boudha in such a sorry state and why the office had only operated twice in the last three years. Part of the reason that the effort for state recognition of amchi medicine has not been effective, according to Amchi Gurung, is due to a lack of coordination among the amchi at the national level and their failure to organise themselves better to run the organisation. Since the majority of the executive board members come from remote areas like Dolpo, Mustang, and Rasuwa, and reside there for most of the year, it is difficult to hold meetings regularly. As it is mandatory to conduct four meetings annually in order to keep the license of the organisation, Amchi Gurung even proposed that the amchi residing in those rural areas come to Kathmandu only four times (if not more) a year to attend the meetings, and organisation would bear the cost of their transport to Kathmandu. However, the amchi could not even attend the minimum required meetings. When all his efforts to run the Association smoothly failed, Amchi Gurung proposed that either the organisation should be shut down or the leadership of the organisation should be shifted to Kathmandu. His logic was that shifting the leadership to Kathmandu would be an effective way to promote amchi and their cause. However, this was flatly refused by the elder amchi who would neither attend the meetings nor leave their posts on the Board.

Amchi Gurung further argued that the elder amchi in the HAA board also lacked the proper skills required to deal with the state bureaucracy. He summarised his interaction with the amchi thus:

Although they are very experienced amchi, who have spent 15-20 years,

some even 40 years, in the profession, they lack proper knowledge about the technical side and regulatory aspects of running an institute. They misunderstood my proposal and mocked me by saying we could even change the name of the association to Kathmandu Amchi Association. It was very difficult to convince them; how can I convey to them that they need to understand that we are dealing with problems associated with language, education model, and regulatory issues and therefore should change ourselves accordingly?

This remark of Amchi Gurung brings all the previous discussions together. Even though the HAA is based in Kathmandu, its leadership still lies on the periphery. The amchi have to play the game in terms of the rules set by the state and be able to master the know-how of this game if they want to be visible as a separate complete medical body. Amchi Gurung is well aware of this reality and therefore has relocated himself to Kathmandu. However, for the HAA amchi, the state recognition of their medicine is also about the acknowledgement of their culture and ethnicity, which the state has neglected since its inception. That is why they mocked Amchi Gurung by saying the name of the organisation should be changed to Kathmandu Amchi Association; it was their reaction to the threat they felt of losing their cultural identity. Amchi Gurung has also realised this fact and for him the future of the amchi profession, and survival of Bhotiya culture, can only be assured if the amchi change accordingly with time and modernise their practice.

Exiled-Tibetan Medicine in Boudha: Neo-traditionalism and the Commercialisation of Therapy

In addition to the Himalayan amchi, there is a second group, comprising of the Tibetan doctors from exile communities in India and Bhutan, that practices Tibetan medicine in modern urban institutionalised clinics in Boudha, Kathmandu. Contrary to the Himalayan amchi, the Tibetan doctors⁸ in Boudha do not have a similar pressure to modernise their

8 Although the two doctors I worked with are from Bhutan, and not from exile-Tibetan community like those working in Mentseekhang, Dharamsala, they studied in the institutes in India that follow Mentseekhang's teaching curriculum; therefore, for the sake of simplicity, I will also describe these doctors practicing Mentseekhang model of Tibetan medicine as Tibetan doctors and their practice as exile-Tibetan medicine, the term I borrow from Kloos (2010), who studied the making of Tibetan medicine in Indian exile through Mentseekhang, the pioneering institute of Tibetan medicine outside the Tibet Autonomous Region of China. This is not to mask their personal identity but to distinguish the practice in the modern Tibetan clinics in Boudha from the ethnic Bhotiya amchi.

practice because they were trained in the modern institutes of Tibetan medicine in India; so their practice in Boudha is already professionalised and institutionalised. Since the Nepali state tolerates their practice and they are able to cater their service to their foreign clientele, they are not struggling for mere survival like the Himalayan amchi. Some Tibetan doctors have taken advantage of the absence of recognition and regulation by creating commercial training courses that suit the tastes of their foreign clients.

The Tibetan clinics in Kathmandu are either operating privately or are patronised by various monasteries. The doctors in these clinics exhibit what Pordié (2008) calls 'neotraditionalism'. It is a term that denotes the phenomena of 'deterritorialization of [Tibetan] actors and practices, modern transnationalization of knowledge', and of 'reterritorialization' while still making 'systematic use of 'tradition' to legitimate new practices' (Pordié 2008, 16-17). This phenomenon is driven by the urban institutional actors like Dr. Lektsok of Kunphen Tibetan Medical Center and Amchi Sherab of Pure Vision Sorig who use Tibetan medicine as an identity marker in larger world politics. These actors also appropriate ideologies of science as a tool to legitimise their traditional Tibetan medicine, while they also resort to religion where appropriate (Pordié 2008). This is very clearly seen in the case of Dr. Lektsok: he was born and raised in the Mundgod Tibetan refugee settlement camp in South India and spent his school years in Darjeeling. After graduating from the Central University of Tibetan Studies (CUTS) in Sarnath, he has been practicing Tibetan medicine in Kunphen Tibetan Medical Center in Boudha for over 5 years. Dr. Lektsok exemplifies how modern Tibetan medicine is practiced today in an urban institutionalised setting. He speaks fluent English, Nepali, and Hindi. He effortlessly switches between biomedicine and Tibetan medical systems while explaining illness conditions,⁹ using the Tibetan, English and Nepali languages, and supplements his explanations by referring to Buddhist philosophy. For example, according to him, the three humors - wind, bile, phlegm - could be understood to be responsible in the formation of *ectoderm*, *mesoderm*, and *endoderm* respectively. Similarly, he described that Tibetan medicine sees cancer as a karmic disease, 'something like *genetic disorder*, to speak in *biomedical terms*', he said. He then continued to

9 This resembles the Tibetan medical practitioners in Darjeeling and Kalimpong (India), who freely use biomedical terminologies to appease their clients (Gerke 2011). Although just appeasing me might not have been Dr. Lektsok's intention when he chose to give me biomedical explanations so frequently; he might have been habituated to do so because of his training.

explain that cancer or '*dre*' is like a fruit of a tree that consumes all energy and develops its own nutrient supplying nerves; '*biomedically speaking*', he said, 'it is treated by disrupting this supply, a process called *angiogenesis*'. But wind, *rlung*, is the cause of cancer according to Tibetan medicine, described Dr. Lektsok. He has traveled to Russia, Ukraine, and Latvia for professional purposes and adheres to Buddhist ethics and code of conduct while practicing his profession; for instance, he opens and ends his daily practice at work by praying to the Medicine Buddha. However, he does not prefer to go to the retreat that is prescribed by *Gyushi* for all doctors in order to excel in their practice.

Amchi Sherab is another example of neotraditional Tibetan doctor. He comes from Bhutan. He received his medical training in Darjeeling and Dharamshala in India. He is also the most entrepreneurial among the rest of the amchi in Boudha. He operates two ventures: a clinic in Boudha and a healing centre-cum-resort in Pharping, a village in the outskirts of Kathmandu. From the glossy colourful brochure of the ventures, one can clearly discern that Amchi Sherab promotes his services as wellness rather than treatment that are geared towards foreigners. He offers his services commercially, yet he also displays altruistic intentions to help his clients. His extensive professional travel abroad has provided him exposure to spa and wellness culture, which he tries to emulate by incorporating some of its elements in his healing centre, where traditional Tibetan therapeutic massage called *Kunye*, hot medical bath, herbal dry sauna, meditation hall, library, shrine room and Medicine Buddha garden are available to the guests. Alternatively, he also employs the trope of tradition, like his branding of *Kunye* massage as a traditional Tibetan massage based on *Gyushi*, to further his practice. The healing centre and his clinic both attract more foreigners than local because he tailors his services to fit the imagination of his foreign clients by bringing 'traditional' healing services into the modern setting of a spa. Likewise, by not resorting to biomedical diagnostic tools, such as sphygmomanometer used by the other doctors to measure blood pressure but instead relying only on the pulse diagnosis, going to meditation retreat every year in order to enhance his medical practice, and starting his daily work by conducting a long *puja* in the morning are also some appealing factors to his clients who find in him a modern doctor and a dharma practitioner.

Amchi Sherab also exhibits another characteristic of neo-traditionalism: 'selective accentuation' or distortion of therapies; just like religious symbols are highlighted in the Tibetan clinics of the West to create a quasi-monastic environment (Pordié 2008), Amchi Sherab's healing centre also

provides a resort for foreign clients who are seeking solace far away from Kathmandu's crowds in a serene environment that is filled with Buddhist symbols and yet still avails them with modern amenities. The centre also has its own vegetable garden and the vegetables grown there are offered to the guests on an organic menu. During my visit there, a German woman had come to spend a night in the centre. She wanted to get away from the crowded and polluted streets of Kathmandu, she told me. Amchi Sherab and his medical practice is an example of a new direction of modernisation in Tibetan medicine in Kathmandu that is informed by the entanglement of religion, medicine, global capitalism, and various translocal actors and imaginations.

What distinguishes Amchi Sherab and his clinic from the others is that he offers a training course of therapeutic *Kunye* massage commercially. Amchi Sherab's wife, Pema Bhuti, a Sherpa from Solukhumbu in the Everest region, is the trainer of the course. She is a certified acupuncturist and also offers other therapies like moxibustion and cupping.¹⁰ After constant requests from her clients to offer a training course, Pema, together with Amchi Sherab, devised a 60 hour course that stretches into 10 days and costs USD 200. The *Kunye* training course developed by Amchi Sherab presents an interesting case study on how Tibetan doctors have benefitted from the lack of state recognition and regulation of Tibetan medicine in Kathmandu. Since there is no central authority that overlooks the Tibetan medical training, medical practitioners like Amchi Sherab are free to create their own brand of therapies. The quality and standard of such therapies is derived from the sheer authority of the amchi themselves, in this case Amchi Sherab, who is a well-known figure in Boudha for his expertise. However, the certificate distributed to the students at the end marks their participation in the course and not necessarily their competence.

Kunye training course is a very popular course among the foreigners, who mostly come from Russia, the US, and many parts of Europe. These participants have a wide range of backgrounds and motivations behind their training. Out of five participants in the course I observed, Chiara, from Italy, was a visual illustrator who had recently developed an interest in Asian medicine. Before taking the *Kunye* course, she had spent a few months in an Ayurvedic hospital in India learning the basics of Ayurveda. She plans to open a healing centre in Italy someday. Laima, from Lithuania, was already an adept masseuse herself but now was learning *Kunye* massage to add

10 A therapy of putting heated cups over the acupressure points; the heat creates a vacuum inside the cup, which then sucks in the skin, and the cups are removed after a few minutes. <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4488563/>.

new variety to her repertoire. Audrie, from France, is a fashion designer working in Delhi and Kathmandu and was taking the course as a hobby. Alexander, a yoga instructor and a masseur in the Ukraine, was taking the course to offer a different variety of services to his clients. Markus, from Germany, was taking this course to explore his interest in Tibetan medicine in general and also because he wanted to learn Tibetan massage from an 'authentic' practitioner.

Pema starts the course by handing out an information sheet about *Kunye*. Etymologically, *Kunye* is a combination of two Tibetan words: *Ku* means to apply oil and *Nye* means 'to apply pressure with a variety of movements' (Bhuti n.d.). It involves pressing particular nodal points on the body that hold energy flows. Therefore, the description continues:

...with a special technique and oils Ku Nye practitioner unblocks energy, nerve, blood and lymph channels and by applying pressure one [sic] the specific point brings the three Nyepas or humors back into balance as well as encourage them to return to their proper seat within the body. By applying pressure on the tender points, which are the sign of an internal blockage one enables the vital force to flow freely, thereby restoring health and wellbeing.¹¹

Hence, this therapy requires a deep knowledge of the workings of energy channels and pressure points on the body.

The sheet also contains an illustration of a human body with various points on the back. The points are described in a mixture of biomedical anatomy and Tibetan medical anatomy; for example, a point at the base of the neck is the 'Central point: processus spinosus of vertebra', below which are the 'points of rLung', 'points of Tripa', 'points of Badkan', 'points of aorta', 'points of diaphragm', 'points of Gallbladder', 'points of spleen/pancreas', 'descending rLung' etc. Likewise, different categories of illnesses that *Kunye* is beneficial for are also described in syncretic terms: 'Neurological problems: numbness, sciatica, paralysis; Psychological problems: agitation, anxiety, depression; Women's health: irregular menstruation, PMS; Pain: chronic pain, such as back pain including upper, middle and lower back, migraine headaches, tension headaches;... as well as for Wind imbalance' (Bhuti n.d.).

After giving a basic introduction on Sowa Rigpa and *Kunye* massage, Pema leads the participants to recite the Medicine Buddha (*Sangye*

11 Bhuti n.d.

Menla) mantra in Tibetan three times. The participants are also asked to simultaneously visualise the deity dissolving into their body. They were to see a blue light descending into them while the deity dissolved into their body. There was a *thangka* painting of *Sangye Menla* hanging on the wall to aid with the visualisation. Also, on the wall, there were a few diagrams inside the glass frames illustrating various acupuncture points on the human body. Pema sometimes used these pictures during the teaching. Once the massage begins, the practitioner's hand movements have to be synchronised with his or her breathing so that the practitioner does not lose his or her own energy by the end of the massage session. Every massage session should begin with the *Sangye Menla* chanting and end with the practitioner dedicating the merit earned from this act to the benefit of all sentient beings.

The course started at 9 am and went until 12 pm. The afternoon session began at 1:30 pm and continued until 5 pm. All the instructions were given in English and the staff assisted the students during the practice sessions. Throughout the day, a soothing meditative music, mostly Tibetan chanting, was played in a low volume from the music player. The training ended on the eleventh day with a distribution of certificate by Amchi Sherab in his shrine room accompanied by offering of a *khatag*, silk scarf, to all the students.

This *Kunye* training course is also a case where the amchi has tapped into the foreigners' imagination of Tibetan medicine, usually imagined as a holistic therapy, and developed a training course that suits the taste of his foreign clients. It is short enough to fit the travel schedule of the foreigners and is rigorous enough to provide some level of skill. Additionally, the mixing of biomedical terms to explain anatomy based on tantric Buddhism makes the course both 'scientific' yet 'traditional', which thereby enhances its appeal; that is to say, by retaining exotic elements like tantric channels but explaining them in familiar terms of biomedical anatomy and physiology, the instructor Pema is successfully able to bridge the gap of the unfamiliar and familiar while catering it to her foreign students who are seeking an 'authentic' training. Pordié (2012) has also reported a similar case at the Mango spa in India that offers its own brand of aromatherapy. Its proprietor also blends modern marketing tools like brand name differentiation and various traditions such as Japanese water therapy and Ayurveda to make it appealing to her clients who are foreigners and urban elites of India. However, Pure Vision's *Kunye* training course is a novel phenomenon in Kathmandu where the other Tibetan doctors do not offer such courses commercially.

Amchi Gurung and the Sorig Khang International Nepal (SKIN)

Since the HAA, the only organisation that is pushing for state recognition of Tibetan medicine, has become dysfunctional for now, Amchi Gurung has turned to bringing international support to Tibetan medicine through another organisation, Sorig Khang International Nepal (SKIN). SKIN was established in 2014 as a country branch office of Dr. Nida Chenagtsang's International Academy for Traditional Tibetan Medicine (IATTM),¹² the main office of which is located in Vienna. Immediately after its inception, it has managed to conduct one international conference, the 3rd International Congress on Sowa Rigpa - Traditional Tibetan Medicine, in partnership with IATTM and the local *amchi* community. The conference was held on 28-30 December 2014 and was attended by participants from 37 countries. In April 2015, SKIN invited Jacqueline Hiu, the head of IATTM's branch in Singapore, to offer a free three hour Tibetan yoga course called *Nyejang*.

With its international support from already well established Tibetan doctors in the West like Dr. Nida, SKIN sees itself to be a major player in bringing Tibetan medicine to the fore of the Nepali state's attention and also aspires to take Sowa Rigpa to the global stage. To achieve those goals, SKIN aims to create a Sowa Rigpa council that will govern and regulate Tibetan medicine practice in Nepal; the same task the HAA aspired to achieve. The members in the organisation are aware of the rapid rate at which Tibetan medicine is globalising. To tap into that opportunity and participate in the global development of Tibetan medicine, SKIN is negotiating with the recently established Lumbini Buddhist University to start a medical school that offers a four and a half year long Bachelor's degree in Sowa Rigpa.¹³ Amchi Gurung revealed that the target of creating such a degree is not only to attract the local students but also international students from Europe and the US. If both these goals - to establish a Sowa Rigpa council and a medical school - eventually materialise, they would serve to consolidate *amchi* identity and strengthen their cultural survival.

Conclusion

Tibetan medicine is undergoing two major trends of modernisation in Nepal due to the lack of state recognition: i) the path of professionalisation and institutionalisation followed by the Himalayan *amchi*; and ii) the path of commercialisation followed by the urban based Tibetan doctors in the institutionalised clinics of Boudha. The latter also entails the westernisation

12 <http://www.iattm.net/>.

13 The programme, which at the time of my study was only in the phase of inception, was inaugurated in February 2016.

of Tibetan medicine. Some local actors realise the shortcomings of both the trends and hence they are trying to create a middle path by combining the most useful elements of each approach. They want to promote the traditional practice by professionalising it in such a way that it becomes a marketable commodity, thereby creating a third model of modernisation of Tibetan medicine that is both professional and commercial.

The state has thus far only acted as a silent observer of these developments. However, if it takes action and recognises Tibetan medicine, there are serious benefits for all the stakeholders involved. If it recognises Tibetan medicine, that would lead to a better integration of the Himalayan population because it would give them the voice that they currently lack. It would at the same time offer rural areas better healthcare services and supplement existing healthcare services in a meaningful and useful way. Likewise, it would also open up economic possibilities as Tibetan doctors in urban areas would have an incentive to expand their practices and their customers would also perceive Tibetan medicine as a legitimate service; this would add legitimacy to the profession and Tibetan medicine as a whole.

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Social Rules and Uses in Public Spaces in Kathmandu

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Social Rules and Uses in Public Spaces in Kathmandu

In 1951, Indian intervention, which was in the process of decolonisation, ended a century of isolationism in Nepal.¹ Since then, political revolutions, cultural transformations and major changes in lifestyles have occurred, coupled with improvements in transportation and communication infrastructure. Some may be too quick in assuming this development was the effect of the emerging 'globalisation' trends. However, development in Nepal cannot only be understood as the simple adoption of external cultural characteristics, as since the 90s, the new liberalisation policy imposed in Nepal has resulted in favouring transformations related to what is called globalisation. The democratisation process has allowed the country to modernise itself, especially through the emergence of a new middle class, which incorporates a variety of heterogeneous populations previously excluded from the upper reaches of society.

This article discusses urbanisation in Kathmandu and its impacts on the daily lives of urban populations². The Kathmandu valley has been inhabited for many centuries because of its fertile land and its location at the heart of the trade routes between India and China. However, it has been the second

1 In 1816, the Treaty of Sugauli, between Great Britain and the Kingdom of Nepal, gave shape to Nepal, except for a few key details. In 1848, the Maharajah (Prime Minister) Jang Bahadur Rana seized power from the king, confining him to ceremonial duties. In 1951, opponents of the power of the Ranas, with the help of India, rebelled to introduce a multiparty democracy. Returning triumphant after the insurgency of 1951, King Tribhuvan and his successors have worked on the development their country. The democratisation process really began in 1990, when King Birendra promulgated a new constitution based on the model of the British parliamentary monarchy. Political turmoil started again in 1996, with the Maoist movement.

2 The ethnographic data presented here was collected during nine research visits to Kathmandu between 2009 and 2015.

half of the twentieth century that the settlement process (rural exodus) of the valley has accelerated; the exponential development of the city speaks for itself, especially from 1990 to 2000. A city where buildings and homes were separate by small family fields and courtyards has become a saturated city, where green spaces are limited, the air and rivers are permanently polluted, and the price per square meter of land is dramatically increasing. The rural exodus, particularly during the Maoist revolution (1996 to 2006), has greatly contributed to the population explosion of Kathmandu, which continues today³.

Context: Urbanisation and Communication

Since the 80s, urbanisation in Nepal has widely been associated with the development of communication infrastructure, originally audio and television media⁴, and more recently with telephones and the internet. In the 90s, the majority of Nepalese media was still controlled by the state, and access to modern forms of mass communication was limited. The 2000s were a turning point in the transformation of the world of media. Indeed, following the Maoist revolution, and other important events which transformed the political landscape, new written media and independent radio quickly appeared on the scene. With the speed that the transformations are occurring in Nepal one could even speak of it as a form of media revolution.

According to Wilmore (2008), an anthropologist who studied the amazing mass appearance of local media in Nepal after the events of the 90s, globalisation has created three major effects in the world of media: international channels have been increasingly broadcast, international productions have become more and more important in the traditional television landscape, and new local televisions and radios have emerged. Just as state sovereignty is challenged in the context of globalisation, the media landscape has also been eroded from above (internationalisation) and below (creating local versions, in particular languages). Currently, the idea of development (*bikas* in Nepali) is crucial and determines much of the national media activity. According to Wilmore, electronic media have

3 In the 2001 census, the population of Kathmandu was estimated at 671 846 inhabitants; in 2011, it was estimated at 975,473 inhabitants. But the population data on Kathmandu is notoriously inaccurate, as there are many migrant households that are still officially registered in their natal villages – it is believed the population is much higher than any official statistics show (unofficial accounts estimate that the population is in the millions, but no accurate data exists).

4 Radio is very popular in Nepal, especially in rural areas.

the particular feature of focusing on national unity; their instrumental role has been decisive in creating a mass audience. This mass is based on the unification of the national population by a common media culture deployed by the central government as an integrative force. Anderson's (2006) work also reveals how the decline of sacred communities, language and lineage is occurring simultaneously, and how a fundamental change has taken place in the understanding of the world, encouraging citizens to 'think of the nation', even in the most remote areas. However, in the same time, since the 90s Nepal has experienced a huge fragmentation along ethnic and caste lines. This has resulted in an environment of identity politics and interest groups (Janajati) that are diametrically opposed to the concept of national unity. This has resulted in the decentralisation and demarcation of ethno-states in the new federal system so that the reification of identity, ethnicity, and local languages is increasing daily and undermining the concept of 'national' identity.

From the 2000s, the new information and communication technologies have been democratised in Nepal by reducing their production and distribution costs, and by the recent emergence of an internationalised middle class. Urban and rural populations are now aware of living in an era different to the previous time, where it took days to send a message to the village, where mass tourism was more unusual, and where people could not identify themselves other than through social categories imposed by the civil code. Indeed, the caste system was enshrined in the Constitution, the *Muluki Ain*⁵, until 1963⁶. However, precarious and poorly maintained roads and communication lines remain a problem for the country, which does not seem to be able to preserve its infrastructure from human and natural erosion to open up its remotest regions.

5 For a study of the Nepalese Civil Code, see: Höfer (1979).

6 The *Muluki Ain*, the ancient constitution of Nepal, was established on the initiative of Jang Bahadur Rana in 1854. It was originally called *Ain*, from the Arabic *a'in*, which means law. *Muluki*, from the Arabic *mulk*, meaning countries. It has been revised several times, notably in 1910 (during a first official abolition of slavery – which was truly abolished in 1924, following an official statement from a Rana governor) and 1943. In 1963, it was replaced by a new constitution by King Mahendra. However, this new constitution was still based on the *Muluki Ain*, so it was not an abolition of this constitutive text, but a transformation. Mahendra, the son of King Tribhuvan restored to the throne in 1950, wanted to make Nepal a competitive nation, but he did not provide a clear abolition of the caste system. This question was then faced by the Maoists from the last decade of the 20th century. Indeed, although untouchability has been prohibited since 1965, Dalits are still forced to live in separate communities and their access to the most sacred temples is still denied, especially in the countryside.

The Users of Kathmandu City

Nepalese living in Kathmandu very rarely leave the city, except to visit their natal villages, for instance for the festival of Dashain. Rare are those who visit their country like foreign tourists do. Only a few religious sites out of the valley, such as the temple of Dakshin Kali or Manakamana, are popular places for the Nepalese. The townspeople move through a series of old neighbourhoods that reflect the history (the many palaces of different royal dynasties for instance), mixed today with the ultra-modern buildings (but rarely more than 4 floors). It is in these streets or narrow passages that they negotiate their paths, their business, their familial meetings, or where they struggle with the incursions of modernity. The street is a kind of theatre where many social interactions take place. Trade, transportation, education⁷, all add up to give a strong sense that the city is very congested. Some use the street only to move, but for many, it is the place where social interactions happen.

In Kathmandu, almost all the castes, religious communities, and ethnic groups of Nepal coexist. Although ethnic groups and castes are frequently separated into neighbourhoods, there are examples of social mixing as children are mixed at school and some homes are frequently shared by several families from different castes, ethnicities, or religions. The houses are mostly composed by one to four floors. Typically, the owners, who are middle class or 'medium high' in particular, use one or two floors for their use and rent the others. It is also common that houses are home to three generations of the same family. Where there are common areas in homes, such as terraces or gardens, owners and tenants meet there and share their daily lives. However, when they are from different castes, they almost never share meals. Indeed, the caste system, in the words of Dumont (1966), divides society into a large number of hereditary groups distinguished and connected by three characteristics: separation regarding marriage and direct or indirect contact (food); division of labour, each group having a traditional or theoretical profession; hierarchy, which orders the groups as relatively higher and lower compared to each other. Nevertheless, cohabitation involves social interactions that lead, in some cases, to emotional ties being created that go beyond any caste considerations. Apart from in homes, at school or in the workplace, members of different castes and ethnic groups do not interact very often, owing to the huge diversity of cultural, religious, and matrimonial practices of each group.

7 Schooling has undoubtedly made significant progress in recent years. The streets are, at certain hours of the day, literally overrun by schoolchildren in uniform.

However, on Saturdays, which is the only day off, young people of diverse origins go into Thamel, the area where the restaurants, bars, hotels, nightclubs are concentrated, to seek entertainment. In these meetings, we often find people who attend, or have attended, the same school, where the social diversity is strong, or people who are working together. However, as Thamel is expensive, it generally attracts the middle class male youth, as there are also strong gender restrictions prohibiting young women from going.

Except for some religious sites⁸ or tourist attractions, green spaces in the city have become increasingly rare because of the extremely rapid and chaotic urbanisation of Kathmandu city. Few homes have a garden, mainly because of the price per square meter. The catering sector (hotels, restaurants, cafes) prize their green areas and the presence of a small garden or a terrace isolated from the traffic is a major asset for businesses. In the aftermath of the earthquakes of May and June 2015, many families had to leave their homes and seek refuge in tents⁹ in the few open spaces, parks and gardens of the city. The streets and all the free land was overrun to meet the most pressing needs: protection from collapses, and shelter from the monsoon, which had started few months after, making the living conditions in a tent particularly difficult for those who couldn't return to their homes. In particular, Ratna Park, the ground for the performance of military parades, was invaded by families in need. This is also the place where humanitarian aid was transported from the airport to proceed to the redistribution of essential goods and emergency supplies.

Urban Projects: Mobility at First?

Since 2007, the government has undertaken large-scale projects in order to maintain its transport network. At the beginning of the project, analysis of the road needs of the city was carried out by the Nepal Roads Department (Department of Roads, Ministry of Physical Infrastructure and Transport¹⁰).

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- 8 Several major religious sites, including the Pashupatinath temple dedicate to Lord Shiva, Swayambunath and Mhyapi, are built on small hills in the centre of the Kathmandu Valley. The sides of the hills are still largely forested and remain natural areas protected from the noise and pollution of the city. Monkeys and many bird species can easily be observed there (eagles, crows, pigeons, etc.).
 - 9 Most remained in the tents for 10 to 15 days, while checking the stability of their homes, and many are still residing in camps as there is no affordable housing for the lower socio-economic groups.
 - 10 During the Rana regime (until 1951), there were two departments of roads called 'Bato Goshwara Kaj' (construction) and 'Chhembhadel Adda' (maintenance). Later, these departments became 'Naya Bato Goshwara Kaj' (construction) and 'Purano Goshwara Bato'

The conclusion was obvious: in 2007, most of the city's roads were obsolete and unsuited to modern traffic of cars and trucks¹¹. The number of vehicles has long exceeded the infrastructure capacities. Large projects had been undertaken in the past; in 1954, the 'Bagmati Valley Road Project' was set up for the construction of major roads; in 1960, battalions of the Nepal Army worked to complete the construction of a route to India, and in 2007, the Government of Nepal allocated a budget of 200 million rupees (budget head number 48-3/4-503) to a road building programme. The aim of this programme was to better connect the country with roads that have a high traffic capacity, starting by widening the main streets in order to solve the immediate problem. One may wonder if the decision had also been influenced by security needs, as well as the Haussmann-style boulevards based on the origin of the current plans of Paris, widening the streets could allow the reduction of pockets of resistance and limit the possibilities of rebellious populations erecting barricades in Kathmandu. However, it is mostly from 2011, during the government of Baburam Bhattarai¹² (August 2011 - March 2013), that the major decision was made to widen the streets of Kathmandu from two to four lanes.

The road network in the Kathmandu Valley has frequently suffered from totally congested traffic, and requires substantial investment. The growth rate of the Nepalese economy largely depends on the efficiency of land transport to neighbouring countries. Moreover, road traffic is sometimes completely saturated, and this jeopardises the heritage which is so useful to attracting tourism. There are two main sources of funding for these projects; the budget annually voted for by the National Commission (National Planning Commission) and aid from development cooperation. Thus, several renovation or widening projects have been fully funded by the redistribution of aid from the UN Development Program, one being the case of the highway that goes from Tribhuvan International Airport to the city of Bhaktapur through Lohakanthali. This high speed road was widened from 4 to 6 lanes in 2010, but in 2015 the two earthquakes damaged it, making the route reduced to two lanes.

Regarding the widening of main as well as secondary roads, the process

(maintenance). These two institutions were merged in 1951 into the 'Public Works Department' (PWD), which was based at the palace of Singh Durbar in Kathmandu. In 1970, the Public Works Department was separated into two distinct entities: the 'Department of Roads' (DoR) and the 'Department of Building'.

11 Motorcycles and scooters are particularly effective in transporting people, which is why they are so numerous. Bicycles are used to transport almost anything and the weights and volumes they can carry is impressive.

12 Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist).

started by painting some metrics data on the walls of houses all over the city. The figure painted on the walls represents the distance the wall has to be set back from the road in order to widen the street. This first encroachment by authorities onto the private property of individuals was the beginning of a long process that is far from complete. Huge demolition sites started throughout the city in September 2007, and as whole streets were to be widened from two to four lanes, thousands of homes were destroyed. Some homes built before the 1980s were preserved, for the sake of heritage. By July 2015, only the main streets had been rebuilt, but the destruction of the walls had started. Some neighbourhoods, such as Samakushi, are deteriorating and reconstruction has been delayed. There are even cases where large blocks of stone and piles of rubble have replaced pavements for several years. The devastating earthquakes on the 25th of April and the 12th of May 2015 led authorities to cease activities on all construction sites. No building permits were issued for months because resources were required to clear earthquake affected areas. The streets are still completely covered by construction waste; either from houses destined for demolition for the road widening or from earthquake induced building collapse.

A Day of Strikes in Kathmandu

Although Nepal's political situation is relatively stable since the fall of the monarchy in 2008, weakness persists, especially concerning the inability of politicians to agree on a draft constitution. There is a form of popular protest called '*bandh*' or '*bandha*,' a Hindi word literally meaning 'closed', which is used by political activists throughout Southeast Asia. During these movements, different groups are mobilised to fight for any reason to declare a strike, which is massively followed despite the level of poverty and lack of compensation. Indeed, during these days of declared strikes, it is customary for all economic activity to be interrupted. Shops, taxis, buses, administrative and public services, everything is closed¹³ as the protesters are heard. When a strike is declared it is generally expected that no one goes to their workplace. Social pressure is palpable, and it is very inappropriate to depart from it. Authorities fear the *bandh* as they affect the whole community; therefore, they are very common in Nepal because it is considered as an effective means of pressure by the actors. The dates of *bandha* are communicated through the media, and more recently on websites devoted to policy debates.

13 With some exceptions, such as hospitals, the police, weddings, and funerals. Some contacts and some money may also 'cause' (as often) these exceptions, like tourists needing to travel to the airport for example.

An ethnographic study of these strikes in Kathmandu demonstrates that people take advantage of these moments to make a different use of the city, as they are deserted by traffic because of the presence of strike pickets near strategic crossroads¹⁴. The *bandha* are not public holidays, there is nothing to celebrate, and because any activity is interrupted, people just let time pass. Roadblocks are set up by the strikers in order to restrain any movement of motorised vehicles,¹⁵ buses, trucks and taxis sit idle, as do cars, motorcycles and private scooters, the streets are imbued with an exceptional serenity, pedestrians can enjoy the space, and the air is more breathable. Families come out into the streets, walk along, while also staying away from the centre of the protests, which sometimes take a violent turn. People sit outside the houses in this exceptionally quiet space. The children invade the streets; they play cricket, football, or learn to ride bicycles.

During these strikes, most of Kathmandu's districts are unrecognisable, except, of course, the places where the events are concentrated. The people seem to enjoy the peace and take advantage of the public spaces, despite the forced slowdown of all economic activity. Usually, the streets are crowded with buses, cars, trucks and motorcycles, street vendors and traders of all kinds, all competing to attract consumers' attention at storefronts and crowded stalls. All these interactions disappear during *bandha*, so that it gives way to previously impossible, or at least hidden, forms of sociability. It is time for people to meet their neighbours, take the time to talk, observe the neighbourhood, and live in slow motion.

Living in *Housing* in Kathmandu: Modern Residential Neighbourhoods

Residential areas, or *housing*, for wealthy families, the upper middle class or foreigners have been built in Kathmandu since the early 2000s. They are formed by houses built on a unique model from a modern Western inspiration, and are usually surrounded by a wall with a security guard. To enter, you must reside there, or have been invited by one of the residents. One can easily assimilate the construction of these areas to a form of

14 In these situations, it is common for the police or even the army to decide voluntarily not to intervene, posing as a simple observer and to ensure relative safety.

15 It is time for rickshaw drivers (tricycles used for transport of persons or goods) to earn as much money as they are the only ones to offer a possibility of transportation during *bandha*. These non-motorised vehicles have been long banned from Kathmandu, except from the tourist area of Thamel, and therefore they circulate in the rest of the city when other vehicles are immobilised.

gentrification phenomenon in the city, with an apparent concern for security¹⁶. Although the projects are still rare and only cover a small area of Kathmandu Valley, it is obvious that they are currently expanding.

Unlike other areas of the city where most homes are subject to power outages¹⁷, the *housing* often benefit from generators. In the *housing*, lifestyles are very different for things such as waste management, garbage collection, is organised by the owners' association at regular intervals, perhaps once, twice or three times per week. As such, these are some of the few places in Kathmandu where the waste does not litter the streets. However, this waste has the same destination as all the other waste: the rivers. Rag pickers, who are often children, sort the waste at these sometimes sacred rivers. Although it is not formally the case, the rag pickers are almost institutionalised dustman because of the caste system.

Furthermore, access to telecommunications is guaranteed in the *housing* as telephone and television lines are installed during the construction of the complex, which reduces the number of cables hanging from electricity poles. Finally, in *housing*, children can easily play in the street, since there is very little traffic, and as a consequence, very little dust. The few vehicles which can be seen are those of people leaving or entering the area. However, with each house having a private garden, it is not common to see children in the street. In other neighbourhoods, children play mainly in the quiet streets, when the traffic allows it, or along the rivers.

Urban Destructuration, Social Restructuration?

Kathmandu is transforming, it is undeniable. The rural exodus, the necessary urbanisation for the demographic explosion, the intensification of economic liberalism, the rapidity with which infrastructure can be destroyed, either for urban projects or by earthquakes, and the slowness of reconstruction, require a new form of understanding of urban life in Nepal.

In April and May 2015, the two earthquakes over 7.8 on the Richter scale destroyed a large part of the UNESCO world heritage sites.¹⁸ Access to some of the affected areas is still dangerous as there is still a risk of collapse for some of the monuments that still stand. Travel outside the Kathmandu Valley is also made more difficult or dangerous because of numerous rock

16 Petty crime seems fairly rare or anecdotal in Kathmandu, however, imposing gates, twisted barbed wire, spikes and broken glass on the walls of houses and gardens are very common.

17 Nepal is experiencing frequent power cuts of up to 16 hours a day in winter, when it is the dry season and the hydroelectric dam is not powered.

18 Nepal counts ten UNESCO World Heritage sites.

falls and landslides. However, the Nepalese demonstrate tremendous resiliency. The sanitary conditions and infrastructure were already poorly developed before the earthquake, and their condition worsened after the project for widening of streets, with some neighbourhoods being destroyed, and little or no reconstruction started. The oldest dwellings, as well as those built in haste, were most heavily destroyed by the earthquakes. The door is now open, if the resources are devoted to it, to an improvement of public sanitation. The reconstruction process can present an important economic opportunity, in terms of growth and employment in particular, but the importance of the tourism sector and its difficult recovery may temporarily slow this progress.

It is still necessary to ask whether the intervention of many NGOs and major international institutions will not shake the Nepalese social restructuring mode. It will now be interesting to analyse the impact of international aid, its origin and destination, as well as its flexibility and influence. People are aware of the amount of resources that have been allocated to the country since the earthquake, and some young Nepalese have already publicly rebelled against what they consider an unfair redistribution of humanitarian aid. In public opinion, it is common to hear that the long political transition that the country is facing, since the fall of the monarchy in 2008, has only delayed vital development projects and exacerbates the impoverishment of the population. Moreover, the colossal sums awarded to the Government of Nepal to rebuild the country fuel greed, and suggest that people should be more fearful than ever of corruption.

Successive restructuring of the citizen's environment in Kathmandu involves adjustments in their way of appropriating spaces. Obviously caste, kinship and ethnicity still play an important role in the social scene that is in the street, but the daily lives in Kathmandu have transformed society by the adaptation of the population, urbanisation, and economic modernisation. In this case, the people of Kathmandu are for some, what we may call a Nepali, 'middle class', as they are all urban workers, and seeking a form of social promotion through class and not caste. It can be observed in their practices that new practices are numerous, but the reifications and stereotypes about cultural and religious practices are also still present, if not stronger. Appropriation, reinterpretation and hybridisation allow the citizens to see themselves as members of other social groups, particularly through their adoption of imported goods and manners, and emblems of international culture. The changes that can be seen in the way people consume indicate a change in people's attitudes towards the value and use of consumer goods. As elsewhere, the mass media disseminates information that consistently

presents a positive and cosmopolitan image, particularly through advertising. All this contributes to the dynamism of social practices¹⁹. These changes directly affect Nepalese cultural values, sustainably changing individual practices and those of the communities themselves.

Contemporary big cities, especially capital cities, are places of concentration (population, economy, etc). There is a permanent tension between the two major functions of the city; the city as a place for living and the city as a business location where we can find a concentration of large companies, or at least their headquarters, logistical core, and a number of large and small shops, etc. These two approaches are complementary, and although they are not the only prerogative of dense urban environments, they are certainly the most visible. For example, improving transport and communication infrastructure is a common goal, whether for the civilian population or the economy. The numerous residents of cities need to travel, to and from work, and for personal reasons, and companies need to move the materials, workers, products, etc.

An important question still needs to be asked regarding the strategies of the Nepalese authorities for the country's development. How do they plan to reconcile the function of the city as a place to live with its function as a business location? And where the risks of corruption are also present, it will be important for Nepal to prevent an unbalanced shift of resources to the economic function of the city, at the expense of the quality of life of its citizens.

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19 This was vigorously denounced by the Maoists, who, in their 40 point demands addressed to the Prime Minister and the Government before the momentum of the war in 1996, attacked the Indian media saturation of the Nepali media, and were particularly critical of the influx of goods, music, and cultural products that could create and excessive influence on the people of Nepal.

Shifts in the Strategy of Caste Representation

Links between Everyday Life Practices and Identity Politics

KANAKO NAKAGAWA

Introduction

Identity Politics in Newar Society

The Newar are defined as the indigenous people of the Kathmandu Valley. In 1995, 'Contested Hierarchies' was published by researchers on Newar society. In the conclusion of this book, Quigley mentions that Newars are the product of groups of different origin, who were absorbed into the society of the Kathmandu Valley at various periods throughout history (Quigley 1995).

Each caste¹ in Newar society was incorporated into the vertical hierarchy by the State. Gellner stressed that as a kind of 'traditional' baseline from which to judge the present-day situation of the caste system, it is important to examine two sources in detail: the *Muluki Ain* of 1854 and the chronicle known as the *Bhasa Vamshavali* (Gellner 1995)². According to the *Bhasa Vamshavali*, Khadgi and others defined as low caste in Newar society were restricted in their clothes, houses, and ornaments (Gellner 1995). The *Muluki Ain* of 1854 has been regarded as the first doctrine to introduce the Nepali national caste order. In the *Muluki Ain*, the Khadgis, Kapali, Dyahla,

- 1 Newar is composed of approximately 36 castes. Ishii characterised the caste-based interaction in Newar society as tightly composed in ritual while it is loosely composed in secular daily practices (Ishii 1980). Quigley also mentions that caste divisions are underscored, as are all aspects of Newar social life, by pervasive ritual (Quigley 1995).
- 2 Gellner mentions that the *Bhasa Vamshavali* dates from sometime between Prithvi Narayan Shah's conquest in 1769 and the 1854 Law Code, but it purports to describe the caste system as it was regulated and established by Jayasthiti Malla long before the end of the fourteenth century (Gellner 1995).

and Chyamkhalah were identified as low castes that cannot offer water to upper castes (Höfer 1979).

After the democratisation movement in 1990, each caste in Newar society began to form its own caste association (Toffin 2007). Thus, caste category was organised as a substantial source of identity. However, in contrast to India, Nepal did not introduce any system of reservation for SCs or OBCs until 2003. Toffin points out that the main purpose of forming caste associations was to protect the individuality of these castes and improve their public image rather than obtaining reservations (Toffin 2007).

This aspect of caste associations has changed in Nepal since the democratisation movements of 2006. By comparing voting motivation in the constitutional assemblies in 1990 and 2008, Gellner pointed out that a shift from party-based voting to caste-identity voting occurred. The shift became more dramatic in 2008 with the introduction of 60 per cent proportionality and the appearance of many 'communal' parties with a realistic chance of obtaining representation in the national legislature (Gellner 2009). As such, the concerns of Nepali voters gradually shifted, centring on identity politics based on belonging, such as ethnicity and caste.

The identity controversy between Newar low castes began in 1997, when the Ministry of Local Development included the Khadgi, Kapali, Dyahla and Chyamkhalah castes as *Dalit*. In 2003, the Nepali Government introduced affirmative action, listing 18 castes, including the four mentioned above, as *Dalit*. Following the democratisation movement of 2006, Khadgi and Kapali left the list of their own volition, while Dyahla and Chyamkhalah remained. Maharjan analysed the logic behind claiming non-*Dalit* status and pro-*Dalit* status (Maharjan 2012), concluding that the rationale for this identity politics was to consolidate their identities in the wake of a new constitution. He also points out that the categories of *Dalit* and *Janajati* are mutually inclusive: one can be both a *Janajati* and *Dalit* simultaneously (Maharjan 2012).

Utilising Globalised Markets, Discourses, and Networks

While caste and ethnic boundaries were demarcated through identity politics, people in Nepal came to enjoy interaction outside of caste restrictions.

Through ethnographic research, Rankin examines how economic liberalisation articulates local social structures and cultures of value. (Rankin 2004). Based on fieldwork in a Newar village, she describes people's involvement in local caste struggle against caste stigmatisation. For example, she analyses the Khadgi narrative that recounts the caste origin, attributing their low status to the capricious action of kings and to

an accident of circumstance. She posits that this story enables its tellers to represent hierarchy on their own terms in order to resist its implications, even as they operate within its parameters and not those of the dominant ideology.

Globalisation of markets, discourses and networks enabled people to directly communicate with each other outside of caste restrictions and utilise discourses such as 'human rights' and 'equality' to manage their own self-image.

Links between Everyday Life Practices and Identity Politics

Then, did the utilisation of global discourses as a way of managing self-image, as Rankin described, operate within the expressions of everyday life-practices? Or rather, is it the case that identity politics and everyday life-practices separate and are mutually exclusive?³

In this paper, I will investigate the everyday life-practices and identity politics of the Khadgi, based on my fieldwork conducted from 2005 onward in a Khadgi community. I further analyse the motivations embedded in everyday life-practices that were mobilised and linked to identity politics to demarcate their caste identity.

In chapter 3, shifts in the strategies of Khadgi's caste representation are reviewed across four periods: the first period covers 1951-1970s, from the end of the Rana regime to the formation of the caste association, Nepal Khadgi Sewa Samiti; the second period runs from the 1970s until the democratisation movement of 1990; the third period spans the 1990s through the democratisation movement of 2006; and the fourth period focuses on 2006 onward. Then, in chapter 4, I examine the Khadgi's everyday life-practices mediated by globalised markets, discourses, and networks. Finally, in chapter 5, I analyse the motivations embedded in their everyday life-practices that were mobilised and linked to identity politics mediated by their caste association.

Shifts in the Strategy of Khadgi's Caste Representation

Prior to the Establishment of NKSS

Before the establishment of NKSS, some Khadgi leaders were engaged in political movements protesting the Rana dynasty dictatorship. The

3 In this regard, Gellner points out that anthropologists, with their tradition of studying the everyday lives of ordinary people, have a particular duty to document the lack of fit between what activists say and the feelings and perceptions of those on whose behalf the activists claim to speak (Gellner 1997).

narrative of Shrijana, a female activist from the 1950s, is insightful. Born in 1933, Shrijana's family led the local protest against the dictatorship.

My brother was an activist. He died in prison at the age of only 19 in 1952. At that time, many communists gathered to recover his body in order to give him a funeral ceremony in the traditional way, not as a criminal. Their gathering transcended caste and ethnicity. In 1948, my uncle was imprisoned, and released in 1951 after the end of dictatorial rule. He formed an organisation named Samaj Sudhar Sewa in 1951. '*Sano jati*' including Khadgi, Dyahla, Kusle and Dhobi joined.

We established four schools. At that time, it was prohibited to give education to the Dyahla caste. Even still, we taught them the concept of public health, washing hands, reading, writing, and making clothes. Since it was prohibited to teach in public spaces, we taught them in our house as private work. In 1954, we organised the *mandir prabesh* movement, which intended to protest against our exclusion from temples. As a part of this movement, we continue to fight the temples that low castes were prohibited to enter. This movement was led by Khadgi, together with the Damai, Kusle, Dyahla.

As this narrative demonstrates, people from the Khadgi caste established schools with other 'low caste groups' that pushed passed caste lines. The Communist party certified Shrijana's brother as a martyr. The movement to recover his dead body was held for 'a compatriot of the communist party.' They acted under the name '*sano jati*' or 'communists,' and defined their belonging according to their demands, such as entering temples, making schools, public health, education, and the like. They sometimes collaborated even beyond the restrictions of caste and ethnicity.

Establishment of Nepal Khadgi Sewa Samiti

The background of the establishment of the Nepal Khadgi Sewa Samiti (NKSS) differed from the anti-discrimination movements of Shrijana's experience. From the 1970s onward, disputes between the Khadgi and Muslims, who are also brokers of buffalo meat, occurred repeatedly. The NKSS was formed in order to negotiate with Muslims collectively, rather than individually.

Since the 1970s, there had been trouble between the Muslims who bring buffalos from India and the Khadgi. Merchants from the Muslim

community sell buffalos with a major profit margin. We could not profit, so we started to negotiate collectively. Our first meeting was held in 1971.

In the 1970s, the government prohibited holding meetings in public spaces. Therefore, the Khadgi gathered at their homes and shops in an informal way. In 1973, the NKSS was established as a social service organisation, since political activity was limited at that time. At the beginning, around 100 Khadgi gathered. The political activists including Shrijana also joined at that time.⁴

The police broke our signboard and trashed our restaurant. They said that because we are a water-unacceptable caste, we should not have a restaurant. Therefore, we operated our restaurant with no signboard. After some time, we put the signboard up again. Even if the police come again and trashed our restaurant, we continued to protest by putting up the board again and again.⁵

The first project the NKSS engaged in was establishing a public water tank, through which they intended to protest 'water-unacceptability.' 'From the Khadgi family' was written on the surface of the tank so people could recognise their intention. In 1975, their first water tank was established at the bus park at the centre of Kathmandu city. Subsequently, they donated water tanks to public spaces, such as bus terminals and temples. In 1975, the NKSS organised a blood donation programme supported by the International Red Cross. They protested against caste discrimination by insisting that blood types are categorised beyond caste and ethnicity.

The main motivation behind forming the NKSS was to obtain an advantage in the commercial negotiation process. Since organised political activities were prohibited initially, the NKSS worked as a social service association, donating public water tanks and organising blood donation programmes. It can be said that the Khadgi's activities during the second period focused on protesting caste discrimination at the grassroots level.

The Era of Democratisation and Marketisation

The democratisation movement of 1990 put an end to the *panchayat* system, and the multi-party system began in its place. The third period of 1990–2006

4 Narrative of Raju, a male in his 60s.

5 Narrative of Bab, a male in his 60s.

can be seen as a period of marketisation, given the lack of control from above.

The meat market expanded rapidly at this time, opening the door to people other than the Khadgi to begin participating. According to door-to-door interviews conducted by the Kathmandu Municipality, there were 758 meat shops in the Kathmandu city area, and of those, the Khadgi owned 526 shops, making it the largest caste group in the meat market. Meanwhile, 76 shops were owned by Muslims, 49 shops by other Newar castes, 36 shops by Chhetris, and 14 shops by Hindu Brahmins. Despite being basically vegetarians, the Hindu high castes took advantage of this economic opportunity by joining the meat business (Nakagawa 2018). Within this situation, many Khadgi 'resumed' their meat business (Ishii 2007). Trade unions estimate about 800–900 buffaloes are brought into Kathmandu Valley per day. Official statistics measured national meat production in 2008 to be 1.7 times higher than that of 1990. In 2010, the Ministry estimated approximately 3,300 meat shops in Kathmandu Valley.

It can also be said that individualisation in the market proceeded during this period. At this time, rather than engaging in caste-based social movements, the Khadgi made individual efforts to increase their income.

2006 Onwards

The democratisation movement of 2006 brought an end to the monarchy. In 2008, Nepal became a democratic republic and the process of drafting its constitution commenced. The main issue in this process was how to incorporate ethnicity and caste into the new constitution. At this time, the Khadgi tended to act collectively as 'indigenous people' in league with each caste group within the Newar. The Khadgi first entered the identity politics debate by insisting on their indigenous nature.

In March 2008, the NKSS requested the National *Dalit* Human Rights Council (NDHR) to remove them from the *Dalit* list. National newspapers reported this incident.⁶ According to these reports, the Khadgi, as a caste of the 'Newar community', were removed from the NDHR's *Dalit* list by the NKSS's protest. The NDHR, on the other hand, explained that they included the Khadgi on the list so they could receive the funding and facilities provided to *Dalits*. However, the president of the NKSS retorted that their problems ought to be solved through discussion within their community. Following that, on March the 18th, the NDHR issued a formal letter stating that they had removed the Khadgi from the *Dalit* list.

6 See *The Himalayan Times*, page 3, March 19th, 2008.

The government offered affirmative action to people listed as *Dalit*, resulting in many groups in Nepal being categorised as such. The NKSS, however, refused that recognition by insisting that they would strengthen ties within their own caste, instead. In essence, the NKSS chose to be categorised as indigenous.

In addition to these activities as ‘indigenous Newar’, activists are engaging in a campaign to change their registered surname in the *nagarikata* (citizenship) from Kasai into Khadgi or Shahi, which is the term for their mother tongue. They insist that Kasai is not an original term, but a foreign pejorative meaning ‘butcher’. The NKSS sends members from its central office to branch offices to urge people with the registered surname Kasai to change it into Khadgi, Nay, or Shahi. By changing their names, they intend to emphasise and locate their roots and traditions as an ‘indigenous Newar’ caste. Thus, the NKSS began operating again in this period, focusing on caste representation.

As outlined above, we can observe shifts in caste representations in these four periods. In the first and second periods, ties beyond caste lines are clear and the NKSS’ activities focused on grassroots social service. In the third period, attention shifted to individual commercial activities to match the expansion of the meat market. In the fourth period, the Khadgi acted collectively once again as an indigenous group, using identity politics to remove the label of *Dalit*.

Networks beyond Caste Lines

Daily Business Practices of a Khadgi Family

In this section, I describe Khadgi’s involvement in daily business to illustrate how everyday life-practices are mediated by the market economy. In particular, I will outline the commercial practices of one Khadgi family living in a suburban area in the Kathmandu Valley, involved in the wholesale and retail of buffalo meat. The family is composed of Anil, his wife Laxmi, his daughter, his son Raju, Raju’s wife and her son. They purchase buffalos at a local market and slaughter them in the abattoir on the first floor of their house. They then sell the buffalo meat at the shop in Anil’s house, and in Raju’s shop, located in Laxmi’s parents’ house in the central area of Kathmandu.

People from a wide range of castes, ethnicities, and religious groups are involved in the slaughtering process, which begins at 2:45 every morning. Seven people work in their abattoir: Anil, Laxmi, Raju, three Khadgis, a Chhetri, and a Muslim. First, one man holds the buffalo while another

strikes it on the forehead with a hammer. The unconscious buffalo falls to the ground, where the Muslim cuts its throat in keeping with halal practice. Finally, two men skin the buffalo, separating the meat and internal organs onto the skin to prevent contamination. The slaughtering and separation process lasts 30 minutes per buffalo.

At 4:50 a.m., a woman from the Chhetri caste and her son join the team. The woman extracts marrow from the backbone and cleans the intestines. Her son engages in dividing the head into eyes, nose, brain, and tongue; the Chhetri woman and Laxmi then wash the intestines. Slaughtering and separating are completed by six in the morning. They slaughter five buffaloes a day on average: two are intended for Raju's shop, three for Anil's shop, and the remainder for meat shops and restaurants in their village.

In our abattoir, seven people are working. My work is to observe the cutting process. They live near our home, so I offer them tea and food after work every day. Some of them are university students. So, after finishing their work in the morning, they go to school.⁷

This case study demonstrates how selling meat has shifted from a caste-based activity to a home industry mediated by the market economy. People outside the Khadgi caste, including Muslims, participate in order to generate an income. All family members, including women, hold important roles, such as taking care of workers regardless of caste, supervising the overall slaughtering process, washing the intestines, and selling meat in their shops.

Transcendent Mutual-Aid Groups: Shifts in Funeral Associations

Following democratisation in 1990, people were allowed to connect to civil society unrestricted by their caste. Here I investigate shifts in livelihood networking processes.

In Newar society, *sana guthi*, the association which carries out death ceremonies, plays an essential role composed of only one caste. From the end of the 1990s, people began forming mutual-aid organisations named *gwali guthi* to manage death ceremonies irrespective of caste lines. The Nepal Communist League established the first *gwali guthi* in 1997. By 2012, about 100 families had joined. Every caste from the Newar community can join this organisation, even including former 'untouchable' castes. The *gwali guthi* has no affiliation with any temples or icons and is without any form of worship.

⁷ Narrative of Laxmi, a female in her 50s.

As for *sana Guthi*, only males are allowed to participate in gatherings and worship. Women have roles performing backyard chores, such as preparing food and ornaments. Women can join the *gwali Guthi*, however. Here, men and women break bread together in a buffet style, in stark contrast to the *sana Guthi*, where only males participate, seated in a line based on their status. A Khadgi friend and I were invited to a member's house, who was from the Vajracharya caste. The Khadgi had been excluded from this residential area because of their 'impure' caste status; however, we can now observe a shift in these circumstances today. As shown in the *gwali Guthi*, occasions the interaction between castes seems to be increasing.

Formation of the Mutual Financial Associations: Shifts in the Economy

Many people in Kathmandu established small-scale mutual financial associations called *sahakari* after the 2000s. Investors pool their money in preparation for their children's education or family health problems. Neighbours and caste relatives form the basis of these *sahakari*. Recently, investing has increased due to high interest rates. Here I investigate networking styles within these finance programmes as a symbol of new social networks surrounding the Khadgi.

There are three types of *sahakari* in the Khadgi community: groups based on the NKSS, the local community, and cooperatives. The NKSS *sahakari* institutions are organised by branch: they target people who engage in small businesses, especially meat sellers, farmers, unemployed people, and low-income groups. Thus, the association provides financial support to those who are unable to receive bank loans.

The largest local *sahakari* was formed in the central commercial area of Kathmandu. About 160 Khadgi, who have shops all over the Kathmandu area, have joined. Their financial system and interest rates are almost the same as that of the NKSS. In 2012, approximately 30 million rupees were deposited for the purpose of financing local businesses.

Cooperative linked *sahakari* was established in 2008. The head office is situated along the main highway that connects Nepal to India. The largest vegetable and meat bazar in Kathmandu is located near the office. Members of this *sahakari* formed cooperatives in 2009: by 2012, about 1,600 Khadgi had joined the *sahakari*, while 553 Khadgi took part in cooperatives. All of them are engaged in the meat industry.

Cooperatives established the modern slaughterhouse through joint investment with the government. Prior to its establishment, members engaged in slaughtering along the riverside, in fields behind their houses,

and on the street. Furthermore, they hold training workshops at the slaughterhouse to provide education on hygiene and the modern concept of public health. They plan to open a model meat shop at a department store to garner prestige and produce a clean image of their business.

Sahakari were initially established to prepare for accidental expenses like sickness and injury. Moreover, this financial system was utilised as a means to autonomously control business rather than depend on foreign aid, as the last case demonstrates. With this funding, the Khadgi receive governmental support, thus enabling them to work more independently than relying on affirmative action. In sum, we can say that the market economy opened daily business interactions outside the bounds of caste and ethnicity, and played a key role in managing daily activities.

Links between Daily Mutual-Aid Activities and Identity Politics: Mediating Activities by the NKSS

The Various Roles of the NKSS

As delineated above, expansion in the market economy precipitated interaction beyond caste restrictions. We observed the formation of mutual aid groups, indeed, cooperatives transcending caste, and *sahakari*, which enabled people to develop businesses autonomously.

Therefore, what roles did the caste association play in developing these networks? Table 1 lists the activities of the NKSS in 2012. Their main internal activities were sponsoring ceremonies for those who successfully applied for their School Leaving Certificates, political awareness campaigns, a joint coming-of-age ceremony, the renaming campaign, and the revival movement for their traditional drums. External activities focused on organising or participating in programmes related to economic

Table 1: Activities of the NKSS

Internal Activities	External Activities
Giving prize ceremonies for seniors, successful applicants for the School Leaving Certification	Organise or join programmes concerning economic development, education, and modernisation of the meat industry
Holding a political awareness programmes	Holding blood donation programmes
Joint coming-of-age ceremonies	Withdrawal from the Dalit list
Renaming Kasai	Construction of biogas plants
Issuing recommendation letters for scholarships	Forming a network to import livestock
Traditional drums revival movement	Making a website and SNS accounts

development, education, the modernisation of the meat industry, blood donations, website and SNS account construction, and withdrawing from the *Dalit* list.

The Annual Meeting of the NKSS

This section examines the shifts in membership within the Khadgi caste association. The annual meeting of the NKSS concerns their decision-making procedure. My description of the meeting is intended to clarify internal discussion regarding identity politics. I observed the NKSS annual meeting in 2012.

First, each branch representative presents their overview of the year. Attendees consist of members from the central committee and representatives from the Kathmandu valley, from eastern and western Nepal, and from 14 branches across the country (Table 2). At the meeting, the chairman of the NKSS insisted that no Khadgi had become a minister, a fact that needed to be acknowledged within the community. He then reported on the establishment of new NKSS branches in rural Nepal, withdrawal from the *Dalit* list, and changing to the surname Kasai. The second session of the meeting held a workshop for branches to report their activities together.

At the workshop, village members reported that discrimination against the Khadgi still exists. People from upper castes admonished the Khadgi, ordering them not to come near the public water supply. In an effort to solve this problem, the Bhojpur branch invited a historian to speak about the Khadgi at their public meeting. They further reported that as indigenous people, they had begun to receive governmental support through affirmative action.

Khadgi from western Nepal reported on their economic conditions, relatively worse than that of their fellows in the Kathmandu valley and eastern Nepal. Many people from this region emigrated in the last 30 years. As a consequence, they requested the NKSS central committee to sponsor language classes, as they cannot understand Newari, their mother tongue. The rename campaign had also begun in this area. Of the 125,000 Khadgi in the Kathmandu city area, 80,000 were reported to be living in slums; they still cannot be invited to parties held by members of upper castes.

Furthermore, the buffalo skin donation programme was noted in advanced activities. A businessman involved in buffalo skin processing donates 10 rupees per buffalo to the NKSS. This man, who donates 3000 rupees per day from the skin of 300 buffaloes, said that community contribution matches the workload, which helps motivation.

Table 2: NKSS Branch Activities

Branch	Reported Activity
Kathmandu city area	12 wards Teaching traditional drums to children
	19 wards Blood donation campaign Ceremony for successful applicants for the SLC
	19 wards Volunteer street cleaning Support for the ill Renaming Kasai
Kathmandu Valley	Baudha Establishing a women's association Establishing a football team Establishing microfinance
	Kirtipur Teaching traditional drums to children Establishing a women association Blood donation campaign Repairing the temple of their lineage god
	Banepa Teaching traditional drums to children
	Bhaktapur Establishing microfinance
	Panauti Repairing temples through aid from Spain and France
Eastern Nepal	Danusa Renaming Kasai
	Bhojpur Jointly organised cultural programmes for indigenous people in eastern Nepal branches
	Udayapur Renaming Kasai Ceremony for successful applicants for the SLC
Western Nepal	Sinduli Renaming Kasai
	Gorkha Establishing a women's association Establishing microfinance
	Tanahun Renaming Kasai Cultural promotion activities (revival of mask dance) Ceremony for successful applicants for the SLC

Women's associations have recently been formed with *sahakari* in each branch of the NKSS as well. At the meeting, the women's associations reported about membership and various kinds of income-generating activities they had conducted. I offer examples of such activities in the following section.

Motivations for Identity Politics

Then, what kind of motivations for the Khadgi does the NKSS represent? The external role of the NKSS shifted from dissenting against caste discrimination regarding 'water untouchability' to identity politics to distinguish their ethnicity as *Adivasi Janajati*. Internally, the NKSS shifted its function from social service to nationwide mutual aid networks mediated by a website and SNS accounts. We can observe the Khadgi motivations lie in building their capacity not through vertical relief, but through horizontal mutual aid.

The NKSS's main activity is conveyed by the renaming movement in

rural areas. After the year 2000, the NKSS began targeting rural areas, establishing more than 20 branches outside the Kathmandu Valley. The NKSS urges the Khadgi to autonomously control their livelihoods through promoting *sahakari*. However, they withheld the *Adibasi Janajati* status for rural people who failed economically.

Therefore, the NKSS has a dual role, internally functioning through mutual-aid networks and externally engaging in identity politics to demarcate caste boundaries. Furthermore, this dual role enabled the Khadgis to obtain their *Adivasi Janajati* status in the national legislature by reinterpreting and managing their self-image in other ways.

Conclusion

In this article, I investigated the Khadgi's caste representation across four periods and how they manage their livelihoods.

In the first and second periods, the Khadgi were engaged in grassroots activities opposing caste discrimination by funding schools and entering temples along with other '*sano jati*'. Khadgi mutual-aid networks focused on donating water tanks against 'water unacceptability' by joining hands with the NKSS. In the third period, NKSS activities were cut back, and each Khadgi came to play an important role in the meat industry at the time. People formed and supported mutual financial aid groups. Thus, during this period, their main strategy was to form new social networks through the market economy. In the fourth period, the NKSS became active again in response to the offer of affirmative action as '*Adivasi Janajati*', not as '*Dalits*'. Khadgi's mutual-aid networks did not take part in this identity politics directly; however, they joined the NKSS through *sahakari* and women's association to conduct income-generation activities.

Finally, concerning the links between everyday life-practices and identity politics, the expansion of the meat market gave each Khadgi a firm economic status to manage their own business activities. The meat market also provided the occasion to construct business networks outside of caste lines. *Sahakari* motivated network organisation and participation in income-generating activities. The new social environment formed by the advent of the market economy instilled motivation towards mutual-aid networks hitherto restricted within the caste order. The dual roles of the NKSS, namely, internal support for autonomy based on mutual-aid and external identity politics represent the Khadgi caste's efforts to maintain their options for interpreting and managing their self-image. In doing so, they can represent their caste in various ways, as '*oppressed people*' to '*indigenous people*' to even '*trade unions*' simultaneously.

Until now, the everyday life-practices of ordinary people were perceived as secondary to identity politics. However, as demonstrated above, they have broadened the horizons of identity politics from below by introducing 'mutual-aid' motivations reflected by the expansion of the market economy. As such, it is exceedingly important to evaluate the everyday-life practices that provide the context for such identity politics

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Climate Change Impacts and Adaptation Response

A Study of Trans-Himalaya (Upper-Mustang), Nepal

RISHIKESH PANDEY

Introduction

The Nobel Peace Prize for 2007, which was jointly awarded to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and Al Gore, can be interpreted as an act of recognising the raising awareness of climate change, and the promotion of adaptive techniques as a direct contribution to peace building. However, the question whether the IPCC's review based literature on climate change and Al Gore's film 'the inconvenient truth' have promoted 'peace' or 'climate terror', has never been answered. In addition, the Stern Review (2006) has further produced 'economic terror' in relation to climate change, yet, rigorous scholarly discourse in these areas is sadly lacking or neglected during mainstream discussions on climate change .

Climate change is a natural process that has different meanings to different people. There are some formal definitions and measurements of climate, particularly given by the prominent geographer A.V. Humboldt and adopted with a few modifications by World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the IPCC. However, there are other metaphorical definitions of climate such as 'the prevailing attitudes, standard, or environmental conditions of a group, period or place, which can also be the intangible, tacit norms and moods of a human collective that are beyond formal measurement or definition are also the climate' (Hulme 2016). In some sense, climate is difficult to distinguish from environment since there is a general practice of referring to different situations as climate, such as 'a climate of political instability', 'degradation of moral climate that lead to global warming' or 'deteriorating economic climate'. The diverse idea of climate fuels the question: whether the climate is environmental,

social, political, or an economic issue? Whatever definition is adopted and the issue interpreted in relation to whatever sector, there is a growing consensus that the climate in the world is changing over time, space, and society. Moreover, the interpretations of the changes are socially constructed and as such are understood in relation to the perception of the affected individuals or communities. The studies on climate change from the lens of the affected people has not become generally accepted yet, but after the IPCC's Fourth Assessment Report (AR4) in 2007, local studies are increasing rapidly, including in Nepal (for example: Bhatta et al 2015; Bhatta and Aggarwal 2015; Chhetri et al 2013; Macchi et al 2014; Paudel et al 2014). Many of these works; however, do not focus on the interactions of communities with the changing climate.

Both rapid and slow changes in climate systems bring disturbances in ecosystem based livelihoods that lead to sustained poverty and slows down the processes of rural livelihood renewal (Osbahr et al 2008). The Nepali Himalaya is characterised by high population densities, agrarian livelihoods dependent on marginal land, and human settlements on the banks of rivers and dynamic mountain slopes (Subedi and Pandey 2002; Bardsley and Hugo 2010), is further facing sustainability challenges due to the severe implications of climate change. Considering the pace of climate change the Himalaya is facing, it can be speculated that the agro-livestock based livelihoods and the climate sensitive social-ecological systems of the Trans-Himalaya in Nepal may be profoundly affected. The human, also called the 'never resting creature of the planet' by Semple (1911), may struggle to adapt to the change. In this process of change - impact - response interactions, the way human society and environment interact, changes over time. However, there is a dearth of studies on the issue of how the societies in the Trans-Himalaya are reacting to changing climate. This research; therefore, intends to answer the questions: how have communities perceived the changes in the Trans-Himalayan climate? How has it impacted the social-ecosystem of the region? And, how have the communities responded to the changes and impacts? To achieve this aim and reach a valid conclusion, this paper is structured into five sections. The first section introduces the research theme, which is followed by conceptual and theoretical literature on human-environmental interactions. The third section briefly introduces the methods and materials used to investigate the interaction between climate change and society. The fourth section presents research findings and discusses them in relation to existing scholarship. The paper ends with concluding remarks drawn from the discussions in the earlier sections.

Conceptual Underpinnings

Berkes and Folke (1998) state that in studies of the interaction between society and nature, a poor level of understanding of systems and models of interaction can mask the existing complexities in human adaptation. The nature-culture divide is often presented as a dualism that leads to conflicting connections. Others argue that 'nature' is not nearly as natural as it seems, it is profoundly a human construction (Cronon 1996). The concept of 'cultural landscapes', the outcome of the human transformation of 'nature' (Sauer 1925), and the 'social constructions of nature' (Jasanoff 2010; Fitzsimmons 1989; Greider and Garkovich 1994), also illustrate complexities in understanding the interrelationships between society and nature. Adger (2006) argues that the increasing tradition of using methodologies of the natural sciences in the social sciences, although highly contested, are also making it more difficult to draw a clear boundary between the natural and the social. Yet, there are three different theoretical approaches: environmental determinism, cultural determinism, and neo-environmental determinism in explaining human-environmental interactions. This study primarily adopts the neo-environmental determinism approach.

The neo-environmental determinism is possibly the most comprehensive approach to study human-environmental interrelationships and interactions. It recognises invariable dynamics between society and the environment (Radcliffe et al 2010), and argues that human-environment relations attribute causal determinacy to the 'natural' environment (Judkins et al 2008). The changing climate, however, produces discordances in the established understanding of the human place in nature (Jasanoff 2010), since it is widely accepted that present day climate change is an outcome of 'anthropogenic interference' to the climate (nature) system. Neo-environmental determinism is a form of the modified use of the theories of ecology and cybernetics theories as well as system approaches to form a social-ecology. According to Butzer, 'societies can be regarded as interlocking, human ecosystems, which operate on the basis of individual initiatives and actions, embodied in aggregate community behaviour and institutional structures' (Butzer 1990, 685). In the words of Judkins et al (2008) social-ecology can be understood as middle-range determinism to deal with human-environment interaction and this research adopts the approach.

In the context of climate change, understanding interactions between society and climatic variability can be further complicated due to the variable exposure to, and sensitivity of, social-ecosystem to climate change, and uncertain adaptation outcomes of the societal responses. The study

of human-environmental interaction in relation to climate change is an ecosystem approach of viewing human society and social spheres and the climate as an integral part of the system. There is no single universally accepted way of formulating the linkages between society and natural systems (Berkes and Folke 1998), however different sub-disciplines of human geography, particularly human ecology and social-ecology, hypothesise the interrelationships and are introduced here.

Human Ecology

Human ecology is an approach to geographical enquiry of human – environmental interactions. It is the science of ecology that explains the complex and dynamic interrelations between societal and bio-physical systems (Barrows 1923; Prudham 2009). Societies develop a complex, but systematic interaction with the environment; and climate has always been an important negotiating component. The concept of human ecology covers a wide range of physical and social phenomena and the complex web of interactions that produce and reproduce particular forms of life systems in different places and times. Human ecology accommodates a range of concepts within its broader definition such as cultural ecology of J. Steward, ecological anthropology of F. Barth and R. Rappaport, political ecology applied by Cockburn, Wolf and Beakhurst in the 1970s; environmental psychology of R. Kitchin and M. Blades and social-ecology of M. Bookchin, and F. Berkes and C. Folke. Although all of these concepts are closely related and are overlapping fields, some scholars criticise human ecology for being overly managerialist or technocratic concerned with adjustment or adaptation and not with social processes (Pelling 2001; Mazlish 1999; Mustafa 2005). Others blame the approach for conceptualising the environment as an influential actor in society – nature relations, and ignoring the role of political economy in interactions (Zimmerer 1994; Zimmerer and Bassett 2003). Also, human ecology is criticised for being limited to answer the question: ‘what is the interrelationship?’ but not sufficiently focusing on answering the questions, such as what ought to be the relationship for the sustainability of the social-ecosystem? Berkes and Folke (1998) have accommodated socio-political and economic institutions into classical human ecology, while Bookchin (1995) accommodated sustainability issues or expected interactions and has generated the concept of ‘social-ecology’.

Social-Ecology

A social-ecological system is a system of interaction between nature and people. Social ecology is the study of interactions among the components

of social-ecosystems. It tries to explain the interactive interrelationships of social phenomena within both bio-physical environments and the political-economic, cultural, institutional, and technological trajectories of social development (Adger 2000; Capra 2007). The approach criticises the mainstream focus on social, political and anti-ecological economic development. Therefore, social ecology is an approach, a paradigm, or a worldview and a praxis of the communities that emphasises the ethical responsibilities of humanity for environmental sustainability (Ehrlich 2002; IPCC 2007; Lade et al 2013). The livelihood systems of people indicate the local capacity for adaptation (Prowse and Scott 2008), since the human system is intimately linked to the geographic environment of a place (Kaltenborn and Bjerke 2002; El-Shafie 2010), and the political, economic and structural constraints of the society (Adger et al 2014). Climate and environmental changes undermine human security only after coupling with a broader range of social factors, including those social-ecological and political-economic interactions (Barnett and Adger 2007; O'Brien 2006). Therefore, it is important to understand the interaction between society and climate change for an effective policy response to approach to a sustainable social-ecosystem.

Data and Methods

Location of the Study Area

The Upper-Kaligandaki Basin in the Central Himalaya, Nepal, located in the Trans-Himalaya is the study site (Figure 1). The site is also known as 'Upper-Mustang'. The study cluster in Upper-Mustang is located between the elevation of 3000 and 3900 m.a.s.l. The term 'Upper-Mustang' covers a relatively larger part of the area than the administrative division, however, in this study; the settlements in the Trans-Himalayan Mustang located above 3000 m.a.s.l. are referred to as Upper-Mustang. The area is mostly barren and rugged so cultivated farmland is limited; however, small fields are managed almost as fertile oases. Therefore, the place is called 'Mustang' that means 'fertile plain' in *Mustangi* dialects. The region is sparsely populated with 2456 people (1294 women) living in 752 households with an average of 3.3 persons per household (Table 1).

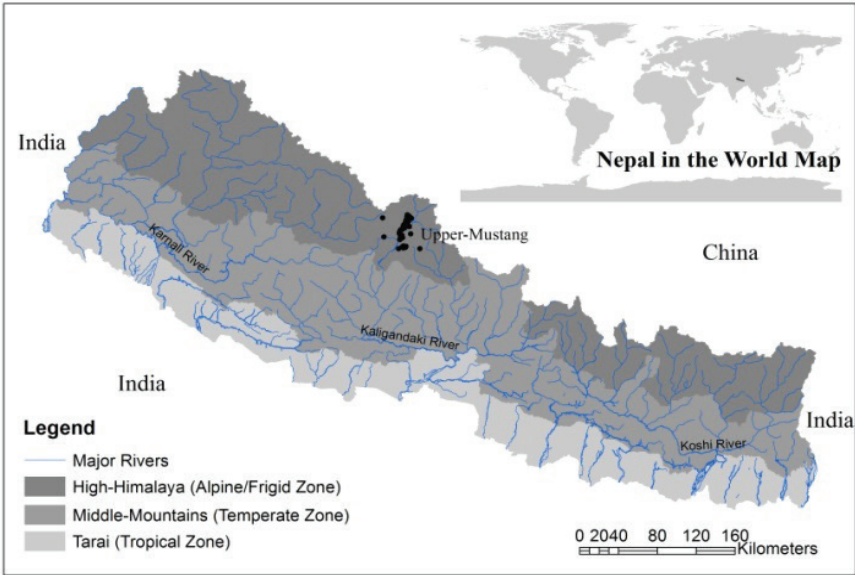
Sample Size and Method of Data Collection

A total sample size of 85, using a representative sampling process, was calculated from the total households ($N = 752$), confidence interval (e) = 0.10 (10% error), significance = 0.05 (95% confidence level), and estimated

probability of success (p) = 50% values at first. However, due to unfavourable weather conditions and inaccessibility during the field work, some of the settlements could not be accessed. In addition, respondents from some of the sampled households did not give consent for interviews (particularly due to not using a local enumerator and other facilitators could not convince the respondents). As a result, the actual sample size was 66 households. The households chosen for face-to-face interviews were randomly selected from the list of households prepared in consultation with the VDC secretaries and key informants of respective VDCs. The respondents from the sampled households were mostly the head of the households. Of the total, almost 30% of respondents were female. The questions included in the household interview schedule were on social-demography and economic status of the households together with perceived changes in 10 weather related variables, experienced impacts in five variables, and the adaptation responses made under seven strategies.

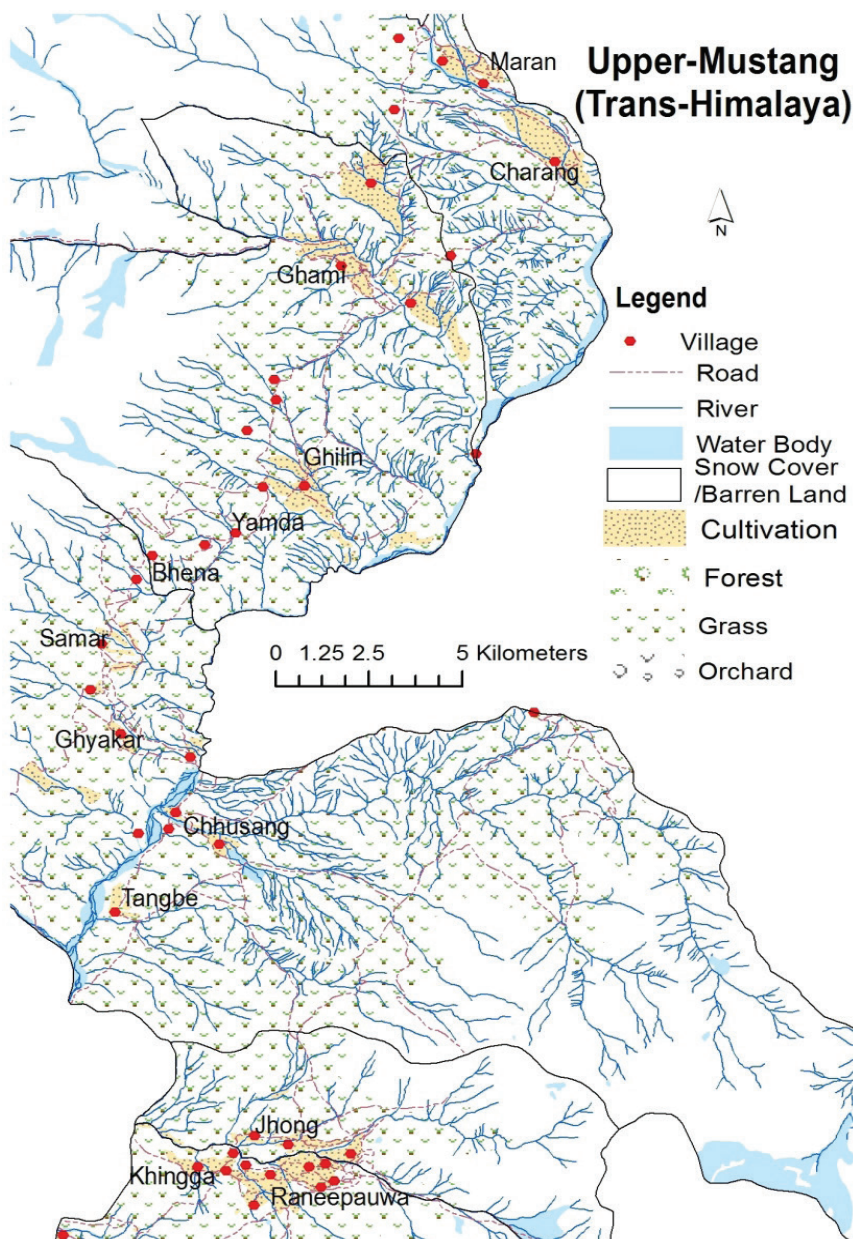
To complement the quantitative data collected from the households, qualitative information from a total of 6 Focus Group Discussions (FGD), and 22 Key Informant Interviews (KII) were also collected. In addition, data on the recent history of weather events and associated impacts were also collected through constructing two historical timeline calendars. Furthermore, Crop Calendars were also sketched at three different

Figure 1: Location of Upper-Mustang in Nepal



settlements to identify the changes made in response to climate change and impact, which are compiled in one during the analysis. Field work was conducted in June 2013 by the author and 2 enumerators, graduates

Figure 2: Settlements in Upper Mustang



in the social sciences with a few years of experience in conducting field research.

Method of Analysis

The Guttman Scale (also called scalogram), after modifying it from bipolar to unipolar response-scale, is used to measure the perceived changes, experienced impacts, and adaptation responses made by the households. The Guttman scale ranges from 1 (the least change, impacts, or poor adoption of strategy) to 5 (the most). The responses were transformed into a single category to get the 'Normalised Responses' using Guttman scores. The Normalised Response (per cent) equals to Total score of actual response divided by Total of the highest possible score, multiplied by 100 to bring it to a percentile. Here, the 'Total score of actual response' refers to the cumulative score of the particular level of response from all the respondents to a particular question (number of respondent* level of response); the 'Total of highest possible score' denotes the total score of all the respondents if they have scaled their response to '5' in a particular question (Total respondents multiplied by the highest score 5); whereas 100 is the 'constant' applied to calculate percentile. The results of perception, impacts and adaptation responses are presented mostly in the form of charts, graphs and tables using descriptive statistics at first.

At the second stage of analysis, the normalised scores of perception, impacts, and adaptive responses have been transformed into index values using 'actual - minimum'/'maximum - minimum' method. The mean of indexed values of 10 perception related variables is obtained as climate change perception index while the means of indexed values of 5 impacts related variables and 7 adaptation response related variables are

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Population

Variables	Population Census 2011*	Sample Households**
Number of households	752	66
Total population	2456	392
Male	1162	212
Female	1294	180
Sex ratio (Number of male per 100 female)	89.8	117.8
Household size	3.3	5.9
Dependency ¹ ratio	na	39.5

(Source: *CBS 2012a; ** Field Survey, 2013)

taken as impact index and adaption index, respectively. To identify the relationships and associations among the studied variables, multivariate linear regression was run in SPSS. Qualitative data collected was digitised into the NVivo9 computerised software and the texts were described using narrative accounts to establish respondents' opinions in relation to the quantitative information. The description of narrative accounts was useful to shed light on how people made adaptation efforts to the experienced impacts of climate change.

Social Demography and Economic Status of Studied Households

Labour Force

The labour force of a household is determined by both natural changes in demography, as well as by socioeconomic and political transformations of a state. A population of young adults accompanied with sound health, skills, knowledge, and a positive outlook and appropriate motivation, can interact effectively with both natural and social environments. The labour force data of the study area show 5.9 persons per household, which is higher than the national average of 4.9 persons (CBS 2012b). The sex ratio of sampled households demonstrates males outnumbering females (118) and is found to be higher than the national average of 94.2 (CBS 2012b). Figure 2 shows that 18.6 per cent of the sampled population were aged below 15 years, while nearly one-third were young adults (15-29 years), 9.7 per cent were elderly, (60 years of age and over), which was higher than the national figure of 8 per cent (CBS 2012b). The ever declining population of the Trans-Himalaya, is reflected in the age structure of sample population, with a small proportion of young people.

Occupational Status of Population

Trans-Himalayan livelihoods generally rely upon a range of on-farm and off-farm activities, and the studied households are no exception. However, Nepali societies have a typical characteristic of reporting 'farming' (*Krishi*) as their principal occupation even if farming contributes only makes a small contribution to their livelihoods (Pandey 2016a), since the overwhelming majority of households in Nepal have land of a marginal size: 95 per cent of people own less than 2 ha of land, and of them, 52 per cent own less than 0.5 ha of land (CBS 2013).

Figure 3 shows the occupational status of the study population. Among the options, a combination of cropping and livestock is adopted by nearly half the population (45%), while those engaged in activities that supply a cash income

(wage labour – 12.2%, business/enterprises – 15.1% and foreign employment –5.9%) was a little over one-third. A significant part of the population (17%), mostly the young, are studying as well as helping with household chores. Although such help may not be accounted as an income generating activity, the engagement of students and minors in household chores is typical in Nepali rural households and makes it possible for working adults to allocate time for outdoor work and generate income or resources (Onta and Resurreccion 2011; Subedi et al 2007a; Pun et al 2009). The proportion of the population engaged in household chores is 17.2 per cent, which probably reflects the poor educational attainment in the remote Trans-Himalaya, resulting in prospective students participating in the labour force.

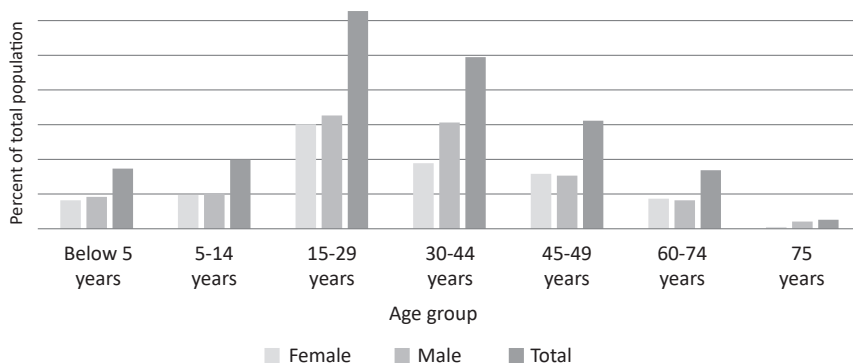
Land Capital

Land is the most important natural resource for the rural people of Nepal. Land not only signifies wealth, but also social status and political power. As a result, the clan and lineage of *Jimidar* (large landlords) are still the key political and economic leaders in Nepal (Subedi et al 2007b). In particular, climate change impacts and adaptive responses of households are strongly influenced by the size and quality of the land resource. Inheritance practices in the country have given access to land to 70.6% of the country's households (CBS 2013). The proportion of households with land in the study area is quite high as all the sampled households have access to land, and the predominance of owner-cultivator households in the study area is observed. Although respondents generally had access to land, plot sizes were mostly small. Of the total, over 56 per cent of the households on the Trans-Himalaya own less than 0.5 ha (marginal holding), 41 per cent own less than 2 ha (small holding) and 3 per cent own 2-4 ha (medium holding) of land. The mean size of total operational or entitled land was 0.73 ha, larger than the minimum amount of land needed for household food security through subsistence production for the Mountain regions in Nepal i.e. 0.64ha (OCHA 2008). However, the standard deviation of 0.68 ha demonstrates a notable inequality, and many households experience moderate to severe levels of food insecurity (Pandey 2016b).

Livestock and Poultry

Livestock such as cows, mountain goats, sheep, horses and mules, and Yaks/*Jhocpos* are an integral part of the livelihoods of the Trans-Himalayan communities. Livestock supplies dairy and meat products for domestic consumption; manure for better farm production; and earns cash through draught power. Selling livestock for cash is also a common coping strategy

Figure 3: Age and Sex Composition of the Population in Sampled Households

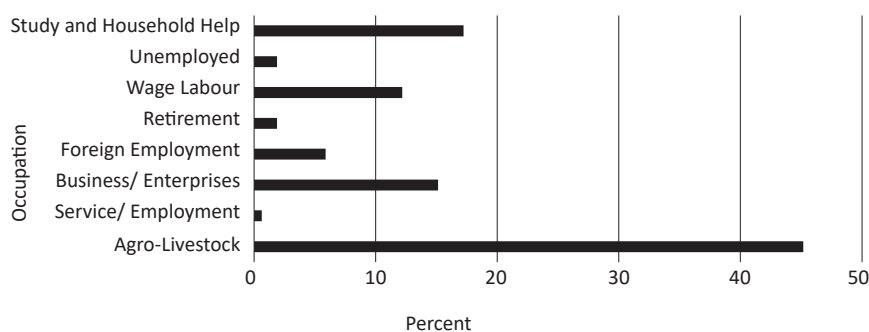


(Source: Field Survey, 2013)

for rural poor households during periods of livelihood stress (Davies et al 2008; Subedi and Pandey 2002). In addition, a lack of livestock can contribute to trapping poor people in chronic poverty cycles (World Bank 2001). Most households (over three-fourths) of the Trans-Himalaya only keep livestock, and only 7.6 per cent keep both livestock and poultry, and the remaining (16.7%) did not have any livestock or poultry. The types of livestock kept are strongly influenced by the area's climate, the adaptability of the livestock types, and the usability of livestock as draught power. Horses and mules are also used as a means of transportation and can earn cash to support livelihoods, while high numbers of goats and/or sheep substantially increases the economic status of a household. However, livestock is sensitive to climatic events in the Trans-Himalaya, Yeh et al (2014) reports that over 80 per cent of livestock in the Tibetan pastoral land have died and this is a common problem also in the study, according to FGD participants. Livestock is typically not insured in the study area so this form of wealth creation is not risk free. There was a high level of consensus amongst the respondents that the contribution of livestock to a household's livelihood is continually eroding.

Perceived Economic Status

Self-perceived economic status of the studied households shows the predominance of middle-class, followed by poor and upper-middle class. Only one household each reported they were affluent or ultra-poor, while little over three-fourths are middle-class and nearly one fifth is poor. Multiple occupations adopted by household members are a positive aspect of livelihoods in some regards, as the complexity provides resilience if

Figure 4: Occupational Status of Population by Type of Occupation

(Source: Field Survey, 2013)

one income source fails. So far, the discussion has focused on the social-demography and economic status in the private domain. The following section provides results, along with a discussion on perceived changes in climate system and experienced impacts and adaptation responses made by the households that would assist in developing an understanding on the interaction between climate change and society in the Trans-Himalaya, Nepal.

Results and Discussions

This section is divided into three sub-sections. First, community perceptions on climate change are discussed, followed by the impacts experienced and adaptation responses made by the studied households.

Community Perception on Climate Change in the Trans-Himalaya, Nepal

Peoples' perception on three temperature related variables: increase in summer temperatures, increase in winter temperatures, and an increase in altered temperatures (summer-winter temperature range), six precipitation related variables: increase in rainy days, decreased winter rainfall, change in the onset and retreat of the summer monsoon, increase in erratic rainfall events and increased intensity of summer floods, and the increase in the intensity of droughts together with the increase in violent winds, were collected and analysed to understand the changes in the Trans-Himalayan climate.

Changes in Temperature

Figure 5 shows the normalised response of 64.8 per cent of respondents reported an increase in summer temperatures, while the proportion of

respondents perceived a warming of winters was 58 per cent. Some of the respondents have reported a decrease in winter temperatures as a result; the altered temperature of the Trans-Himalaya is increased. The proportion of respondents who reported increased winter-summer range of temperatures is 53.8 per cent. While looking for specific responses, over one-third of the respondents reported a clear increase in summer temperatures, while a fairly comparable proportion often felt that the summer temperature has increased and 10.6 per cent occasionally feel the change. Another fourth of the respondents either do not think there has been a change or cannot evaluate that the changes in summer temperatures in the Trans-Himalaya.

In the case of changes in winter temperatures, 22.7 per cent of the respondents see a clear increase, followed by a third reporting they 'often' felt changes. The participants of the FGDs further explained that they felt the warming of the winters, and that the length of the winters appeared reduced since 'the spring is arriving earlier and the autumn is lasting longer'. The informants also reported increased numbers of snow-free winters in the Trans-Himalaya. However, a little more than a fourth of the respondents either cannot evaluate or think that winter temperatures in the Trans-Himalaya has not increased (Figure 5).

The proportion of respondents who perceived a clear increase in altered temperatures is 13.6 per cent while about 35 per cent 'often' felt that the temperature range has increased. The research participants, during the KIIs, also mentioned 'extremely cold nights with a clear sky and frosty mornings in the winter, accompanied by extra hot days in the summer', leading to an increase in the altered temperature. Respondents suggested that the reduced winter rainfall and increased length of the dry season is causing the increase in both minimum and maximum temperature extremes, further leading to an increase in the temperature range. Nevertheless, about a third of the respondents either cannot evaluate or they feel that temperature range has not changed in the Trans-Himalaya (Figure 5).

Changes in Precipitation

The studied communities also perceived an increase in the frequency and intensity of droughts in the Trans-Himalaya (Figure 5). The normalised response demonstrates almost 60 per cent of respondents reported an elevated intensity and frequency of droughts. Among them, 12 per cent reported a clear increase in drought frequency and intensity while almost half the respondents often felt that drought in the Trans-Himalaya has increased. The Trans-Himalaya receives limited rainfall annually, so peoples' understanding of drought is unique and perhaps, as a consequence,

only 12.1 per cent of the respondents clearly recognised more drought. Nevertheless, 12 per cent of the respondents do not recognise this and a little over one-tenth cannot evaluate the change in drought intensity and frequency.

The respondents' perceptions on the changes in annual rainy days are also presented in Figure 5. The normalised response shows 70.6 per cent of them reported an increase in the annual wet-days, while over 37.9 per cent expressed that there was a 'clear' increase and 30.3 per cent often felt the increase in annual rainy days. Moreover, nearly one-fifth of the respondent consider an occasional increase; however, the other 10.6 per cent do not think there have been any changes and the remaining of 3 per cent reported that they cannot evaluate the changes in the annual rainy-days in the Trans-Himalaya. The research participants in the Trans-Himalaya reported the increase in rainy days, especially because of the decreased winter snow, but there had been an increase in rainfall in the early spring instead of snowing that led respondents to translate the change as 'increased rainy-days'. Macchi (2011) and Bhatta et al (2015) also reported a similar pattern of decreased snowfall and increased rainfall at the high altitudes of the Himalaya. The respondents of the Trans-Himalaya reported an increase in extreme rainfall events as well during summer.

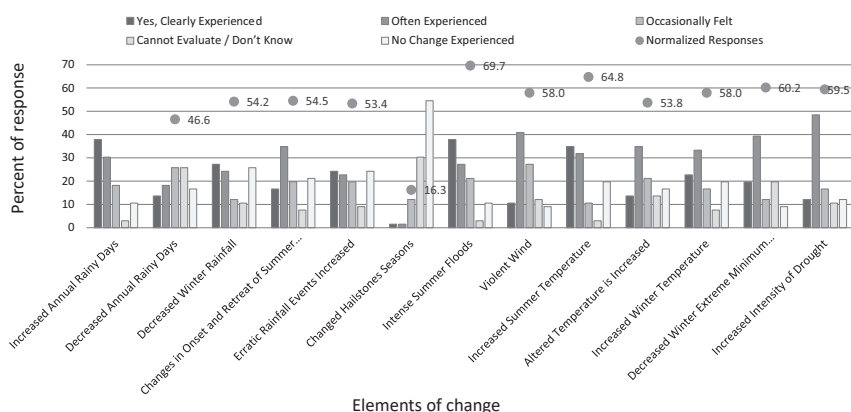
Although its data appears to be conflicting on the response to changes in the annual rainy-days, quite a high proportion of the respondents (normalised response of 54.2 per cent of the respondents) reported a decrease in winter rainfall (Figure 5). The proportion of respondents who perceived a clear decrease is 27.3 per cent, and who often felt the decrease is 24.2 per cent. Little over one-fourth of the respondents do see changes in the winter rainfall, while little over one-tenth mentioned that they cannot evaluate the change. Yet, community members participating in the discussions reported a number of examples of decreased winter precipitation, particularly the disappearance of snow during the winter but an increase in snow during the spring season. This shift in precipitation pattern is translated as extreme rainfall events by the respondents because snow in the spring season melts fast and enhances run-off and flooding. The community people also described reductions in pre-monsoon (spring) rainfall as well after winter rainfall. Many studies from Nepal suggest similar results, especially the unusual decrease in winter rainfall (Gentle and Maraseni 2012; Onta and Resurreccion 2011; Moiwo et al 2011), and respondents' perceptions support these studies.

The respondents from the study generally agree that there are an increasing number of extreme rainfall events. More than a half of the

normalised response (53.4%) suggested that extreme or erratic rainfall events have increased. Out of the total, about a fourth of the respondent indicated that the erratic rainfall events have ‘clearly’ increased while over 22 per cent reported there was ‘often’ an increase in extreme rainfall events (Figure 5). However, there is a variation in the perceptions among the respondents as 24.2 per cent tend to report no change in extreme rainfall events in the Trans-Himalaya. The participants of the FGD; however, reported continuously increasing rainfall events, and is consistent with the other studies (Shahi 2011). Frequent extreme rainfall events and the shift of winter snow to the spring season have caused intense monsoon floods in the Trans-Himalaya, and nearly 70 per cent of the respondents reported frequent and intense summer floods over recent years. The proportion of people recognising a clear increase in monsoon floods was 37.9 per cent of the total respondents, and people reporting that it often increased was 27.3 per cent, although there were a few respondents (10.6%) who think that there is no any change in the summer flooding pattern over time.

The participants of the group discussion also reported the increase in flooding, and the association with an increase in rainy-days, instead of snowfall events. The claims of the communities are consistent with the literature (Macchi 2011). Moreover, frequent rainfall events, rapid melting of snow/ice, the disappearance of permanent snow (as reported by the survey respondents), and the highly dynamic mountain topography or erosive soil structure (Photo 1a), together with the recent haphazard construction of roads in sensitive environments (Photo 2b), have all contributed to an

Figure 5: Perceived Changes in Various Weather Elements in the Trans-Himalaya



(Source: Field Survey, 2013)

increase in flooding, soil erosion, and landslides in the Trans-Himalaya. Decreased snow cover, glacier retreat, Glacial Lake Outburst Flooding (GLOF), and the associated downstream effects in the Himalaya are also reported in the literature (Barnett et al 2005; Prasad et al 2009). It has been

Erosion of Sensitive Landscapes, Floods, and Landslides and Settlements on the Verge of Collapse in the Trans-Himalaya:



Photo 1: Highly Eroded Trans-Himalayan Landscape (a)

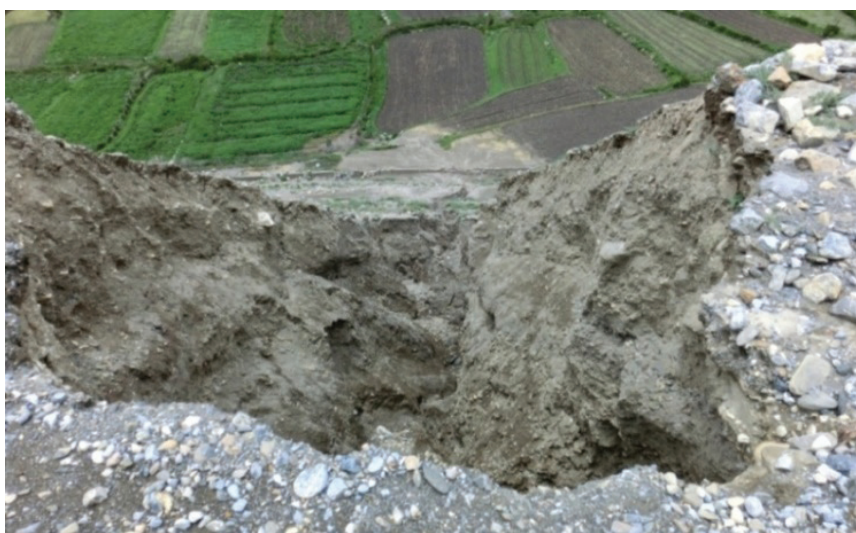


Photo 2: Haphazard Construction of Mountain Road is Causing Heavy Landslides in the Trans-Himalaya (b)



Photo 3: The Trans-Himalayan Settlement on the Verge of Collapse (c)

reported that unpredictable fluctuations in stream flow, reduced water availability in spring, and severe floods in summer are evident in the Trans-Himalaya. Such flooding and erosion could possibly cause some settlements to be threatened (Photo 3c).

The monsoon system is an interactive mechanism between the atmosphere, land, and ocean systems. Studies of the Himalayan rainfall patterns have shown variations in timing, amount, intensity, and onset of the summer monsoon rainfall (Macchi 2011; Pandey 2016a). A normalised response of over 54.5 per cent of the respondents reported changes in the onset and retreat of the summer monsoon. The proportion of the respondents reporting a clear shift was 16.7 per cent and those considering that it often changed was 34.8 per cent. However, 21.2 per cent of the total respondents did not perceive any changes while 7.6 per cent reported that they cannot evaluate the change in onset or retreat of monsoon in the Trans-Himalaya (Figure 5).

Changes in Wind Characteristics

The monsoon, equatorial trade wind, westerlies and siberian blizzard are the major regional wind systems that influence atmospheric circulation in Nepal and the Himalaya. The complex topography of the country generates a number of local wind systems. The major local winds are the valley breeze (blowing towards the mountains during the day) and the mountain breeze (blowing towards the valley during the night). The Siberian blizzard (called *Sireto* in Nepal) occasionally causes exceptionally low temperatures

in the winter, and the Trans-Himalaya is the most affected region from this wind. Nepal is a landlocked country so it does not experience the extreme primary effects of tropical cyclones. Nevertheless, as Trenberth et al (2007) have claimed, the Himalayan climate system is affected by an increase in the intensity of tropical cyclones and Westerlies due to climate change; greater frequency and the intensity of the wind is also attested to by the communities. The normalised response shows 58 per cent of the respondents reported the increased intensity of violent winds. Of the total respondents, 10.6 per cent reported a 'clear increase' while 40.9 per cent reported that it 'often' increased. Similarly, over a fourth of the respondents considered the occasional increase in wind interventions. However, the rest, 9.1 per cent and 12.1 per cent, did not perceived any change or cannot evaluate the change, respectively (Figure 5). Consistent with this research, an increase in violent winds has also been reported in the Himalaya (Macchi 2011).

The relationship analysis suggests that the perceptions of climate change are independent of many factors, such as age and gender; education, occupation of household members, and the size of farmland a households posses. However, the perception to climate change seems to be dependent on the impact of climate change and weather extremes households have experienced. Multivariate linear regression shows a significant relationship between the climate change perception index and impact index with a 5 per cent confidence level with the p value 0.02. In addition, perceptions are also likely to be dependent, but weakly, on the overall adaptive capacity of a household to impact of climate change and that relationship is significant with a 10 per cent confidence level with p value 0.064. The comprehensive discussion above demonstrates significant changes in the climate system of the Trans-Himalaya. The section below presents the impacts of the change that the studied households have experienced.

Impacts of Climate Change in the Trans-Himalaya, Nepal

Extreme weather events cause a number of disasters, although the impacts vary between individuals and communities. Disasters cause the loss of life and property; disturb the production and distribution systems, decrease income and consumption, and overall human development. Poor people and poor countries suffer more because they lack reserve assets to buffer the loss caused by disasters (McCarthy et al 2001) and the losses can rise because of inadequate and ineffective post-disaster rescue and relief work. Disasters, including floods and landslides, are major challenges for the sustainability of social-ecological systems in Nepal and the Trans-Himalaya, and they are increasing with climate change induced extreme events. Some

of the major impacts noted by the communities of the Trans-Himalaya are discussed below.

Flooding and Landslides

The respondents of the study area reported an increased frequency and amplified intensity of flooding and landslides; which has changed the condition of the natural resources, particularly farmland, with the increased accumulation of debris and silt, as well as greater erosion. Damage of homes and livestock sheds are also common. The loss of farmland for households with small-holdings exacerbates their food and livelihood insecurity. Injuries and loss of life, including their livestock, and the displacement of houses is also reported, despite Upper-Mustang being an arid zone. While increased disasters may be attributed to inappropriate road engineering, climate is playing a role. Irrigation infrastructure is frequently damaged and farmland silted. The management of infrastructure has become increasingly difficult and costly. The spiralling effects extend to agriculture, livestock, and the social life of Upper-Mustang. Key informant at Ghami, Trans-Himalaya stated:

The opening of a track for a district road is in progress, although it was started almost a decade ago. The work is not effectively considering the environmental sensitivity of Upper-Mustang. Not much effort has been made to control landslides while constructing the road. As a consequence, the place is seeing more landslides and floods than ever before.

The participants of the FGD also mentioned a similar topic, yet they see increased rainfall, particularly the changed season of rainfall from winter to spring and the changed nature of precipitation from snowing to rainfall, as a driver of floods and landslides in the Trans-Himalaya: 'We have never experienced such landslides, floods and active streams and rivers like we are seeing in recent years'.

According to the respondents, snowfall stores water for the dry periods and supplies soil-moisture for a longer period. It also controls surface runoff, which discourages soil erosion and landslides. As their understanding, intense rainfall and surface run-off in the sensitive Trans-Himalayan morphology has caused severe soil erosion and flooding. Off-season snowfall (snowing during the spring) in recent years has damaged crops, including oats, wheat, and barley. It has also encouraged crop diseases and increased insect numbers. Furthermore, the farmers reported that grazing animals in the high altitude pastures lack fodder, foraging vegetation, drinking water,

and shelter due to off-season snowfall, leading to an increased number of livestock deaths. These findings are largely consistent with the findings from other studies conducted in Upper-Mustang, Nepal (NTNC/ACAP 2012; Sharma et al 2009).

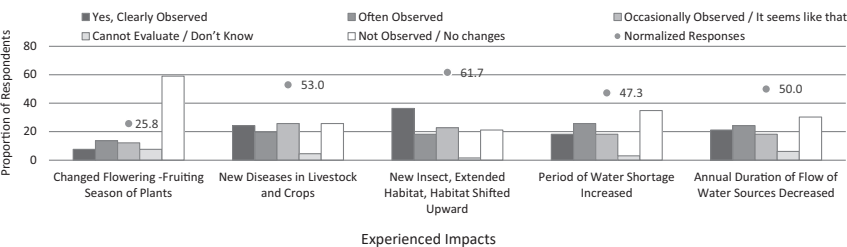
Increased Invasive Species and Changed Phenology

The literature claims that there is an increase in invasive species, altered plant phenology, habitat fragmentation and loss of species as well as reduced forest regeneration due to climate change (McCarthy et al 2001; Rosenzweig et al 2008). However, these implications can also be connected to other factors, such as over exploitation, plant migration (natural or induced), and natural cross-fertilisation. Respondents from Upper-Mustang have seen a progressive diffusion of new species on their farmland and pastures. The normalised response of 34.5 per cent of households indicated the spread of invasive species, yet this is just emerging. The people also witnessed changes in the flowering, fruiting, and ripening seasons of fruit. The normalised response shows 25.8 per cent of households identified such changes (Figure 6). Participants in the FGDs also reported a visible change in the phenology of *Rhododendron* (blooms three weeks earlier than during the ‘usual’ seasons), peaches, and apricots, with most of the early blooming leading to unsuccessful fruiting.

Crops and Livestock Diseases and Changed Habitats of Disease Vectors

The global and regional literature on the implications of climate change for crops and livestock have shown a general consensus on new diseases, disease vectors and insects, and their fragmented and extended habitats (Parry et al 1999; Ramirez-Villegas et al 2012; Sivakumar 2011). Insects and disease vectors often impact crop-livestock productivity, such that in South Asia, crop-livestock diseases and associated losses are projected to increase

Figure 6: Socially Perceived Impacts of Climate Change on the Components of the Social-Ecological System



(Bosello et al 2009). A large proportion (53 per cent of the normalised response) of the respondents reported new crop-livestock diseases, where the proportion having perceived a 'clear increase' in crop-livestock diseases and insects in the Trans-Himalaya, is 24.2 per cent (Figure 6).

Increased crop-livestock diseases and the emergence of new insects have negatively impacted on the mixed crop-livestock systems of the study area. Many participants of the FGDs, and individuals interviewed during the field work, stated that the problems of crop-livestock disease in Upper-Mustang are associated with snow during the wrong season that when snow is not harmonised with the crop calendar the risk of crop-disease and insect problems increases. Together with the perception of more prevalent crop-livestock diseases, the respondents of the study area have also seen new insects and disease vectors and the extended habitats of such pests. A normalised response of 61.7 per cent of the households expressed an increase in the insect population and extension of their habitats.

Decreased Availability of Water

The availability of water sources and extended water shortages are associated with diminished rainy-days and rainfall amount, the increasing variable nature of rainfall, and extended dry seasons. Reduced water availability has grave implications for socio-ecological systems globally, as well as regionally. The IPCC has predicted a severe water shortage for over 5 billion of the global population by 2025 (McCarthy et al 2001), and over 1.2 billion within Asia by 2050 (Cruz et al 2007). The IPCC (2007b) also states that the availability and quality of water will be the main issue for societies and the environment under climate change. The communities of Upper-Mustang are already experiencing rising water scarcity despite the increase in rainy-days. Half of the respondents reported diminished water availability, suggesting potentially grave implications of climate change on water resources (Figure 6). According to respondents the snow accumulated on flat mud-roofs used to supply water for domestic use for longer periods in the past. However, the changed pattern of precipitation has increased the problem of roof leakages and damage to the walls, and now more households have to fetch water from public taps. In addition, the normalised response shows 47.3 per cent of the respondents reported extended water scarcity. Of the total, 18.2 per cent of the respondents noted 'clearly increased' water scarcity (Figure 6).

Multivariate linear regression analysis illustrates that the impacts are strongly influenced by the perceived changes in the climate system. It is interesting to note that there is a complex interrelationship between

climate change perceptions and climate change impacts in the Trans-Himalaya and whether the impacts or perceptions of changes are dependent on the other. The relationships analyses show higher impacts of weather events leading the respondents to perceive a higher level of changes; in a similar manner, the respondents who perceive a higher level of changes have also evaluated the impacts as being much more serious (see section 4.1), since the regression analyses show significant associations between climate change impacts and climate change perceptions with a 5 per cent confidence level and a p value standing at 0.02 while considering if either of the elements are dependent on the other. Nevertheless, perceptions of climate change impacts are seemingly independent to many other factors, such as age or gender of the respondents; occupation, land entitlement, or the size of irrigated levelled terraces (*Khet*) of the members of the households, or the overall adaptive capacity of a household. Respondents with better educated households members; however; are more likely, at least partially, to evaluate the impacts as relatively less serious since the relationship between the index of experienced climate change impacts (dependent) to adaptive education index is significant, but only with 10 per cent confidence interval a p value of 0.089. To respond to the experienced impacts of climate change discussed above, the households and communities of Upper-Mustang have developed and applied a number of strategies, and a few of the major strategies are elaborated below.

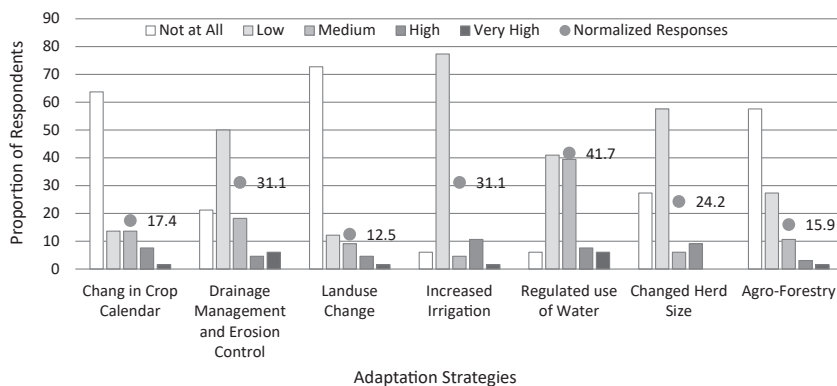
Adaptation Responses to Climate Change Impacts

Adaptation to experienced and anticipated climate change impacts is very important for human communities globally. The livelihood systems of the study area have been built through interactive relations between the bio-physical, techno-economic, socio-cultural, psychological, and politico-institutional spheres. Therefore, communities have to interact with both climate change impacts and socio-political spheres aiming for successful adaptation. The types of effective strategies that the small farmers of the Trans-Himalaya adopt are locally appropriate and they have context specific benefits as described below.

Change of the Crop Calendar

Local farmers are adjusting their cropping systems according to their capacities and are expecting support from governmental agencies to adapt to changes and weather variability. The very limited size of farmland available to households and limited growing season in the Trans-Himalaya has led farmers to focus on changing the crop calendar.

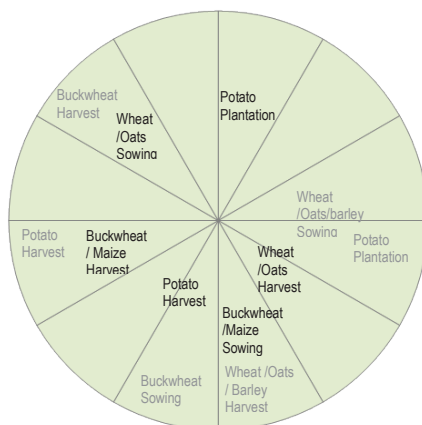
Figure 7: Adoption of Strategies Adopted by the Households of the Trans-Himalaya



Changes in the crop calendars are considered one of the most important adaptation strategies when changes in climate system to adversely affect crop production. Changing crop calendar refers to changes in crop timing, crop varieties, and crop cycles to reduce farm production losses. Effective changes in the crop calendar can support adaptation to moderate the negative implications without major investment (Lobell et al 2008). It can be a tricky strategy, which is dependent upon farmers' awareness of the recent trends in the climate system. Seasonal weather forecasts with appropriate levels of accuracy can help farmers effectively change the crop calendar.

Figure 7 shows that 17.4 per cent of the respondents reported a change in the crop calendar. The changes in the crop calendars constructed by the representative farmers are presented in Figure 8. The participants of the FGD stated that the harmony between the crop calendar and rainfall calendar has become detached, and farmers have not been able to reconcile them successfully. The perceived early arrival of the spring season and the late winter rainfall in the Trans-Himalaya leads farmers to sow winter crops approximately 15 days before the normal sowing date. However, many of the farmers have not changed their crop calendar because they expect better weather patterns each year, although uncertain weather has caused frequent losses. The participants of the FGD in Tsusang village reported a shift of approximately 10 days in the crop calendar over the last 10 years. They also stated that the shift in the crop calendar mostly depends on the time of the winter snowfall. Early winter snow, or the lack of it, leads to an early start of the crop calendar whereas late snow causes some delays.

Reliable weather forecasts, both long-term and short-term, are important

Figure 8: Crop Calendar in the Trans-Himalaya

Gray text – Upper elevation

Black text – Lower or Irrespective of elevation

determinants of climate adaptation. They also help farmers harmonise crop calendars with weather calendars. The provision of agro-climatological information helps agricultural adaptation. However, the respondents of the Trans-Himalaya reported difficulties in changing crop calendars due to the lack of agro-climatological information.

Improved Drainage Management and Erosion Control

Protecting fertile farmland is very important for farming communities and drainage management as well as erosion control are very important strategies to protect farmland. The steep and tectonically active Himalayan topography is highly erosive (Photo 1a), which is further enhanced by the changing precipitation pattern. This study found the normalised response of 31.1 per cent of the respondents practicing locally learned drainage management to control soil erosion. The traditional techniques for controlling soil erosion in Upper-Mustang was the construction of mud-stone walls and planting trees along the edges of farmland (Photo 4), while the construction of flood control dikes using gabion boxes and concrete materials are becoming common strategies in recent years.

Increased Irrigation and Regulated Use of Water

The use of water is growing at twice the rate of the population growth globally (UN Water and FAO 2007); however, fresh water is a highly affected resource due to climate change. To overcome the problems associated with

the scarcity of fresh water, people of the Trans-Himalaya are accessing water from distant places as well as regulating its use. Of the total, normalised proportion of 31.1 per cent of households adopted this strategy. In addition, it is very hard for communities to autonomously manage irrigation infrastructure in Upper-Mustang while government support is minimal. A senior citizen at Zhong reported that:

... the government spends an outstanding budget to construct administrative buildings like VDC offices and buildings for political parties at the office, however, it does not give priority to irrigation infrastructure. Does a building produce grain to feed the people? Until the investment is made in irrigation and transportation, the development of the country cannot be expected...

The respondent went on to claim that the ‘pork barrelling (misuse of state treasury in favour of party-supporters)’ by the political parties in power justifies the inappropriate use of state treasury funds.

Although the respondents have made a number of efforts to increase irrigation, they were not very successful. The lack of irrigation is a common problem in Nepal, with just over 52 per cent of the total holdings in the country having some irrigation (CBS 2013). Consequently, potential cropping seasons are underutilised in parts. The lack of feasible sources of water to increase irrigation and the high management cost of irrigation infrastructure, particularly due to floods and landslides as well as heavy



Photo 4: Mud-Stone Wall to Control Debris in Farmland in Upper-Mustang in the Kaligandaki Basin

siltation problems, have limited the scope of increasing irrigation in the Trans-Himalaya. The regulated use of water can maximise the efficiency and fair distribution of water resource among the users. Ordered use, better channelling, and the use of sprinkler are some of the actions taken by 41.7 per cent of the studied households (Figure 7). The general argument of the respondents was that due to poor availability of water, the households adopted an ordered use in most cases.

Change in Livestock Types, Herd Sizes, and Feeding Practices

Livestock is a fundamental part of subsistence agriculture in the study area. The better availability of livestock fodder and a strengthened livestock economy directly contribute to livelihood sustainability. However, climate change impacts the quantity and quality of fodder and foraging vegetation. Warming of up to 2°C is expected to have positive effects on pasture and livestock productivity in humid temperate regions; however, the effect in the dry and cold Trans-Himalaya may not be strictly positive. The respondents of the study area were asked if they have adjusted their livestock and fodder management as part of an adaptation strategy to climate change.

The proportion of normalised response of 21.9 per cent of households has changed¹ their livestock types, herd sizes, and feeding practices over the last decade (Figure 7). However, those decisions cannot simply be attributed to climate change. Changes in the types of livestock, herd sizes, and feeding practices, but is assisting households adapt to feed and fodder scarcity associated with climate change. To justify this, respondents reported access to fodder resources as the dominant driver of change. Although there are no formalised restrictions on grazing areas in the Trans-Himalaya; the region is not very rich in fodder and grazing resources. The herd sizes have decreased, mostly due to increasing difficulties in managing livestock at a household level and the high wages of hired herdsmen.

Agro-Forestry: Grass Seedling, Fodder, and Timber Trees Plantation

Agro-forestry is sometimes understood also as ecological farming. Agro-forestry is used more than many of the other strategies because it maintains the stability of production by changing the micro-climate; improving soil and biological environments; increasing the adaptive capacity of ecosystems; and supporting agro-biodiversity conservation for food

1 The term 'change' refers to decreased size of herds, priorities given to small animals, like goats/sheep instead of big rudiments like cows and buffaloes, and the practice of stall-feed instead of grazing.

security (Bosello et al 2009; Verchot et al 2007). In addition, agro-forestry stores carbon, increases organic matter in soil, and may help against floods, landslides, and droughts. Appropriate management of agro-forestry helps reduce poverty and make the rural livelihoods resilient (Chhatre and Agrawal 2009; Larson 2011; Persha et al 2010). However, its use as an adaptation strategy is poorly practiced in the Trans-Himalaya with the normalised proportion of only about 16 per cent of households practicing agro-forestry (Figure 7). The limited availability of agricultural residues in Upper-Mustang is compensated by agro-forestry and private grassland.

Adaptation to climate change is influenced by the sensitivity of the occupation of households to changing climates. Higher dependency of households to climate sensitive occupations for their livelihoods, appear to be less adapted, while those having non-agro-livestock occupations are better adapted in the Trans-Himalaya. The multivariate linear regression analysis shows significant dependency of adaptation to occupation 'less sensitive to climate change' at 5 per cent confidence interval with a p value standing at 0.036. Climate change adaptation processes; however, are poorly associated with the level of perception to climate change since the association of the climate change adaptation index to climate change perception index is significant at only 10 per cent confidence interval with a p value standing at 0.064. Similarly, adaptation to climate change of farming households also depends on the total farmland, particularly irrigated level terraces (*Khet*). In other words, farmers with larger fields of irrigated level terraces seem to be better adapted, but the relationship is significant at only at 10 per cent confidence level with a p value standing at 0.091. On the contrary, adaptation is not strongly associated with other elements, such as age, gender, or education of the respondents as well as the level of impact of climate change experienced by a household.

Conclusion

The communities in the Trans-Himalaya are aware of the changing climate in the region. They have also experienced a number of implications of climate change in to their social-ecosystem. The major changes reported in the climate system are: increased rainy-days, decrease in winter rainfall, changed onset and retreat of the summer monsoon, increase of erratic rainfall events, intense summer flooding, increase in the frequency and intensity of violent winds as well as droughts, and the increase in both summer and winter temperatures together with an increase in altered temperature. The widely articulated implications are floods and landslides, together with changes in plant phenology, increase in crop and livestock

diseases/insects and extended habitat of disease vectors, increased period of water shortages and shortened annual period and size of the flow of water sources. These effects in turn have challenged ecosystem based livelihoods, such as the combination of agro-livestock-forestry-pasture and the Trans-Himalayan communities are forced to change their traditional practices. Justifying this, the impacts are less severe to the households having non-agro-livestock related livelihoods or occupations, which are relatively less sensitive to the changing climate.

The relationship analyses show the climate change perceptions, impacts, and adaptation responses are independent to many social-demographic and economic factors, and the findings challenge the existing scholarships. The perceptions and impacts are highly interrelated to each other; however, neither the perceived changes nor the experienced impacts have encouraged agro-livestock based communities to adopt known coping and adaptive strategies. The appropriate management of natural resource systems enhances the adaptive capacity of agro-pastoralist communities of the Trans-Himalaya, and many households are adopting a numbers of strategies associated with bio-physical resource management, but to a limited degree. The communities in the study area, although they possess unique traditional knowledge and methods of resource management developed over generations; the 'no-regret' strategies that would be effective whatever the trend of climate change would be in the future, should facilitate adaptation to climate change. However, the households and communities are not very interested into ecosystem-based adaptations. Rather, they are inclined to change their occupations from high climate sensitive areas to the less sensitive ones, since the households that have less climate sensitive livelihood systems are better adapted. As the climate change impacts exhibit many uncertainties, it is not always easy for farmers to adopt new strategies, which might have hindered households from investing in ecosystem based adaptations. Therefore, climate change adaptation policies are required to address the issues associated with agro-livestock based livelihoods, so traditional ecosystem-based adaptations can be restored to achieve the goal of social-ecological sustainability. Yet, considering the Himalayan diversity, a number of micro-level studies are required to understand climate change, the associated impacts and adaptation responses in the Trans-Himalaya before generalising the interactions between climate change and society.

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Playback Theatre

An Approach to Community Reconciliation in Nepal

NAR BAHADUR SAUD

Introduction: Theatre, Healing and Reconciliation

In general, theatre is a collaborative form of articulation in which a group of performers enacts experiences of real or imagined events live in front of audiences on a particular stage (Østern n.d.). Theatre includes enacting, singing, musical plays, dancing with traditional rituals of greetings which emphasises the openness to incorporation of local cultural forms. Likewise, Hatley (2009) states that theatre is widely recognised as a powerful medium of ‘conflict transformation’, primarily for the reason that it educates as well as entertains. Theatre can certainly help to promote social transformation even in the contexts of communal conflict. Theatre activities, i.e. drama, playback, and poetry all have the potential to attract and engage audiences through enactment and dialogue facilitation on the first viewing and make audiences emotional and empathetic. There are so many ways of learning, but theatrical performances are considered very high level activities in Nepali society. Therefore, theatre is also something like ‘learning by doing...and can be more useable and readily accessible than other kinds of learning’ (Soule 1998, 41). Similarly, Boal (1996, 49) argues that ‘aesthetic space’ in the ‘Theatre of the Oppressed’ facilitates both awareness and conflict transformation initiatives. In life, we tend to make and find images of ourselves which then influences us to modify our behaviour which we could not have done otherwise. The aesthetic space also allows a democratic interchange, and impels one to say ‘OK, that’s the way things are but that is not a way things should be, and now I am going to create an image of how I want the world to be’. Reconciliation is one of the key pillars of democratic interchange and conflict transformation, and activities related to theatre are believed to be strongly linked with reconciliation in any community.

There are variations in defining reconciliation in the world of scholarship.

The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) defines reconciliation as ‘a societal process that involves mutual acknowledgment of past suffering and the changing of destructive attitudes and behavior into constructive relationships toward sustainable peace’ (Brounéus 2003, 3). For reconciliation, a party affected by conflict must start realising the importance of individual level healing and cooperation which is interrelated to the peace process. Not only by definition, but in practice, healing is the basic foundation to start the reconciliation process. Reconciliation and conflict transformation cannot be achieved without healing, and healing is primarily related to the individual level of dealing with the past which supports the creation of space for a broader level of reconciliation.

In this wider concept of community, reconciliation, healing and conflict transformation, theatre activities fit as a artistic and creative component which can bring the parties; both past and currently conflicting parties, together to improve their relationship. In some cases, the goal of communal healing and reconciliation is widely understood in terms of active social bonding between conflicting parties in ‘the restoration of broken relationship or coming together of those who have been alienated or separated from one another by conflict to create communities again’ (Assefa 1993, 9). Playback theatre is very important, even within the different available types of theatrical performances, because it is a theatrical approach that can provide a safe space for ‘telling and listening to each other’s stories and developing more complex narratives and more nuanced understanding of identity’ (Cohen 2004, 6). As an improvisational form of theatre, Playback theatre is created through a unique collaboration between performers and the audience. In Playback theatre, someone from the audience tells a story or a moment of their life, chooses the actors to play different roles, and watches the story enacted, which immediately gives artistic shape and coherence in a safe space with rituals (Dirnstorfer 2016). Playback theatre has been a common platform of dialogue facilitation in communities since 1975. Fyfe (1996) and Schonman (1996) show that there are a number of examples where Playback theatre also involved school pupils to promote inter-culture relationships; for example, war-torn Israel and Northern Ireland are noteworthy in this respect.

Similarly, Fox (2008) gives three reasons why he thinks that it has potential to encourage healing and peacebuilding activities. First, Playback theatre is gentle in its approach as the individual does not have to tell any more than what is comfortable to them. Second, Playback theatre’s ‘aesthetic sensibility’ to what the audience member has shared then lets the actors capture the many layers of the story, and lastly, one person’s

story can make a connection to many other people within the community. Regarding Nepal, it is better to see the role of Playback theatre in building the relationship between ex-combatants and community members by promoting truth and empathy among the participants.

In this context, this paper has mainly focused on how to assess how successful the approach has been in providing healing and reconciliation in the communities of Nepal, where since their discharge from the cantonment sites large numbers of former combatants live together with the other community members. The discussion in this paper focuses on the healing aspects, and explicitly on reconciliatory functions where community people wish to share their untold stories of their experiences, and examine how the storytellers feel and perceive the situation after the enactment of the story.

This paper is based on theoretical review of the secondary literature available on Playback theatre and participatory experiences and observations of the writer in the project,¹ for a period of ten months (March 2015 to December 2015). During that period, the writer attended training as a participant and coordinating actor and was subsequently involved in 84 playback theatre performances and directly observed more than 15 playback theatre performances in communities in six project communities in Nepal. The writer also participated in the training process for 12 national level artists and 48 dialogue facilitators², and interacted with about 30 storytellers and audiences regarding their experiences after the performances. In addition, the writer frequently consulted with Ms. Anne Dirnstorfer and Mr. Christoph Werthmann; practitioners and integrative mediators, along with the trained theatre artists for a conceptual understanding and the practical challenges of the Playback theatre performances in war-torn communities like Nepal. Later, the writer had a chance to learn more on the philosophy and practical background of Playback theatre with Jonathan Fox, Co-founder of Playback theatre, during his visit to Nepal in March 2016.

Among the many different kinds of theatre, Playback theatre is

1 A peacebuilding project entitled – Supporting Reconciliation through Theatre Facilitated Dialogue, was a joint initiative of Pro Public and CSSP as pilot activity in the six communities of Nepal namely Gulariya/Bardiya, Binauna/Banke, Bijauri/Dang, Parroh/Rupandehi, Gauribas/Mahottari and Triyuga/Udayapur. (See website for details: propublic.org.np).

2 Pro Public uses the term 'Dialogue Facilitators' to refer community level peace worker who have been already trained on mediation and dialogue facilitation. They were selected in an inclusive way (gender, caste/ethnicity) and from different backgrounds such as ex-combatants, conflict victims, community workers, leaders and government representatives.

predominantly used as a peacebuilding tool to share personal stories among audiences consisting of ex-combatants, conflict victims, and community members in a safe environment in Nepal. The shared stories represent communities where high numbers of ex-combatants have settled peacefully, and are attempting to gain social recognition through their active involvement in community agencies, such as in local peace committees, ward citizen forums, consumers' groups, cooperatives, school management committees etc. Therefore, one can argue that the theatre's capacity to bring people together to facilitate communal transformation serves as a foundation of confidence and trust building for healing and reconciliation purposes.

The Nepali Context of Recalling the Past

Following the end of the decade long armed conflict (1996 – 2006), Nepal has committed to promoting social cohesion and consolidating the democratic transition through peace agreements i.e. the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and the Interim Constitution of Nepal. This was an outcome of continuous dialogue between the parties affected by conflict with the aim of establishing the truth and restoring transitional justice to help facilitate healing and reconciliation. Thousands of people were killed and tens of thousands were victimised during the armed conflict, and the dialogue processes are still attempting to establish the truth about the incidents of human rights violations during the armed conflict and provide recommendations for appropriate legal action. Community level initiatives on reconciliation through dialogue are also pivotal in the course of post-conflict peacebuilding (Salas n.d.). Here, 'dialogue' refers to the audience members' personal testimonies and narratives of the wartime for healing purposes.

In Nepal, dialogue through oral traditions and storytelling is very common, and theatre is one of the mediums of dialogue. The purpose of theatre works is to entertain and share experiences with unique cultural values, and the objective of theatre has always been to spread a message of morality which helps people understand the various dynamics of communal life. In a similar way, theatre works, such as street dramas, plays, poetry, radio/television programmes etc. are used for education, social transformation, and promoting peace, particularly after the restoration of democracy in Nepal (Subedi 2006). Nepali theatre artists adopted Playback theatre by using its Nepali name, *Chautari Natak* in 2015. Traditionally, the *Chautari* represents a common resting place under the *Bar Pipal*³ trees

3 According to Hindu Mythology, Bar and Pipal plants are of great importance; conjugating

to hold gatherings of community members to share their suffering and happiness through social practices in order to get psychological relief and empathy; and these activities have been part of Nepali culture for generations. Theatre works have also contributed to the consolidation of democratic processes, particularly after the formal end of armed conflict in Nepal in 2006, and continued to promote reconciliation and social cohesion in different communities in association and partnership with development partners. Adoption of a Playback theatre approach for community level reconciliation made the possibility of a successful joint initiative by Pro Public and CSSP – Berlin Centre for Integrative Mediation, together with the professional theatre artists and local dialogue facilitators in Nepal (Pro Public 2015).

Dirnstorfer (2016) shares her project experiences of working in communities where high numbers of ex-combatants and conflict victims settled, and how the project supported healing and reconciliation in Nepal. She noted that to introduce the concept of Playback theatre in Nepal, a group of professional Nepali actors was formed based on their skills in improvisation, music, physical expression, but also on their general attitudes and capacities for empathy. They were trained in basic skills of Playback theatre, and then they trained the dialogue facilitators in the communities who disseminated their knowledge and skills of playback within their own communities.

The writer found that any person, even from non-artistic backgrounds, could learn Playback theatre skills if they are ready to open his/her heart to others. Based on the interest and willingness, six groups⁴ of dialogue facilitators were formed and their skills were developed through basic and advanced training. A female dialogue facilitator from Banke believed that she would find it difficult to perform the *Chautari Natak* in her community. When the dialogue facilitators had their 'own' first performance in their own community, they did not think it would work, but the experiences were just like the national level theatre artists – who initially performed in front of dialogue facilitators in their communities. The stories emerged from the

in-between and erecting a resting bench under the trees to have a social gathering and internal peace is integral and common part of life in Nepal. Therefore, few people plant the trees to be memorialised themselves for centuries. Planting the Bal-Pipal trees in suitable locations is also recognised as a sacred deed.

- 4 The groups consisted of eight actors for the Chautai Natak balancing four male/four female, four ex-combatants/four community members and members of different castes and ethnic groups. Some of the members also had disabilities that were mostly linked to war time injuries. Even though most of them had worked together in a previous project, a big effort was needed to build trust between them.

audiences easily and they were happy and relieved after the performances. Thereafter, each group of dialogue facilitators independently organised various community level performances.⁵

Given this background, it was found that the project attempted to support the healing and reconciliation process. The platform was found to be correctly utilised in the communities, and the project provided opportunities to ex-combatants, conflict victims and community members to work as dialogue facilitators,⁶ where they shared and enacted the personal narratives of lives that may have remain unheard. A storyteller from Binauna Banke says, 'It has been nine years, I have never shared this story to anyone and hidden it within me. After sharing, I feel so relived and my heart is light⁷. At the same time, ability to imagine experiences of the 'other', and particularly empathise with the suffering of one's enemy is an important capacity required for co-existence and reconciliation. Theatre provides spaces to 'understand ourselves and our adversaries, and reality of our interdependence' (Cohen 2004, 11). Sharing untold personal stories in Playback theatre was an opportunity to contribute to the healing and reconciliation process. There are many people in communities who might be seeking the right opportunity to express their repressed pain for many years.

By comparing the playback theatre performances from different districts in their social context and impact on their audiences, the study reflects the role of Playback theatre in facilitating direct community reconciliation and achieving more plural and integrated community. One of the dialogue facilitators from Bardiya district shares, 'We, the ex-combatants, were perceived differently in this community, now, the *Chautari Natak* has given us a space for connecting with other community people and a chance to change their perception toward us'. The dialogue facilitators of ex-combatant backgrounds from the project districts kept saying that the *Chautari Natak* has improved their perception in the community and has given them a better image in their communities. It is also argued that Playback theatre-facilitated dialogue has the potential of minimising oppositional perspectives and creates empathy after hearing the stories and

5 In 2015, 84 performances of the Chautari Natak were organised in the communities of Gulariya/Bardiya, Binuana/Banke, Bijauri/Dang, Parroh/Rupandehi, Guaribas/Mahottari and Triyuga/Udayapur by the trained team of dialogue facilitators.

6 A group of dialogue facilitators worked as an unofficial self-help agency to facilitate dialogue and mediation for the healing and reconciliation activities in the communities, - who were trained by Pro Public - a national NGO working in the field of peace-building in different communities of Nepal.

7 Writer's interview with a storyteller in Binauna, Banke on March 12, 2015.

watching the enactments, especially of antagonists. The motivation to bring people together, acknowledging each other, creating a safe environment by listening to others, and celebrating local identity through Playback theatre are some of the strengths that can support to sustain communal harmony. Therefore, the *Chautari Natak* can be one approach to recalling the past for healing and reconciliation.

Sharing the Personal Stories and Promoting Reconciliation

Reconciliation is a process that includes the whole society of a post-conflict setting. It is not just a process for those who suffered directly and those who inflicted suffering, but has to be imbedded in a wider perspective of social, political and cultural transformation. It is crucial to adopt a path that is suitable for the local context, 'Local, home-grown reconciliation and grassroots initiatives are viewed as the key to successes' (Bloomfield et al 2003). Playback theatre is one example of a bottom-up approach for reconciliation that has been successfully tailored to fit the Nepali context. Performing Playback theatre in the communities by a group of dialogue facilitators from the same local communities provides the opportunity to share their personal stories and watch the stories enacted in front of them aligned with local culture, and has found to generate a tremendous level of satisfaction and revelation of subjective truth among community members. In contrast, a South African scholar writes, 'the top-down approach is characterised by a perception that [...] for local dynamics to change, national intervention must first take place. This will then filter down, or create the conditions (and incentives) within which local actors can pursue reconciliation processes' (Bloomfield et al 2003, 25). It is an illusion to believe that only reconciliation imposed from the top will automatically engender individual steps towards reconciliation. The authorities cannot impose trust and empathy by decree, nor can they forgive in the name of the victims. However, it was found that the project of sharing personal stories for healing had been supplementary to the activities of government authorities at the community level reconciliation processes in the country.

A project officer at Pro Public shares his experiences that 'the audiences and dialogue facilitators were engaged in establishing relationships in each performance and an environment was created for reconciliation by listening to each other in an empathetic way'⁸. Technically, anyone in the audience

8 Sharing personal opinions about project experiences and implications in March 2016, during the advance training on playback theatre to theatre artists with Jonathan Fox.

can share a story, the dialogue facilitators enact the shared story and through their art and creativity, including musical rhythms, the audiences are able to share empathy and engagement with the storytellers. It was found that the intermingling chain of reciprocity among the participants contributed to wider social and cultural improvements. When a person participates in a show, he/she realises that a particular performance methodology creates dialogic intimacy that can improve society, communities, and local culture. In this sense, audiences find that voiceless voices are not only heard but also performed in the *Chautari Natak*. In this context, the officer claims that Playback theatre is a democratic process for reconciliation in terms of active and inclusive participation of victims and perpetrators for healing and social justice by engaging in dialogue.

The writer clearly identified some examples of Playback theatre's contributions to healing and reconciliation in the target communities. One of the most remarkable stories was observed in the Rupandehi district where the performance showed the positive impact of storytelling on the life of the storyteller after the performance, and this was documented a successful case in the project report (Pro Public 2015). When the group of dialogue facilitators performed a story of a young widow; whose husband was killed during the conflict period, it brought positive changes in her life. She was blamed as 'husband eater' and considered as a 'bad omen' by her family. As a result, she used to be treated badly by her family and community. Once she got the opportunity to share the superstitious blaming and the suffering she went through in the *Chautari Natak*, a respectful performance of her story created an environment that reacted positively to her. As a result, the family and community members learned about her feelings and started to develop empathy towards her. Gradually, attitudes towards her changed and she was treated as if she was their own 'daughter' rather than 'daughter-in-law'. Later, she was able to re-marry another person with due respect. The dramatic change in perceptions of her was unbelievable to her. Currently, she is happily engaged in her new marital life and a respected relation within her previous family. It can be argued that the safe space provided to share her story among fellow community members supported to transformation of her life.

Playback theatre supported and encouraged community members to rethink their previous attitudes and behaviour. Whatever people may think of being the truth, the perceptions of the same truth might change after listening to stories of fellow neighbours. A female ex-combatant, a dialogue facilitator from Mahottari district recalls her reflections of the Playback theatre. She says, 'The strength of the *Chautari Natak* is focusing on the

feelings of a storyteller⁹. Community members have little understanding of the lived experiences of ex-combatants because they are entirely different to their own lives. People remain detached from them and are simply unable to understand or see connections to their own lives. The major strength of the *Chautari Natak* is to really focus on the emotions of a storyteller and behave in an empathetic way, as this can bring people closer and enable them to restore their relations.

Similarly, there are many people interested in sharing personal stories in the public sphere, but it requires suitable timing and environment. Playback theatre can be an appropriate option in communities, as sharing their pain and suffering, storytellers perceive empathy, and the process of story sharing and honest listening supports the reduction of their pain and suffering. For instance, 'the project' has supported the provision of justice to victims in the project districts after hearing the horrific stories of the victims (Pro Public 2015). A dialogue facilitator from Dang shares his experiences as a conductor, 'playback theatre is a common forum for organising communication among dialogue facilitations, audiences and other concerned stakeholders directly or indirectly and place to rest his/her suffering'.

Celebrating Empathy and Strengthening Communities

While observing the current situation of communal harmony in communities in Nepal, one can witness the presence of alienation and loneliness. Such a situation has arisen primarily due to the consequences of armed conflict. In addition, political affiliation and stereotypical cultural taboos have significantly increased communal fragmentation. The presence of community members in a public gathering and meeting is undesirable and inauspicious particularly due to political reasons. People hesitate to initiate a dialogue or listen to each other during common forums (Pro Public 2015). If a safe environment is created for dialogue, including the *Chautari Natak* shows, the identified perpetrators and victims show a spontaneous interest of sharing their stories and innermost feelings.

By telling personal stories, storytellers feel relief and psychological comfort. A storyteller from Dang says: 'I have felt psychological healing after sharing my story in front of fellow community members'¹⁰. Audiences also expressed that real stories were shared in such an environment, if not; it would not be possible to share the stories with large groups. Audiences

9 Writer's interview with the DF in Gauribas, Mahottari on April 15, 2015.

10 Writer's interview with a storyteller in Bijauri, Dang on April 20, 2015.

not only perceive empathy and solidarity with storytellers, but also a bridge for reducing negative thoughts and hearsays about someone else. Audience retold victims' stories with other people who are preoccupied with negative emotions and have preconceived perceptions and feelings of the victims or perpetrators. A conducting dialogue facilitator from Mahottari says, 'Many people ask me – When and where is another show of the *Chautari Natak*?' He adds, 'Stories of local people are shared and the performers are also local people, therefore, audiences find an organic flavour in the performance'¹¹. Because of local spatial and temporal composition of the stories, audiences, and dialogue facilitator, the *Chautari Natak* is celebrated by the audience. Experiences of the *Chautari Natak* support the reduction of ill-feelings toward victims and ex-combatants and contribute to the process of reconciliation and peace building.

Likewise, one of the storytellers from Bardiya expressed her reflection and feelings of sharing her story in the *Chautari Natak*. Her story was related to her disappeared husband in 2004. She does not have any information on whether her husband is alive or dead, and she shares that 'I came to observe the *Chautari Natak*, and however, it was about telling the real life story. I thought, I should not miss the opportunity to share my story as I could not sleep well for years'. This opportunity gave a good space to celebrate empathy among community members, and many storytellers thought that they were the only people who had undergone different types of suffering but they changed their thinking by hearing similar stories of suffering from many other people. It was crucial to plan for empty time and enough breaks where these reflection processes could happen. Further, in the advanced skill development the enactment for traumatic stories had to be given a special focus. When stories of strong violence are shared actors are frequently challenged and tend to choose modes of enactment that are less literate (such as through poems). To find the right level of showing violence while at the same time strengthening the resilience of the teller is a challenging process in creating the space for healing. The more actors and dialogue facilitators have had spaces to reflect on their own stories, the easier it is for them to deal with other people's heavy weight.

In the cases of conflict affected, storytellers shared their experiences and struggles with other community members during and after the performances. It was found that the *Chautari Natak* provided support to integrate people with similar painful memories and traumatic experiences in the same communities. An audience member from Udayapur, who is a

11 Writer's interview with the DF in Gauribas, Mahottari on April 15, 2015.

young single woman, realised the tremendous changes in her life regarding the community's perceptions after sharing her perceived reality with fellow community members. She comments, 'Many people of this community raised questions about my character after the death of my husband' – with whom she was compelled to marry without her consent at the age of 15 as a second wife. She adds, 'After sharing the compulsion and reality of life, community people treat me positively by saying I'm a selfless and courageous lady'¹².

Therefore, the success of the project also realised that the courage to share personnel stories seems itself a breakthrough for a suffering individual. Once a story is shared in a performance, the story automatically becomes a public story. The experience of being heard can be extremely empowering for the storyteller and gives the confidence to coexist equally in the communities. The Playback platform may also be a common place to hear and share the reality of lives to celebrate and strengthen community level interrelationships.

Conclusion

The *Chautari Natak* approach is supportive in creating a safe environment to share untold stories of conflict victims and enhance the capacity for mutual empathy among members of communities. It helps in building communal relationships with the support of a performative space. Storytellers were found to be perceived, and behave, differently after listening to his/her reality and seeing the enactment of the dialogue by facilitators. As an interactive social domain, the theatre-facilitated dialogue became a successful tool in creating social discourse for healing and social transformation, and in supporting the national process of reconciliation. In a public performance, the audiences expect and deserve an aesthetic experience, and community based Playback theatre performances were found to have larger socio-cultural implications. Thus, this is a good opportunity to listen to the unheard voices of the community members.

In the process of national or community level reconciliation, the methodological approach of Playback theatre-facilitated dialogue – gathering, storytelling, active listening, enacting, and collective solidarity for storytellers, and was found to be an empathetic way of empowering individuals to share their stories. Its unique methodology was also applicable in the rural setting of Nepali communities where people rarely get an opportunity and common forum to share their feelings, emotions,

12 Writer's interview with a storyteller in Triyuga, Udaypur on March 25, 2015.

and suffering. Conversely, it was difficult to gain the 'trust' of storytellers to share their stories; however, once a 'safe' environment was created, it was hard to stop them telling their untold stories in front of other community members (Dirnstorfer 2016).

Communities members were either busy with their daily work or rarely found such secure and safe environments with their neighbours. The *Chautari Natak* can create such environments in a culturally and politically heterogeneous group, where people were actively engaged in the stories and expressed sympathy, empathy and a collective belonging. This process of coming together and building a sense of collective belonging is an essential step and process of reconciliation and healing. The way the audience and dialogue facilitators engage in the stories and respond to the storytellers and dialogue facilitators is evidence of the growing knowledge of each other, and the building of a collective belonging and sense of social cohesion. The evidence indicates that this kind of theatre-facilitated dialogue contributes positively to the process of healing and reconciliation in communities at the community and national levels in Nepal. In this context, there is a need of additional studies and research on the short term and long term impacts and implications of theatre in the national process of reconciliation and peacebuilding.

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‘Every Day is about Surviving’ Street Children and the Great Quake

DAWA TSHERING SHERPA & SONI KHANAL

Introduction

Children are one of the most vulnerable groups who are adversely affected during and after natural disasters. There are various instances of natural disasters impacting children’s lives that have affected their physical and psychological health, along with their social well-being, proving that they are one of the most vulnerable groups. The 7.8 magnitude earthquake on the 25th of April 2015 and the large subsequent aftershock on the 12th of May affected many families and children. Plan International et al (2016) states that post-earthquake, children have become more vulnerable in terms of health, shelter, and education. When the status of children in general is highly affected, the ones who are at the lower socio-economic strata are even more vulnerable. While there have been studies globally on the impact of disasters on children, the link between disasters and street children has been overlooked. None of the post-Earthquake literature published discusses street children during and after the Earthquake. To fill this vacuum, this paper explores the conditions of street children by looking at their general background and three other stages; their conditions prior to the Earthquake, during the Earthquake, and after the Earthquake, thereby presenting a comparative perspective.

UNICEF (1984) defined street children by labelling them into two categories, ‘children of the street’ and ‘children on the street’, which are globally accepted definitions, amidst a few criticisms, for street children. ‘Children of the streets’ are the children who have been pushed or have chosen to live their lives on the streets and have become completely disconnected with their family members or only have very weak ties. ‘Children on the streets’ are those who spend most of the time on streets to generate an income without any supervision from their family members, but have connections with the family. According to Onta-Bhatta (1996), people in Nepal under the age of 16 are legally considered children.

Calamities and Children

There are different ways that disasters can impact children. According to Kousky (2016), disasters affect children in three different ways. Firstly, they can have an impact on their physical health as they might die, get injured, face food shortages leading to malnutrition, and at the same time they might not have access to medical care that may make the situation worse. Secondly, children can also suffer from mental health problems as disasters might be stressful and frightening as they damage homes and possessions, might lead them to migrate, lose their loved ones, see their parents undergo stress, suffer from neglect and abuse, and there is often a breakdown of social networks, neighbourhoods, and local economies. Finally, disasters can affect children's education because it displaces families, destroys schools, and pushes children into the labour force to support their families. Peek (2008) also argues that disasters have effects on children's physical and psychological health and education.

In addition, the vulnerability of children to trafficking has been proven in the aftermath of various disasters. According to US State Department (2010), around 225,000 people were trafficked in Haiti after the Earthquake in 2010. Sixty-five per cent of them were girls who were between the ages of six to fourteen years. In addition, Calkins (2013) also stated that after the typhoon in Philippines, around 300,000-500,000 Filipinos were trafficked, and up to two million children were at risk of trafficking (Clakins cited in Eimer 2013). The reports published in Nepal during the post Earthquake period also identified children as one of the most vulnerable the times of disasters. Child Workers in Nepal (CWIN) is one of the organisations that protects children's rights and prevents child labour. According to the CWIN's (2015) 'Annual Report on State of Rights of Child in Nepal 2015', 2742 children in Nepal lost their lives during the Earthquake, 1244 girls and 1498 boys. The report further states that 93 children (39 girls, 40 boys, and 14 unidentified) lost their lives to other natural disasters in the same year. Even a year after of the Earthquake, children from affected areas are still suffering from the loss of homes, animals, belongings, schools, trees, communities, and more generally, life as they knew it (Plan International et al 2016).

The Post-Disaster Needs Assessment report (NPC 2015) highlights that affected families can have serious consequences on women, girls, and children, who may face an increased risk of sexual and gender-based violence, human trafficking, child marriage, and child labour. Moreover, there are many reports of the trafficking of children after the Earthquake.¹

1 Jones 2016; Guardian, 27th of May 2015.

Furthermore, Jones (2015) also shared a statement from a UNICEF official stating that it is difficult to say if the trafficking has increased or decreased after the Earthquake, because there is no accurate record-keeping system in Nepal regarding trafficking. However, post Earthquake, the Nepal government tried to reduce trafficking by creating checkpoints on the main roads and at the airport to attempt to tackle the problem.

Into the Streets

There are various studies that have identified the factors that influence children to enter the streets. Across the globe, the World Bank (2002) identifies five major factors causing children to come onto the streets. The first is the low family income, as children work on the streets to contribute to their family income. Another reason that has been highlighted is inadequate housing conditions as the lack of proper housing may push parents and children onto the streets. Neglect and abuse has been identified as another factor, and parents being unable to give sufficient time to caring for children or parents having addictions or abusing substances alcohol. Dropping out from education also leads many children to the streets as does the loss of parents due to armed conflicts, natural disasters, epidemics and diseases (World Bank 2002).

In the context of Nepal, the factors that have been specifically identified as contributing to children entering the streets are similar to those highlighted by the World Bank, with a few slight differences. For instance, the Child Protection Centre and Services (CPCS) Nepal works for the security and awareness among street children, and states that the children also land on the streets to find freedom from their family members by being with their friends. Furthermore, it also states that children with broken families have also ended up on the streets. According to CWS (1996), the access of transportation from the rural areas to urban areas have also played vital role in encouraging children to leave their homes and go to chase their dreams in urban areas.

We found similar cases in our interviews; 14-year-old, Udhav Khadka² from Sindhupalchowk stated:

Mero naam Udhav Khadka, Bhuichalo le eta pani padka uta pani padka (My name is Khadka, the Earthquake damaged my house here and at home). I had a wish of coming to Kathmandu from a long time but my parents would not permit me. The economic condition of the house went down

2 All the names are changed and only pseudonyms are used in the paper.

after the Earthquake. So, my parents were compelled to send me to Kathmandu.

Taking Udhav's example into account, the Earthquake not only forced children onto the streets, but gave a chance for children to go to the streets for the ones who really wanted to leave their home and work in urban areas. Two girls, Sujita and Shanta from Dhading and Dang respectively, also started working after the Earthquake.

In addition, a 12-year-old boy from Rautahat, Guddu shared, 'I came to Kathmandu to earn and support my parents as the agricultural activities back home are not even sufficient for them to eat. I think I am a grown up and I can earn now'. The reason for Guddu being on street is that he thinks he is an adult and a responsible member of his family that needs to support his family. However, he might not think this if his parents were economically sound. A 14-year-old girl, Sujita, mentioned:

My father committed suicide four years ago. My mother had a bike accident after the Earthquake. I started earning to support my mother by working. Now, my mother is well and does not want me to continue the job. But, I don't feel like giving up because once you start earning, you don't feel like leaving the job.

Perhaps if she had someone else to support her at that time or if her father was there she would not have chosen to work. In addition, she stated she could not leave her work because she had become habituated to earning on her own. The reasons for children ending up on the streets vary individually, but there are certain factors that become interconnected and lead children to the street. Once on the streets, the children adopt and utilise various strategies for income generation and working in the vulnerable conditions they are exposed to daily.

Prior to the Earthquake

There are various studies conducted prior to the Earthquake that describe the condition of street children in Nepal. Ryckmans (2012), while conducting a study among 302 street children, both outside and within the valley, describes that more than 50 per cent of the children worked as rag-pickers. The remaining were beggars, street vendors, *Khalasis* (person collecting money on the public transport) and children without jobs. The results were similar in a study conducted with street children in Kathmandu; nonetheless, they also identified that some of the children

were engaged in illegal activities (CPS Nepal and CPS Belgium, 2007).

Among the eight street children the authors talked to, five of them were already on the streets before the devastating earthquake. Two of them were begging for a living, two were working as rag pickers, and one was working as a vendor. A street child Tara, a 7-year-old girl, mentioned, 'My mother and I have been begging on the streets for a long time. I do not know the exact year. The people tend to give more money to a child than an older person. As I earn more, it helps my mother to run the house'. The voice of Akash, a sixteen-year-old boy, echoed the voice of children staying on the streets:

Prior to the Earthquake, I used to do the same work of rag-picking and slept on the streets of Kathmandu during the night. I stayed with a group of boys around 8-9 [years old]. The place where we slept was almost the same [every night]. All of us, although worked in different places [during the day], came and slept together at night. Whatever I earned during the day was only enough for food and sometimes not even for that. We feel more secure when we are in a group rather than alone.

Guddu (12) also shared:

I have been staying with my brother in a rented room prior to the Earthquake. I sell balloons and earn my living whereas my brother works as a wage labourer. We stay together. So, I don't need to mingle with the other boys and I always feel safe.

The other three children who came to the streets to work after the Earthquake were staying with their parents and were also going to school, whereas the children who were on the streets prior to the Earthquake were dropouts or did not attend school. As Udhav (14) mentioned: 'I used to live with my parents prior to the Earthquake. My parents are farmers back home. I only had to help them sometimes during cultivation, that was also mostly during the holidays'.

Ryckmans also mentions that street children face various forms of vulnerability, such as physical and mental violence, drug dependence, threats from various gangs, diseases, crime, alcoholism, starvation, and lack of self-esteem. Also, CPS International (2008) describes incidences of street children being exposed to psychosocial, physical, and sexual abuse. Moreover, Subedi (2002) states that street children are extremely vulnerable to trafficking.

Suraj (name changed), a 14-year-old ragpicker, explained how the seniors of other groups used to harass him prior to the Earthquake.

The older boys used to tell me, '*oie tero goji chhamum ta, kati chha vaeko jati malai de*' (hey, let us check your pockets, give me whatever you have.). If I would not give them the money, they would hit me. This happened mostly when I was alone. I felt comparatively more secure when I was in a group. Also, when I didn't have money to buy food after giving to the seniors, I slept smelling dendrites.

He further shared:

I have stayed in various organisations. I go thinking I will study and improve, and get free food. But, once I go there, I feel like it's a prison. I cannot smoke there. *Ekchoti dulne baani lagepachhi, ekdumai garo hunchha* (It is difficult once you have the habit of roaming around).

Saurav, an 8-year-old boy who begs around a temple, also shared the same kind of experience, 'The older boys bully me at times. Although they don't take all the money that I have, they ask me to give some, and I have to give what they ask for. Otherwise, they would thrash me'. However, Tara (7) and Guddu (12), who were with their guardians, felt less risk of harassment as they were also staying in rented rooms during the night. Generally, the street children were working in vulnerable conditions prior to the Earthquake, and they worked to buy food and struggled with various forms of harassment.

Methodology

To understand the scenario of the street children in the post-Earthquake situation, the study adopted a qualitative study method where the children were contacted based on the snowball method. Children, both boys and girls, who work for an income, were selected as respondents after detailed consultations with one of the organisations working with street children. The children were approached and interviewed more than once in order to build rapport with them, and make them feel comfortable speaking. The analysis is based on 12 in-depth interviews, eight with children and four with key-informants. Among the street children, three were girls and five were boys. Out of the four KIIs, two (both female) were with NGO representatives working with street children, one with a junk dealer (male), and one with a person (female) who has been working at Dohori

Sanjh restaurant for 10 years, and has closely worked with young girls there. The study was conducted in the Kathmandu valley.

There were a few limitations of the study. It was very difficult to contact the female respondents. The ones whom the authors could get in touch with were hesitant to share the contact details of their peers. This paper does not include all the street children and does not represent all of them. However, it gives the basic idea of what is happening in some street children's lives during the post-Earthquake situation.

During the Earthquake: Their Initial Coping Strategies

The forms and instances of the vulnerability that the children were exposed to increased during the Earthquake. One of the key-informants affiliated to an organisation working with street children explained, 'there were minor injuries among the street children we work with. However, there were no cases of severe injuries and death among them after the Earthquake'. Likewise, none of the children who were part of this research shared that they were affected physically during the Earthquake or know any of their friends facing such instances.

The street children had different experiences to share about what they did during the Earthquake compared to the children who were not on the streets during the Earthquake.

I was playing on the field with my friends when the earth shook. I felt the tremble and saw my parents coming out from my house. I could see my house falling down. I felt numb for a moment and did not know what to do.

(Udhav, aged 14)

I was walking in the streets of Thamel. Suddenly, people started to come out of their houses, and were saying *Bhaichalo Ayo, Bhaichalo Ayo!* (There is an earthquake!). I didn't know how I should react, so I went inside an unknown house. I couldn't do anything there, so I sat and put my hands on my head. After the trembling stopped, I got out of the house and walked. I couldn't make sense of what had happened.

(Akash, aged 16)

I was in Thamel, begging as usual. Once the land started shaking, my mother started crying holding me tight. I also cried along with her as I did not understand what was happening.

(Tara, aged 7)

I was just walking around the temple where I beg. I saw some of the temples collapsing and did not know what to do.

(Saurav, aged 8)

I was playing in the playground of an organisation during the earthquake. I saw the house swinging. I did not know what was happening.

(Suraj, aged 14)

While the above statements establish that there was a sense of confusion and fear among the street children and their guardians, the street children also mentioned interesting coping mechanisms.

I was scared due to the earthquake. I started smelling dendrites in a larger quantity than I did in the past after the earthquake. That helped me have a sound sleep wherever I lay down on the streets.

(Akash, aged 16)

I was staying in an organisation during the earthquake. Everyone started staying outside after the earthquake. Then I got an urge of coming out of the organisation because it was same as staying on streets but we had to be more disciplined. I felt if I left out I could smoke and live my life on my own. So, I ran away and came and met Akash, who is my friend from a long time.

(Suraj, aged 14)

Substance abuse for both Akash and Suraj seemed to be a coping strategy soon after the earthquake. It helped them avoid the traumatic experiences. However, Guddu, who was in Kathmandu to help his parents back home, shared a different story:

Immediately after the earthquake, I ran to look for my brother. We stayed at Thankot for about two days in an open space. But, our parents were really worried about us. So, they called us back home. We both went home and stayed with our parents in Rautahat. We were at home and did not feel the aftershocks. We were also at home at the time of the second earthquake.

(Guddu, aged 12)

Saurav (8), who stays around a temple with a big group, shared how the group that they stay with influences his behavior, 'I was with the bigger

boys. They laughed at me when I was scared. So, I had to show them that I was strong'. This showing off initially made him strong and he said he was no longer scared of the tremors. Similarly, Tara (7) said that she stayed with her mother in an open space near her rented room. Therefore, it was not difficult for her and she got used to the earthquake by watching others staying with them in the public space.

The children, on and off the streets, showed different coping mechanisms according to the situation they were in. However, the children who were with their parents during the earthquake and were not connected with the streets until that point of time had their own experiences to share.

I started thinking about convincing my parents to come to Kathmandu as I always wanted. As the house was completely destroyed and all the grains were lost due to earthquake, I felt that I will be able to help them out if I would go to Kathmandu like my friends did.

(Udhav, aged 14)

I was staying with my mother in the open space at Gongabu. There were lots of people staying like us. I made many friends on the ground. We used to pass our days playing. We did not recall the earthquake much.

(Sujita, aged 14)

I was in Dang during the earthquake. The first one was scary. However, none of the houses in my village was affected. So, I was not scared.

(Shanta, aged 17)

Different children used different coping mechanisms during the earthquake. It largely depended on the external influencing factors. The children who were with parents, children who stayed in groups, and children who were on their own had different ways of coping during the earthquake.

Every Day is about Survival: Post-Earthquake Situation

The above section portrayed that street children were initially struggling after the earthquake. However, in the long run, their struggle for survival preceded their experiences of the earthquake. The children had to overcome their fear to obtain food to survive. They also had to struggle with various forms of abuse, as they always have to do after the earthquake.

The initial days were difficult for the ragpickers, and Akash informed us that they did find high amounts of junk thrown out of the destroyed houses, but junk buyers did not buy their goods as they thought that

ragpickers stole the junk, and many junk dealers remained closed after the earthquake. It was hard for the ragpickers for couple of weeks to sell the junk, but the children used to get food from the people who were staying on streets. Suraj and Akash said that and slept on the streets and had to keep moving around the spaces where people were eating. Once everything was normalised, they again collected junk and sold it to junk dealers. As Suraj (14) rightly said, '*Bhuiuchalo agadi pani kabadi tipnai parthyoo, bhuichalo pachi pani kabadi tipnai paryo* (I had to pick up junk before the earthquake, I have to pick up the junk even after the earthquake)'. Furthermore, Suraj mentioned, 'I survived the big earthquake, why should I be scared of the aftershocks, I will survive them too. I need money to eat, nothing is more important for me than that'.

There was a decline in the number of tourists as well as pedestrians soon after the earthquake; I had to go to the places where people were staying with tarps on public grounds. People didn't give money, but they at least gave something to eat. We went to places different than where we stayed after the earthquake to beg. I was with my mother wherever I went. So, I was not scared of the earthquake. Later the situation became normal and we started begging again as we did in the past.

(Tara, aged 7)

You know, my seniors figured out the places, soon after the earthquake, where they could eat for free. So, we used to go there and get food for free. There were fewer people soon after the earthquake who visited temples, but they did arrive after the earthquake. However, I earned by guarding people's shoes around the temple after 7 pm when the shoe collection gets closed.

(Saurav, aged 8)

I went home after the first earthquake. I stayed there for around three weeks. The money that my parents earn was not sufficient for us. So, I had to go to other's fields and work to contribute to the family income. Later, when I came to Kathmandu, things were normal. I could sell balloons as I did in the past.

(Guddu, aged 12)

Furthermore, one of the KII respondents, a junk dealer, shared, 'The street children came with junk which looked pretty new, which we did not accept.

I felt that incidences of theft were on rise'. Similarly, while conducting interview with a KII respondent, who was working with the children, they mentioned that there were incidences of theft in the public spaces where people were staying after the earthquake.

The situation of the girls working in Dohori Sanjh was also similar. Dohori Sanjh are restaurants that entertain their customers by showing live Nepali Folk dance shows along with young waitresses. Most of the Dohori Sanjh hire young girls in order to attract customers. While conducting a KII with a senior dancer of a Dohori Sanjh restaurant, she told us that after the earthquake, business went really down. It had an impact on both the workers and the owners. They were jobless for around three months after the earthquake, but, the situation has improved. She had savings, but other young girls had to take loans for their survival. For a short time, the workers in restaurants had difficulty earning, but people soon came back and the business started again. She mentioned that the earthquake brought changes to their livelihood for a short period, but not in the long run.

Although the earthquake affected the livelihood strategies of the street children for a few weeks, their struggle to obtain two meals a day continued. They had to work harder than they did in the past. The other struggle in their lives, which is the vulnerability to abuse, also continued to take place during the post-earthquake situation and has also increased in some instances. Every day, young boys have to face harassment from senior or older boys. Even after the earthquake, nothing has changed in terms of the harassment, as the older boys used to bully them prior the earthquake and afterwards. Akash believes that the earthquake has not changed anything for them. Although the younger street children ignore the older ones, they get into occasional fights and face more trouble.

In addition, Saurav (8), who begs for a living, also stated that older boys always try to check his pockets even if he tells them that he does not have any money. As he lives with them, he cannot do anything to them, and has to endure physical torture if he cannot earn enough money. With the girls, they again become victims of the same street children, as they are harassed physically and sexually by the boys. One of the key informants, working at an NGO for street children, shared that there are girls who had to face more harassment after the earthquake. The street children or youth had to stay in shared houses after the earthquake as opposed to living in the streets. Usually, street girls work as commercial sex workers or dancers in bars in order to afford the rent in Kathmandu. Street boys, who do not have jobs, depend on their female peers' income. During the aftershocks, most of the girls had to face forced sex by their male friends. The anxiety of boys

drove them to rape their female counterparts. Prior to the earthquake, the boys were living somewhere else, but after the earthquake they came to stay with their female friends, and began to sexually harass them. Street girls could not even complain to the police as the harassers were their own friends, and they believed the police would not listen to them. The girls were helpless, and some of them even became pregnant. The plight of girls worsened after the Earthquake due to the incidents of harassment.

However, not all the street children are victims of harassment. Apparently, the children who stay with their guardians have not faced any harassment as adults are with them and look after them. Tara always stays with her mother, and has not experienced any harassment. In addition, Guddu, a balloon seller who stays with his brother, shared a similar experience. He is prepared if anyone comes to harass him, he will say: '*Malai kehi garis vane ma police lai vani dinchu*' (If you do anything to me then I will complain to the police). He seemed confident that he can protect himself from abusers. In addition, he also believes that if anyone tries to mess with him, he has his brother to protect him. The children who are with a significant adult or guardian believe that their guardians are there to protect them. On the other hand, those who do not live with their parents have to face harassment and suffer.

A Major Change at the Policy Level

The Ministry of Women Children and Social Welfare came up with a new guideline for the street children after the earthquake following the National Child Policy 2012. The main objective of the guideline was to rehabilitate street children and reunite them with the family members and society to set them 'free' from street life. Furthermore, it also aims to identify the factors influencing children to enter the streets and address them. The implementation process of the guideline is to first deal with the issue at the destination of the street children by rescuing them and rehabilitating them with the help of various organisations working in the field of street children. The children will be reunited with family members as far as possible. If not, there are provisions to keep them in long term homes or provide them with skills training for a better life. Then, the plan is to run awareness raising programmes in the areas where the children are in vulnerable situations. In addition, the parents will also be supported in income generation if their children are vulnerable. The rescue of the street children has been conducted by the Central Child Welfare Board with the help of various organisations (MWCSW 2015).

The Central Child Welfare Board came up with data that 188 children

were rescued by the government under the new guideline for the rescue and rehabilitation of street children. However, 38 of the children left the shelter houses. The government has also set up NPR 10 million for the programme in this year's budget. The executive director of the Central Child Welfare Board stated that the process of rescuing and rehabilitating street children is difficult as street children do not want to stay in a disciplined environment. Ten rehabilitation centres have been selected for the process. (The Kathmandu Post 2016)

Upon asking an NGO official about the difficulty in implementing the guideline, she stated: 'Street children have become smart enough these days. They come to streets during the day, and have started renting rooms in groups. As they do not live on the streets and have homes, the rescue process is difficult'. Three children we talked to were aware that now the police take away the children from the streets now. However, they were not fully aware of the laws. There were only two children, Akash and Suraj, who said that they have been escaping the police by staying in the make-shift camps left by other people after the earthquake. Tara is small and she said her mother has been threatened many times by the police, but her mother hides her when she sees the police approaching.

Conclusion

Children are vulnerable during disasters and are less likely to defend themselves, which exposes them to severe physical and psychological stress and abuse. Street children, in particular in Nepal, have various experiences with regard to the earthquake, but one of the continual concerns for the street children is their livelihoods. During the period of multiple aftershocks, they were not able to work, and had to find alternate means for survival. Some children became involved in crime, such as theft, in order to sustain themselves. After things gradually returned to normal, the children also restarted their regular work. There is a huge dynamic of harassment between girls and boys, who are working or living in the streets. Our research indicates that events, like natural disasters, could affect them psychologically and emotionally both in the short term and over longer periods of time. Nonetheless, their day to day struggles seemed to have made them strong to the extent that they were often able to cope with the stress of the earthquake on their own. However, the street children who stayed with their parents found it much easier to cope immediately after the earthquake and were exposed to no, or significantly less, abuse and harassment. Therefore, the primary concern of the street children during the post earthquake period was their livelihoods, which is always difficult

and insecure even without the added problems caused by disasters, such as earthquakes.

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Public Migration of Health Workers from Nepal¹

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Introduction

The world today faces acute shortages in the health workforce with a chronic worldwide need for an estimated 2.4 million health personnel, such as physicians, nurses, and midwives and an additional need for 2 million pharmacists and other paramedical workers (WHO 2006, cited in Siyam and Roberto Dal Poz 2014). However, these shortages are inequitably distributed between the Global South and Global North. Studies have shown that health care workers are mainly concentrated in high income countries due to the reason that the health care workers (HCW) migrate primarily from relatively poor countries to the more developed countries of the Global North.²

Consequently, the shortage of HCWs in low-income countries is recognised to have had an adverse and long-lasting effect on the health of populations as well as the health care systems in the countries of origin, especially in terms of unmet needs (Connell 2010, 2014). This problem, in addition to putting the burden on low-income countries, has also been increasingly reinforcing the unbalanced distribution of health personnel between and within countries (Dussault and Franceschini 2006). Likewise, these shortages and imbalances are widely recognised to have been the major obstacles for attaining the Millennium Development Goals (MGDs) and other development goals in many developing countries, including

1 This paper draws on a study, 'Migration of Health Workers from Nepal', conducted for the International Labour Organization. The authors would like to thank our colleagues - Ashim Bhattarai, Dawa Tshering Sherpa, Soni Khanal, Swarna Kumar Jha and Manju Gurung for their support during the research.

2 See Bach 2007; Commander, Kangasniemi and Winters 2004; Connell 2014; Prescott and Nichter 2014.

Nepal.³ The migration of HCWs and often the consequent shortage it causes in low-income countries, what Eckenwiler (2014) calls ‘one of most pressing issues of our times’, has drawn a great deal of attention from scholars and policy makers across the world. Recently, there have been some attempts to promote ‘orderly or managed migration’ and ethical recruitment of HCWs in order to redress the imbalance and shortage.

Like many countries in the Global South, Nepal is also said to be facing a critical shortage of health workers with the health worker to population ratio at 0.67 doctors and nurses per 1000 (MoHP and NHSSP 2013), which is significantly less than the World Health Organization’s (WHO) recommendation of 2.3 doctors, nurses and midwives per 1000 individuals. However, in the case of Nepal, there is a dichotomy that: on one hand there is a chronic shortage of doctors and specialists; on the other, Nepal’s health education/training institutions have been producing approximately 10,000 health workers over the recent decades with over 32,000 being produced between 2009 and 2011 alone. Furthermore, a total of 54,177 health workers were accounted to have been engaged in both the public and private sectors. Of these, 39 per cent are in the private sector compared to 61 per cent in the public sector (MoHP and NHSSP 2013). Earlier studies have suggested that approximately 16 per cent of registered doctors are outside the country (Shrestha and Bhandari 2012) and total 5,916 nurses had formally migrated out of the country during the period between 2002 and 2015⁴. This trend of out-migration of HCWs is said to be steadily on the rise in recent years. Despite this, the related authorities and institutions in Nepal seem to be reluctant to govern this migration and address the critical situation of health care worker migration.

In general, there is a lack of accurate and updated information on the number, characteristics, and distribution of Nepal’s health workforce, and not many studies have focused on identifying the reasons behind the shortage despite the high level of production in the country. The pre-existing studies on the subject have also largely focused on the drivers of migration of within either of the categories of HCWs, channels and process of going abroad for study and/or their experiences in the destination countries.⁵ Two recent studies conducted in Nepal have tried to explore the drivers of migration intentions among final-year medical and nursing students in Nepal (Baral and Sapkota 2015; Huntington et al 2012). More importantly, there is a complete dearth of studies that deal

3 See Afzal, Cometto, Roskam and Sheikh 2011; MoHP and NHSSP 2013.

4 Nepal Medical Council Database.

5 See Sapkota et al, 2014; Adhikari 2012, 2009-2010.

with the policies, guidelines, and mechanisms of governing of the HCW migration.

Taking this into consideration, this study seeks to fill these gaps. More specifically, this paper first presents the policy and institutional landscape that govern migration of HCWs from Nepal and goes on to discuss the implications for managing and governing the out-migration of the HCWs, especially in terms of the contradiction between the right to health and right to mobility. Additionally, it also identifies some of the key drivers contributing to the out-migration of HCWs from Nepal, and sheds light on the linkage between the social and economic condition of HCWs and inherent hierarchies in this form of migration.

Methodology

The study utilised a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. Secondary research was conducted to map the institutional (legal and policy) framework, and mechanisms governing the migration of health workers from Nepal. Information, such as demographic profiles of the prospective migrants, key destinations, and the channels of migration, was collected based on the review of the literature and primary research comprising of a survey and interviews with concerned stakeholders. Additionally, the policies of major destination countries were also reviewed to identify the factors influencing mobility of health care workers.

The study administered a survey to uncover the migration intentions amongst final-year medical and nursing students from two medical and six nursing colleges in the Kathmandu Valley in order to unravel the drivers of migration. The sample design was developed based on a stratified two-stage cluster design with a probability proportionate to size (PPS) selection, and the number of students in the final year as a measure of size in the first stage and systematic random sampling in the second stage. Prior to the administration of the draft questionnaire for pilot testing, it was subjected to in-depth qualitative testing on nine respondents representing all the various degree programmes. Following the pre-tests, pilot tests were conducted at a medical school and a nursing school, which had not been selected for the final sample, and which helped the refining of the survey questionnaire. A total of 294 final-year medical and nursing students took part in the study, out of which 180 (64.2%) were nursing students and 104 (35.4%) were medical students.

The survey was supplemented by in-depth interviews, which were conducted with concerned stakeholders as well as returnees and prospective migrants. Additionally, doctors and nurses currently working in Nepal were

interviewed in groups to gain an understanding of the working conditions in Nepal.

The study received ethical clearance from the Research Ethics Committee of Social Science Baha, and the survey was subjected to an additional ethical review from the Institutional Review Boards of the medical schools that participated in the study.

There were a few methodological challenges that were encountered in the process of data collection. The expected sample size for the survey could not be covered, primarily because of two reasons: i) lack of permission to conduct surveys in several institutions which were part of the sample, which was a major obstacle; and ii) the unavailability of a certain category of students, particularly from the BSc Nursing programme, due to the clash of the time of data collection with their examination schedule.

Migration of HCWs from Low-Income Countries: Theoretical Arguments and Empirical Evidence

The migration of health workers from the relatively poor developing countries to the more developed countries has now exceeded five decades and has undergone several phases, including increasingly complex care chains, reflecting the growth in numbers and trends of active recruitment (Connell 2014). Given its persistent significance, there have been multiple attempts to theorise the migration of health workers. In general, with the increase in the flow of migration of HCWs, there is a growing consensus that such migration is problematic as it is seen to have an adverse and long-lasting effect on the health care systems of the countries of origin (Connell 2010; Connell 2014; Hooper 2008). This has given rise to debates around the ethics of the recruiting process which has resulted in national and international attempts to slow migration, regulate internal recruitment through the voluntary WHO Global Code of Practice on the International Recruitment of Health Personnel, and engage in what is called 'managed migration' through bilateral agreements like in the case of the Philippines (Hooper 2008). The arguments surrounding the ethical recruitment of health workers is countered by the recognition of rights of individuals to move. This argument is supported by the benefits of migration in terms of the possibility of international mobility providing work for unemployed professionals and contributing to improving their standard of living. Additionally, it is argued the residents of the health-professional-sending countries can gain from migration in terms of the remittances the migrant health professional send home and the skills and expertise such individuals bring with them when they return home (Buchan 2010; Hooper 2008).

As the international mobility of health professionals has become an increasing trend (Buchan 2010), interests in understanding its dynamics and implications has also received wider currency. Existing theoretical and empirical literature indicate that there are various drivers and reasons that facilitate or inhibit the migration of skilled workers from developing to developed countries. One of the prominent, but broad, lines of argument is developed based mainly on push and pull factors.⁶ The key argument of these studies is that migration from developing to developed countries is deeply embedded in the structural conditions of both the origin and destination countries. More precisely, the migration of HCWs is triggered by poor economic conditions, unstable political conditions, fewer opportunities for employment and professional growth, poor working environment/conditions, lower wages and benefits etc., in the origin countries, and the perception among the potential migrants of an improvement in all these factors in destination countries. In this regard, it is argued that the global political economy explicitly or implicitly facilitates migration of high-skilled workers from developing countries to developed countries.

This argument about push and pull factors is critiqued as being more individual-centric and having little explanatory value (Bach 2007), and also one that undermines the importance of the roles, and changes in institutions and government policies may significantly influence the magnitude and composition of migration flows by either restricting or encouraging it.⁷ Additionally, some scholars emphasising the importance of networks argue that additional migration is stimulated in places where migration pathways have already been established (Massey et al 1998).

With these theoretical and empirical arguments in perspective, the paper presents, in the following sections, the major findings of this study that helps develop an understanding why health care workers chose to migrate from Nepal to developed countries. However, it should be noted that the paper does not try to test the aforementioned theories about HCW migration, but only seeks to contribute to this body of literature by presenting the case of Nepal.

6 See e.g., Connell 2014; Bhagwati 2003; Bach 2007; Cornelius et al 2004; Eckenwiler 2014; Hatton 2005; Kaelin 2011; Karemera, Oguledo, and Davis, 2000; Lofters 2012; Massey et. al., 1998; McColl 2008; Nair and Webster 2012; Presscott and Nichter 2014; Portes and Rumbaut 1990; Walton-Roberts 2015.

7 See Beine, Docquier and Özden 2011; Carling, 2002; Commander, Kangasniemi and Winters, 2004; Hatton 2005; Karemera, Oguledo, and Davis, 2000; Mayda 2006, 2010; Ortega and Peri 2013.

Status of Health Workers in Nepal

Migration Process and Patterns of Health Workers from Nepal

As is the case in several countries worldwide (Connell 2014; Bach 2007), the maintenance of managed data on stocks and flows of health workers has been a major challenge in the case of Nepal. Review and analysis of this study revealed that, while each institution maintains some kind of records on the migration of specific categories of health personnel seeking to migrate abroad for education or work, no single institution is responsible for maintaining records on the migration of health personnel in general. The review identified that there is a lack of comprehensive disaggregated data in terms of gender and age composition of the flow as well as the destinations of health workers. Although some public officers have acknowledged the lack of the proper data management and the need for it, the lack of financial and technical capacity of the state and its institutions is often seen as the major obstacle, as stated by a high-ranking official from the MoHP:

Of course, we need to keep proper data of those health workers who migrate abroad. But it is not only due to lack of resources and manpower, it is the result of the fact that there was no system from the beginning.⁸

This situation is further complicated by the fact that nurses and doctors, whether migrating to study or work, do not have to go through the same procedures, which has acted as a major obstacle for uniform record keeping. For instance, Nepal Medical Council (NMC) requires medical students seeking to pursue their further studies abroad to fulfil the eligibility criteria. The same is not required for students pursuing nursing education abroad. Instead, Nepal Nursing Council (NNC) issues verification and Letter of Good Standing to those who seek to work or study abroad; for which they can apply even while abroad. Hence, the on-going trends can, to a certain extent, be inferred from the data available from various governing bodies, namely the NMC, NNC, and Department of Foreign Employment (DoFE). Such absence of comprehensive and updated data, as argued by some (see Nair and Webster 2012), seems to have adverse implications also for devising appropriate policies and interventions relating to Nepal.

Amidst this problem of data, the available information suggests that total of 3643 undergraduate medical students had travelled abroad between 2008

⁸ Interview with Chief Public Health Administrator, MoHP, 20 April 2016.

and 2013. Over the years, the top destinations among the undergraduate medical students have consistently been Bangladesh, China, and the Philippines. Similarly, between 2013 and 2015, 892 medical students had acquired eligibility certificates in order to pursue post-graduate degrees abroad, with India, China, the Philippines and Bangladesh ranking as the top destinations.⁹ Although these countries appear to be key destinations for education, based on requests for verification that the NMC receives, at the rate of an average of four per day, the United Kingdom (UK), Canada, and the United States (US) appear to be the top countries where Nepali doctors seek registration. Likewise, a significant number (16%) of the total membership of the NNC are recorded as having already migrated abroad at the time of writing.¹⁰

The Nepal Nursing Council (NNC), on the other hand, has not enforced any regulations which require individuals seeking to pursue nursing education abroad to register with the council prior to migration. However, nurses aiming to work as registered nurses abroad often need a verification letter, also known as 'Letter of Good Standing' from the Council. NNC records on the distribution of verification letters suggests that the number of nurses from Nepal working abroad has dramatically increased from 115 in 2002 to 724 in 2014.¹¹

Given the steady growth in the number opting to migrate abroad, it becomes important to examine the context and underlying causes increasing and governing the migration of health workers from Nepal. The following sections elaborate some of the issues arising in the monitoring of health worker migration from Nepal.

Policy Framework Governing HCWs Migration and Its Implications

Theories, arguments, and empirical evidence have indicated that changes in institutions and policies of both origin and destination countries play crucial roles in migration, either by promoting or containing it¹².

The analysis and review of this study revealed that there is no separate policy framework, act, or guidelines governing HCW's migration from Nepal. General policies and guidelines related to migration for foreign

9 Nepal Medical Council Database.

10 As of the 5th of July, 2016, the NNC had a registered membership base of 38,759. <http://www.nnc.org.np>.

11 Nepal Medical Council Database.

12 See Beine, Docquier and Özden 2011; Carling, 2002; Commander, Kangasniemi and Winters, 2004; Hatton 2005; Karemera, Oguledo, and Davis, 2000; Mayda 2010; Ortega and Peri 2013.

employment, such as the Foreign Employment Act (2007), Foreign Employment Rules (2008), and Foreign Employment Policy (2012) are meant also to govern the migration of professional HCWs. But none of these policies and regulations have provisions specific to health workers nor are they broad enough to capture the extensive process the HCWs rely on for migration. Besides these, there are some key health sector-related regulations, such as the National Health Policy (1991) and Nepal Health Service Act (1997), which recognise the migration of health workers as a primary challenge to attaining health-related goals but are largely silent on the details.

The latest policy, the National Health Policy (2014), provides the general framework to guide health sector development and is the only document which explicitly states the migration of health workers as a primary challenge and the existence of a gap between education institutions and health institutions to retain the health workers. Specifically, the policy emphasises the need to create a better working environment and provide incentives for health workers so that it helps enhance equitable distribution of competent health workers across Nepal, and also stop them from migrating.¹³

With regards to the process, unlike general migrants, health workers need to register with overseas medical professional council. The process of registration varies from country to country and usually it requires examinations, such as United States Medical Licensing Exam (USMLE), National Council Licensure Examination for Registered Nurses (NCLEX-RN) and the National Council Licensure Examination for Practical Nurses (NCLEX-PN) in the case of the US, Professional and Linguistic Assessment Board (PLAB) and Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) Computer Based Test (CBT) in the case of the UK, and the Australian Medical Council (AMC) Examination in the case of Australia. Since they ultimately need to give registration examinations in most of the destination countries, health workers often tend to opt for the student visa route in order to migrate when they go abroad to pursue their postgraduate degree and then apply for registration. Earlier studies (Adhikari 2012; Adhikari 2009-2010) have argued that finding employment abroad often coincides with finding education or training opportunities abroad, whereby obtaining a student visa but leaving Nepal with the intention of finding work is one of the predominant channels for the migration of health workers, especially

13 The National Health Policy (2014). Also based on interview with the Administrative Officer of Nepal Nursing Council, 6 March 2016; Registrar of Nepal Health Professional Council, 11 March 2016.

nurses. Although the registration process for countries like the US, Australia and the UK is more arduous and more expensive compared to India, Bangladesh, and China, findings from the study indicate that individuals seem to be more attracted to the former countries in recent years.

Notably however, policy and guidelines that would support potential migrant HCWs make informed decisions, i.e., whether to migrate or not, are also absent. Instead, there is an educational directive, Education Consultancy Service and Language Instruction Directive 2068 BS, introduced by the Ministry of Education that defines and limits the role of educational agencies only to disseminate information on possible post-education employment opportunities. As a result, medical and nursing students seeking to migrate abroad seem to face difficulties in accessing proper information for their migration.

Findings from the study revealed that the main source of information on the process and opportunities abroad are families and relatives who are already residing abroad (80 per cent of the study participants mentioned that the key source of information were families and relatives abroad), indicating how family networks are increasingly becoming important facilitators in the migration process of HCWs.

Individual Decisions amidst Structural Conditions

The high level of international migration of health workers to developed nations is primarily propelled by technological advancement, changing demographic dynamics (e.g., ageing populations), pre-existing shortages in such countries, and an inequitable distribution of health workforce (Nair and Webster 2012). Further, as argued by Commander, Kangasniemi and Winters (2004), the flow of health workers is contingent upon a multiple other factors, including state sponsorship of work migration to capture foreign revenue through remittance, a growing medical education industry, the growing demand of health workers related to changing demographic trends, politics of immigration and national security. The same sentiment was also expressed by the president of ECAN in Nepal:

If those countries are receptive, if they have a greater tendency of providing visas, then many students go to that country that year. If the visa policy is strict, students start going to other destination.¹⁴

In fact, immigration and integration policies in the main countries of

14 The President of Education Consultancy of Association Nepal - ECAN.

destination does seem to play a significant role. The UK, for example, can be taken as one of the prime examples where policies, determined by needs and also influenced by adherence to the WHO code of conduct, have directly impacted the flow of health workers into the country. The annual inflow of Nepali nurses into the UK has witnessed significant fluctuations over the years. It reached its peak in 2007 and 2008 when 148 and 117 nurses entered the UK in those years respectively, and then dipped to 4 and 3 in 2009 and 2010 respectively. Similarly, the annual inflow of Nepali doctors to the UK reached its peak in 2005, with 33 doctors entering the UK, but the figure significantly dropped to 16 in 2006. This was in line with a number of legislative changes in the UK. In 2004, the UK's Department of Health implemented a Code of Practice for International Recruitment of Healthcare Professionals, which was designed to address the ethical aspects of international nurse migration, and significantly curtailed the recruitment of healthcare professionals from low-income countries such as Nepal (Adhikari 2012). In 2005 doctors, and then in 2006, general nurses were removed from the professional shortage list, obliging employers to give priority to recruiting personnel from within the EU. From 2006 onwards, non-European doctors holding a training position were also required to have a work permit.

The ramifications of the changes in the UK was apparent in Nepal, including in policy realm. In 2005, the Nursing and Midwifery council also instituted the Overseas Nurses Programme (ONP), a compulsory orientation course for nurses who wanted to practice in the UK in which the seats were limited. In 2007, the requirement of English language proficiency was raised from 6.5 to 7 in the IELTS test, and by 2013 the process of foreign nurses was made more complex with the inclusion of an online theoretical exam as well as a practical assessment. In 2008, the UK introduced immigration policies based on a points system. Although this allowed foreign doctors to come the UK without a prior job offer, it was revoked in a 2010 amendment (OECD 2015). As argued in the other studies,¹⁵ liberalisation or restrictions on visa-processing policies in Australia during the period between 2004 and 2015 has also directly impacted the number of migrating HCWs from Nepal to Australia as the President of ECAN said:

Prior to 2002/2003, Australia used to give out 230-232 visas. It started increasing from the year 2005 and at one point they gave visa to 11,039 students. Then they gradually started becoming strict. Last year, they

15 See Carling 2002; Commander, Kangasniemi and Winters 2004; Hatton 2005; Karemera, Oguledo, and Davis 2000; Mayda 2010; Ortega and Peri 2013.

gave out visas to only 3082 students. Earlier, the Australian government used to accept documents from 16 commercial banks but now they have reduced it to two.

Individual aspirations for migration have also been shaped by global demands coupled with a perception of better training and returns abroad. The survey carried out as part of this study revealed that out of the 294 participants, a total of 147 (50%) planned to migrate abroad either to pursue further studies (38.4%) or to work (11.6%) upon the completion of their degree. Amongst those who wanted to pursue further studies abroad, Australia (44.2%), the US (36.3%) and Canada (8.8%) emerged as the top choice of destinations. While Australia was the top choice for the nursing students with 47 participants choosing Australia as the country they are planning to migrate to while the US emerged as the top choice for medical students. However, according to Nepal Medical Council the top destination for postgraduate studies was China, India and the Philippines. However, this discrepancy arises primarily because while the NNC records reveal the reality, the survey sheds light on the aspirations of the prospective migrants. The top three destinations for those who wanted to migrate to work was the same and majority of the nurses also opted for Australia. Australia, Canada, the UK, and the US remain the principal destination countries for HCWs migrating from all over the world, including India, Pakistan, the Philippines, China, and countries in Southern Africa (Khadria 2010; Labonte et al 2015; OECD 2015).

Our health system has progressed in a traditional way. Health services haven't been widespread enough to be able to absorb the trained manpower. Instead, there is overproduction of health workers. But there are no employment opportunities. So people are bound to leave.¹⁶

The top-ranking reason for migration was to pursue further studies abroad were the better quality of education abroad (82.3%), better living conditions (73.5%), and the ease of getting a job abroad post-education. Most often, these individual intentions are embedded in larger structural problems. For instance, amongst those who chose easier access to job post completion of their degree, the majority, 75 per cent, were nurses compared to 48.6 per cent of the doctors. This is consistent with the wider situation where doctors in Nepal find it easier to find employment compared to nurses,

16 Registrar, Nepal Health Professional Council.

as doctors have alternative avenues, such as opening their own clinics. Furthermore, nurses find it difficult to find jobs post-education because of the underutilisation of nurses in hospitals and no prospects and opportunities for professional growth. This is coupled with the revelation that their job in Nepal is less-respected and there is an erosion of working conditions in Nepal.

In Nepal, it is hard to get a job for nurses. There are many unemployed nurses. The (job) market is too limited but the production is very high.¹⁷

Abroad, even if you work part-time, you can earn up to 1 lakh a week. Here you earn merely 10,000 rupees. Why would anyone want to stay in Nepal?¹⁸

Another structural reason HCWs from Nepal seek to migrate abroad is also the limited seats for post-graduate degree, where there is a tough competition for enrolment. The seats for residencies or post-graduate degrees are not fixed, as it depends on the number of hospital beds and number of professors available. On average, there is yearly intake of 250 students in residency programmes applicable only to medical students. As a medical officer said:

It is very, very tough to get a place on a residency programme in Nepal. Every year around 2500 students graduate MBBS. However, there will only be 250 seats for MD all over Nepal. This will stretch to 300 maximum. If an additional 2500 medical officers are vying for those seats every year, then it will definitely be bottleneck competition.

Another added:

To find residency positions in the institution of your choice, or Kathmandu to be specific, is extremely difficult. It is almost close to impossible. Not every specialisation is available in all the colleges in the first place. For instance, the current trend is to specialise in radiology. If you want a seat in radiology, in Kathmandu University, you have to rank number one in the written exam as there is only one position every year.

17 An Education Consultant.

18 A prospective nurse.

The reasons for migration are different when individuals migrate for work. The top three factors motivating people to migrate were a better salary (91.2%), better living conditions abroad (85.3%), and better working conditions (70.6%) abroad.¹⁹ In terms of remuneration, there is a wide disparity in what one earns in Nepal and what can earn abroad. A medical officer claimed:

In India, a medical officer earns INR 60,000 (equivalent to USD 900). Recently, it was increased to INR 65,000 (equivalent to USD 950). In Nepal, it is 27,000-28,000 rupees (USD 260) maximum. This is for a private hospital. In government hospitals, it is 22,000-23,000 rupees (USD 220-230). The government has announced an increase of 25 per cent, although it has not been implemented yet... Once you are a consultant, if you go to places like the US or Australia your starting salary will be 12 lakh rupees (USD 12,000) where as it is merely 1 lakh (USD 1000) here. Why would anyone want to come back after this?

On the contrary, amongst those looking to stay in Nepal, rural service was undesirable. Commenting on the impracticality of the five-year bonding scheme implemented by the government after the completion of an MD, a medical officer said:

In exchange of doing a three-year post-graduate degree, we need to work in a rural area for 5 years for 40,000 rupees (USD 400) a month. Those five years is our peak time. If we go to the village in that duration, then all will be lost. There no proper set up. Recently I heard of an operation being performed under torch light. What will we do in such places?

Another added:

Another thing you need to keep in mind is that it is a five-year commitment. You are a consultant. Like he said earlier, you may not have a family now but you will have a family by then. If you stay here in Kathmandu as a consultant you will earn up to 1 lakh (USD 1000) a month minimum on average. But the consultant who goes outside Kathmandu will earn only 40,000 rupees (USD 400) a month plus no facilities and no equipment. This is demoralising.

19 Please note that this was a multiple choice question where individuals were asked to rank each item. The listed percentage is in accordance with what the respondents ranked as 'Very important.'

Another further added:

Plus your skills will degrade. We won't use what we learned.

Therefore, while one of the primary reasons why health workers do not want to emigrate is to be close to their families, this does not necessarily mean that they want to stay and work in any part of Nepal. On the contrary, health workers are discouraged by the idea/requirement of working in rural areas, despite the government's policy requirements. The retention of health workers in Nepal tantamounts to provisioning employment opportunities for them in urban centres where they are able to utilise their knowledge and skills more aptly and also pursue better career options in the future.

In short, the analysis carried out for this study indicates that the push and pull factors of HCWs are not dissimilar to other types of labour migration; individual HCW's migration decisions and outcomes are likely to be conditioned by the demand for health workers in the destination countries, and the ways in which Nepali actors also react to those changes.

The findings of the study also reveal varied drivers of migration for the different categories of HCWs. The nurses marked 'easier access to jobs after the completion of education' as being very important for their migration, compared to doctors. This is consistent with the wider situation where doctors find it easier to find employment compared to nurses. This is particularly due to the fact that doctors have alternative avenues for job security, such as opening their own clinics.²⁰ On the contrary, nurses find it difficult to get jobs post-education because of the underutilisation of nurses in hospitals despite the ratio of nurses per patient set by the Nepal Nursing Council, 1 nurse to 6 patients during the day, 1 nurse to 8 patients during the night, 1 nurse to 1 patient during emergencies, and 1 nurse to 3 patients in the operating theatre.²¹ As the President of the Nursing Association of Nepal explained:

The nurse patient ratio should be three nurses at one operation table, and there should be nurses equal to the number of general and ICU beds. However, the hospitals in Nepal are not following these rules, not even the government hospitals. One nurse in our government hospital does the work of seven nurses.

20 Interview with a returnee doctor, 3 May 2016 and WHO officials on 10 May 2016.

21 Interview with Registrar of Nepal Nursing Council Nepal, 6 March 2016.

The problems of underutilisation and the consequent unemployment of nurses coupled with their overproduction is further exacerbated by the tendency of hospitals, at least in urban centres, to rely on final-year interns to fill positions. As one nurse working in the private sector said:

The number of nurses hired largely depends on the number of beds in the hospitals. There are many beds in public hospitals but not as many nurses. A few nurses have to look after many people. Most of the nurses who work in the hospitals are students who are there as interns. In fact, many also pay for the internships since the colleges pay hospitals to allow their students to intern there. When the students aren't there, the burden of looking after up to 30 patients falls on a single staff nurse.

Nurses also seem to have less scope in rural employment because of the prevalence of community workers that perform the tasks of nurses as well as centralisation of medical facilities in Kathmandu and some urban centres. A nurse working the private sector claimed:

Nurses don't usually opt for rural employment. It is mostly done by community health workers. Those who do choose to go to rural areas are those who originate from those areas. The salary is significantly more if you go for rural service. For instance, if you earn a basic salary of 17,000 rupees (USD 100) here, you earn up to 50,000 rupees (USD 500) if you go to remote areas. But most nurses want to stay in Kathmandu because all the facilities are here. If I stay in Kathmandu, I can prepare for my IELTS or entrance exam for further studies. It is not possible to do the same in rural areas.

This analysis, as suggested by other studies,²² finds that poor and lower structural conditions at home is likely to contribute to the migration of health care workers from Nepal to more developed countries.

Conclusion

This paper focused on identifying the basic situation of health care workers in relation to their migration trend in Nepal. This included the policy framework for governing migration as well as the drivers causing HCWs to migrate. In the course of the study, it was identified that the migration

22 See Connell 2014; Bhagwati 2003; Bach 2007; Cornelius et al 2004; Eckenwiler 2014; Hatton 2005; Kaelin 2011; Karemera, Oguledo, and Davis, 2000; Massey et al 1998; McColl 2008; Prescott and Nichter 2014; Portes and Rumbaut 1990; Walton-Roberts 2015.

of HCWs is rarely explored and there is a critical problem with the lack of records and management of data, which has not only led to an unclear understanding of the issue but has hindered effective policy-making in this arena.

The analysis revealed that there is a lack of a clearly defined and effective policy framework as well as strategies to govern and manage the migration of health workers from Nepal; and the existing policy frameworks, especially concerning migration in general and health, do not seem to effectively address the issue. Another important finding of the study was that there has been a steady increase in the migration of health workers and the predominant channel of migration is using the student visa route. Amongst the many drivers, the crucial drivers of migration include substandard working conditions, such as insufficient remuneration and education, employment opportunities for HCWs and their families in rural areas, the lack of benefits as well as the weak health policy environment in Nepal, and the perception of a better education, working, and career prospects including permanent settlement in destination countries.

Further, the study results also indicate that the institutional and policy changes in the countries of destination as well as in Nepal has played an important role in facilitating or limiting the migration of HCWs from Nepal. A puzzling conundrum that however characterises the migration of HCWs from Nepal is the overproduction of doctors and nurses on the one hand and chronic lack of medical professionals on the other, particularly in rural areas. This particular dynamic indicates that any policies and/or interventions in the area of HCWs' migration from Nepal needs to be addressed in a holistic manner, tackling not only the foreign employment policies but also those relating to health, education, and rural development generally.

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Urbanisation and the Transient Migrant Labourer¹

BANDITA SIJAPATI, SAMBRIDDHI KHAREL & ANISH BHANDARI

Introduction

In Nepal, as in other developing countries, both migration and urbanisation have been considered powerful factors for social change. Studies that show the link between urbanisation and migration has been growing (Asfar 2003; Basnet 2011), and the construction industry and investments in infrastructure are potentially acting as powerful pull factors for internal labour migration. In Nepal too, the demand for construction workers, including more specialised construction labour has seen a rapid growth; the share of the construction industry in non-agricultural wage employment has grown from 30 per cent during 1995/96 to 37 per cent during 2010/11 (CBS 2011). Not only has such growth enhanced job opportunities in the sector but it has also provided workers with opportunities to move from villages to urban centres as well as from one urban centre to another, triggering significant internal migration across the country. Notably, Nepal is not the exception, in Morocco for instance, 28 per cent of internal migrants, from rural to urban areas, work in the construction sector (Haas 2006).

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- 1 This paper is based on a five-country study on the urbanisation-construction-migration nexus undertaken during September 2014-March 2015 in collaboration with the London School of Economics. The study was commissioned by DFID's South Asia Research Hub and the full study report is available at: <http://www.lse.ac.uk/business-and-consultancy/consulting/consulting-reports/the-urbanisation-construction-migration-nexus>. We would like to thank all the respondents who gave us the time to talk to us and shared their valuable insights. We would also like to thank Melissa Fernandez and Sunil Kumar for their constructive feedback throughout the study. We are grateful to researchers from Social Science Baha who were involved in different phases of the research. Ashim Bhattarai was involved in all phases of the study - questionnaire design, data collection, data analysis and report writing. Dinesh Pathak, Prakriti Thami, Soni Khanal, Dawa Tshering Sherpa, Mohammad Ayub, Himal Kharel, Manju Gurung, Ratna Kambang and Chhoti Sherpa were a part of the data collection.

Similarly, in the neighbouringneighbouring countries of India and China too, the construction sector is a major source of employment for rural-urban migrants (Thorat and Jones 2011; Combes et al 2013).

Based on 82 in-depth interviews conducted with individuals, mainly male and female labourers, professionals, contractors, and petty contractors engaged in construction work at three different construction sites in the Kathmandu Valley in September 2014-March 2015, this paper examines the nexus and interconnections between migration, urbanisation, and labour. In particular, by examining the ways in which urbanisation and migration are experienced by migrant workers who come to inhabit the urban spaces, albeit temporarily, we demonstrate the subjectivity around labour that manifests itself in multiple and multi-directional ways.

For the purposes of this paper, the demand for rural migrant 'contract' construction labourer is conceived as a 'resurgent' form of internal rural to urban migration.² The labourers themselves are labelled as 'transient' migrants because this labour is not really 'surplus' since they seek alternative work during quiet agricultural periods as a means to cope with poverty and to accumulate capital. Furthermore, their transient nature is derived from the temporal nature of their stay in the urban spaces they inhabit (Kumar and Fernandez 2016).

Arguably, construction labour is the 'bedrock of the urban built environment' and despite the considerable interest in academic as well as policy circles on investments in urban infrastructure and its effects on the urban ecology, insufficient attention is paid to construction labourers, who are essentially the producers of urban infrastructure (Kumar and Fernandez 2016). At most, studies of migrant labour in construction have explored their employment issues, including the process of recruitment and working conditions, their role in petty construction projects, and the sale of their labour on a casual basis, in 'day' or 'spot' construction labour markets (Harris, Rosser and Kumar 1996). By focusing on the transient migrants' sphere of work, city and home, this paper adds to this body of literature by examining the variety of meanings and relationships that the transient migrants have to their work and the urban space that they inhabit.

2 As Kumar and Fernandez (2016, p. 19) point out, while movements of workers, especially from rural to urban areas on the basis of a verbal contract is not new, the current trend is different and new in terms scale as well as the magnitude at which such movements is happening.

Context

As elsewhere in South Asia, different types of construction-related activities are being carried out in Kathmandu, the capital city of Nepal, which provides employment opportunities to the poor and the working class while also triggering migration. According to data obtained from the Kathmandu Municipality, of the 344 ongoing medium to large-scale projects in the FY 2014-15, the majority involved construction of residential structures followed by road construction. Others include construction of commercial buildings for supermarkets, insurance companies, airlines, banks; institutional structures such as office buildings for the land revenue office, colleges, temples and monasteries; and other types of infrastructure projects such as parking projects, area development projects, among others.

In terms of residential structures, housing in Nepal, as well as in Kathmandu, is dominated by 'owner-built system,' an informal system of housing development. In this system, an owner is responsible for the land purchase, linking with public infrastructure, such as electricity, sewage, drinking water, etc., and the construction of the house itself. The role of the government, in this case, the municipality, is limited to issuing building permits and providing permits for the aforementioned basic services. There is no formal contract between the owner and the contractor nor with the designer who prepares building drawings and supervises the construction once the services have been rendered.

Besides residential structures, the other major type of construction work being undertaken in Kathmandu municipality involves road construction and road expansion projects, which is managed by the Department of Roads under the Kathmandu Valley Road Improvement Project and Kathmandu Valley Road Expansion Project. Other infrastructure projects implemented by the government include area development projects, the establishment of museums and so on. Although construction of residential buildings comprises the highest proportion of ongoing activities in Kathmandu, the land area for those is very small. For the purposes of this study, construction activities in less than 1 *ropani* of land (less than 5476 sq. ft.), have been categorised as small-scale. Even when these small-scale construction activities are not counted, most of the land area where the medium scale non-infrastructure construction work is ongoing is in 1-2 *ropanis* (0.05-0.10 hectares) of land. In fact, the average land size of areas where these activities are ongoing is about 1.67 *ropanis* (0.085 hectares) even though there are few construction projects taking place in significantly larger sites; for instance, where the site area is greater than or equal to 14 *ropanis* (0.71 hectares). For institutional structures, the average land size is slightly

higher at 3.5 *ropanis* (0.18 hectares) while that for commercial buildings is 4.4 *ropanis* (0.22 hectares).

Methodology

The research for this project was conducted in three different construction sites, notably, Melamchi Water Supply Project representing infrastructure construction, the IOM Cancer Hospital representing 'institutional construction' supported by the government, and Classic Towers representing 'private residential construction'. Eighty-two in-depth interviews were conducted with people working in these construction sites. Besides construction workers, the interviewees include two petty contractors and eight professionals who are not construction workers but are working on the construction sites in other capacities, such as one business person (canteen owner), two nurses, one waitress, one quantity surveyor, two cooks and one crane operator. In addition, key informant interviews were also conducted with Cooperativa Muratorie Cementisti di Ravenna Company (hereafter, CMC), (contractor of the Melamchi project) representatives; the public relations representative and human resource manager, Development Commissioner of the Kathmandu Valley Development Authority, and a trade union member representing the Nepal Trade Union of Construction Workers.

The easiest availability of respondents was at Classic Towers, a private residential construction project. Moreover, towards the end of this research, a team of skilled Indian workers started the plaster work, at Classic Towers, so 10 respondents who were non-Nepalis from the said site were also included. At the Melamchi site, the interview process was stopped after completing 18 interviews, especially after the team was asked, albeit indirectly, not to come for the interviews unless it was after 9:30 pm. At the cancer hospital, the work had stopped temporarily as the government had not released the budget to continue with the construction work. Workers in this instance either went back home or were working at other sites.

In all three sites, the company personnel supported the research team in the identification and selection of labourers. While this facilitated the process of the interviews, there were also challenges. For instance, in the initial days, the CMC company personnel in Sundarimal had voluntarily selected workers to be interviewed but during the course of the interviews, the research team realised that the interviewees were not construction workers, but rather cleaners and helpers in their site office. Since the interview process had already commenced and these individuals had given their time, they were included as respondents and their experiences incorporated in the analysis.

In terms of process, with the consent of the company to carry out the

research, the respective site in-charge was approached to identify the labourers with whom the interviews were taken. Most of the interviews were taken at the site after working hours (i.e., after 5 pm) and during the lunch break. This timing for the interviews was also suggested by the company representatives. Although the company representatives were supportive, the labourers were initially reluctant to talk. Most of the labourers wanted to avoid being interviewed, and one such respondent even dropped out of an on-going interview. There could be many reasons for this reluctance, including anxiety about being 'interviewed', perceived fear of reprisals from the employers, and simply not having adequate time during lunch breaks or being too tired in the evening after a full day's work.³ This left the workers with very little time for the interviews. However, it is interesting to note that instead of the workers who were being interviewed, in some instances, their co-workers, who were the spectators at the time of the interview, were more eager to participate in the interviews.

The interviews were conducted at the sites as most of the workers reside in site camps. However, some of the workers also reside outside the site in rented accommodation. The workers who resided outside the camps were more reluctant to talk because of the aforementioned time factor and household chores combined with lack of transportation facilities from the company, the latter especially important because public transportation was not available in the area after certain hours.

When the interviews were conducted during the lunch break, it was easier to interview the workers independently, but there were also constraints on time since the lunch hours were typically for an hour and most of the interviews took longer than that to complete. As a result, the entire work schedule itself was affected. For example, the workers of the reinforcement group had to wait for their fellow worker, who was giving the interview, to resume their work as a team. However, since the company representatives present at the sites were given prior notice about the interview schedule, they did not show much concern about the delays caused.

Findings and Discussion

Profile of the Workers

In terms of the general profile of the workers, the mean age of the workers was 27.9 and the age variance ranged from 16 years to 56 years.

3 This was especially the case since the workers had to attend to their other responsibilities such as cleaning, shopping, preparing dinner, etc.

Construction work was also carried out mostly by migrant workers from other parts of Nepal, i.e., outside the Kathmandu Valley. Out of the total of 82 respondents, only seven were non-migrants (from Kathmandu). The migrant workers came from all across Nepal and represented diversity in terms of caste, ethnicity and region. Most workers were from the Tarai districts but there were also workers from Salyan, Gorkha, Baglung, and Syangja in the western hills; Sindhupalchowk, Kavrepalanchowk, Nuwakot, and Ramechhap in the central hills, and Ilam, Taplejung, and Udayapur in the eastern hills/mountains, and 10 respondents were from India. In terms of the caste and ethnicity of workers, although there were construction workers from the 'upper' caste groups, Bahuns and Chhetris, the largest group of workers were the Tharus (18 workers) who came from the Tarai districts of Saptari, Sunsari, and Dang. In addition, there were also few individuals from other marginalised groups such as Tamangs and one Dalit.

One of the notable findings from the interviews is that the incidence of illiteracy⁴ among respondents was significantly low (only 8 cases out of 82 interviewed) thus bringing into question the assumption that low-skilled labour work, including construction work, is a sphere for the less educated. In fact, many respondents who have been classified as working in low-skilled⁵ jobs tended to have several years of formal education with the average years of schooling among the sampled workers being 7.09. Some of the reasons for dropping out of school were financial difficulties, having to walk to school for hours, and losing interest. For example, when asked about her education, a 19-year-old girl from the Sindhuli District responded that she did not continue her education after Grade 9 because her family could not afford it, and added that it used to take her 2 hours to reach the school. There were also cases where respondents were working as well as preparing for their school examinations. One of the workers, aged 16 years, stated that he 'will work for two months and then go back home to appear for School Leaving Certificate exam'.

4 According to the Nepal Living Standards Survey literacy is defined as someone who can both read *and* write.

5 For the purposes of this study, 'low skilled' job category includes respondents who described themselves as 'cleaners', 'helpers', 'labourers'; 'high skilled' job category includes respondents performing jobs that require a professional degree like 'nurses' or 'engineers'; finally, respondents who do not fall into either of the aforementioned categories are classified in the 'semi-skilled' category and includes, among others, workers performing such jobs as 'steel fixtures', 'concreting', and specialised machinery operation.

Relationship to Work

In order to understand the transient migrants' relationship to their sphere of work, this section of the paper explores their migration pathways, the relationship to their patrons, their working conditions, and their relationship with their employers. To a large extent, knowledge about the availability of work in construction, prior to migration, is the real-time 'pull factor' for the transient migrant construction workers. Migration in this way is undertaken by 'joining' a workforce, as opposed to traditional forms of independent migration that were predominantly in 'search' of work (Kumar and Fernandez 2016). In our study, a significant majority of the participants had first heard about their current job via social networks, especially village friends and relatives. As one respondent working at Classic Towers explained:

Yes, I knew about the work before I came to Kathmandu. A friend from my maternal village told me about the work here in Kathmandu. That friend helped me get the job. He is a friend from my mother's village, not a very close friend though.

Even amongst those who had found out about the specific job opportunities when they were already in the city, the fact that these workers had not moved independently to the city to search for work was evident. For instance, Ram Chandra Chaudhary, who is currently working at the cancer hospital site in Maharajgunj, explained that he was already in Kathmandu and was looking for employment having completed a previous contract. His brother-in-law, who is a petty-contractor, told him about the construction project and helped him get the job.

As illustrated by these examples, labour contractors do not directly recruit the workers for their project. Instead, the workers are able to bring in other workers, generally friends, neighbours or family members, to the labour contractor, as long as the potential workers accept the working and living conditions. The same is true even for non-Nepali workers. As a 32-year-old Indian petty-contractor, who has been working in Kathmandu for almost 18 years, stated:

I got this contract from a Marwadi. He got the contract from the Classic Towers developers to do the plastering of the walls. So, he asked me to do it. Now I have called around 30 workers from India. There is a lack of skilled labour [for plastering] in Nepal. Unskilled labour/helpers can be found here, but skilled masons have to be called from India. I like

the people here in Nepal; they are friendlier than people in India. I first came as a tourist and liked the place. Then I started working as a labour for one of my friends. Slowly, I learned the work and started working. At that time, there were more than 100 people from my village living here in Kathmandu. It felt like my whole village was here. Lots of people are still living here. We stay in Tahachal. I have worked in many parts of Kathmandu as well as around Nepal.

In some cases, the labour contractors ask for references and conduct an on-the-job test to verify the skill level of the workers, but mostly the hiring process is very informal and ad hoc and taken in the context of availability of jobs as opposed to the search for work. The use of such labour provides the construction industry with 'captive migrant workers,' whose sphere of work and everyday life is largely dependent on the relations with employers, co-workers, and their labour-contractor patrons (Kumar and Fernandez 2016).

Of these different types of relations, the one with their labour-contractor patrons/employers is particularly notable. The migrant workers are heavily dependent on these patrons, primarily the individuals who helped them secure the job, not only for being/remaining employed but also for other support, such as getting cash advances, on site job training, to name a few. In this regard, the labour-contractors are essentially the 'employers' for the workers, and hence the term 'labour-contractor employer' or 'labour-contractor patron' to describe them.

Workers on average made NPR 16,255 per month with differences according to experience and nature of the occupations. However, apart from their monthly salary, the workers also got advance money from their labour-contractor patrons whenever needed. This led to the workers often being indebted to their labour-contractor employers while the latter exploited the situation by withholding of wages during periods of absence, and/or even determination of overtime rate. Specifically, all the workers were involved in overtime work. However, the overtime wage-rate varied between sites and professions ranging between 0.5 times to 1.5 times the regular rate, and this, was determined by the labour-contractor patrons.

The relationships between employers and the transient labourers were found to be simultaneously informal, that is without any formal contract, and also very transactional, that is, relations that were void of personal ties, affinities, or social interactions. With the exception of the Melamchi project, a largely internationally funded infrastructure, there were no formal contractual agreements that the workers had with the employers,

and wages were paid in cash. Furthermore, direct interactions between employers and the employees were also limited. Some of the common responses from the workers vis-à-vis their employers were: 'We do not have to interact with the senior project engineers'; 'I have not come into contact with them'; '...Not so much. Sometimes when they come, we talk about how our work is going'; 'No, because I am unknown to them'; 'I have no contact with them because I don't talk with them. They talk but I don't like talking with them'. Even a cook at Melamchi mentioned, 'I don't see them around much. I serve them food when they come here. They don't talk or say anything much to me'.

Based on these narratives, it is not surprising that the 'loyalties' that workers have with their employers are thus strictly transactional, workers were willing to work for their current employer to the extent that they are unable to find a better job, especially better wages, somewhere else. None of the workers interviewed mentioned that they would continue working with their current employer if offered better wages by another project. Similarly, informal discussions held with the employers indicate an almost identical perception of employers towards their workers; the employers also did not appear to have any sense of responsibility or loyalty towards their workers.

In such an environment, opportunities for advancement for the workers, either in terms of higher wages or better career opportunities, did not lie with one company/employer, but only happened in the process of transitioning from one employer to another. Put differently, the only possibility for workers to move up the 'job ladder' was by shifting from one construction project to another. In our study, a number of workers who began working as 'general labourers' or 'helpers' had moved on to operate complex machinery after a number of moves between employers/projects. One worker who began his career as a 'general labourer' in 1988 had learned to operate machinery on the job and had become a 'circuit operator' by 1995; the latter also is his current job description but with a higher pay overtime.

The living conditions of the workers, who generally lived in labour camps, were not very amenable. In general, 'bedrooms' were rather cramped and in two of the sites (cancer hospital and Classic Towers), the workers did not even receive a personal bed, all the workers in a given room shared a common raised platform. At the cancer hospital construction site, a total of 8 workers were sharing a small room. Furthermore, at both these sites it was noted that the camps built by the workers themselves were not properly roofed, and some workers often complained about being cold at

nights. Also, the camps lacked separate cooking facilities, so the workers cooked inside their rooms. A proper system for waste disposal were also absent.

Despite the unfavourable working and living conditions, there were no scope for workers to bring their grievances and/or concerns to the notice of groups representing construction labourers because of their isolation in labour-camps, and their fear of losing favour with their labour-contractor employers.

The political will to address violations amongst construction workers was also largely absent. Like the case with union organising across Nepal, within the construction sector too, there are different trade unions with different political affiliations reducing their efficacy.⁶ With the exception of three workers, all the other workers interviewed were not members of any political or non-political organisations. In fact, workers generally were unaware of their rights and the labour laws. Some older respondents replied that they have heard some basics about their rights, but most of the respondents, especially the young, were unaware of the specific laws and policies related to their own identity or location as a 'worker' and/or with the construction sector.

These findings from the study resonate with Robinson's (2001) argument that due to their working conditions, primarily factors such as poor living conditions, short-term jobs, and low pay scale, workers experience structural alienation and relative deprivation, as was also the case with the research participants in this study. Yet, despite the range of exclusion and exploitation that these transient migrants face, they value the 'regular' and 'guaranteed' work that large-scale construction offers, for the duration of, or the particular phase of, the project for which they have been employed. They also value the opportunity to be redeployed by their labour-contractors to other projects in the same or other urban areas. Such dualisms is what makes these workers 'captive migrant workers.'

Relationship to City

Urbanisation in Kathmandu has brought with it associated opportunities for employment in large-scale construction through increase in investors, primarily the better-off urban residents themselves investing in, among others, housing and commercial ventures. To examine the relationship that the transient labour migrants have with the city, this section will consider

6 The Construction and Allied Workers Union of Nepal (CAWUN) is affiliated with the Nepal Trade Union Congress (NTUC), while the Central Union of Painters, Plumbers, Electro and Construction Workers-Nepal (CUPPEC) is affiliated to GEFONT.

the nature of the relationships that the workers have with the local or long-term resident workers, the limitations posed by the transient workers' living arrangements and their relationship to the local non-labour residents.

At the outset, the recruitment of transient migrant labour by large-scale construction projects in urban areas is seemingly reducing employment opportunities in such projects for local and long-term resident construction workers. However, a closer examination suggests this is primarily a result of labour employment practices adopted by large-scale urban construction projects where the preference is always for the 'captive workforce' that the transient migrant workers provide. If local and the long-term resident labourers were willing to work and live in the conditions that transient migrant labourers live and work in, they would be accepted on large-scale construction projects. The trade-offs faced by local and resident migrant labour are, on the one hand, accepting the working and living conditions in large-scale projects that 'offer regular' work, or on the other hand, looking for work that pays higher wages and affords better living conditions even though it may mean not having regular work.

The only exception to this is when a company is required to hire locals as was the case in Melamchi, an international donor funded project where CMC, an Italian company, specialising in tunnel work that was responsible for the construction work. Representatives from CMC pointed out that while providing employment opportunities, the company has allocated its priority to the families affected by the Melamchi project to which they provide 40 per cent of the jobs. They have categorised the affected households as Seriously Project Affected Families (SPAF), and these workers are unskilled and are provided training on the job and given a contract for the full project duration. Regardless, in general, since the local or long-term resident workers are often not involved in construction work, they do not work alongside the migrant workers and interaction, whether in competitive forms or not, is also limited.

The transient migrant labourers also do not have much opportunity to integrate with host communities, even if they wished to. Often, workers live in 'gated labour camps' (on- or off-site) with poor services that renders them 'invisible' and 'difficult to reach'. In all three construction projects included in the study, the companies provided living quarters for the migrant workers. Such accommodation on site was 'free' in the sense that no explicit deductions were made from the wages of the workers. At any rate, most of the workers who stayed on-site preferred it to living off-site where they would have to pay rent and utility costs. Workers with children also noted that staying on-site was beneficial for their children as they

would have friends, the children of co-workers, and space to play. In these labour camps, the only form of interaction that the workers had was with their fellow workers and their families, and interactions with other city dwellers were almost non-existent.

For their part, the labourers themselves did not see the benefit of making contact with host communities, due to the temporary and transient nature of their stay. During the interviews, most of the workers stated that there are no reasons for them to interact with the locals, let alone befriend them. At most, the workers said that they go to the nearby shops if they wanted to buy something, and then they return to the camps where they live. As a female respondent, who works at the cancer hospital construction site, explained:

We do not have a relationship with the locals because we are new here. The relationship with other workers is good but the people around are still not on talking terms.

In fact, a common response amongst the transient labourers was that there is nothing to talk about with the local city dwellers. There were only few instances where interactions with locals were mentioned but even then, they were minimal. For instance, one worker employed as a concrete pump operator at Classic Towers site mentioned that he talks with the person living in the house near the construction site since that individual also works as a consultant who prepares the blueprint for the building. Another respondent mentioned that local people in the vicinity of the labour camp call them if they have some work for them, such as, building or plastering a wall, and their interaction ends there.

Importantly, it was also observed that the workers do not even have the time to interact much with the other city dwellers because once the construction work is finished, they usually move along with their contractors or companies to the other sites where there is work. This would also include inter-city travel, which gives them very little time to develop a bond in one particular place in the city. Being engaged in an occupation where mobility is high, the transient labourers working and living in Kathmandu in effect relate to the city vis-a-vis their employment where, as described above, the temporal dimension is strong.

On the contrary, the communal bond can be easily observed in the camps, as the workers speak the same language, eat the same food, go to the market together, and build relationships with each other through their work. Further, as mentioned before, since the workers come to the

city through their personal networks, even in the city, the workers are primarily exposed to their own community and village people.

Relationship to Home

Workers, primarily the transient labourers, generally leave their places of origin for a variety of reasons. Among others, these include the increasingly untenable rural livelihoods and the inability to secure alternative income-earning opportunities. In such a context, earnings from construction help workers meet their daily expenses and service debt and, in some instances, also provide earnings that can be used for other investments (e.g., the improvement of housing, investment in businesses, etc.) at their places of origin.

As mentioned earlier, most of the transient migrant labourers are men and are also the primary and the only breadwinners of their families. For example, details of one male respondent shows that his family members include his three children, father, mother and wife. He is the one who is responsible for earning to support all of them. The case of this individual is not an anomaly either, most of the workers interviewed were men with their families residing back home. As individuals who have left their homes and villages for work, the main concern of these workers was the amount of money they would be able to save in order to support their families back home.

Most of the workers with families believed that one of the greatest benefits of their work in Kathmandu has been that their children, most of whom are currently back home, are now able to acquire better education because of the money they are able to send home. One of the respondents asserted that he is working hard only for a better future for his children. Regarding the future of their children, almost all the respondents insisted that they would want their children to study and be capable in their lives. As most of the respondents were educated only up to the secondary level, they valued the importance of education and wanted their children to achieve much more than they had been able to.

Furthermore, construction projects in urban areas, by and large, mirrored the agricultural cycle, as labourers are able to go home to their place of origin and return to work in construction when they have met their livelihood and social obligations back home. Construction, in this regard, is a natural a fit for seasonal and circular rural-to-urban migration in comparison to employment in other informal sectors. The upshot of such circular migration is that the ties with home remain strong while the relationship with the city never really advances.

Planning for the Future

As described above, whether in terms of fulfilling their household responsibilities or returning home seasonally, the transient migrant workers sustain strong ties with their places of origin. On the contrary, the city is not a place where these transient migrants aspired to settle permanently though they deeply valued the opportunity to work in the city. The low wages they received in relation to the general price hike and inflationary pressures in the city were a concern for many workers. Others stressed that city life is hectic and very expensive to live in and view village life to be more comfortable even though there were more job opportunities in the city. For instance, a male working at the cancer hospital expressed his ambivalence by saying:

There is still some work here, two to three stories are yet to be constructed. If they pay me well, I will stay here. I also have to go back home in between. Let us see for how much longer this work will continue. After this work is completed, I will go back home and do agriculture/farming... I cannot really say anything about the future. For now, I am doing this, if I get good wages and work then I will stay in Kathmandu and continue with this contractor if not then I will go and do farming. I don't know.

In fact, in terms of future plans, most of the transient migrant workers mentioned that they would either try to go abroad to earn more, or go back to their village and become self-employed, either by establishing a small business or by doing farming. Thus, the temporality of employment, the strong sense of responsibilities towards families left behind, and the seasonality of work in the construction sector, all provide the transient migrants with a strong sense of belonging to their areas of origin, notwithstanding their everyday life on the move.

Conclusion

To conclude, despite being the bedrock of the urban built environment that characterises the Kathmandu Valley, the construction workers who build the city find it difficult to carve a space within it to be able to call it a home. This is primarily because of the transient nature of their work and their subjectivities in relation to their work, the city and their home areas. While this paper has been able to examine some of the ways in which the workers are negotiating their relationships with the construction work and the

city they temporarily inhabit, researching the urbanisation-construction-migration nexus in the Kathmandu Valley has generated numerous questions for further research. For instance, why do some households opt to migrate or send their members to work in large-scale construction while others do not? What is the process that labour contractors undertake to recruit at the places of origin, the choice of migrants and the negotiations that occur? How would the subjectivities explored in this study play out in secondary cities and towns in Nepal? While there are perhaps more questions than answers, the findings presented in this paper also point to a range of policy issues confronting 'transient migrant contract construction labour', including the restrictions on their movements in and out of the labour camps where they reside, their 'invisibility,' their dependence on labour-contractor patrons, their poor working and living conditions, and the fact that they are 'hard-to-reach'. As Nepal continues to become one of the most rapidly urbanising countries in South Asia, it is essential that policy makers attend to these concerns with immediate effect.

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Micro-Hydro as Common Property

An Analysis of Local Institutions and Development

MANOJ SUJI

Introduction

Micro-hydro development as a form of rural energy and rural electrification programme commenced along with the development of the government of Nepal's Alternative Energy Promotion Centre (AEPIC), under the Ministry of Science and Technology, in 1996. The process was further supported by the involvement of donor agencies, such as the Rural Energy Development Program (REDP) and the Energy Sector Assistance Program (ESAP) (AEPIC 2014). The primary objective of AEPIC; with support of donor agencies REDP and National Rural Renewable Energy Programme (NRREP), was/is to promote rural energy technology in the rural and remote villages of hill and mountain districts of Nepal in order to fulfil the electricity demand. In addition the reduction of poverty and the improvement of the living standards of the rural people by creating employment opportunities at the local level through sustainable development of rural energy such as micro-hydro (AEPIC 2014) was also a fundamental objective of the programme. The community based micro-hydro was initiated with the introduction of various rural energy subsidy policies¹ which emphasised the participation of all groups of community people including poor, women Dalit and Janajatis and other socially excluded groups in micro-hydro development, management and uses of electricity. In addition, the Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) guidelines for rural energy, ensured their access and increasing their sense of ownership (AEPIC 2014).

Consequently, the trend of construction of Community Managed Micro-Hydro (CMMH) in rural areas dramatically increased as common property

1 Renewable (Rural Energy) Policy 2006, Subsidy Policy for Renewable Energy 2009 and Subsidy Delivery Mechanism Policy, 2009-2010 and Renewable Energy Subsidy Delivery Mechanism, 2013.

among the users, governing it by their own institutional arrangement for the constructions, allocation of electricity, repair and maintenance, and its overall governance (Rolland and Glania cited in Gurung, Bryceson, Ho Joo and Eun 2011). Additionally, rural electrification from community based micro-hydro improves the living standards of the community people by reducing poverty and creating employment and income generation opportunities (AEPC 2013; REDP 2008).²

Recent studies have revealed that several groups of people, such as the poor, women, and Dalits are still excluded and have difficulties in accessing electricity (AEPC/RERL 2012; Tulachan 2008; Nepal and Amatya 2006) from the community managed micro-hydro. This is mostly due to the endless conflicts of uneven electricity distribution and resource mobilisation although they have contributed equal (Tulachan 2008; Upadhaya 2009). Further, the problems are grounded in the sustainable management and governance of community based micro-hydro due to the conflictual relations between the users and political economic interests of certain groups of people (Maier 2007; Greacen 2004). The findings of these studies show that the social (caste and gender), economic status, and political interests are major factors of exclusion from community based micro-hydro. However, even through what institutional processes and dynamics are excluding and depriving marginal groups from the equitable benefits, this topic is not discussed.

This paper aims to fill this gap by examining the institutional, social, and political dimensions of community micro-hydro development. It attempts to address two major issues: 1) how community managed micro-hydro, as an external development intervention, benefits all groups of people in particular heterogeneous communities and 2) how the local institutional arrangements exclude or include certain groups of people regarding accessing to electricity. The major argument is that although micro-hydro is owned by the community, and there is provision of GESI as the major guidelines in rural community electrification, the local institutional arrangement and the social and political dynamics among the social actors in heterogeneous communities creates exclusion of the poor and disadvantaged groups from accessing electricity and the benefits of sharing.

I have structured this paper in to four sections. In the first section I will discuss the theoretical debates on the role of local institutions and their

2 See also Saqib et al 2013; Murni et al 2012; Gurung et al 2011, Kirubi, 2009, Winter 2008, Maier, 2007; Greacen, 2004; Mahat, 2004; Khennas and Barnett, 2000; Smith, 1994.

importance in governing common property. The second section briefly addresses the methodology, and the third section will discuss the empirical findings on how local institutions and the dynamics of power relations exclude the poor and socially disadvantage groups from community managed micro-hydro development interventions. The last section will summarise the main findings in the conclusion of the study.

Local Institutions: Discourse on Common Property Resource Governance

There are two distinct schools of thought on the governance and management of common local resources: 'Tragedy of the commons' developed by Hardin (1968) and the 'common without tragedy' developed by Ostrom (1990). Scholarships on the 'Tragedy of the commons' believe that when the common property is governed by the community it becomes the subject of degradation. Hardin (1968), a pioneering scholar, argues that finite resources have finite carrying capacity and the human tendency to maximise personal benefits cause the common property to be over used and degraded when it is govern by the community. He, therefore, strongly proposes two solutions to prevent the commons from degradation: commons should either be privatised or nationalised by imposing sanctions on the users. Conversely, scholarship on the 'common without tragedy' have extensively analysed the importance of local institutions in governing common property and the equitable distribution of resources among the community members. As opposed to Hardin's thesis, this school believes that the community can manage and govern the common property resources through their own institutional arrangements and collective action (Ostrom 1990, 1992).³ They believe that a local institution has enforceable rules that control the users' actions and behaviour regarding access, use, and management of the commons (Agrawal 2003). As an alternative for governance and management, Ostrom (1990) emphasises the importance of local and community institutional arrangements, and argues that the arrangements creates a basis for collective actions and governance which would help enhance the sustainable management of the common property and fair distribution of resources among the community members. The institutional arrangement consists of eight design principles⁴ (Ostrom 1990, 1992).

However, some scholars consider the mainstream theorists are more

³ See also Wade 1987; Gurung 1999; Fisher 1994; Chhetri 1993; Uprety 2010.

⁴ Clearly defined boundaries; Proportional equivalence between cost and benefits; Collective choice arrangement; Monitoring; Graduated sanctions; Conflict resolution; Minimal recognition of the right to organise; and Nested enterprises.

guided by a functionalist perspective by analysing the roles of institutional arrangements and fair allocation of resources from the commons ((Mehta et al 1999; Agrawal 2003). They further argues that they overlook the social heterogeneity and diversity among the users. Having different interests in heterogeneous community, the development of institutions is a political process and the powerful social actors exclude the weaker sections of community benefiting from the commons). Furthermore, the social capital of the of the community members directly influences the institutional arrangement and development interventions (Chopra 2002). Hence, it is believed by some that Ostrom's argument ignores the general process of crafting the institutions in diverse and heterogeneous environments where the dynamics of the power relations is likely to shape and reshape the whole institutional crafting process (Mehta et al 1999; Agrawal 2003), and consequently, the distribution of benefits might be influenced accordingly.

Methodology

In order to explore the role of local institutions in community managed micro-hydro development in heterogeneous communities, this study is grounded in qualitative ethnographic methods. For this study, the data was collected in 'Urja Khola-I community managed micro-hydro' in Rangkhani VDC of Baglung district, western region of Nepal, since the district was declared as a model district (energy district) of a decentralised rural energy system (primarily through micro-hydro) by the 12th District Council in 2004. According to the census 2011 the village consists 907 households having 3,807 of total populations where the total numbers of male population are 1627 and 2180 are female (CBS 2014). The studied community (user groups) of the micro-hydro is also diverse in terms of economic status, caste, and ethnicity, comprising 170 Janajatis (Magars), 42 Brahmin/Chhetri, and 60 Dalit households. In such contexts, in order to explore the institutional arrangements (overall governing system) of the micro-hydro and its benefit in the community, in-depth qualitative interviews were conducted with the key-members of the management committee and the users (and non-user) households. A total of 25 interviews were conducted. Out of which, 5 Key-informant interviews were conducted with current and former executive committee members and 20 interviews were also conducted with local representatives of political parties, general users (men and women from Dalit and non-Dalit groups), school teachers, health workers, micro-hydro operators. In addition, one informal group discussion was conducted with men and women from Dalit and non-Dalits user groups as well as data gathered from observations and experiences.

Findings and Discussion

Existing Social Institutions and Power Relations: Capacities and Difficulties in Accessing Electricity

Urjakhola-I community managed micro-hydro was constructed in 2001 with financial support from AEPC, REDP, the district development committee (DDC), and VDC.⁵ However, to initiate the construction of the micro-hydro and its sustainable governance a robust institutional mechanism is required. Therefore, in late 1999 and early 2000 in the name of 'Construction Committee', an institution was formed to lead the project construction with the coordination of APEC and REDP. The community members, mainly the local leaders, elites and *janne bujhne haru* (so called village intelligentsia) from high caste groups (Magars and Brahmin/Chhetri), were interested in the formation of *nirman samiti* (construction committee). Since the micro-hydro was based on community governing, the autonomy would have been placed to the community in planning, construction, fund utilisation, implementation, and monitoring of the project. The construction committee would autonomously legitimise a body at the local level to do all these processes. Therefore, there was competition among the elites and representatives of different political parties [Nepali Congress (NC), UML, CPN-Maoist (CPNM) and Rastriya Janamorcha Party (RJP)] in order to form the construction committee and initiate and handle the project.

Despite the different points of view, interests, and tension among the local level political parties and elites as well as villagers, the body of the construction committee was formed by the local representatives of the RJP and some local elites, who were devoted to the same political parties. Having the majority at the local level, the institutions developed by certain groups neglected the interests and voices of other social actors, such as women, Dalits, the poor and representatives of political minorities in the village.

Local Institutions as an Exclusionary Mechanism

The findings suggest that the political and economic interests of certain groups of people influence the process of crafting institutions that define the appropriators and allocation of electricity as they hold controlling power in decision-making. Furthermore, poor, women and disadvantage groups with no political and economic influence failed to participate in the

5 For the construction of the MH the total cost invested was NPR 4,073,744 where UNDP/REDP supported NPR 1,085,487; AEPC, NPR 742,257; DDC, NPR 50,000; VDC, NPR 350,000 and Free Labour Contribution by the Community was NPR 1,846,000.

overall institutional development and decision-making processes, which in turn excluded them from accessing electricity from the community managed micro-hydro.

For example, the inception of the micro-hydro project to its overall management system the institutional arrangement has been set up as fundamental rules. In order to supply and use electricity, and to control the roles and duties of the user groups, the set of rules has been designed and documented in written form that is called '*bidhan*' (operational plan) in local terms. The formal operational plan of the MHP was formed in 2001 (2058 BS). However, it was the documented set of rules as formed by the 'construction committee' before the project completion and followed by the management committee during the post project completion phase. According to the institutional rules of the micro-hydro, rights to the use of electricity have been defined in terms of contribution of cash and free labour during the micro-hydro construction period. As per the institutions rules, community members had to contribute a small amount of cash and physical labour during the project construction phase. The user households contributed 133 days of free labour and NPR 1300 cash. Those households who were not able to contribute cash and labour due to their socio-economic condition were not given the right to use the electricity. However, there are some people who have connected to the electricity without contributing free labour during the construction period because of their political and economic power.

The *niyam kanun* (rules and law) is only for the *nimukha* and *garib* (powerless and poor) but it is not implemented for the *parkures* (politically and economically powerful men). It was the same with in the distribution of electricity. Before, they (members of the construction committee) decided those who do not need to contribute free labour and cash she/he but would have right to connect to the electricity. This is how many of the poor, Dalit, single women, old people were excluded. I was also excluded because I was from a different political background and we were against the (RJP) single party decision in the project construction and distribution of electricity as well as the misuse of finances. However, nobody could resist the *pakhuers*. Neither had they contributed the required days of free labour nor had they paid cash, but they still received electricity.

(Harkaman Shrees, aged 58)

The committee modified its previous set of rules about the right to use electricity and brought an offer that the excluded households where they

could be connected to the electricity by paying an equivalent amount of cash and labour as the other users during the construction phase. They could buy a share (right to use electricity) by paying NPR 18,000. This provision included some economically well-off households and politically powerful people. However, even if some households were willing to pay the amount of money as equivalent to the cash and labour, they were not given the rights to use the electricity. The reason behind that was they have no political influence, they belong to the low caste groups or are poor, and their voices were ignored by the executive committee members.

I have eight children, 3 sons and 5 daughters. Three years ago my husband eloped with a woman from the village and has not returned again to the village. Now I am living with the children doing wage labour to feed my family. My children study in primary and the lower secondary levels, but we all have been living in the dark even though the transmission line passes over the roof of my house. We could not contribute labour power during the micro-hydro construction because we were in India, and left our elderly parents-in-law at home. Later the committee announced we could buy a share for 18,000 rupees but we could not afford this amount. When my elder son started working in India and earned money I wanted to buy a share, but I was refused by the management committee as they said there was a power shortage.

(Fhulkumari BK, aged 40)

During the construction of the MHP in the village I was in Madrash, India for work. I could only visit my family once a year during the Dashain festival. This was the reason that I could not contribute free labour and cash. When I returned home and asked the management committee to connect the electricity by paying 18,000 rupees they said I cannot use the electricity as I am not in the *ama samuha* (mother group). Now I have no hope they will give us electricity. We may die living in the dark.

(Lal Bahadur Rana, aged 80)

However, it is interesting that since 2011, the management committee has been selling large amount of electricity to the Ncell mobile tower worth NPR 20,000 per month, but neglecting the basic electricity demands of the community people. The committee has prioritised profit making by selling electricity to external agencies instead of fulfilling the basic demands of local people.

Unlike Ostrom's (1992) emphasis on the local institutional arrangement for sustainable management and fair distribution of resources from common property resources, the empirical findings suggest that the local institutional arrangement is more of a political and an exclusionary process. Furthermore, the local institutional mechanism of community managed micro-hydro is highly influenced by the existing social inequality and power relations between the politically and economically powerful and powerless groups, such as poor women and Dalits. Like earlier studies (Tulachan 2008; Upaddhya 2009; Nepal and Amatya 2008) on community based micro-hydro in Nepal, this study also has similar findings that poor, Dalit, and women are mostly deprived from the equal distribution of electricity. However, the reason for the deprivation and exclusion are not merely their economic and social status, instead it is primarily the institutional arrangements and decision-making controlled by the politically powerful people.

Does Micro-Hydro Benefit All?

By analysing the rural electrification from community micro-hydro, it is found that micro-hydro does not equally benefit all groups of people for their livelihood enhancement and poverty reduction through the involvement in employment and income generation activities. The experience of benefits of micro-hydroelectricity is determined by the existing social inequality and the wider component of caste and gender dynamics as well economic ability. However, although the rural electrification creates opportunities in rural communities it is experienced differently by different groups of people.

For example, community managed micro-hydro has contributed to village development by opening up the new economic opportunities by stimulating small scale industries, and entrepreneurialism.⁶ The electricity, besides lighting purpose, has been utilised for income generation activities, such as the poultry farms; cold stores; agro-processing mills; mobile repair and maintenance centres; electronics shops; photo studios; photocopying; computer institutes; and grocery shops at the village level.

Poultry farms and agro-processing mills were new income generation activities that first arrived to the village with electricity. However, the installation of a meter reading system in each household in 2011 enabled people to adopt several kinds of businesses, including poultry farms. The poultry farm business has been taken as an easy and quick profit making

6 See Kirubi et al 2009; Kirubi 2009; Mahat 2004, Greacen 2004; Maier 2007; REDP 2008; Saqib et al 2013; Murni et al 2012.

business and entrepreneurship in the village. Therefore, even Brahmin families have become involved in poultry farms and cold store businesses.

Poultry farms are quick profit making business. It is even possible with a small investment and does not require high levels of training and knowledge as agro-processing mills and other technical businesses. I started a poultry farm two years ago and from the last six months I have started a cold store in my own home.

(Padmalal Padhya)

The poultry business is satisfactory in the village. We are not able to fulfil the demands of the locals. Mostly for marriage ceremonies, picnics and in other local festivals the demand for poultry is high. Therefore, we have a high demand for chicken. Sometimes, we have to import from neighbouring villages to satisfy the demand of the villagers.

(Hari Shrees)

Furthermore, photo studios; photocopying; electronic shops; repair maintenance centres; hotels; grocery shops; beauty parlours; tailoring shops; and carpentry were also observed in the village for income generation on the one hand and service providing on the other. People are satisfied with their businesses as it was advanced by the electricity. A young entrepreneur explained the role of electricity in his family occupation as:

Photography has become our family occupation. A long time ago my father started photography in the village and now I am doing the same profession. Before the installation of micro-hydroelectricity in the village it was difficult for us to make and printed photos, but now we can do it by computer and the digital system at home.

(Birbal Gurung, aged 39)

The electricity has not only provided these services to the village, but also created opportunities in the village for income generation. Moreover, when the Urjakhola I micro-hydro interconnected with the mini-grid, its major goal was to promote micro-industry and entrepreneurship in the village to enhance the livelihood of local people, particularly focusing on the poor and minority group. The REDP provided NPR 150,000 as seed money to the community using the management committee, so local people could use the money for looms with low interest in a rotation system and could become involve in small scale businesses and entrepreneurship. The REDP

also coordinated with other district level NGOs to facilitate some income generation training and workshops, such as making bamboo tools, pickles, bee-keeping, sewing, and cutting etc. for the villagers.

Experience of the Poor, Occupational Castes, and Women

However, the income generation activities and growing opportunities in the village are highly contested among the poor, Dalits and women. They argue that the electricity from micro-hydro brought no changes to their lives. They mentioned that they never got the chance to take loans from *pariyojana* (micro-hydro project) and it never came to people with a low income.

Electricity from *pariyojana*, has benefited the people who have *paisa and sakti* (money and power) but people like us, what can we do? We could also do some business, such as poultry farms and other kinds of income generation activities if we get financial and technical support from *sansthas* (NGOs). We are not informed with any kinds of training and funds that come for the village people. It may come for *thula badas* (big and powerful men), but it never comes for us.

(Maya BK, aged 42)

Besides the financial burden due to the lack of proper mechanical, technical, and electric knowledge, some Kami households fail to recognise the potential benefits of electricity advancing their traditional occupation. There are very few Kami household, mostly elder people, continuing their traditional caste based occupation based on traditional technology called *aran*. There is electricity but they are unaware how the new technology can advance their occupation and increase their income.

It is difficult for us to use electricity and technology to make iron tools; to run electric motors and there several buttons as well as the working process you need *gyan* (knowledge), but we cannot even read Nepali letters, we are old people, and do not know about that kind of technology. We cannot afford it either.

(Purna BK, aged 60)

Similarly, despite a few women from Janajati and Brahmin/Chhetri communities, the majority of women have not experienced any drastic changes to their livelihoods and income generation opportunities through the intervention of micro-hydro in the village. As previously mentioned,

very few women from the aforementioned ethnic groups were involved in income generating training organised and facilitated by Rural Energy for Rural Livelihoods (RERL) and AEPC. Moreover, no women were using the knowledge and skills that they learned in the training for income generation activities because of the mismatch between the local social cultural context and the training provided by the *sansthas* (NGOs). A woman who took the training to make pickles of *lapsi* (*Choerospondias axillaris*) and bamboo making tools, said:

There are no *lapsi* trees in our forests. If we buy it people from other villages it will be expensive and we can't sell the pickle for a fair price in the local market. Therefore, I did not continue it as an income generation activity even though I took the training.

(Rita Padhya, age 48)

The empirical evidence shows that the opportunities created by electrification are not experienced equally by all users' households, particularly women, the poor and Dalits. The inability of people to become involve in income generation and entrepreneurship by using electricity can be analysed from two different types of entrepreneurs: 'survivalist' and 'growth oriented', as discussed by Barner, Gomez, and Knorringa (Barner et al 2008). According to them, 'survivalist' entrepreneurs are small in nature and require little capital and less or no skills and are mainly lead by women at the household level. Alternatively, the 'growth oriented' entrepreneurs are usually family enterprises that are more risk-taking, more difficult to get started because they require access to finance and men specialised in terms of what goods and services to supply. Analysing the employment, entrepreneurialism, and income generation activities and opportunities from the perspective of these two models, it could be argued that there is less or no access of the poor, women and Dalits to growth oriented entrepreneurship in order to improve their economic condition and living standards. Furthermore, the lack of finance and proper skills and knowledge regarding business and entrepreneurialism means that women, poor and Dalit households are excluded from growth oriented or income generation entrepreneurship (Barner et al 2008). As a result, the opportunities created by micro-hydro and rural electrification are centred on a very few high caste and economically well-off households, who have access to growth oriented entrepreneurship for various reasons.

Gender Dynamics: Role of Electricity

In general, women have no control over the rural energy technology because of their lack of knowledge about repair and maintenance (Mahat 2004; Cecelski 2000). Despite women's contribution being high during the construction phase as they contributed free labour, women have no control over the MH, either in the management committee or in employment opportunities as operators. The cultural norms, beliefs, and social status of women in society shape their right and control over property, either in public or household based resources (Winther 2008). Similarly, because of the cultural norms and values women are not allowed to spend the night outside their home and the MHP power station is quite far from settlements. The cultural norms and household workload constrains women's opportunities to become an operator of the MHP. However, the rural electrification and modern technologies have a significant impact on the reduction of women's drudgery, saving time to become more involving in income generation activities as well as social and community development for their self enhancement and empowerment (Mahat 2004; Winther 2008). Rural electrification has a direct relation with the gender dynamics and gender division of roles.

Since the development of the micro-hydro project in the village the user households equally benefitted by using modern electronic home appliances, such as radios, televisions, rice cookers, mixers, refrigerators, kettles, bread makers and so forth. The use of modern technology and home appliances has drastically changed the working pattern of the rural population, particularly women. Women have largely benefited from rice mills and home appliances such as cooking items. According to Mahat (2004), normally women in rural Nepal spend between two and four hours daily to process grain, and more hours to cook food. The installation of a rice mill in the village reduced the drudgery of women and time required to process grain in traditional indigenous technology, such as *dhiki and janto*, which is very labour intensive. The women have experienced that electricity and modern technology have saved their time while cooking food and processing grain. They can now become involve in different activities while cooking food, such as cutting grass, fetching water, working in grocery shops and so on. In a group discussion a woman shared her experiences by stating:

We did not know before that electricity can make possible the things that we are benefiting from now. We do not have to do *dhiki and janto* like in the past. If we have small or large amount of grain we go to mill.

It has also become easier to cook food by using a rice cooker. Plug in the rice cooker and we can fetch water or cut grass. We do not have to spend much time cooking food. However, women have always *dukhha* (pain), *hamilai kamle kahilai chhodaina* (the work never leave us free).

Before, women's duty was to process grain by doing *dhiki-janto*. But now things have changed due to the establishment of the rice mill in the village. *Logne manche* [men] also carry the loads and come to process the grain. Moreover, men also help women in cooking food by using the rice cooker.

(Geeta Shrees, aged 40)

However, very few women are partially involved in income generation activities from the saved time of collecting fuel wood, and processing grain. Due to the migration of men for foreign employment, women have become involved in both farm and non-farm activities. They are also playing the role of the household head, taking care of children, giving guardianship to them, handling agriculture activities and other business. Moreover, women have to participate in social and community organisations, such as community forest groups, water user groups, and women's cooperatives. Therefore, the case here is quite different than argued by Mahat (2004), Cecelski (2000) and Winther (2008). I further argue that women are not a homogenous group, but rather, they are diverse in terms of caste/ethnicity and economic status. The differences among women determine their access to electricity and home appliances as well as the impact of the electricity in their lives. The reduction of women's drudgery and time saved from processing grain, collecting fuel wood, and cooking food has shifted from one sector to another, such as farm activities.

However, due to the access to electricity and technology the working pattern of men has also changed in some ways. In the past, processing grain and cooking food were considered women's work, but having access to electricity and home appliances men are now also involve in cooking and carrying loads of grain to the mill. This reflects the idea that the gender division of labour is not a merely local production; instead it is the production effect of the globalised world economy.⁷

7 See Bossen 1984 cited in Cameron 1998; Mishra 1987.

Conclusion

This paper has explored the role of local institutions in the governance of community managed micro-hydro interventions in a heterogeneous community. The empirical findings and discussion have shown that although the community managed micro-hydro is governed and managed by the community itself, the entire institutional process is controlled by influential social actors with socio-economic and political power. The controlling mechanism of certain powerful groups in decision-making explicitly excludes the poor, women, and Dalits from accessing electricity from the community micro-hydro. This study further suggests that not all groups of people in the diverse and heterogeneous community are benefitting from rural electrifications as claimed by the development interventionist and donors, that the notion of 'rural electrification and enhancement of livelihood'. The existing local institutional arrangements, which are in the hands of powerful people has excluded the poor, women and Dalits, from accessing electricity for their basic electricity demands as well as livelihood enhancement becoming involved in income generation activities.

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‘Aren’t We also Wheels of this Nation-Chariot?’

Orature as an Alternative Her-Story of the Nation

BALRAM UPRETY

Situating the Silence: Locating Tij and Its Context

In the contemporary academic, popular, and journalistic discourses, Tij is invariably constructed as the idiom of Nepali *nari*.¹ In an article in *Gorkhapatra*, on the 29th of August 2011, Pratibha Sharma Regmi notes that ‘Nepali mahili’² cherish the festival of Tij because Tij is related to the *maiti* of *Nepali mahila*. Similarly, Lekhnath Regmi states in an article in *Kantipur* on the 18th of August 2009, that ‘myriad songs of the Tij are hitting the market on the occasion of *Haritalika Tij*; the *mahan*’³ festival of *Nepali mahila*’.

Celebrated annually during the post-paddy cultivation period of August and September, Tij is collectively seen as a celebration of *cheli-maiti* bonds, and the celebration of the relationship between a married woman and her natal family. During Tij, a married Nepali woman is taken to her *maita*, either by her father or her brother. A gastronomical indulgence, known as *dar*, which means something sustaining, preludes the festival on *dwitiya*, the first day of the festival. The feast of *dar* on *dwitiya* is seen as a prelude for fasting on *tritiya*, the second day of the festival. The archetypal fasting of *tritiya* is undertaken by women for the long life of their husbands. Unmarried Nepali women, who have started menstruating, undertake the *tritiya* fasting to pray for a good husband. As women fast on *tritiya*, they dress in their best clothes and go to the nearest Shiva temple and sing and dance. On *panchami*, the final day of the festival, women go to the nearest river and undertake the elaborate ritual *panchami puja*: a rigorous ritual bathing

1 Nepali woman.

2 *ibid.*

3 Great.

ceremony and *puja* carried out in order to atone for the sins they may have incurred by touching the initiated male members of the family when the women were menstruating. Though the ritual core of Tīj is patriarchal, the songs that accompany the festival often critique patriarchy.

The overt patriarchal ritual of Tīj and the counter-intuitive critique of patriarchy in the songs of Tīj make this trope a strange paradox. In spite of its centrality as *the* festival of Nepali women, Tīj has always been treated as a 'footnote' in Nepali academia. There are several problematiqués of the indigenous writing on Tīj: the most fundamental problem with the writing is its epistemic paradigm; its univocal, archetypal and androcentric constructions of Tīj misses the pluralities and ambivalence that make Tīj simultaneously a complex site of conformity and contestation, hegemony and counter-hegemony, patriarchal ritual and the carnival anti-ritual.⁴ American anthropologist, Lynn Bennett's ethnography on Tīj is important for its documentation and reading of this cultural metaphor as an expression and endorsement of Brahminical patriarchy. By excluding Tīj songs from her ethnographic practice, Bennett; however, misses Nepali women's complex contrapuntal conceptualisation of Brahminical patriarchy (Bennett 1983). Skinner and Holland's papers on Tīj read it as Nepali women's expression of alternative femininity and counter-hegemonic subjectivities (Skinner, Holland and Adhikari 1994; Holland and Skinner 1995).

Skinner and Holland limit their analytical canvas to a *cursory* examination of a few issues, such as inheritance, alcoholism, education, and matrimony. The urban Tīj is also left unexamined in their writing. The scant indigenous Tīj scholarship, controlled by the upper caste male scholars, does not engage with the politics of inclusion and exclusion; theories of race and ethnicity; discourses of body politics and space politics, and gender politics; discourses of nation and nationalism; issues of caste, subalterneity and othering; the urbanisation of Tīj with its entry into the globalised market economy in the first decade of the twenty first century, as these critical areas are yet to be applied for an oppositional and polemic reading of Tīj. Out of the numerous issues waiting to be explored, this paper seeks to explore the corpus of Tīj songs to map an alternative 'her'story' of the Nepali nation state.⁵

4 For detailed analysis of Nepali writing on Tīj, see Balram Uprety, 2013.

5 This paper seeks to trace an alternative her-story of nation--using the oft-neglected source of orality. The author is aware of the fact that constructing a systematic alternative her-story or canon of the Nepali nation-state by using the source of orality alone is a rather ambitious task. Providing a detailed and systematic trajectory of the Nepali nation-state from the time of Shah's time to the present is not the focus of the

Tij songs are not a homogenous temporal category as the shifting temporal contours of the songs need to be differentiated at the outset to make a more accurate historiographical construction of the Nepali nation state. Temporal markers are arbitrary, fluid and slippery, yet they are necessary evils that must be deployed with caution and apology. With this understanding and disclaimer, I have located three broad temporal shifts that mark the changing politics of Tij songs. The classificatory markers of the classical/old/rural, the interrogative and polemic songs, and the urban are used here to trace the changing trajectory of Tij songs. I use the oxymoron of classical folk/Tij songs to designate the songs produced before the onset of the discourse of liberal democracy in the politically charged decade of the 1980s and 1990s. In the classical/old Tij songs, women's protestation lies in the *articulation* of their dissatisfaction with patriarchy. Their protest is ambivalent and the songs oscillate between critique and conformity, anger and anguish, resentment and resignation. However, Tij songs become an unambiguous means of protest with the advent of the feminist vocabulary of protest and polemic during the pro-democratic movements of the 1990s.

Although democracy was re-established in Nepal in 1990, the idioms of protest and polemic that marked the decade of the 1980s preceded the actual re-instatement of democracy in 1990. The polemic/interrogative songs reflect this climate of protest, an episteme of protest that started in the 1970s and 1980s and cumulates in the decade of democracy. During this period, the songs undergo far-reaching transformations; this is the time when the songs become overtly emancipatory and political. Tij songs of this period are used for social transformation and feminist politics, as they played a very significant part in the feminist struggle for equality and emancipation. During this decade, Tij becomes synonymous with Nepali woman's fight for freedom and emancipation. The textual texture of Tij undergoes further radical transformations during the first decade of the 21st century when globalisation and market economy impact the production and consumption of the genre. The urban Tij songs show a significant departure from their rural counterparts in their articulation of politics. In the urban archive, the feminist emancipatory agenda is replaced by the increasing impact of consumerism and corporatisation. This shift

present study. The paper is an attempt to look at the nation state from the prism of folksongs. The paper seeks to trace the outline of the trajectory of the Nepali nation state using the corpus of Nepali Teej songs. More than a complete picture of the Nepali nation-state from the perspective of gender, the present paper provide a sketch. It seeks to map how the nation state looks like from the prism of the folk. It is, therefore, more synoptical than systematic, more suggestive than definitive.

from the emancipatory to the erotic, from transgressive to titillatory enacts the third paradigm shift in the trajectory of Tij songs.

The Nation and Its Erasures

Chatterjee's (1993) theorising of the woman's question in the context of Indian nationalism has some uncanny resonance in the Nepali context. His separation of the home and world, in spite of the criticism it has attracted (Bhattacharya 2005), is largely relevant for the similar privatisation of the women's issue in the Nepali context.⁶ For Chatterjee, the Indian nationalists sought to resolve the woman's question by resorting to a series of binaries; between the inner and outer, the spiritual and material, and the home and the world. The nationalists' identification of woman with the home and the inner domain of spirituality sought to insulate and protect the Indian/Bengali woman from the brutal onslaught of colonialism. In a world that was deeply incarcerated by colonialism and its brutalities, the home was created as a place of autonomy and redemption; authority and agency;

6 Chatterjee's neat separation of the inner and the outer, the material and the spiritual, the home and the world has come for criticism and contestation. The home and the world in the colonial nationalistic period, as Niladree Bhattacharya rightly points out, were not distinct spaces: autonomous of each other. The home itself was not a self-contained unit: it was a divided space where colonial modernity entered 'on sly' where husbands secretly taught their wife how to read in the darkness the night. They subverted in the cover of the darkness what they subscribed in the public. Moreover, the colonial laws on marriage such as on restitution and the age of consent further complicate the separation that Chatterjee makes. For Nilandree, the conformity on the part of the Indian men and women to the separation of the inner and the outer was more strategic than real. Niladree therefore opens the space for agency and empowerment where Chatterjee does not seem offer. See, Bhattacharya, Niladri. 2005. 'Notes towards a Conception of the Colonial Public'. In *Civil Society, Public Sphere and Citizenship: Dialogues and Perceptions*, edited by Rajeev Bhargava and Helmut Reifield, 130-56. New Delhi: Sage Publications. Feminists have posited another problem in Chatterjee's thesis. He locates the agency of the nationalists in their ability to create this binary and insulate the home from the world. The nationalists created their nationalism in their ability to 'rescue' its women from the degrading influence of the Western civilisation. This may be true to a large extent. Such an argument, however, constructs the position of vulnerability and victimhood for the Bengali/Indian women and ignores and elides subversion and recalcitrance that form the micro-politics of the process of counter-hegemony. I use Chatterjee's thesis not as a truism. My paper asserts as well as questions the legitimacy of his argument. Though his separation of the home and world largely stand justified in my discussion of the classical Tij, Nepali women's articulation of complaint and discontent in the form of songs problematises Chatterjee's ascription of silence and submission as the domain of the feminine. Even in my discussion of the contemporary Tij, Nepali women's response to modernity and *parampara* is more complex than the kind of monolith that he constructs for his Indian/Bengali counterparts.

purity and sanity. This inner sanctum of spirituality and regeneration functioned as an anti-colonial antidote and existed as a trope of nationalist sublimation (Chatterjee 1993). In Chatterjee's theorising of the woman question, the 'other' operates as a foundational premise; the coloniser was the other that should not be allowed to defile the inner sanctum of domesticity. The reformist agenda of the nationalists was to create women who were educated yet traditional, progressive yet domesticated, rational yet spiritual – a combination that would make women worthy companions of the educated Indian men and protect their home against the dystopia of colonialism.

If the Indian nationalists wanted to educate yet domesticate, reform yet insulate, liberate yet fetter women, Nepali leaders were less ambivalent about their colonisation of women.⁷ The Nepali nation state that emerged in the second half of the 18th century as a result of what Kumar Pradhan calls the Gorkha Conquest under the Kshatriya leadership of Prithvi Narayan Shah used the cultural logic of Hinduism to justify his imperialistic conquest (Pradhan 2009). The Hindu imagination of the nation went hand in hand with the androcentric imagination of the nation. Shah's '*Asli Hindostan*' was an androcentric imagination. To accentuate its difference from the Muslims and the British in India, Nepal was imagined as the authentic land of Hindus. Prithvi Narayan Shah's description of Nepal as *Yo asli Hindustan ho* ('this is the authentic land of the Hindus') must be read in the context of his need to imagine a community that was different from these others. According to Enslin (1990), the ideological masterstroke of the assertion of

7 Though Chatterjee's theorising of woman's question in India helps us understand the similar 'privatisation' of woman's question in Nepal, it would be incorrect to miss the differences between the two distinct moments of history. The emergence of the Nepali nation state takes place much before the emergence of the concept of nation-state and nationalism in Europe from where we have largely inherited the contemporary vocabulary of nationalism. Nationalism in the Nepali *muluk* that Shah conquered and annexed operated top down; in the absence of the apparatus of modernity, it was confined only to those who were directly related to the project of nation-building. Though Nepali women were excluded from the political geography of the nation, it would be wrong to say that she was subjected to total erasure. Like their Indian counterparts, they were pushed to the private domain of religion and spirituality, nurturance and motherhood. Hinduism and Brahminical patriarchy therefore continue to remain the basis for the exclusion of Nepali women from the new nation-state. The Indian nationalism emerges in the aftermath of India's encounter with the Western modernity. The Indian nationalists used the project of modernity to reform and yet insulate Indian women as a part of their nationalist agenda. In the Nepali context such complexity is missing. If the Indian women were the victims of the burden of nationalists who wanted to practice their nationalism on them and through them, the Nepali women were the victims of the Brahminical strictures and codes that believed in woman's innate sinfulness.

asli Hindustan was that it legitimised his claim to be a *Hindupati*⁸. Politically and ideologically, the imagining of the nation state went hand in hand with the centralisation of Hinduism as the state ideology.

The masculinist gendering and scripting of the nation cannot be missed here. The perceived threat of foreign invasion was not only at the religious and political level. The threat of sexual violation, and the bodily invasion of Brahmin and other upper caste women by the untouchable *Mlechhas*⁹ also seems to have prompted the creation, expansion, and consolidation of the *asli Hindustan* as a 'safe' space for Hindus. The Chhettri rulers, who undertook the imperialist project of creating a nation state, inhabited the epistemological and ideological world order manufactured by the Bahuns or Brahmins. With the consolidation of Brahminical imperialism in the new nation, the imposition of Brahminical codes of patriarchal order and control were seen as necessary to the nation-building process. The ordering of women's bodies and lives in accordance with these codes was essential for the beginning of a more systematic masculinist narrative of the nation. Bhattachan contends:

In the last two hundred and twenty five years, the Nepalese state has been, on the whole a predatory, weak and undemocratic state. Since the establishment of 'Gurkha Imperialism' by King Prithvi Narayan Shah in 1768 AD, has been using unfailing cultural weapons such as Sanskritisation, Hinduisation, Nepalisation and Bahunbad (Brahminism), legal weapons such as the old/new national codes based on Mitakchya and Dayabhag school of Benaras and Bengal of India respectively, centralisation of power and authority by male *Bahuns* and *Chhettris*, and patriarchal system, all have been subjugating...women belonging to all castes - high and low caste, and indigenous ethnic groups. The centuries of old tradition has not changed even after the reinstatement of multi-party democracy in 1990.¹⁰

The purity of the Nepali *asli Hindustan* depended upon the purity of its womenfolk. Brahminical expositions of scriptural authority tended to support the idea of women as being either 'prone to pollution' or possessing an innate 'impurity.' With the tendency of Hinduism to privilege *dharma* and *moksha* (release) over *artha* (material gain), and *kāma* and *moksha* over *samsārā*, women became, in the language of innumerable religious teachers,

8 The lord of the Hindus.

9 The term was used to denote the non-Hindu foreigner, in this case, Muslims.

10 Bhattachan 1998, 3-4.

‘naturally’ associated with *kāma* and *samsārā*; therefore dangerous and threatening to man’s final goal of salvation.¹¹ As women were needed for the perpetuation of patriarchy, only mothers in their reproductive role were venerated. Not only were women denied autonomy, the ‘innate’ depravity and frailty of the female ‘naturally’ made her unworthy of independence. Therefore she needed constant guidance and vigilance, control, and subordination. Like father and husband, the Hindu state took on this role of protecting and controlling the lives and ‘purity’ of women. The womb became the ‘vessel’ for bearing the future sons of the nation, and had to be guarded from contamination and miscegenation.

The erasure of women in Nepal as actors and participants in the process of history was further accentuated with the simultaneous construction and consolidation of a martial identity for Nepali men. This was accelerated following the Anglo-Nepal war in 1814. As Enslin puts it, the ‘nationalist elaboration of martial tradition is best viewed as a gendered construction of ethnicity and nationalism’ (Enslin 1990, 31-32).

The classical Tīj songs reflect the Hinduised contours of the nation, as women did not exist for the state and the state did not exist for women. In the classical Tīj songs, the notion of nation continues to elude women, and what comes under women’s interrogation is not the political, but the personal or the realm of domesticity. There seems to be nothing for women beyond the family; the patriarchal nation made inroads into women’s lives through the institution of the family. Women seemed insulated from the rise and the fall of kingdoms, political conquests, and defeats. The following songs show the domestic/‘domesticated’ subjectivities and concerns of Nepali women. In an article in *Sunchari Samachar* on the 15th of September 2005, the noted Nepali folklorist Singh archives a song that clearly associates Nepali woman with home and hearth:

On reaching *ghar*, I met *sasurā*
 So unlike my *bābā*, lau *siri Bhagawān!*¹²
 On reaching *ghar*, I met *sāsu*
 So unlike my *āmā*, lau *siri Bhagawān!*
 On reaching *ghar*, I met the elder brother-in-law
 So unlike my brother lau *siri Bhagawān!*
 On reaching *ghar*, I met the elder sister-in-law

11 See Allen and Mukherjee 1980; Bennett 1983; Gray 1995.

12 *O siri Bhagawan* literally means ‘O my God’. Here it is an exclamation of anguish and surprise, shock and rude awakening.

So unlike my *bhāju*¹³, *lau siri Bhagawān!*¹⁴

...A ten-*paise sindūr*¹⁵ now takes over my life.
 After repaying money for your ten-*paise sindūr*,
 ... I'd rather stay with *bābā*.
 ...The life-giving *bābā-āmā* I shall look after.
 Tell me which deity to placate to become a son?
 What offerings are needed to please that deity?
 Leaving her *janmaghar*¹⁶ a daughter must go,
 I would rather be a son by dying tomorrow.
 Transplant the flower that has blossomed near the door,
 Strangle your love for this ill-fated daughter.¹⁷

In the old Tij songs of complaint and critique, anger and anguish, the nation as a category does not exist for Nepali women. Although the nation was imagined as *matribhoomi*, the *motherisation* of the nation did not mean a corresponding democratisation of gender in the nation. The feminisation of the nation was an effective ideological tool for exercising power, the passivity, vulnerability, and nurturance inscribed in the feminisation and motherisation of the nation that constructed a continuum from women to nation, as both needed colonisation and control. As a colonised category, the nation in the old/classical songs shows its presence through its absence.

Though women do not exist for nation, it is still possible to find references to Nepal in the classical folk archives. Even when erased from the national imagination, women show their consciousness of a Nepal that is *not* Nepal.

The town glittering.
 What flower has blossomed on the mountain top?
 What flower has blossomed on the mountain top?
 The gleaming mountain, O Sanginai, the gleaming mountain.
 When my father was in Nepal,
 Shoes on his feet and umbrella on head,
 The town glittering, O Sanginai, the town glittering.

13 Wife of elder brother.

14 All songs quoted in the paper are in Nepali. I have translated the songs and provided substantial quotations. A significant corpus of Tij songs continues to remain inaccessible to those who are not conversant in the language. All translations are mine unless otherwise stated.

15 Vermillion that costs a meager amount.

16 House where one was born.

17 Acharya 2005, 232.

When my mother was in Nepal,
 Sindur¹⁸ on her head and pote¹⁹ on neck,
 The town glittering, O Sanginai, the town glittering.
 When my brother was in Nepal,
 Shoes on his feet and umbrella in hand,
 The town glittering, O Sanginai, the town glittering.²⁰

My dajai²¹ has earnt and sent a sirphul²² for me from Nepal
 My sasu²³ would not give it to me,
 She kept it for herself.²⁴²⁵

The Nepal in the archive does not refer to the Nepal that we understand today. In spite of the emergence of the nation-state, the folk singers, very interestingly, do not seem to have a political vocabulary to imagine their location and their own erased political subjecthood. More than the nation, it is *Muglaan* that underlines their locational and spatial awareness.

Muglaan is the 'other' that seems to reinforce their sense of differential locational identity. Their sense of location, in this regard, seems to be passive, as they do not seem to have an active and autonomous sense of location, an autonomous sense of belonging, and an affirmative vocabulary of their belonging and location. *Muglaan* seems to give them a strange identity as it marks them as people who *do not* belong to *Muglaan*, and their sense of location can only be gleaned from their not belonging to *Muglaan*. In the construction of their national identity, their non-belonging (to *Muglaan*), becomes more important than their belonging (to Nepal). Their locational identity is predicated upon the negative; their non-belonging rather than belonging. *Muglaan*, more than a national, is a locational and cultural entity, and it helped them construct a sense of religious, cultural, and economic identity that was different from the one provided by *Muglaan* to those who migrated to *Muglaan*.

18 The vermilion power applied traditionally by Nepali women on the parting of their hair to mark their state of sumangali, the auspicious one. It also indicates women's marital status.

19 A string of small beaded ornament worn by married Nepali women.

20 Bandhu 2001, 138.

21 It means daju, brother.

22 A flower-like golden ornament.

23 Mother-in-law.

24 Parvati Ghimmire in a private conversation with the author at Chandragari on the 22nd of August, 2011.

25 Parvati Ghimire, private conversation.

All go to *māita* when comes the *Tij*
 There in *Muglaan* is my *māita*
 I go to work even on such a festive day
 Alas! On the threshold fall my tears!²⁶

More than the reference to *Muglaan*, it is the reference to Nepal that requires some serious annotations. Why do Nepali women use the signifier Nepal to refer to Nepal even after the emergence of the nation-state of Nepal? Why do they continue to use the old signifier Nepal, which was traditionally used to refer to the Kathmandu valley? Women's erasure of the new nation-state in the song quoted above is related to the erasure of women by the new nation state. If we look at the testimony of orature, this erasure continues for a long time. The androcentric imagination of the nation gets seriously problematised when the idea of the modern nation state enters Nepal during the decades of democracy in the 1980s and the 1990s.

Democracy and Its Incomplete Project

The democracy movement of the 1990s and the introduction of liberal western democracy can be seen as a turning point in the way in which women imagine their socio-political subjecthood within the state. Although the introduction of democracy is a defining moment in this period, it may not be totally correct to ascribe democracy with too much revolutionary potential. It may be seen as a culmination of a process that started with the end of the autocratic Rana dynasty in 1951. Nepal's policy of insulation and isolation came to an end in 1951 and the process of modernisation and internationalisation began. It became a laboratory of international welfare oriented developmentalist modernity. The micro-politics of international grants and aid that has mostly acted as a neo-colonial tool to write the 'colonies' in its own image, the impact of other South Asian democracies, the internalisation of democracy as the normative political order, the spread of education in Nepal and the rise of the middle class, the increasing role and presence of the mass media, the corrupt and decadent governance of the Panchayat era all seem to have played a significant role in the re-establishing democracy in 1990.

Although 1990 is taken as a historical marker, it will be incorrect to isolate the equally politically charged decade of the 1980s that preceded the re-instatement of democracy. The interrogative, questioning, and spirit of the pre-democracy decade is as important as the decade of democracy

26 Parajuly 2007, 180.

for understanding the second tectonic shift in the production of Tij songs. In a series of songs produced pre-and-post-1990, the gender of the nation comes under serious problematisation and re-investigation, and many songs dramatise Nepali woman's gynocentric re-imagination of the nation. Inevitably, given the omnipresence of patriarchy, legitimacy is sought for the rise of women in the public sphere by invoking the language of competitive nationalism, wherein the progress made by women in other countries is cited as an example to encourage Nepali women to empower themselves:

As Indira Gandhi developed India,
We women shall develop Nepal.
Let's rise and stand up women, come together now.²⁷

Develop the country by marching forward.
Women of other countries have reached the moon,
Women of our country are still backward.²⁸

The awareness of the rest of world brought about by some preliminary symptoms of globalisation helps the singer to show that women's empowerment can only strengthen the state and enable it to stand on par with other countries, and not cause an unsettling of the established order. Internalising, the rhetoric of nationalism is perhaps strategic, as it reduces retaliation by the patriarchal forces in politics and society when radical change is suggested. In the nationalist, woman-centric re-imagination of the nation, women do not see themselves as the passive receivers of the nation's benevolence or as the silenced subaltern waiting to be spoken for by the male intellectual. It is not the nation that speaks for women now; it is women who speak for the nation. In the contemporary Tij songs, women see themselves not only as the builders of a modern nation state but also as its protectors: 'Aren't we too wheels of this nation-chariot? Don't we too have a right to protect it?' (Dhakal 2001). In the conventional rhetoric of nation-building, woman, like the nation, was seen as an entity that needed male supervision and protection. The speaker here refuses to identify with the vulnerable position constructed for her. Her desire to protect her country is a negation of her own vulnerability conventionally ascribed to her, strategically couched in the 'acceptable' language of patriotism and

²⁷ Dhakal 2001, 28.

²⁸ Dhakal 2001, 35-36.

nationalism. The speaker wants to lay down her life for her country: With a pen and a notebook, to the school shall I go,/And march forward by laying down my life for the nation (ibid). By speaking of the 'good of the nation', the speaker is also legitimising her right to education. The speaker presents a gendered inversion of the discourse of patriotism. Conventionally, women were allowed to participate in patriotic activities only through motherhood by giving birth to good citizens, but dying for one's nation was a privilege preserved for the martial man. Patriotism was effectively used as a political weapon to justify the androcentric conceptualisation and control over the state. The speaker's willingness to die for her country challenges the exclusivity of the politics of patriotism.

Saying women should not join politics,
Mighty have they become by deceiving women.²⁹

Paradoxically though, women's re-imagination of the nation is always in reference to an androcentric vocabulary. The semantic politics of *pani* which means 'also', 'even', 'too', which occurs in many songs linking Nepali women to global modernity, needs closer attention:

We too can study I. A. B. A. *doctori*,
We too can do all the *naukari*...

...We too need inheritance, like our *dāju-bhāi*,
We need to inherit property, money and farmland.

...It is day-break; there is no longer darkness,
It is time even for women to march ahead.^{30,31}

A critical scrutiny of the semantics of 'we too', 'even us', and 'we also' would make it clear that the speakers want to achieve what men (or western women who are equal to men in terms of access to opportunities) have already achieved. An innocent reading would establish these women's desire for equality. A political reading would, however, establish the fact that the paradigm of equality still continues to remain androcentric; to have what men have or to be 'like' men is to be equal, autonomous, and

29 ibid, 42.

30 Sung to the author by Gita Sarki in an interview at her residence in Siphachour, Kathmandu on the 12th of July, 2012.

31 Gita Sarki, Interview.

liberated. The songs are not a yearning for a radical re-structuring of the nation with a female face, in the female image. Women's imagination of the nation is predicated not upon their difference but upon their sameness with men. The marginal loses its marginality only when it 'becomes' the dominant: women can 'become' women only when they become men.

For a more equitable remodeling of the nation, women find it imperative to de-mythologise the equation of political power with patriarchy: As one song goes, 'By saying women should not join politics; they become mighty by deceiving women (ibid, 42). Women appropriate the idiom of liberal democracy, the idioms of equality and franchise to interrogate the gendering of politics. The myth of biological essentialism, that men are somehow biologically better equipped for leadership roles is de-bunked. In a song that questions why there is not enough political representation of women in the higher rungs of Nepali politics, the speaker states:

All are born ignorant here,
'Tis misleading to say men know better.³²

Internationalism informs and shapes these women's articulation of protest. One might even say that a certain idealised vision of the West is repeatedly held up for comparison with women's condition in Nepal. The protest emerges out of difference, as it were, older songs merely complained and documented women's suffering while more recent songs show a clear agenda for reform and progress emerging out of a comparison with other states:

The Prime Minister of India had become Indira,
Isn't she a woman just like us?
As Indira Gandhi developed India,
We women shall develop Nepal.³³

Women of other countries have reached the moon,
Women of our country are still backward.

Much has been accomplished by women of videsh,
The burden of [carrying] grass keeps us occupied.³⁴

³² ibid, 43.

³³ ibid, 28.

³⁴ ibid, 45.

The West emerges in these songs as a land of feminist utopia; a land where women have freedom and access to wealth and employment; a land where women do not suffer inequality and injustice; a land where women, as much as men, have leadership roles; a land, in short, of female emancipation. In the re-mapping of the nation, if the West emerges as the 'aspirational model', the East is seen as a land lacking, of regression and stasis. It is depicted as a space frozen in time and history waiting to be reclaimed by the mimesis of western modernity. It is yet to become 'like' the west.

To overemphasise the emancipatory potential of the model of western modernity would undermine the polyphonic uncertainties that mark Nepali women's understanding of tradition and western modernity in the contemporary Tīj songs. It might be useful to give an example from the Indian context for comparison here. Chatterjee (1993) feels that in the face of the modernising and westernising colonial cultural onslaught in the outer world, the 'inner sanctum' of domesticity and tradition, insulated from the degrading onslaught of an alien culture, became the exclusive burden of the Indian women. In Chatterjee's discourse, Indian/Bengali women's relationship with modernity seems to be univocally unproblematised and passive, bereft of contestation and agency. However, Nepali women's response to modernity and tradition, articulated in the contemporary Tīj songs is undercut by ambivalence and complexities.

On the one hand, the songs articulate women's understanding that the promise of liberation and emancipation exemplified in western modernity cannot be reached without demolishing the prison-house of tradition or *parampara*. *Parampara* is unequivocally seen as women's enemy, the antithesis of the emancipatory modernity. *Parampara* is not seen as the path that would uplift the morally superior indigenous women, but as the ideological *pardah* or veil that would enslave women permanently.

Forward shall we march - pulverizing *paramparā*,
Uprooting the forces that bring us down
Ripping apart the roots that push us down.³⁵

These women do not seek to redefine, re-negotiate, revisit, or re-invent *parampara*; their anti-*parampara* radicalism goes much beyond this. What arrests our attention is the repeated use of the word *utha* which means 'rise' and/or 'stand up' in several lyrics, for example, 'Let's rise and stand up women and come together now/And develop the country by marching

35 Dhakal 2001, 35.

forward' (ibid). 'Rise and stand up my *didi*, rise and stand up my *bahini*!/
or forever shall we remain oppressed!' (ibid, 45), or 'Let's rise and march
ahead now - abandoning the burden of grass,/We shall walk too - choosing
our own path' (ibid). 'Let's rise and rise women; afraid we shall not be now,/ For
clapping, we need both the hands,/ Woman is one hand, another a man' (ibid).
Explicitly political is the lyric which states, 'Rise, rise *didi-bahini* to get
rid of such *chalan*/And to annihilate all exploitative bourgeoisie' (ibid, 38-39).
Such exhortation to rise and/or stand up cannot be dismissed as rhetoric.
The temporal exhortation, *aba* meaning now, appears as frequently as *utha*.
If 'now' is the time to rise and/or stand up, the past is by extension seen as a
state of stasis and inertia, a decadent world of *parampara* and *purano samskar*.
Thus, *parampara* and the past are interchangeable, as both are equally
oppressive. In the binary temporality, if 'then' was the time of regressive
medievalism, 'now', loaded with immense modernising possibilities, is the
time of renaissance and awakening. In the binary chronotope of progress
and modernity, 'our' spatio-temporal stasis and inertia is contrasted with
the spatio-temporal explosion and expansion of *videshka nari*.³⁶

Domesticity, like *parampara* and the past, is seen as an anti-thesis
of modernity and progress. Women 'inherit' from *parampara* and the
past the 'legacy' of *chulo chouko* and *jutho bhando*³⁷ Through metonymic
identification, *jutho bhando* and women stand interchangeable. In a heavily
gendered world, *chulo chouko*, *jutho bhando* and *ghas ko bhari*³⁸ are female.
The feminisation of domesticity has made 'One son an engineer, another a
doctor/ Forever is the daughter a servant in the *ghar*' (ibid, 40). One song
declares:

Household work never leaves us,
Our bodies are weathered by the hot sun.
Sometimes we stir the rice, sometimes we stir the burning wood,
Mother always has to comfort the children.
Our life goes round like a sari being put on,
Who kept us in this narrow enclosure?
Who gave us this kitchen work as part of our inheritance?
When did our world become separate [from men]?
We women should have to lift this world [to be like men]?

³⁶ The progressive women of other countries.

³⁷ The 'feminine' world of home and hearth, utensils and domesticity.

³⁸ Literally, 'burden of grass' for cattle; figuratively, a bounded world of domesticity of women.

But we always have to carry bundles of grass...^{39, 40}

Women like us have stepped on the moon,
Let the unclean utensils not detain us anymore.⁴¹

In the discourse of the contemporary Tij songs, *purano samskar* would not allow the radical re-alignment of gender politics through the emancipatory influence of western modernity. Patriarchal politics feminises *parampara* as women's exclusive burden and creates a false consciousness to justify women's spatio-temporal freezing in the 'liminality' of domesticity. To counter this, many songs suggest breaking the binary of 'home' and 'beyond' by stepping into the 'unsafe' space of public life:

*Mahila-mukti*⁴² would not happen by being within the *ghar*,
Come out now *didi-bahini*⁴³ with resolute urgency.⁴⁴

However, unlike Chatterjee's Indian counterparts, Nepali women's anti-*parampara* radicalism, although articulated in a different time and context, is complex and ambivalent, deeply problematised by their own invocation of *parampara* to recuperate 'eastern' cultural sanctity in the face of western cultural imperialism.

Women have now become men and men women,
An *ultajamana*⁴⁵ comes; now what will happen?
Girls of today - how gilded they are,
A *kalikali*⁴⁶ girl has a fair face.
In jeans, shirt, shoes and cropped hair,
Some [girls] saunter like boys, deceiving all.
A black bird on her eyes, a fish on her hair -
From where has such fashion come to Nepal?
Cheeks done up with cream and powder, lips with lipstick,

39 Translation not mine.

40 Skinner, Holland and Adhikari 1994, 283.

41 Dhakal 2001, 40.

42 Liberation of women.

43 Literally sisters, here it is used means woman: it is an invocation of sisterhood. The term seeks to invoke solidarity by seeking to invoking a sense of universal sisterhood of Nepali woman.

44 *ibid*, 45.

45 Times that have turned up-side-down.

46 Dark-skinned.

This fake make-up, *didi-bahini*, for how long?
 Red are the twenty nails, painted with nail polish,
 Cheeks powdered white, elsewhere she is dark.
 Sandals make you ten feet tall, you may trip over them...
 'Being fashionable' all day, when will you study?
 Thrice a day you don three [different] fashions,
 And brighten your prospects in *bilāyat* and Japan.
 The *videśi* fashion has enveloped village and town,
 People see these fashions, all want to be fashionable.
 Better to study than get mired in fashion.
 March forward in the *mahilā mukti āndolan*⁴⁷
 'Simple living and high thinking' rather,
 Cast off fashion, *didi-bahini*; this is my plea.⁴⁸

The sartorial is political; the sartorial departure is therefore seen as moral and sexual departure by the speaker in this song. From the bio-political perspective, the sartorial westernisation, by accentuating the body, makes the body embodied. This song underlines the embeddedness of bio-politics in the texture of androcentric morality. Therefore, the loss of the docile feminine body does not frighten the speaker as much as the phobia of acquiring a vocal westernised unfeminine body. Chatterjee's words seem apt to describe Parbatiya patriarchal anxiety: 'No encroachment by the coloniser must be allowed in that inner sanctum. In the world, imitation of, and adaptation to, Western norms was a necessity; at home they were tantamount to annihilation of one's very identity' (Chatterjee 1993, 120-21).⁴⁹ In the world view of right wing Parbatiya patriarchy, women as the em-'bodiment' and extension of the home are the last custodians of the superior eastern spirituality, and they carry on their frail shoulders the civilisational burden of the east. Hence, the *vidheshi* fashion must not be allowed in 'our Nepal'. Here, the sartorial acquires a civilisational dimension. For a patriarchy anxious to protect the purity of its home, the sartorial westernisation is not far removed from the sexual westernisation of its women. Western modernity, sartorial as well as civilisational, is not seen as a monolith of liberation and transcendence, anxiety and celebration, phobia and philia, simultaneously mark women's response to it.

Women emerge as a homogenous body in the nation imagined thus.⁵⁰

47 Women's liberation movement.

48 Dhakal 2001, 65.

49 Chatterjee 1993, 120-121.

50 Nepali women are equally ambivalent towards India. Though Indira is seen as an

Pluralities, ambiguities, differences, internal ruptures, and fissures are denied in an attempt to construct a meta-narrative of Nepali women's march towards modernity in songs such as: 'All women of Nepal! Be one and rise!' (Dhakal 2001). In these songs, there is an invocation of a universal Nepali woman who typically needs to rise and stand up; march forward and fight. Differences of caste, class, ethnicity, religion, race, and sexual orientation are elided in order to construct a fictitious category of 'Nepali woman'. The homogenised category of Nepali woman has come under much critical interrogation for the politics of erasure that it promotes in the name of representation and universalism.⁵¹ Most songs illustrate an essentialist imagination, based on biological similarity. When history, nation, race and class are collapsed into biology, what results is an epistemological fantasy or hallucination which is a/anti-historical. Moreover, an imagination that essentialises also tends to universalise. In the songs given above, historical, cultural, and geo-political differences are erased in order to manufacture an image of a suffering or agitating Nepali sisterhood. In the politics of universalism, it is the dominant Parbatiya upper caste womanhood that becomes the universal norm. The marginal must shed its 'otherness', 'become' or 'be' like the dominant to be visible.

The Carnival Nationalism

While there is a corpus of writing on rural Tij, the urban Tij is still waiting serious academic investigation. Skinner and Holland's reading of Tij at Naudada seeks to examine Tij during the democratic turn. Therefore, their focus does not allow them to theorise the urban Tij, which may be said to have started with the impact and globalisation and market economy during the first decade of the 21st century. While urban Tij may look like a terminological oxymoron as folk in the commonsensical understanding is invariably pitted against the urban, but urban Tij is a significant cultural phenomenon that requires attempts at theorising and investigation. The lack of systematic academic engagement perhaps results primarily for two reasons. Firstly, the first reason takes us to the ontology of folklore as a

inspirational and aspirational model, India is seen as a hegemonic imperial power in other Tij songs. The anxiety of India as a colonial mercenary nation informs songs produced during this period. Even in the songs produced in the urban Tij, India continues to be seen as an imperial hegemonic bully. The treatment of India in the Tij song requires separate sustained treatment.

- 51 For detailed discussion on the politics of representation on Tij, see Balram Uprety, 2013; For the contestation of the normativity of the upper caste subjectivity in the formation of subjecthood in Nepal, see Seira Tamang, 1999 www.himalmag.com/component/.../2319-Assembly-line-sisters.html.

discipline. The origin of folklore is unmistakably rural; from the beginning, it was associated with peasantry, pastoralism, and rusticity. In the post-Enlightenment epistemic paradigm, the rural root of folklore was seen to constitute it as an antithesis of civilisation, modernity, and rationality. The 19th century influence of evolutionary theory that charted a linear theory of human civilisation from barbarism to savagery to peasantry, folklore was seen to occupy the space between savagery and peasantry (Datta 2002, 23-24). As civilisation progressed folklore disappeared was the common (mis)-understanding. The notion of urban folklore is relatively new in academia. Dorson (1976), and later Dundes 1980, in the second half of the last century, emphasise the need to enlarge the scope of folklore to incorporate the urban and industrial folklore as the legitimate terrain.

This epistemic shift is yet to be felt in Nepal where the systematic study of folklore, which always means rural, may be said to have started very recently. It is, therefore, not surprising that most traditional folklorists are not comfortable with the departure of Tij from its folk roots. For most Nepali folklorists, still rooted in the pastoral and a past-centric understanding of the folk, the departure of Tij from its pastoral patriarchal underpinnings poses uncomfortable ontological problems.

Furthermore, globalisation is seen today as urbanisation and industrialisation were seen in the 20th century, a veritable death knell of oral literature (Gowda 2004). Globalisation with its relentless logic of the market and its homogenising and standardising tendency, invokes the images of dystopia and apocalypse for many folklorists. The imperial onslaught of the powerful Western cultures, aided by its technology and its politics of market and media, is seen to vanquish and swallow the *lok samskriti* and the folk located at the margins of the global transnational capital system. Sentimentalism, nativism, and mostly a sense of panic, urgency, and solidarity inform this *samskriti* *baćao* discourse. While the threat posed by globalisation that inevitably comes with the hegemony of the Western world order may not be dismissed easily, and it would be juvenile to equate globalisation with the demise of folklore. In the 20th century, technology similarly was seen as an antithesis of oral literature as globalisation is seen today. Indeed, the era of technology generated its own corpus of oral literature, the vast body of the industrial lore and the computer jokes are some of the examples (Dorson 1976; Dundes 1980). Tij, produced under the impact of the forces of globalisation and market economy is not even considered Tij by the Nepali folklore scholarship. Since the counter-cultural and the carnival that Tij has become under globalisation constantly undermined patriarchy embedded in the original

Tij, the indigenous folklorists and the popular discourse both dismiss it as *vikṛiti* and *visaṅgati*, degeneration and dystopia. Since it is not the original or the archetypal, it is non-folklore, and because it is non-folklore, it does not even merit analysis by folklorists. The underlying assumption is that it is fakelore, to borrow Dorson's coinage to designate the similar material. The discourse of degeneration that marks the production of Tij in the popular discourse in Nepal will be addressed later. Here, I am trying to understand and explain the 'untouchability' of the urban Tij by the indigenous folklorists and anthropologists.

The urbanisation of Tij can be traced to the first decade of the twenty first century, when the effect of globalisation can be seen in the production and consumption of Tij. To make sense of the gradual disappearance of nationalism in urban Tij, Appudarai's (1996) theorising of nationalism under globalisation becomes helpful. Before outlining some of his seminal arguments, it is important to emphasise at the outset that he produced his theories of trans/postnationalism in the last decade of the 20th century. The tendencies of what he calls transnationalism were at their nascent stage when he theorised. In the early decade of the 1990s, still awash in the high tide of patriotism, nation-building, and the emancipatory project of developmentalist western modernity, Nepal's nationalistic euphoria of this time would shame Appudarai's theories of post-nationalism produced in the same decade from the global centre to characterise 'our time'.

However, his ideas would become prophetic for Nepal only after a decade or more when the impact of democracy, globalisation, market economy, and the resulting consumer culture start becoming the defining features of Nepali urban life. The 'global flows' of 'scapes' – of people (ethnoscape), media (mediascape), technology (technoscape), capital (financescape) and idea (ideoscape) – weaken the ever fragile borders of the nation-state. For him, globalisation is intrinsically built upon the de-territorialisation of the foundations of the nation-state.

...the nationalist genie, never perfectly contained in the bottle of the territorial state, is now itself a diasporic. Carried in the repertoires of increasingly mobile populations of refugees, tourists, guestworkers, transnational intellectuals, scientists, and illegal aliens, it is increasingly unrestrained by the ideas of spatial boundary and territorial sovereignty. This massive revolution in the foundations of nationalism has crept up on us virtually unnoticed.⁵²

52 Appudarai 1996, 160-61.

While Appudurai's ideas of post/transnationalism have been debated and contested, (Chatterjee 1998), his ideas, to a large extent, help us understand the transnationalistic contours of the urban Tġ produced under the influence of globalisation. In Nepal, the dream of developmentalist modernity and the utopia of emancipation that marked the decades of democracy are replaced by the desires to leave the nation behind to escape into the globalised world of commodities and consumerism. In this section I argue two things; firstly, the urban Tġ dramatises the gradual disappearance of the nation, or the shift of Tġ from democratic nationalistic of the 1990s to the post-nationalistic of the present. The sporadic eruption of the songs of nationalism and nation building is an anxious attempt by some lone voices to restore Tġ back to its emancipatory project and patriarchal purity can be seen as a departure against the order of the day that has made Tġ synonymous with global consumer culture and carnival utopia. The urbanisation and globalisation of the trope alters the accent from the emancipatory to the carnival, from the feminist to the female, from transformational to titillatory, from the lyrical-textual to the visual, from democratic-nationalist to the carnival-postnationalist. Secondly, the carnivalisation of Tġ, which makes it a part of global consumer culture and market economy, will be seen as the extension of the logic of post-nationalism or transnationalism where the centrifugal forces of market and the consumerist modernity and utopia that it promises replace the centripetal forces of nationalism. Departing from the Nepali popular discourse on the urban Tġ as a trope of crass consumerism, *vikriti* and *visangati*, I seek to locate redemptive possibilities and empowerment, in spite of certain degree of ambivalence, in women's undermining of the original patriarchal rituals of Tġ.

Democracy did to rural Tġ what globalisation would do to urban Tġ; it affected a paradigm shift in the production of Tġ. The globalisation of the polity and culture as the gradual culmination of democracy can be seen as the second turning point in the production and consumption of Tġ. Although Nepali democracy was established in 1990, the impact of globalisation on Tġ took almost a decade to be seen. The metropolitan versions of Tġ can be roughly traced back to the first decade of the twenty first century.⁵³

It is important here to summarise the changes that Tġ undergoes in the urban context. Though the ritual core of the festival remain static, fasting on *tritiya* and the celebration of Tġ which is ritually modified and

53 Fixing a definitive date to describe a social phenomenon is always problematic - especially it becomes more dangerous and questionable if we are dealing with contemporary history. However, in the institutionalised production of knowledge, periodisation as a necessary evil continues to remain indispensable.

re-invented, the urban avatar of the festival cannot be more removed from its patriarchal rural counterpart. Spatially, urban Tij has re-located itself from the androcentric *mandir* and the *maita* to the carnival marketplace and public-square. The relocation of Tij from the *maita* to the marketplace and public square, the temporal expansion of the festival from the original three/four-day celebration into a more than a month long celebration, the undermining of the fixity and hierarchy of the Tij invitational system flowing from the *maiti* to *cheli*,⁵⁴ from *thula* to *sana*,⁵⁵ and the consequent democratisation of invitation whereby women invite women, the *sana* invite *thula*, the institution invite their women employees; the undermining of the gendered invitational system; the entry of men in the celebratory complex of Tij; the changing contours of Tij songs form textual to the visual, from the emancipatory to the erotic, from transformational to titilatory, the gastronomical shift from the fasting to feasting, from patriarchal purity to the feminist/female impurity and hybridity; therefore, urban Tij can be seen as a part of carnival counter-culture.

Bakhtin (1984) looks at the carnival as a creative contestation of the official. The medieval carnival, for him is the trope of insurrection and counter-ritual. The urban Tij can be seen as the 'carnivalisation' of the archetypal Tij. Bakhtin's concept of the carnival gives us a suitable interpretative framework for understanding the urban politics of Tij. For Bakhtin, the medieval carnival:

...offered a completely different, non-official, extra ecclesiastical and extra political aspect of the world, of man, and of human relations...⁵⁶

... As opposed to the official feast, one might say that carnival celebrated temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from established order; it marked the temporary suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms and prohibitions.⁵⁷

... Carnival is a minimally ritualized anti-ritual, a festival celebration of the other, the gaps and holes in all the mappings of the world laid

54 Maiti are a married woman's parents and her male relative at her natal home. Such a woman becomes a *cheli* for her *maiti*. The term is used with affection, indulgence and reverence.

55 In a hierarchical kinship system, *thula* occupy a higher place in the hierarchy and *sana* a lower place.

56 Bakhtin 1984, 6.

57 *ibid*, 10.

out in systematic theologies, legal codes, normative poetics and class hierarchies.⁵⁸

The market is unpatriotic. Patriotism and nationalism become important to the market only when it can package them as commodities and sell them for profit. The market, in this age of advertisement and corporate hegemony is mostly seen as a space of conformity and unfreedom. However, the commodification of Tij by the forces of the market makes this essentially patriarchal ritual a site of subversion and counter-hegemony. In the marketisation of Tij, the spatial relocation of the genre from the androcentric spheres of the *maita* and *mandir* to the marketplace and public-squares is the foundational moment that inaugurates the redemptive politics of the carnival.

The carnival is a/post-nationalistic. The centralisation of pleasure is the means of its protest, if it can be called so. It, therefore, does not come as a surprise that the urban Tij songs and the ritual of Tij, by and large, move away from the politics of emancipation that defined the ontology of Tij at the democratic turn. This also implies a shift from the issues of nationalism and the project of nation-building. Nor are these songs concerned with the gynocentric re-modelling of the nation. The politics of othering and erasure, margin and centre, are replaced by the songs of celebration and carnival utopia. Although it is wrong to say that emancipatory songs have disappeared from the urban repertoire, the intermittent presence of such song requires some investigation. Hari Devi Koirala has become synonymous with this genre of song. She bemoans the 'urbanisation' and 'globalisation' of Tij. She equates the loss of the originary and the archetypal with dystopia and depravity.⁵⁹ Sometimes it is also possible to come across some sundry examples of emancipatory songs as well as the songs that narrativise woman's sufferings and incarceration. The following song by Koirala seeks to continue the reformist project of Tij.

Sweat drenches the Dhaka-topi on my head,
When, I wonder, shall this country develop?
Mushrooming are leaders more than the followers,
To fulfil their own needs so they move ahead,
Divided this politics serves not the people,
Money-minting profession it has become

⁵⁸ Clark and Holquist 1984, 300.

⁵⁹ Haridevi Koirala in telephone interview with the author, August 16, 2011.

They have earned wealth to last seven generation.
 Leaders of this country have lost their way,
 Of no avail too is the coming of democracy,
 Day by day we are facing pain more and more,
 From martyr's blood has come democracy,
 See how cheap has become democracy...⁶⁰

Another DVD, named quite interestingly *Rato Surya*, seeks to continue the emancipatory path that had become synonymous with Tij in the politically loaded decade of the 1990s. There are overt thematic and structural similarities between the reformist zeal of Koirala and this production:

Industry and business that the country needs,
 Have all opened abroad,
 From a needle to a cetamol,
 All are made there,
 We want technology and knowledge.
 In Nepal may we find work, to earn our living,
 May we not compelled to go abroad,
 We want technology and knowledge,
 A new constitution that can further the country.
 ...Neither did the republic grow,
 Nor did the constitution got made
 Till when shall we tolerate such abuse?
 We want technology and knowledge.⁶¹

These songs, though they continue with the reformist tradition of Tij, are different, as the nationalism that is expressed in these songs is different from the nationalism that marks Tij at the democratic turn. Here, the speakers do not seek to justify their patriotism and nationalism. The self-consciousness, self-reference, and self-reflexivity that mark the songs produced at the democratic turn are no longer present as women in the urban Tij songs do not feel apologetic about their nationalism. These are the confident voices of women who no longer look at politics as a gendered domain.

Oh! Oh! Politics has become filthy,
 The stench starts to grow,

60 Dhalki Dhalki Jaunla Hai, n.d.

61 Raato Surya, n.d.

A small mishap and Nepal gets closed,
 Oh the laws of Nepal!
 Only the lord knows.
 What the little say, why should the great obey?
 Oh the source of anarchy is here active,
 In the mill of anarchy are the commoners ground
 Oh the laws of Nepal!
 Only the lord knows.
 ...oh with rallies and slogans daily,
 Our throats have gone dry,
 New Nepal has become,
 A field for wrestling.
 ...oh nationalism and unity as slogans are vibrant,
 You talk of liberation, but your actions speak otherwise
 Oh the laws of Nepal!
 Only the lord knows.⁶²

The speaker does not feel that she is invading an alien territory; the 'even we can' convention of language that would mark the speakers' exclusion as well as desire to break the politics of exclusion is replaced by an idiom that underscores the spontaneous and 'natural' participation of women in the increasingly de-gendered world of politics and nationalism.

Such concerns with nation and nationalism are; however, transient in urban Tij. The pulls of transnational and the concomitant politics of the market are the defining features of the urban Tij. For Appadurai, transnationalism results not only because of the 'global flows', but is also the result of the failure of nation-state. Its failure is extrinsic as well as intrinsic. When the promise of deliverance and emancipation contained in the discourse and dissemination of nationalism crumbles, nationalism, especially in Third World countries, comes to be seen for what it essentially is – a fictitious construct created to disguise the hegemonic shenanigans of the corrupt ruling elite. This loss of moral and political legitimacy of the nation state in conjunction with the politics of globalisation marks the era of transnationalism. In his articulation of the transnation, Appadurai also talks about the uncomfortable 'marriage' between nation and state. The dangers of such an unholy alliance become all the more evident in Nepal. In the Nepali context, the failure of the state seems to have created the disenchantment with the nation.

62 Hey Barai Nepalko Kanoon, n.d.

The Nepali transnationalism appears as much a product of the failure of the Nepali nation-state as it the expression of the globalising currents of our time. The two songs quoted above show the failure of the developmentalist modernity as well as democracy in Nepal. Therefore, the centrifugal consciousness of the wife in the following song has to be read in the context of mass disenchantment, scepticism with nationalism and the politics of patriotism in contemporary Nepal. The Nepali nation state emerges in these songs as a domain of failure rather than possibilities, and this is a dangerous and saddening departure from the nationalist euphoria that greeted the movement of democracy in the 1990s. It seems to be a form of transnationalism that appears to equate the home with failure and the world with possibility, and this equation takes us back to Nepali women's conceptualisation of the West-East dichotomy during the nationalist period. In their dichotomous understanding, although the East was seen as a land of stasis and regression, the West was seen simultaneously as a land of material development and cultural dystopia, worldly liberation and spiritual crisis. The trans-national nation and its centrifugal extension, the West, in the urban Tij song is no longer the 'other' that needs to be imitated and dreaded at the same time. It is no longer the intimate enemy; the West is the land of liberation and emancipation, a land of opportunity and ecstasy, lyricism and desire.

As we examine the large corpus of urban Tij songs, the pressures of 'transnation/post-nation' and the prospect of financial improvement abroad, inform the significant corpus of songs produced in the urban centres. Perhaps the following song about the passport has to be located in the context of Nepali women's transnational migration, a phenomenon that not only signals the breakdown of patriarchal spatiality, but also symbolises the emergence the New Nepali woman.

Make me a passport, husband, abroad I shall go and earn,
 She has lost her mind, abroad wants to go my Sirmati!...
 Make me passport, husband, you get henpecked and stay idle and eat,
 She has lost her mind, abroad wants to go my Sirmati,
 When your heart weeps at the thought of your children,
 Who will wipe your tears abroad, Sirmati?
 Is she possessed that she wants to earn?
 Others climb a horse; she climbs a rooftop,
 She has lost her mind, abroad wants to go my Sirmati.
 Make me a passport, husband, abroad shall I go and earn,
 Bundles of money will flow, from the bank you will fetch,

Money shall I send, you will only spend and enjoy.
 She has lost her mind, abroad wants to go my Sirmati,
 Don't be too active, or I shall marry again
 I'd rather die than live on your earnings.
 Make me a passport, husband, abroad shall I go and earn,
 Besides smoking and drinking, nothing do you do,
 Become an ascetic if nothing can you do.
 ...She has lost her mind, abroad wants to go my Sirmati,
 To till our barren land, let us be ready,
 Why go abroad? Here shall we live together.
 ...Make me a passport, husband, abroad shall I go and earn,
 My mind has already flown abroad,
 Nothing else do I need but a passport.
 She has lost her mind, abroad wants to go my Sirmati,
 Should you go abroad, give me a divorce,
 Never shall you return to my home.⁶³

The pastoral and nationalistic desire to work the 'barren land' and 'live together' is replaced by the pull of the trans-national capital. The migration of a large number of Nepali women to Israel, Malaysia, Dubai, Singapore and many other parts of the world corroborate the reality of the song. The husband's alarm and ridicule of the wife's trans-national ambition must be located in the patriarchal tendency of gendering the space/nation. Even in an age of globalisation and trans-national capital, the home is seen to be the right place for the *Sirmati* who has lost her mind because of her trans-national dreams. The wife's trans-nationalism is not simply geographical or economic; it is cultural as she wants to domesticate her husband, she is not merely fighting for her independence but is equally fighting for her husband's loss of independence. Her resistance is not only aimed against her spatial confinement that equates her with nurturing and domesticity, but also against the patriarchal cartography of space that seeks to equate women with home and nation in which the sanctity and purity of home and nation becomes the burden of women. The wife clearly articulates her understanding that her breaking the boundary of the nation automatically translates into breaking the boundary of gender. The husband's 'nationalist' desire to work the 'barren land' and 'live together', and his politics of shaming his wife and this threat of divorce make his a voice of the past frozen in time warp.

63 Passport Banaideu Budha, n.d.

It would be wrong to say that feminist emancipatory agenda is totally missing from the urban repertoire of the songs. There is, however, an increasing disappearance of polemic songs from the urban archive. In the shift of accent from the emancipatory to the carnival, Nepali woman's conceptualisation of the Nepali nation state also undergoes some interesting transformations. The absence of nationalistic songs in the 1990s is exceptional as the presence of nationalistic songs in the urban Tij. What explains the *erased presence* of the nationalistic songs or the emancipatory songs in the urban Tij? What is very interesting in the urban Tij is the *apparent* corporatisation and commodification of the politics of emancipation. The 'co-optation' of emancipatory songs in the urban archive of songs has to be read in the context of gradual association of the urban Tij with *vikriti* and *visangati* in the dominant conscience and consciousness. The inclusion of one emancipatory/nationalistic song in an archive of celebratory songs seeks to blunt the reactionary critique of the carnivalisation of Tij. It is aimed more at silencing of criticism than for singing of suffering.⁶⁴ Such tokenistic inclusion of the emancipatory lyrics is more about the exclusion. The inclusion of one emancipatory song allows women to carnivalise Tij as a trope of gynocentric consumerism and extravagance, eroticism and ecstasy, liberation and license. It allows them to produce songs that celebrate female sexuality and body, songs that celebrate women's sartorial longing and desires; songs that celebrate female camaraderie and festivity and songs that celebrate female-hood; and above all, the songs that celebrate the glory of being female.

Even though my father scolds us
Even though my mother looks away
...Today shall we dance
Slender waist shall we bend today...⁶⁵

Chameli from this house and Gita from the next
Ujeli from the house above and Sita from below

64 The fact that the urban middle class women, relatively more empowered and privileged, need to justify their pleasure shows the continued dominance of Brahminical patriarchy in Nepal. Pleasure, in the dominant consciousness is a masculine territory: conventionally women's pleasure lied in ensuring men's pleasure. The centralisation of women's pleasure in the urban ritual and lyrical complex of Tij has made it synonymous with degeneration. The commonsensical understanding here, something largely internalised by most women, is that *sanskriti* becomes *vikriti*, culture becomes chaos, when women start asserting their pleasure zones.

65 Jhakas 2011.

We're all getting together this *Tij*,
We'll dance, breaking our waists.⁶⁶

Drunk in dance we shall get this year
This slender waist can break if it will.
...O with what abandon she dances,
At three places breaks her waist.⁶⁷

These songs show the eruption of female body in *Tij* songs. Dancing can be seen as the metaphor of transgression. Dancing inscribes the female body hitherto erased in the official bio-politics of *Tij*.

The female body also erupts in women's sartorial longing and desire –

*Marwari*⁶⁸ can't be tolerated anymore
O husband, I will now wear a *jhumka*⁶⁹
...Long have I not gone to *māita*, *budā*⁷⁰
Now I want to dance bending my waist
Silver *pauju*⁷¹ and golden *jhumka*
I shall wear for the dance.
...Outmoded are the *sari* and *choli*⁷²
I feel like walking around in jeans
...I have rights, I am powerful
Don't try to string women like garlands
...Now I will wear the *jhumka* too.⁷³

Nation no longer remains the point of reference in the urban *Tij*. As *Tij* becomes a part of market economy and globalisation, the market, more than the nation, defines the politics and poetics of *Tij*. In the era of globalisation, the festival moves from nationalistic to carnivalesque, and the carnival is inherently anationalistic or post-nationalistic; some vestiges of nationalism or the discourse of emancipation functions merely as alibi for singing about the body; of female sexuality; of sartorial longing and consumerist excess; of titillation and transgression. These sporadic songs of nationalism,

66 Chamma Chamma Chamma, n.d.

67 Yo *Tijma Dhalkiyerai Nachincha*, n.d.

68 An ornament that adorns the ears.

69 A hanging earring.

70 Husband.

71 Anklet.

72 Blouse.

73 *Meri ta Budhile Jhumka Launi Re*, n.d.

surrounded as they are by the songs of celebration and festivity, of market and consumerism lose their nationalist sting and efficacy. Such appearance of the cultural in the counter-cultural, of the official in the subterranean, of the serious in the subversive makes the official ludicrous and grotesque by juxtaposition. Nation-building is no longer seen as an aspirational and inspirational activity. Women's songs of celebration and titillation cannot be equated with degeneration and dystopia. They are expressions of their autonomy. If the first glimpse of freedom makes them sing of sexuality and body; of sartorial longing and desire; female libido and consumerism, we must also understand that this is an insurrection of the repressed, of desires banished underground in the patriarchal cartography of the nation. Their sartorial longing, commodified sexuality and the body; corporatised consumerism, gastronomical excess and above all their longing for the excess of the everyday and here and now, and the things that may show them as victims of corporate patriarchy assert their distinctive female carnival (a) nationalism.

Concluding Remarks

The central feature of the carnival is its ambivalence; the carnival is a temporary suspension of the dominant, the counter-cultural is framed within the framework of the dominant.⁷⁴ Therefore, there may be a reading of the urban Tij as the co-option, corporatisation and 'consumerisation' of a genre that was inherently loaded with insurrectionary potential. Those who refuse to acknowledge the liberatory potential of the corporatisation

74 The carnival is the condition of living in two worlds: the world of conformity as well as the world of contestation. Nepali women's essentially empowering carnivalisation of Tij has its own ambivalence. The trope of consumerism that they use for their protest is a double-edged sword: it liberates and imprisons them simultaneously. In today's global order structured upon structural inequities and injustice, consumerism which has its genesis in the post-Second World War decadence of the western society cannot be an unmitigated source of protest, even if it empowers the oppressed. The consumerism of the West, according to Ahish Nandy is the result of the ennui and spiritual void, and civilisational crisis that marked the post-industrial Western society. Therefore, it is difficult the import consumerism without importing its historical and ideological context. Another danger of consumerism is it also consumerises the consumers thereby effectively obliterating the differences between commodities and consumers. Also, when Tij moves away from the *mandir/maita* to the marketplace, the marketplace should not be seen as an unproblematic monolith of liberation. The marketplace that thrives on the logic of materiality and marketability creates new hegemonies replacing the older ones. Here, the strategic use of the market is important: women need to negotiate a treacherous terrain here – they need to use the market without getting used by the market. Such an appropriation of the market can result only when the market is used and resisted simultaneously and strategically.

of Tij perhaps simply look at it as a mechanism of corporate patriarchy to use women as consumers. This narrative of victimhood and conspiracy theory, in spite of its seductive appeal, seeks to deny women any agency and attempts to silence their subversive politics. There is an academic tendency that seeks to equate all forms of consumerism with corporate hegemony. These voices do not make any distinction between the consumerism of the elite and the consumerism of the oppressed. In the evolution of consumerism across cultures, men were the normative consumers, as they consumed commodities as well as women, just another commodity in the endless chain of commodities. Accentuating the empowering possibility of the shopping malls, Fiske (1989) argues that consumerism's blurring of the distinction between the home and the world, the private and the public can be potentially liberating for women. Similarly, highlighting the liberating impact of Dalit consumerism in India, Menon and Nigam (2007) write:

The only terms in which the upper-caste elite, even of the radical/liberal, secular kind, can deal with the Dalit experience is in terms of pain, oppression, poverty, and violence on the one hand and anger and resistance, on the other. In sharp contrast to this, we may note the distinctive idioms of carnivalesque celebration and excess developed by the Dalit community's own representatives...⁷⁵

The bemoaning of the indigenous media that Tij has lost its emancipatory function and reformist project and has become synonymous with vulgarity and obscenities should be read in the context of Nepali women's *betrayal* of her legacy of pain and resistance, victimhood and protest; the only domains that become the contemporary Nepali *nari*, the rightful domains of the oppressed!

In the Nepali context, Liechty (2003) demonstrates the gendering of consumerism in the urban metropolitan space of Kathmandu.

Why are the stories of 'youth culture' both about young men? Why do women here, as in the previous chapter, begin to slip out of picture? ... in Kathmandu young men are more like to be implicated in the cultural construction of 'youth' than are women. What emerges in Kathmandu is not an *age-specific* 'youth culture' is not only *class-specific* but also large *gender specific*...Nor is it to say that young women have no 'youth

⁷⁵ Menon and Nigam 2007, 101-102.

culture'. But young women, even in middle class, still have limited access to public space (where a woman's honor [ijjat] is always at risk)...⁷⁶

Liechty documents the middle class consumer culture of Kathmandu in the decade of the 1990s, when the economy and politics of consumerism was predicated upon the normativity of male consumerism. The female-as-consumer was yet to destabilise this gendered politics of consumerism. The gender of consumerism undergoes a radical remaking in the urban Tij. The logic of Nepali women's gullible and innocent victimised co-optation into the global corporate patriarchy may also be seen as a patriarchal desire to insulate women from this consumerist modernity that inscribes them into the global map of visibility and assertion, pleasure and sensation. Moreover, the 'consumerisation' of women is not necessarily the 'decarnivalisation' or 'corporatisation' of Tij. The emergence of women as consumers requires a more complex, critical lens. While it cannot be denied that the feminisation of consumerism of Tij 'targets' women as consumers, it cannot be denied that the self-indulgence makes them unfeminine from the point of view of patriarchy. This consumerism unsettles the patriarchal ontological as well as the epistemological construction of women as *bhogya*, the archetypal consumable. The carnival journey from *bhogya* to *bhokta*, from being the consumable to the consumer is the journey from objecthood to subjecthood, from 'otherhood' to selfhood. What is problematic about the discourse of degeneration and dystopia is; therefore, its gendering of consumerism; what is attacked in the popular construction of Tij in Nepali is not the evil of consumerism, but the evil of *women's* consumerism.

Moreover, the logic of corporate patriarchy also requires some annotations. Because of the emergence of the New Nepali woman, corporate patriarchy, even though it is a reality, no longer stands unproblematised and uncontested. There is an alternative economic narrative that underscores the emergence of the financially independent New Nepali woman. In this gynocentric 'anti-discourse,' money and buying power are seen as the antithesis of patriarchy. It is not the money that merely purchases commodities; it can purchase, when earned by women, privacy, space, and autonomy, or as Woolf puts it, 'a room of one's own'. Women in these songs look at their ability to earn politically; their financial celebration here is ultimately political. The gendering of the economy comes under a radical attack in the following song.

76 Liechty 2003, 233-34.

On my husband's earnings I shan't live, when I marry,
 I myself shall earn merrily
 Take this not to heart,
 I too can look after my husband.⁷⁷⁷⁸

Furthermore, Nepali women's de-sacralisation of Tij as a trope for asserting their politics of pleasure gives them a visibility that was denied to them in the originary patriarchal metaphysics of Tij, which was erected to ensure their erasure. The efficacy of the carnival lies in the fact that it provides a liberatory glimpse of the alternative. After tasting the forbidden fruit of the carnival, women's relationship with the patriarchal everyday cannot remain the same. The journey of Tij songs from anguish and anger to the carnival laughter is indeed an insurrectionary journey. In the carnival of consumerism that globalisation has ushered in, women seem to create a post-nationalist utopia of consumerism; the carnival nation is not so much the loss of the political as the re-adjustment of the political in the idiom of the carnival. The carnival nationalism is the transcendence of the nation as a defining political category. Nepali women's transnation and their creation of the nation of carnival pleasure that celebrates their post-nationalist consumerist ontology can be seen as a gynocentric script of transnation created in the countercultural idiom of the carnival. Nepali woman's journey from erasure in the archetypal Tij to interrogation in the democratic turn, from the critique to the carnival, from the feminist to the female, from nationalism to post-nationalism, in spite of its metropolitan and class bias, seems to be a definitive moment in recovering the gynocentric gendering of the Nepali nation state using an archive of orature that bears an unambiguous female signature.

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77 Chandrakala Shah, in private conversation with the author, Kathmandu, August, 2009.

78 Chandrakala Shah, Private Conversation.

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Rishikesh Pandey is an Environment and Development Geographer. He received his PhD from the University of Adelaide, Australia; MPhil from the University of Oslo, Norway, and a Master's degree from Tribhuvan University, Nepal and is currently affiliated with Pokhara University, Nepal. He is involved in research and teaching, managing community development programmes, and is a consultant for research-based policy reform in Nepal.

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Appendix
Conference Schedule

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THE ANNUAL KATHMANDU CONFERENCE ON NEPAL & THE HIMALAYA

27-29 July, 2016, Hotel Shanker, Lazimpat

Social Science Baha, The Association for Nepal and Himalayan Studies,
Britain-Nepal Academic Council, Centre for Himalayan Studies-CNRS &
Nepal Academic Network (Japan)

SCHEDULE

Day 1: 27 July (Wednesday)

SESSION 1: 9 – 11 am			
HALL A		HALL B	
Opening Remarks: Nirmal Man Tuladhar, Social Science Baha		Opening Remarks: Katsuo Nawa, Nepal Academic Network (Japan)	
Panel A1		Panel B1	
Chair: Krishna Adhikari, BNAC Discussant: Andrew Haxby, University of Michigan		Chair: Michael Hutt, School of African and Oriental Studies Discussant: Swatahsiddha Sarkar, University of North Bengal	
Sanjaya Mahato PhD Candidate, Graduate School for Social Research (GSSR), Institute of Philosophy and Sociology – Polish Academic of Sciences (IFiSPAN)	Women and Competency in Electoral Competitions in the Nepalese Elections after 1990	Ajapa Sharma Candidate for MPhil in Modern Indian History, Jawaharlal Nehru University	Becoming Nepali: Projects of Self- Making in the Writings of Laxmiprasad Devkota, Balkrishna Sama and Bisweshwor Prasad Koirala
Thakur Prasad Bhatta PhD Candidate, Kathmandu University, School of Education	Decentralised Planning in Nepal: Stakeholders' Perspectives on District Development Plan	Lokranjan Parajuli Senior Researcher and Head, Publications, Martin Chautari	Marx Supplants Manu: 'Manifesto' of an Activist in the Late Rana Nepal
Manoj Suji Research Associate, Social Science Baha	Micro-hydro as Common Property: An Analysis of Local Institution and Development	Balram Uprety Assistant Professor of English, St. Joseph's College	"Aren't We too Wheels of this Nation- chariot?": Orature as an Alternative 'Her-story' of the Nation
BREAK: 11 – 11:30 am (refreshments will be served in the dining hall)			

Day 1		SESSION 2: 11:30 am – 1:30 pm		27 July
HALL A		HALL B		
Panel A2		Panel B2		
Chair: Katsuo Nawa, University of Tokyo Discussant: Noah Coburn, Bennington College		Chair: Jeevan Baniya, Social Science Baha Discussant: Ang Sanu Lama, Social Science Baha		
Sujeet Karn Researcher, Social Science Baha	Death – A Concept of ‘Martyrology’: References from Maoists People’s War in Nepal	Jessica DiCarlo Master of Development Practice, University of California, Berkeley (expected) Katie Epstein Masters of Arts in Energy and Resources, University of California, Berkeley (expected) Bikash Adhikari Forest Action Nepal	Post-disaster Agroecological Transition: How the 2015 Nepali Earthquakes Impact Agricultural Adoption in Mid-montane Communities	
Krista Billingsley Ph.D. Candidate, Anthropology, University of Tennessee	Transitional Justice in Nepal: Perspectives of Nepalis Affected by Conflict as Children	Rishikesh Pandey School of Development and Social Engineering, Faculty of Social Sciences, Pokhara University	Climate change and Society: Their Interactions in the Trans-Himalaya (Upper-Mustang) Nepal	
		Kalyan Bhandari Lecturer in Events, Hospitality and Tourism at the University of West of Scotland	International Development Discourse and Two Tourism Policies of Nepal	
LUNCH: 1:30 – 2:30 pm (served in the dining hall)				
SESSION 3: 2:30 – 4:30 pm				
HALL A		HALL B		
Panel A3		Panel B3		
Chair: Sambriddhi Kharel, Social Science Baha Discussant: Ajapa Sharma, Jawaharlal Nehru University		New Norms and Forms of Development: Following Financial and Technical Assistance in The Health Sector in Nepal Chair: Jeevan R. Sharma, University of Edinburgh Discussant: Deepak Thapa, Social Science Baha		
Babika Khawas Ph.D. Candidate, Department of Sociology, University of North Bengal	Plantation Patriarchy and Women Workers in the Himalayas: Experiences from Darjeeling Sikkim Himalayas	Shiva Raj Adhikari Associate Professor, Tribhuvan University	Impact of Architecture of Health Care Financing In Nepal	
Rajen Upadhyay Assistant Professor, Department of History, Namchi Government College	Hidden transcripts in Nepali Folksongs during Sikkimese Feudalism	Radha Adhikari Research Fellow, School of Health in Social Science, University of Edinburgh Obindra Bahadur Chand Research Associate, Social Science Baha	Foreign Aid and Institutional Arrangements in Implementing a Maternal and Child Health Project in Nepal	

Swatahasiddha Sarkar Assistant Professor, Sociology, Department of Sociology, University of North Bengal	Linguistic Situation in Darjeeling-Sikkim Himalayas: Interstices between Identity, Difference and Belongingness	Kapil Dahal Lecturer, Central Department of Sociology/Anthropology, Tribhuvan University Ian Harper Professor of Anthropology of Health and Development, School of Social and Political Science, University of Edinburgh Sushil Baral Health Research and Social Development Forum (HERD) Rekha Khatri Independent Researcher	The Global Fund in Nepal
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BREAK: 4:30 – 5 pm (refreshments will be served in the dining hall)

HALL B

Open Panel: 5 pm (Public and Free Session)

Academic Journal Publishing in and about Nepal: Some Reflections

Moderator

Janak Rai

Tribhuvan University

Panelists

Pratyoush Onta, Editor, *Studies in Nepali History and Society*

Man Bahadur Khattri, Editor, *Dhaulagiri Journal of Sociology and Anthropology*

Heather Hindman, President, Association for Nepal and Himalayan Studies, publisher of *Himalaya*

Michael Hutt, Contributing Editor, *European Bulletin of Himalayan Research*

Day 2: 28 July (Thursday)

SESSION 4: 9 – 11 am			
HALL A		HALL B	
Panel A4		Panel B4	
The Use of Social Sciences Methods in Mental Health Research and Intervention Design in Nepal Chair: Radha Adhikari, University of Edinburgh Discussant: Madhusudan Subedi, Patan Academy of Health Sciences		Evaluation of the Impact of Migration in Nepal Chair: Jeevan R. Sharma, University of Edinburgh Discussant: Rashmi Upadhyay, NEHU and Aarhus University	
Mangesh Angdembe Project Coordinator, Transcultural Psychosocial Organization (TPO) Nepal Kohrt Brandon Assistant Professor of Psychiatry, Global Health, and Anthropology Duke University Mark Jordans Director, War Child Holland, Department of Research and Development Damodar Rimal Senior Officer/Research (TPO) Nepal Nagendra Prasad Luitel Research Manager	Qualitatively Exploring the Adaptation of Community Mental Health Services in Pyuthan, Nepal	Bandita Sijapati Research Director, Centre for the Study of Labour and Mobility, (CESLAM) Social Science Baha Jeevan Baniya Researcher, Social Science Baha Neha Choudhary Independent Researcher	Migration of Health Workers from Nepal
Sauharda Rai Research Associate, Duke Global Health Institute (DGHI), Duke University Kohrt Brandon	Adolescent Aspiration Models and Mental Health	Ang Sanu Lama Research Associate Social Science Baha Sambriddhi Kharel Researcher Tracy Ghale Research Associate	Impact of International Male Out-Migration on Women's Participation in Community Forestry in Nepal
Prasansa Subba Research Officer Programme for Improving Mental Health Care (PRIME) (TPO), Nepal Nagendra Prasad Luitel Mark Jordans Kohrt Brandon	Narrative Approaches for Community Detection of Mental Health Problems in Chitwan, Nepal	Bandita Sijapati Sambriddhi Kharel Anish Bhandari Research Associate Social Science Baha	Urbanization and the Transient Migrant Labourer
BREAK: 11 – 11:30 am (refreshments will be served in the dining hall)			

SESSION 5: 11:30 am – 1:30 pm			
HALL A		HALL B	
Panel A5		Panel B5	
Chair: Heather Hindman, ANHS Discussant: Amrita Limbu, Social Science Baha		Chair: Kanako Nakagawa, Kyoto University Discussant: Jeevan Baniya, Social Science Baha	
Ramji Prasad Adhikari Lecturer, Faculty of Humanities and Social Engineering, Pokhara University	Not the Women but their Remittance Contribution is Acknowledged: Women Labour Migration and their Exclusion in Nepal	Andrew Haxby PhD candidate, University of Michigan	Transparency and Disaster: Tales from the Reconstruction of Post-Earthquake Nepal
Rishikesh Pandey School of Development and Social Engineering, Faculty of Social Sciences, Pokhara University			
Rashmi Upadhyay PhD candidate, Department of Anthropology, NEHU and Aarhus University	Return of the Nepalese Coal Mine Migrant Workers	Leah James Research Associate, Natural Hazards Center, Institute of Behavioral Science, University of Colorado Courtney Welton-Mitchell Director, Humanitarian Assistance Applied Research Group Josef Korbel School of International Studies, University of Denver Shree Niwas Khanal Program Coordinator, Transcultural Psychosocial Organization (TPO) Nepal Alexander James The State University of New York at Binghamton	Disaster Mental Health Intervention Research with Earthquake-affected Communities in Nepal: Enhancing Well-being and Increasing Engagement in Disaster Preparedness
LUNCH BREAK: 1:30 – 2:30 pm (served in the dining hall)			
Day 2	SESSION 6: 2:30 – 4:30 pm		28 July
HALL A		HALL B	
Panel A6		Panel B6	
Chair: Shiva Raj Adhikari, Tribhuvan University Discussant: Sambriddhi Kharel, Social Science Baha		Chair: Kalyan Bhandari, University of West of Scotland Discussant: Kumar Chettri, University of North Bengal	

Kanako Nakagawa Research Fellow, Japan Society for Promotion of Science, Graduate School of Asia African Area Studies, Kyoto University	Shifts in the Strategy of Caste-Representation: Links between Commercial Negotiations in the Meat Markets and Identity Politics	Noah Coburn Faculty Member, Bennington College Dawa Tshering Sherpa Independent Researcher	The Socio Economic Impact of British Army Recruitment in Nepal
Tek Bahadur Dong M. Phil. Candidate Anthropology, Tribhuvan University	Dashain Celebration among the Tamang Community and Producing Doxa: An Indigenous Perspective	Neha Choudhary Independent Researcher	The Gurkha Wives of United Kingdom: Challenges to Social Integration
BREAK: 4:30 – 5 pm (refreshments will be served in the dining hall)			
HALL B			
<p>Open Panel: 5 pm (Public and Free Session)</p> <p>Public Release of Richard Burghart's <i>The History of Janakpurdham: A Study of Asceticism and the Hindu Polity</i> edited and introduced by Martin Gaenzle</p> <p>by Dr Ram Baran Yadav, former President of the Republic of Nepal</p> <p>Speakers</p> <p>Michael Hutt, Director, South Asia Institute, School of African and Oriental Studies Ramawatar Yadav, former Vice-Chancellor, Purbanchal University Jacob Rinck, PhD candidate, Yale University</p>			

Day 3: 29 July (Friday)

SESSION 7: 9 – 11 am			
HALL A		HALL B	
Panel A7		Panel B7	
Chair: Mahendra Lawoti, Western Michigan University Discussant: Kapil Dahal, Tribhuvan University		Chair: Lokranjan Parajuli, Martin Chautari Discussant: Jeevan R. Sharma, University of Edinburgh	
Bryony Ruth Whitmarsh PhD Candidate, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London	Gantantra Smarak (Republic Memorial): The Politics of Memory	Alba Castellsagué PhD Candidate, Socio-Cultural Anthropology, Universitat Autònoma of Barcelona (UAB)	Schooling, Gender and Mobility in Nepal: At The Crossroads towards Development?
Gaurav Lamichhane MA South Asian Studies, University of Heidelberg	State Recognition and Emerging Trends of Modernization of Tibetan Medicine in Nepal	Kumar Chhetri Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR), Doctoral Fellow, Department of Sociology, University of North Bengal	Gender Dimension of the Gorkhaland Movement
Ruja Pokhrel Research Officer, Emerald Project, Transcultural Psychosocial Organization, (TPO) Nepal Nawaraj Upadhaya Mark J.D. Jordans Dristy Gurung Ramesh P. Adhikari Inge Peterson Ivan H. Komproe	Mental Health System Governance in Nepal: Current Situations and Future Directions	Susan Clarke PhD candidate, School of Public Health and Community Medicine, University of New South Wales	Structural Violence, Health and the Lives of Women in Jumla
BREAK: 11 – 11:30 am (refreshments will be served in the dining hall)			

SESSION 8: 11:30 am – 1:30 pm			
HALL A		HALL B	
Panel A8		Panel B8	
Chair: Susan Clarke, University of New South Wales Discussant: Bryony Ruth Whitmarsh, University of London		Chair: Noah Coburn, Bennington College Discussant: Sujcet Karn, Social Science Baha	
Claire Martinus Pedagogic Assistant, Anthropology and Sociology, UMONS- ESHS	Social Rules and Uses in Public Spaces in Kathmandu	Jeevan R. Sharma Lecturer, South Asia and International Development, University of Edinburgh	How Does a Case Become a ‘Case’? Understanding Torture and Ill-Treatment Documentation in Nepal
Dawa Tshering Sherpa Independent Researcher	‘Every day is about Surviving’: Street Children and the Great Quake	Nar Bahadur Saud Masters in Conflict Peace and Development Studies Tribhuvan University	Community Reconciliation through Playback Theatre- facilitated Dialogue in Nepal
Soni Khanal Independent Researcher			
LUNCH BREAK: 1:30 – 2:30 pm (served in the dining hall)			
Day 3	SESSION 9: 2:30 – 4:30 pm		29 July
HALL A			
Panel A9			
Chair: Bandita Sijapati, CESLAM, Social Science Baha Discussant: Sanjaya Mahato, Institute of Philosophy and Sociology – Polish Academic of Sciences			
Mahendra Lawoti Professor, Department of Political Science, Western Michigan University		Effective or Illusion of Participation? Interrogating the Constitution Writing Process in Nepal	
Swatahsiddha Sarkar Babika Khawas Department of Sociology University of North Bengal		Locating Nepal in Indian Sociology and Social anthropology: Mapping the Research Highways from India to Nepal	
Closing Remarks: Heather Hindman, Association for Nepal and Himalayan Studies			
BREAK: 4:30 – 5 pm (refreshments will be served in the dining hall)			

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