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SOCIAL SCIENCE BAHA

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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presented at the conference were submitted for publication; some were published in other platforms while others remain unpublished.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 along with the abstracts submitted can be viewed at www.annualconference.soscbaha.org.

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Improving Learning Outcomes through School Improvement Plans

Shak Bahadur Budhathoki

Introduction

In the last two decades, initiatives have been taken to decentralise the school education sector of Nepal through several acts and regulations (MoE 2017). Stakeholders of the sector, such as the school management committees (SMCs), parent-teacher associations (PTAs), and head teachers (HTs) assume various roles and responsibilities in improving schools, including better teaching and learning outcomes. The SMC, as a school's governing body, undertakes the function of overall management while the PTA engages with parents to promote their involvement in school activities.

The Constitution of Nepal 2015 and the Local Government Operation Act 2017 have conferred powers and functions relating to the overall management and functioning of the school sector to the local governments (LGs). But, some ambiguities in jurisdiction still remain among different levels of the government.1 As the policies of LGs should not contradict those of federal and provincial governments, LGs are reluctant to formulate education policy on their own given that there is no federal Education Act. This state of affairs has led to confusion among different levels of government. This confusion is also because of a conflicting provision in the constitution. In Schedule 8, the power of basic and secondary education is mandated to the LGs, but in schedule 9, education is listed as a concurrent power of federal, state, and local levels. However, policy initiatives show that powers and functions regarding education are gradually being devolved to the local level in the recent decades, even if the extent of such power varies.

1 For more on this, see, Shak Bahadur Budhathoki, 'Address Local Educational Issues', *The Rising Nepal,* December 23, 2019, https://risingnepaldaily.com/opinion/address-local-educational-issues and Shak Bahadur Budhathoki, 'Making Local Education Policies', *The Rising Nepal,* November 11, 2018. For details, see, *The Constitution of Nepal* (2015).

As part of devolving powers and functions to schools, existing government policy envisions that schools prepare and implement periodic plans, called School Improvement Plan (SIP). The SIP is a document that covers plans for a school's functioning and development for five years and its work plan section is annually updated after reviewing the previous year's progress and bottlenecks. The SIP consists of the school's introduction (historical, geographical, school's catchment area[2] and its population composition[3], programmes implemented in school), analysis of school's context (in terms of its physical infrastructure, economic condition and so on, its major challenges and solutions to them), framing of plans (school's vision, objective, identification of school's priority, identification of five years' activities, budget estimates), and annual implementation as well as monitoring plan (MoE 2017).

School stakeholders chart out their strategic plans in the SIP. Nepal's community schools have been preparing and implementing SIPs mandatorily since the fiscal year 2001/02 (CERID 2003). The SIP should be aligned with existing government policy provisions, but the stakeholders, the SMC, the PTA and the HT take school-specific context into consideration as they understand their context better (Barrera-Osorio et al. 2009, 2).

Globally, the trend of decentralising education began in the 1970s and the reasons for this were disintegration of centralised governments, financial globalisation, and emergence of new information and communication technologies to control over systems (Barrera-Osorio et al. 2009; Welsh and McGinn 1999), and the SIP has been considered to be a tool for education decentralisation. Over time, there have been different experiences of education sector decentralisation across the world. It is hard to generalise such dynamics in their totality as they often manifest differently depending on country contexts. But, it is important to review the contextual factors to determine why and how education decentralisation has been successful in some contexts and not in others.

This paper attempts to contextualise Nepal's education decentralisation process, taking the case of SIP preparation and implementation with a focus on teaching and learning processes and students' learning outcomes. Two decades after its introduction, the process of SIP preparation and its

2 School's catchment area refers to the geographic area where a school is supposed to provide its services and from where children come to the school to acquire formal education.

3 The population composition refers to disaggregation of different groups of people in certain geographical areas such as percentages of ethnic and caste groups Tharu, Brahmin, Chhetri and so on.

quality varies from one school to another. As observed, the willpower and initiatives of the HT and teachers plays a crucial role in preparing an SIP. In general, these school stakeholders perceive that SIPs play a key role in improving the overall school education. The policy, as envisioned by the centre, is only partially implemented in the ground, and Nepal's experience is similar to that of other countries to some extent in decentralising the education sector.

This article begins with a brief description of methodology adopted for this research followed by a historical overview contextualising the education decentralisation process in Nepal. Then, it moves on to introducing SIPs and policy provisions governing them, and their implementation in the frontline, followed by analyses of SIPs of three selected schools and their subsequent effects on students' learning outcomes. Finally, conclusions are drawn based on the findings.

Methodology

This research uses qualitative methods. Content analysis of SIP documents of three randomly chosen public schools of Kailali district was conducted. Of these, two schools were in rural areas and one in urban area. In doing content analysis, the SIP framework, as provided by the Government of Nepal (MoE 2017), has been taken into consideration, and the focus has been on the teaching and learning outcomes.

Case studies of the schools were also conducted to understand the process of SIP preparation and implementation. The author participated in the SIP preparation and review meetings in two of the schools, and conducted ten open-ended interviews with HTs, teachers, members of SMCs, and PTA chairs and members in July 2019. The interviews were focused on the process of SIP preparation and implementation, and on how they envisioned learning outcomes, and its subsequent effects on students' actual learning outcomes.

Locating Education Decentralisation in Nepal

The term decentralisation refers to 'the exercise of substantial power at the local level on many aspects' (Florestal and Robb 1997). The extent of devolution of power may vary from one country to another, and even across sectors within a country. The scale of distribution of power may also vary for different categories among different layers of governments or administrative layers – central, regional, district, and schools. Thus, 'decentralisation' hardly signifies a unitary phenomenon (Welsh and McGinn 1999). In this paper, the term 'decentralisation' is used to refer to

the general idea of conferring some sort of powers to local governments or frontlines of education governance.

In the history of Nepal, the autocratic Rana rule (1847-1951) has been termed as a dark period because the Ranas hardly promoted education system in the country. In fact, the Ranas offered education only to their kin. This is mostly because the Ranas were aware that mass schooling would inculcate political awareness in people, thereby enabling them to question the unjust practices of the regime, and create instability. As a result, the literacy rate at the end of the Rana rule was only two per cent (Pandey et al. 1956).

After the advent of democracy in 1951, people began to participate actively in the development of education, undertaking spontaneous initiatives for opening new schools on their own even if they were not given funds from the state (Lamsal 2008). At that time, many community-initiated schools, in terms of land, funds, volunteer teachers, labour, construction materials and so on, were in the founding stage (CERID 1984; Khaniya 2007). Although there were no state-led policy initiatives for bottom-up planning, people did so on their own, exercising power at the grassroots—a decentralisation initiative in practice in the history of Nepal.

However, this historic momentum of people's participation got disrupted by the nationalisation of schools in 1971 with the introduction of the National Education System Plan (NESP) under the rule of King Mahendra. He dissolved democratic governance in 1960 and introduced party-less *panchayat* system in the country in 1962. As a result, community-based SMCs were scrapped and the responsibility for operation of schools was placed on the government (Lamsal 2008), conferring key roles to the District Education Office and the District Education Committee. Thus, the decade of 1970s is marked by centralisation of education system in the country.

However, communities and the private sector were again allowed to establish education institutions in the 1980s since the government could not resist the demand of people and bear the entire cost of delivering education. Although SMCs were reinstated, the involvement of communities in managing schools declined (Shrestha 1998). This was due to a sustained negative consequence of NESP which had blocked people's participation in the education sector, coupled by neoliberal policies making inroads in every sector of society. In the 1980s, Nepal witnessed the beginning of gradual decentralisation of the education system.

The education sector further decentralised during the decade of 2000s with the seventh amendment of the Education Act 1971 conferring different powers and functions to local stakeholders, mainly school administration,

i.e., the HT and the SMC. As power was distributed between the HT and the SMC, they would make key decisions on financial, administrative, and educational issues. Therefore, Nepal's education decentralisation tilts towards a mix of political-administrative model since it gives authority to school administrators as well as an elected body, the SMC, in operating schools.

In the changed context of federalism in Nepal since 2015, schools submit SIPs to LGs annually to get their funds. Hence, LGs should take account of problems, programmes and plans in the SIP while preparing educational policies and plans (MoE 2017). This is an example of bottom-up planning approach as envisioned in the seventh amendment of the Education Act 1971 and Education Regulation of 2001 (CERID 2003). As recent legal and constitutional provisions are in the process of implementation, how such decentralisation initiatives will translate into practice in the upcoming years is yet to be seen.

The Concept and Objective of SIP

The SIP has been practiced in Nepal's community schools as a tool for education decentralisation since 2001/02 as a part of Basic and Primary Education Programme II (CERID 2003). Enhancing learning environment is one of the major components in SIPs. For instance, the government's book designed to support SIP-preparation states, 'The major objective of SIP is to ensure better school, better teaching, and better learning for improving quality of education. SIP is a means to support schools to improve the quality of education with their own initiatives' (translated from Nepali) (MoE 2017).

The practice of planning has increased engagement of local stakeholders in schools and brought about positive results. The government's guidebook further elaborates, 'Making such plans has enhanced stakeholder participation and capacity building. The concern, participation, ownership and accountability of local community has increased in making and implementing plans and mobilising resources' (translated from Nepali) (MoE 2017, 2). In the two decades since its implementation, the SIPs have resulted in some positive outcomes at the local level. Yet, it is important to verify and validate context-specific outcomes.

In theory, schools should align SIPs with the policies, programmes and priorities set out by the federal, provincial and local governments.[4]

4 One HT shared that the finalisation of the SIP was on hold because the provincial and local governments asked them to wait for their policies and programmes (Interview on 5 July 2019 in Dhangadhi, Kailali).

Concomitantly, LGs should also include problems, concerns and programmes of SIPs in their education policies and plans (MoE 2017). This is how bottom-up planning should be implemented in the decentralised context, but, in practice, it was observed that it was implemented only partially.

The SMC is required to form a taskforce of five members to prepare the SIP—the HT, representatives of SMC and PTA, a teacher and a local educationist—from among the stakeholders (MoE 2017). The taskforce holds consultation meetings, reviews the previous year's work, and comes up with new priorities. Then the action plan is updated in the annual section of the five-year SIP. Once the SMC approves the plan, a copy is submitted to the LG for the disbursement of school funds. The HT takes the lead role in implementing the plans while the SMC monitors, evaluates and reviews the progress (MoE 2017). However, this policy provision is operationalised differently across schools for a variety of reasons. The next section makes a detailed discussion on how SIPs are prepared and implemented at the school level based on case studies of three schools.

The Practice of Preparing SIPs

At the local level, school stakeholders come together to write SIPs, forming taskforces, and sharing responsibilities as envisioned in the existing policy. This exercise had slightly improved in comparison to the practices in the previous years in the three schools where the case study was conducted. The SIP writing process has gradually become a collective effort in recent years, which is a good change in many ways.

Teachers and HTs can formulate good SIPs if they have the willpower and commitment. In one school, there were a few teachers who worked hard to produce a good SIP. A teacher of that school searched for the government's guideline for writing SIPs online.[5] With this small initiative, the teachers were able to accomplish much. In another school, a newly-appointed HT engaged proactively in preparing the SIP by asking HTs of other schools with experience of preparing SIPs and learning how to write it. In an interview, a recently-appointed HT said that he contacted 40 to 50 HTs to inquire about the process of preparing SIPs as well as the contents to be included in them as it was the first time that he had been directly engaged in preparing one. He was able to develop a good SIP for the first time in the school's history, working hard and in cooperation with other stakeholders. As indicated by the evidence, it is the HTs and teachers, who

5 The SIP Preparation Guide Book 2017 is available in the website of the Department of Education, Government of Nepal. Although the book mentions that it would be available to schools in physical form, most schools do not have access to it.

are mostly engaged in preparing SIPs (CERID 2003). This scenario has not changed much over the years.

Most respondents said that data collection is a daunting task in the course of preparing an SIP. The schools need data regarding students' subject-wise and grade-wise learning outcomes of previous years, population composition of students by ethnic groups, number of school-age children, number of children with disability and so on in the area that the school serves. As it takes time to collect specific data, the writing too, therefore, often gets delayed. The recently-appointed HT struggled to gather data and he had to visit the ward office and meet key authorities who had been involved with the school from the early years, as the school had no system of record-keeping. The previous HT did not make a complete SIP as specified, and hence the required data was not available. Thus, the new HT had to start from scratch. The HT worked hard to collect correct information on the history of the school.[6] All schools come across such hurdles, though they may differ in degree. Literature suggests that the process of data collection burdens teachers as 'planning requirements often have the unintended effect of overloading teachers and administrators' (Levine and Leibert 1987).

It appears that need-based institutional support to write SIPs is lacking. For example, the recently-appointed HT said that earlier he had to copy another school's SIP as he had to work entirely on his own. Of the three case studies for this paper, two HTs received a short training on writing SIPs from the LG,[7] but whether they were useful or not remains questionable as the content of such trainings were not clear.

Cooperation and coordination between schools and local and provincial governments in writing SIPs is observable in some cases, but there is no specific mechanism set out in this regard except the requirement that LGs should collect SIPs from schools. In cases where there is cooperation among them, it is primarily because of the initiatives of HTs. One of the case study schools cooperated with local and provincial governments to align the SIP with their policies and programmes so that it would be easier for them to get some funding for the specified programmes.[8] To do this, the HT of the school has maintained a very good relationship with local and

6 This is based on an interview with a recently-appointed HT on 5 July 2019 in Dhangadhi, Kailali. According to him, there were disagreements about when the school was established, but he got the correct information after talking to key authorities who were associated with the school in its formative years.

7 Based on an interview with an HT on 6 July 2019 in Dhangadhi, Kailali.

8 Based on an interview with an HT on 5 July 2019 in Dhangadhi, Kailali.

provincial governments. However, the coordination was possible because of the efforts of the HT rather than the institutional mechanisms in place.

The policy for writing SIPs has been implemented only partially. In particular, the participation of some stakeholders, such as parents, has been unsatisfactory, partly because they are unaware of these processes. Although there have been recent initiatives to promote parental engagement, only few parents participate and even when they do, they hardly voice their concerns.[9] This is mainly because of existing power dynamics in public schools where parents are perceived to be inferior to teachers.

The Portrayal of Learning Outcomes

In this section, a brief discussion will be made on learning outcomes as outlined in the SIPs of case study schools. The term, 'learning outcomes', which is an essential component of the SIP, generally refers to a statement on what the learner is expected to be able to do or know about and/or value at the completion of a unit of study, and it is expressed in numbers in SIPs.

There is a great variation among schools on how they depict learning outcomes in SIPs—some schools do it impeccably while others miss out some points or do not follow all the procedures for a number of reasons, including the capacity of the school leadership. For example, when asked about parents' concerns regarding learning outcomes, teachers said that most parents are highly concerned about their children's learning outcomes. This means parents are aware that children should learn better in school. Therefore, it is important how such issues are included in SIPs and how stakeholders address parents' concerns.

One rural school presented detailed plans for students' learning outcome at two levels. First, they provided data on grade-wise learning outcomes to be achieved in five years. Second, they presented data on targets of learning outcomes, expressed in percentage of the total achievement expected, to be achieved every year, for each grade and each subject. They used illustrations to show clear targets on the per cent of learning outcomes to be achieved for the upcoming years.

In the annual implementation plan section of the SIP for the following year, the school had provided students' learning outcomes to be achieved, expressed in percentage, on the basis of marks received by the students of

9 The author spent seven hours at a school attending the SIP preparation meeting. He found that there were very few parents in attendance, and they had almost no say, mainly because they were not literate about such processes. So was the case in another school, where parents had hardly any idea on how to share their ideas and feedback for the SIP.

each grade for every subject in the previous years. This enables everyone to compare the students' performance based on the academic result of the previous year. In this school, there was an average increase in the examination scores in all grades by about 3 to 4 percentage points except in grades 6 and 7. This means that the school achieved the target, though partially. Finally, the SIP also set a target for achieving 2 to 6 per cent growth in learning outcomes for the current year. In this way, the plan seems to be rigorous, systematic and achievable for the upcoming years.

In fact, this school did a wonderful job because it produced a good quality SIP which included all the contents as required, including fitting in data properly and reliably even though the HT hardly took any leadership responsibility for the task. Instead, it was the vice-HT who took the lead role in this regard. For the last few years, the teachers[10] of the school had been preparing and finalising the SIP. But this year, the SMC formed a taskforce which invited stakeholders to review and identify issues to be included in the SIP.[11] As an invitee, the author had an opportunity to participate in and observe the meeting.

The next school presented the current scenario of learning outcomes of students of each grade for every subject based on the mark ledger of the previous academic session. The SIP reviewed action plans of the previous years to improve learning outcomes for four subjects, Mathematics, Social Studies, Science and English, and found that there was an increase in learning outcomes of up to 2 percentage points in a year. Analysing the data, it was pointed out that students performed poorly in English in the lower grades and in Mathematics in the higher grades. The reason behind their 'poor performance' as mentioned in the SIPs was traditional teaching methods that made it difficult for students to conceptualise learnings. By the term ‚traditional teaching methods', they generally meant teacher-centric teaching methods which predominantly involved giving lectures and rote learning.

Although the SIP consisted of plans to increase students' learning outcomes for five years, they were not disaggregated subject-wise unlike in the previous school. The plans were therefore a little vague. The SIP also included plans to increase students' learning outcomes by providing additional classes for students performing poorly, holding interactions with parents regularly, rewarding/penalising teachers based on their

10 One of the teachers used to take the responsibility of writing the SIP in the previous years and he used to be paid for it. But this year, they have taken collective responsibility. This is based on an interview on 9 July 2019 in Dhangadhi, Kailali.

11 Based on an interview with a teacher of the school on 9 July 2019 in Dhangadhi, Kailali.

performance, preparing and using local teaching materials, and so on. In short, the plan entailed an exhaustive list of action plans to improve students' learning outcomes in the following years.

The third school outlined students' learning outcomes of the previous year for each grade for every subject, but it is unclear whether the learning outcomes were based on mark ledger of the annual examinations or something else. The available data was not interpreted substantially even though it was mandatory under the existing policy. Thus, it was difficult to understand the SIP. Furthermore, it set the target of achieving growth in students' learning outcomes from 49 to 80 per cent in five years, without disaggregating present subject-wise learning outcomes of each grade. This made the target unreliable. Hence, the SIP of the school targeted growth in students' learning outcomes on a weak basis.

SIPs discuss little on challenges and opportunities in improving learning outcomes. They do not contextualise issues while setting priorities. Some schools list out priorities, while others set specific targets to be achieved annually. Thus, schools show great variation in preparing and implementing the SIPs. As discussed earlier, there are a number of contextual reasons for this state of affairs, including pro-activeness of its stakeholders—mostly teachers and the HTs.

The Effects on Learning Outcomes

The existing literature on the relationship between SIP and students' learning outcome has two dimensions. First, it is argued that SIPs have positive outcomes as, 'Some saw benefits in developing them [SIP], particularly administrators and teachers in leadership positions at their school' (Mintrop and MacLellan 2002, 289). The system of preparing SIP could directly and indirectly contribute to students' learning outcome and school atmosphere. To achieve what has been set out in the plans may be difficult to realise within the timeframe, but some components of the plans could be achieved by different means.

However, many argue that preparing SIPs have little effect on improving students' learning outcomes as it may be used as an excuse for the ineffectiveness of school leadership. Levine and Leibert state, 'In some cases, individual school plans seem to serve the latent function of providing administrators with a means to legitimate low student achievement. That is, since all the steps in the planning process have been followed and a plan for improvement has been approved by central office personnel, how can the principal be criticised when improvement does not occur?' (Levine and Leibert 1987, 399). This shows that preparing the plans but

not implementing them effectively may not result in positive outcomes as envisioned in SIPs.

The issue of whether SIPs are translated into action or not is an under-researched phenomenon as there is inadequate empirical research dealing with this topic. In addition, the 'published literature on the impact of planning on performance produces few results' (Fernandez 2011, 343). Although planning should generally produce good results, there is little evidence that supports this idea.

In discussing how provisions in SIPs affect students' learning outcomes, it should be mentioned that one of the three schools planned learning outcomes targets poorly and did not interpret data as required in the ministry's guideline. Given this context, it is hard to believe that the school implemented what was written down in the SIP. Yet, two schools successfully fit in data in the required format in detail. and therefore they could say that what they had envisioned had been achieved. Further, since they consulted with relevant teachers in preparing the plans, the teachers had a sense of ownership of the set targets. Reactions and results in terms of the effects of SIPs on students' learning outcomes is therefore mixed.

The SIP preparation process involves discussions on students' learning outcomes. As a result, this issue gets incorporated in the SIPs, and some HTs instruct teachers to achieve the targets set out. In some schools, there was a practice that subject teachers provided detailed data, expressed in percentage points, of learning outcomes they intended to improve upon in the upcoming years. Such practices should have positive effects on improving students' learning outcomes as planning is critical to improve such outcomes (Angelle and Anfara Jr. 2006).

SIPs mention many zero-cost activities that could be implemented in schools with the purpose of improving students' learning outcomes. For instance, adopting student-centric teaching and learning methods, taking attendance at the beginning and end of each day to reduce the number of absentees, preparing and utilising local teaching and learning materials, and holding meetings with parents on students' learning outcomes periodically are some of those activities. These activities could be useful for enhancing students' learning outcomes, provided that they are duly implemented.

Conclusion

The practice of preparing and implementing SIPs in Nepal's community schools in the last two decades has gradually become systematised. School stakeholders have begun to show renewed focus on improving the SIP preparation process by attempting to involve parents, teachers, students,

SMC and PTA chairs and members, ward chairs, etc. in the process. Nevertheless, the influence of parents and their concerns is negligible, and broad-based participation as envisioned in the education policy is still missing for various reasons.

In general, there is a great deal of variation among schools in terms of SIP preparation, its quality and implementation due to a number of factors. The pro-activeness of teachers and HTs has been crucial because they can come up with good SIPs through hard work and perseverance. In one case, as the government's support mechanism for a recently appointed HT to prepare the SIP was absent, he consulted and collaborated with stakeholders to prepare a new SIP for the first time in the school's history. In another school, teachers worked hard on behalf of the HT, searching for materials online and learning to write SIPs. As indicated by the evidence, it is the HT and the teachers who are mostly engaged in preparing SIPs. The process of preparing SIPs is still at a basic level even after two decades of its introduction.

Schools rarely come up with radical goals and ideas in the SIPs, thus raising questions on the ongoing decentralisation process. In fact, schools also hardly reflect local needs, priorities and plans in their SIPs. Generally, they overlook school-specific problems and suggest neither roadmaps nor steps to achieve specified targets. This shows a mechanistic or ritualistic kind of process of preparing and implementing SIPs. In general, there is a lack of creativity and imagination in taking school-specific concerns into consideration in preparing SIPs and this goes against the basic premise of decentralisation process in addressing the problems.

The process of preparing SIPs is less participatory, coupled by lack of knowledge on the part of stakeholders. The policy provision that there should be participatory process of preparing an SIP is not really followed at the school level. Although key persons who have power or social/political capital are invited for the review meeting on SIP, stakeholders' participation in the real sense is negligible. In one instance, even the HT did not have much understanding about the SIP process, so it is unreasonable to expect parents' involvement given the context of the country. However, parents and students can be informed of the provisions clearly so that they will be able to express their concerns effectively, leading to meaningful participation.

The initiatives in decentralising Nepal's education sector have resulted in some positive outcomes after two decades. For instance, the school stakeholders perceive the process of preparing the SIP as important and necessary for improving the learning outcome. They also believe that it is

an established norm and that they must complete due process. This shows the stakeholders' positive perception towards the SIP-making process.

It can be assumed that preparing SIPs should have positive implications for learning outcomes as pointed out by most respondents. One HT pointed out that as it is a zero-cost activity, he has instructed teachers to achieve the learning outcome targets as set out in the SIP. As discussed, the process of preparing SIPs has been more collaborative in the recent years with concerned subject teachers contributing in setting targets for learning, which makes them feel responsible to fulfil the set goals and they have a feeling of ownership in the SIP.

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Enduring Islam and 'Muslimness' in Trans-Himalayas

Some Reflections from the Case of the Gorkha Muslims and Tibetan Muslims in the Eastern Himalayan Town of Darjeeling, India

Anup Shekhar Chakraborty

I

Moorings and Methods: Islam and Being Muslims in South Asia

Outside the Middle East, Islam exists in contradistinction with the 'host culture'.[1] The contradistinction is well reflected in the heterogeneous character of Muslims in South Asia and the observable variations even in the densities of Muslim settlements in different parts of the sub-continent (Ahmed 1990; Bose and Jalal 2004; Engineer 1985; Hardy 2008; Hasan 2002, 2004; Ludden 2006; Robinson 2000). Muslim consciousness and Islam in India, as elsewhere, unfolds a bewildering diversity of Muslim communities and multiple manifestations of their identity (Alam 2004; Bilgrami 1992; Jalal 2001; Marranci 2008; Tundawala 2010). Amidst the positional differences cutting across notions of language, geography, caste/*jati*, *jat*/*zat* and *birathery* (patrilineal group), Muslims have endured a directional commonality by

1 The notion of the 'host' culture' comes with its arrays of problems. First, the term 'host' explicitly unweaves the idea that 'Islam' is an alien religion, having come from elsewhere, having arrived at a certain time in the past, therefore the religion and its faithful are to be systematically clubbed as not being the 'original inhabitants', or having come from somewhere, migrants, second citizens, or respectable denizens, etc. Second, the term 'host culture' inevitably makes us guilty of using banal terminologies with tendencies of polarity that is neatly treating culture as idyllic, fixed, permanent, non-changing and pushing forward unconsciously the binaries of 'pure culture, impure culture', etc., and conveniently air-blowing the idea of culture as ever-changing, non-static aspect of societies.

remaining by and large a 'West' looking religion and observably, religiosity among followers of Islam have time and again looked at the 'West' (Mecca, Medina) for solace and redemption (Hooker 1983; Hunter 1871; Mayaram1998 2004; Metcalf 1995; Minault 1984; Roy 2001; Sharma 2004; Siddiqa 1993). Joya Chatterji (1998) for instance, mentions that there is no one universally true and fundamentally knowable *Islam*, no standardised and essentially unchangeable system of *Islamic* ritual and belief, no authentic soul or spirit of *Islam,* or indeed of the Muslim community. With the conceptual moorings that different and often contradictory meanings of *Islam* compete for hegemony, the paper attempts to locate the Muslims of the Darjeeling hills.

The town of Darjeeling could not sanitise its white British foreigners from the natives as the whites could not imagine a life minus the retinue of native servants in operation of the 'display of imperial imagination of superiority'.[2] The Muslim migration into the hills of Darjeeling forms a formidable part of the imperial administrators and the colonial project of building a sanatorium in the form of a hill station. The discussions in this paper in general would bring to the fore the myriad hues in the philosophy, position and practice of Islam, and the embodied experience of 'being Muslim' in Darjeeling hills in the eastern Himalayas. The discussions in particular would unravel the Muslims in an ostensibly multicultural terrain and the challenges in enduring Muslimness within the same. Also, the paper attempts to glean 'whether the Muslim communities are ethnic or not?' by taking the case of the Nepali (Gorkha/Gorkhey) Muslims and Tibetan Muslims in Darjeeling.

The challenges encountered while studying the ever-fluid social and political life worlds of communities made it meaningful to adopt what Patton (1990) calls an 'empathic neutrality' (pp. 55-58). Identities are not fixed immutable entities; they are constantly becoming into newer ones. They are subjective, created by individuals, and subject to change. Information that has formed the flesh of discussions in this paper was gathered through semi-structured, in-depth, small sample, personal, key informant interviews. The semi-structured interview method was deliberately chosen to combine consistency with flexibility. Despite the use of a planned interview guide with general open-ended schedule list, departures and digressions were incorporated to accommodate unexpected turns in the interview process which proved to be very productive. The small size of the sample eased to build rapport, thereby opening the avenues of probing even further.

2 I conceptualise this phrase with an emphasis on 'display' to signify the fact that as much as it was a white dream, it had also become a brown reality.

II

Islam and Muslims in Darjeeling: Eastern Himalayas in Perspective

Locating historical records regarding the Muslim population of Darjeeling is a challenging task precisely due to two reasons: first, the documents at Darjeeling District Magistrate Office are not properly stored; second, because the old Darjeeling Municipality building was gutted down by a fire in the year 1996 wherein all the old paper records were consumed by fire (Chakraborty 2015a, 2015b). However, limited information regarding the Muslim community in Darjeeling can be found in the writings of O'Malley ([1907] 1985), Dash (1947), among others. Likewise, the census records of 1871-72, 1881, 1901, etc., document the Muslim population of the district and the subdivisions therein.

On the basis of linguistic and ethnic lines, the Muslims in Darjeeling hills (including Kalimpong, Kurseong and Mirik) are categorised into four broad categories, namely—Nepali Muslims,[3] Tibetan Muslims,[4] Bihari Muslims,[5] and Kashmiri Muslims.[6] A fifth category may be added as the 'Afghan refugees'[7] in Darjeeling and Kalimpong. Besides these, there exists the Bengali speaking Muslim group popularly referred as Islampurias[8] (Ahmed 1981, 2001; Roy 2006).

The historical records regarding the spread of Islam and Muslims in the trans-Himalayan region has been well documented (Bartold 1938; Gaborieau 1995; Jest 1995; Moevus 1995; Zarcone 1995). However, the same cannot hold true in the case of Darjeeling hills in the eastern Himalayas. We can only speculate and reconstruct the history of Islam and Muslims in the Himalayas from some scattered information on the

3 Nepali Muslims are converts belonging to the disparate native Nepali speaking communities both in Nepal and in India.

4 Tibetan Muslims trace their origin to immigrants from four main regions: Kashmir, Ladakh, China and Nepal. Islamic influences in Tibet also came from Persia and Turkestan.

5 Bihari Muslims are the Muslims from the Indian state of Bihar; they are stereotyped as the *Bhaiyaji* category by the native Nepali speaking communities of the hills. Hindi language is considered by the hill communities to be the native language of the Bihari people (Hindus and Muslims).

6 Kashmiri Muslims are of diverse ethnic backgrounds and occupational specialisations. They are Sunni Muslims and observe the teachings of Hanifi School. They are into curio business in Darjeeling town.

7 Afghan Muslims were refugees settled in parts of the hills of Darjeeling and Kalimpong. These include certain Afghan aristocratic families.

8 These are seasonal migrants from Islampur subdivision of Uttar Dinajpur district of West Bengal and work as masons, construction labourers, house servants and petty shopkeepers, etc.

Delhi Sultans during the early medieval periods (Mondal 1994). We can safely say that Islam came from somewhere else to the eastern Himalayas, but it is very difficult to ascertain when exactly the Muslims first began to make the region 'their home' due to paucity of written documents or sources. Colonial documents and archival sources mention the original habitants of this region as the Lepcha (O'Malley [1907] 1985). The available documents hardly indicate any Muslim inhabitants in Darjeeling Himalayas. But it can be speculated that Kurseong and Kalimpong had Muslim traders. The intergenerational family history of Rezwan mentions that 'his grandfather had come to the town in 1930 from Sheikhpura, Siwan District in Bihar to work under the British, and later moved to Bijanbari for business purpose and settled permanently'.[9] The small business in these two hill centres revolved around the 'weekly *haat*' run by the petty businessmen and some of them may have been small marginal Muslim businessmen from neighbouring Tarai plains or Bihar. Similarly, colonial writings mention the seasonal wave of 'boxwallas' who in most occasions could have been the emergent Muslim population in the hills (O'Malley [1907] 1985; Dozey [1916] 1989; Pinn 1986). Trading communities of both Kashmiri and Tibetan Muslims visited the hill towns of Darjeeling and Kalimpong frequently to trade in woollen garments, silk, animal skins, and jewels. It can be speculated that they may have built temporary settlements in the hills. Survey reports and colonial census show that the Muslim population of Darjeeling town and its adjoining rural and urban areas had a tremendously low female population since most of the businessmen came without their families.

Local intergenerational memories among the Muslims in Darjeeling trace the presence of the Muslims in the hills to the Sultanate period (1206 - 1526 CE). The Delhi Sultan Mohammad bin Tughlaq and the Bengal invader Ikhtiyaruddin Mohammad bin Bakhtiyar Khalji had sent their armies to invade Tibet through Kurseong and Darjeeling (Shakabpa 2010). However, due to severe winter conditions, their armies collapsed near present-day Darjeeling. They made temporary settlements near the present-day Jama Masjid locality. They also prepared a temporary mosque close to Laldighi near present-day Bramha Samaj building. Some of these soldiers returned to the plains, while others got married to native women and settled in Darjeeling hills. Observably, this is a popular emic version of 'local history' among the Muslims regarding the origin of the Muslims in Darjeeling

9 Rezwan Akhtar (Kashmiri Muslim). *Personal Interview.* Darjeeling, 5 September 2014.

town.[10] This is indicative of the urgency to 'become local' (Chakraborty 2015a).

Archibald Campbell, the first superintendent of the sanatorium of Darjeeling, devoted himself to the task of developing the hill station, attracting migrants and other specialised occupational groups for their specialised services (Dash 1947; Sen 1989). The establishment of Judge Bazaar, a separate market for the Muslim traders by the Darjeeling Municipality and a separate residential area (*rihaishi*) known as Butcher Basti is reflective of the openness of the colonial government towards the migration of Muslims. The Muslim migrants who came to the hill station in search of work or business opportunities often married native women and settled permanently in the hills. This was a marked break from the earlier advent of Islam in the eastern Himalayas where the Kashmiri and Tibetan Muslim businessmen frequently visited the region but did not settle permanently. The most common occupational pursuits of the Muslims during the colonial times were small scale marginal businesses, leather works, craftworks, wage labour, *bawarchi/khansama* (cook), *hajam* (barber), *kasaih* (butcher), and various lower grade services. The official population of the Muslims in Darjeeling Municipality according to the 2011 census is 4680, but the local sources put the number close to 15-50,000 for the entire hills (Census of India 2011).

On the question of assimilation, the opinion among the Muslims is fragmented. While a section among the Muslims in Darjeeling believe that Muslims should adopt the customs and ways of life of the hills, an opposing opinion stakes claims for a distinct identity.[11] The polarisation of voices seems to reaffirm that the Muslim population in Darjeeling hills is ethnically and linguistically diverse. In short, the ostensible homogeneity is marred by variegated heterogeneity. Also, the Muslims are further

10 I acknowledge the field report (political science (general)) prepared by the 3rd year general course students Tanveer Ahmed and group 2015 as a part of the completion of the university examinations, University of North Bengal. I refrain from using the word myth and replace it with 'emic version' of 'local history'.

11 A. Ansari (58-year-old Bihari Muslim, owner of a bakery). *Personal Interview.* Chowrasta, Darjeeling. 14 July 2013; Mohammad Khan (54-year-old Bihari Muslim, a stall owner at Orient Lines). *Personal Interview.* Darjeeling. 11 August 2013; Mustaq Razzak (40-year-old Gorkha Muslim born to a Bihari Muslim father and a Rai mother, working in a mobile phone repair shop). *Personal Interview.* Darjeeling. 6 September 2014; Wasim Mohammed (51-year-old Bihari Muslim, businessman). *Personal Interview.* Butcher Busty, Darjeeling. 4 August 2013; Shabnam Khatun (22-year-old Nepali speaking Muslim born to a Bengali Muslim father and Limbu mother). *Personal Interview.* Lebong, Darjeeling. 28 June 2014; Jakir Hussein (Bihari Muslim). *Personal Interview.* Darjeeling. 17 August 2013.

clubbed as 'old timers' and 'latecomers', 'Urdu speaking' and 'Bengali speaking', etc. (Ahmed 1988, 2001; Alam 2004; Jafri 2005; Masud 2014; Misra 2002). Alongside these internal differences, Muslims also have the creole segments among them, i.e., Muslims born out of mixed marriages with non-Muslim communities and represent the hybridised sections of Muslim population in Darjeeling.[12]

A quick glance at the composition of Muslims in Darjeeling town shows that the community is strongly marked by diverse regional and ethnic variations. Today, the Sunnis are the dominant sect.[13] The Sunnis of Darjeeling are of the Hanafi school of law (Mojahabs) and are fragmented on theological schools as Barelvi[14] and Deobandi.[15] Darjeeling Muslims are

12 Yusuf Ahmed (Bihari Muslim). *Personal Interview.* Darjeeling. 17 August 2013; Nilima Rai (Muslim father and Rai mother). *Personal Interview.* Darjeeling. 17 August 2013; Shabnam Khatun (22-year-old Nepali speaking Muslim born to a Bengali Muslim father and Limbu mother). *Personal Interview.* Lebong, Darjeeling. 28 June 2014; Zakeeyha (Nepali-speaking youth born to a Bihari Muslim father and a mother of Kashmiri descent). *Personal Interview*. Darjeeling. 8 March 2014; Mustaq Razzak (40-year-old Gorkha Muslim born to a Bihari Muslim father and a Rai mother, working in a mobile phone repair shop). *Personal Interview.* Darjeeling. 6 September 2014; Ahmed (44-year-old Nepali speaking Muslim born to a Bihari Muslim father and a Bhutia mother). *Personal Interview.* 27 March 2013; Fariedi (60-year-old Nepali speaking Muslim born to a Muslim father from Rae Barielly (UP) and a Tamang mother). *Personal Interview.* Darjeeling. 27 March 2013.

13 During colonial times there were some Shia Muslim families who were in various administrative posts of the colonial government. Some of them stayed back in the hills after retirement, while keeping their connections with native villages (desh) intact. Following the partition of British India, the Shia families migrated to Lucknow or to East Pakistan (now Bangladesh).

14 The term Barelvi is derived from the school of theology at Bareli of Uttar Pradesh. It is a movement of Sunni Muslims that originated on Indian soil. The movement was started by the writings of Ahmad Reza Khan (1856-1921) of Bareli to promote the distinctive Islamic practices of the Indian Muslims which is deeply influenced by Sufism. 'Despite his physical death, the Barelvis believe that the prophet is not *bashar* (material or flesh) but *noor* (light), and can be present at all places and at all times with the will of Allah. They see the Muhammad as more than a man, a part of the divine light of Allah. He is human but not like other humans. Allah has given him the ability to see the whole of Creation. This is called being *"nazir"* ("witnessing"). Allah has also given him the ability to physically and spiritually go anywhere in the Created Universes which is meant by *"hazir"* (present). This doctrine gives rise to a form of Islam that provides a space for holy men and esoteric practices and graves appear to be often more ornate than those found within *Deobandi* communities. The *Barelvis* accept the socio-religious conditions of their previous generations without much criticism' (Tundawala 2010).

15 Deobandi is also a movement which began from the school of theology at Deoband in the Saharanpur district in Uttar Pradesh. The school was established in the year 1866 by some notable Muslim theologists. Darul Ulum Deoband is one such madrasa from where the movement began. Since the 1920s, the movement was spread over the whole of the Indian subcontinent as Tablighi Jamaat movement. The objective of this Tablighi Jamaat

mostly Barelvi except Tibetan Muslims who do not consider themselves bound by any particular school of law or school of theology. The proselytised Nepali families also adhere to the Barelvi school. Furthermore, the Muslims in Darjeeling are wedged on the lines of occupations, *jat/zat birathery* (patrilineal group).[16]

There is a tendency among the Barelvi and Deobandi to claim superiority over each other. The notion of superiority prevalent among the Deobandi in Darjeeling town is less rigid compared to elsewhere in India. The Deobandi are, in most cases, the affluent section in Darjeeling. Interestingly, this variegation in the faith is denied by believers, which means that the followers of Islam in general project the ostensibly homogenous image of Islam.[17] The adherence to the two theological schools is easily brushed aside in the simple denial of the existence through the common response '*Islam ek hai, hum Musalman hai*' (Islam is one, we are Muslims). The ostensible homogeneity of the faith gets circumvented by class consciousness. For instance, the Muslims of Darjeeling showed deviations from practices among Muslims and in Islam in the South Asia on the issue of veneration of the *pir*. Though most elite families strongly emphasised that they were Deobandi they also mentioned that they equally accepted a '*pir*[18] and respected the

movement is to purify the Sunni Hanifites from a number of customs and practices which do not have sanction from Quran. The Deobandis believe that little traditional elements of the Indian Muslims have no such relevance and are required to be abandoned. The Deobandi interpretation holds that a Muslim's first loyalty is to his religion. That is why they have long sought to purify Islam by discarding supposedly un-Islamic accretions to the faith and reemphasising the models established in the Quran and the customary practices of the Prophet Mohammed. The Deobandis idolise the Prophet as *insan-i-kamil*, the perfect person, but still only a man, a mortal (Tundawala 2010).

16 Ahmed (44-year-old Nepali-speaking Muslim born to a Bihari Muslim father and a Bhutia mother). *Personal Interview*. 27 March 2013; Fariedi (60-year-old-Nepali-speaking Muslim born to a Muslim father from Rae Barielly (UP) and a Tamang mother). *Personal Interview.* Darjeeling. 27 March 2013.

17 Ahmed (44-year-old Nepali-speaking Muslim born to a Bihari Muslim father and a Bhutia mother). *Personal Interview.* 27 March 2013; Fariedi. (60-year-old Nepali-speaking Muslim born to a Muslim father from Rae Barielly (UP) and a Tamang mother). *Personal Interview.* Darjeeling. 27 March 2013; Rezwan (Kashmiri Muslim). *Personal Interview.* Darjeeling. 5 September 2014; Riwaz (Bengali Muslim). *Personal Interview.* Darjeeling. 5 September 2014; Sadaqat Hussain (Bihari Muslim). Personal Interview. Darjeeling. 6 September 2014; Salim Subba (Bihari Muslim father and Limbu mother). *Personal Interview.* Darjeeling. 6 September 2014; Imtiaj (Bihari Muslim). *Personal Interview*. Darjeeling. 6 September 2014.

18 *Pir* (male), *pirni* (female) are individuals transcending class, caste, theological cleavages, and connect the material with the ecclesiastical. Belief in spiritualism is a popular phenomenon among the Indian Muslims. Indian spiritual tradition and cultural practices were widely accepted by a large number of spiritual experts or specialists who are popularly known as pir, *murshid* or *aulias*. Each *pir* has its own procedure or tradition of

silsila orders' and they did not find contradictions in 'being Deobandi' and yet accepting a *pir*. The Deobandi do not believe in *pir* veneration or tomb worship (*mazar sharif*). Tomb worship in particular is considered to be *shirq* or the sin of associating partners with Allah.[19] The Barelvi Muslims, on the other hand, essentialised the *baiat* or clientship of *pir*. The Barelvi condone the presence of little traditions within their socio-religious life and consider the Sufi *aulias* or *pirs* as mediators and to do the needful on behalf of the believers. The case of the Barelvi and Deobandi in Darjeeling is a paradox that stands in contradistinction to Muslim experiences and practices elsewhere.

The Muslims in Darjeeling incline towards a 'belief in spiritualism' (*tariquat*) and are accordingly segmented into various *silsila* orders. The *pir,* as the spiritual specialist, has a great role in binding his disciples across gender to a united fellowship irrespective of their *jat/zat* and *birathery* class status. The necessity of such spiritual guidance is, however, accepted among all Muslims, especially among the Sunni Barelvi (as *mureed*, followers). Kashmiri Muslims, though Deobandi, also cling to this spiritualism. Interestingly, Tibetan Muslims do not affiliate or cling to a *pir* or *silsila.*[20] Social stratification is based on sects and mystic orders within the greater framework of Islam. There is a great debate among social scientists if Muslim communities are ethnic or not. The following subsection dwells further into this debate.

III

From Nepali Muslims to Gorkha Muslims

The missionary activities of the Barelvi by the *Dawat-e-Islami* (green turbans) in Darjeeling effectively proselytised a number of Nepali-speaking people to Islam. Nepali Muslims of low income are the followers of Barelvi sect. Islam,

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teachings or guidance which tend to develop groupings among the disciples or *mureeds*. On account of the belief in supernatural power and hereditary character of the *pir*, the people have wholehearted respect for the pir and also their family members. The places where the *pir* conduct and evolve their spiritual practices are termed as khanquah. Each *pir* has his respective sequential process of spiritual practices and teaching called the silsila (Roy 1996, pp.100-120; Alefiya Tundawalla, Assistant Professor, Savitri Girls' College. *Personal Interview*. Kolkata. 3 April 2021; Omar Ghazali, Assistant Professor, Hooghly Moshin College. *Personal Interview*. Kolkata. 3 April 2021; Javid Iqbal Bhat, Assistant Professor, University of Kashmir. *Telephonic Interview*. Kolkata. 4 April 2021).

19 Alefiya Tundawalla, Assistant Professor, Savitri Girls' College. *Personal Interview*. Kolkata. 3 April 2021

20 Majid (55-year-old Tibetan Muslim). *Personal Interview*. Darjeeling. 11 August 2013.

through its followers, came into conversation with several sets of traditions viz. Islamic, Nepali (Gorkha) caste and tribe and Tibetan/Bhote/Bhutia, etc., and meaningfully shaped Muslimness in the region. Nepali Muslims and Tibetan/Bhote/Bhutia Muslims are not distinct from the Hindu, Christian or Buddhist Nepali and Tibetan/Bhote/Bhutia counterparts in respect to language, food, dress pattern, occupation, material culture, family organisation, habits, customs, etc. The morphological similarities further make it impossible to neatly distinguish between these communities/groups. The 'mixed population' that has evolved due to constant mixing with the Nepali (Gorkha) are almost identical with their non-Muslim neighbours. For instance, the difference between a Nepali Muslim and a Kashmiri Muslim is more prominent than a Nepali Hindu and a Nepali Muslim. Many Muslim families, influenced by the larger Nepali community (both Hindu and Buddhist, and to some extent, Christian), revere local deities, spirits, etc. For instance, cutting across communities and religious beliefs, hill communities are fearful of the various *nag devta* which are believed to be residing in the vicinity of the *jhoras* (springs), and follow strict 'norms of purity' while going to the springs to collect water. Those respondents who lived in predominantly non-Muslim areas and accessed the local *jhoras* (springs) under the control of the *gaon samaj* (localised vigilant residential communities) interpreted the *nag devta* as a kind of malevolent *jinn*.[21] This is interesting because it reflects the transportations of cultural tropes of Islam to explain and understand the nuances of local deification, religiosity and belief systems.

Coming to the discussion of how one becomes a Muslim, or how one retains 'Muslimness', Islam calls for 'conversion' as the only path to become a 'Musalmaan' (Muslim) and that conversion is the only way for marriage between a believer and a non-believer (Farid 1992; Robinson 2000, 2007; Sharif 1921). Thus, a number of indigenous women and select men (Nepali-speaking or otherwise) have converted to Islam to get their marriage solemnised in the eyes of the religion when marrying a Muslim man or woman. The trend of inter-marriages between followers of Islam and non-believers can be traced back to colonial times. Inter-marriages of Muslim men with native women could have been helpful for establishing settlements and acquiring residency claims in the hills. The issue of

21 Sanjeeda Khatun (45-year-old Bihari Muslim housewife). *Personal Interview*. Butcher Busty, Darjeeling. 17 August 2013; Tanveer Ahmed (21-year-old Bihari Muslim). *Personal Interview*. Singamari, Darjeeling. 18 September 2014; Taufiq Ahmed (22-year-old Bihari Muslim). *Personal Interview*. Singamari, Darjeeling. 18 September 2014; Raja Ansari (Bihari Muslim). *Personal Interview*. Darjeeling. 12 November 2015.

inter-marriages with local women have, in contemporary times, shaped Muslim identity in the hills of Darjeeling, and in a strong way pushed forward the community's claims to being 'sons of soil', of the *pahad* (Darjeeling hills) (Chakraborty 2016; Weiner 1978). The resistance to conversion to Islam has been rather muted, which might be due to the secular character of the hill communities in terms of religious faith and food consumption habits. For instance, among the Hindu Nepali (ethnic and caste) communities and also the Buddhist Bhutias, consumption of beef is not a taboo. Also, these ethnic categories conveniently absorbed and filtered the notion of 'pollution-purity' of Hinduism to suit their everyday practices of consumption of tabooed items such as beef. This might be one of the factors for limited tensions in everyday life between pre- and post-conversion to Islam for the non-believers (Chatterjee 2011).[22] Non-affiliation and indirect affiliation is the major trend as far as *silsila* order is concerned. Nevertheless, respect to all the Sufi orders remains. A majority of the Nepali Muslims have a tendency to affiliate themselves with the Chisti order of Ajmer. The Nepali converts often adopt/emulate the *silsila* orders of socio-economically affluent Asraf[23] families. The experience of caste-like discrimination among the Arzal/Raizal, i.e., converts from unclean occupational Hindu castes compels them to emulate and engage in Asrafisation (Lindholm 1986). The process is particularly common among the Arzal (Nepali Muslims) who are treated as Dalits among the Muslims.[24]

Prior to 1950, the town did not have a *mazar sharif*.[25] In the 1950s a Nepali Muslim, Mohamad Kashim, dreamt of a dilapidated, unnamed grave with the callings of the divine to revive the same into a *mazar.* Following the signs of his 'dream', Mohamad Kashim stumbled on a grave and started offering flowers and sweets. After 1972, the grave (as an unidentified grave) was made a *mazar sharif* without a *silsila* order. The Anjuman-E-Islamia Darjeeling shaped the grave into the present form by building an enshrined

22 Though seemingly a full-proof explanation to the proximity of hill communities to the Muslim ways of consumption behaviour, it is indeed a food for thought as to why the differences on the issue of 'pork consumption' has not wedged the lines between the hill communities and those practicing Islam in the hills of Darjeeling.

23 The Asraf (Khas) are those who claim a foreign descent and are sub-divided into four hierarchical groups: Sayyads, Sheikhs, Mughals and Pathans in that order of rank.

24 Rezwan Akhtar (23-year-old Bihari Muslim). *Telephonic Interview*. Bijanbari/Siliguri/Kolkata. 10 June 2018.

25 *Mazar sharif* refers to a Sufi graveyard, enshrined tomb where *urs* (birthday of the Pir/Pirni) is celebrated annually. The *mazar sharif* and associated rituals/practices of tomb worship has a special relevance among the Barelvi followers. Omar Ghazali, Assistant Professor, Hooghly Moshin College. *Personal Interview*. Kolkata. 3 April 2021

tomb. Thereafter, believers and enthusiasts began the ritualistic Friday prayers, offerings of sweets and flowers, etc., and today incense shops, *khada* shops, shops selling religious prayer items, etc., have mushroomed around it.[26] The *mazar* has also struck the piety of the non-Muslim including in communities such as the Lepchas, Tamangs, and other caste Hindus and Buddhist communities. They conscientiously offer flowers, sweets and *khada*[27] at the *mazar* for wish fulfilment.

Contemporary ostensible styling of the self-defined (*khudi*) identity among Nepali-speaking Muslims in Darjeeling hills as 'Gorkha/Gorkhey Muslim' and not 'Bihari-Muslim'[28], 'Bengali Muslim', and the like substantiates the already existing scholarship on Muslim consciousness or Islam and multiple manifestations of the same (I. Ahmed 1973, 1976, 1984; R. Ahmed 1981, 1988, 2001; Chatterji 1998; Madan 2006).

The 'second generation Gorkhaland movement' has witnessed the visibility and vocality of the Muslims (men and women) in the public sphere (Chakraborty 2015b). This is an interesting development in terms of community participation in social movements and strategies projected to overcome vexed exclusions at the levels of the social, the cultural, the economic, and the political. Here, it is important to note the relevance of hyphenated identities and the underlying power-play of prefix and suffix. What comes out very strongly through this is that the 'Gorkhey identity'[29] is to be retained either as prefixed or as suffixed appendage to

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26 A. Ansari (58-year-old Bihari Muslim, owner of a bakery). *Personal Interview*. Chowrasta, Darjeeling. 14 July 2013; Mohammad Khan (54-year Bihari Muslim, having a stall at Orient Lines). *Personal Interview*. Darjeeling. 11 August 2013; Wasim Mohammed (51-year-old Bihari Muslim, businessman). *Personal Interview*. Butcher Busty, Darjeeling. 4 August 2013; Mustaq Razzak (40-year-old Gorkha Muslim born to a Bihari Muslim father and a Rai mother, working in a mobile phone repair shop). *Personal Interview*. Darjeeling. 6 September 2014; Majidi (65-year-old Kashmiri Muslim). *Personal Interview*. Darjeeling. 20 September 2014.

27 A *khada*, *khata*, *khadag*, or *hada* is a traditional ceremonial scarf common in Tibetan culture. It symbolises purity and compassion. It is usually made of silk. Tibetan *khadas* are usually white, symbolising the pure heart of the giver, though it is quite common to find yellow or gold khadas as well. *Khadas* can be presented at any festive occasion to the host or at weddings, funerals, births, graduation, arrivals and departure of guests, etc. The *khada* is a strong signifier of Tibetan influences on the different communities in the eastern Himalayas.

28 The Bihari Muslims are *jat/zat* conscious and maintain a distance from Nepali Muslims whom they believe to be polluted because of their marital alliance with the locals. They claim higher social position in the community hierarchy. The elite Muslim families also belong to this group and economically these groups are in much better position. Bihari Muslims are of diverse occupational backgrounds.

29 For this study I use the term 'Gorkha'/Gorkhey'/'Gorkhali' as a blanket term to denote all

any other community identity and cannot be undermined in any situation (Chakraborty and Chakraborty 2016). The distinction between the 'Nepali Muslim identity' and the 'Gorkha/Gorkhey Muslim identity' is that while the former is more linked to the linguistic notions of community that is the native Nepali-speaking Muslims who are the descendants of the native converts to Islam, the latter is more of an emic restyling of the self-identity of the native Nepali-speaking Nepali Muslims in and around Darjeeling hills. The 'Gorkha/Gorkhey Muslim identity' is visualised as being more authentic and truer to the two identities cusped into one, i.e., the lineage of the Bir Gorkha identity (subsumed into a Pahadey/Pahadi identity) with that of Muslim identity (projected as a unified marker amidst fissures). Also, the 'Gorkha/Gorkhey Muslim identity' has evolved as a politically significant and presumably empowered identity amidst the second wave of Gorkhaland Movement post-2007 (Chakraborty 2016). Unlike the *Chiyasi ko Andolan* (1986 Gorkhaland Movement), under the current imbroglio (resurgence of ethnic political consciousness in the hills), a strong tilt towards 'being Pahadey/Pahadi', and wearing the Gorkha/Gorkhey identity as a badge is evident in the Muslims as a community, whether native Nepali-speaking or otherwise. This is a comfortable turncoat situation, breaking the earlier stereotypes of the 'Nepali Muslim' as the Arzal, the unclean subaltern, the 'Dalit Muslims', or the *kafir* among the Muslims. Rather, the new self-definition as 'Gorkha/Gorkhey Muslims' allows for easy crossovers within the Muslims as believers and followers.

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ethnic tribes/people who migrated from Nepal to British India and who speak *Khas Kura*, the lingua franca of Nepal. The present work does not intend to delve into the debates on the correct nomenclature for the said group as argued by A.C. Sinha in the Prologue to Sinha and Subba (2003). Moreover, I consider it more appropriate to refer to the said group as 'Gorkha'/Gorkhey'/'Gorkhali' because of their colonial linkages as migrants either recruited in the British Indian Army or administration. What is interesting to note is the fact that the term 'Gorkha' is basically the name of a district in present day Nepal, and later the term acquired a special meaning in British martial discourses. The term 'Gorkha' or 'Gorkhey' has got a community appellation and transformed its culture-historical underpinnings into an ethno-political one (B. Golay 2009; P. Golay 2009). I use 'Gorkha' and 'Gorkhey' interchangeably while referring to the community's self-defined identity. The latter though has more poetic connotations associated to it. I acknowledge the insights provided on this by Radha Sharma, Associate Professor, Department of Nepali, St. Joseph's College, Darjeeling.

IV
Tibetan Muslims in the Hills of Darjeeling

Tibetan Muslims (Bhote Muslims and Bhutia Muslims) are a micro-migrant group of the Tibetan exiles in India who migrated alongside their Buddhist counterparts during the early 1960s (Butt 1994). Over the years, Tibetan Muslims have settled in Srinagar, Gangtok, Darjeeling, and Kalimpong in the eastern Himalayas.

The Tibetan Muslim community as a part of the larger 'Tibetans in Exile' have walked a tight rope in order to furnish evidence of their loyalty to the larger encapsulating Tibetan Buddhist identity, and to distance themselves from the more controversial symbols of their religiously informed cultural identity (Fang 1989; Jest 1995). Such a strategy has enabled Tibetan Muslims to elbow out other Muslim groups (Bihari, Bengali, Kashmiri, etc.) in Darjeeling and claim proximity to the exclusivist 'Pahadey identity' ('hill identity' akin to the hegemonic 'Gorkhey identity') in hill towns of eastern Himalayas. Second, in order to gain proximity to the Indian state, they cling to their 'Kashmiri-Ladhaki Muslim' lineage and flaunt the necessary symbols of their associated religious identity. These are much in congruence to the understanding of how people as communities negotiate themselves into becoming 'citizens' in parts and degrees. Critics, however, typecast this in the hills of Darjeeling-Kalimpong-Gangtok as the 'chameleonising tactics' of 'guests', i.e., the Tibetan Muslims (Chakraborty 2017).[30]

As a community, Tibetan Muslims have remained an interesting 'hybrid'31 of Islam (Muslim) and the Buddhist ethnic Tibetan. The initial contacts between the Islamic world and Tibet dates back to the 7th century (Beckwith 1979) and throughout the 12th century (Hoffman et al. 1975). Tibetan Muslims fall roughly in three groups: Kashmiri and Ladhaki, commonly referred as the 'Kha-che' by Tibetan Buddhists; the Chinese Muslims of Turkic and Central Asian origin referred to as 'Ho-po-lings'; and the 'Gharibs' whose origin is obscure (Jest 1995; Nadwi 2004; Sheikh 1991;

30 The description of the 'chameleon' is interesting at one level because of the superficial ability to mix with the disparate communities in the hills; second, because it very strongly brings to the fore the issue of 'trust', and trust issues question and further reverberate community social imaginaries in operation, and unleash a wave of doubt/suspicion rooted in their religiously garnered identities as 'Muslims'.

31 Though 'hybrid' is considered to be largely banal, I prefer to retain the word 'hybrid' for this enmeshed identity rather than the more convenient term 'Creole' precisely because the latter is more relevant in the context of colonisation and the colonial experience while the former can be safely used in any other social, cultural, political context.

Siddiqui 1991). The Za'idah[32] are naturalised Kashmiri Muslim Tibetans and speak Tibetan language, use the Tibetan traditional clothing, and have married Tibetan women.[33] However, following the Chinese occupation of Tibet, Tibetan Muslims of Kashmiri origin migrated to India between 1959 and 1962 (Nadwi 2004). These Tibetan Muslims organised themselves and approached the Indian mission in Lhasa to claim Indian citizenship for their escape. They petitioned to the then head of Indian counsel P.N. Kaul, referring to their Kashmiri ancestry, and sought permission to return to Kashmir and claim Indian citizenship. The Chinese started torture and extortion of these Muslims for the fulfilment of their demand. In the meantime, Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru's office requested the Chinese government, through diplomatic channels, to allow these Muslims to 're-migrate' to India (Nadwi 2004). Butt (1994) mentions that as many as 124 Muslim families were escorted by the Chinese army to the Nathu La border of Sikkim in 1960. They were welcomed by the Indian government and shifted to temporary colonies in Gangtok, Kalimpong, and Darjeeling. Thereafter, a majority of Tibetan Muslims were relocated to Srinagar from 1961-64, but about 50 such families were sheltered in the towns of Darjeeling and Kalimpong (Butt 1994).[34]

In these transit settlements, the Tibetan Muslims have easily put to use their ancestral community forte in trade-mercantile activities and have excelled as shopkeepers, selling an array of items from cheap Chinese clothes and shoes to Tibetan handicrafts, supply of meat to the *butcherkhana*, and as hoteliers providing services to the tourists in these hill towns. In Darjeeling, the Tibetan Muslim families control majority of the garment business and

32 *Za'idah* is the term used to denote the Kashmiri Muslims (lit., *Kha-che* in Tibetan) born in Tibet. The Tibetan word to describe the variegated collective of Muslim people from the trans-Himalayan borderlands of Kashmir and Ladakh is '*Kha-che*'. The *Za'idah* are the largest group among the *Kha-che* or Kashmiri Muslims (Atwill 2018).

33 Historical records regarding the penetration of Islam in Tibet establishes the fact that there was a close trade relation with Arab traders who often came to Tibet via Samarkhand, Kashgarh, and Ladakh. Muslim rulers of these places later attacked Tibet and successfully preached Islam in the places adjoining the traditional old Tibet trade route. It is agreed that the Tibetan Muslims are the descendants of Muslim traders or merchants who came from these regions between the 12th and 16th centuries, married Tibetan women and settled permanently. They enjoyed special privileges and were treated as the 'Ornaments of Lhasa' (Akasoy, Burnett and Yoeli-Tlalim [2011] 2016).

34 Butt (1994) mentions that initially the Indian mission at Tibet accepted a few Muslim families as Indian and gave them white paper for citizenship on the basis of the following criteria: 1) permanent domicile remained in the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir; 2) who visited India from time to time; 3) one of the parents or grandparents was born in undivided India.

sell woollen garments, Tibetan dress and contemporary 'western' styled garments. Most of these shops are in Mahakal market (near GPO building) and Chowrasta. Some have enterprisingly ventured in operating tourist taxis in the hill towns of Darjeeling and Kalimpong. The younger generation being trilingual (able to speak Tibetan, Hindi/Urdu and Nepali) have taken advantage of educational facilities assured by the Government of India in the form of the Central School for Tibetans at the Hermitage, and higher education in the hills, as well as outside West Bengal. The visibility of the Tibetans (Bhote, Buddhist, and Muslims alike) in the economic sphere has been perceived as 'threatening' by the larger Gorkha people claiming to be true 'locals' of the *pahad* (hills).[35] In fact, their marked presence in public offices in the hills has been humorously put as the '*gumbaisation* of the office', i.e., the conversion of the public office to a monastery due to the overwhelming presence of the 'Bhote' (aka the 'Lama/Pala') through affirmative action of the Indian state.[36]

Tibetan Muslims are endogamous and generally marry within their own community. Marriage by negotiation is most common.[37] Cousin marriage of both types is very common.[38] Marriage customs are organised as per Islamic law and rules, with considerable local influences through acculturation. For instance, the wedding attire and foods served during marriages are almost identical to the Tibetan Buddhists, but we do see strong influences of Kashmiri ceremonial *wazwan* meal of 30 or 40 dishes.

35 It is to be noted that the Gorkha people do not fine-tune the distinction between the Indian Bhote community residing in the same region and the Tibetan Bhote (Buddhist or Muslims or Christian). For the Gorkha, i.e., the Nepali speaking community, all Bhote (including Tibetans, Sherpas, Bhutias) can be clubbed into the image of the 'pala' and 'amala'. Pala (lit., father in Tibetan/Bhote) and Amala (lit., mother in Tibetan/Bhote) holding on to their traditions, wearing their ethnic costumes and conversing in pidgin Nepali in the bazaars while interacting with other communities feeds the gaze of the Nepali/Gorkha community and their angst towards the visibility of the 'others'. The contests in visibility among communities in eastern Himalayas reflects how the notion of 'ethnosymbolism' in exile and how a multiversal and seemingly polarised notions of 'being Tibetan' in diaspora and contested frames of Tibetanness, becomes meaningfully engaged by those far from home and those trying to find a home in themselves, or in other words taking their home with and within themselves.

36 The humour in the term 'gumbaisation of the office' reflects the societal actuality or popular sentiments through popular aphorism.

37 Tibetan Muslims living in Srinagar make marriage alliances with their relatives in Darjeeling and Kalimpong and vice versa.

38 Majid (55-year-old Tibetan Muslim). Personal Interview. Darjeeling. 11 August 2013; Shakeel Sherub (23-year-old Tibetan Muslim). Personal Interview. Darjeeling. 15 September 2013; Shohrub (28-year-old Tibetan Muslim). Personal Interview. Darjeeling. 15 September 2013.

Marriages mostly take place at the *Anjuman* hall. Also, dowry is not taken by the bridegroom.[39]

Both nuclear and joint families are prevalent among the Tibetan Muslims in Darjeeling town. The traditionally Tibetan Muslim joint family system has been facing stiff challenges amidst modernity and urban space crunch. Life in exile has affected the pattern of socio-cultural life of the Tibetan Muslims. However, family continues to be patrilineal and daughters leave the parental home post marriage. Kinship continues to be a stronghold of the socio-cultural life of the Tibetan Muslims. Women take charge as homemakers, child-bearers and rearers, business help, etc.

In Tibet, they had their own political unit of council of elders comprising five men known as *ponj*.[40] The *ponj* and the Dalai Lama had mutual reverential relations. The Tibetan Muslims in India are still trying to maintain the *ponj* or council of elders. The constraints of living in exile has weaned many of the traditional aspects of the community and the *ponj's* responsibility lies in retaining these lost lineages. The *ponj* runs its affair from two different places: one from Srinagar which controls the Tibetan Muslims in Kashmir, and the other from Kalimpong which controls the Tibetan Muslims in Darjeeling, Kalimpong, and Kathmandu (Nepal).[41] In addition to their traditional political unit, the Tibetan Muslims in Darjeeling and Kalimpong have established a 'welfare association'[42] to look after matters related to socio-economic issues of the community.

Some Closing Observations

Observing the Darjeeling Muslim society unveils sharp degrees of social gradations and inter-ethnic stratifications. The Muslims in the town are divided into three broad categories in terms of their ethnic markers and

39 Majid (55-year old Tibetan Muslim). Personal Interview. Darjeeling. 11 August 2013; Shakeel Sherub (23-year-old Tibetan Muslim). Personal Interview. Darjeeling. 15 September 2013; Shohrub. (28-year-old Tibetan Muslim). Personal Interview. Darjeeling. 15 September 2013.

40 The *ponj* committee elect a leader from among themselves known as the *mia*. Tibetan Buddhists and others called this leader the *kache gopa*. The *ponj* follow the Shariat laws.

41 Majid (55-year-old Tibetan Muslim). *Personal Interview*. Darjeeling. 11 August 2013.

42 The Indian Tibetan Muslim Welfare Association was established in 1961 in Kalimpong by some notable elder Tibetan Muslims for the development of the community. Initially, the association looked after the matters related to the socio-economic problems. But soon, it began to control all the problems including social and familial disputes in the community. At present, the association only looks after Tibetan Muslims living in Darjeeling, Gangtok and Kalimpong and all the Tibetan Muslims living there are members of the association. There are seven executive members in the association. This association does not have any connection with the association in Srinagar.

occupational backgrounds like in other parts of India, the Asraf, Ajlaf (Aam) and Arzal (Frietag 1988). The upper class Ajlaf, which includes the economically well-to-do Bihari, Kashmiri, and Tibetan Muslims, do not have close social relations with lower classes, particularly the Arzal which includes Nepali Muslims; the same way Nepali Muslims do not normally have close social relations with Bihari, Tibetan or Kashmiri Muslims of Asraf category. Though 'purity-pollution' (*chua-chut*) and commensality is not practised among them, each of these groups practise endogamy within their own *jat/zat* and *birathery*. The Kashmiri Muslim and the Tibetan Muslim always develop affinity within their own social group and strictly follow 'the rule of endogamy'. But, the Bihari Muslim and Nepali Muslim families are more open in marital relationships as these two social categories are highly heterogeneous and stratified in various *jat/zat* and *biratheries.* The upper-class Bihari Muslims or Asraf and Ajlaf never seek marriage alliance with the unclean occupational groups, the Arzal (Nepali Muslim).

With changing times, the traditional occupational lines are being contested, transgressed and circumvented as we find that many of the *jat/zat* and *birathery* members do not profess their traditional occupation. The gradually decreasing traditional *jat/zat* and *birathery* arrangement is being replaced by the new type of social stratification of 'status group'—*raees* (lit., chief, leader, affluent, propertied) and *garib* (lit., poor, indigent, fortuneless, penurious). And, very interestingly, the traditional *jat/zat* and *birathery* system also has a shadow on these 'status groups'. The Asraf families, because of their economic progression, scaled up the social ladder of the Muslim community and were identified as *raees aadmi*. The control of the *Anjuman* administration was under them and even the government agencies took their advice on various issues pertaining to the Muslims in Darjeeling. Kashmiri and Tibetan Muslim families along with few Bihari Muslim families over the years were categorised as *raees*. The *garib* included the marginal occupational categories of Bihari and more particularly the Nepali Muslim groups. They formed the bottom of the social ladder of the Muslims in terms of social prestige and power. But with the political wave of Gorkhaland movement post-2007, the equations of the *raees* and *garib* is slowly, yet surely, witnessing a change. The politically charged identity consciousness of Nepali Muslims (Arzal) now stand raised, and like their ethnic affiliates of the hills, they have raised voice in favour of the Gorkhaland movement of Darjeeling hills. They have asserted their claims as 'locals' and have taken over control of the administration of *Anjuman,* and displaced the Ashraf. The pressure unleashed by the Gorkhaland movement with its current pronounced ethnic overtones has compelled

the Nepali Muslims (Arzal) and other *garib* to cling to the local Pahadey/ Pahadi connections and exhibit their 'localness'.[43]

As elsewhere in South Asia, in Darjeeling conversion to Islam does not result in the complete snipping of ties with the older religious belief system. In other words, caste hierarchy and the everyday religious underpinnings of the life world continue to hold on and anchor themselves in the new proselytised setting of Islam (Ahmad 2000; Amin 2005; Dale 1980; Gottschalk 2004; Marranci 2008). Islam in the eastern Himalayas and the consciousness of 'being Muslim' in the hills of Darjeeling demystifies the popular monolithic conceptualisation of Islam and Muslims (Fazal 2014; Marranci 2008; Siddiqui 2004).

Bringing the discussion to a close, the paper indicates two things. First, the 'indigenous converts, always bears the ethnic characters of their regions' (Mandelbum 1970). Second, there were marked time frames in which Islam penetrated itself into South Asia through diverse routes, and embossed its entries in milestones, monuments, and memory, thereby ensuring that 'Islam would present itself to the peoples of South Asia in many different epiphanies seen from many angles' (Hardy 2008, 282).

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43 Zakeeyha (a Nepali-speaking youth born to a Bihari Muslim father and a mother of Kashmiri descent). Personal Interview. Darjeeling. 8 March 2014.

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Summer Farmers, Winter Traders
Loba's Adaptation through Changing Socio-Political Times

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Introduction

The Lobas have always been subsumed and studied under broader and with various other categories of mountain/border people. Mustang, the home of the Lobas, is referred to as the 'lost Tibetan kingdom' and the Lobas share cultural, religious, trade and kinship ties with Tibet. As trans-Himalayan salt traders, they are overshadowed by the Thakalis with whom they were forced to trade their salt after they were awarded the customs contracts on salt and wool in the area in 1862 (von Furer-Haimendorf [1975] 1988). The Lobas are also closer to other Mustangis from lower down the Kaligandaki river with whom they share certain cultural affinities, and with other mountain people with whom they share the traits of the mountain and border people such as cultural practices, religion, language, and food crops. The Lobas and their ways of living have been studied through other people[1] because of their location in a geographically difficult and sensitive border location ('forbidden kingdom')[2], especially after 1959 when Tibet was forcibly occupied by China, just as Nepal was opening to the outside world and attracting academic attention and scholarly scrutiny.

Mustang lies in the rain shadow of the Himalayas, and hence it has

1 The paper shows, in the absence of systematic study, most of the early information on the Lobas have come to us through anecdotal or very [unreliable] old sources or the studies on the Thakali community and their role in the [salt] trade through the Kaligandaki river.

2 Mustang is often referred to as 'forbidden kingdom of Tibet' due to its close historical and cultural affinity to Tibet; its first rulers being from western Tibet and the King of Mustang held special autonomy over this region until 2008 as part of the erstwhile Kingdom of Nepal.

arid desert-like conditions. Mustang can be divided into lower and upper regions by geography, ecology, and ethnicity/culture: the region below Ghiling, lower Mustang, is inhabited by Thakalis, Tibetan-origin peoples, and other communities, and is fairly green in places with irrigated fields and some forest cover; the region above Ghiling, upper Mustang, is inhabited mainly by Tibetan-origin people who speak a dialect of Tibetan language and practice Buddhism. There are also other communities and nomads in upper Mustang. Upper Mustang area is also called Lo Tsho Dyun. This upper region is the home of the Lobas. The Loba population was 2624 in 2011 (CBS 2012).

Most of upper Mustang is above 3000 meters, and most of it is high-altitude desert-like, steep slopes with some snow-capped mountains. Such an environment makes for a difficult place to live in with 'relative unpredictability, low primary productivity, and high environmental fragility', yet the mountains are also political, and access to and control of trans-Himalayan transport can provide economic advantages as well (Stevens 1993, 57-58). As Mustang lies on an ancient trade route, the Lobas, and the Kingdom of Mustang effectively used their location to their advantage from trade. Like other Himalayan communities, until the 1960s, the Lobas would travel south to barter Tibetan salt with grains from the mid-hills of Nepal, the end of which has led many of them to abandon and develop new subsistence strategies (Stevens 1993). Mountain environments have been characterised as 'regions of difficulty' (Fleur 1919) and 'region of refuge' (Beltran 1967) (both quoted in Skeldon 1985) and 'delicate like islands', yet 'modern' economy can be easily accommodated in these regions (Skeldon 1985). Though the Lobas have adapted to the end of the salt trade with Tibet in the 1960s, their traditional way of life and economic base has been 'irreparably damaged', and with the opening of tourism, like the Sherpas in the east, they will also be 'dependent on the fortunes of an external economy' (von Furer-Haimendorf 1974, quoted in Skeldon 1985).

Although more than 80 per cent of the population of Mustang district claim agriculture to be their primary occupation (DDC Mustang 2014), in upper Mustang, less than 50 per cent of the Lobas own enough land to support themselves; this combined with lack of rain and overuse of agricultural land by humans and animals in the centuries has led to desertification, and the remaining lands also suffer from drying water sources and/or unseasonal floods from melting glaciers (Dhungel 2002). In such harsh environment, the Lobas have always had to practice multiple strategies for survival, which have served them well through the centuries (Tulachan 2003). During the short summer, the Lobas practice agriculture

and animal husbandry that used to form a basis of family wealth, estimated to be between 20,000 to 30,000 animal heads in one village at its height (Tulachan 2003) and forms an important part of the Lobas' livelihood with communal collective care of the animals on rotation (Dhungel 2002). The practice of cross-border transhumance came to an end in 1985 as access to winter pastures in Tibet was denied to the Lobas with the 1983 border protocol, and they had no choice but to head south looking for winter pastures (Tulachan 2003). Though Mustang district has the highest livestock holding in Nepal, more than 27 per cent of the population claims to engage in other economic activities besides agriculture and livestock-rearing, reflecting low landholdings (CBS 2014).

Every plot of available arable land in upper Mustang is cultivated through a series of irrigation canals and planted with barley, buckwheat, peas, mustard, millet; and there is evidence that the region was trading some quantities of these produces with people from downstream of the Kaligandaki river (Gurung 1980). In the past, apple cultivation was only favourable in lower Mustang but due to climate change, people have started to cultivate apple in upper Mustang as well, mostly in Tsarang, Ghami, Dhin, and Surkhang villages (Khattri 2019). Some fields or even entire settlements have long been abandoned either due to irreparable damage to the irrigation canal (von Furer-Haimendorf [1975] 1988; Gurung 1980) or yields falling low (von Furer-Haimendorf [1975] 1988). There is generally one harvest a year. Wheat is sown between February and May and harvested from August to October, barley is sown from October to December and harvested in May to June next year, and buckwheat and mustard are sown in April to May and harvested from August to October (adapted from Tulachan 2003).

Mustang, by virtue of its location along the Kaligandaki river and its difficult terrain, has always had to engage in some form of trade and/or migration as a livelihood strategy. As trans-Himalayan traders, the Lobas used to trade in Tibetan salt which they would barter with grains from the south. Though the once flourishing trade with Tibet ended long ago and trading salt during the winters no longer forms part of their economy, the practice of migrating during winter to escape the cold continues. In more recent times, during the harsh winters, the Lobas travel to the lower midhills as itinerant traders, trading herbs and trinkets, or go to India and Kathmandu on pilgrimage and business.

This paper tries to explore historical routes of the Lobas and how they have adapted to and adopted 'modern economy' to survive as a culture and people as their traditional way of life has been disrupted by political and

economic upheavals of the twentieth century. This paper does not provide any quantitative data on trade, migration, or any other activity per se but tries to portray a community negotiating complex relations with the outside world. While the initial part of the paper focuses on the Mustang region as a whole, the following discussions focus only on the Lobas in upper Mustang as our informants were from there.

The Historical Salt Trade

The Kingdom of Mustang, also known as Lo, came into its own with its founding around 1380 (Shackley 1995) though its early history can be traced back to the seventh century (Jackson 1984) with various rulers and kingdoms of western Tibet and Khasa in western Nepal extending their suzerainty over present-day Mustang district, and during which close cultural and political ties were formed, especially with Tibet (Dhungel 2002). Besides being contiguous with Tibet, Mustang was also close to western Tibet ethnically, linguistically, culturally, and economically and follows the older Sakyapa sect of Buddhism (Dhungel 2002). In fact, the first known ruler (governor) of Mustang was from the Gun-thang region of south-west Tibet (Dhungel 2002) as Lo was regarded as one of the provinces of Tibet (von Furer-Haimendorf [1975] 1988). The ancestors of present titular kings of Mustang were local governors who seem to have chosen to consolidate Mustang into an independent kingdom by 1440 (Dhungel 2002). The reason for attraction and interests of other kingdoms, especially of powerful Jumla, in the affairs of Mustang was its important and lucrative location along the north-south trade route (Dhungel 2002). The domination of Jumla proved disastrous both economically and culturally for the Kingdom of Mustang as it extracted heavy tributes and harassed and exploited Loba traders (Dhungel 2002).

Mustang accepted dependent state status under the Gorkhali rulers in 1786 (Dhungel 2002), which was confirmed by a royal order from King Rana Bahadur Shah to *Raja* Wangyal Dorje of Mustang in 1790. The royal order set out the territories under Mustang and called for the yearly tribute that was paid to Jumla to be paid to the Kathmandu court and the continuation of yearly payments to Lhasa[3] (Naraharinath 1970, cited in Regmi 1970). The Chinese takeover of Tibet in 1959 ended centuries of direct relations with Tibet in terms of cultural, kinship, and trade ties, forcing the Lobas to adapt to and adopt new ways of sustaining themselves. However, as will be

3 Though unclear in the literature, these taxes must be similar to the land taxes to the Nepal government and head tax paid by people of Limi Valley, Humla, to Tibet (Saxer 2013).

seen later, they still managed to keep a close connection with the Tibetans in exile.

This relation with Tibet and the location of Mustang along the Kaligandaki river provided it with advantageous access over this important trade route, though with periodic interruption with the shift in political power in the region. Traditionally, trade with Tibet took the form of barter of grain mainly with and for Tibetan salt though trade with other commodities such as metal-wares, spices, tea, animals, Himalayan herbs also took place (Dhungel 2002). The Lobas would be intermediaries of these goods between the Tibetan traders in the north and important trade centres such as Tukche in the south. Though much has been made of the Thakalis of Tukche while discussing the salt trade through the Kaligandaki river, their position and wealth from the salt did not come from trade as much as it did from institutionalised customs-contracting that was the result of political changes occurring in Kathmandu, as alluded to earlier (von Furer-Haimendorf [1975] 1988). It was most likely the Lobas and people from Baragaon in Mustang and even Dolpo, living further higher up nearer the Tibetan border, who were the actual traders, going to Tibet to barter salt and wool with grains and bringing them into Nepal (Vindig 1988). At one time, only people from Lo and Dolpo were allowed to buy salt in Tibet while other people could only trade in livestock and wool (von Furer-Haimendorf [1975] 1988).

The trans-Himalayan trade used to be a major economic strategy for people living in the northern border areas of Nepal (von Furer-Haimendorf [1975] 1988; Stevens 1993) as there was a great demand for grains in Tibet which in exchange for Tibetan rock salt generated substantial profit, but that relied on 'extended network/complex schedule of movement of men, animals, and commodities' (Ross 1983). Like other trans-border people, the Lobas would go to Tibet from May to October when the Kora-la pass was snow-free to trade for salt and wool with grains in volume. The Lobas would travel to their regular business partners in Tibet to exchange barley and rice for salt. They would transport these commodities on the backs of yaks and goats that numbered in the hundreds as these trade trips had to be taken in groups. In winter (around November and December), Tibetan traders would come to Lo Monthang, the capital of the Kingdom of Mustang, bringing pack animals with loads of salt, wool, and other goods for barter with grains. The Lobas would bring the salt down to the Thakalis in Tukche in Thak-khola region of Mustang, but would not go farther down because of the trails and climate being unsuitable for their animals (Vindig 1988). The Thakalis used to pay for the salt with locally grown barley and rice from

further south. The rice would be brought up in the winter by the traders and *dhakres* (porters) from the mid-hills who would make the trip to Tukche to buy the Tibetan salt with rice.

In 1862, during the Rana regime, a customs post was established in Dana, border town between Mustang and Myagdi district, and a monopoly on salt trade as well as on all the goods passing through the Kaligandaki corridor, including salt, was granted to the customs collector. So the salt traders had to compulsorily sell their salt to the salt contractor or his agents in Tukche (von Furer-Haimendorf [1975] 1988). This monopoly on salt trade by the contractor not only hurt the Lobas, in terms of profitability and flexibility of movement, but also other Thakali traders who started focusing on wool and live animals, or travelled to Kalimpong for purchasing tea to sell it in the Kaligandaki region (Vindig 1988).

With the end of the salt monopoly in 1927 and the establishment of a government customs post in Jomsom, everyone was free to engage in trade. The Lobas would take their salt down to Tatopani or Ghasa, farther south from Tukche, or even to Butwal in the southern plains. These trading trips though dangerous were profitable; for example, the barter rate between salt and rice in Tatopani was 4:5 compared to 6:1 in Lo (Tulachan 2001, cited in Tulachan 2003). Though the amount of this trade for the Lobas cannot be quantified due to lack of data and passage of time, it has been estimated that during 1970s, for a slightly longer trade route (including acquiring salt from Tibet) and cycle (lasting 8–9 months of the year), transporting up to the lower mid-hills (from Jumla), and including sale of animals along the way, profits could be up to 2400 per cent per season (Ross 1983).

After the Chinese takeover of Tibet in 1959, though there was no trade for some four or five years, after agreements between the Nepali and the Chinese government, Lobas were allowed to trade in Tibet but with limitations (further explained below in section 'New Chinese Market Towns'). As the Chinese tightened the grip on the border to prevent Tibetans from fleeing into exile, access to winter pastures in Tibet became restricted. So, starting in the early 1960s, the Lobas mostly from Lo Monthang travelled down south to Pokhara with their horses, donkeys, and mules to escape the harsh winters, and feed themselves and their livestock—transhumance in the other direction to the hills and towns of Nepal. They packed their belongings (clothes, shoes, utensils) along with *tshampa* (ground barley), dried *jimbu* (wild chives), salt, and other items and loaded them on their animals (Tulachan 2003). Older women and men stayed back in the village to look after the houses and also because they were too old for the long journey. Along the way, the Lobas sold *jimbu* and goats and sheep in the

villages of Jomsom, Lete, Tukche, and Dana. They would also travel to remote villages in Myagdi and Baglung districts to trade with Tibetan salt that was still trickling in despite the border controls by China. However, after a motorable track was opened up to Tansen in late 1960s, as part of the Siddhartha Highway linking Bhairahawa in the plains to Pokhara in the mid-hills, cheap Indian salt became available in the midhills and there was no longer any demand for Tibetan salt.

Once in Pokhara, the families with livestock allowed their animals to graze and lived in rented sheds, outbuildings, and shelters (Tulachan 2003). Other family members, mostly the able-bodied, and the families with no livestock, travelled to distant villages and peripheral areas of Pokhara spread across the mid-hills and peddled *jimbu* and other items bought from Pokhara and the villages along the way, such as safety-pins, dried coconuts, *hing* (asafoetida), black salt, plastic earrings, needles, and other smaller necessities (Tulachan 2003). They went house-to-house bartering these goods for corn, millet, maize, and other local produce. They then exchanged it for rice in the stores. The Lobas would then make trips to the Thakali villages in lower Mustang, in between their stay in Pokhara, to store their rice to be taken when the winter ended. Once the snow melted and it got warmer, the Lobas returned home with rice and other grains, picking up their stored rice from lower Mustang, but not in large quantities as most of it got used along the way and throughout the winter.

As the road connectivity from the south to upper Mustang improved in the early 2000s and local economy changed, families stopped rearing horses, mules, and donkeys in large numbers, leading to the end of the large movement of animals to the south. However, Loba youth still travel to the villages in the mid-hills selling *jimbu* and other trinkets and have most recently started carrying winter clothes. Although this trade is not lucrative, it provides the Lobas an opportunity to escape the winter and keep themselves busy, while also having a warmer place to stay.

The Tibetan Connection

As the trade with Tibet came to a halt, the Lobas had to look for other strategies for subsistence which eventually led them to northern India. Mustang also served as a military base for armed Tibetan struggle against the Chinese occupation of Tibet from the late 1950s through 1974 (McGranahan 2010). This extended stay of the Tibetan guerrilla warriors, mostly Khampas (an ethnic group from eastern Tibet), led to their friendships and marriages with the locals. Although some traders involved in trans-Himalayan trade already had connection with the Tibetans in the north, the exodus

of Tibetan refugees extended their relationships beyond their territory of Tibet and Mustang into India. In the 1970s, a few Lobas, mostly those who did not own a house and/or agricultural land, followed their Tibetan friends and kin (by marriage) to northern India to work as labourers on road construction projects in Shimla, Himachal Pradesh, during the summer. During the winter, they again followed the Tibetans who bought factory-made sweaters in Ludhiana and sold them in Banaras. Lobas, due to their close cultural and religious ties to Tibet, easily pass off as Tibetan refugees in India (Tulachan 2003). Hence, it was easier for them to build trust/relationships with wholesalers, lessors, and Tibetan traders in India. Relatives of the first families to migrate to Shimla saw the economic benefits and followed suit.[4] Eventually large numbers of Lobas started travelling to India to sell sweaters during the winter after seeing it as a good source of income and livelihood strategy to buy household necessities sufficient for a year. Around the same time, people from lower Mustang, Baragaon, also migrated to Assam and Nagaland to sell factory-made sweaters bought in Ludhiana (Schuler 1977). About 40-50 Loba families, including families from Baragaon, have settled permanently in Shimla and Assam and run clothing shops there till date.[5]

The Sweater Trade

The major trade destination for Lobas is Banaras, India. A few Lobas go to Shimla and Assam as well. The Lobas travel from their villages to Jomsom to Pokhara to Banaras via the Sunauli border and Shimla and to Assam via the Kakarbhitta border. In the remaining part of the section, we will focus only on the Lobas who travel to Banaras.

The Lobas travel in groups for the sweater trade every winter. As soon as the harvest season ends around early/mid-October, a group of traders leave their villages and head south towards Pokhara via Jomsom (Tulachan 2003). In Pokhara, they exchange currencies (NPR to INR) for expenses on their journey and wire the rest of the cash to a trusted vendor, friend or relative in India. They then wait for the rest of the Loba traders to catch up and take a bus to the Sunauli border together. After crossing the border, they take a bus to the city of Banaras. Once there, each trader rents a threeroom flat, with a kitchen, a bedroom, and a store room for the merchandise. Usually,

4 An 80-year-old Loba woman, one of our respondents for the study, was one of the first few to go to Shimla with her husband in the 1970s. They stayed and worked alongside Tibetan refugees for 11 years and were able to go back to Mustang and build a house for their family.

5 This information is from two Lobas who went to Assam in the winter of 2018/19.

they rent from the same landlord as previous years (Tulachan 2003). The group also fixes their rental agreements with officials who rent out and manage the municipal land where the Lobas set up shops; the Lobas build around thirty makeshift shops with bamboo walls and plastic roofing. A few traders also rent stores outside the market. After setting up the shops and finalising living arrangements, the group travels to the factory town of Ludhiana, Punjab, where they stay for about a week to buy the merchandise of sweaters and jackets from different wholesalers on both credit and cash. After they have bought enough merchandise, they pack them carefully and take it to Banaras on the train. It is a difficult journey due to their large luggage, and they have to face Indian officials in each checkpoint who extort money for the extra baggage (Tulachan 2003). The Lobas pay the bribes and make their way to Banaras where they are joined by the second wave of Lobas who are called *lau* or paid helpers—mostly family members (wife, children, and siblings), relatives, and fellow villagers. Amongst the second wave of Lobas, not all are *lau* of the Loba traders, rather they are hawkers who buy merchandise from the Loba traders on credit to sell those in the streets, villages, train stations, and other public spaces in Banaras, hanging those on their arms and carrying those on their backs. This practice of buying from traders on credit is called *thendi*, and it requires no capital as one can return the merchandise they cannot sell during the day; this provides opportunity for poorer Lobas to trade during the winter.

Cash was always scarce in the Loba community as there was no other source of income besides occasional trade and agriculture. Compared to the Lobas selling trinkets in the mid-hills, sweater trade is riskier and requires larger capital, but it is not as physically challenging. Only Lobas who have enough capital or access to credit are able to engage in the sweater trade (Tulachan 2003). With only a few people with cash (around two-three families in Lo Monthang), the Lobas had to take loans from these local moneylenders at exorbitant interest rates—nine per cent for three months in the 1990s—and make use of their familial and social connections to get access to them.[6] Although traders still take loans for the sweater trade, access to capital has improved and the interest rates have lowered with the cash economy growing at home. Road connectivity, tourism, and migration to foreign countries have created more favourable economic conditions for Loba families and increased their cash-holding as well (further explained below in Section 'The connected future').

The sweater trade has evolved over time for the Lobas. During the 1970s,

6 Interview with a former moneylender from Lo Monthang.

piggybacking on Tibetan refugees, most of the Lobas, poor and cash-stricken, would either work for Tibetan sweater traders or practice *thendi*, buying sweaters from Tibetan traders on credit on a daily account, selling it by the day, and returning any unsold items. From around late 1990s and early 2000s, Lobas were able to borrow money and start their own sweater-selling businesses. During the three winter months, some Lobas even used to rent spaces that were restaurants during other months in the streets of Banaras.

Since the early 2000s, they adapted to a more organised trading model by emulating the Tibetan Refugees Sweater Association in Banaras. In this new model, around 30 traders rent a large plot of government land and build make-shift bamboo shops with plastic roofing and allocate a shop for each trader. The shops are allocated by drawing lots. The market is managed by a committee formed amongst themselves. The committee decides on the dates for travelling to India, opening the market, renting the market space, closing date of the market, management of the market, and other facilitating roles.

The market starts in late October/early November and all the traders are required to open the stores on the same day. Traders who rent stores outside the market run their businesses as they wish. For the traders with stores in the market, they open every day from 8 AM to 9 PM.[7] Each trader has at least two *lau* who are mostly responsible for selling the items, looking after the shop, and/or cooking. Some bigger traders hire eight to ten *lau*. Traders rely mostly on the *lau* to run the business during the day. The traders are only in the stores in the morning during the opening, once in the afternoon, and at night during closing time when they collect cash from the sales. Since the market stalls are make-shift bamboo stores, the traders and *lau* have to set up their merchandise every day and carry the remainder each night to their flats. The market has an official closing day for the season that usually falls at the end of January or early February.

Again, following the Tibetans' example, the committee enforces fixed-price policy in the market, sparing the Lobas from hagglers and price competition amongst themselves. Only after the closing day, are the traders allowed to take their remaining stock and sell outside the market. Some traders who bought stock on credit from the wholesalers return it to them instead of paying cash, some store it for the next year, and some carry it around villages near Banaras and sell it.[8] Every year, the same group travels to India for trade though members can sell or transfer their membership to

7 During the peak season (December and January), they open until 10 PM.

8 In the past, Lobas would sell it at loss towards the end to get rid of the stock (Tulachan 2003).

other Loba families. However, there still are Loba traders outside this group who sell sweaters on the street, go around villages, and rent spaces outside the market to sell sweaters.

After paying for their *lau* and other expenses, an average trader makes about INR 200,000 to 300,000 net profit and a larger trader makes about INR 700,000 to 800,000 net profit per season. With their earnings, the Lobas buy their annual household necessities such as milk powder, Amul[9] butter, blankets, clothes, household items such as utensils, and prayer room items from India, and rice, sugar, and other household necessities from Pokhara or Kathmandu. A few buy jute carpets, bronze utensils, and other items to sell during the bi-annual Chinese market that takes place on the China-Nepal border in upper Mustang. They also take some cash home and some even put their savings in bank accounts or loan it to other traders in India. This way they earn interest and have capital for next year's trade.

The scale of sweater trade has also increased over the years. This is reflected in the increase in capital, profit margins, and wages paid to *lau*. A *lau* is paid about NPR 50,000-60,000 per season now (2019) compared to NPR 4000-6000 in the 1990s (Tulachan 2003, 255). The *lau* usually works for about two years under the trader and then starts his/her own sweater trade. Hence, the number of Loba sweater traders has grown over the years.

Yet, just like the trade in the mid-hills, for most of the small and itinerant traders, the sweater business is not highly profitable and only provides them enough to buy household necessities for the year and a small amount in savings. Regardless, the annual practice of sweater trade has persisted for the past fifty years because it provides numerous social benefits. Many Lobas claim that sweater trade is fun as they get to meet and interact with Lobas from other villages, who they normally would not meet in Mustang, and many youths meet their life partners during this trip as well. Travelling to India each year also provides them a 'sense of place', a time of the year to go to movie theatres, shopping malls, sight-seeing with friends, and other activities. Most importantly, it gives the youth a gainful activity to pursue during the idle winter months as they have nowhere else to go.

The Connected Future

Road Connection

Upper Mustang is no longer the geographically isolated or 'forbidden' place that it used to be. After multi-party democracy was reinstated in Nepal

9 Name of a dairy products brand in India.

in 1990, a motorable road from the Tibetan border to upper Mustang was built by local businessmen, with support from the district headquarters in Jomsom, to bolster their trade relations with Tibet. Although they faced some backlash from the central government who did not want to upset India, they were successful in building the road. Chinese trucks entered upper Mustang for the first time, bringing all kinds of necessities, including cheap rice, beer, sugar, eggs, carbonated drinks, biscuits, blankets, shoes, jackets, furniture, and solar panels for lighting and cooking, among other things. This presented the locals with cheaper goods compared to the expensive (due to high transportation costs) products from the south. However, this Tibetan monopoly did not last long after the motorable road from the south also connected to upper Mustang by 2014/15. Now, markets of upper Mustang display products from the south as well. Some of the popular products from the south are bottled water, rice, fresh produce such as onions, tomatoes, green vegetables, fruits, and meat (chicken, buff) that are not found locally. The road connection has also provided access for both outsiders and Lobas to travel easily, opening more opportunities for trade and mobility. Upper Mustang that was only accessible by walking, on horseback, or helicopter in the past can now be reached on four-wheel-drive vehicles and motorcycles. The locals are also anticipating the official opening of the Kora-la pass which the Nepal government had agreed to open as part of China's Belt and Road Initiative along with five other passes across Nepal's border with Tibet/China. This will significantly impact the local economy, trade, land use, lifestyle, and, as in other Himalayan communities, cause loss and damage to the local culture and infrastructure (Bardecki 2009; Beazley 2013; Beazley and Lassoie 2017; Vanishing Cultures Project n.d.).

Tourism

Although restrictions still apply (vestiges of border sensitivities of both China and Nepal and semblance of attempts at sustainable tourism), upper Mustang, including villages below Ghiling and above Kagbeni, opened to foreign tourists in March 1992 (Shackley 1994). Annapurna Conservation Area Project (ACAP), the National Trust for Nature Conservation (NTNC), implements controlled sustainable tourism in the area, which includes charging permit fee of USD 500 for ten days and USD 10 per day as royalty after ten days to foreigners.[10] Although upper Mustang was promised 60

10 Initially it was USD 1000 in 1992, was lowered to USD 700 the same year, and to USD 500 in 2008.

per cent of the royalty for the local community development projects, the central government in Kathmandu did not release any of this from 1994 to 2007; according to some estimates, only 30 per cent in 2008 and 2009 was released to the District Development Committee in Mustang, leading to a protest by the local upper Mustang youths in 2010 (Craig 2011). The central government, however, does not have a transparent system in place to show the disbursement of the royalties.

The number of tourists visiting upper Mustang has increased over the years from just 483 in 1992 to 3946 in 2018.[11] The number of tourists entering upper Mustang almost doubled between 2007 and 2008 (an increase from 1157 in 2007 to 2194 in 2008), and this can be attributed to the ban on tourists in Tibet by the Chinese government for a few months in 2008 before the Olympics, perhaps indirectly increasing flow of tourists to upper Mustang, the 'forbidden kingdom of Tibet', and other Himalayan destinations of Nepal. Just ten years ago (in 2008), there were only six hotels in upper Mustang, but now there are almost 60 hotels of which 26 are in Lo Monthang alone. Tourism is a lucrative business where hoteliers and service providers are able to earn enough during the tourist season which starts in February/March and ends in October. Families now involved in tourism, mostly from Lo Monthang and Tsarang (two of the largest villages in upper Mustang), who used to migrate to India for trade, have sold their sweater market memberships to others from smaller villages. They spend winters in Pokhara and Kathmandu, taking bakery and/or cooking courses, shopping for their hotel and souvenir shops, and going on pilgrimages. They do not engage in sweater trade in India nor sell trinkets in mid-hills as they have enough to survive through the winter.

However, tourism has directly benefited only a few families who already have better economic and social standing in the community. These families have a monopoly on the teahouses, cafes, hotels, souvenir shops, and transportation in upper Mustang. Hence, the poor with no capital, education, and know-how are not able to benefit as much from tourism, and migrate to India and the mid-hills for trade.

Migration

Seasonal migration has been an important income-diversification and risk-coping mechanism in agriculture-based economies in developing countries where the climate prevents continuous cultivation of agricultural land (Gautam 2017; Macours and Vakis 2010). Most Lobas have been migrating

11 This data was posted on a bulletin board at ACAP office in Lo Monthang.

to escape the harsh winter and supplementing food deficit by trading, migrating with their livestock to greener pastures in Tibet and later in Pokhara, and going on pilgrimages. In the past, the Lobas even migrated west to Dolpo and east to Manang to work on fields while the agricultural workload was low at home. However, recently the Lobas have been engaged in longer-term international migration and have migrated for work in large numbers to Japan, the US, France, and South Korea. International migration of the Lobas started in the late 1980s and early 1990s when the first few Lobas went to Japan and the US respectively.[12] Since then, many have moved beyond these countries, doing low-skilled jobs and facilitating the migration of their families, relatives, and fellow villagers. Although the Lobas in Japan are not able to get permanent residency, most Lobas in the US have secured permanent residency, allowing them to bring their families with them and settling there more permanently (Craig 2004). Currently, there are more than 150 Loba families in the US.[13] Most recently in 2010s, young Lobas have started migrating to France for low-skilled jobs and a few have secured permanent residency as well.[14]

Remittances from international migration have had significant impact on the Lobas, their lifestyle and economy. Many have built homes and bought property in Pokhara and Kathmandu, providing a space for their family members and relatives to stay during the winter. Many former traders whose children or siblings have migrated abroad no longer go for sweater trade or to the mid-hills as they can afford to live in the cities during the winter. Most of the Lobas who have migrated to the US and Japan are from Lo Monthang and Tsarang, and those from smaller villages north of Lo Monthang have migrated to France. In addition, remittances have also provided an extra channel of capital for sweater traders and hoteliers who are now able to make larger investments and earn more. Many oldergeneration Lobas whose children are abroad live in Kathmandu and Pokhara the year-round, looking after their grandchildren who go to private schools in the cities.

12 Interview with a former broker who used to help with the migration of the Lobas to Japan and the US.

13 Personal communication to the authors by the representative of Lo Nyamship Association USA Inc, a non-profit organisation formed by the Lobas in New York and New-Jersey; they keep records of the Lobas in the US and organise Loba cultural and religious activities there.

14 Interview with a young Loba sweater trader.

New Chinese Market Towns

After an agreement with the Nepal government in early 1960s, the Chinese allowed the Lobas to trade in a designated area called Likche in Tibet where the Chinese had built temporary tents/shelter for the market (Tulachan 2003). However, this was frequently interrupted by the Tibetan guerrilla warriors, Khampas, who were residing and operating against the Chinese army from Mustang until they were driven out by the Nepali army in 1974. Later in the 1990s, the Loba traders made agreements with the Chinese officials to set up the annual market fair in Neychung, north of Lo Monthang, and in Tibet alternately. This took place for a few years but due to security reasons and management problems, the market fair only takes place in Tibet now. The fair takes place two times a year, first in July and then in October; the market is open for about two to three weeks. People stay in tents there throughout the fair and some even set up restaurants and bars. People trade in all kinds of products, including carpets, watches, utensils, food items, animals, thermos and cups, both in cash and as barter. Instead of horses and yaks, the Lobas and Tibetans now travel to the market fair in bikes, jeeps, and trucks.

Conclusion

The Lobas are again on the cusp of a new beginning. After more than twelve centuries of geographical isolation, the Lobas were forced to move out of their mountain home beginning from the second half of the twentieth century as the world around them suddenly collapsed and their traditional ways of economic life as Tibetan salt traders slowly died. This journey outward took them to the mid-hills of Nepal and to its cities in search of livelihood options. They even reached India, following their Tibetan trading partners and kinfolk, to escape the harsh winters and supplement their meagre cash incomes. And they have migrated to other countries as well for work and new beginnings. However, as the Lobas adapt themselves to their surroundings, their isolation has been physically breached with the opening of the Kaligandaki corridor road project that connects India in the south to Tibet in the north. This road connection to the outside world means the Lobas' splendid isolation has finally come to an end, and even though restrictions still apply, outsiders can finally visit their place as tourists and traders. The Lobas have adapted quickly to serve the tourists, and have again started looking at the economic potential of the north-south road connection. So again, the Lobas find themselves trying to negotiate a complex situation which is not of their own making. They are now expected to preserve their culture as the last Tibetan kingdom on the road to modern

economy and its attendant distractions, and also take advantage of their location on the new trade route.

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Cultural Tourism
An Ethnographic Study of Homestay in Briddim Village, Nepal[1]

Tek Bahadur Dong

Introduction

When I reached Pema Homestay, I saw Neema, the owner of the homestay, and her assistants, Pema and Kaanchi, preparing breakfast for trekkers. Neema was in ethnic costume wearing syama (coat), angdu (long garb), pangap (back-apron), che (waist-belt), and budil (earrings), but the two young girls were dressed in T-shirts and trousers (see Figure 1). When breakfast was ready, Pema served it to the trekkers who were sitting outside in the garden. They were a group of four Singaporeans who were heading to Syafrubesi, a tea house destination on the Tamang Heritage Trail and the Langtang trek. Six Canadians were also sitting in chairs in the garden. I noticed that four of them were students and two were teachers. Around 45 minutes later, I saw Neema come along with her one-month-old baby in a bamboo basket and walk around the dining room. In general, the host/owner walk around the tourists to ensure that the tourists are happy and satisfied with their food and the service.

1 This paper is part of my M. Phil. dissertation in Anthropology. I would like to thank Prof. Dr. Ram Bahadur Chhetri (Dissertation Supervisor), Dr. Dambar Chemjong (External Examiner) and Assoc. Prof. Dr. Bhanu Timisina (Dissertation Committee Member) for their insightful comments on my thesis. Also, I would like to remember and thank all my research participants from the study area, and Social Science Baha for giving me an opportunity to present my paper in The Annual Kathmandu Conference on Nepal and the Himalaya, held on 24-26 July 2019, Kathmandu. I also extend my acknowledgement to Shalini Gupta who read my paper carefully, almost each word and sentence, and gave me constructive comments and feedback. I have greatly benefited and succeeded in shaping this paper.

Figure 1: Breakfast preparation by owner and her assistant; Neema (right), is wearing a traditional costume and Pema (left) is wearing T-shirt and trousers.

Source: Fieldwork 2017

Later, Neema came into the garden and arranged a mattress for oil massage for her child. The Canadian girls were very interested to look at the baby boy; they took a few pictures and observed the baby for a while. This natural performance represents a little picture of homestay where tourists can interact directly with the host families, observe their daily lives and the socialisation process.

This study is an ethnographic study of homestay tourism in Nepal that explores how local people interpret culture as resource to operate their homestay, and examines the cultural exchange resulting from the interaction between two different societies and peoples (the locals and the tourists). The paper starts by providing a context of homestays, followed by research gap and research methods. The discussion section revolves around how the host society and tourists influence each other's social and cultural values, and the cultural changes they experience as a result of their interaction with each other.

Context

The word 'homestay' first appeared in the American periodical *Vermon Life* in 1956 to refer to the programme 'Experimental for International Living' where foreign students stayed in locally-owned Japanese houses (Boenig and Davis 2000). Homestay became a tourism product for the first time in 1970 when Taquile Island community, Peru, provided accommodation for the tourists. The community distributed tourists on a traditional rotate system through which each host homestay received an equal number of

tourists. The homestay concept turned into a cultural exchange programme with the arrival of Japanese youths in the 1980s. The community-based practices of the Taquile community and the accommodations of Japan would determine what homestays would look like in the world.

The concept of homestay tourism emerged with the development of community-based tourism in 1970 as critique of mainstream tourism that seemed to have excluded vulnerable groups, thus depleting indigenous culture. Community-based tourism involves collective ownership and management of tourism assets (Mitchell and Muckosy 2008), and limits the negative effects of economic behaviour on the local environments and cultures while fostering cross cultural relationships (Zurick 1992). Accordingly, Chambers (1983) elaborated that development can be productive if poor, marginalised, and vulnerable groups are kept at the centre. World Commission on Environment and Development (1987) and the Rio Earth Summit (1992) further suggested that states recognise and duly support indigenous communities' identity, culture and interest to enable effective participation in the achievement of sustainable development (Carnaffan 2010; Mitchell and Muckosy 2008).

In Nepal, the practice of homestay emerged in the mid-1990s, nearly four decades after Nepal became officially open to Westerners. The government published a new *Tourism Master Plan* in 1972 which was followed by *Policy Document for Tourism Sector* in 1995 (MacLennan, Dieke and Thapa 2000, quoted in Lim 2007), and *Village Tourism Policy 1995* (Pradhanang 2009). Similarly, *Tourism Policy 2008* highlighted the extension and diversification of tourism activities and creation of self-employment opportunities targeting the rural poor people. In order to fulfil the objectives of the tourism policy and support Nepal Tourism Year 2011 and Vision 2020, homestay was introduced along with *Homestay Working Procedure 2010* (Acharya and Halpenny 2017; MTCA 2010; Sharma 2012). Homestay was established with the support of Tourism for Rural Poverty Alleviation Programme (TRPAP). TRPAP was part of the *Tenth Plan (2002-2007)* and was designed to use tourism as a poverty alleviation tool and enhance employment opportunities in rural areas (MTCA 2010).

Literature Review

Homestay is a cultural tourism product that has now become a popular choice for tourists not only because of the low budget required for lodging and food, but also because it offers an experience of authentic culture in a new society. Over the years, many researchers have carried out studies on various topics related to homestays to primarily understand local customs

and the impact of tourism on the host community. For example, Richardson (2004) explores the case in Australia where the hosts considered their homestay students as members of their extended family; however, they maintained their social relationship based on what is popularly known as a pseudo-parental role, i.e., the host family treated the students neither as a guest, and nor as they would treat their own children. The hosts taught the international students in their care how to clean, look after themselves when sick, and advised on choice of clothes suitable for Melbourne's changeable weather (Richardson 2004, 5). Although Richardson mentions that the guest students carried impressions of Australia back to their own countries, the paper does not illustrate the types of impression on students.

Most homestays in Malaysia are operated on the beachside villages and the host families are mostly led by women. Women are responsible for the hospitality services as well as for preparing meals for their husbands. Aziz and Selmat (2016) have identified this dual performance of women in Malaysia. The authors write, 'these women had unconsciously performed a "staged performance" when there are tourists around. Their daily activities are considerably different from what they "show" to their guests' (Aziz and Selmat 2016, 73). Therefore, the research concludes that 'tourist experience' is a production of 'staged' performance in order to create an 'authentic' experience. This study has explored the dual performances of host community which has not been studied in Nepal.

A broader definition of homestay in Thailand highlights social interactions and cultural exchange among the host societies and tourists. Tourists staying in rural areas of the country can have a local experience as they observe lifestyles, interact, and engage in cultural exchange with the host family and visitors (Boonratana 2010). He talks about how both hosts and tourists benefited from social interactions and learning about new cultures, but his analysis does not incorporate tourists' learnings from the host community.

The trend of homestay in Nepal is slightly different from other countries. The government has suggested host communities to conduct cultural programmes such as traditional games, cultural performances, and welcome and farewell programmes according to local customs for guests (MTCA 2010). Kunwar and Pandey (2014) describe that homestays in Gatlang village offer tourists close interaction with the hosts' lifestyle, domestic activities, sleeping pattern, cooking systems, dressing pattern, and human behaviour. However, with the initiation of homestay at this village, the host community also got acculturated with the tourists' practices in food, dress and values and norms; this poses a threat to the authenticity of the

hosts. However, their study has not explored the acculturation of tourists after they visited this village.

The above studies reveal that scholars have explored the impacts of tourism on the host society and its culture, but have not covered the aspect of how tourists were impacted by the host community's culture and traditions. There is some literature on homestay tourism in the field of cultural tourism; however, none of the available literature deals adequately with the everyday lived experience in homestays. Identifying these research gaps, I have tried to study the impacts on tourists from the host culture and traditions of Tamang people in Briddim village. I have focused on changes in lifestyle, feelings and thoughts, and attempted to derive new anthropological knowledge in tourism.

Research Methods

The fieldwork for this research was done in Briddim village near the Nepal-Tibet border in Rasuwa district in April-May 2017. I stayed in the study site for two weeks of the fieldwork. Although the duration of fieldwork was short, I had had a chance to visit the village before my research for a period of more than a month as a research assistant and tourism entrepreneur. Hence, my previous stay and research experiences also helped me in complementing my reduced length of stay during fieldwork, especially as I required less time for rapport building with the local people during the fieldwork.

This research is based on primary data, and secondary data is applied as necessary. Secondary data collected from existing literature helped in developing research questions, engaging with relevant theories, analysing and interpreting data, and also served as a guideline to understand national and international practices of homestay tourism. Primary data was gathered through fieldwork using various ethnographic methods, such as participant observation, key informant interview, life history, informal discussion, and pictures and videos. I also gathered old collections of photos from physical albums of villagers and downloaded pictures from social media to understand cultural practices and the past scenario of the village. Since this study deals with an analysis of people's meanings, their feelings, perceptions, emotions, thoughts, ideas, and beliefs (Brewer 2000), I adopted an emic approach to understand their social world and how they themselves created and defined the meaning of homestay.

Study Setting

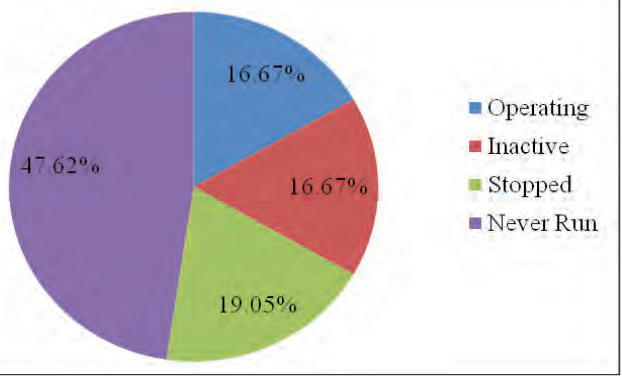
Briddim village is situated in the north-western part of Rasuwa district in Langtang National Park at an altitude of 2,229 metres. At the time of my

fieldwork, there were 42 households and 175 individuals (51.86 per cent male and 49.14 per cent female) in the village. All of them are from the Tamang ethnic group and follow Buddhism. The people of this village have a close affinity with Tibetan Buddhism and said that they are descendants of Tibetan immigrants who came to Nepal about a century ago. According to local mythology, the village's name (Briddim) is derived from the disappearance of a yak's feet in Briddim when a yak and a bull ran from Tibet to escape the Tibetan king's order to slaughter them for the feast in a wedding ceremony. 'Briddim' is composed of two words: 'bri' meaning feet and 'thim' denoting disappearance (Dong 2017).

At this village, each household has created a space to worship Buddhist deities. Poor people display posters of deities while wealthy families used deities of copper decorated with holy books, *thanka* painting, colourful *khadas* (a traditional ceremonial silk scarf), and prayer flags. Every morning, the male head of the household places fresh water in seven copper or brass bowls. Then, he takes the small worship pot to the kitchen to fill it with charcoal and incense. After this, he offers the incense to the gods and walks around the house to each corner carrying this smoking incense. It is a way of paying respect to the Buddhas. He asks the gods for success, protection from harm, material prosperity, and good health. Any member of the family can perform this daily ritual in the absence of the head member of the family.

Homestays have been in operation in Briddim village since 2001 and have become an important profession. TRPAP played a significant role in promoting the operation of homestays in the village by providing complementary tour and training for the villagers. The tour was held in Sirubari village, Syangja district, and trainings were provided at the village,

Figure 2: Status of homestay



Fieldwork 2017

and it included topics such as cooking, sanitation, housekeeping and management, and basic English conversation. The objective of this tour and training was to educate local people to enhance their skills and abilities for customer service. Today, this occupation has become a prestigious and profitable business for many men and women because they accumulate a large amount of money through this compared to other occupations. The popular homestay operators thus feel a superior status compared to others in the village. In other words, homestay has produced a new social/economic value in the village. However, after the massive earthquake of April-May 2015, it has become challenging for them to operate this business. In 2017, only seven households (16.67 per cent) were operating homestay, while seven other homestays were inactive as their homes were destroyed by the earthquake, and eight (19.05 per cent) homestays were completely shut down (see Figure 2).

Through a household survey, it was found that 20 households (47.62 per cent) had never run a homestay. With the introduction of homestay in the village, local people began to directly earn money by renting their rooms and selling handicrafts such as hats, *pangap*, gloves, socks, etc. Although many popular homestays and elites reaped most of the benefit from increased local tourism opportunities by capitalising on their social network, the poorer families also benefited somewhat from the homestays. Those families that did not operate homestays supplied snacks and drinks for tourists' welcome and farewell programmes, and also during trainings of homestay to the homestay operators. This way, the homestay proprietors as well as the general population benefited from this occupation.

Study Findings

In the following sections, I will first explain the features of homestay and illustrate the touristic amenities present when homestay tourism was developed in the village. Next, the living culture of host community, their traditions, meals, and accommodation and link that with the way it is perceived by the tourists will be discussed. I will conclude with a discussion of cultural change in both the hosts and the tourists as a result of their interactions and exchange of each other's cultural norms and values.

What Does a Homestay Look Like?

Traditionally, all the houses in Briddim have been a double-storey structure made of stone walls (without using clay), and are decorated with Tibetan wooden architecture. The ground floor is mostly used for storage of firewood and food grains, and some houses also have a loom,

generally used to produce traditional handicrafts. Women still weave and wear traditional clothing, hats, bags, belts, socks, and gloves. The houses have an outside staircase leading to the upper floor area where people live, worship, cook, and sleep. Usually there are only two sleeping rooms and the hearth is located in the middle of the dining room in the upper floor. The right corner is decorated with Buddhist deities, while the area on the left is filled with kitchen utensils and food grain containers.

Homestays are operated by family members, so there is no 'trained' receptionist, manager, waiter, cook, or other workers like in a hotel or a lodge. In general, female family members and neighbours are usually seated around the hearth, while senior males of the same family and neighbourhood are seated on a wooden bench in descending order according to their socio-economic position. Mostly, the poor neighbours sit close to the entrance door, and each visitor usually would know his/her sitting place. Guests and tourists stay in the middle as a sign of respect from the host. Therefore, while sitting for meals or drinks or otherwise in the dining room, the tourists can closely observe activities for religious worship, meal preparation, and other everyday activities, while also being close to the seating of different villagers who drop by the household.

In the past, there used to be no dining room in the houses in Briddim, and people sat on the wooden floor. Some people used yak pelts as sleeping mattress. With the impact of globalisation and the most recent April-May 2015 earthquake, many traditional interior design practices have changed, focusing specially on the needs of the tourists. The homestays now have modern facilities such as beds with mattresses, toilet, shower, and tables and chairs, although very basic. The interior walls of the bedrooms are separated by plywood; so when tourists are present, there is a loss of privacy in communication for the hosts. Instead of wood, many houses now use glass, both in windows and in the dining room. The rooftop is now furnished with zinc sheets instead of pangyap (wooden tiles). The houses are usually not well-insulated from cold and wind, but few homestays also have a facility of non-smoky heated firewood dining (see Figure 3D). In the dining area, there are now long dining tables and benches connected to each other which are relatively higher than the traditional ones (see Figure 3D). Cushions and carpets are also placed on the benches for comfort. Toilets and bathrooms are usually outside the tourists' rooms in the ground floor; however, few homestays are also constructing attached bathrooms, although these are with very basic amenities. The number of kitchen utensils in the houses has also increased generally with the introduction of many new utensils and appliances such as frying pan, rice cooker, saucepan,

Fieldwork 2017

Figure 3A: Traditional house

Fieldwork 2017

Figure 3B: Traditional and modern structure

Fieldwork 2017

Figure 3C: Traditional dinning hall.

Fieldwork 2017

Figure 3D: Modern dinning hall.

varieties of plates, momo cooking pot, etc. Few houses are even equipped with LPG cooking gas and refrigerator. Therefore, with homestay tourism, the village has adopted modern amenities.

Meals, Accommodation and Cultural Exchange

The everyday life of the villagers operating homestays is a combination of providing service to their guests and their regular work in agriculture, weaving, livestock rearing, farming, and other seasonal works. In many of the homestays, I found that the husbands catered to the guests' needs, communicated with them, and maintained books, while the wives cooked, and were often assisted by trekking guides, if need be. Host families share Nepali culture with the tourists while also trying to learn their cultures. Often host family members speak limited English but they are very friendly, and do their best to make the tourists satisfied. Host families greet the tourists with a 'Namaste'; this welcoming gesture involves the joining of both palms few inches below the chin, while slightly bending one's head with a smiling face. Upon their arrival at the homestay, guests are offered welcome drinks and are shown to their rooms. When they come to the dining room, the host provides the guests with the menu.

When travelling with a guide, the guide takes the order of the food and presents it to the host family. In general, the dining hall and kitchen are closely connected, and if guests are interested to learn or observe the cooking, they can sit down in the kitchen, and the host family does not usually mind even if the guests forget to ask for permission before doing so. They would usually smile and say, 'Namaste'. The meals for guides and porters are served after the guests' dinner. Dal-bhat is the regular food for guides and porters for lunch and dinner. After this, the host family members have their dinner which is different from the tourists. Their general meals involve items such as dal-bhat, dhindo (paste of corn, or wheat or millet flour) or chapati with some vegetable curry or soup, and chowmein. Next morning, the host family serves breakfast for tourists, guides, and porters. For tourists, breakfast is selected from the menu among food items such as muesli, porridge, pancakes, eggs, fried potato, and bread along with tea or coffee. For guides and porters, the host family serves tea along with bread or noodle soup.

My field observation from the village shows that local foods and drinks are one of the favourites from the Nepali menu for the tourists. I found most of the tourists had eaten dal-bhat, a traditional Nepali meal. Many guides say 'Dal-bhat power, twenty-four hour', which emphasises the energy of dal-bhat. Some tourists also wanted to eat with their hand as the locals do.

During interviews with few tourists who had visited Nepal before, I learned that they occasionally cooked dal-bhat at home too. A Canadian lady who had visited Nepal three times shared, 'I cook dal-bhat in my country once in a month and offer it to my friends, but the taste is different'.

Masala tea is the second popular item among tourists. This beverage is generally prepared in milk or water with tea powder along with cardamom, ginger, clove, and cinnamon boiled in the pot. I saw that after completing their trek, the tourists wanted to buy several packets of *masala* tea so they could prepare it back in their homes. Tourists were also interested to learn about *momo* and *syakpa* stew soup.

The practice of host families offering different meals to tourists from what the host family usually ate is similar to what Aziz and Selmat (2016) call dual performance of women when tourists visit for homestay. The host families eat whatever is left from the tourists' meal, or sometimes they eat popcorn, soybean or bread. Tea is not a regular beverage for them; they drink *bhalu* (a local beer mixed with plain omelette) or *ara* (local wine). For tourists, they generally offer tea, and only offer such local drinks when the tourists have become more familiar with the host family.

Generally, tourists spend a night at the homestay, but some tourists stay longer depending on the length of their holidays. After tourists depart from the homestay to start their trek, the owners clean all the rooms, bathrooms, dining room, and wash the kitchen utensils. When they do not have a guest, host families continue with their other activities. When the tourists are trekking on the route or relaxing at the homestay, they can see village life and culture, the socialisation process, arrival of friends and relatives, washing of clothes and pots, tending of livestock, children's games and activities, songs, and occasional rituals and customs. These characteristics can be seen in the rural areas of Nepal, but less so in the city areas. Therefore, a homestay is a living culture of a particular community whose practices are based on its belief system, norms, rules, and values.

Cultural Exchange and Social and Cultural Change in Briddim

Homestay is a cultural exchange business where host communities and tourists exchange their cultural differences with each other. Bhuiyan et al. (2012) gives a rough idea of cultural exchange between two cultural groups at a homestay. The guests who were primarily students from Japan, Australia, Korea, and Malaysia, lived with the family members of the homestay operators of Malaysia and had opportunities to exchange their culture during the daily ordinary activities of their stay (Bhuiyan et al. 2012). This is an example that tourism industry involves a series of social

interactions and encounters between hosts and tourists. This give-and-take effects both host societies and tourists and plays a significant role for cultural change (Nash 1981).

Below, I discuss cultural changes seen among different actors because of their interactions with different cultures and personalities. The actors include tourists, host society, host members, trekking guides, and porters.

Tourists

In trekking destinations, tourists have social relations with the guides and porters and they exchange each other's cultural differences. By the end of their trips, the tourists manage to learn some Nepali culture from the guides and porters. During the fieldwork, I observed how guides taught the tourists about Nepali cultural practices, and some of the tourists also showed interest in local foods and beverages. I saw that one tourist was sitting with her guide in the kitchen and was observing the preparation of meals and taking notes.

During my study I asked a few questions to tourists regarding how they were impressed by Nepali culture and what they felt was the best part of Nepali culture. All of them replied that Nepalis are always smiling and welcoming wherever they are. An Italian tourist shared his reflection with me thus: 'Nepali people are always smiling, very much family and community based, less mean, stress free, and smile even in the busy time. For Westerners, staying at mountain is hard and it is like a punishment. Western people are straightforward but Nepalis are not like this'. A Canadian girl said, 'Nepali people are very soft like *masala* tea, they are very sweet people! The culture here is very open because of people bathing, brushing hair, breastfeeding, and caring for children in public areas, but Western people, they maintain their space'. These narrations indicate how tourists thought Nepali culture was different from their own. I also noticed some changes in the tourists after they interacted with and observed Nepali society, and I discuss those below.

The most common word learned by tourists was 'Namaste!'. They said 'Namaste' whenever they met someone at a restaurant, hotel, homestay or any other place they visited (see Figure 4). Further, they also learned some ethnic greetings such as 'Lhasso' and 'Tashi Delek'. Other words learned by tourists included: 'Jam jam' (let's go) and 'Dhanyabad' (thank you). Although these are new greetings for tourists, these can be interpreted as 'phenotypic change' as explained in the theory of cultural drift, and are acted only temporarily as tourists return to their own style of greetings when they depart from the homestay. According to Collins, 'Cultural drift

Fieldwork 2017

Figure 4: A tourist dancing, acting Namaste; and in the background, a trekking guide is playing madal, a folk musical instrument in Nepal

in this sense states that the role of the guest differs from that of the host and that the temporary contact situations results in change of phenotypic behaviour in both the host and the guest. The phenotypic change may be permanent in the host society/culture but temporary in the guest society/culture' (Modi 2001, 109).

During their stay in Nepal, tourists develop their understanding of Nepali lifestyle and food culture as well as local greetings when they observed local traditions and interacted with the host community. The welcoming behaviour of host community and their less stressful life further impressed the tourists.

Next, we will discuss the social and cultural changes seen in the host community and trekking guides and porters associated with travel, performance, attitudes, behaviour, lifestyle, modern values, and tourists' culture.

Host Community

Infrastructure development is a basic requirement to satisfy tourists in the host society. Welcome house (the house where the tourists are greeted and given farewell), trail maps, sign boards, and clean trail with dustbins on the trail are some examples of development in Briddim village and support for these was received from the TRPAP and the NTB. These infrastructures

have made it helpful to operate homestays.

Homestay tourism has brought new social roles and opportunities, especially for the women in the village, leading to empowerment. For example, homestay played a vital role to fill the social and economic gap between men and women in Barpak village of Gorkha district (Acharya and Halpenny 2013). In the same way, homestay tourism played a significant role for women in Briddim village who can now sell their handicrafts directly to tourists. Although both husbands and wives participate in homestay service, in general, the homestay scenario of Briddim village shows that women have more responsibility compared to men because of their involvement in cooking and weaving in addition to their other agricultural and domestic work. Women also get opportunities to interact with new people and cultures, trek with tourists, and travel outside the village during the meetings and training of homestay while the men are working as guides, porters, drivers, or in other seasonal works as wage labourers.

A study from Himanchal Pradesh of India showed that those women who worked as local guides saw changes in their lives: they became more empowered in decision-making processes in the household and were able to send their children to good schools in the city (Wangchuk n.d.). The women of Briddim village experienced a similar empowerment in their lives. With the support of tourists, many of their children were receiving sponsorship for education and some of them studied in Kathmandu for better education (Dong 2017; Kaelin 2014). The educational sponsor is a financial support for the parent but it is not always positive in terms of culture because when young people go out for education, they tend to forget their culture and language (McDuie-Ra 2011). One of the respondents said to me, 'If we continue sending our children in schools outside of village, our local culture will be disappeared because of no interaction with our custom, ritual, and even less awareness of our own primary kinship'. This narrative suggests that the respondent believed that if his child had studied at the village, he could have learned more about his culture and tradition. This clearly shows that schooling of children, when away from the village, hindered in their socialisation in family.

According to Appadurai (1996), cultural changes occur primarily by different dimensions of cultural flows, such as the migration of citizens across boundaries and home culture, production of and dissemination of information, and new types of cultural interaction and exchange through technology, among others. Today, many people of Briddim village have mobile phones and many use Facebook to understand distinct cultures and

connect on the social network. The trend of travel to different villages, cities, and even abroad for the purpose of work and study is more common now than in the past. People see and learn new things which impact them and the society. They engage in new businesses and learn from each other's ideas and experiences. In Briddim, I found a wide range of changes in terms of ceremonies, festivals, rituals, house structures, use of everyday commodities, and education system. Few of them are discussed below.

One morning, when I was walking in the village, I heard someone singing in their home. I decided to stop by. When I reached there, I saw that a lady was sitting next to the loom and was weaving a pangap. I observed for a while until she stopped singing. Later, I asked her about the situation of traditional songs. She said, 'In the past, people used to sing at home and in the forest while cutting grass or taking care of domestic animals, but now they rarely sing as cassettes and televisions have taken their place. Even in ceremonies and festivals, mostly older generations sing and dance, but many from the younger generation prefer to arrange an electric loudspeaker'. This shows that the tradition of singing is declining dramatically and young generations are attracted by cassettes and modern songs.

She also told me about the current trend of young generation regarding their changing behaviours, thinking patterns, and attitudes. According to her, the new generation prefers to cook fast food like noodles and drink tea prepared using tea bags; they also felt shy to work in the farm and did not obey their parents' instruction associated with household works. In general, the young generations were not socialised into local culture from the childhood and they were copying Western dress, music, and values; therefore, they were getting away from social control and making their own decisions (Mishra 2062 BS [2005/6]). In the homestay area, when local people interacted with tourists, they copied touristic cultures and values gradually, but more significantly, the traditional social order became disrupted as the young generation changed their behaviour with touristic culture.

Marriage is an aspect of culture which reproduces social relations and maintains kinship system in the society. A respondent explained the changing practice of cross-cousin marriage[2] in their community. He said, 'If a daughter does not marry with her maternal uncle's son, the maternal uncle and aunt become angry. This is not good for us because parents also

2 This is a traditional marriage practice among some ethnic groups of Nepal such as Tamang, Gurung, Thakali, and Magar where a son marries his father's sister's daughter, and a daughter her mother's brother's son.

get upset due to this. Earlier, the daughter's marriage used to be determined by parents, but now this has been changed because of Facebook, and now the parents' role is only to assist their children's wedding ceremony'. This narration shows the declining practice of cross-cousin marriage and the vital role of social media for couples to meet in recent times.

In this section, we also discussed how homestay tourism brought opportunities for women and how they interacted with tourists, learned about new culture, got directly involved in business, and thus felt empowered. There are few other cultural changes that can be observed at the household level as discussed below.

Host Families/Members

Changes in the sanitary practices and birthday celebration in the households are easily observable. At this village, the host families keep the houses clean according to their traditional practices. They sweep the floor, the terrace, the staircase, and the surroundings of the house, and the dust is managed somewhere around the house corner. Earlier, they would go

Facebook, 2017

Figure 5: Birthday Celibration

to the woods in the mornings and evenings for toilet purposes. However, with the initiation of homestay at Briddim village, the host community has constructed toilets, shower rooms, and few separate rooms for the stay of

the tourists. They also kept a dustbin in each room, in the kitchen, and outside the house in order to manage waste properly. In rich houses, there were plastic dustbins and buckets, but poor houses improvised a dustbin out of things like a plastic bag, a biscuit carton, a beer carton, or a sack.

After the operation of homestays, villagers also learned tourists' ceremonies such as birthday, New Year, Christmas, and marriage anniversary. However, it is worthwhile to note here that these occasions and festivals are celebrated with local traditional flavours. We can take an example of birthday celebration as seen in see Figure 5 (used with permission from one of my respondents' Facebook posts). As seen in the image, the birthday girl is wearing a clean dress, is decorated with khadas, and a birthday cap. The neighbourhood children are sitting on a bench, wearing birthday caps and holding balloons in their hands. There are candles, cold drinks, beers and local wine by the cake. On the other side, there is a brass plate filled with envelopes with money. Traditionally, the invited children give money to the birthday boy/girl before the end of the birthday celebration. This trend shows that when tourism engages with new forms of globalised communities and societies, both the hosts and guests are assimilated in each other's cultures, but they keep traditional practices to sustain their own distinctive local culture (Park 2014). We can conclude that hosts and tourists interacting with each other and exchanging their customs, values, and beliefs fosters the production of a new culture.

Trekking Guides and Porters

An experienced guide presents ethnographic details of the local community, local culture and traditions, festivals and occasions, and also introduces the geographical features, the trail condition, flora and fauna, and any historical sites present. During the journey, a guide also usually asks about the tourists' norms, values, traditions, festivals, and world-view. Interactions between guides and tourists generate new ideas, values and motivations for social and economic progress (Paul 2012), and through the direct interaction, they learn about each other, which may change their lifestyles, either permanently or temporarily, in their social world (Dong 2017).

Permanent culture among the host society is influenced by the acculturation with tourists' culture. According to acculturation theory, when there are interactions between a strong culture and a weaker one, it is mostly the latter that gets influenced by the former. In the context of tourism, host community members adopt tourists' culture to satisfy their visitors' preference (Modi 2001). During the trekking period, porters, and

mostly guides, become familiar with quality gears being used by tourists, and they also get acculturated with the tourists' values and norms. For example, while feeling hungry, now they prefer to go to a nice restaurant, while earlier they used to go to a basic restaurant which would not be clean enough. Now, when they eat, they chew with their mouths closed. If they are invited by friends or others, they arrive on time, and they also always inform in advance if they are visiting someone, either neighbours or tourists. In general, they also take permission before taking someone's personal belongings, and keep distance in social interactions to maintain space, especially with the opposite gender.

Some of the cultures adopted by the guides and porters are temporary or can be understood as 'cultural drift' as described by Wall and Matheison (2006). Such cultural practices are mostly carried out by the guides and porters when with the tourists and during official activities, but not in general places. For example, a guide always looks for a dustbin to throw trash. When trekkers sneeze, the guide says 'God bless you!'. While I was in the field village, I found guides and porters use polite words and greetings. Many guides were assimilated in tourists' lifestyle, especially with their way of communication and gears. A guide, who used umbrella or plastic during rain in his hometown, now wore a raincoat and rain trousers after involvement in the trekking industry.

The discussion with the host society and tourists makes it clear that homestay culture is now mixed with global culture and has become a social field of cultural production on a global scale (MacCannell 1992). It is primarily because of the demonstration effect (Fisher 2004), "xenocentrism" (Kent and Burnight 1951), and acculturation of tourist's language, food, dress, and norms and values (Nash 1996).

There was only little change among the tourists while larger changes were found in the host society as host society adopted many of the touristic cultures. Interaction with tourists is a central component in the definition of ethnic identity and authenticity (Picard 1990). Societies borrow cultural traits from one another during homestay and this shows how tourism has become a central component in the process of globalisation. However, tourism is not the main culprit for the loss of cultural identity and traditions. Globalisation and homogenisation of culture is also caused by modern communication and technology in creating the values, opinions, lifestyle and fashion of the world (Liu 2003). Research shows that globalisation is an ongoing process and people are interconnected through culture, ideas, trade, and commerce brought about by sophisticated technology of communications and travel, and by the worldwide spread of

neoliberal capitalism (Lewellen 2010; Wolf 1982). Therefore, globalisation is not a recent process at all, indeed it has been underway for a very long time, as long ago as people have been moving from place to place, whether across rivers, mountain ranges or oceans, transporting ideas along with the material goods they carried with them (Fisher 2011). Hence, globalisation and tourism are interrelated and interconnected with each other, and tourism has become an integral part of globalisation.

Conclusion

Homestay is a new dimension to Nepali tourism industry and offers tourists pleasant hospitality and experience of authentic local cultural practices of rural areas. It is a small business whereby someone's private house is commercialised for tourists for the purpose of selling rooms on a daily basis. In this paper, I have explored the homestay scenario of Briddim village and its tangible and intangible cultures. The cultural resources of this village make Briddim a suitable destination for cultural tourism. At the homestay, tourists are treated as temporary family members and are allowed to participate in the family's activities and occasional rituals at the village. Lanier and Berman (1993) argue that homestay supports income generation and facilitates the meeting of people from different communities, but my study has identified that homestay is also associated with social prestige in the community for the homestay operators. This way, homestay created a new social value in the village.

Folmar (2009) has pointed out a decrease in the social bond between hosts and tourists in the case of lodges because of little interaction between the two; he adds that this loss of cultural hospitality at lodges was a result of lodges being business oriented. But at a homestay, there are many chances for tourists to interact with host families. Generally, homestay represents the smallest unit where tourists can observe the local social and cultural life. Therefore, homestay is not completely associated with the profit and loss aspect, but is a venue where tourists can learn about authentic culture. My study suggests that homestay has to be understood in the local context. Other businesses such as hotels and restaurants are shut down and look for new business if they lose their business. But homestay is in constant operation even if at a loss. For the rural people, homestay is not just a business, but it is home where they work, live, and continue their traditions. It cannot be understood only in the economic terms of sustainable tourism.

With global tourism, local people now engage in the global exchange network and are fully active in the process of globalisation (Macleod 2004). Homestay in Briddim is a product of cultural exchange which covers

the ideas, experiences, lifestyles, and traditions of different people and societies. Therefore, the lifestyle of host community is mixed with global cultures. The tour and training provided by TRPAP have empowered local women to independently operate a homestay and have also given them opportunities to interact with other Nepalis and tourists. Thus, a broader social and cultural connection has become available to women compared to the past days.

Cultural exchange also leads to cultural change. When tourists travel in a homestay zone, they are not just coming for trekking and tour, but also for talking with different people and participating in local rituals and ceremonies. Their behaviour, lifestyle, clothes, attitudes, and ideas may also influence Nepali people. Similarly, local culture also assimilates with tourist culture, and the resulting culture is a mix of the two. Likewise, tourists also learn Nepali culture associated with greetings, foods, and drinks. This shows how host communities influence tourists with their culture. Therefore, meeting of two different cultures is a medium of cultural change.

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A Political Ecology of Neoliberal Climate Mitigation Policy in Nepal

Shangrila Joshi

Introduction

As climate change moves from an impending crisis to being a part of everyday life everywhere, efforts to mitigate it have captured the attention of the international community for decades now. Among the policy instruments to emerge out of the United Nations deliberation process to negotiate an international climate treaty are the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) and the Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) platform, both understood to be market-based mechanisms to address climate mitigation by engaging various stakeholders through a global system of carbon trade. Both of these mechanisms have been introduced in Nepal. Their two explicit goals are to contribute to emission reductions globally and sustainable development locally. This paper critically examines the implementation of the CDM and REDD+ and their implications for Nepal.

I draw on field research during the monsoon months (July-August) of 2013, 2017, and 2018. My research methods consisted of semi-structured qualitative inperson interviews with a wide range of Kathmandu-based stakeholders: Alternative Energy Promotion Center (AEPC), REDD+ Cell, Federation of Community Forestry Users, Nepal (FECOFUN), Nepalese Federation of Indigenous Nationalities (NEFIN), Ministry of Science, Technology, and Environment (MoSTE), Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation (MoFSC), Ministry of Forests and Environment (MoFE), Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF-Nepal), International Center for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD); members of community forestry user groups in Dolakha (Charnawati watershed), Gorkha (Ludikhola watershed), and Chitwan (Kayarkhola watershed); site visits at community forest locations in these three districts; members of households with biogas plants in Godavari, Lalitpur and Sanga, Kabhrepalanchowk; as

well as participant observation at stakeholder workshops held in Pokhara, Chitwan, Dolakha, Kathmandu, and Nagarkot. Rather than take an a priori stance for or against the CDM and the REDD+, this paper seeks to understand the ways in which they are affecting local communities.

Situating my analysis in the context of existing critiques in political ecology of neoliberal climate solutions facilitated by carbon trading and other market-based mechanisms (Bond 2012; Bumpus and Liverman 2020; CDM Watch 2012; Ervine 2018), this paper analyses a small-scale CDM project, deemed to be more conducive to meaningful sustainable development, and REDD+ implications for community forestry, deemed to have better social safeguards. I present a critique of biogas projects as a 'low-hanging fruit' option for climate mitigation, for focusing on populations with already low emissions per capita, before moving on to discuss the specific ways in which this form of carbon trade facilitates new forms of nature's neo-liberalisation as well as new forms of accumulation by dispossession. I argue that in this particular context, the labour of the subaltern woman enables this trade, often without adequate informed consent. I also present a gender and development (GAD) critique of what I see as a women in development (WID) approach to engaging women in these projects.

Meanwhile, the process of diffusion of REDD+ in Nepal's community forests threatens to weaken and reverse the achievements of the unique and progressive model of community forestry governance that has developed in the country for the last four decades. A desire and need to render forest governance more legible to quantification for the process of working within the established modalities of buyers of carbon credit, such as the World Bank (WB), are key ways in which the forest commons are at risk of becoming increasingly brought into the sphere of global capital and commodity markets. Aside from this, there are winners and losers marked by geography, occupation, ethnicity, and gender, even within the national and local contexts, when you examine who benefits the most from folding community forests into the realm of carbon markets. Yet, local resource users, although inadequately informed, are not gullible and hapless victims. Aware of and well-versed in interactions with foreign non-government organisations and longstanding patterns of power imbalances, I find that individuals at various social locations exercise clever ways of leveraging limited resources to meet their everyday needs, sometimes by utilising the neocolonial tools at their behest, such as scientific forestry.

Based on this research, I argue that while Nepal does not provide blatant cases of disenfranchisement in areas where CDM and REDD+ projects are being introduced, concern for possible erosion of progressive structures

and provisions is warranted. At a time when critical scholars and activists are making calls to dismantle CDM and REDD+ altogether, there appear to be ways in which existing projects can do a better job of meeting their purported objectives. I end with an invitation to consider what it might mean to make these projects more equitable even as we recognise their inherently flawed nature as a genuine climate mitigation strategy, raising the question of what it might mean to develop a 'fair trade' in carbon markets.

Clean Development Mechanism: An Assessment of Biogas Projects in Nepal

CDM enables high emitting developed countries to meet their emission reduction commitments by funding voluntary mitigation projects in developing countries. To be funded, a project needs to undergo a rigorous certification process that determines, first, that there are documented climate mitigation benefits, and second, that funded CDM projects would also produce local sustainable development benefits. The majority of existing projects are large-scale development projects including mega dam projects, clean-coal projects, or large-scale waste-to-energy industries located in China, India, Mexico, and Brazil (Bumpus and Liverman 2010; CDM Watch 2012). Apparently, sustainable development is envisioned primarily from an ecological modernisation perspective that sees the pursuit of sustainability primarily as a technological challenge. In some cases, CDM projects have led to land grabs by governments for monoculture forest plantations for biofuels or conservation or for the construction of dams without adequate consent, disenfranchising indigenous populations who relied on the land for their subsistence and cultural needs (Finley-Brook and Thomas 2011). CDM has, therefore, been heavily criticised on multiple counts, including the possibility of emissions leakages due to loopholes, as well as its tendency to reward polluting industries and leave out potentially far more effective strategies for climate mitigation and sustainable development (Bumpus and Liverman 2010; Ostrom 2014). Within Asia, India and China receive the biggest share of CDM-generated funds, with approximately 70 per cent and 15 per cent of registered certified emission reductions (CERs) respectively (UNEP/DTU 2020). If CDMs were meant to generate financial flows to the Global South, it is clear that they are quite inequitably distributed within the Global South.

Most of the research on CDM has been based on these large-scale industrial projects that have comprised the bulk of CDM projects globally. Bumpus and Liverman (2010) have argued that CDM funds should be

channelled to smaller-scale projects that have greater potential to support more meaningful sustainable development. While arguments about neocolonialism and neoliberal governmentality have been based on large-scale development projects, this paper examines smaller-scale CDM projects designed to promote meaningful sustainable community development. The designated national authority for CDM implementation in Nepal was MoSTE, now MoFE. A semi-autonomous unit affiliated with this Ministry, AEPC successfully secured CDM project funding for biogas projects within the 'small-scale projects' category. An Emission Reduction Purchase Agreement was signed by AEPC and the WB for the purchase of emission reductions from these projects. The existence of baseline data for biogas is largely credited for enabling CDM proposals—in absence of baseline data, it is impossible to document emission reductions, i.e., additionality, tied specifically to the project. AEPC registered its first CDM project in Nepal in December 2005. By 2009, more than 200,860 biogas plants had been installed in Nepal, and at least 60,000 of them were supported by the CDM (NESS 2011).

Nepal's Biogas/CDM Apparatus

Commonly referred to as an appropriate technology for alternative energy production, biogas technology has been around in Nepal since 1955. It was first introduced by a Netherlands development organisation called SNV-Nepal. Since 1976, Nepal government and development partner agencies have actively promoted the biogas technology in rural Nepal to enhance the country's self-reliance on energy needs. AEPC is the primary government entity that regulates biogas use in the country. Its partners include SNV-Nepal, the Biogas Support Programme (BSP), and the Nepal Biogas Promotion Association (NBPA), among others. The NBPA oversees around 100 pre-qualified biogas companies that engage in construction, promotion, installation, and servicing of biogas plants. The development and promotion of biogas gained momentum after the establishment of BSP in 1992 and AEPC in 1996, with more than 90,000 biogas units installed (Barnhart 2013). With retraction of donor funding, new installations stalled in the 2000s. During 2011-12, approximately 20,000 plants were installed under an approved CDM project. Since entering the CDM market, the biogas project, introduced to increase the country's self-reliance for energy, entered a neoliberal model of environmental governance, where the AEPC engages in carbon trading on behalf of the households that adopt this technology (Barnhart 2013).

As interviews with AEPC officials revealed, biogas units have been

subsidised by AEPC with the support of donor agencies from the beginning, such that the individual household paid a reduced cost of approximately NPR 7000-10,000 in 2013 (interview with AEPC official).[1] Where families could not afford it, they might borrow credit from microcredit banks—where available—if they decide to install a plant. AEPC essentially acts as an intermediary between the households that enable emission reductions and companies who are interested in buying those CERs, brokered by the WB. CERs produced by individual households are pooled together and sold by AEPC to the WB. Essentially then, the WB and AEPC serve as brokers between the actual entities whose actions are enabling the carbon trade. While the household does not see a direct financial benefit other than the finances saved from the subsidised cost of the biogas plant, AEPC claims to reinvest the CDM-generated funds in creating subsidies for newer installations. This is seen as a crucial way to sustain the biogas programme at a time when foreign aid is dwindling.

The rationale for approving biogas for climate mitigation arises out of the observation that biogas reduces the consumption of firewood (75 per cent of the primary source of energy for cooking in Nepal) and other biomass (agricultural residue, dung cakes), and fossil fuels (kerosene and liquid petroleum gas) for cooking. This contributes to conserving forests, a vital sink for carbon dioxide (Dhakal and Raut 2010). A biogas users' survey conducted by AEPC in 2010 found that the impact of biogas has been significant in reducing such consumption, particularly of firewood, although consumption of fossil fuels was not significantly affected (NESS 2011). Further, biogas is also seen to serve as a viable form of alternative energy for cooking. Given the growing shortage of available firewood, women are required to travel longer distances to collect firewood, and its price is also found to have risen due to scarcity. Thus, in addition to aiding in climate change mitigation, biogas has at least three benefits. First, it reduces the burden of work for women and children, and second, it reduces costs for households. A third benefit of biogas as commonly stated is its contribution to reducing indoor air pollution that benefits all members of the household, but particularly women and children, given that over 7500 women and children in Nepal are estimated to die every year due to smoke-induced illness caused by use of traditional cooking stoves (NESS 2011).

1 In 2018, as per a signed agreement between AEPC and a household, the total cost of installation for a household was NPR 65,000, the cost for household was NPR 34,000, household labour amounted to NPR 8200 and the subsidy amount was NPR 22,800.

Perceptions on CDM and the Mitigation Potential of Biogas in Nepal

All the officials involved in biogas projects I interviewed—who were incidentally male, members of non-marginalised caste groups, and trained in engineering fields at the highest positions—shared common concerns regarding Nepal's ability to capitalise on the CDM. A key concern was lack of capacity-building opportunities to enable Nepal to reap greater benefits from global carbon trading. One high-ranking official in a 2012 interview shared that the MoSTE had received NPR 2.5 million for climate change adaptation and mitigation, but despite being the Designated National Authority, the Ministry was struggling to design a concrete climate policy. He acknowledged that this mode of climate change governance was quite new and that training programmes to help understand the complex process of marketbased mechanisms would be valuable.

Capacity-building was necessary due to a significant lack of technical expertise and a corresponding over-reliance on foreign consultants and experts for various stages of the CDM. The process of proposal design and development (PDD), certification, and monitoring, reporting and verification (MRV), thus, necessitates an over-reliance on foreign consultants and experts that amounts to a drain on resources, rendering most CDM projects largely unfeasible economically. Although Nepal could potentially receive financial benefits from global carbon trading, much of these funds get siphoned back to developed countries. The requirements to provide evidence of emission reductions (additionality) poses an additional challenge. Only a limited number of proposals have, therefore, been prepared, for which there is a relatively well-established development agenda, and, therefore, available baseline data. It is comparatively easier to meet the 'sustainable development' requirement. The Ministry published a brochure that listed possible ways in which a project can qualify for funding, several of which involved easing the work burden on women or enhancing opportunities available to women.

Additionality constraints have translated to less effective mitigation strategies being funded. For projects that are operational, such as biogas plants, a few junior officers told me 'off the record' that biogas was not an effective climate mitigation mechanism. On the one hand, they observed that there are far more effective ways to reduce emissions at a larger scale within Nepal such as reforming the transportation sector and targeting the highly polluting brick industry (see also Dhakal and Raut 2010), while on the other, focusing on a country like Nepal for emission reduction, whose emissions profile is almost non-existent in a global context, is hardly an

effective way to achieve global emission reduction. However, they also noted that the CDM helps generate funding to support sustainable development efforts in Nepal. They gave me the impression that if anyone could milk the CDM for monetary benefits, why wouldn't they? Higher-ranking officials, however, did not have much confidence in the long-term sustainability of the CDM since it was tied to the Kyoto Protocol and this itself is destined to come to an end in 2020. They worried about the high costs of investing time and resources in pursuing CDM projects, in terms of both financial and human resources. However, the carbon-trading practice does extend beyond the Kyoto Protocol, into the Paris Agreement, in the form of the Sustainable Development Mechanism, and there is also a voluntary carbon market outside of the UN framework.

In each of the households I visited, biogas is supplemented with liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) and/or firewood, when more food needs to be cooked, or when biogas supply is low, based on biomass availability. The flame from the biogas stove is not big enough to cook large meals for extended families during feasts and festivals. Kitchens in urban Nepali households typically run with LPG cylinders, delivered on demand or purchased from the store. Rural households are increasingly beginning to use them as well. Having a biogas plant slightly reduces use of LPG, but not significantly, as a survey also showed (NESS 2011). All of the users interviewed found the technology fairly easy to use and conveyed a largely positive experience with operating them. Biogas plants were convenient to work with and instructions are quite simple and easy to follow. Most of them thought their investment of about NPR 7000 was worthwhile, considering their reduced labour from collecting firewood and saving from buying firewood and LPG cylinders. In more efficient biogas systems, the slurry byproduct from the biogas plant is used as fertiliser in kitchen gardens or household farms. An additional benefit is often derived by connecting the biogas plant to the household toilet so that there is no need of an infrastructure to deal with the sewage.

Sustainability and Sustainable Development Benefits of Biogas/ CDM Projects in Nepal

The sustainability of biogas for energy use might be generationally limited. In some of the households I visited, the plant was attached to an older home, and not to a newer home built for married children within the same premises. The reason given was that the newer generation preferred using modern amenities, and were reluctant to engage in the work of maintaining the biogas plant, including manually transporting manure. For those households interested in installing a biogas plant, income or

assets could be a limiting factor. While the majority of households I visited were able to afford the subsidised cost of the installation, one couple whose children were going to school in the city struggled financially to complete the installation they had initiated, even after taking out loans. They said that a slightly greater subsidy would have made a difference. The AEPC policy of offering a flat subsidy therefore appears to not be as meaningful, particularly for those who might most benefit from an economic boost of installing a biogas plant. This suggests that although the adoption of this technology is subsidised for the relatively well-to-do, it is not necessarily more accessible to those who could not have afforded it in the first place. Presumably then, the most economically marginalised households are left out of benefits from biogas. This inequity may be shaped by caste as well, since research has revealed that the majority of the biogas adopting households were Brahmins (45.19 per cent), with Dalits comprising 2.96 per cent (NESS 2011).

During my visit to one of the households, I interviewed the head of the household while his wife was away. Like the others, he proceeded to demonstrate how the system worked. He tried unsuccessfully for a while and could not figure out how to turn the stove on. A male tenant in the premises also tried to help, unsuccessfully. Eventually, the wife returned and promptly turned on the stove. While this incident clearly demonstrated who did the actual work associated with the biogas system, this was also confirmed in interviews with female members of this and other households. In each household, it was the male head of the household who made the decision to adopt the technology and who was also the dominant participant during the interviews. The male member typically answered questions regarding biogas benefits including differences in labour before and after, as if he were speaking from experience, when it was actually the female member who did all the work—collecting and transporting manure, and stirring the sludge periodically. It was the female member who did the work of extracting the fertiliser from the slurry and applying it in the fields. It was the female member who did the cooking. It was the female member, moreover, who was targeted by the NBPA for training on biogas 'how to's', which reveals a gender bias that becomes perpetuated even within the auspices of a project that is ostensibly expected to contribute to sustainable development on account of women's empowerment.

This is particularly startling when the sustainable development criteria for this CDM project is met primarily due to its focus on gender, as revealed by the Ministry and the AEPC officials. It is evident here that a women in development (WID) approach is at play where women are simply treated as

victims needing to be rescued (Sheppard, Porter, Faust and Nagar 2009)—in this case, from indoor air pollution, difficult labour involved in collecting firewood. What is deemed an adequate approach to sustainable development in this context is then seeking to remove these hurdles, without actually addressing the unequal power relations between men and women that continues to marginalise women and treat them as second class citizens within the Nepali context, or seeking their input in designing appropriate strategies. It, therefore, appears that it is the subaltern woman's labour that enables any climate mitigation targets met by those who buy CERs generated from these biogas projects.

When a household signs a contract to receive a subsidy from the AEPC—often without fully informed consent—it relinquishes its rights to claim any benefits from global carbon trading to the AEPC (Barnhart 2013). This egregious fact is rendered even more so by the thought that it was never the woman's place to sign such a contract in the first place. Does it matter then that the woman's voice and agency is subdued or silenced through multiple levels of marginalisation in the global carbon trade context? This question will be even more poignant as households are increasingly forced to confront the consequences of climate change—such as disasters, droughts, food and water insecurity—because the burden of doing so will most certainly fall on her again.

It, therefore, appears that although the CDM offers benefits to local populations, they were limited and limiting because of the narrowly articulated conceptualisations of sustainable development among agencies promoting it as a climate solution. Further, there are multiple inequities at various stages and scales implicated in the process of pursuing and receiving CDM benefits. In order to maximise the economic benefits of the CDM, significant work needs to be done to challenge hierarchical and unequal relationships at multiple scales. The carbon market exploits the unequal terms of trade between core and periphery economies. This creates the power imbalance between the Global South and North. Further, the benefits from carbon trading are unequally distributed even within the Global South. Within the nations of the Global South, power and resources are typically distributed unequally along multiple axes of rural versus urban, state versus citizen, and among citizens along caste, class, and gender lines.

A socially just CDM policy should judiciously work towards challenging these multiple intersecting inequities. For the CDM to be more effective for climate mitigation, it will need to remove barriers to creative innovative solutions for encouraging large scale transitions away from a

fossil-fuel-based economy, whether it is by reforming the transportation sector, creating incentives for polluting industries to reduce emissions, or enhancing alternative energy options, including waste-to-energy projects and urban biogas systems. All of these potential climate-mitigation options are currently ineligible or unfeasible for CDM funding due to additionality requirements, while we have CDM-funded biogas projects that can be seen as a low-hanging fruit from the point of view of effective global mitigation efforts. Non-market approaches will need to be conceptualised and developed to create mitigation policies that reward innovative cost-effective approaches that enable larger scale shifts away from fossil-fuel-based and/or polluting industries without being encumbered with the additionality constraint as well as expensive certification and MRV processes that occupy significant time and energy of environment and development agencies.

A Structural Analysis of the CDM

While it is necessary to discuss ways in which the CDM policy process should be reformed to make benefits accessible to households that are currently left out, it is also important to understand the changes in environmental governance that are introduced by it. From a critical perspective, this approach to climate change mitigation and sustainable development can be understood within the broader context of the neoliberalisation of nature and environmental governance (Bakker 2005). Scholars critical of neoliberal environmental governance question the very basis of carbon trading as inimical to the multiple suggestions for reform discussed in the preceding paragraph (Bond 2012; Bumpus and Liverman 2010; Ervine 2018). Carbon-trading practices essentially serve to commodify the atmospheric commons. As such, the market value of the commodified carbon credit does not reflect its true ecological value, and, therefore, is not an effective approach to achieving emission reductions to the extent necessary to avoid dangerous anthropogenic interference in the global climate system. Instead, strong domestic mitigation policies are necessary.

The current literature on neoliberalisation of the environment is focused on extractive industries where commonly held natural resources are increasingly commodified around the world. We can see how this is also operating now with the atmospheric commons. The cap-and-trade mechanism has essentially commodified the global atmospheric commons by assigning a price for a unit of reduced emissions—a carbon credit that can be bought and sold in the global carbon market. As a commodity, the price of this carbon credit is determined not by its actual worth, but rather by the

vagaries of the market, hence it is greatly underpriced. Ironically, the buyers of carbon credit, the ones creating the pollution, are determining the price of emission reduction, while those who are already relatively cleaner, have no say. Since the latter are also more vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, one can argue that they have a greater stake. Such unequal terms of trade have led to concerns that the CDM might serve as a neocolonial instrument (Bumpus and Liverman 2010). This adds a fourth dimension to what Roberts and Parks (2007) describe as the triple injustices of climate change—in addition to responsibility, vulnerability, and capacity to address the problem, even solutions to it are inequitable and unjust. Perceptions of injustice have given rise to demands for climate justice conceptualised as a climate debt that the Global North owes the Global South (Joshi 2014). The CDM clearly does not operate as a payment of climate debt but rather maintains North-South inequities, and also disparities at other scales, including within the Global South and within nations.

As noted earlier, the practice of CDM, while contributing to improving indoor air quality, does little to actually empower women socially, as it adopts a WID approach that is limited and limiting (Sheppard et al. 2009). While it may be argued that the goal of the CDM is not to promote women's empowerment but rather to contribute to climate mitigation and sustainable development, this critique is relevant because one of the reasons why the biogas project receives CDM certification is that it promotes gender as the sustainable development criteria. Further, we see how although an individual household receives benefits from CDM indirectly as a subsidy, they are also being robbed of their agency, as they are made to sign away their rights to claim any benefits state or international environmental agencies might receive from engaging in a carbon trading enabled by them. Their participation in a global carbon trade essentially occurs without their informed consent or ability to determine the price of the product they are selling. Sustainable development here occurs within a paradigm of neoliberal environmental governance that creates governable subjects stripped of their agency to shape policies that affect their lives. In this sense, CDM facilitates a form of 'accumulation by dispossession' (Harvey 2007). Although material benefits for households adopting this form of appropriate technology do exist in the form of greater indoor air quality and money saved from subsidies, this approach to climate mitigation and sustainable development seems to promote the creation of ecological consumers rather than ecological citizens.

Neoliberalisation also alters state-society relations, replacing state policies with market-based mechanisms to solve problems (Bakker 2005).

Doing so typically requires a reorganisation of local institutions, often at the cost of local communities' social networks, self-determination, and consequently their loss of access to local resources and avenues for sustainable livelihoods, pushing them further into low-wage jobs in a market-based economy. This is especially significant when considered in the historical context of Nepal where the tradition of common property resource management institutions has been known to be robust, as a result of which forests which were nationalised following dubious accounts of widespread deforestation have been increasingly handed over to local forest user groups that are now seen as sustainable stewards of these forests (Ostrom 1999b). Ostrom (1999a) effectively critiqued the myth of the tragedy of the commons based on extensive research on traditional resource management practices in numerous rural communities, suggesting that although often invisible to foreign development officials, an intricate system of rules of resource governance contributes to the sustainable management of resources in common property systems. While CDM can potentially be reformed to extend the benefits of alternative energy technologies, such as biogas, to the most marginalised households to create incentives for the industrial sector to seek CDM certification, as well as to enable countries such as Nepal to receive a greater share of the CDM funds compared to its neighbours, India and China, it appears that this approach to climate mitigation and sustainable development is limited to a more reductionist approach by design. As such, it focuses on one or two measurable or quantifiable indicators as opposed to a more holistic approach that emphasises the generation of sustainable livelihoods that encompasses a harmonious nature-society relationship that existed prior to the introduction of modernist development and economic globalisation. Agencies looking to integrate meaningful sustainable development with climate mitigation goals would do well to heed this insight from Sheppard et al. (2009, 150):

> For people in the third world who derive their livelihoods from the forests, fields, and waters around them, sustainability is intimately related to rights of communal ownership, collectively shared ways of knowing, cultural autonomy, religious rituals, and freedom from externally imposed programmes that seek to promote someone else's vision of how to conserve or develop the environments they depend upon.

REDD+: A Preliminary Assessment of Impacts on Community Forestry

Given the impressive achievements in reversing forest loss in Nepal since community forestry was formally introduced (Thwaites et al. 2018), it is not too surprising that community forests were chosen as a site and landscape on which to implement REDD+ initiatives in Nepal. Nepal was one of few Asian countries selected by the World Bank for a REDD+ project in 2018. Before getting to this point, a REDD+ Readiness process involving a pilot project were implemented from 2008 to 2013 with the involvement of MoFSC, the WB's Forest Carbon Partnership Facility, and other agencies. A REDD+ pilot project was enacted in three different watersheds/districts in Nepal—Dolakha, Gorkha, and Chitwan—that have a strong record of achievements in community forestry outcomes, and represent distinct ecological zones. The experience with REDD+ experimentation was quite different in these three areas, but with some similarities as well.

In all three pilot project locations where I conducted field work, an enthusiastic attitude was palpable among community forestry user groups (CFUGs). This is in stark contrast to communities in other Global South locations where REDD+ is vociferously opposed due to concerns about land grabbing by the state or foreign corporations (Gilbertson 2017). In fact, the Ministry chose to focus REDD+ resources on community forestry precisely because the strong institutional structure of community forests serves to prevent disenfranchisement of resource-dependent communities as seen in other contexts, in large part because international agencies' support is conditional upon social safeguards being put in place to prevent the kind of issues that have led to opposition elsewhere. My conversations with CFUG members in all three sites revealed that they were zealously welcoming of REDD+ projects. This is in part due to an incomplete or sometimes inaccurate understanding among the local populace as to how the problem of climate change functions and how forests fit into that picture. I found that those desirous of REDD+ viewed it as a source of financial support to sustain CFUG development activities and did not convey an understanding of the way in which REDD+ is embedded in a global carbon trade in a context of unequal exchange (see also Joshi 2021).

The many agencies that have spoken to CFUG members to solicit support and buy-in appear to have presented outreach and educational information in a somewhat misleading way. Rather than viewing REDD+ through a lens of economic injustice, communities were clamouring for the economic opportunity it represented. One CFUG member and community leader in Dolakha, in emphasising her claim that REDD+ should continue in her

region, argued that Dolakha 'has high quality carbon to sell'. Another CFUG member in Gorkha wondered what missteps might they have made for their inability to attract or retain REDD+ in their region. Now, both of these pilot project sites were excluded in the first REDD+ project, since the Terai Arc Landscape—where Chitwan is located—was selected instead. A CFUG member in Chitwan shared with me that her community was initially fearful that carbon trading meant that 'foreigners wanted to buy up the oxygen' in their villages, but when they realised that they were in fact offering to pay them for their good work conserving forests, their outlook towards it changed. These mischaracterisations of forest-climate linkages obfuscate an understanding that REDD+ is operating in these contexts with fully informed consent.

As evident during field work in 2018, even members of the pilot project groups in Chitwan did not understand that their region was selected for REDD+. Rather, there seemed to be a sense of competition and mystery as to which CFUGs get chosen for the next project and why. Not knowing that all of Chitwan was included in the REDD+ project, some CFUG members in Shaktikhor, for instance, wondered why Korak had been chosen as a model site. As it turned out, Korak CFUGs had been more cooperative in adopting scientific forestry practices and had been held up by the Chitwan District Forest Office as a model for others to emulate. A dual perception of inaccessibility and reward appears to cultivate desire and interest for the project (REDD+) and offer incentives to adapt to compatible modalities. Since REDD+ involves international trade of certified carbon units, quantification of how much carbon is stored in trees, and by what extent it has increased within a timeframe, and the ability to measure this, for better MRV, become important to meet the additionality requirement and to determine payment. As such, scientific forestry, which is more amenable to quantification, is desirable from the point of view of the buyer and intermediaries, since it lends itself to what Osborne (2015, 72) refers to as 'techniques of carbon forest legibility'.

Whether this trend is amenable to the everyday work of forest users and managers is another question. Although scientific forestry, due to its association with Western science, is easily seen to be a neocolonial instrument (Robbins 2004; Scales 2017), my conversations with CFUG members revealed a matter-of-fact sense of the usefulness of scientific methods for forest management by some users. Others lamented that agencies' scientific management techniques contradict local knowledge of forest users who are not exclusively focused on carbon. In addition to this tendency to prioritise quantifiable knowledge over traditional, it

is also problematic who is empowered to govern in such market-based prioritisation. Measuring carbon by necessity requires technologies such as GPS and remote sensing that are currently inaccessible to local forest users, lessening their authority/competence in everyday governance of forests. There is a danger that due to the introduction of REDD+, the decentralisation of forest governance stands to be reversed. These risks are different from the kind Osborne (2015) documented in her research in Chiapas, Mexico, where the commons are gradually eroded through a process of proxy privatisation, but rather have to do with how power is shared between the Westernised centre and the bearers of tradition at the margins. The 2019 Forest Bill that was tabled in Parliament does little to quell these concerns.[2]

Even as we must be concerned about the risk of erosion of a hard-won decentralisation of forest governance in Nepal, we should also recognise that while community forestry is typically heralded for its decentralised commons-oriented governance structure, even before REDD+, governance was shared with the centralised forest bureaucracy (Ostrom 1999b). The decision-making authority of the CFUG committees has typically been constrained by the government's forest agency-sanctioned uses and limits. While this might be driven by ecological necessities, the elevated and possibly romanticised governance powers serve as a façade for the subtle and insidious processes through which environmental/forest subjects and subjectivities are being created by government and non-governmental agencies (Agrawal 2005). It is revealing that a FECOFUN member suggested that selling timber would be economically more profitable than selling carbon, but indicated how this point of view is sacrilegious, and therefore the suggestion unthinkable. When considering the low price of carbon (USD5/ton), questions about the fairness of the trade reasonably arise. In fact, it would be an interesting thought experiment to imagine what a 'fair trade in carbon' would mean. Meanwhile, rather than seeing themselves as victims of unequal exchange, those involved in forest bureaucracies see a clearly unequal transaction as a means of ushering in financial resources that would not otherwise materialise. But questions remain: at what cost, for what benefits, and for whom?

Following Bakker (2005), it is easy to see how REDD+ (and CDM) are new forms of neoliberalisation of nature. Rather than tangible commodities,

2 Chandan Mandal, 'Taking Back Forests from Its Community Users Is Curtailing Their Rights, Activists', The Kathmandu Post, May 27, 2019, https://kathmandupost.com/climate-environment/2019/05/27 taking-back-forests-from-its-community-users-is-curtailing-their-rights-activists.

it is the capacity to remove carbon from the atmosphere that is being traded. Even so, we also see how the atmosphere's commodification is inherently tied to the commodification of tangible commodities such as forests. Neoliberal capitalism is problematic in part because of its tendency to facilitate accumulation by dispossession (Harvey 2005). Paudel (2016), in using this optic to examine community forestry, surmised that Nepal's community forestry is one of the rare exceptions where accumulation without dispossession can be witnessed. While this may be true, and used as a rationale for why REDD+ in community forests offers win-win possibilities, a number of issues continue to raise concerns. Although forest users are not being displaced per se from common forests due to commodification of timber, their labour costs from paid positions and reproductive labour costs—unpaid labour involved in the day-to-day maintenance and care-taking of members of the community who manage community forests—do not appear to be fully compensated when the work that goes into sustaining the forests is taken into consideration. Add to this the new processes of carbon trade, and the means of dispossession are multiplied. Adding a reproductive justice approach to the Marxist political economy lens employed by Paudel, the assessment of whether accumulation takes place with or without dispossession should be revisited (Federici 2019; Olson 2014; Salleh 2011).

Even so, forest users, similar to forest bureaucrats, are shrewd in making the best of available structures—adapting to, appropriating, and possibly engaging in acts of everyday resistance or opportunism—even as they recognise the unfairness of their circumstances. One indication of this, and this is telling in its complexity of social dynamics, is the deliberation within a particular community that suspected that their site was chosen for a REDD+ project because of its high proportion of Adivasis. While cognisant of this, some CFUG members expressed disdain for the said group, and rationalised why REDD+ safeguarding provisions of guaranteeing a quota of funds for the group were unreasonable, arguing that they were 'lazy, wasteful, and unproductive' members of the community! Another group that is often relegated to the status of victim but capable of using agency is women, who, with the exception of a recently appointed director of the REDD+ cell, have typically only occupied the most juniorlevel positions in the REDD+ organisational structure, and have been compensated on a contractual basis, despite doing the most arduous legwork involved in carbon assessments on the ground. Yet sometimes they find creative ways to mobilise resources, even in trivial ways such as manipulating an outsider into paying for their

meals or transportation, or trying to get you to stay at accommodations they or their friends or relatives own.

The Government of Nepal has a longstanding agenda to support community forestry in Nepal (MoPE 2016). Whether the REDD+ agenda serves to strengthen or weaken the existing community forestry infrastructure is an open question that further research might reveal. There have been concerns that REDD+ might have been portrayed in too positive a light, downplaying inherent complexities and challenges (Khatri et al. 2016). Likewise, a lack of adequate awareness of the climate change-forest linkages among the local populace, even in pilot project sites, is understandably seen as an impediment to the equitable practice of REDD+ (Gilani et al. 2017; Mandal et al. 2013). I would agree with these assessments and in cautioning against rushing the process of enforcing equity and inclusion imperatives in a top-down fashion, seeking to force the hands of national bureaucrats or community leaders, as this might worsen inter-communal relations. Instead, the value of a genuinely participatory process that involves a wide range of local stakeholders in designing programmes cannot be understated. Lack of attention paid to procedural justice is bound to thwart the social safety guards that REDD+ sponsors ostensibly seek to promote and protect (Suiseeya and Caplow 2013). Other researchers have indicated that community forestry and REDD+ are compatible agendas and can create co-benefits and equitable distribution of carbon revenues if proper safeguards are instituted, even as gender and social relations take time to evolve (Aryal 2015; Sharma et al. 2016). Since progressive social transformations might take time, it is vital to prevent newly introduced policies from exacerbating or introducing new modes of social inequality through processes of enclosure, exclusion, encroachment, and entrenchment, especially since these processes will eventually weaken the capacity and resilience of communities in climate adaptation efforts (Sovacool 2018).

Conclusion

This paper addressed the question of whether and to what extent neoliberal climate solutions such as REDD+ and CDM pose a threat to common pool resource governance structures such as community forestry in Nepal. I argue that there are two key ways in which the institutions of common pool governance are being compromised. In case of CDM, accumulation by dispossession is observed in the way in which the household labour of women is appropriated—often without their informed consent—to enable carbon trade between Nepal and the WB, with the AEPC working as intermediary. In case of REDD+, competition over scarce financial resources serves as a tool

to facilitate the gradual erosion of essential elements of community forestry governance. Preparatory groundwork activities indicate that community forestry leaders are desirous of REDD+ monies but unclear exactly what the criteria are for selection. There is a clear perception that 'scientific forestry' is deemed desirable by REDD+ administering agencies. The centralised push towards the replacement of local knowledge-driven management of forests by such methods is increasingly successful, potentially weakening established community forestry regimes, and strengthening the power of central forest agencies in Kathmandu.

While a key motivator for the promotion of scientific forestry is the need to facilitate legibility, measurements, and quantification of carbon for the purposes of trade, it is so far unclear whether and to what extent scientific forestry will erode and weaken community forestry institutions. With the imposition of scientific forestry, there is a danger that REDD+ serves not only as a neoliberal instrument but as a neocolonial one—threatening to replace traditional local knowledge regimes with Westdriven technological ones. However, there is also always the possibility that local resource users astutely take what they find useful in seemingly neocolonial and neoliberal instruments and modify them to meet their own needs. While this helps explain dynamics in a North-South context, it is also necessary to understand how these 'climate solutions' operate within and sustain power dynamics in the local context. Specifically, both CDM and REDD+ operate within an established culture of patriarchal domination and control, as well as domination of the urban, educated elite in the national context, and of caste dominance and privilege in the rural context. Initial attempts at gender sensitisation and gender mainstreaming are laudable, but there are indications that efforts to encourage equity for Adivasi groups are occurring in problematic ways that appear to further exacerbate animosity between social groups. If these instruments of carbon trading are to continue and in socially just ways, the question of what constitutes a 'fair trade' in carbon as a commodity at multiple scales begs serious attention.

The climate crisis can be seen to create opportunities to re-evaluate power dynamics at multiple scales, as well as to re-envision how earth's resources are used. Even as climate change offers new frontiers for the decades-long project of neoliberalising nature, it also provides opportunities to strengthen institutional arrangements designed to empower ordinary people to engage in ecologically sustainable behaviour. The challenge is to do so, and equitably, in meaningful—not token—ways. The current moment in Nepal—and the world—serves as a reminder that the stakes for a battle between these competing forces have never been higher.

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Labour in the High Himalayas
Recruitment and Agency of Mountaineering Expedition Labour on Nanga Parbat and Everest (1922–1939)

Nokmedemla Lemtur

The Himalayas is a lived space and studies on their transcultural nature show them to be inhabited by indigenous communities with distinct historical relations to the environment surrounding them—as trade routes and refuge (Viehbeck 2017), and the peaks as the 'abode of gods'. Martin Conway's expedition to the Karakorams in 1892 signalled the beginning of mountaineering in India and the shift in the Western gaze from the Alps, which was the 'playground of Europe' (Stephen 1907) to the Himalayas, as several foreign expeditions began attempts to scale Himalayan peaks. Scholarship on mountaineering has shown how it functioned as a sport and through it, a way to display colonial masculinity and the growing strength of the empire (Bayers 2003; Hansen 2000). With colonial expansion in the nineteenth century, this region became the frontier and borderland of the empire. The borderlands became 'complex and fragmented entities' far from the image of stability and control that the colonial state projected (Simpson 2017). The numerous surveys and exploration expeditions called unto a labour market that was highly dependent on local intermediaries and intervention of the colonial state given the absence of a reliable civilian labour pool (Sharma 2016).

By the early twentieth century, mountaineering expeditions were undertaken in the context of the national project and performance of heroic masculinity by various European nations. The expeditions required the consistent supply of labour due to the immense logistical demands of such an enterprise. Thus, this new 'playground' also functioned as a space of work for the various communities recruited for expeditions. Furthermore, the idea of a specialised community of high-altitude porters like the Sherpas emerged through the process of negotiation and patronage of the European

climbers. Using archival materials and monographs of expeditions to Mount Everest and Nanga Parbat between 1922 and 1939, this paper looks into how the mountaineering expeditions dealt with the logistics of labour and the creation of a very distinct labour pool, which became specialised and popularised in the sector of mountain climbing on two levels. It traces, firstly, the practices on recruitment, management, and control of the high altitude labour in the Himalayas; and secondly, the emergence of agency and claims to a certain kind of work through negotiations and conflict with European expedition members and also other indigenous communities that became characteristically identified with the Sherpas. Mountaineering in the early twentieth century was critical in consolidation of a workforce that served the expeditions. This paper is a small glimpse into the massive potential of these expeditions to inform us of the labouring world of the Himalayas.

Persistent Practices: Expedition Labour Recruitment

The process of colonial border-making and the labour markets it created laid the foundation for mountaineering expeditions. Cantonments, military campaigns, plantations, and constructions of roads and railheads created a wide spectrum of labour regimes that tactically balanced the migrant and local populations (Singha 2011). It was such 'labour pools' that mountaineering expeditions tapped into to fulfil their needs and to search for the ablest high-altitude load-carrying bodies. The works of Chitra Joshi (2012) and Radhika Singha (2015) illuminate various aspects of labour practices that were reproduced in the Himalayas. In particular, the colonial state's effort to control and regulate the time and body of the various labouring communities, attempts to recruit beyond the 'martial races', and the responses to such rationalisation informs one of the ongoing mechanisms of the labouring policy. The dual colonial obsession with 'primitivity' and the concretisation of different ethnic labour categories were used as a solution to the growing labour demands (Ghosh 1999). This narrative was developed to justify recruitment, initially for the indentured labour system and subsequently for the war effort in the First World War. Singha (2015) states that the World War experience provided a new discursive element with the search and discovery of loyal ethnicities. She also highlights the fact that a more generalised discourse on 'Indian labour' and the degree to which it could be managed or improved through the stereotype of the 'unskilled coolie mass' continues to persist (Singha 2015, 53).

One sees a continuation of such strategies through the play of ethnographic comparison between different communities recruited for the

expeditions in official reports and newspaper coverage. The ethnic labels of different communities were separated in terms of their physiology, cultural traits, and work skills (Singha 2011). What recur in such discussions are the issue of caste, and the binary between the coolies of the plains and the hills. In an address to the Alpine Club in 1917, Alexander M Kellas, a doctor who had travelled extensively across the Himalayas, writes:

> Of the different types of coolie, the writer has found the Bhutia Nepalese superior to all others he has employed. They are strong, good-natured if fairly treated, and as they are Buddhists there is no difficulty about special foodstuffs, a point strongly in their favour at high altitudes. The Lepcha and Kumaoni are of inferior physique, but the former makes an excellent coolie. The Kashmiri of the plains were not found reliable on the mountains, which was perhaps hardly to be expected; but the hill-men of North-West Kashmir can be trained, as Collie's account of mountaineering in the Nanga Parbat region shows and the author can confirm. The Gahrwali is inferior to the Bhutia at high altitudes, because he is a Hindu, and there is far more difficulty with his food supply (Kellas 1917, 27).

This binary between the coolies of the plains and the hills was used to create the image of the most suitable load-carrying body (Ghosh 1999). Furthermore, it was often stated and accepted in colonial narratives that a subject without caste was easier to control as they were more docile and tractable, even though they sometimes might have been physically weaker (Ghosh 1999; Singha 2015). The perceived absence of caste among the expedition porters, who happened to be Buddhists, increased their utility in the eyes of the climbers as they were less difficult about food or commensality.

In the colonial state's attempt to look beyond the 'martial races' to fulfil the insatiable demands for labour for various colonial enterprises, the expedition's labouring body can be located to see how the expedition labourers were observed, their characteristics recorded, and ethnic communities hierarchised. In a highly variated labour market, such observations accounted for the intergenerational transmission of stereotypes that persisted through colonial records and travel accounts.

The entry of Sherpas, who had migrated from the Solu-Khumbu region of Nepal, into the labour market took place in the process of Darjeeling becoming a commodified frontier (Bennike 2017). Rune Bennike (2017) and Jayeeta Sharma (2016) both show how Darjeeling became a hub for

different communities responding to the labour demands of the colonial state. Due to the absence of a reliable civilian labour pool and competition from the tea industry in the hills in the nineteenth century, the British were compelled to conscript military labour for construction and upkeep of mountain roads. Labour from the neighbouring states of Sikkim and Nepal were lured by cash advances as the labour force needed to be attracted and retained (Sharma 2016). The absence of labour regulations in Darjeeling through a collusion between colonial governance and planter capital to attract labour from the neighbouring states also provided the labouring communities with a range of employment opportunities (Shneiderman and Middleton 2018). According to Sharma (2016, 65), with the migration of labourers, 'colonial officials gradually refined a complex ethnography that differentiated between Himalayan labouring subjects based on reified cultural and biological traits that fitted tasks to groups'. Sharma (2016) highlights the fact that while Nepalis were employed in plantation, household, or other skilled indoor tasks, Bhutias had strenuous outdoor jobs. With the onslaught of Nepali and Bhutia migrants, the Lepchas came to be characterised by the British colonials as shy and less physically capable than the other groups as they withdrew from the labour pool.

The Sherpas, in particular, entered this labour pool as they began to migrate to Darjeeling in the second half of the nineteenth century in search of economic opportunities and to escape the exploitative system of feudal tenure in Nepal under Rana rulers. The first mention of Sherpas appears in 1907 in the narrative of Norwegian climber Rubenson, published by the *Alpine Journal* (vol. 24) when they were selected as porters for an expedition to Kabru (Ortner 1999). Two years later, in 1909, the Scottish explorer A. M. Kellas, who became famous for his pioneering work on human physiology at high altitudes, was one of the first to 'discover' the Sherpas as resilient porters and report his findings to the *Alpine Club* (Ortner 1999). His report popularised the Sherpa for future expeditions. Subsequent reports by other climbers of Sherpas' performance in the high mountains gradually naturalised their load-carrying abilities. The work of Ortner (1999) on the Sherpas explains how the poor landless labourers migrated to Darjeeling and found employment in these expeditions that provided them with seasonal employment with the assurance of a salary, clothing, food, and above all, social mobility. The promise of *bakshish*, a good testimonial that would ensure future employment, and the possibility of a *zhindak*, which roughly translates to a patron or protector, can also be discerned as factors which extracted performance of these porters in the mountains (Ortner 1999). All Sherpa porters hoped to have a *zhindak sahib* who would look out for them

after an expedition. This was, according to the Sherpas, not a position of inferiority but of reciprocity (Ortner 1999). That they were provided with kits and ration while on an expedition could perhaps be seen as an effort to lift themselves from the status of a mere coolie to a position with a higher degree of negotiation and claim to a particular set of skills. In doing so, one could discern an attempt to be seen as active participants in a common project that was displayed through camaraderie or the performance of it on the mountains.

The Sherpas had been recruited for Everest expeditions since the first reconnaissance expedition in 1921. The Nanga Parbat expedition relied on the Hunza porters from Kashmir in the first attempt, with the expectation that they would be as good as the Sherpa porters. Elizabeth Knowlton (1932, 17) writes of the Hunza porters, '...these are real hill people, honest and strong, and used to working at great heights. They are made of the same stuff that Everest "tigers" are made of'. However, they were seen as falling short of the 'stuff' that made the Sherpas, and the Hunza porters were blamed for the failure of the expedition. Subsequent expeditions eventually recruited Sherpa porters from Darjeeling to help the Germans in their attempted ascent of the mountain.

The 'trained eye' was a trope regularly used by Western travellers and explorers that 'scientised' travel as they were gathering information and knowledge for metropolitan science (Driver 2001). It transformed the observer from a passive spectator to one who saw within a 'proscribed set of possibilities' (Driver 2001).[1] While looking for labourers, expedition climbers looked for 'lithe and active in preference to the thick set and at first sight more impressive looking giants . . . (as) it is interesting to note that when the time came none of them were fit enough to take part in the really high climbs' (Norton 1925, 58). The archetype of the best porter form reappears when Captain J Birnie remarks that 'the final eight (Sherpas) were determined to do a record carry [sic] and joked heartily at the prospect; curiously enough they were practically all of one type, the tall, strong porter was out of it, and we had eight small, tough, young men' (Birnie 1936, 344).

The narrative produced in this period of the expeditions popularised the performance of Sherpas in the mountains, and one can trace the gradual naturalisation of their load-carrying abilities in high altitudes. The Sherpas were able to achieve a rare position due to their climbing abilities and

1 This is in reference to the idea of the 'gaze' – scientific, picturesque and geographical that Mathew Edney (1997) explains as creating a power relationship over that which is being observed.

through various acts and desirable traits that they displayed. The British were especially keen on transforming them into a specialised workforce, or 'a porter corps' (Younghusband 1931). Younghusband (1931, 36) further writes:

> They would be infused with an esprit de corps. Appeal would be made to their spirit of adventure, their love of fame and honour, their ambition to make a name for themselves. And they would be paid well, fed well, equipped well and also ruled well, so that by the childish indulgences to which they are prone they would not risk the success of the expedition.

The establishment of the Himalayan Club (henceforth HC) in 1928 provided some structure in employing labour for expeditions. The club managed a set of seasoned porters who were ranked according to their performance and experience, and also provided a framework for their salary, rations, clothing, equipment, and insurance in case of accident or death (National Archive of India 1937). The HC issued the well-known 'chit-book', containing the porters' photographs with written testimonials of their service by various climbers. The average rate for a Sherpa porter was twelve annas[2] a day, but they were paid one rupee per day, including rations and equipment, in case they had to work above the snow line, as it was more dangerous. In case of death, a married man's family was paid a compensation of 500 rupees and a single man's family of 200 rupees (National Archive of India 1937).

The Sherpas' unique stature in mountaineering is reproduced through the expedition accounts, lectures at the Royal Geographical Society, and the Alpine Club meetings and newspaper reports. Sherpas were often celebrated for their loyalty, sacrifice, and voluntary work, and colonial records reflect that they had a love for sport, good humour, and camaraderie but were undisciplined and childish. The Sherpa was portrayed with all the characteristics of a sporting coloniser, and their reputation was immortalised through their deaths in the mountains which far outnumbered the deaths of climbers. By the 1930s, as their involvement in the mountaineering expeditions expanded, they were considered indispensable to any attempt to scale the Himalayas. According to Bauer (1938, 102), '[i]t is impossible nowadays to contemplate a Himalaya expedition without the help of these fine Sherpas'. Due to such a reputation, they were able to secure an advantage in which they were required to only carry loads once they reached a base camp and not on the journey to the base camp. The process of claiming one's

2 One anna is equal to one sixteenth of a rupee.

skill was instrumental in the Sherpa's ability to have some agency over their work terms and conditions. Ang Tharkay (2016), a Sherpa veteran of three expeditions to Everest, highlights an incident from 1935. When they were ordered to carry a load of seventy pounds each en-route to the base camp, from Gangtok to Lachen, the Sherpas protested and threatened to abandon the expedition and return home. The British climbers realised that they couldn't convince the Sherpas to do their bidding and ceded to their demands. Not only were they exempted from carrying the loads on the journey, but they also shouldered the responsibility of keeping the local labour in line, preventing mischief and pilfering, and watching over the expedition stores. Such a relationship of trust and confidence was attributed to the connection the British felt toward this labouring community. E.F. Norton (1925, 51) writes the following on the 1924 expedition:

> To deal with individually or even en masse these men are [sic] singularly like a childish edition of the British soldier, many of whose virtues we share. They have the same high spirit for a tough and dangerous job; the same ready response to quip and jest. As with the British soldier, the rough character, who is perpetually a nuisance when drink and the attractions of civilisation tempt him astray, often comes out strongest when 'up against it' in circumstances where the milder man fails.

These narratives of bravery, loyalty, and performance in the high altitudes were simultaneously accompanied by their descriptions in diminutives and narratives of paternalistic affections. Lionel Caplan's (2003) work on the Gurkhas shows striking similarities in the way the community was reproduced in the various texts that claimed to have an authority over the history of the Gurkhas. He argues that though the officers saw a version of themselves in the Gurkhas they commanded, the process of miniaturisation was to draw attention to the contrast between the officer and the native soldier. The Sherpa had a trajectory similar to the Gurkha 'warrior gentleman' in colonial texts and literature but with a stronger opposition in recognising them as guides in the mountains. It is remarkable to note that despite the recognition, awards and acknowledgement that no climb would be successful without their help, they were inflexibly categorised as labouring bodies and not as being masculine or possessing climbing abilities. The Himalayan Club proceedings record:

> 'Climbers' is a term already used for Europeans of the party; 'guides' would give a false impression, for it is most undesirable that the porters

> should be looked upon as guides in the Swiss sense; and since the name 'Tiger' has been fairly constantly used since the Mount Everest expedition of 1924 for the picked porters who have gone high, it has been adopted as the best name put forward (L.J.T. 1940).

The denial to name the Sherpas 'guides' exposes the tension in colonial discourse over the recognition of their skill without considering them professionals, despite the knowledge that climbing attempts would have been impossible without their help. However, the porters' conduct on the mountains reveals that they weren't merely passive receivers of a foreign practice and imperial domination. They did not downright reject mountaineering and saw in it an opportunity to reinvent themselves and overcome the hierarchy imposed on them.

Hidden Transcripts: Labour Agency in the Mountains

The moments that break the mould of the image of the perfect mountain porter created by the climbers are often the most significant. The idea of the pliable and loyal Sherpa persists and their load-carrying abilities are naturalised by suggestions that they have been carrying loads since childhood, were born and bred in the mountains, and are used to being exposed to severe climate. However, scattered across many expedition reports and accounts are 'mischiefs' by Sherpa porters that provide a potential to read the narrative of mountaineering differently. MacDonald and Butz (1998) suggest a re-reading of these public transcripts to reveal instances of resistance that may be embedded within the text.

Materials from public transcripts are relatively accessible as they were often published as official reports, expedition accounts, and reports by the climbers. Parallel to this are non-public discourse and practices that reject and subvert the public transcript. Such transcultural discourse originating in indigenous experiences are often less accessible, but this helps understand how subordinate groups adapt or adopt foreign conceptions of themselves. However, due to the impervious nature of the hidden transcripts, the discourse took place away from the arena of performance and was veiled from the dominants' view (Scott 1990). The porters on the mountains employed diverse tactics to legitimate, manipulate, accommodate or resist the material condition of their interaction (MacDonald and Butz 1998). Scott (1990) also lists some of the methods through which the porters resisted the material, status-based, and ideological domination, such as strikes, outright desertion, refusal to work, disputes over wage and load limits, spreading of rumours and re-emergence of folk stories. Apart from

these techniques, a strategic use of space and topography was adopted which utilised the expedition members' limited knowledge of the mountain landscape. These were moments that exposed the hidden transcripts of the subordinate community to resist and negotiate a degree of dignity and self-respect in the mountains. For instance, the Nanga Parbat expedition in 1934 was held up for almost a month because the Sherpas demanded their special flour, tsampa, and were unwilling to compromise on an alternative (Bechtold and Tyndale 1935). Despite the fact that the Sherpas used their religiosity as a bargaining chip, their piety, loyalty and obedience also come into question through several incidents which often go against the trope of the Sherpa that was conjured by the climbers. Norton narrates an amusing incident in the 1924 expedition when Tamding, the Sherpa porter assigned to personally serve Somervell, had fallen with his load and broken his leg. He writes:

> (Tamding) was Somervell's servant on the journey across Tibet and during that time Somervell had lost one or two articles of underwear which had never been traced. Inspection of the fractured limb now reveal the fact that the missing garments had been 'borrowed' by Tamding (Norton 1925, 67).

Such instances of 'mischief' appeared to be a common problem in expeditions and expedition members often favoured hiring younger Sherpas, not only because they were more eager to please and stronger, but the 'old soldier' types were seen as prone to causing trouble. Narbu Yishe was one such person who was characterised as 'a plausible rogue, a Mongolian replica of a well-known type in the British army—the old soldier: his nickname the "Purana Miles" will convey as much to those whose scholarship is both classical and oriental' (Norton 1925, 101). Strikes among the porters began especially when physical conditions in the mountains became difficult. George Mallory termed it as 'oriental inertia', in which after a certain stage of depression or physical discomfort, they simply curl up (Norton 1925). Ortner (1999) also refers to this particular aspect as her work on the Sherpas in the Himalayas provides valuable insight into their lives, as it attempted to show how they saw themselves in the larger context of mountaineering in the twentieth century. Tharkay (2016), a Sherpa veteran of three expeditions in the 1930s, dispels the illusions one might have had regarding the treatment and experiences of the Sherpas. In his memoir, he writes on the 1933 expedition:

> Life in base camp had no real appeal for us Sherpas. The expedition organisers barely treated us as humans. The latrines that had been built were reserved exclusively for the 'sahibs'. We had to relieve ourselves some distance away. (Tharkay 2016, 55)

The climbers would often present the tragedy of mountaineering as unfortunate accidents or risks involved in mountain climbing. Instances of cruelty or violence were often overlooked but the narrative of Tharkay provides a peek into certain events during his experiences in the mountains. He recounts the time in 1938 when a team on Everest had to retreat from Camp IV due to bad weather and a Sherpa, named Pasang, had become paralysed on the way down. The climbers felt that he was beyond rescue and planned to abandon him at Camp III as he was a burden and endangered their descent. Tharkay (2016, 71) writes:

> Poor Pasang realised that the entire team was leaving and abandoning him to his fate. One of the Sherpas covered Pasang's face with a piece of fabric, thinking it would ease his agony. Mr. Tilman asked me to do something for Pasang.

Tharkay managed to drag Pasang down to the base camp and brought him to safety so that he could be looked after.

An incident occurred on Nanga Parbat as well, in 1934, where it was disclosed that the worsening weather had forced the climbers to abandon their camp and descend to a lower camp. Two German climbers, Peter Aschenbrener and Erwin Schneider, were given the responsibility to escort down three Sherpa porters with them. However, on their descent, the two climbers found themselves unable to handle the Sherpas and they allegedly left the Sherpas in the storm. Fortunately, the Sherpas managed to survive the descent on their own, but the two climbers were accused of abandoning them on the mountain. Schneider and Aschenbrener (1934) defended themselves by reporting that they left them to spare the porters unnecessary effort and had the intention to return for them but could not as the weather had gotten much worse. Such incidents are often neglected when climbers write their stories of hardship and heroism in the mountains. Though they were not averse to depict themselves as using force when having to discipline the porters who were up to mischief or had had too much to drink, to show that they treated their porters cruelly fell short of their self-fashioning as generous and civilised people. The climbers were intent on sticking to the script of their role in uplifting the

Sherpas and instilling in them skills and a shared love for the mountain.

Conclusion

Mountaineering expeditions in the early twentieth century provide a glimpse into the lives of communities that were a significant factor in such imperial enterprises. The process of recruitment, regulation and control were reified and borrowed from earlier colonial processes, and stereotypes continued to be perpetuated in the colonial narrative. Such colonial efforts did not proceed without resistance or negotiations, but ultimately resulted in the creation of a category of high-altitude labour that has today become synonymous with the Sherpa. The textual descriptions provide us a picture of the labouring body being observed and recorded. While these observations may not seem particularly scientific to us, I borrow Smail's (2013) argument in treating science not as a fixed category defined solely by its content but also as a socio-cultural construct. Taking into consideration the physical practices and skills performed by the porters in the mountain, we find that these are the aspects that become normalised but are accessible to us as observational anecdotes. The efforts of ongoing process of colonial border-making drew back to colonial expansion in the nineteenth century with the Himalayas becoming the 'complex and fragmented frontier' (Simpson 2017) and borderland of the empire. Such expansion called for numerous surveys and exploration expeditions that made the mountain the subject and space of scientific practice. There appears to be a shift in interest by the early twentieth century to the body in high altitude, in particular the labouring body in the high Himalayas as a subject of scientific observation and practice, as the region became mapped more comprehensively and heights calculated.

Historical research on the Himalayas, like the mountains themselves, is often a challenge given the sheer vastness of the region and diversity it encompasses. The emergence of mountains as a transcultural space through various trade connections, surveys and exploration excursions opened the mountains to investigation from different perspectives that appeal to the scholarship of various orientations. The commencement of large-scale mountaineering expeditions in the Himalayas provides an access into a deeper understanding of the impact of various colonial processes and of the lives of the communities that inhabit this region. Such encounters hold the potential of considering questions of the labouring process, the reach of capital, the emergence of remittance economy, and household strategies among the labouring communities.

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Centering Himalayan Stray Dogs
Reframing the Narrative of Non-Human Being Subjectivity and Agency

Sese Ma

Background and Research Objective

Modern sanitation and health projects began quite recently in Nepal. This is one of the reasons for stray dog population not being effectively controlled by humans, as opposed to the case in other nations, such as Japan. The issue of abundant stray dogs poses a problem to the Nepali state in various aspects. First, it is a security concern as residents and tourists are scared of being attacked when bypassing the territories of different dog packs. Second, it is a public health concern as people die of rabies. Third, it is an economic concern as tourists are driven away by the all-night barking, as Nepal relies heavily on tourism. In response to these concerns, governmental approaches, in the past, have varied from culling dogs (using poisoned meat) to carrying out ward by ward neutering campaigns funded by international NGOs. These practices have become the center of discussions in the study of ethics in both South Asian (Singh and Dave 2015) and international academia (Iseda 2008).

However, one of the problems of these top-down efforts is the source of data. Empirical knowledge of the stray dogs is rarely prioritised, and this insufficient understanding helps to sustain stereotypes and categorisations. Empirical questions, such as how a certain individual got infected with rabies or the circumstances under which certain individual dogs decide to attack certain humans, are often left unattended, as research questions are rarely designed in a way that recognises stray dogs as individuals. This phenomenon is exemplified in the ways that stray dogs have always been seen and compared as a group in most of the few studies concerning them in South Asia.

> We carried out a study in Chitwan District (central Nepal), to collect baseline data on free-roaming owned dog demographics, assess

> knowledge, attitudes and practices of dog owners concerning dogs and rabies, evaluate rabies vaccination coverage... Most dogs appeared healthy, although haemoprotozoans, endoparasites and ectoparasites were identified in 12%, 73% and 40% of the dogs, respectively. (Massei et al. 2017, 30).

Of the few studies on stray dogs in Nepal, many are related to community health concerns, such as rabies vaccination coverage, education on post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP), and dog population management programmes. One of the noticeable features of this type of study is the use of numbers. This emphasis on numbers is not accidental. As in most studies of animal behaviours, it is groups that are important.

As observed by biologist Lynda Birke, whereas in the study of wild species, the focus is often on the social group and its dynamics (such as observing social interactions and the formation process of linear hierarchy within a group of chimpanzees), in the study of laboratory animals, the focus is always on representative groups (such as comparing fifty mice receiving hormone treatment to fifty mice not receiving it). Even when individuals are being studied, they are often seen as exemplars of particular species, instead of an individual with his or her idiosyncrasies (Birke 1994).

This predominant phenomenon could be viewed as a form of 'essentialising'. It is an anthropological term that refers to the treatment of individuals as if they were the same as others in their gender, race, or species. This type of thinking is implicit in environmental policy, as well as most of the discourses on conservation and sustainability. In these perspectives, what matters is the survival of the species instead of the survival of the individual. That is because the species as a whole is understood to play a contributing role in the ecosystem, but the individual is not. For example, all tree frogs in one biome are considered interchangeable with one other. They are not thought as different and irreplaceable individuals. What matters is the portion of their collective existence (the adding up of same individuals) in comparison to other species in the ecosystem. As a result, there can be too few, too many, or just enough numbers of these individuals in order for the species to contribute to the ecosystem.

When the population is not 'right' in number, human is entitled to get it under control. This perspective was coined as 'anthropocentric utilitarianism' by ecofeminist Linda Vance. It underpins nearly every environmental policy, demonstrated by population management programmes around the world, whether it be the control of invasive species, regulation of overpopulation, or preservation of endangered species. The

capturing, culling or neutering of stray dogs is just one small part of this framework of policies.

In fact, utilitarianism is also practiced repeatedly on human out-groups in different places. In her study on the teenager suicide epidemics within Inuit population in Canada, anthropologist Lisa Stevenson points out that throughout history, in every state health programme and intervention campaign, indigenous populations have always been seen in numbers. It is as if that to the Canadian state, the lives of the Inuit teen suicides are only mournful in comparison to the white majority. An ethnic community seems to deserve international protection only when it declines significantly in numbers. A threatened animal species is usually given special status of protection only before its extinction. These two seemingly unrelated attitudes towards endangered minorities is shockingly similar.

By contrast, 'There are just too many of them!' is an everyday complaint we encounter. We hear different versions of this in different places as well. There can be too many stray dogs, too many cockroaches, too many immigrants, too many refugees, and too many Chinese tourists.

However, few might complain that there are too many royal and loving family dogs. Literature scholar Randy Malamud has explored the ways animals, especially dogs, are constructed as helpful, serving, and willing. The 'nature to serve' discourse has been prescribed to dogs for centuries—'dogs are man's best friend'. However, there doesn't seem to be much space for dogs who are stupid, disobedient, or in other words, useless to us.

Seeing a community as being both too many or too few reflects a utilitarianism that serves to categorise one's relationship with other living beings as variations of usefulness and uselessness. What is common among these attitudes is the treatment of individuals as if they were the same as others in their ethnicity, gender, or species. This has been practiced among those of other ethnicities, other countries, other religions, etc. It is often accompanied by labelling the constructed group with specific disempowering judgements—it de'human'ises and diminishes individuals.

For non-human animals, one direct reflection of this utilitarian perception of lives is their prescribed legal rights to exist—all non-human animals are categorised by the circumstances under which they may be killed by humans: they may never be killed, killed at specific times, killed when they behave in specific ways, or killed at random (Vance 1995). 'Useful' animals, such as flagship species like the Ganges River Dolphin, may never be killed; 'not too bad' animals, such as service animals, or prey species in the wild, may be killed when they pose harm to human enterprise; 'insignificant' or 'repugnant' species like ladybugs or cockroaches can be killed at random.

All animals threatening human safety are required to be exterminated by law, such as cows in the foot-and-mouth disease outbreak in the UK or cows exposed to radiation after the Fukushima nuclear disaster in Japan.

Let us go back to the types of studies that are most commonly conducted on stray dogs in South Asia. It is important to reconsider the ways in which embedded essentialising (manifested by research focus on group and number) impacts the research result and its story-telling practices. As pointed out by feminist Donna Haraway, the way research questions are asked and answered, including in the scientific field studies of animals, are all 'politics by other means' (Haraway 1984).

One question I wish to ask is: what kind of images of stray dogs are being associated with these studies, given the fact that we live in a world where dogs could be either useful or useless to us?

When animals are thought about, a commonsense view of them is often adopted. There is an image of the 'naturalistic' animal that we associate with certain wild and domesticated species (Lynch 1988). For example, a 'naturalistic' companion dog is different from a 'naturalistic' stray dog. A naturalistic view is a taken-for-granted, everyday kind of image, which is often not based on a personal dialogue with the individual animal. It could obscure empirical facts about its subject. Yet it is persistent and often has practical impacts.

Stray dogs occupy a conceptual grey zone—they have the potential to bond with humans intimately and be 'valuable' companions, yet they could also pose potential danger and be feared as bloodthirsty aggressors. This categorisation carries into reality—those seen as 'aggressive' and 'unloving' often lack the justification to exist. Moreover, produced knowledge about stray dogs often follows or fails to resist the 'useful' and 'useless' naturalistic images about them. This is indeed a common by-product of essentialising; lack of empirical data about individuals sustaining a mass-produced image about alienated groups.

Who are these unattended individuals? How does a stray dog go about his or her daily life, bonding with specific individuals and asserting agency in different life situations? What is the specific circumstance under which a dog gets infected with rabies or decides to bark at night or attack certain humans? My research was designed to engage with these missing pieces by attending to specific dogs and their daily lives in the Nepal Himalayas.

Research Sites

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines four categories of dogs based on the extent to which they depend on humans. These four categories

are 'neighbourhood dogs', 'restricted dogs', 'family dogs' and 'feral dogs'. 'Neighbourhood dogs' are also commonly called 'village dogs' or 'stray dogs'. It refers to dogs that live semi-dependent on humans (scavenge in human waste or receive food directly from humans) and are semi-restricted or unrestricted in terms of their ability to roam. They are often seen in cities and villages. 'Restricted' dogs refer to dogs chained outside the home, such as a guard dog and livestock guardian dog. They live in human settlement and often have to follow a strict schedule. 'Feral' dogs refer to dogs that live independent of humans (with no food and shelter provided by humans) and roam unrestrictedly.

In Langtang, Nepal, dogs of all four life styles show their presence. In Syafru Besi (1460m) and Chilime (1738m), a big number of free-roaming dogs that stay around people who are cooking and eating can be spotted during the daytime. The number of stray dogs decreases after sunset; however, they can be heard every night barking in the mountain area outside the village. Half-eaten small mammals can be found outside the village at dawn. A hypothesis is that like many village dogs in the world, some of them hunt and stay outside the village at night. Moreover, in Syafru Besi, there are also a few family dogs that are semi-restricted. Instead of being originally a part of the village dog population, they are purchased from Tibet or Kathmandu for their appearance

In Lingling (2026m), there are feral dogs who roam outside the village, as well as restricted dogs that are chained outside the house to protect humans. According to their owners, the restricted dogs, usually puppies, are also purchased from Tibet for their potential to fight. In Briddhim (2229m), without the presence of any village or feral dogs, there are two restricted dogs that were brought from Tibet for the specific purpose of fighting with the monkeys who come to the villagers' apple fields. Given the fact that Langtang is a national park, Assamese monkey communities do visit frequently during harvest.

In Thuman (2390m), there are village dogs that hang out and play in the fields during the day and roam in the village for human waste at night. In contrast to Syafru Besi, the number of dogs increase after the sunset, and barking can be heard inside the village at night. One hypothesis is that these resident dogs have territory inside the village and they are reminding the others not to look for waste in their territories. Another hypothesis is that despite the presence of village dog populations, feral dogs come during the night to scavenge, and barking is a type of warning. In Kyanjin Gompa (3870m), without the presence of village dogs or restricted dogs, there are feral dogs hunting and roaming outside the

village, which do not interfere with humans.

In their study of free-roaming 'village dogs' in Italy, MacDonald and Carr (2017) looked at whether free-roaming dogs in various ecological niches might have different types of social organisation. I think Langtang is an ideal place to explore individual adaptions and decision-making because of the accessibility of various ecological niches, anthropogenic projects such as hydropower dams and highways, as well as human-made 'natural' spaces, namely national park and trekking routes to all free-roaming dogs.

All the stray dogs I have encountered so far are either solitary or in groups of two. The only group of three dogs I met were two puppies and their mother. This corresponds to Majumder et al. (2014)'s study on free-roaming dogs in urban environments in India. They found that dogs forage both solitarily and in groups, depending on the time of year.

An interesting fact is that groups of two dogs in Langtang always look identical to each other. It made me wonder whether they were siblings or friends as opposed to mates (as has been argued by Majumder et al.) and how they come to be with each other. Moreover, given the fact that each village in Langtang is usually within one day's walking distance to the next for a human, it would be meaningful to explore the reasons each dog chooses to live in its current environment, taking into consideration all the ecological and anthropogenic space being available, and how much does each individual travel and change its place of inhabitance during the course of his or her life.

In order to understand the life of any individual dog, the multi-species landscape and overall social-political context of Langtang national park also needs to be attended to. First of all, living in Langtang entails living with a wide range of domestic and wild species, and it would be inaccurate to perceive stray dogs as entities formed in isolation. A web of multi-species relatedness takes part in the decision-making of the dogs. The movement of wild mammals (such as the Assamese monkey) as well as livestock animals (most commonly yaks) are part of the daily lives of most stray dogs living in or outside the village.

As it borders Tibet, Langtang is also influenced by the development and political agendas of both the Nepali and Chinese state. For example, the construction of both Chinese and Nepali hydropower dams in the area has instigated a redefinition of the relationships among the locals and the state. The 2015 earthquake also brought on heavy emotional tolls, transforming existing relationships including those between humans and stray dogs and the lives of all domestic and wild animals in the area. The Belt and Road Initiative and its reconstruction of borders in the recent years also brought

Chinese merchants and security forces into the area, although the reason is unclear given the fact that Tibetans could barely escape to the area due to tighter border controls. These factors all contribute to the decision a stray dog might make about its relationships, migration, and inhabitance. Attending to each individual's decision-making processes would be one way to get to know who they are, without defining them solely by their relationships with humans, as the categorisation of WHO sadly does.

Approach and Methodology

In the field of human-animal relations, there have long been academic debates on the ways in which the objectification of animals not only justifies their systematic exploitation but also provides a conceptual basis that allows the subjugation of human out-groups. Yet, outside the disciplines of humanities and social science, there is a lack of study on material animals within similar frameworks. This research aims to engage with this missing piece by providing empirical data on non-human agency and their entanglement with other species under dominating social-political contexts.

In an influential manifesto for multi-species ethnography, Kirksey and Helmreich (2010) urged scholars to treat non-humans as ethnographic subjects with legible biographical and political lives. Over the last decade, an important body of scholarship from interdisciplinary backgrounds, namely science and technology studies, political ecology, anthropology and psychology, have all focused on illuminating animal agency, as well as the ways humans and non-humans 'become with' one another through intimate encounters (Haraway 2008).

However, there is a division of employed methodologies: natural scientists tend to study non-domestic species by ethological methods, while social scientists tend to examine domestic species or human attitudes towards non-domestic species by ethnographic methods. This division is problematic because to a certain extent, it reinforces the culture/intimacy vs. nature/conflict dichotomy that underpins the categorisation of domestic/non-domestic animals, which these researchers set to challenge in the first place. My research is set to connect this dichotomisation by using both ethnological and ethnographic methods.

Employing both ethnographic and ethological methods, I would start my research with the more accessible village dogs in Chilime, Briddhim and Thuman. I plan to use focal and scan sampling and fixed-point observation to identify individual dogs and get to know their basic daily schedules, personalities, relationships, and life histories. I also plan to follow the

domestic and wild animals, most commonly yaks, and humans that the dog interacts with and conduct interviews and participant observations in the village to further understand their life histories. Intensive interviews and ecological studies of the surrounding environment would be carried out in Briddhim and Lingling in order to understand the life of restricted dogs and the reason behind the absence of other stray dogs.

Within one year, I wish to identity 10-20 individual dogs with whom I could build mutual trust and start to adopt an actor-oriented approach instead of the traditional space-oriented approach. I will follow the dog day and night, wherever it roams, to observe the different activities and relationships that unfold in various spaces, in and out of borders. In terms of feral dogs living nearby Lingling and Kyanjin Gompa, the research method has not been decided. No current research has been done on feral dogs in the mountains given their extremely high mobility. The use of GPS animal collar was suggested but I am still debating on its usage due to ethical issues.

After reading James Scott's *The Art of Not Being Governed* (2009), I realised that mountain dogs are also beings who live in the frontiers. Their small groups and mobility made it difficult for mass culling or neutering campaign to target them, and their dispersal guarantees that they don't pose a threat for tourism and anthropogenic projects. The absence of empirical knowledge about them might correspond to the ways in which the state rarely bothers to control these dissidents living in the periphery. However, with continuous development projects that reconstitute and stabilise borders and restrict movements, along with highly improved technology for surveillance, they might start to get in the way. This is the main reason I hesitated using GPS collars.

Future Prospect

Discourses on development, sustainability and eco-tourism have been emphasised by the Nepali state in recent years. By asking questions as to how development discourses shape the perception and categorisation of animals in different areas of Nepal (cities vs. national parks), I hope to gain insight into more general issues of how legal systems or classifications made by biologists and professionals in a specific social/ historical background are carried into different societies and therefore shape the ways in which one perceives and imagines the world.

How does the status of a species change along with the space it occupies? In what conceptual space are stray dogs being situated when they live in a conservation area? What conceptual space are they placed in when they are living on the street and more recently, human homes? And most

importantly, how do all these conceptual spaces take shape in different societies and shift historically?

In her work *Purity and Danger*, Mary Douglas (1966) has argued that 'dirt is never a unique, isolate event. Where there is dirt there is system. Dirt is the by-product of a systematic ordering and classification of matter, insofar as ordering involves rejecting inappropriate elements'. What cannot be easily defined or controlled is often feared, therefore put under the category of 'dirt'. Is this the reason stray dogs in metropolitan areas, such as Kathmandu, are often seen by policy makers as existence needing to be controlled? If stray dogs occupying other forms of man-made landscapes are not considered as existence out of place, is it due to the absence of an ordering, a specific vision of the landscape?

In Langtang, feral and village dogs seem to be seen as entitled to be there just because they have always been there—they have the right to exist without being useful to humans. Mountain dogs in Langtang might be a window to peek into the variety and complexity of relationships which human and non-human animals always have had but are often deemed invisible by the social structure they live in. I hope understanding stray dogs as individuals could in turn foster the reconceptualisation of received ideas of human and non-human animals in general. I hope the real daily life of the mountain dogs in Langtang would question the ways they are categorised and perceived based on dichotomies constructed by biodiversity discourses and conservation policies. I plan to continue this research as an engaged ethnography. Through future collaborations with local animal organisations, veterinarians, and policy makers, I hope that this study will provide new insights on stray dogs and environmental policy in general.

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Issues in the Development of Community-Led Tourism in Nepal
The Example of Dhorpatan Region

Ravindra Nyaupane, Mike Pretious and Suvash Khadka

Introduction

This paper provides a descriptive, historical, and current account of the issues constraining and promoting local entrepreneurial activities in the development of tourism in the Dhorpatan region in west Nepal. In doing so, it provides direction towards possible future developments and research agenda.

The paper vividly narrates a picture of the last one and a half decades, when social movements, NGOs and other actors have shaped and reshaped reality. This preliminary work uses diverse sources of evidence, including field observations, researchers' notes, newsletters, documents, websites and other secondary sources (Yin 2018). The paper is presented firstly based on the chronological order of events, and secondly, through identifying enablers and disruptors of efforts affecting conservation and livelihoods, including tourism, within the Dhorpatan cluster regional programme (see below). It is notable that in recent years several actors within the Dhorpatan region seem to be taking a more positive approach to both conservation and tourism.

At a broader level, labour migration to overseas countries and its resultant decline in activities, mainly in NGOs and the service sector, is discussed in the paper. Further, the national historical, political, and social context of Nepal is also analysed to better understand local issues in the Dhorpatan region.

Key Terminologies

The cluster concept and programmes for Dhorpatan region are relatively new, therefore, it is important to determine the geographical scope and

dimensions of the region, as explained in the following terminologies:

- **Dhorpatan area** comprises Dhorpatan hunting reserve, Dhorpatan valley and the entire Dhorpatan municipality, as well as Nisikhola and Badighat rural municipalities within Baglung district.
- **Dhorpatan cluster region** incorporates the above stated Dhorpatan area, and the rural municipalities of Madane in Gulmi district, and Gaumukhi and Jhimruk in Pyuthan district, which are also aligned to the Dhorpatan cluster programme.
- **Dhorpatan cluster regional programme** integrates (i) Dhorpatan hunting reserve and areas south-east from it in Baglung district; (ii) Madane forest conservation and the entire Madane rural municipality area of Gulmi district, and (iii) Okharkot-Gaumukhi heritage trail and the entire Gaumukhi and Jhimruk rural municipalities of Pyuthan district.
- **Mid-hills** are situated at the foothills of the Himalayas which border with China in the north, and the Tarai plains of Nepal in the south. The mid-hills are considered the heartland of Nepal, and apart from the rural areas, they include some cities, including Kathmandu. The altitude of the mid-hills ranges from 500 to 3000 meters.
- **Gaumukhi Development Area (GDA)** covers the entire Gaumukhi municipality area in Pyuthan district and Aglung village of Gulmi district.

Background

Local Context

Similar to most parts of mid-hills of Nepal, the Dhorpatan cluster region has Hinduism as the majority religion, while small minorities follow Buddhist and Christian faiths. In Hindu culture, there is a practice of *atithi devo bhava*, meaning 'guest is like a god'. This important attitude towards hospitality is shared across the cultural-religious spheres of Nepal, including in Dhorpatan, and in South Asia generally.

Partly because of this cultural practice and attitude, homestays are some of the most successful rural tourism practices in Nepal across diverse subcultures. Alongside this custom, aspirations towards better working practices that can potentially alleviate the burden on weary farmers, together with the slogan promulgated by Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli in 2019, *Samriddha Nepal, Sukhi Nepali* (Prosperous Nepal, Happy Nepali) have been influential in shaping entrepreneurial and social life.

The term 'sukhi' has connotations about having abundant wealth or an easy life (less hard work for people in farming) and happiness, but these goals may be difficult to attain in the prevailing *laissez-faire* economy. Trust in private businesses and the NGO sector has traditionally been very low in Nepal because these entities lack transparency, and their contribution in development of the country has been perceived as too little. Thus, they face challenges to achieve their social, environmental, and economic goals despite their positive intentions.

Supported by the remittances, migration from rural and remote areas to towns and larger cities is a common phenomenon, and it is discussed in the following sections. Most businesses in the Dhorpatan cluster region are small grocery retailers connected to the basic trading system in Nepal selling daily essentials like food, hardware, clothes, etc., while few of them also serve as internet cafes or provide financial services through cooperatives as well as commercial banks. Although there are agriculture-based enterprises such as dairies and livestock farms, and cottage industries like handlooms, their numbers are very low in this region. NGOs provide diverse support to the community, including healthcare, education, livelihoods, youth empowerment, and so on. The local government has the function of providing services to the public and delivering infrastructure, welfare, and other programmes. However, none of these organisations (public, private, or government) create uniquely local products or services. Tourism stands out as potentially being very local with respect to its production and delivery.

Context of Organisations

United Development Organisation charity was founded in this political environment in northern Pyuthan region in January 2006 when the armed conflict between the government forces and Maoist rebels was ongoing since 10 years but there were signs that the it was about to end. The primary objective of the organisation was to mobilise youth for social change in the remote villages of north-eastern Pyuthan, which was designated as the GDA. The government and the Maoists eventually signed a peace deal in November 2006 but the decade long conflict had taken its toll with people having little hope for fruitful employment, although economic activities were gradually resuming.

In this article, we refer to the period from 2006 to 2018 as the post-war crisis period, with the broader generalised timeline as 2005-2020 because of the longer effects of war on both points of time. The 2010-2016 period specifically was a recession period for organisational activities in the

region. The end of the crisis period (2017-18) is characterised by local and federal elections and the formation of stable governments, ending the political deadlock and instability that had prevailed for a decade.

Following the establishment of United Development Organisation in 2006, several other organisations were founded in the region, including Gaumukhi Federation, a civil society organisation, in 2007 and United Cooperative Community Bank in 2009. Furthermore, United Network Consortium, a confederation of organisations in the GDA was ideated in 2009. Other districts in the Dhorpatan region (Baglung and Gulmi) followed similar trends, forming local youth clubs and community development charities. The Christian Union of Gaumukhi (CUG) charity started in 2014, while United Network Consortium was formalised in the same year. In 2015, the French charity Amis de Dhorpatan was formed to help farmers in the Dhorpatan valley grow and sell potatoes. The integrated Dhorpatan cluster initiative comprises multiple stakeholders across Baglung, Gulmi, and Pyuthan districts, and was started in 2017 as an initiative of the United Network Consortium. The Dhorpatan hunting reserve (a conservation tourism site) was started in late 1980s by Nepal government (Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation, Nepal 2011).

The Dhorpatan cluster continues to evolve through changes from a well-established conservation area and development of a new heritage trail in the southern region. It seems viable to maintain a local approach to tourism in each of the three districts in the Dhorpatan cluster at this time, while also aiming to establish a combined regional identity that is more visible and appealing to tourists and entrepreneurs.

Influences on the Development of Tourism in the Dhorpatan Cluster

This section articulates what are considered to be the pre-eminent influences on the development of tourism, and indeed the economy in general, in the Dhorpatan cluster. Some of these influences can be considered as 'enablers' of tourism—for example, the development of transport infrastructure and the vigour of local charities and community groups. Other influences may be considered as 'inhibitors' of tourism—for example, the remote geography of the region and endemic political and social factors. The section also discusses the changes in these influences in various time periods. In order to create a sustainable tourism economy, the positive influences need to be enhanced and the negative factors mitigated.

Geography and Infrastructure

The Dhorpatan cluster region is located at the foothills of Himalayan mountains in an altitude of 2000–3000 metres above sea level which generates favourable weather conditions in the region for agriculture, livestock, and tourism activities. Likewise, the north flowing Uttarganga river is a beautiful attraction. There are also many local Hindu temples/religious sites in the region. Hydropower sites and supporting tourism activities—for example, the construction of dams forming artificial lakes for boating and other water sports—are important ongoing developments in the Dhorpatan area of Baglung.

Other developments include the formation of local government authorities in 2017 and the ongoing mid-hill highway construction and the nearby Kaligandaki corridor, east of the Dhorpatan region. Similarly, commercial banks are expanding their services and internet accessibility is also improving in the region. However, while the Dhorpatan region is clearly one of great potential, at present, the lack of infrastructure for travel, tourism, and wider business development, including farming, is a major challenge.

Workforce Considerations

Currently the greatest challenge to the instigation of entrepreneurial activity in Dhorpatan and Nepal more widely is the lack of a sufficient and appropriate workforce. The reality is that many Nepali youths go to the Middle East for work (Baruah and Arjal 2018) and one-third of Nepal's GDP comes from remittances (money sent back to family/relatives in Nepal from such workers) (Shrestha 2018). This money is usually spent on land/house purchases and for other consumption uses. Remittance money has become a challenge for subsistence farming (not funding it) and exaggerates the issue of shortage of labour, impacting livelihoods. The impact of workforce migration is so severe as to be altering the demography and the fabric of rural communities in Nepal (Maharjan, Bauer and Knerr 2013; Pant 2013).

Nepali Society: 2010-16

Decades of workforce drain to overseas labour destinations from cities and towns in Nepal brought many activities and social life in rural areas to a near standstill. The failure of political parties in society, as well as social movement through civil society organisations in the local region of GDA (Nyaupane 2017) added to this crisis. The impact of such failure is apparent, for example, in the difficulties experienced by charities and community projects, especially in establishing leadership and succession

planning. The 2010-16 period proceeded from the productive period in organisational activities during 2005-09 when successful social movements and organisations were founded in the region. The 2010-16 crisis period for organisational activities was characterised by a perceived lack of time (mainly among youths) for collective works, such as community development and volunteering for charities. Any young person who remained in the village or those who supported it from outside tended to become occupied with business ventures, jobs, or political parties, leaving a vacuum in the charity and community sphere. There were no individuals or organisations to help promote entrepreneurial developments, who could successfully combine opportunity, capital, and the social context (see McAdam et al. 1996) to create value. In addition, the trend towards remittance monies, indicated above, was unhelpful toward supporting social causes and non-government organisations. Sadly, the unmissable fact in the GDA and elsewhere in Nepal was that organisations—whether for-profit or non-profit—collapsed and became bankrupt within years of their founding, such as the Gaumukhi Federation and several other charities in the region. Several factors such as lack of stability of entrepreneurs, leadership succession, capital, opportunities as well as supporting environment such as national economic progress and related industries/services contribute to such early demise of businesses and NGOs.

The region also suffers from persistent crises that come from natural disasters like house-fires, flooding, and landslides. Furthermore, medical care for people with critical illnesses has become an urgent necessity. Recently, charities such as the CUG have risen to the challenge to support people in such crises, which has helped the transition into post-crisis period as discussed below.

Organisational Engagement: Post-Crisis, 2017-18

The 2010-16 slump in organisational activities in GDA changed following the elections and formation of local, provincial, and federal governments in 2017-18. Several organisations, including local NGOs and international charities, began to focus on development opportunities in the Dhorpatan cluster. The United Network Consortium focused on environmental conservation and local economy development. The French charity Amis de Dhorpatan began its aid programme to farmers in the Dhorpatan valley region, mainly concentrating on potato growing and selling. More recently, activities in the region such as the Swansea University students' trip to the Dhorpatan region in the spring of 2019 and the French charity's exhibition of Dhorpatan's agro-products in Kathmandu provided evidence of renewed

activities for the region. Furthermore, the integrated approach of improving local livelihoods linked to conservation by Bird Conservation Nepal in the Madane area of Gulmi since 2018 chimes with the Dhorpatan cluster's focus on conservation. Similarly, local heritage tourism development in Pyuthan by Okharkot Tourism and Rural Development Service Committee in recent years, and United Development Organisation's interest in arts and heritage in Pyuthan's northern region are recent positive developments since the preceding slump period.

The regional approach to developing an integrated tourism destination will face challenges because almost every local government (rural and urban municipalities) is coming up with its own tourism plans. However, this year, destination promotion events such as the recent Gaumukhi media conference in Pyuthan, Gaumukhi municipality's recent meeting to instigate collaboration with a neighbouring municipality in Baglung, and the multi-stakeholder consultation event for Dhorpatan cluster in Burtibang, will all likely contribute towards an integrated destination in Dhorpatan (along with the possibility of competing with one another as niche destinations).

Without question, the influence of organisations embedded in or external to the Dhorpatan cluster will be crucial in the ongoing development of tourism and other economic initiatives.

Endemic National Characteristics in Nepal

There are two distinct factors in Nepal's social and political makeup that militate against the successful setting up and continuation of organisations, whether for-profit or non-profit. The first such factor is the widespread 'poverty mentality'. This 'poverty mentality' is characterised by lack of hope, initiation, and dependence on others for any positive changes in peoples' lives and society. The mentality is well represented in the Nepali saying *laata desh ka gaada tanneri*, which translates as 'the complacency of a better-off person amongst the less well-offs'. A partial effect of this life-philosophy is that there exists almost nothing man-made in Nepal that can be recognised as globally known, be it business products, public services, infrastructure, and so on. Alongside this attitude is a second factor that distracts young and old people alike from entrepreneurship. Engagement in politics is a key regular habit in social life across the country. One result of this 'political cadre' culture is youth with only ideology and no skills. This culture is prevalent everywhere in cities, towns and rural villages. Socio-economic life is segregated, dominated and driven by political affiliation and favour, and certain regions are

known to be the homelands of certain political parties, meaning that it is perceived that to achieve success in these regions, individuals have to have the 'right' political associations. It is important for Nepal to be aware of these negative practices to ultimately move away from them for the greater good of society.

Tourism Initiatives and Development

The region has multiple challenges as well as opportunities for domestic and international tourism with diverse strands of touristic activities. In addition to prevailing opportunity for trekking, there is scope to expand the industry into more diverse adventure-based tourism activities such as mountain biking, paragliding, horse riding, snow skiing, and bungee jumping. In addition, tourism based around agriculture, hunting, and wildlife conservation has strong scope for development. However, these activities require considerable improvements to infrastructure like trails and services. Most touristic activity will also require accommodation infrastructure such as lodges and hotels, which are currently very limited.

Foreign Tourism Development in Dhorpatan

What has been done to promote tourism in the region so far largely comprises short-term measures, such as destination promotion in the form of festivals (*mahotsav*) which usually last a few days. While such occasional destination festivals over the last decade, mainly in Baglung and Pyuthan regions, have been able to attract some international visitors, the residual impact has been almost negligible. Firstly, this is because these locations, Dhorpatan (Baglung) and Gaumukhi (Pyuthan) are very remote. Secondly, these destinations are not well connected to other popular national destinations like the Annapurna Conservation Area. However, there have been some encouraging developments recently. The Great Himalayan Trail passes through Dhorpatan which is also home to the internationally known hunting reserve of Nepal. Similarly, to the west of the Dhorpatan cluster is a less-known guerrilla trek, a heritage trail in the Maoist conflict heartland, though this is not directly connected to the cluster. Thirdly, promotion-led tourism activities, like organised festivals (*mahotsav*) happen only at certain times of the year, like coinciding with Hindu festivals, and are not regular. Fourthly, there is little accommodation for visitors across the region.

Generally, the region lacks tourism products and services that are accessible, and that are available throughout the year that can attract the interest of foreign visitors.

Domestic Tourism

While Dhorpatan's adventure tourism appeals mainly to foreign tourists, there are, as discussed above, festivals and other products such as concerts, cultural/religious events, sports competitions targeted at local youths and tourists. These, together with the heritage trail in the southern region of the cluster, offers rich experience for local tourism. There is no product that is purely aligned for domestic tourists or purely for foreigners; thus, tourism services could potentially be blended according to customer demands.

Agriculture and Tourism

The Dhorpatan cluster region is rich with good quality high altitude farming land at the elevation between 2000 to 3000 metres, which presents opportunities for particular crops such as buckwheat, cardamom and *kodo* (millet), as well as fruits such as oranges and apples. The French charity Amis de Dhorpatan, working in the Dhorpatan valley has identified potatoes grown there to have special culinary qualities, with potential for export. Agricultural tourism and tourism linked to other local professions are potential tourism products as suggested by a recent Swansea University student trip.

Conclusion

Given that the research being undertaken is still at an early stage and ongoing, any conclusions drawn from it are necessarily tentative.

Tourism, which is specific to local potentials like conservation and extreme adventure, using an integrated destination approach is important for the socio-economic well-being of the Dhorpatan region, and to progress from the existing underdeveloped and diverse local tourism initiatives. It will require local collaboration, consensus, and joint purpose among multiple stakeholders in the region. However, the local economy that is currently built on agriculture and remittance money largely opposes the tourism proposition. Agro-tourism might be a mediating factor in these competing issues for the region. Perhaps a longer-term transition from over-reliance on agriculture to tourism needs wide-ranging consensus supported with concentrated and persistent actions. This proposition needs further research, with examples from elsewhere. In this way, an improved and stable local economic activity can offer opportunities (skilled and well-paid jobs), enabling migrating youths to stay in the area. Otherwise, continued migration away will remain a key challenge for sustainable socio-economic progress in Dhorpatan and in Nepal generally.

In this context, a comprehensive and jointly administered programme for the Dhorpatan cluster can be a solution amid the recent positive developments

in the region. A strong multi-stakeholder joint mechanism is necessary, supported by managerial and bureaucratic excellence. Ultimately, it will need insight and leadership to manage complex local, national, and global issues. The cluster is not exempt from the national problems of 'political cadreship' culture and organisational instability. Poor and insufficient (although gradually developing) infrastructure is also a major inhibiting factor.

Thus, further development of this research is required to track the reasons for the successes and failures of specific initiatives in the local context and to examine the endemic problem of the failure of entrepreneurial projects in Nepal, perhaps comparing this to success and failure rates in other regions and countries.

Ultimately, peoples' hardship in the Dhorpatan cluster region can only be turned into prosperity if stakeholders (governments, non-profits and business community) work together to develop sustainable business practices. Tourism offers a substantial opportunity to do this.

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Guthis Abroad
Newars and Continuation of the Tradition of Community Cooperation

Shobhit Shakya

Introduction

Newar culture is argued to be one of the most complex and developed cultures in the Himalayan region (Nepali 2015; Regmi 1977). Yet, within the modern state of Nepal, people often mistake Newars as being merely an ethnic group. While there is no doubt that Newars are not ethnically homogenous, there are cultural aspects among them that are fairly common across all sub-groups. One aspect that holds true among all Newars is the celebration of several life-events and religio-cultural events that are unique to the Newars. From *macha janku* or the rice feeding ceremony of infants to the funeral rites of the deceased, members of Newar community will have several important life-events which combine to make a unique Newar identity (Shakya 2011; Levy 1990, 661–62). *Guthis*—the defining socio-economic institution of Newars—play an important part in organising these life-events and other functions (Dangol 2010; S. Shakya and Drechsler 2019; Toffin 2005). For instance, *sana guthi* is responsible for funeral processions (Dangol 2010; Quigley 1985). In similar ways, many *jatras* (festivities) that are part of Newar identity are conducted by guthis (Shrestha 2012; Toffin 2005, 2007, 2008). All Newars are usually members of one or more guthis, and it is more common in the Buddhist sub-groups of Newars, such as Shakyas, Maharjans, Tuladhars and so on (Toffin 2019).

Newars have a strong association with their homeland and are usually rooted to their ancestral land. But as traditionally skilled tradesmen, Newars travelled to many new areas and set up many satellite settlements for the purposes of trade. Historical towns like Bandipur and Tansen have been habited primarily by Newars who helped establish these towns

as they migrated to expand their businesses (Marchian 2017; Marianne 2014). Many Newar tradesmen travelled to even farther places like Sikkim and Tibet. B.G. Shrestha has provided details on the lifestyle of Newars in Sikkim where community cooperation still seems to play a major role in conducting their way of life (Shrestha 1998, 2015). With globalisation, the emigration of Newars from their original homelands to far-reaching places has resulted in significant populations of Newars in Europe, the US, and Australia. Despite being important to their lifestyle, guthis have not been as popular among the later generations of Newars in Nepal, with many opting out from their ancestral guthis (Toffin 2005; Pradhananga, Shrestha and Dee 2010; Shakya and Drechsler 2019). However, paradoxically, it can be noticed that new namesake organisations have been set up among the Newars who have started settling in the West.

This paper tries to document some key aspects of the guthis among Newars living abroad, and explores the role of such institutions in providing for cultural and welfare needs of these diaspora communities through the study of two such organisations. In addition, the attempt of this paper is also to explore and assess to what extent these new guthis adhere to the features of the older and traditional guthis, conceptualised in this paper as the legacy of the Newar state before Prithvi Narayan Shah's conquests in the eighteenth century (Sharma 2015; Shrestha and Singh 1972). The cases of two guthis in the US and the UK, namely Newa Guthi New York and Pasa Pucha Guthi UK, have been used for this study. Information has been gathered through desk research and remote or in-person semi-structured interviews.

Conceptualising the Guthi Institution

Early records on guthis were often works of historians who have provided accounts of guthis through stone inscriptions and other forms of records. Scholars like Dhanavajra Vajracharya and Mahesh Chandra Regmi have provided extensive studies on the function and role of guthis (Regmi 1965, 1977, 1988; Vajracharya 1973). Regmi's work, despite being important for an overall understanding of guthis, may be misleading to some extent as he looks at guthis from the rather misaligned perspective of land taxation and ownership system as defined by the government's legal framework, something that has been critiqued given the socio-cultural significance of these organisations in the Newar populace (Quigley 1985; Toffin 2005). Regmi made clear distinction between the concept of guthis as a land tenure system as interpreted by the state legislation of the time and the institution of Newar guthi which bore key distinctive features (Regmi 1977).

As Nepal became more open to foreign scholars, study of Newar culture and guthis became more prevalent, especially among anthropologists. There was an increased focus on the cultural aspects of Newars from an anthropological lens, also bringing increased focus on the intangible cultural heritages (Diwasa, Bandu and Nepal 2007; UNESCO 2003). As of late, scholars have been conceptualising guthis as intangible heritage and the mainstream media has also been adhering to this perspective (Maharjan and Barata 2017; Pradhananga et al. 2010; Taylor 2016). Media coverage during the June 2019 protests against the Guthi Act Amendment Bill makes it clear that the view towards guthis as an intangible heritage is popular in general (Gellner 2019; A. Shrestha 2019). It was during the aftermath of the 2015 Gorkha earthquake when major cultural heritages were damaged with slow or unsatisfactory rebuilding process that 'heritage activism' among Newars sprang up, and guthis were recognised as an intrinsic part of Newar identity in those discussions (Lekakis, Shakya and Kostakis 2018). The rhetoric of the protests against the proposed Act also revolved around Newar identity and the politics surrounding it to a large extent.

The institution of the guthi can be looked at from the lens of public administration and governance. Guthis historically provided public utility functions in Nepal Mandala[1] under the Lichhavi kings (Pokharel 2019). This understanding has been reached through the historical evidences from the Lichhavi era (Shrestha and Singh 1972; Shaha 1990). As understood from works of Dhanavajra Vajracharya (1973), since the time of the Lichhavis, the job of cleaning roads or providing water supply was largely done through guthis, which functioned as community cooperatives in a general sense. It is also important to note that the religious duties were very much part of state functions then, contrasting the concept of state and the government back then to the fairly new concept of the secular state which largely excludes religious activities from the state functions (Dobbelaere 2011). Guthis are indeed religious in nature and seeing them as religious trusts would not be entirely wrong. Moreover, religion cannot be completely avoided when discussing forms of traditional mechanisms of public administration in Nepal. Guthis have been greatly influenced by Buddhist beliefs and are common primarily amongst Buddhist Newars, followed by Hindu Newars and non-Newars, too. The institution itself could have roots linking to the historical Buddha himself based on available evidences (Gellner 1992; Shakya and Drechsler 2019).

1 Nepal Mandala is the cconglomerate of cities and towns that were located in and around the Kathmandu Valley before the Shah conquest of these cities (see Slusser 1982).

The rhetoric that emerged during the protests organised against the Guthi Bill, a draft bill that was introduced by the government in 2019, aimed at, among other things, nationalising public and private guthi lands that sustain life-events and religio-cultural events of the Newars, was influenced by the idea of two conflicting understandings of guthis: as a land tenure system, and as a socio-economic institution that the state was failing to recognise (for more details on the protests and its context see Shakya 2019; Toffin 2019). The misinterpretation of the guthi institution by the government can be seen as being aberrations that were introduced during the Rana regime (Shakya 2019). During the Rana regime, emphasis was put on the land tenure system, with increasing number of people from the elite class registering land as guthi land (Regmi 1977). The first National Code of Nepal—Muluki Ain of 1854 (Malagodi 2008)—had legal provisions for guthis. But, the lack of understanding of the concept of the institution itself made the legal code look at guthis from a more religious land-endowment perspective (Regmi 1977). In later acts like the Guthi Sansthan Act 2033 BS (1976) and Land Reform Act 2021 BS (1964) too, the focus was towards modernising the state structure and providing additional legal rights to tenant farmers who tilled the guthi lands.

The guthi institution is a legacy of the Newar state or Nepal Mandala which was won over by Prithvi Narayan Shah of Gorkha. Upon his conquest, he became the king of 'Nepal'. Instead of continuing to rule from his ancestral seat in Gorkha, he chose Nepal Mandala as his new capital, bringing little change, arguably, to the well-established public administration mechanisms like the guthi institution. Historians agree that only during the reign of Rana Bahadur Shah (1777-99) were there steps taken against guthis (Pradhan 2012). Following how history unfolded, one realises that after the conquest by Prithvi Narayan Shah, Nepal Mandala had a new monarch and was annexed into the expanding Gorkha state, but this transition was not immediately felt; and perhaps it was intentional that the changes were not felt at the grassroots level. Newars were the only significant urban-based population in the Nepali hills, and the statecraft and institutions that Newars practiced would have been far more developed compared to the institutions of the Gorkha state, which would have rendered their complete replacement very difficult. As Prithvi Narayan Shah was educated in Bhaktapur for some years as a guest in the palace of Ranajit Malla, it may be that his own skills in statecraft were largely influenced by the Newars (Shrestha and Singh 1972; S. Shrestha 2019). Thus, one can come to understand that even though the Mallas were overthrown by Shahs, the mechanisms of the state that was subsequently used by the Shahs was

largely the continuation of the traditional Newar state, and matters of economy, governance, culture, and so on remained unchanged.

The definition of state in the social sciences context is argued to have been influenced by the definition proposed by Max Weber: state is 'a compulsory association which organises domination. It has been successful in seeking to monopolise the legitimate use of physical force as a means of domination within a territory' (Weber 1946, 5). Joel Migdal (2001) explains that this definition is often not sufficient to explain all the dynamics of a state, such as why some states perform better than others, and why a given state takes certain form, such as a democracy, while others become autocratic. Migdal's definition of state under his concept of state-in-society is built on the works of Parsons and Shils among others (Parsons et al. 1961). Migdal defines a state as following:

> The state is a field of power marked by the use and threat of violence and shaped by (1) the image of a coherent, controlling organization in a territory, which is a representation of the people bounded by that territory, and (2) the actual practices of its multiple parts. (Migdal 2001, 16)

Underscoring Migdal's state-in-society concept, it is necessary to understand that a state, in addition to being a 'powerful image of a clearly bounded, unified organisation that can be spoken of in singular terms', is also a 'heap of loosely connected parts or fragments, frequently with ill-defined boundaries between them and other groupings inside and outside the official state borders and often promoting conflicting sets of rules with one another and with "official" Law' (Migdal 2001, 22).

Using Migdal's framework, it is possible to envision the state of Nepal Mandala or the Newar state as being not only the 'image' of the state being headed by the Malla monarchs, but an amalgam of various institutions and dynamics within it that continued from the period, perhaps, even before the Mallas. The Newar state constituted of largely different features as compared to modern nation-states. Newar towns in districts of Nuwakot, Dolakha and Kavre exhibit features of having very loose boundaries. Similarly, the trading towns that used to be at the centre of the settlements in these districts carried distinctive Newar features, whereas the periphery areas of the towns, often inhabited by Tamang and other indigenous groups, lacked the distinctive urban flair. The change of monarchs from Malla to Shah certainly transformed the state in several ways. However, as outlined earlier, many elements of the older Newar state continued

unabated. Hence, the transition and shift of power after the political change was a gradual process, and not a sudden and sharp one. The concept of the guthi institution as the legacy of the Newar state continued to exist within the new state of post-conquest 'unified' Nepal. Since guthis are formed on the basis of kinship and other forms of social ties, and are supported by a strong cultural foundation, they are resilient and are able to exist beyond the territories of domination from the state authority (Shakya 2019; Shakya and Drechsler 2019; Toffin 2005, 2019). The shared feeling of responsibility towards one's own community keep guthis from disintegrating despite changing socio-political contexts.

Guthis have been formed by Newar communities in settlements beyond the sphere of political influence of Nepal, wherever they have travelled. Bal Gopal Shrestha gives clear accounts of guthis that were established by Newars who migrated to Sikkim during the mid-1800s (Shrestha 1998, 2015). The most significant function of the guthis that were established in Sikkim appear to be for social welfare provision amongst the community. Through guthis, the community in Sikkim also organised a few festivals that were observed in Kathmandu. This can be interpreted as an extension of the legacy of the Newar state within the political borders of Sikkim. It is necessary to acknowledge that the Newar community in Sikkim have taken a considerably long time to evolve as a community and establish such institutions. This paper now proceeds to look at whether other Newar communities elsewhere across the world follow similar trajectories of establishing guthis.

Guthis among the Newars Living Abroad

The trend of migration of Nepali citizens to foreign countries and Nepal's economy becoming more and more dependent on remittances from the migrant workers is a well-documented phenomenon (Dahal 2014; Seddon, Gurung and Adhikari 1998). The migration of Nepali citizens to the US, Canada, Australia and Europe shows a pattern that is different from the emigration for labour work primarily to the Middle East. While semi-skilled labour migration to Middle Eastern countries seems to be due to labour demand, wherein most people come back to Nepal after a period of labour abroad, migration to the US and Europe tends to be more permanent (Ministry of Labour and Employment 2014). Several people apply to go to Western countries through schemes that attract highly skilled labour (Bohra-Mishra 2011). Commercialisation of education has helped students to first pursue higher education in Western countries and then permanently migrate there (Bhattarai 2009; Valentin 2013). This has created a large

community of Nepalis in the Western countries. Foreign education has been most popular among people falling in the middle income bracket (Thieme 2017). Since most Newars fall in the middle income bracket, they would come under the category of people who would be highly attracted to foreign education (Müller-Böker 1988; Patel 2013). Approaching foreign education is also easier for Newars as they have been living in the capital where almost all the diplomatic missions are located and many events for providing consultation for abroad studies are organised. The trend to go abroad for studies started almost three decades ago, with the numbers increasing every year, and the count reaching 67,226 in 2017 (Ministry of Education 2017; RSS 2018). With this increasing trend of migration to Western countries, the population of Newars in the West has also started to grow significantly. This is especially true in destination like the US, Australia and Europe (Dhungel 1999; Pariyar 2019). Newars who settled in these countries in recent years have started to establish namesake guthi organisations. The Newa Guthi in New York and Pasa Pucha Guthi in London, UK and its chapters elsewhere are some examples of this.

Pasa Pucha Guthi UK (PPGUK) was formed in the UK in November 2000 with Amrit Ratna Sthapit, Arjun Pradhan, Balmukund Prashad Joshi, Dharma Shakya, Ishwar Prasad Manandhar, Jit Bahadur Tandon, Mahanta Shrestha, Shashidhar Manandhar, Rameshwor Lal Singh Dangol, and Uttom Govind Amatya as the founding members.[2] As per an article in the annual magazine published by PPGUK and information provided by a representative from the guthi[3], the initial objective of the organisation was to bring together the Newar diaspora in the UK and provide a feeling of belongingness through social activities within the community (Manandhar 2011). Eventually, they started organising cultural festivities and language classes, and invited prominent Newar personalities to the UK for events. The organisation chose to include the word 'guthi' in its name because it had motives similar to the traditional guthis which, according to the view of the members, were 'family lineage associations that have stood for the welfare and communal prosperity of people'. A board of trustees was formed in 2010 with the motive to bring the entire Newar community in the UK under one organisation to ensure better unity. Since then, similar regional chapters of the organisation in London, Southeast London, Aldershot, Reading, and Wales began autonomous operations. They also came together in UK-wide meetings every couple of months to discuss their issues and ways to help

2 'PPG UK - Pasa Puchah Guthi, UK', n.d, accessed July 7, 2019, http://www.ppguk.org/.

3 Shrestha, Sanyukta, Personal interview, January 13, 2019.

each other. Board members were elected from among the representatives of each chapter for this purpose. PPGUK and the various chapters have a more western way of administration internally. They usually choose their board and executive members through elections amongst the general members. The last election of the board of PPGUK was held in 2018.

The clear goal of PPGUK has been to enable continuation of Newar culture within their community in the UK. In doing so, they have managed to encourage a tightly-bound community to continue carrying out their traditions and culture. The organisation was started by young members, and according to Shrestha (see fn 3), it has been a key motive of PPGUK to keep the younger generation interested and involved with their native culture while also acquainting non-Newars with Newar traditions. This becomes increasingly necessary as more and more young Newars abroad marry non-Newars, which is more common among Newars who are abroad than in Nepal. In addition to organising usual festivals and rituals which are important life-events such as *ihi* ceremony (a ceremony for pre-adolescent girls), *kaeta puja* (initiation ceremony for young boys) and *macha janku* (ceremony to mark feeding of solid food, namely rice to infants), among others, PPGUK also helps in events of death, as *Si* guthis (funeral guthis) do (see Levy 1990, 661-680 for details on the life-events mentioned).

There is the aspect of conservative ideals developing among many immigrated groups who live in different parts of Europe, which is not seen in a positive light usually (Sejdiu 2017). The concept of 'immigrant integration' may not be a result of these conservative ideals entirely, but it is also a topic that needs to addressed (Korteweg 2017)politicians, and the engaged public away from the actual ways in which those labelled 'immigrants' are full members of immigrantreceiving societies, both in terms of participation and of belonging, and (2. However, PPGUK's position is not leaning towards conservative ideals. The organisation certainly wants their members to keep in touch with Newar tradition and culture, but they are also willing to accommodate change to adapt to the British culture. The view of PPGUK is that avoidance of British culture is not the way forward, and they acknowledge that the influence from the new culture of where people live is something inevitable. Thus, the stance of PPGUK is to adapt to the changed reality of Newar community in the UK. For example, Sanyukta Shrestha mentioned that they are open to organising Christmas events through the guthi; his view was that *Yomari Puhni*—a Newar festival celebrated around the same time of the year as Christmas—could be merged with Christmas celebrations. The organisation is also following the current trend amongst the younger generation to increase their social media

presence as this tends to attract the younger generation the most. In fact, with multiple chapters across the UK, it is understandable that without the use of ICT and social media, coordination and information dissemination activities would have been impossible

Newa Guthi New York (NGNY) is one of the many organisations in the US established among the Newar diaspora, such as Newah Organization of America and United Newah USA, among others.[4] The organisation was established in 2007 by nine founding members which included Aditya Maharjan as the founding president, Nuchhe Dangol as the founding vice president, and Samir Maharjan as the founding treasurer. New York at the time had a small but significant community of Newars. As some members were already high-skilled professionals, they were available and showed their interest and support to start an organisation that brought people together for the benefit of their community. Their initial aim was to bring the community together through semi-traditional cultural events. It can be said that the form of the organisation at the start was more like a social club for the Newar community there. But, gradually they took a form of a traditional guthi with the focus shifting towards celebrations of traditional festivals and provision of social welfare and community support. The organisation has also put thoughts into starting a *Si* guthi that specifically provides support to the family of the deceased to conduct traditional funerals which can be difficult to arrange. One of the main objectives set by the organisation is to preserve the culture among the community so that the Newar identity can be transferred to the younger generation, who unfortunately may not have much contact with their country of origin.

NGNY has been doing very well in providing meaningful social services to the Newar community in New York. Like PPGUK, the organisation has been helping with conducting life events, organising annual celebration of festivities, and providing social welfare and support to the community. In the context of the US, as healthcare and welfare system is lacking in many aspects (Khazan 2018), the guthis have filled a void for people in the community. One mentionable incident is that of Ms Prasha Tuladhar who was able to receive a double lung transplant in 2016 with NGNY support. NGNY raised funds for Ms Tuladhar and was proactive in providing emotional support to the family in the time of their need.[5]

After World Newah Organization (WNO)[6] was established in 2011 with the intention of creating a single organisation to represent all Newar

4 'Newa Guthi', n.d, accessed July 7, 2019, http://www.newaguthi.org.

5 Samir Maharjan, personal interview, October 30, 2019.

6 'World Newah Organization', n.d., accessed July 7, 2019, http://www.worldnewah.org/.

communities spread around the world, both NGNY and PPGUK joined WNO as chapter associations. WNO was joined by several other Newar diaspora communities.[7] WNO was formed through initiatives of key thinkers of the Newar community living abroad, and with the leadership of Mr Bal Gopal Shrestha (Shakya n.d.). WNO has since organised conventions every three years. The current paper lacks an adequate study to clearly put forward an argument on how the WNO might progress as an organisation, but it is evident that its intended trajectory is to establish a larger body which coordinates all the diaspora guthis and associations of the Newars around the world.

Discussion

PPGUK and NGNY, despite not being like traditional guthis in how they have been set up, do tend to have similar features which associate them with the Newar identity. The author of this paper has put forward few distinctive features of guthis in an earlier publication (Shakya and Drechsler 2019), but these features are largely non-existent when it comes to the diaspora organisations. As per Gellner (1992), there are three essential principles of the guthi institution, and looking at those, it appears that these neo-guthis, mainly prevalent amongst Newar communities outside of Nepal or at least outside of Kathmandu Valley, tend to divert from some of the key aspects of the traditional guthi institution which are (for elaboration see Toffin 2005):

1. Structure is based on seniority
2. Members take responsibility mandatorily on rotation
3. Organisations are founded on basis of territory (also kinship)

Therefore, there can be a debate whether these organisations could be called guthis if one is to be strict with the features of guthis. Yet, these neo-guthis do tend to be a result of the inclination of the Newar community towards associating through cooperative organisations, influenced by the traditional guthi institution. Toffin has pointed out that the establishment of newer organisations among Newars that are more egalitarian in their power management are still influences of the guthi culture (Toffin 2016, 2019).

It is has been well discussed by several scholars that guthis are in decline (Lekakis, Shakya, and Kostakis 2018; Locke 1985; Vajracharya 1998). There

7 'Chapters | World Newah Organization', n.d., accessed February 18, 2019, http://www.worldnewah.org/chapters.

has been a steady decline in the awareness of or the tendency to associate with guthis among, more specifically, the younger generation. This holds more true for non-Buddhist Newars (Toffin 2019). But, from what is understood from studying the case of the neo-guthis in the communities abroad, the younger generation does have stronger attachment towards the term 'guthi', even though the organisations that they form may not be able to emulate the exact features of traditional guthis. In defence of the neo-guthis, it is understandable that institutions evolve based on how the culture evolves. Further, given the realities of living within the legal framework in a foreign land, organisations may not be able to adhere to all the traditional features that the guthis in Nepal encompass. The guthi is a centuries-old institution and it needs to adapt to the reality of the contemporary context, too; hence a degree of deviation from the traditional practices can be for the betterment of the institution itself. However, there is the need to check whether these organisations are indeed guthi-like to some extent or whether they are merely their namesake and irrelevant and disconnected with the overarching guthi institution. The aberrations and sharp deviation from their true forms may lead to a situation like what was demonstrated by the 'Guthi Bill' episode in June 2019. While some of the lawmakers and the government voiced their support for the Bill, Newar masses protested against it. It was clear that the later aberrations introduced to the guthi institution (see above) deviated the true definition of guthis, thus creating an unclear legal translation of the institution (Radio Nepal 2019; Shakya 2019; Toffin 2019). To ensure that such deviations do not occur, there needs to be an influential body that would guide these new organisations. With the WNO taking the role of an umbrella organisation of all the neo-guthis and other organisations formed by Newar diaspora communities around the world, there can be a better direction. However, the extent to which the WNO can exercise its authority is questionable and something yet to be seen.

What form these organisations will take in the future as the new generation of Newars who have hardly lived in Nepal take charge is yet to be seen. Yet, it is not likely that these organisations will cease to exist in near future. Guthis that have existed outside the borders of Nepal for significant period of time, for example like those in Sikkim exist under a different political system and have had a different trajectory compared to the traditional guthis in Nepal, but have managed to continue with the traditions (Shrestha 1998, 2015). The culture of cooperation in the Newar community is extremely strong and has been strengthened over the centuries due to the continuation of the guthi institution. Factors

such as non-supportive state leadership, change in lifestyle, and rising western individualistic ideals may have set guthis into decline (Locke 1985). However, there is space for optimism in the current era of information technology as guthis will have better access to information and historical records, and better communication with well-informed members of the Newar community who can provide guidance to these organisations. With technology, social media, and internet, information on Newar culture and identity is more accessible now than it was a few decades ago. Communication and information sharing is much easier, and umbrella organisations like the WNO can now keep in touch with its chapters located around the world; it is congruous that the WNO was envisioned through Skype conferences among key Newar activists and thinkers.8 Due to these reasons, with the changed context of technological advancements in ICT, distributed organisations have better means of working cohesively. While guthis kept majority of Newars rooted to Kathmandu Valley, the changed reality will allow movement without alienation.

While in Nepal, steps of the government such as the recent controversial bill proposed in the National Assembly by the Ministry of Land Management, Cooperatives and Poverty Alleviation may have negative implications towards the guthi institution and has shown that there is the possibility of the guthi institution being depleted. The Khas-Brahmin hegemony that has developed in the country is certainly not very appreciative of Newar institutions, either out of lack of awareness or perhaps with clear motives to displace Newars as some Newar activists have claimed (A. Shrestha 2019). In that sense, there is a threat that the guthi institution within Nepal may become even more depleted. But, there is also a clear indication that the Newars are highly supportive of the guthis and steps of the government that are against the interests of the guthis will face strong protests. The discussions that took place in the traditional media and social media regarding the controversial bill has improved awareness about the guthi institution among Newars and non-Newars alike. Many have come to appreciate these organisations and their cultural impact, which was highlighted by the number of people who came to protest the controversial bill on 19 June 2019 (Satyal 2019).

There are many authors who have investigated the interplay between culture and state institutions (Alasuutari 2015; Alesina and Giuliano 2015; Senge 2013). Alesina and Giuliano (2015) have put forward the idea that the

8 Daya Shakya, n.d, 'Foot Steps on Newah Movement in America', accessed July 7, 2019, http://www.himalayangiftandcandy.com/images/english.pdf.

culture (which also includes informal institutions) and formal institutions that are legally recognised within a state mutually shape each other. Culture is also one of the various aspects which constitute a state. Culture is more resilient compared to other aspects and change in culture happens gradually over time, but directing or forcing cultural changes is difficult (Fukuyama 2004). Newars had a stronger and more developed culture compared to most other communities which now live within the political borders of Nepal (Nepali 2015; Regmi 1977; Sharma 2015). For this reason, even after more than two and a half centuries of Shah conquest and being gradually side-lined from political power, the community has continued to exist as a relevant group whose cultural identity still constitutes a large part of the overall image of Nepal as a country; the art, architecture, traditional urban lifestyles and various other identities of Nepal definitely comes from the Newar identity and the Newar state of the past or Nepal Mandala (Gellner 2016; Slusser 1982). Staying within the framework of Migdal's state-in-society concept, we can look at the neo-guthis among the Newar diaspora as extensions of the Newar state of the past, the legacy of which continues to exist within the modern state of Nepal. The strong sense of culture of the Newars enables them to function as a cohesive community group even though they are not ethnically homogeneous. The culture of collaboration and cooperation among Newars that has been established through centuries of continuation of the guthi institution makes the community naturally inclined towards collaborative efforts in achieving common goals.

Conclusion

The neo-guthis among the Newar communities living abroad have been effective in providing for the socio-cultural needs of the communities. The presented case studies of the neo-guthis among Newars in the UK and the US have shown that these institutions are more than just 'social clubs' for the community to gather around; they also provide social welfare to the community, while enabling the continuation of their traditional festivals and important life event rituals. These neo-guthis may not exhibit all the key features of Newar guthis, but they still provide some key functions of traditional guthis. The culture of Newars to create these cooperative organisations to tackle specific tasks is a legacy of the Newar guthi institution which continues to exist and evolve, and at the same time, also influences the modern state of Nepal. Among the diaspora community, which exist within different legal and political contexts, guthi organisations may not exist in their true form, but may tend to adapt as per the needs

of the community. Whether an authoritative body can keep checks on these organisations so that they do not stray too far away from the true features of the guthi institution is something that needs to be seen. With the formation of the WNO, this role may be played by the organisation. Despite questions on whether the state will continue to support the guthi institution as a legal institution in Nepal, it is likely that the neo-guthis among the Newar diaspora may continue in largely evolved forms.

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The Determinants of Disaster Resilience in Nepal

An Assessment of Recovery, Reconstruction and Resilience in Nepal after the 2015 Earthquake

Jinglu Song & Rishikesh Pandey

Introduction

The Nepal earthquake of April 2015 caused numerous casualties and severe destruction, especially to the Gorkha district, about 200 km from Nepal's capital, Kathmandu. It was the fifth 8-magnitude earthquake of this century and caused approximately 9000 deaths, injured 22,000 people and completely destroyed more than 500,000 private houses, resulting in a property loss of more than USD 7 billion, which is equivalent to about one third of Nepal's gross domestic product (NPC 2015). The aftermath of this extreme event resulted in a comprehensive set of proposals to incorporate 'an insight into risk', and more importantly, 'a vision for resilience' (WHO 2016), which brought resilience improvement measures to the forefront of policymakers and agency leaders. As effective disaster management and resilience investment calls for a just allocation of limited resources, the knowledge of quantifying resilience and seeking its determinants is crucial to justify resilience enhancement priorities.

The term 'resilience' has been broadly used to describe the capacity of an affected system to absorb, resist, adapt to, and recover from external disturbances. Understanding disaster resilience is vital to pre-disaster preparation, risk mitigation, and post-disaster recovery (Frazier et al. 2013; Klein, Nicholls and Thomalla 2003). It is only with the knowledge of baseline resilience conditions that the policymakers and agency leaders know where, when and which priority measures should be taken for resilience enhancement (Burton 2015; Cutter et al. 2008). However,

quantifying resilience is difficult, partially due to the omission of an explicit set of indicators that could serve as determinants of disaster resilience. A set of evidence-based determinants of disaster resilience could help the policymakers and leaders of local agency identify the strengths and weaknesses within resilience characteristics, and determine the policy orientations that should be implemented to achieve resilience and sustainability. However, among most of previous research, resilience indicators are mainly selected based on literature review, implying a possible inclusion of redundant or even irrelevant variables in the final assessment framework.

Several empirical studies have been conducted to fill the need for justifying the indicators included in the proposed models and test their efficacy. In communities that experience disasters, the assumption is that higher versus lower levels of resilience characteristics will help members sustain themselves and recover from the destruction of the disasters (Wyche et al. 2011). To substantiate this assumption, empirical cases aim to increase the evidence base on how it is that some communities seem to respond better than others in the wake of adversity and what are the determinant factors that contribute to a resilient response. And in most cases, such a multiple and complex recovery process after disasters is indirectly measured using one or several indicators based on publicly available data. Several indices are developed to measure recovery capability, involving from the widely-used ones related to building reconstruction (Burton 2015; Despotaki 2018) and population return (Cai et al. 2018; Li et al. 2015; Mihunov et al. 2018), to those derived from new data sources such as the emergency service request records after hurricanes (Kontokosta and Malik 2018), waste gas and waste water discharge data after flash floods (Song et al. 2017), and disaster-related social media data (Zou et al. 2018), etc. A question remains as to what extent these recovery indicators might be specific to study regions and the particular kind of natural disasters. Further, the publicly available indicators are not able to directly elicit perceptions of community members about their response to and recovery from the disaster damage, thereby resulting in a doubt as to the bias between the indexed recovery conditions and the real conditions of community members in response to and recovery from natural disasters.

Previous literature confirms that a community-specific survey of public opinion could fill those gaps and it has been used widely to evaluate the individualistic response to natural disasters and identify a set of community capacities that could predict a resilient response (Buikstra et al. 2010; Chamlee-Wright and Storr 2009; Kulig et al. 2008; Madsen and O'Mullan

2016; Sherrieb et al. 2010, 2012; Wyche et al. 2011). However, most of the field survey studies on measuring resilience often derive the community-factors from subjective survey items. Therefore, in these researches, the validated factors could improve our general understanding of merely what aspects the residents believe to be influencing resilience, rather than focusing on what 'community-factors' contribute to a more resilient community. Although many scholars have recognised the necessity of exploring the scale of effect and temporal variation of each factor for validation of these community factors, few works have been conducted in this way.

This study therefore aims to fill the gaps identified within existing literatures and improve our general understanding of community resilience in disaster recovery efforts. The foci of this study are to: 1) validate community-level factors that predict a resilient response against individual relief perceptions from survey data; 2) explore their contributions across spatial scales and over time; 3) facilitate multiscale decision-making over different stages of recovery progress. The questions that guided the study were: what domains and associated indicators were widely-used as proxies of community resilience characteristics? What indicators selected were significantly associated against the relief scores in community-specific surveys? Would the contributions of resilience indicators validated against survey data persist or vary temporally across spatial scales and in what ways? The implications of the findings for resilience characteristics and associated indicators that contribute to the surveyed community-level relief process across spatial scales and over time are discussed at the end.

Study Area and Survey Data

Study Area

The 2015 Nepal Earthquake was reported as the worst natural disaster in Nepal since 1934 (NPC 2015). The earthquake caused avalanches in regions around its epicentre, which was close to the capital of Nepal, Kathmandu. As a result, a large number of buildings were destroyed and hundreds of thousands of people were made homeless. According to geophysicists and other experts, Nepal's geology, urbanisation, and architectural conditions make it highly vulnerable to earthquakes. However, in terms of monthly surveys from July to December 2015 (UN-RCHCO 2015), the affected communities experienced different relief progress after the earthquake, where some communities responded as recovering well while others failed. Therefore, it is important to determine to what extent community resilience contexts could explain such variations and to determine

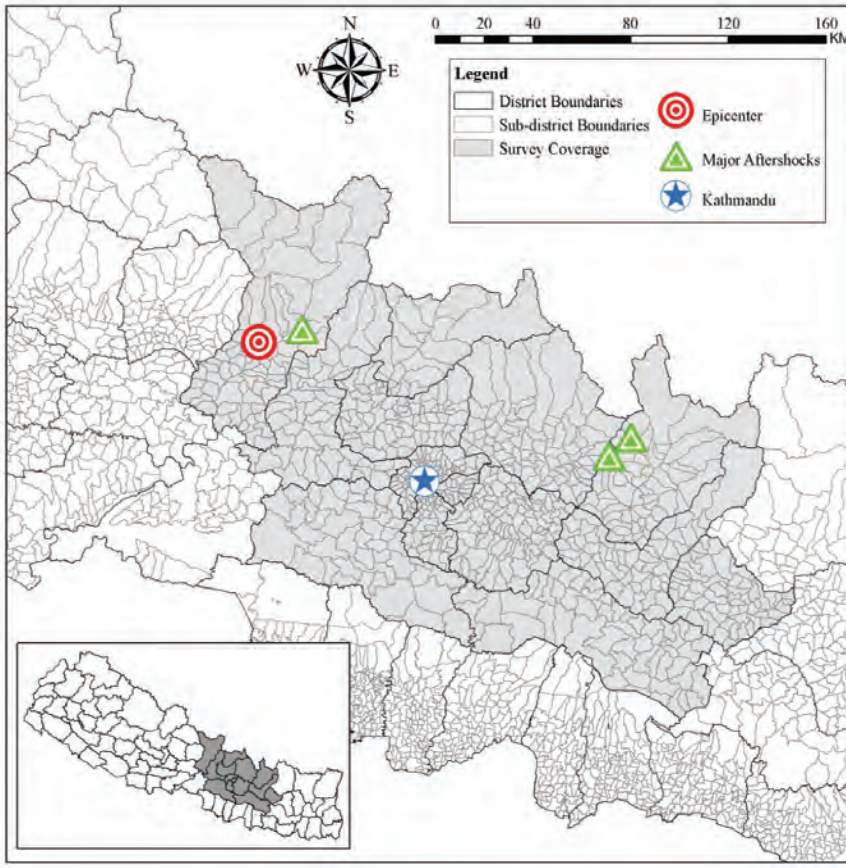

Figure 1. Study area: 14 districts in Nepal that were seriously affected by the 2015 Nepal earthquake and the borders of sub-districts (i.e., municipalities, village development committees [VDCs]).

significant indicators to use as proxies for communities' resilience contexts as the time goes on. These findings are expected to benefit future disaster risk management and resilience intervention in Nepal.

According to the coverage of surveys within the area affected by the earthquake, a set of sub-districts (i.e., municipalities and village development committees [VDCs], which are equivalent to sub-district units in Nepal) near the epicentre were selected as the study area (**Figure 1**). The nearest census data of each analysis unit in Nepal was available at 2011, and would be used as one data source in this empirical study.

Survey Data

Individual survey data were collected by community perception surveys supported by the Inter Agency Common Feedback Project (CFP), developed

by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), the UN Country Team in Nepal, and the UN Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator's Office in Nepal (Nepal UNRCHCO). The purpose of this project was to obtain feedback from affected people to support informed decision-making, strengthen response efforts, and ensure future recovery progress and resilience (CFP 2015). Six survey rounds were conducted from July to December 2015; each included around 1400 respondents in the 14 most severely affected districts. Within each district, four or five sample sub-districts per district were selected considering initial reports of mortality rates and destruction and consultations with local government and different agencies. Below the sub-district level, random sampling was used to select four or five wards per sub-district. Within each selected ward, trained volunteers randomly selected around five households with some flexibility to broadly capture a more diverse set of perceptions. In this way, each round of the survey gathered data from 1400 respondents, around 100 respondents per district (CFP 2015). All survey data were provided by Nepal UNRCHCO. Due to differences in the survey design in July, the analysis began with data collected in August, and thus five rounds of survey data are used to monitor the relief process over five months. To reduce the influence of

Table 1. Number of respondents for each survey round by district

DISTRICT	No. of VDCs	No. of Respondents				
		Round1	Round2	Round3	Round4	Round5
Bhaktapur	2	47	47	49	41	40
Dhading	13	86	92	95	97	85
Dolakha	9	81	79	79	82	86
Gorkha	4	40	40	37	29	37
Kathmandu	11	79	83	83	84	95
Kavrepalanchok	7	72	77	74	72	73
Lalitpur	10	81	88	89	78	78
Makwanpur	9	86	90	90	82	86
Nuwakot	9	66	82	81	79	83
Okhaldhunga	7	63	64	67	66	69
Ramechhap	10	88	94	100	99	96
Rasuwa	6	41	60	48	48	48
Sindhuli	9	96	96	99	99	99
Sindhupalchok	9	87	94	96	98	99
Total	**115**	**1013**	**1086**	**1087**	**1054**	**1074**

sample size, all samples in a sub-district were deleted if the sub-district is a singleton sub-district (i.e., a sub-district containing only one sample respondent) (Bell et al. 2010) or if the sample size of the sub-district varied significantly over time. Consequently, around 1000 respondents remained in each round of the survey (Table 1).

Variables of each surveyed individual are all measured as categorical variables. To reduce the uncertainty in further analysis caused by individual variables with so many categories, we decreased the number of factor levels by collapsing levels. The regrouped individual predictors are listed in Table 2 with a reference category and a set of contrasted dummies.

The relief score is based on a survey question 'Is the post-earthquake relief effort making progress?' All samples with answers of either 'Don't know' or 'Refused' were discarded. The remaining answers were given on a 5-point Likert scale ('1= not at all'; '2 = not very much'; '3 = neutral'; '4 = mostly yes'; '5 = completely yes'). Without specific respect to any social, economic, or physical relief process, this measure can be used as a proxy for other, more 'objective', but often difficult to measure, relief progress. To empirically examine potential resilience indictors that are significantly associated with relief progress, we recoded the relief score into binary variables—1 for mostly yes or completely yes and 0 for others—and applied the recoded relief score as the dependent variable in further regression models.

Methodology

This study aims to adopt interdisciplinary approaches to validate potential resilience indicators against survey data. In doing so, several hierarchical regression models are built up to explore to what extent and what period of time a potential resilience indicator contributes to the post-disaster relief and recovery process. Based on the numerical evidences, the implications of the findings are also discussed to justify which measure is the priority of resilience enhancement measures. To this end, this study follows three steps: 1) selection of resilience indicators as contextual variables; 2) multivariate analysis; 3) validation of resilience metrics through hierarchical regression analysis. The details of these steps are given below.

Selection of Relevant Indicators

Because disaster resilience has a multidimensional nature and is difficult to measure directly, several indicators were collected as proxy measures to characterise disaster resilience in different domains. These indicators were then used to establish baselines to monitor process and recognise success

Table 2. Sample statistics for individual variables

Demographics	Variable	Round 1	Round 2	Round 3	Round 4	Round 5
Age	% 15-39	0.19	0.15	0.15	0.13	0.15
	% 40-54*	0.72	0.75	0.75	0.79	0.76
	% 55+	0.09	0.09	0.10	0.08	0.09
Sex	% male*	0.64	0.65	0.61	0.65	0.64
	% female	0.36	0.35	0.39	0.35	0.36
Caste/ethnicity	% Brahaman/Chhetri*	0.40	0.42	0.42	0.48	0.42
	% Janajati/Gurung/Dalit	0.20	0.23	0.23	0.18	0.19
	% Newar	0.15	0.16	0.14	0.16	0.15
	% Tamang	0.17	0.15	0.18	0.11	0.19
	% others (minority)	0.07	0.04	0.03	0.07	0.05
Occupation	% farmer/NGO worker	0.71	0.76	0.75	0.75	0.81
	% government	0.06	0.06	0.06	0.08	0.06
	% skilled worker	0.03	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.04
	% others* (e.g. student, housewife, etc.)	0.20	0.13	0.14	0.12	0.09
Personal disability	% with personal disability*	0.26	0.27	0.26	0.30	0.28
	% without personal disability	0.74	0.73	0.74	0.70	0.72

Note: For an individual variable, * represents the reference category, whereas others represent contrast categories. Due to the similarity of coefficient estimations, two of the original age levels, '15-24' and '25-39,' are regrouped into one level, '15-39'; and two of the original occupations, 'farmer' and 'NGO worker,' are pooled into one named 'farmer/NGO worker.' For caste and ethnicity variables, we consider the caste, ethnicity, and regional identity in Nepal in addition to similarity of coefficients. Consequently, we regroup the original five levels (i.e., 'Brahaman', 'Chhetri', 'Janajati', 'Gurung', and 'Dalit') into two levels denoted by 'Brahaman/Chhetri' and 'Janajati/Gurung/Dalit', which represent, respectively, a higher-caste group and a special-caste/ethnic group with its own mother tongue and traditional culture in Nepal (Dahal 2003).

(Cutter 2016). In this paper, potential resilience indicators were selected from social, economic, infrastructural, and environmental dimensions, which are commonly reported components of disaster resilience (Kontokosta and Malik 2018; Sharifi 2016). To identify the dominant indicators on different spatial scales, each indicator was collected at both district and sub-district levels. For indicators derived from census statistics, such as demographic attributes, original data were available at two areal units in the Nepal National Population and Housing Census 2011. To match the spatial scales of the census data, other continuous indicators were aggregated using average values at either the district level or the sub-district level. Finally, a set of potential indicators based on the available data are listed as proxies for disaster resilience in Table 3.

Multivariate Analysis

Because the set of resilience indicators is not definitive, the selection of the aforementioned indicators is subjective to some extent. To reduce duplicate messages and indicators on both the district and sub-district levels, multivariate analyses were conducted separately on each level to construct a parsimonious set of metrics for further regression analysis. All original data were first rescaled using a zero-mean scheme for a set of unbiased indicators (Jones and Andrey 2007). The widely-used principal component analysis (PCA) was adopted by dimension to eliminate redundant information and construct a set of principal components (PCs). Before PCA, indicators with extremely high correlations under the same dimension were removed because inclusion of these nearly redundant variables would cause PCA to overemphasise their contributions (Rufat 2013). As a result, 17 of the 26 indicators were retained as proxies for resilience in the social, economic, infrastructural, and natural dimensions. For PCA, a targeted rotation and the criterion that more than 75 per cent of the total variance should be explained by the derived components were used to extract significant loadings, thereby constructing PCs as proxies for resilience with most similar structures across various levels on a spatial scale. Once the component loadings were derived, adjustments were made to their directionality with respect to their known influence on resilience, based on the empirical literature on factors that increase or decrease disaster resilience (Cutter et al. 2003). Consequently, the dominant indicator(s) of each PC remained almost the same on both the district and sub-district levels. The procedures to validate the derived variables in the social, economic, infrastructural, and natural dimensions are detailed in the following section.

Table 3. Potential indicators of resilience in social, economic, infrastructural, and environmental dimensions

Dimension	Variable	Description	Data Source
Social	Average household size	Average number of people per household	Nepal Census, 2011
	Education attainment	% population with at least a high school diploma (secondary and above)	Nepal Census, 2011
	Educational equity	Ratio of population with college degree or above to population with no high school diploma	Nepal Census, 2011
	Ethnic diversity	Shannon index of local ethnic composition; higher values indicate higher level of ethnic diversity	Nepal Census, 2011
	Pre-retirement population	% population 15 years old or above and below 60 years	Nepal Census, 2011
	Sex ratio	Ratio of male to female	Nepal Census, 2011
	Special needs	% population without sensory, physical or mental disability	Nepal Census, 2011
Economic	Agriculture establishment	% land area that is farmland	OSM, 2015
	Commercial establishment	% land area that is for commercial land usage	OSM, 2015
	House ownership	% households living in their own house	Nepal Census, 2011
	Household property exposure	% households with at least one of the facilities like refrigerator, television, etc.	Nepal Census, 2011
	Industrial establishment	% land area that is for industrial land usage	OSM, 2015
	Evacuation/temporary shelters potential	Kernel density of residential buildings	Survey Department, Nepal, 2015
	Electricity dependence	% households using electricity for lighting	Nepal Census, 2011
	Health Facilities Accessibility	Distance from the centre of build-up area of each census unit to the nearest health facilities (km)	OSM, 2015
	Medical care capacity	Number of health facilities (health post, hospital, clinic, etc.) per 1000 population	OCHA and WHO, 2015

Dimension	Variable	Description	Data Source
	Principal road density	Principal road kilometres per square kilometres within build-up area (km/km2)	OSM, 2015
	Capacity of emergency camps	Number of emergency camps per 1000 population	OCHA and WHO, 2015
	Water source	% households using tap/piped water for drinking water source	Nepal Census, 2011
Environmental	Average elevation	Average elevation based on Digital Elevation Model (DEM) data (m)	GDEMV2, 2009
	Average slope degree	Average slope degree based on Digital Elevation Model (DEM) data (°)	GDEM SLOPE, 2009
	Ecological buffer	% natural vegetation	GLOBELAND30, 2013
	River network	Length of river network within build-up area (km/km2)	OSM, 2015
	Earthquake experiences	Number of historical earthquakes during the past 5 years (2008-2013)	Environmental Statistics, 2013

Note: Statistical unit: per district or per municipality/VDC in Nepal. Demographic data were derived from the published National Population and Housing Census 2011 of Nepal (Nepal Census). Information points and parcels were downloaded from the Open Street Map (OSM) in 2015 before the earthquake. Building data were provided by the Survey Department, Nepal. The dataset of health facilities and emergency camps in Nepal was collected by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in Nepal and published by the World Health Organization (WHO) in 2015. Natural vegetation land cover was derived from the GLOBELAND30 dataset. Digital elevation model and slope data were derived from the 30 × 30-m ASTER GDEM dataset published in 2009. Historical records of earthquakes in Nepal were derived from Environmental Statistics in Nepal (2013).

Validation of Resilience Metrics through Hierarchical Regression Analysis

To explore contextual variables associated with relief progress on different levels, we incorporated a two-level structure for all regression models, with individuals nested into sub-districts or districts. Multilevel models allow for a reliable decomposition of variations in response on different levels and robust estimation of within-group and between-groups heterogeneity effects while controlling for individual variables (Dang et al. 2019). In this study, for each round of the survey, a bivariate response binary multilevel model was constructed at the district level and at the sub-district level. Thus, ten separate regression models were adopted using logit models, in which only a random intercept at the group level is included to identify contextual variables with effective predictive power at different areal units. The bivariate response logit multilevel model is specified as follows (He 2017; Howe et al. 2015).

$$\textbf{Level-1: } \Pr(y_{ij} = 1) = \text{logit}^{-1}(\beta_{0j} + \textstyle\sum_m \beta_m x_{m,ij}) \quad (1)$$

$$\textbf{Level-2: } \beta_{0j} = \beta_0 + \textstyle\sum_n \beta_n X_{n,j} + \mu_j + \varepsilon_{ij},\ \mu_j \sim N\left(0, \sigma_\mu^2\right), \varepsilon_{ij} \sim N\left(0, \sigma_\varepsilon^2\right) \quad (2)$$

Where in Eq. (1), each variable is indexed over individual *i* within group *j* (e.g., a district or a sub-district in this study) and over a specific response category *m* for age, sex, caste and ethnicity, occupation, personal disability, and damage estimation; denotes the coefficient of the individual variable *m*, and denotes the intercept of group *j*. For Level-2 (Eq. (2)), each variable is indexed over group *j* and over a contextual variable *n* for any of selected resilience indicators; denotes the coefficient of the contextual variable *n*, and denotes the median value of intercept estimations among groups. Following Eq. (2), the variance is 'partitioned' into two components: is the between-groups variance, and is the residual variation between individuals. At the individual level, the variance of residual from Eq. (2) is set to under the logit link function (Goldstein et al. 2002).

Each regression model was fitted using Markov Chain Monte Carlo (MCMC) methods, implemented in the R package 'brms' (Bürkner 2017). For a parsimonious model, we adopted a widely used Bayesian variable selection method by specifying a horseshoe prior for contextual variables. Via regression shrinkage, the effects of redundant variables shrunk to near zero while leaving sizeable real effects largely unchanged (Piironen and Vehtari 2016). As a result, for each round by different scales, an active subset of contextual predictors was identified and incorporated for an optimised model. The statistical inferences on model parameters were

based on four MCMC chains, each of which consists of 8000 iterations, with a burn-in of the first 4000 iterations that allow the MCMC chains to gain coverage. The coverages of the MCMC chains are identified with effective diagnostic criteria. During the modelling process, as control variables, individual demographics and the damage indicator were specified to follow the default diffuse prior distributions in brms at all times (Bürkner 2017). The widely applicable information criterion (WAIC) and leave-one-out cross-validation (LOO) were used to explore the prediction accuracy of a fitted Bayesian model (Vehtari et al. 2016).

Results and Discussion

A set of variables in the social, economic, and infrastructural dimensions of resilience were derived from PCA with targeted rotation (Table 4). Those variables explained more than 76 per cent of the total variance in each dimension.

The results of regression analyses on both the district and sub-district levels show that a set of individual variables were associated with relief scores, indicating the need to control for individual demographics and initial damage conditions when exploring the effects of contextual variables (Tables 5 and 6). Accordingly, the demographic variables gender, occupation, caste/ethnicity, and personal disability were detected as strong predictors of relief scores in one or several survey rounds.

Given the control variables at each level, the binary multilevel models validated a set of contextual variables as strong predictors against individual relief scores, and their effects exhibited variations over time and across levels at the spatial scale (Tables 5 and 6). Based on the results of regression shrinkage, all regression models were used to cull contextual variables that contributed little individually or in combination to the explanation of relief score differences among groups. Thus, the contextual variables listed in Tables 5 and 6 were identified as strong predictors of relief scores and should provide a scale-specific index of disaster resilience. Accordingly, the parameter estimates denoted by 'Estimate' linked the relief progress of affected regions in Nepal to the parameters selected to measure resilience. The confidence interval denoted by '95% CI' reflects a significance level of 0.05. That is, if the estimate of a parameter had a '95% CI' with no coverage of zero, the parameter was strongly associated with the response.

The results of the variables in the social dimension suggested that household structure served as a strong predictor on both district and sub-district levels, especially in the last survey round (Round 5 in December), whereas the ethnic diversity variable played a significant role only at the

Table 4. Results of principal component analysis in social, economic, and infrastructural dimensions at the district and sub-district levels

Dimension	Extracted Variables	% of Variance		Dominant Indicators	Information Extracted		Component Loading	
		District	Sub-district		District	Sub-district	District	Sub-district
Social	Household structure	20.73	22.80	Average household size	0.997	0.921	-0.981	-0.946
	Demographic capital	57.12	35.46	Sex ratio	0.907	0.754	0.951	0.803
				Education attainment	0.962	0.836	0.935	0.785
				Special needs	0.920	0.538	0.918	0.697
	Ethnic diversity	17.58	21.62	Ethnic diversity	0.986	0.946	-0.871	-0.968
Economic	Industrial diversity	49.79	36.57	Industrial establishment	0.983	0.709	-0.885	-0.801
				Agriculture establishment	0.989	0.768	-0.943	-0.875
	Vulnerability of household property	47.28	39.50	House ownership	0.969	0.786	0.946	0.861
				Household property exposure	0.943	0.780	-0.834	-0.877
Infrastructural	Community capital	32.89	27.25	Electricity dependence	0.760	0.826	-0.797	-0.889
				Evacuation/ temporary shelters potential	0.782	0.615	0.832	0.540
	Accessibility and emergency service	34.95	28.38	Medical care capacity	0.940	0.610	0.920	0.568
				Principal road density	0.905	0.799	0.808	0.865
	Emergency camp capacity	19.79	20.37	Capacity of emergency camps	0.996	0.949	0.973	0.964

Note: Variables were extracted from social, economic, and infrastructural dimensions, respectively, explaining 95.43%, 97.08%, and 87.64% of the total variance of the corresponding dimensions at the district level and explaining 79.89%, 76.08%, and 76.00% at the sub-district level. In the environmental dimension, because Barlett's test of sphericity was violated, the indicators under environmental dimensions were not highly correlated and therefore unsuitable for structure detection. The results were all derived via Principle Component Analysis and Orthogonal Target Rotation.

Table 5. Estimation results of each survey round on the district level

	Round1		Round2		Round3		Round4		Round5	
	Estimate	(95%-CI)	Estimate	(95%-CI)	Estimate	(95%-CI)	Estimate	(95%-CI)	Estimate	(95%-CI)
Intercept										
Median	-1.270	(-1.671, -0.873)	-0.927	(-1.575, -0.246)	-0.599	(-1.358, 0.197)	-0.126	(-0.733, 0.500)	0.586	(-0.120, 1.358)
Variance	0.032	(0.000, 0.290)	0.998	(0.372, 3.411)	1.533	(0.651, 4.391)	0.908	(0.370, 2.610)	1.443	(0.571, 4.316)
Individual Variables										
Damage	-0.199*	(-0.531, -0.013)	-0.212*	(-0.553, -0.020)	-0.105*	(-0.317, -0.008)	-0.126*	(-0.304, -0.010)	-0.556*	(-0.920, -0.255)
Gender (Reference: male)										
Female	-0.364*	(-0.675, -0.050)	0.173	(-0.159, 0.494)	-0.033	(-0.327, 0.262)	0.109	(-0.171, 0.409)	0.179	(-0.141, 0.505)
Occupation (Reference: others)										
Farmer/NGO worker	-0.135	(-0.522, 0.239)	-0.371	(-0.855, 0.108)	0.199	(-0.282, 0.677)	0.255	(-0.157, 0.691)	0.712*	(0.121, 1.291)
Government	0.162	(-0.475, 0.770)	0.458	(-0.290, 1.212)	-0.039	(-0.744, 0.673)	0.950*	(0.326, 1.582)	1.405*	(0.594, 2.289)
Skilled worker	-0.545	(-1.731, 0.466)	-0.306	(-1.167, 0.488)	0.264	(-0.465, 1.049)	0.214	(-0.571, 0.958)	2.120*	(1.276, 3.072)
Caste/ethnicity (Reference: Brahaman/Chhetri)										
Janajati/Gurung/Dalit	-0.039	(-0.418, 0.332)	-0.726*	(-1.126, -0.343)	-0.927*	(-1.328, -0.555)	0.408*	(0.022, 0.802)	-0.134	(-0.560, 0.289)
Newar	0.413	(-0.069, 0.868)	-0.242	(-0.732, 0.256)	-0.964*	(-1.456, -0.476)	-0.341	(-0.755, 0.067)	-0.370	(-0.881, 0.136)
Tamang	0.339	(-0.112, 0.734)	-0.289	(-0.837, 0.222)	-0.213	(-0.650, 0.215)	-0.713	(-1.208, -0.226)	0.089	(-0.360, 0.528)
Others (minority)	-0.733*	(-1.520, -0.116)	-0.410	(-1.181, 0.302)	-0.647	(-1.643, 0.275)	-0.206	(-0.764, 0.317)	0.080	(-0.600, 0.770)
Age (Reference: 40-54)										
15-39	-0.121	(-0.517, 0.255)	-0.301	(-0.747, 0.119)	0.065	(-0.343, 0.475)	0.401	(-0.012, 0.811)	0.543*	(0.104, 0.995)
55+	-0.032	(-0.560, 0.459)	-0.311	(-0.869, 0.234)	0.082	(-0.416, 0.572)	0.062	(-0.439, 0.597)	0.251	(-0.293, 0.835)
Personal disability (Reference: with personal disability)										
without personal disability	0.149	(-0.203, 0.518)	0.618*	(0.247, 0.984)	0.947*	(0.630, 1.296)	0.791*	(0.477, 1.103)	1.179*	(0.821, 1.555)
Contextual Variables (district level)										
Household structure									**0.919***	(0.121, 1.702)
Ethnic diversity			0.678*	(0.110, 1.382)					**0.619***	(0.097, 1.329)
Industrial diversity	0.844*	(0.534, 1.256)								
Community capital	0.310*	(0.088, 0.546)	0.375	(-0.221, 1.054)	0.554*	(0.047, 1.333)			0.999*	(0.237, 1.758)
Accessibility and emergency service			0.880*	(0.272, 1.470)	0.567*	(0.049, 1.286)	0.454*	(0.060, 1.027)	0.766*	(0.140, 1.458)
Emergency camp capacity	0.204*	(0.032, 0.416)	0.203	(-0.543, 0.951)			0.264	(-0.305, 0.784)		

Note: *Significant at the 5% level; for robust estimation, the parameter estimates denoted by 'Estimate' represent the median values of MCMC posterior samples.

Table 6. Estimation results of each survey round at the sub-district level

	Round1		Round2		Round3		Round4		Round5	
	Estimate	(95%-CI)	Estimate	(95%-CI)	Estimate	(95%-CI)	Estimate	(95%-CI)	Estimate	(95%-CI)
Intercept										
Median	-1.458	(-2.111, -0.856)	-1.298	(-1.998, -0.676)	-0.555	(-1.178, 0.086)	-0.171	(-0.714, 0.393)	0.769	(0.047, 1.563)
Variance	4.263	(2.693, 6.878)	6.308	(3.926, 10.245)	6.159	(3.876, 9.728)	3.738	(2.442, 6.102)	9.341	(5.736, 15.629)
Individual Variables										
Damage	-0.158	(-0.815, 0.300)	-0.037	(-0.612, 0.492)	-0.103*	(-0.338, -0.004)	-0.061*	(-0.285, -0.003)	-0.246*	(-0.799, -0.017)
Gender (Reference: male)										
Female	-0.590*	(-0.981, -0.213)	-0.010	(-0.408, 0.369)	0.003	(-0.404, 0.382)	-0.043	(-0.394, 0.316)	-0.027	(-0.445, 0.415)
Occupation (Reference: others)										
Farmer/NGO worker	-0.266	(-0.765, 0.260)	-0.151	(-0.763, 0.485)	0.122	(-0.475, 0.750)	0.262	(-0.285, 0.786)	0.406	(-0.262, 1.086)
Government	0.046	(-0.821, 0.881)	0.737	(-0.231, 1.681)	-0.136	(-1.061, 0.779)	0.864*	(0.048, 1.672)	1.42*	(0.283, 2.655)
Skilled worker	-0.250	(-1.613, 1.004)	-0.162	(-1.158, 0.825)	0.123	(-0.890, 1.143)	-0.098	(-1.014, 0.805)	0.907	(-0.097, 2.055)
Caste/ethnicity (Reference: Brahaman/Chhetri)										
Janajati/ Gurung/Dalit	-0.304	(-0.865, 0.179)	-0.644*	(-1.158, -0.134)	-0.539*	(-1.101, -0.003)	0.157	(-0.350, 0.729)	0.079	(-0.578, 0.694)
Newar	0.350	(-0.317, 1.013)	-0.405	(-1.102, 0.265)	-0.185	(-0.945, 0.609)	-0.242	(-0.835, 0.348)	0.229	(-0.519, 1.029)
Tamang	0.094	(-0.501, 0.666)	0.182	(-0.511, 0.860)	-0.152	(-0.820, 0.499)	-0.878*	(-1.566, -0.213)	-0.001	(-0.739, 0.696)
Others (minority)	-0.399	(-1.331, 0.577)	1.062	(-0.018, 2.221)	-0.304	(-1.452, 0.750)	0.048	(-0.637, 0.723)	0.187	(-0.649, 1.053)

	Round1		Round2		Round3		Round4		Round5	
	Estimate	(95%-CI)	Estimate	(95%-CI)	Estimate	(95%-CI)	Estimate	(95%-CI)	Estimate	(95%-CI)
Age (Reference: 40-54)										
15-39	-0.247	(-0.741, 0.285)	-0.328	(-0.884, 0.234)	-0.200	(-0.708, 0.347)	0.089	(-0.420, 0.621)	0.306	(-0.280, 0.869)
55+	-0.154	(-0.789, 0.492)	0.294	(-0.393, 0.948)	0.068	(-0.558, 0.692)	0.079	(-0.545, 0.709)	0.194	(-0.593, 0.967)
Personal disability (Reference: with personal disability)										
without personal disability	0.080	(-0.418, 0.541)	0.427	(-0.058, 0.904)	0.778*	(0.299, 1.265)	0.336	(-0.078, 0.780)	0.772*	(0.233, 1.306)
Contextual Variables (sub-district level)										
Household structure							0.243	(-0.192, 0.692)	0.791*	(0.114, 1.532)
Ethnic diversity										
Industrial diversity			0.549	(-0.211, 1.650)			0.207	(-0.263, 0.811)		
Vulnerability of household property					0.211	(-0.475, 0.873)				
Community capital	0.396	(-0.074, 0.875)	0.686*	(0.181, 1.245)	0.800*	(0.184, 1.486)	0.210*	(0.013, 0.609)	1.385*	(0.710, 1.939)
Accessibility and emergency service	0.559*	(0.083, 1.040)					0.284*	(0.022, 0.706)	0.208	(-0.473, 0.867)
Emergency camp capacity										
Average elevation					0.331	(-0.222, 0.865)				
Earthquake experiences			0.557*	(0.096, 1.131)	0.622*	(0.124, 1.211)	0.740*	(0.275, 1.207)	0.589*	(0.139, 1.354)

Note: *Significant at the 5% level; for robust estimation, the parameter estimates denoted by 'Estimate' represent the median values of MCMC posterior samples.

district level. The effects of household structure indicated that households with fewer members were more likely to be satisfied with the relief progress after the disaster, which justified our selection of household structure in both areal units. The strong association of the ethnic diversity variable with relief scores existed only on a larger spatial scale. This finding was noteworthy because it confirmed the findings of previous studies that the effect of ethnic diversity should be highlighted in resilience assessment (Laska and Morrow 2006). In addition, the effect of ethnic diversity was seen at the district level rather than at the sub-district level. The findings are explainable because a set of caste and ethnic groups (i.e., Newar, Dalit, Janajati, etc.) in Nepal live in limited regions (i.e., hilly areas) and have their own culture and mother tongue. Some of them (i.e., Dalits) were traditionally considered 'untouchable' and may suffer from racial segregation and unfairness in the allocation of relief supplies. Furthermore, because this racial segregation is greatest at the macro-scale (i.e., districts) and least at the mesoscale (i.e., sub-districts like municipalities/VDCs in Nepal) (Manley et al. 2015), the effect of ethnic diversity, as expected, was amplified as the spatial scale grew larger.

Regarding the economic dimension, industrial diversity was slightly more strongly associated with relief scores at the district level, and the vulnerability of household property variable was involved only at the sub-district level for optional predictive models with respect to the Bayesian variable selection results. Industrial diversity served as an indicator of economic diversity, which benefits employment growth and income recovery after disasters (Xiao and Drucker 2013). According to previous findings, substantial resilience in the economic context at the regional and national levels rather than at the sub-regional level might be a result of the higher and deeper mixture of different types of industries within larger areal unit levels (Xiao and Nilawar 2013), which, in turn, might help to explain the slightly stronger effects of industrial diversity on resilience on larger areal units (i.e., district level). Even at the district level, this industry diversity variable was not statistically significant beyond the first survey round. This could be attributed to the out-migration observed continuously after the earthquake, which reduced the supply of labour and likely changed the underlying industrial mix (Xiao and Feser 2014), thereby masking the effects of industrial diversity during the relief process. The insignificant role of vulnerability of household property might have been masked due to the bidirectional effects of the household property variable on resilience capacity; on the one hand, it represents a high risk of hazard loss and requires much greater efforts to recover, but on the other hand,

populations with larger amounts of household property are expected to have much more financial resources and external funds to cope with disturbances. Therefore, these bidirectional effects might have led to the insignificant role of the variable of vulnerability of household property.

In the infrastructural dimension, community capital, accessibility and emergency services, and emergency camp capacity showed predictive strength at the district level, whereas only the first two variables showed predictive strength at the sub-district level. Community capital was an increasingly important factor during the relief process on both levels, which justified our selection of indicators related to electricity dependency and evacuation/temporary shelter potential. The variable of accessibility and emergency services appears to be much more significant at the district level than at the sub-district level. Because principal road density loaded highly on this contextual variable and principal roads serve as important links for the delivery of relief supplies between districts, the between-districts difference in the principal road density would account for the total variance of individual relief scores more than the between-sub-district difference in principle road density. The effect of emergency camp capacity is observed only at the district level. Accordingly, people usually prefer to remain near their house and neighbourhood after a disaster (Villagra et al. 2014). For this reason, people in a sub-district with insufficient emergency camps would prefer to migrate to camps in adjacent sub-districts; thus the influence of migration among the smaller areal units might offset the influence of uneven allocation of emergency camps among sub-districts. In contrast, because people must travel a much longer distance to camps in another district, between-district migrations would not be so frequent that they could make up for the shortage of emergency camp capacity within a district, thereby maintaining the power of the camp capacity variable to effectively explain the between-districts variance. We also observed that the effect of camp capacity was not statistically significant beyond the first survey round, which is attributable to the rescue and relief procedure, during which affected people are allocated to emergency camps during the first step, and the delivery of relief supplies and emergency services (i.e., health services) follows as the next step to support the scattered camps. In addition, because winter was approaching, the decreasing temperature would have amplified the role of relief supplies as time went on. For this reason, the effect of accessibility and emergency services was observed as an increasingly significant factor thereafter.

Within the environmental dimension, the regression results suggest that earthquake experience was a strong predictor at the sub-district level

and that its effects began to make a difference that lasted throughout the remaining four survey rounds. These findings justify our selection of the earthquake experiences variable as a proxy for resilience and, more importantly, the variable's scale of effect in smaller areal units (i.e., units at the sub-district level in Nepal). According to previous findings, risk perception is determined by the extent of people's experiences with the negative consequences of natural disasters more than with the direct experiences with disasters (Bubeck 2012; Lo and Cheung 2015). Because the most serious damage caused by earthquakes is mostly around the epicentre, people who experience serious loss are expected to be located around the epicentre, thereby implying a significant association between people's earthquake experiences and their risk perceptions, which exist only in limited areas around the epicentre. Because the scale of the epicentre area is comparable to that of a sub-district rather than a district, the significant effect of the earthquake experience variable on relief progress only at the sub-district scale is acceptable. This finding is also consistent with previous findings of vulnerability indicators that issues of personal perceptions and coping capacity can only be captured at the micro and mesoscales (i.e., counties, municipalities/VDCs, etc.) (Fekete et al. 2010).

Conclusion

This study was the first attempt to incorporate spatial scale notions into feature selection of resilience assessment. In doing so, the case study builds up several hierarchical models to validate potential resilience indicators against survey data at different spatial scales. Results show that variables related to household structure, industrial diversity, community capital, and accessibility and emergency services show significant effects in predicting individual relief scores on both the district and sub-district levels, thereby justifying our selection of these variables as proxies for disaster resilience. The ethnic diversity variable and the emergency camp capacity variable were significant predictors in models that incorporated contextual effects at the district level, whereas the earthquake experience variable was validated as a proxy for resilience at the sub-district level. These findings justify the necessity of addressing resilience assessment in different manners depending on the levels of analysis, for sub-regions (i.e., sub-districts in Nepal), regions (i.e., districts in Nepal), or larger geopolitical units (i.e., nations), providing empirical evidence for governments and decision makers as to what scale a specific resilience indicator could make differences and be more effective to promote resilience capability.

In addition, the case study observes that the effects of the validated

variables varied across scales and over time. Specifically, the industrial diversity variable and the accessibility and emergency services variable were slightly more strongly associated with relief progress for the larger areal units (i.e., districts in the case of Nepal); community capital serves as an increasingly important factor during the relief process on both the district and sub-district levels. Although variances across levels on a spatial scale and over time might be the results of other unobserved changes, they remind researchers to pay more attention to validations of potential resilience indicators across scales and over time. For example, according to the case of Nepal, governments and decision makers are advised to take measures first and most comprehensively in the larger areal units (i.e., measures to improve links and communication among districts in Nepal).

Because this study is one of the first empirically based resilience assessments that considers the validation of metrics for resilience on different administrative levels while also considering the variations in the effects of the validated variables over time, it is not without areas of opportunity. First, because individual perceptions of the relief process served as the external term for validation of the variables of resilience, the accuracy of the coefficient estimations and the uncertainty depend on the sample size within each areal unit (district and/or sub-district) and on the number of areal units. Recommendations to overcome this problem in a future study are to conduct interviews with more people within each areal unit and to attempt to collect data from respondents in uncovered units of analysis or from other published datasets, if possible. Second, given the multidimensional characteristics of disaster resilience, more indicators must be included and validated as proxies for resilience to achieve a more complete resilience assessment (e.g., an institutional resilience component and a disaster communication component) (Burton 2015; Spialek et al. 2016). These limitations provide fertile ground for continued work that focuses on data collection to construct more alternative variables and on more reasonable assessment standards. Third, it also leaves opportunities to improve the multilevel regression models. Specifically, given that the purpose of this study was to construct a composite index using variables validated across various levels on a spatial scale, it does not consider the interactions among variables in various dimensions of resilience or cross-level interactions. Therefore, a future study could examine inference models to explore interactions among variables at the same level and more complicated cross-interactions.

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Shobhit Shakya is a PhD candidate and Junior Research Fellow in Ragnar Nurkse Department of Innovation and Governance at Tallinn University of Technology, Estonia. He has an MSc in E-Governance Services and Technologies (cum laude) from Tallinn University of Technology, Estonia. His PhD is on traditional practices of public governance in a non-Western context. His research interests include governance, public administration, E-governance, ICT4D, and Engaged Buddhism. He is the Managing Editor of the journal *Halduskultuur–The Estonian Journal of Administrative Culture and Digital Governance*.

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Appendix

Conference Schedule

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Day 1: 24 July (Wednesday)

SESSION 1: 9–11 am

HALL A–Panel A1		HALL B–Panel B1	
Welcome		**Welcome**	
Urban Growth: Change and Livelihood **Opening Remarks and Chair:** ***Krishna Adhikari*** Chair, Britain–Nepal Academic Council **Discussant:** ***Shangrila Joshi*** The Evergreen State College, Olympia, USA		**Memorialising Nostalgia and Loss** **Opening Remarks and Chair:** ***Nirmal Man Tuladhar*** Chair, Social Science Baha, Kathmandu, Nepal **Discussant:** ***Michael Hutt*** Professor, SOAS, London	
Thomas Robertson Executive Director, Fulbright Nepal	**Changing Kathmandu: Land, Water, and Public Space Through the Decades**	**Abha Lal** Independent Researcher/ Desk Editor, *The Record*	**When There Was a King There Was Unity: An Exploration of Nostalgia for the Monarchy**
Dipak Bahadur Adhikari Lecturer of Economics, Patan Multiple Campus	**Informal Economy and Poverty in Nepal**	**Bryony Whitmarsh** Associate Dean, Faculties of Creative and Cultural Industries and Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Portsmouth	**From Darbar to Sañgrahalaya: Creating New History in the Narayanhiti Palace, Nepal**
Sanjay Sharma PhD Candidate, National University of Singapore	**Industry under the Open Sky: An Exploration of the Political Economy of Brick-making in Nepal**	**Stefanie Lotter** Senior Teaching Fellow and Research Fellow, SOAS, London	**Collecting Loss and Displaying Absence: Curating the Earthquake**
TEA BREAK: 11–11:30 am (served in Kailash Hall, ground floor)			

Day 1 **SESSION 2: 11:30 am–1:30 pm**

HALL A–Panel A2		HALL B–Panel B2	
From Epicentre to Aftermath: Ethnographic and Historical Views of Post-Earthquake Nepal *(double panel)* *(Convener: Jeevan Baniya,* Social Science Baha*)* **Chair:** ***Ramjee Parajulee*** Department of Political Studies, Capilano University, Canada **Discussant:** ***Stefanie Lotter*** Senior Teaching Fellow, SOAS, London		**Informed Policies: Insights and Evidence** **Chair:** ***Janak Rai*** Associate Professor, Central Department of Anthropology, Tribhuvan University **Discussant:** ***Arjun Kharel*** Research Coordinator, Centre for the Study of Labour and Mobility, Social Science Baha	
Bina Limbu Independent Researcher	**Reconstruction and the Rise of One-roomed Houses in Rural Nepal**	**Richard Bownas** Associate Professor, Political Science and International Affairs, University of Northern Colorado	**Measuring Caste Discrimination in Urban and Rural Nepal: Some Empirical Approaches**

Day 1: 24 July (Wednesday)

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Sanjay Sharma PhD Candidate, National University of Singapore	**Industry under the Open Sky: An Exploration of the Political Economy of Brick-making in Nepal**	**Stefanie Lotter** Senior Teaching Fellow and Research Fellow, SOAS, London	**Collecting Loss and Displaying Absence: Curating the Earthquake**
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Day 1 **SESSION 2: 11:30 am–1:30 pm**

HALL A–Panel A2		HALL B–Panel B2	
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Bina Limbu Independent Researcher	**Reconstruction and the Rise of One-roomed Houses in Rural Nepal**	**Richard Bownas** Associate Professor, Political Science and International Affairs, University of Northern Colorado	**Measuring Caste Discrimination in Urban and Rural Nepal: Some Empirical Approaches**

Philippe Le Billon Professor, Department of Geography University of British Columbia, Canada **Manoj Suji** Research Associate, Social Science Baha **Dinesh Paudel** Assistant Professor, Department of Sustainable Development, Appalachian State University North Carolina, USA	**Earthquakes and Cashflows: Households and Disaster Financialization in Post-earthquake Nepal**	**Obindra B. Chand** Qualitative Research Officer, HERD International Kathmandu, Nepal **Shophika Regmi** Manager, Monitoring and Evaluation, HERD International **Abriti Arjyal** Research Coordinator, HERD International **Chandani Kharel** Research Manager, HERD International **Sushil C. Baral** Managing Director, HERD International	**Use of Data for Decision Making in Planning Process of Local Health System in Nepal: A Critical Note on Problems and Prospects**
Michael Hutt Professor, SOAS, London	**Before the Dust Settled: Nepal's Seismic Constitution**	**Sanjaya Mahato** Independent Researcher **Rupesh Kumar Sah** Under Secretary, Federal Parliament Secretariat Nepal **Pooja Chaudhary** Advocate affiliated with the Nepal Bar Association	**Legislators' Engagement in Policy Making and Post-Legislative Scrutiny in Nepalese Parliament Since 1991**
LUNCH: 1:30–2:30 pm *(served in the dining hall, ground floor)*			

Day 1 **SESSION 3: 2:30–4:30 pm**

HALL A–Panel A3		HALL B–Panel B3	
From Epicentre to Aftermath: Ethnographic and Historical Views of Post-Earthquake Nepal *(double panel)* **Chair:** ***Nabin Rawal*** Lecturer, Central Department of Anthropology, Tribhuvan University **Discussant:** ***Dinesh Paudel*** Appalachian State University, USA		**Mediating Development: Clients and Agents** **Chair:** ***Thomas Robertson*** Executive Director, Fulbright Nepal **Discussant:** ***Dannah Dennis*** Hamilton College, New York	
Mark Liechty Professor of Anthropology, University of Illinois at Chicago, USA	**Disasters and 'Conditions of Possibility': Rethinking Causation through an Analysis of Nepal Earthquakes**	**Manoj Suji, Nilima Rai** Research Associate, Social Science Baha **Sambriddhi Kharel** Independent Researcher	**Role of Actors and Institutions in Translating the 2030 Agenda for Gender Equality Commitments in National Discourse: A Case Study of Nepal**
John Whelpton The Chinese University of Hong Kong	**Between Two Big Ones: Earthquakes in the Nepali Consciousness, 1934-2015**	**Pearly Wong** PhD Student, University of Wisconsin-Madison	**Development (In)Convenience: Agrarian Change and the Experience of Development in Dakshinkali, Nepal**

Day 2 **SESSION 5: 11:30 am–1:30 pm**

HALL A–Panel A5		HALL B–Panel B5	
Colonialism: Historicising the Subaltern **Chair:** ***Michael Hutt*** Professor, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London **Discussant:** ***Hema Kiruppalini*** National University of Singapore		**Community Institutions: Old and New** **Chair:** ***Suresh Dhakal*** Central Department of Anthropology, Tribhuvan University **Discussant:** ***Pritisha Shrestha*** Syracruse University, New York	
Amanda Taylor, Claire Blaser Postgraduate (MA) Student, SOAS, London **Martin Brooks** Postgraduate Associate, SOAS, London	**New Insights into Colonial Encounters in the Himalaya**	**Tek Bahadur Dong** OneSeed Expeditions, Regional Director for Nepal and Bhutan	**Cultural Tourism: An Ethnographic Study of Home-Stay in Briddim, Rasuwa, Nepal**
Nokmedemla Lemtur PhD Student, Center for Modern Indian Studies, Georg-August Universität Göttingen, Germany	**Labour in the High Himalayas: Recruitment and Agency of Mountaineering Expedition Labour on Nanga Parbat and Everest (1922–1939)**	**Mitra Pariyar** Leverhulme Research Fellow, Kingston University, London	**Fighting Caste through Religious Conversion: Early Experiences of Nepali Dalit Christians**
Sanjay Sharma PhD Student, National University of Singapore, Singapore	**'Invisible Counterparts' of the 'Warrior Gentlemen': Tracing out the Mobilities of 'Gurkha Women'**	**Shobhit Shakya** Junior Research Fellow and PhD Student Ragnar Nurkse, Tallinn University of Technology, Estonia	**Guthis Abroad: Catering to the Social Needs Amongst the Newar Diaspora**
LUNCH: 1:30–2:30 pm *(served in the dining hall, ground floor)*			

Day 2 **SESSION 6: 2:30–4.30 pm**

HALL A–Panel A6	HALL B–Panel B6
Stigma: Changing the Narratives **Chair:** ***Madhusudan Subedi*** Professor, Central Department of Sociology, Tribhuvan University and Patan Academy of Health Sciences **Discussant:** ***Amar BK*** PhD Candidate, University of Pittsburgh	**Disaster and Suffering: Ascendency of Resilience** **Chair:** ***John Whelpton*** The Chinese University of Hong Kong **Discussant:** ***Jeevan Baniya*** Assistant Director, Social Science Baha

Sauharda Rai PhD Student, Jackson School of International Studies, University of Washington, Seattle, USA **Bonnie Nicole Kaiser** Assistant Professor, Anthropology, University of San Diego, USA **Brandon A. Kohrt** Charles and Sonia Akman Professor of Global Psychiatry, The George Washington University, USA	**Recovery Narratives in Global Mental Health: Understanding the Benefits and Harms of Mental Health Service User's Storytelling in Nepal**	**Jinglu Song** Department of Urban Planning and Design, Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University, Hong Kong **Bo Huang** Institute of Space and Earth Information Science, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Shatin, N.T **Rishikesh Pandey** School of Development and Social Engineering, Pokhara University, Pokhara, Nepal	**The Determinants of Disaster–Resilience in the Himalayan Kingdom of Nepal: An Assessment of Recovery, Reconstruction and Resilience in Nepal after 2015 Earthquake**
Aidan Seale-Feldman Postdoctoral Research Associate and Lecturer, Bioethics Program, University of Virginia, VA, USA	**Thinking with Ghosts: Bhut laagyo, Hysteria, and the Politics of Conceptualization**	**Sapana Basnet Bista** PhD Researcher, Liverpool John Moores University, UK **Shaurabh Sharma** HI International **Rose Khatri** Liverpool John Moores University, UK **Padam Simkhada** Liverpool John Moores University, UK	**Indiscriminating Earthquake Discriminatory Aid: Effectiveness of Blanket Approach to Aid Distribution to People with Disabilities**
Yasuko Fujikura Research Fellow Institute of Research in Humanities, Kyoto University, Japan	**Dealing with Marginality: Gender and Caste in Western Nepal**		

Day 3: 26 July (Friday)

SESSION 7: 9–11 am

HALL A–Panel A7		**HALL B–Panel B7**	
Nepali Women: Struggles for Autonomy and Agency **Chair:** ***Dipak Gyawali*** Social Science Baha **Discussant:** ***Neeti Aryal Khanal*** Central Department of Sociology, Tribhuvan University, Nepal		**Transitions: Meeting Aspirations and Expectations** **Chair:** ***Seira Tamang*** Independent Researcher **Discussant:** ***Sanjaya Mahato*** Independent Researcher	
Pritisha Shrestha PhD Student, Syracruse University, New York	**Bold, Brahmin and Banned: Recovering History's Unsung Rhetoric of a Revolutionary Woman of Nepal**	**Bhim Narayan Regmi** Lecturer, Central Department of Linguistics, Tribhuvan University, Nepal	**Additional Official Language Policy of Nepal: A Review**

Sanjaya Mahato Independent Researcher **Pooja Chaudhary** Advocate affiliated with the Nepal Bar Association **Dogendra Tumsa** Statistician, Social Science Baha **Bipin Upadhyaya** Statistician, Social Science Baha	**The Untouchables: Prevalence of Sexual Relationship during Menstrual Period**	**Chiranjibi Bhandari** Assistant Professor, Department of Conflict, Peace and Development Studies, Tribhuvan University	**Revisiting Ex- Combatants: Past Assumptions and Present Realities**
Amar BK PhD Candidate, University of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA	**Autonomy, Gender, and Women's Suffering in Nepal**	**Sara Bertotti** PhD Student, SOAS, London	**Translating Hybridity and Change: The 2006 Comprehensive Peace Accord of Nepal**
TEA BREAK: 11–11:30 am (served in Kailash Hall, ground floor)			

Day 3 **SESSION 8: 11:30 am–12:50 pm**

HALL A–Panel A8		**HALL B–Panel B8**	
Violence: Understanding its Forms and Consequences **Chair:** ***Katsuo Nawa*** Professor of Cultural Anthropology, The University of Tokyo **Discussant:** ***Sudeshna Thapa*** Research Associate, Social Science Baha		**Borders and Boundaries** **Chair:** ***Nabin Rawal*** Central Department of Anthropology, Tribhuvan University, Nepal **Discussant:** ***Rupak Shrestha*** PhD Candidate, Department of Geography, University of Boulder, Colorado	
Lata Gautam Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Science and Engineering, Anglia Ruskin University, Cambridge, UK **Agatha Grela** University of West London, UK **Jaya Satyal, Sharad Gajuryal** Annapurna Neurological Institute and Allied Sciences, Nepal	**Understanding the Nature of Sexual Assault Cases in Nepal Through a Forensic Lens**	**Yangchen Dolker** Research Associate, Social Science Baha **Khem Raj Shreesh** Social Science Baha	**Summer Farmers, Winter Traders: Loba's Adaptation through Changing Socio-Political Times**
Harsha Man Maharjan Researcher, Martin Chautari, Kathmandu	**From Media Accountability to Violence: Audience Participation and Opposition in the Proposed LED Bulb Procurement Episode on Social Media**	**Anup Shekhar Chakraborty** Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science and Political Studies, Netaji Institute for Asian Studies, Kolkata, India	**Enduring Islam and 'Muslimness' in Trans- Himalayas: Some Reflections from the Case of the Gorkha Muslims and Tibetan Muslims in the Eastern Himalayan Town of Darjeeling, India**
LUNCH: 1:30–2:30 pm *(served in the dining hall, ground floor)*			

Day 3 **SESSION 9: 2.30–3.50 pm**

HALL A–Panel A9	
Children's Needs: Moving beyond Rights	**Chair:** ***Mitra Pariyar*** Leverhulme Research Fellow, Kingston University, London **Discussant:** ***Aidan Seale-Feldman*** Postdoctoral Research Associate and Lecturer Bioethics Program, University of Virginia
Jeevan Baniya Assistant Director, Social Science Baha **Tracy Ghale** Senior Research Associate, Social Science Baha **Nilima Rai** Research Associate, Social Science Baha **Amit Gautam** Research Associate, Social Science Baha **Lacchindra Maharjan** Save the Children, Nepal	**Why Children Matter: Vulnerabilities and Needs of Children in Disasters**
Nabin Maharjan PhD Candidate, Department of Child and Youth Studies, Brock University, Ontario, Canada **Richard C. Mitchell** Professor of Child and Youth Studies, Brock University, Ontario, Canada	**The UNCRC and Global Childhoods: Transdisciplinary Reflections from Nepal**

SESSION 10: 4 pm–5.20 pm

HALL A–Panel A10	
Mixed Panel	**Chair:** ***Richard Mitchell*** Brock University, Canada **Discussant and Closing Remarks:** ***Dipak Gyawali*** Social Science Baha
SeSe Ma Graduate School of Asian and African Area Studies, Kyoto University, Japan	**Centering Himalayan Stray Dogs: Reframing the Narrative of Non-Human Being Subjectivity and Agency**
Ravindra Nyaupane PhD Candidate, Swansea University, UK **Mike Pretious** Senior Lecturer in Management, Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh **Suvash Khadka** University of South Wales, UK	**Issues in the Development of Community-Led Tourism in Nepal–the Example of Dhorpatan**

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Nepal Academic Network