

CHAPTER – ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

As an academic and development discourse livelihood is a much- talked issue throughout the world in recent years. In the literal sense, livelihood is the means of earning a living. A livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets (stores, resources, claims and access) and activities required for a means of living (Chambers and Conway: 1992, cited in Ellis: 2000). Making modification to this definition Ellis mentions that a livelihood comprises the assets (natural, physical, human, financial and social capital), the activities, and the access to these (mediated by institutions and social relations) that together determine the living gained by the individual or household. Ellis points out that such type of definition of livelihood fails to convey change over time and adaptation to evolving circumstances, and further makes clear that livelihood strategies are dynamic; they respond to changing pressures and opportunities and they adapt accordingly (Ellis: 2000). Parallel to this idea Molnar (1981) writes that society's economic strategies are adaptation to the constraints and potentials.

Livelihood approach is concerned first and foremost with people. It seeks to gain an accurate and realistic understanding of people's strengths (assets or capital endowments) and how they endeavor to convert into positive livelihood out comes (DFID). Various activities like occupation, investments, productive strategies and others that individuals/ households undertake constitute the livelihood strategies. Livelihood strategies enable individuals/ households to obtain the means of their survival. Individuals/households develop livelihood strategies according to the environmental contexts. Some continue their traditional strategies while others modify them for meeting the basic requirements of their existence. Several factors impinge upon livelihood strategies that operate from individual/household levels, i.e., internal to regional/nationals/ global level, i.e., external. Hence living is the output of the livelihood strategies.

Changes in the livelihood strategies in many cases are the responses to the changing livelihood platforms induced by development practices and the environmental change. The introduction of communication and transportation; commodity circulation and access

to market to the rural areas have altered the people's livelihoods in various ways. Environmental changes and developments are likely to dispel some groups of people away from such sites of development activities while attracts others towards their centers (Chhetri: 2006). It is worth noting that subsistence agriculture, trade and labour migration out of the country are the ways of earning livelihood for the Muslims under this study. These livelihood strategies are the results of responses to the environmental changes brought by the development processes over time. These strategies are developed with the modification of traditional ones in order to adapt to the changing circumstances. The changes in the livelihood strategies of Muslims are also due to the activities of non-Muslims too. Hence, Muslims' perception of the environment is closer to Barth as he states that for any ethnic group, the environment is not only defined by natural conditions, but also by the presence and activities of other ethnic groups on which it depends (Barth: 1981, cited in Chhetri: 2006). The environment does not refer to only natural conditions but constitutes the social, political, cultural and economic conditions as well. Various factors affect the environmental conditions. Market forces may create environmental ravages by stripping resources away from local communities. They may interfere with people's subsistence practices by forcing them to compete within the pressures of market activities. Human subsistence strategies are, thus historically shaped and reshaped by changes both in the internal needs of people and the external interests of market and politics (cited in Pandey: 2006). This study is based on the context of interaction of changing environment and population, i.e. the process of procuring the living in the environment. Livelihood strategies analysis is oriented towards the understanding of persistence and change over time.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The livelihood strategies of Muslim households seem to be changing depending upon the new opportunities and constraints. But persistence in some aspects also tends to be a rule. The development process involves growing availabilities of modern technology, instruments and materials. However it could not encourage the Muslims of the study area to exploit agriculture intensely as their livelihood strategy despite agriculture being their traditional as well as primary occupation. They could have involved much of their human capital to bring more output from their arable land but they have not done so. Rather the shift of manpower from agriculture to some other alternative fields has been increasing.

Likewise, they are less involved in farm keeping. These trends have brought gradual loss of agricultural products like food grains, fruits, vegetables, milk and so on. Then they are bound to buy various products from the market in place of their own productions. This has resulted in their dependency in market than on their own products. However, neither they could give up agriculture nor specialize it. In spite of the changes in farming practices the overall nature of farming has remained subsistent.

Like in agriculture similar trend of degradation can be realized in their mobile trade network which resulted in opting for new kind of trade pattern. Basically, mobile trade was the most common profession along with the agriculture but in course of time the earlier generation of the Muslim individuals depending on mobile trade grew older and became passive in the profession. Simultaneously the trend of adopting mobile trade has decreased in newer generation. The multiple causes behind this trend and what has led their trade pattern to be shifted are to be explored.

This study shows changes in livelihood strategies along with persistence which have come about historically. Particular attention is paid to the shifts in the economy during the past two decades. It attempts to describe and explain how a Muslim community has made modifications in its ways of life to changing environment and how their livelihood strategies have evolved and are evolving. It also deals with the natural, socio- economic and cultural constraints as well as opportunities that have influences on their livelihoods. The study integrates the household and village economy with the regional, national and global systems. It highlights the trends of farming, trade, the spread of goods and commodities facilitated by transportation, communication and market centers, mobility of people within and across the border and remittance economy entering into the households, and how these have shaped and reshaped the Muslims' economy. The study attempts to deal with the following questions.

- How has the Muslim community been adapting to the changing environmental context and development processes?
- What were the livelihood strategies of Muslims in the past and what are they at present?
- How have the development processes altered the economic life of Muslims? and
- What are the economic constraints and opportunities that have existed over time?

1.3 Objectives

The research will hold the following objectives.

- i) To describe and explain the persistence and change in the livelihood strategies of Muslims during the past two decades; and
- ii) To identify the constraints and opportunities shaping Muslims' livelihood strategies over time.

1.4 Rationale

Much of the pertinent works and literature on West hill Muslims have emphasized on accounting general background, life pattern and socio- cultural organizations. But, no specific work has been carried out regarding their livelihood strategies in specific natural and socio- cultural environment. Hence, this study will explore the livelihood strategies of Muslims in a specific context through the logic of ecological and political-economic analysis. It tries to uncover, through anthropological tools and techniques of data collection and analysis, the persistence and change in the livelihood strategies along with the environmental changes. The rationality of research will remain academic and obviously be basic and pure in nature.

1.5 Theoretical Framework

Ecological analysis directs our understanding of the human survival strategies within specific environments. Ecological models have become popular approach in anthropology to describe subsistence economy and to determine what constraints or limiting factors operate in that system (Molnar: 1981). The earlier ecological perspectives conceived environment as a determinant of human survival strategies. Steward (1955) provides more dynamic analyses on the interaction of population and environment. Ecological perspective based on Stewardian analysis has focused on the human adaptive responses to the environment. His ecological framework analyses the dynamics of subsistence systems induced by the changes in technologies, population and resources. However, his ecological perspective is unable to trace out the influences of regional, national and global

economic forces on the adaptive strategies. Therefore, this perspective is useful, but not necessarily it is an adequate tool in analyzing the Muslim community which is linked with outside economic and political forces and changes produced by these dynamics.

The concept of political economy has been applied as a complement of ecological perspective in this study. Neo-Marxist approach has been the most influential approach of political economy of recent times. It is rooted on Frank's analysis of political economy of underdeveloped countries. Though, this approach has many off-shoots and has undergone many changes and adaptations to different situations, pervasive common feature can be summarized as the integration of local economy into the national and global economy has caused the dependency and peripheralization of the local economy.

The total dependence on a single theory has its own limitations in explaining the livelihood strategies. Hence, this study draws ideas from two theoretical perspectives- comprehensive ecological perspective and political economy in tracing the dynamics of Muslims' livelihood strategies. In doing so, it will be kept in mind that Muslim *Gaun* is not an isolated setting but is rather linked with the outside world. It will include the external factors that have a powerful influence on the changes in their livelihood strategies.

1.6 Conceptual Framework

For the convenience of study the organization of the elements of livelihood, their relations and changes can be traced out diagrammatically.

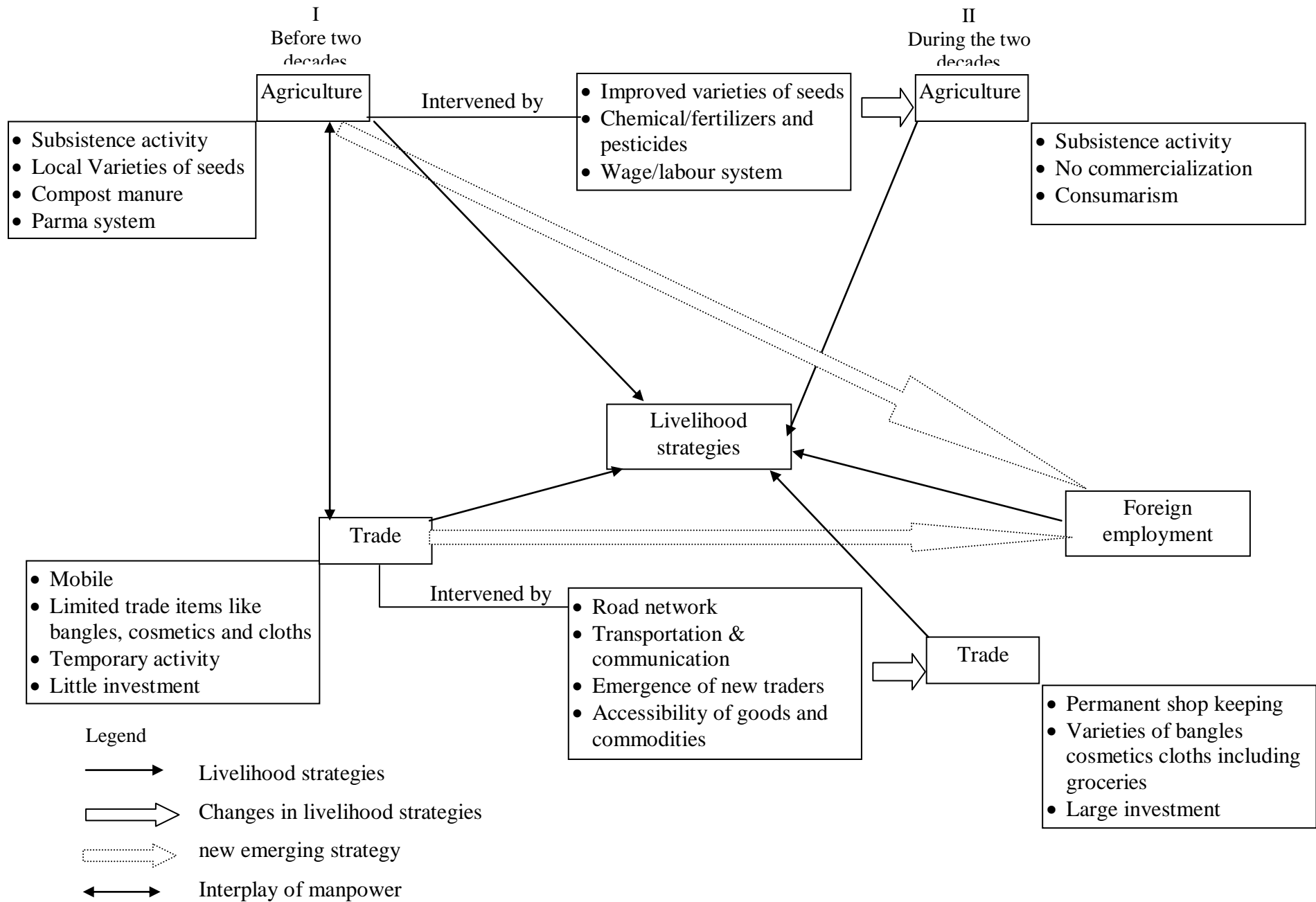


Figure 1: Conceptual Model for the Changes in Muslims' Livelihood Strategies

Agriculture and mobile trade were the livelihood strategies for most of the Muslim households before the past two decades. Agriculture was their primary occupation which was supplemented by mobile trade for the sustenance. It was a subsistence activity consisting of the cultivation of local varieties of seeds of various crops and vegetables. Compost manure was extensively in use. The labour organization of agriculture was predominantly *Parma* (reciprocal labour exchange). There was the linkage between agriculture and mobile trade as the same human power was utilized in both in most of the cases.

Trade was mobile since the Muslim traders used to visit different places along with their limited trade items like bangles, cosmetics and cloths. It was a temporary and seasonal activity. Most of the traders had invested little financial capital. It was mostly concerned with the provision of basic requirements.

The years after the political change of 2046 B.S. brought about several developments in rural areas throughout the country. Principally, infrastructural developments like extension and development of road transport network, communication and so on altered the mode of rural life to some extent. Modern technologies, commodities, services and even ideas entered into the villages. In agricultural sector, improved varieties of seeds, chemical fertilizers and pesticides begun to become available in abundance in villages. Despite the use of modern materials and methods in agriculture, it has been the least subject to change. Instead of commercialization of agriculture, agricultural production has declined thus resulting the increase in consumerism and market dependency for food supply than in the past. Human power started to shift from agriculture to other alternative activities. Subsistence- oriented agriculture since earlier has not changed even though there is the introduction/ intervention of development.

Likewise, the development of road transport network facilitated for the accessibility of the goods and commodities in villages. Local new traders other than the Muslims emerged in villages that also started to sell the trade items of Muslims. Muslims' mobile trade network slowly declined and they were forced to change their trade strategy. Permanent shop keeping in urban and urban oriented places has occupied the place of mobile trade. Although the mobile trade is oriented towards shop keeping, emphasis on trade items- bangles, cosmetics and cloths have remained same to a large extent.

Less interest of youths in agriculture and business, increasing household expenses and unstable socio-political development throughout the country have stimulated the foreign labour migration. Foreign employment has emerged as a new livelihood strategy for many households since the last decade. At present, the livelihood of Muslims comprising of agriculture, business and foreign employment have a different human power allocation. For many households the incomes from these occupations are intermingled for the survival.

1.7 Organization of the Study

The study has been divided into nine chapters. Chapter one introduces background, statement of the problem, objectives, rationale, theoretical and conceptual framework of the study. Chapter two discusses the relevant literature to the present study. Books and articles related to this study are reviewed. Chapter three presents the methodology adopted for the study in which various methods of data collection and analysis are described. Chapter four discusses the social and demographic aspects of the study area that contributes in analyzing the research problems. Chapters five, six, seven and eight present the research findings, interpretation and analysis of livelihood strategies of Muslims so as to meet the objectives of the study. Finally, chapter nine presents the conclusion of the study.

CHAPTER – TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

There have been some significant works carried out regarding the livelihoods of various caste/ ethnic groups of Nepal. How do the change in natural and socio- economic environment have resulted in different strategies of livelihood are adequately addressed by different scholars in their research based works.

Molnar (1981) identifies the economic strategies of the Kham Magars who inhabit the hill region south of the Dhaulagiri and Dolpo ranges, where several factors are acting that lead to the differences on their economic strategies, among which ecological factor is the determinant one. Applying ecological model, she studied four Kham Magar communities (Thabang, Lubang, Taka, and Maikot) and found that these Magars are adapted to mixed high altitude farming and pastoralism in varying degrees. Culturally, the four communities share common value system and speak the same dialect- Kham language. However, the available natural resources and harvesting strategies make differences. She finds that Taka and Maikot have a greater access to northern pasture land due to change in pasture land rights and charges for others. She analyzes the main constraints for adaptation of Kham Magar; access to pasture land, trade pattern, seasonal labour availability, cultural attitudes towards animal husbandry and education. These constraints have determined the livelihood adaptation of the four communities. Hence, her focal analysis is to identify how environmental phenomena are responsible for the development of economic strategies.

Stevens (1993) has been concerned especially with a cultural ecological analysis of Sherpa life and in particular with the central issue of how a people's historical subsistence strategies relate to the ecosystems within and from which they gain their sustenance. He explores the ways in which Sherpa land use and life styles reflect environmental perception and adaptation as well as other important factors such as cultural values and responses to outside political and economic conditions. He finds that diverse factors have involved in economic change, and that many changes in land use patterns and resource management institutions represent Sherpa responses to factors other than physical environmental conditions. These changes may be adaptive, but only in the broader sense of defining adaptation as change that maintains cultural and social values while adjusting

economic patterns to reflect new opportunities and constraints in the wider environment, which includes regional economic networks and political economy. In many respects Sherpas continue to maintain many basic features of their culture and social organization despite their increasing involvement in tourism and other changes in Khumbu life during the past forty years. Stevens further mentions that the Sherpas of Khumbu are a people of remarkable adaptability, ingenuity and persistence who thus far at least have been anything but another example of tragedy of the demise of a traditional people and their culture following the impact of tourism and other new and outside cultural, economic and political pressures. He highlights how the local economy at both the household and community levels, has been rooted in an abiding concern with the risk, and rewards of particular subsistence practices in the context of Khumbu ecology.

Fricke (1993) views most closely at the adaptive strategies employed by the people of Timling and shows how those strategies intersect with demographic and household processes. He views the patterns of behaviour by which people extract a living from their environments are movements that persist in broad outline for many years. He further mentions that change comes from a combination of intervening external events and process over which a population has no control and through the consequences of behaviours designed to work in a particular environment but which must paradoxically alter the very environment to which they are adapted. From the cultural ecological perspective, the intent of his study is to show how particular strategies of making a living have implications for household structure and the organization of the village. His concern is to explain how demographic processes determine the adaptive mechanism of households. He contends that the number of children in a household influences the diversification of the household economy.

MacFarlane (1976) believes that it is demographic fluctuations which underlie many of the social and economic changes in an area. He describes the long term changes which have occurred and the present stocks of land and other resources and analyzed the production and consumption patterns of Gurungs of Himalayan society. He examines the complex interrelations between social structure, fertility and mortality and their impact on economy.

Bishop (1990) presents the relationship of humans to the biota of their habitat and their modifications of their habitat. He examines the ways of people of the Karnali zone

traditionally have coped with the constraints on their ways of life and how their old methods are holding up today under new and more intense stresses. He has assessed the significance of economic, political and social forces that recently have changed the movement patterns of people. His study focused on the interrelationships of varied and limited natural resources in often harsh landscapes; the cultures and livelihood pursuits of varied ethnic groups; the articulation of economies through the movement of people, animals and goods; the response of the people to change-effecting forces; and the cultural and environmental constraints on these people that, in turn, affect their ability to cope with the increasing pressures on their limited energy and land resources and their often precarious ways of life.

Fürer- Haimendorf (1975) deals with the change in the conditions of the mountain dwellers on the Nepalese side of the border brought about by the political and economic upheavals/ developments throughout the region. He uncovers how the various ethnic groups reacted to the decline in trans Himalayan trade in different ways and how such communities as the Sherpas were able to develop alternative sources of income, while others abandoned their home villages and, moving to lower regions, adopted a new way of life. He writes that the economic developments taking place in Sherpa country can't be divorced from the current changes in social attitudes and he views that economic, social and political trends interlock and reinforce each other. He views Sherpas not only as agriculturalists, but also as traders, mountaineers and animal herders. They have changed their subsistence pattern by adopting more supportive strategies for their traditional agricultural systems.

Chhetri (2006) examines the changing livelihoods of the Jalari people in pokhara valley- in particular looking at how the both physical and social space of their interaction have changed over time as a consequence of changes in the total environment around them. He concludes that environmental changes and development have meant different things to different groups of people in terms of their access to resources and the resulting livelihood strategies. He argues that the wheel of 'development' as it spins, has sent a centripetal force towards some groups of people but a centrifugal force towards others. He further mentions that change in environments (i.e., physical/ natural and socio-cultural, political, and economic, etc.) have resulted in different responses from different groups of people.

Blaikie et al (1980) adapt the neo-Marxist approach to provide the basis for the analysis of political economy of Nepal. Their analysis tries to illuminate the dynamic and structure of a local and regional political economy within a national and international context. Their study attempts from an interdisciplinary perspective to combine local level analysis of change in the wider Nepali economy and society in order to describe and explain the situation of contemporary Nepal. The major conclusion they draw is that there have been some significant changes in the west- central Nepal, but these are either inadequate indigenous responses to the current crisis or exogenously generated changes which fails to alter the fundamental characteristics of underdevelopment, mask them and, in some cases, even strengthen them.

Dahal (1983) studies a village of eastern of Nepal and attempts to understand the interrelationship between population and resources. He analyzes the population size and growth, resource availability and changing patterns of adaptive strategies of individuals, households and also of community. He finds that despite population growth over time and grain deficit in the village, the people were moving towards prosperity not poverty. This happens mainly due to the alternative economic strategies adopted by the people in course of time.

Siddika (1993) discusses the historical background, population, and various social, cultural, religious and economic aspects of Muslims of Nepal. She mentions that the Muslims of Nepal, especially those living in the western hills have strong influence from other communities and are accommodating themselves accordingly despite they have their own traditions. She asserts on that the main occupations of Muslims of Nepal are business and farming. Those Muslims who are living in western hills, better known as *churaote*, have little land and support themselves by selling bangles while those of Terai regard farming as their main occupation and most of them are self-sufficient farmers, and very few are landless wage earning labourers.

Dastider (2007) studies the Nepalese Muslim minority group and tries to uncover their position amidst multiethnic and multicultural Nepal. She finds that Muslim religious minority group is in various forms of transitions. She presents the historical antecedents of Nepalese Muslims along with their mobilization and recognition. Regarding west hill Muslims, she mentions that the natives of western hill districts since five centuries, commonly known as *churaote*, initially invited as artillerists from Mughal India by the

local rulers, they eventually settled down in those hills as makers of agricultural implements, utensils and ornaments. She further writes that although agriculture remained their primary source of livelihood as all of them were granted lands by the local rulers, with the increase in their population and growing fragmentation of cultivable lands, bangle selling became a common profession among the Muslim farmers of the hills.

All the studies mentioned above explain the life ways of people with respect of the changing situations. This review of literatures helps to understand the research problems raised in this present study and the ideas generated from these literatures have been proceed with the research procedures. This study is primarily concerned on how the Muslims have earned their living and what factors have affected their economic life over time.

CHAPTER- THREE

METHODOLOGY

The fieldwork for this study was carried out in Muslim *Gaun* of Arghakhanchi district. These hill Muslims were the least studied, marginalized and distinct religious minority groups. The area in and around Muslim *Gaun* has witnessed a number of significant and influential social, political, cultural and economic changes particularly during the last two decades. The study was concerned to obtain a better picture on the Muslims' livelihood strategies; more specifically on persistence and changes and the factors operating in shaping their livelihood strategies.

The universe of the study comprised 144 households, i.e., all the households of Muslim *Gaun*. Out of this, 67 households were selected through random sampling method. The researcher's aim was to administer census and survey in 72 households, i.e., 50% of the universe, but the researcher could not find the people able to provide information in 5 households since these households' senior members were not at home at the time of fieldwork. The researcher's intention was to collect information on Muslims' livelihood of past and present that would allow a comparison over time.

3.1 Research Design

The orientation of this study is descriptive and analytical since it depicts and describes the characteristics of a situation of Muslims' livelihood and analyzes the facts related to research problems. The research design has incorporated quantitative and qualitative mix methods for data collection and analysis keeping in mind that such a mix method would allow to obtain a better picture of Muslims' livelihood.

3.2 Data Sources

The data required for the present study come from the fieldwork hence were primary data. Primary data collection procedure accumulated various aspects of livelihood.

3.3 Data Collection Methods

Integrative methods have been used to collect the data needed to address the issue of persistence and change in the livelihood strategies of Muslims. Field data methods

included household surveys, livelihood survey questionnaire, focus group discussion, observation and unstructured interview.

3.3.1 Household Survey

The census of 67 households was administered to obtain the data of present conditions. The data on demographic aspects like age and sex structure, household size and marital status; socio-economic aspects like educational status, occupational status and residential status were collected through household survey. In fact, household survey presents the real picture of the study site. These data were required for interpreting and analyzing how the Muslims' earn livelihood through the mobilization of human, social and economic capitals.

3.3.2 Livelihood Survey Questionnaire

Structured questionnaires were administered through interviews with respondents to obtain the various economic activities of Muslims. The researcher oriented to interview with household head and/ or senior member of the sample household to ensure the reliability of information. To some extent livelihood strategies of past were also collected through this method.

3.3.3 Focus Group Discussion

Through this method oral histories on settlement, past trend of the agriculture and trade were collected. Based on the information provided by respondents of age 45 and above, the researcher reconstructed their history for chronological comparison of their livelihood. It was the most important method to achieve the data on past since there was the lack of written of document regarding these Muslims.

3.3.4 Observation

Non participatory observation method was used to obtain qualitative information on Muslims' overall environment and its influence on their livelihood.

3.3.5 Unstructured Interviews

Unstructured interviews with school and Madarasa teachers, elderly people and people involved in business and foreign employment were taken to obtain the necessary data that were significant to answer the research questions.

3.4 Data Analysis and Presentation

The livelihood strategies of Muslims were examined at various levels- individual level, household level, community level and by sex and age. The qualitative data based on focus group discussion, observation and unstructured interviews were used to substantiate the quantitative analyses. Ungrouped data were interpreted where necessary. The facts and figures have been utilized in the justification of the points being made.

3.5 Limitation

As far as possible, every effort was made to obtain reliable facts and figures. But, the possibility of errors on accumulating these cannot be denied. The study was heavily dependent on the facts and figures provided by respondents and the researcher's personal observation. The dates mentioned in the study were the respondents' recall of the past phenomena. The study did not incorporate the interaction of Muslims and non-Muslims minutely. The study is limited in dealing that the economic aspect of Muslims' life in asserting that this is the aspect that concerns their very survival, and, as such, governs the nature of life in other aspects too.

CHAPTER – FOUR

SOCIAL AND DEMOGRAPHIC ASPECTS

4.1 The Social Setting

The Muslim *Gaun*, the focal village of this study is located in eastern part of Arghakhanchi district. It consists of two densely populated clusters- Arbun and Myaltuppa of Balkot and Chidika VDCs respectively. These clusters lie on either sides of the motarable road that connects Ridi bazaar with Sandhikharka: district's headquarter and Tamghas of Gulmi via Balkot. The settlement is tightly clustered as their houses are very closely constructed. The houses display considerable similarity in design and technique of construction. Most of the houses are two storied with the mud plastered stone walls and steeply pitched roofs of tin and slate. The *Goths* (animals' sheds) are separately constructed near the houses. Their settlement is in plain area with the exception of few which are in slightly slope area. The village boundaries are clearly demarcated from non-Muslims settlement, i.e., the Muslims households are not intermingled with the non-Muslims' settlement. The Muslims have their own *padhero* (drinking water source) and few water taps for drinking water supply. A small forest area lying in Arbun is utilized by only Muslims as it is under the ownership of Muslim community but another community forest lying near Myaltuppa is utilized by both Muslims and non-Muslims.

The Muslims, locally called *Miya* are treated as untouchable caste group by non-Muslims. They are not allowed to enter into the houses of non-Muslims. They have their own distinct religious and cultural institutions. There are two main *Pakki* (made up of brick, cement, iron, etc.) *Masjids*, one each in Arbun and Myaltuppa, constructed in the recent past bearing all the expenses by Muslims themselves. The Muslims gather in *Masjid* for worshipping during their festivals, and for praying and reading *Namaj*. The *Masjids* are managed by a management committee. *Mulvi Maulana*: a chief responsible person performs important role in teaching Islam rules and way of life, and praying. The Muslims worship and celebrate their religious festivals like *Id*, *Bakar Id*, *Mohurram*, etc, collectively. The *kavrasthans* (burial places) are located within their own communal land near the settlement area. There are two *Imambada* (place where religious dance- *Haidosh* is performed) one each in Arbun and Myaltuppa.

For centuries these Muslims have remained untouched from outside influences, even from Islamic influences. They got acculturated with the Hindu milieu to a considerable extent. It is said that in the past (about two hundred years ago) the Muslims used to put *Tika* and celebrate festivals like *Dashain*, *Tihar*, etc. In the recent years, though they do not celebrate these festivals, they indulge in eating and entertainment activities. These Muslims are proficient in local dialect- Nepali, which has become their mother tongue; however, some males who have got *Madarasa* education speak broken Urdu among themselves. These Muslims also speak *Parasi* language which is not so much different from Nepali. According to them this language was developed by themselves after their arrival in western hills as a code language for their privacy. In their dress, food habit, and certain local customs these Muslims are almost indistinguishable from their Hindu neighbors. But, adult males can be easily distinguished by their long beard and no moustache. Despite the affinity and socio-cultural assimilation with neighboring non-Muslims, these Muslims have distinct social and cultural traditions.

4.2 Settlement History

“At the end of seventeenth century, *chaubise* Rajas who were ruling in the western hills of Nepal invite few dozens of Muslims from India for providing training in the use of fire arms to the soldiers. Besides these, other group of Muslims entered into the western hills as independent traders of bangles, glass beads, and leather goods; later called *Churaotes*: bangle sellers” (Bista: 1976). However, the most significant wave of Muslims are said to have settled in the western hills in the aftermath of Britisher’s crushing of 1857 Mutiny in India (Shamima: 1993 and Dastider: 2007).

These Muslims are the descendents of Indian migrants but disagree with this history of their arrival in this area and claim that the Muslims’ settlement in this area is as old as Hindu settlement. They further argue that when, how and why the Hindus fled from India and arrived here, for the same reason Muslims too arrived. It is believed that 10-12 households settled on the top of then called Arbun Danda (now called Chhatrathan). But most of their landholdings were on Lakurikharka; at a distance of twenty minutes walk from Arbun Danda, where they also held their Goths. In Arbun Danda they established *Chura Bhatti* (bangle production factory) and involved in bangle selling but their priority was on farming. With the increase in their family size, the scarcity of drinking water and firewood, and inconvenience for farming they shifted from Arbun Danda to Lakhurikharka (later named as Arbun). Later some families shifted to Myaltuppa, near

Arbun. Some families migrated from this Muslim *Gaun* to other hill districts- Gulmi, Palpa and Baglung, Terai districts- mostly Kapilvastu and Rupandehi, and even Assam of India during the last hundred years.

4.3 Demographic Profile

The Muslim households in Muslim *Gaun* are 144- of which 93 are in Arbun and 51 are in Myaltuppa, consisting of total population 1411* (736 in Arbun and 675 in Myaltuppa). The population of Muslims in 67 households sampled for the study at the time of field survey (September/October-2008) was 738 with an average household size of eleven persons which is double of the national average household size-5.4. Table 1 shows the distribution of households and population by size of households.

Table 1: Distribution of Households and Population by Size of Households, 2008

| Household Size | No. of Households | Total Individuals in Hhs. |
|----------------|-------------------|---------------------------|
| 52 | 1 (1.5) | 52 (7.0) |
| 25 | 1 (1.5) | 25 (3.4) |
| 22 | 1(1.5) | 22(3.0) |
| 19 | 3 (4.5) | 57(7.7) |
| 18 | 2 (3.0) | 36(4.9) |
| 16 | 4(6.0) | 64(8.7) |
| 15 | 1(1.5) | 15 (2.0) |
| 14 | 9 (13.0) | 126 (17.0) |
| 13 | 3 (4.5) | 39 (5.3) |
| 12 | 2 (3.0) | 24 (3.3) |
| 11 | 2 (3.0) | 22 (3.0) |
| 10 | 8 (12.0) | 80 (10.9) |
| 9 | 3 (4.5) | 27 (3.7) |
| 8 | 6 (9.0) | 48 (6.5) |
| 7 | 5 (7.5) | 35 (4.7) |
| 6 | 1 (1.5) | 6 (0.8) |
| 5 | 6 (9.0) | 30 (4.0) |
| 4 | 6 (9.0) | 24 (3.3) |
| 3 | 1 (1.5) | 3 (0.4) |
| 2 | 1 (1.5) | 2 (0.3) |
| 1 | 1 (1.5) | 1 (0.1) |
| Total | 67 (100) | 738 (100) |

Source: Field Survey, 2008.

Figures in the brackets indicate percentages.

*Notes: Total number of households and population was obtained from the School and Madarasa Teachers. They collected this data for their own purpose. This has made convenience to divide the expenses and stocks among the households in their religious ceremonies.

The household size ranges from one to fifty two indicating that there is only one household with a single person and one with 52 persons. Majority of the households have 10 or more individuals living together. For instance, 76% of the households constitute more than six persons where as 24% of the households constitute one to six persons. Most of the households reflect their joint type. The residential status of some persons of the household is somewhere else (out from the house) for different purposes. The survey data reveal that 40% of the total households of the Muslims are larger than the average household size. In many households, there is a co-residence of more than one married brothers, their wives and children, parents or widowed father or mother and other never married brothers and sisters. Informants insist that in only rare instances a son is separated from the main household when he becomes financially strong and independent since household has little property to be partitioned.

Table 2: Age and Sex Structure of the Muslim Population under Study, 2008.

| Age Group | Male | Female | Total |
|------------------|-------------|---------------|--------------|
| 0- 4 | 58 (7.9) | 49 (6.6) | 107 (14.4) |
| 5- 9 | 46 (6.2) | 62 (8.4) | 108 (14.6) |
| 10- 14 | 43 (5.8) | 60 (8.1) | 103 (13.9) |
| 15- 19 | 35 (4.7) | 43 (5.8) | 78 (10.5) |
| 20- 24 | 35 (4.7) | 42 (5.7) | 77 (10.4) |
| 25- 29 | 29 (3.9) | 30 (4.1) | 59 (7.9) |
| 30- 34 | 26 (3.5) | 21 (2.9) | 47 (6.3) |
| 35- 39 | 18 (2.4) | 14 (1.9) | 32 (4.3) |
| 40- 44 | 10 (1.4) | 8 (1.1) | 18 (2.4) |
| 45- 49 | 14 (1.9) | 19 (2.6) | 33 (4.4) |
| 50- 54 | 10 (1.4) | 12 (1.7) | 22 (3.1) |
| 55- 59 | 8 (1.1) | 7 (0.9) | 15 (2.0) |
| 60- 64 | 12 (1.7) | 7 (0.9) | 19 (2.5) |
| 65+ | 11 (1.5) | 9 (1.2) | 20 (2.7) |
| Total | 355 (48.1) | 383 (51.9) | 738(100) |

Source: Field Survey, 2008.

As per the data on age structure, it is evident that the majority of the Muslim population (i.e. 53.4% of the total) was less than twenty years of age at the time of field survey. The highest proportion of the population belongs to the age group 0- 4, 5- 9, and 10- 14 years

comprising of 14.4%, 14.6% and 13.9% respectively. This indicates that the Muslims must have high fertility rate. The population of females exceeds by 3.8% with more than half of the total population. The overall sex ratio is 92.7, i.e. about 93 males per 100 females. But the sex ratio fluctuates in different age groups. The elderly population of Muslims of age 60 and above is 5.2% and the children population below the age of 15 is 42.9%. This is indicative of the higher dependent population comprising of 48.1%. The dependency ratio is 93.7 which mean that 100 economically active populations have to support itself and about 94 other dependent populations. The dependency ratio is high mainly because of higher number of children. The dependency ratio has direct bearing on the livelihood status. At the time of research, the male and female population of age 60 and above was 3.2% and 2.1%. It implies that the life expectancy of Muslim males is slightly more than females.

Marriage is almost alike a universal phenomena in Muslim *Gaun*. The Muslim law of marriage has no specific religious ceremony and does not require any religious sites. Muslim individuals can marry with almost any other Muslim of opposite sex except prohibited one, i.e., the partners unacceptable are those who born from the same mother.

Table 3 : Marital Status by Sex and Age group for Muslims under Study, 2008

| Age Group | Never Married | | Currently Married | | Widowed/divorced | |
|-----------|---------------|--------|-------------------|--------|------------------|--------|
| | Male | Female | Male | Female | Male | Female |
| 15- 19 | 30 | 29 | 5 | 14 | - | - |
| 20- 24 | 9 | 6 | 26 | 36 | - | - |
| 25- 29 | 3 | - | 26 | 29 | - | 1 |
| 30- 34 | 1 | - | 25 | 20 | - | 1 |
| 35- 39 | - | - | 18 | 14 | - | - |
| 40+ | - | - | 56 | 43 | 9 | 19 |
| Total | 43 | 35 | 156 | 156 | 9 | 21 |

Source: Field Survey, 2008

The data on Table 3 show that there were a total of 156 currently married couples on 67 households under study. In the age group 15- 19 only 5 males were reported to be currently married while the corresponding figure for females was 14. In the same age

group the number of never married males and females was nearly equal. In the age group 20- 24, 26 males and 36 females were currently married whereas the number of never married males and females were 9 and 6. It indicates that marriage of boys and girls generally occurred when they reach the age of 15- 25 but not below the age of 15. It is seen that marriage of girls occurred earlier than boys. Liberty is allowed for boys and girls who have reached the age of puberty. Only 5 males were found never married in the age group 25- 29 while never married females were not found in the same age group. The number of widowed males and females were 9 and 19 respectively. All the widowed males and 17 females were above the age of 40 years. One each widowed woman was found in the age group 25- 29 and 30- 34. According to the Muslim law a widow or divorcee may marry whoever he/ she wishes. In this Muslim *Gaun* this system was not practiced much by women but men were found practicing remarriage. Some cases of polygamy were also found in Muslim village.

4.4 Educational Conditions

In Muslim *Gaun* very few are educated though it is said in Muslim society that “Seek knowledge from the cradle to grave”. This is limited only in saying. As a result, their economic and social progress is hampered. There are two *Madarasas*, poorly maintained due to financial problems where Islam education in Urdu language is given. The provision of such education is to strengthen the Islam religion. Two teachers from the same community specialized in Urdu are appointed. At present, the Muslim students of both the sexes who go to school also join *Madarasa* to get their religious education. One *Madarasa* is registered in District Education Office. Most of the Islamic literatures are available in Urdu. So, they prefer to give the basic education to their children through Urdu medium.

Table 4: Educational Status by Age- group and Sex among Muslims under Study, 2008.

| Age group | Illiterate | | Literate | | Primary | | Lower Secondary | | Secondary | | Higher Level | | Total | |
|-----------|------------|----|----------|----|---------|-----|-----------------|----|-----------|----|--------------|---|-------|-----|
| | M | F | M | F | M | F | M | F | M | F | M | F | M | F |
| 5- 14 | 1 | 6 | - | - | 65 | 84 | 23 | 32 | - | - | - | - | 89 | 122 |
| 15- 29 | 1 | 11 | 4 | 15 | 13 | 22 | 40 | 29 | 34 | 31 | 7 | 7 | 99 | 115 |
| 30- 44 | 3 | 28 | 8 | 8 | 10 | 5 | 18 | 2 | 13 | - | 2 | - | 54 | 43 |
| 45+ | 18 | 51 | 17 | 2 | 7 | 1 | 9 | - | 3 | - | 1 | - | 55 | 54 |
| Total | 23 | 96 | 29 | 25 | 95 | 112 | 90 | 63 | 50 | 31 | 10 | 7 | 297 | 334 |

Source: Field Survey, 2008.

Of the 188 males between the ages of 5 and 29 years, only 1.1% is reported to be illiterate and 2.1% are literate; 41.5% have got primary level education, 33.1% have lower secondary, 18.1% have secondary and only 3.7% have got higher level of education. Of the males 109 of age above 30, 19.2% are illiterate and 22.9% are literate; 15.6% have got primary, 24.8% have got lower secondary, 14.7% have got secondary and 2.8% have got higher level of education. In case of females, females below 30 years are better educated than the rest. This is the evidence for that the females' access to school education opened up widely since the last three decades. It can be related to the growing awareness in Muslims regarding the importance of education in public sphere. Out of the 237 females of age between 5 and 29, 7.1% are illiterate and 6.3% are literate where as 45.5% have attained primary, 25.7% have lower secondary, 13% have secondary and 2.9% have attained higher level of education. The greater incidence of female illiteracy is seen above the age of 30 years. For instance, of the 97 females, 81.5% are found to be illiterate. Only 10.3% of females are literate, 6.1% have attained primary level education, and 2.1% have attained lower secondary level of education. In this age group no females have attained secondary and higher level of education.

The educational status according to the different age group implies that the trend of joining the school in the recent years has considerably increased than in the past. But most of the Muslim students drop out of school, and do not complete school level

education. The reason for this, they say, is poor economy. The total number of Muslims who have passed SLC is 33- of which 21 are males and 12 are females. Most of them have passed SLC in the recent years. 17 individuals have got/ are getting the higher education. Among them 10 are male and 7 are female. Two males have completed intermediate level, 2 have completed CMA, 4 are studying in higher secondary level education, and 1 each is pursuing Masters and CMA. Only one female is pursuing bachelor level while six are studying in higher secondary level. Most of those who are studying in secondary and higher secondary level are in the city/ towns with their parents or relatives settled there for business.

The involvement of Muslims in government jobs/ services is negligible. Only 3 individuals are reported to be involved in government service. Two males who have passed SLC are engaged in primary schools each in capacity of head masters and one male who have passed CMA is a sub- health post in-charge. Only one female is found to be engaged in teaching primary school in the capacity of temporary children education teacher.

CHAPTER- FIVE

MUSLIMS' LIVELIHOOD STRATEGIES

There were two distinct economic activities in which the livelihood of Muslims relied in the past. Undoubtedly agriculture was the predominant economic activity because most of the households were engaged in its various forms. But, agriculture has never fulfilled the undisputed role of being the primary economic activity. The other supplementary economic activity was mobile trade, i.e., selling bangles, cosmetics and cloths by visiting different places. Livelihood strategies of people rely on the context or environment in which households work to make a livelihood. As the context or environment is dynamic, the strategies a household adopts can not remain static. Extension and development of road transport network, expansion of markets and availability of goods and commodities, introduction of communication facilities, and other infrastructural developments in the rural areas have led Muslims to change their livelihood strategies. Traditional economic activities started to loose their strength as the means of livelihood. The mobile trade became outdated and incompatible with the new market situation. When a change has been perceived in the economic structures, the households have reacted and adjusted to the new context.

The livelihood strategies and subsequent livelihood outcomes of Muslims, at present, are greatly dependent on farm and non-farm activities. Farm activities include crop production and livestock raising for household consumption. Non-farm activities refer to non-agricultural sources of earning a livelihood. In case of these hill Muslims, non-farm activities include trade and foreign labour migration. It is obvious that there are not so much off-farm income generating opportunities in and around Muslim *Gaun* due to lack of commercialization of agriculture and other natural resource based production. One interesting feature of these Muslims is that they do not prefer to be involved in wage labour either in agricultural or non-agricultural sector in village or elsewhere within a country. Rather than relying on just one occupation, most of the Muslim households survive by adopting different occupations. This means that diversification in occupation has the greater contribution in the standard of living of the household.

Diversification is the creation of diversity as an ongoing social and economic process, reflecting factors of both pressure and opportunities that cause families to adopt

increasingly intricate and diverse livelihood strategies (Ellis: 2000). Various forces to village economy have generated changes in livelihood patterns. These forces are demographic features of household including family size, age and sex, and economic structures including land ownership, access to resources and services, market interaction and development activities. The relations among these forces have set the boundaries of possible income generating activities in which a household has engaged. Engagement of household members in diverse portfolio of income generating activities is in response to financial vulnerability.

Table 5 : Distribution of Households by Livelihood Strategies, 2008

| Livelihood Strategies | No. of Households |
|---|--------------------------|
| Agriculture | 4 (6.0) |
| Trade | 5 (7.4) |
| Agriculture and Trade | 23(34.3) |
| Agriculture and Foreign Employment | 19 (28.4) |
| Agriculture, Trade and Foreign Employment | 16(23.9) |
| Total | 67(100.0) |

Source: Field Survey, 2008

Figures in the brackets are Percentages.

Table 5 displays the livelihood portfolio of Muslim households. Proportions of income generated from the different components of livelihood are not available to compare their contribution for sustenance of household. But, it is evident that for majority of the households (i.e., for about 87% of the households), income from both farm and non-farm activities have intermingled. It is appropriate to mention here that agriculture for most of the households is of secondary importance though the Muslims regard it as their primary occupation. Hence, non-farm income which is generated externally, i.e., away from home is significant for household sustenance. In other words, it can be said that remittances accounted for a substantial proportion of household income. The households with comparatively large size are found to allocate human power in multiple income sources. Only about 13% of the households are reported to be in single income source, of which 6% in agriculture and 7% in trade. It may be due to the small size of household and in turn little household consumption requirements or sufficiency from particular occupation. The households engaged in only trade have either very little land or have given to share or rent cropping.

For about 34% of the households, trade comprises the main source of cash income required for household expenses whereas for about 28% of the households remittances obtained from foreign employment is the primary source of livelihood. About 24% of the households are involved in agriculture, trade and foreign employment. For these households too, remittances constitute prior place amongst others. The household male member(s) involved in trade in different places need to support the survival of the members (i.e., wife, children, and in some cases brothers, sisters or others) who stay with them and those who stay at home. So, the amount sent to home may be small. But, the member(s) who go for foreign employment send remittances to home since their dependents stay at home.

At present, majority of the households have been keeping agriculture aside in the pursuit of non-farm activities. This is not a question of Muslim households moving from farm activities to non-farm activities rather, it is a dynamic and inevitable process in which they combine activities to meet their various needs over time. This trend is manifested by the living and working of different members of the household in different places for long time. So, migration of Muslims to engage in non-farm activities in the non-rural economy is substantial. The migrants maintain a flow of remittances to their families, although the proportion of income sent and its frequency display variation across individual migrants.

Table 6: Distribution of Economically Active Population By Age, Sex and Residential Status, 2008

| Age Group | Residential Status | | | |
|-----------|--------------------|------------|------------|-----------|
| | Home | | Away | |
| | Male | Female | Male | Female |
| 15- 29 | 27 (7.0) | 66 (17.3) | 72 (18.9) | 49 (12.9) |
| 30- 44 | 15 (3.9) | 25 (6.6) | 39 (10.3) | 18 (4.7) |
| 45- 59 | 23 (6.0) | 31 (8.2) | 9 (2.4) | 7 (1.8) |
| Total | 65 (16.9) | 122 (32.1) | 120 (31.6) | 74 (19.4) |

Source: Field Survey, 2008

Figures in the brackets are percentages.

The economically active population of Muslims is found to be dispersed for earning livelihood. The data on above table show that there is an overwhelming proportion of economically active population living and working away from home. Of the total of 381

economically active population, 49% is at home- of which 16.9% men and 32.1% women, and 51% is away from home- of which 31.6% men and 19.4% women.

The mobility of men is higher as compare to women. There is a clear demarcation of works according to sex. In Muslim society, men have full responsibilities for the maintenance of their family, while women have no or very little financial responsibilities. This could be the reason why mobility of men is greater. The percentage of women living at home implies that they are more involved in agriculture and domestic works than in other cash income generating economic activities. But, this does not mean that women living away from home independently operate their income generating activities. They are merely treated as assistants and dependents to their husbands, sons or other male members of family. Only a few literate women are involved in trade bearing all responsibilities. Not all the economically active population is involved in income earning activities. In few instances the population below 15 years of age is also involved in economic activities while the population above 60 years of age engaged in economic activities is significant.

It is the household that mobilizes human resource for migration and in turn is the recipient of the remittances. The mobility of Muslim population has crucial role for sustenance of family mainly because of limited resources and economic opportunities in the villages. Hence, the mobility of population for supporting and earning livelihood is of prime concern at present which was also a feature of past economy but to a lesser degree. The Muslims' mobility for earning livelihood includes long term migration within country and foreign labour migration.

The details of Muslims' livelihood strategies are presented and analyzed in the succeeding chapters.

CHAPTER- SIX

VILLAGE ECONOMY: AGRICULTURE

The majority of Muslim population depends upon agriculture for a livelihood. The subsistence strategies of Muslims in the study area constitute of multiple production systems. There is an irrigated field (*Khet*) production system involving rice cultivation twice a year by some households and rice and wheat cultivation by others. The rain-fed field (*Bari*) production system emphasizes different crops cultivation like maize, wheat, mustard, potato, beans, etc. Some households make use of a number of these different production systems while others confine their subsistence strategy to the use of single production system. This option is often influenced by the size and type of land they own. Each household reaches its own decision about the varieties of crops it prefers to plant on its land.

The vast bulk of production in agriculture, from the very beginning was undertaken by households whose primary objective was to provide food for their own consumption and seed for the next year rather than to produce a marketable surplus. The agricultural production is not adequate to keep pace with population increase in this Muslim *gaun*. Due to increasing pressure of population and small size of most farm lands, income from agricultural production is often insufficient to maintain the household. For this reason most of the households are found to depend on diverse portfolio of activities and income sources amongst which trade and selling labor in India and Gulf countries are most common. The agro-economy of the Muslim is based on mixed farming and to a lesser degree, livestock raising. Agricultural techniques and farming practices are fairly simple. Human and animal powers are used for ploughing, transplanting, weeding and harvesting of crops. This is the kind of agro-economy which traditionally was, and to large extent still is, prevalent in Muslim *gaun*. Even so, slight changes in agricultural processes and practices are experienced.

6.1 Land

Land, one of the basic material elements of production in agriculture, occupies a progressively dominant place in the overall production process. Every household in the Muslim *gaun* owns some land, mostly ancestral, even if it is very little. Most of their land,

Pakho (*Bari and Kharyan/Butyan together*) covers the surrounding area of their settlement, whereas irrigated lands (*Khet*) are scattered and situated at some distance from homestead sites. Some households have plain *Bari* but others have slope *Bari*. According to an elderly person, since the early days of Muslim settlement in this area, the Muslim people enjoyed occupancy and inheritable rights of land. They made direct payment of their land tax to the *Thum Thumka Raja* (petty hill state) and then to the central state after unification. A system of state-landlordism, known as *Raiker* prevailed in this area. Their lands were registered in Baglung. For the first time, Muslims got the receipt for land tax payment in 1926 B.S. from Baglung *Mal Adda* (revenue collection center). Since about 1980 B.S. they started to pay land tax in Gulmi *Adda* as this area was a part of Gulmi district. After the separation of this area from Gulmi and included in Arghakhanchi district since 2024 B.S., the Muslims begun to pay their land tax in Arghakhanchi district.

The distribution of arable land relative to the population expresses the population pressure on land. *Pakho* dominates larger size in comparison to *Khet*. The size of land owned by 67 households according to land type is shown in table 4.

Table 7: Distribution of Total land owned by Households under study by land type.

| Land Type | Land Size (ropani) |
|-----------------------|--------------------|
| <i>Khet</i> | 215 (19.30) |
| <i>Bari</i> | 480 (43.09) |
| <i>Kharyan/butyan</i> | 419 (37.61) |
| Total | 1114 (100) |

Source: Field Survey, 2008.

Figures in brackets are percentages.

Out of total land owned by sample households, 19.30% is *Khet*, 43.09% is *Bari* and 37.61% is *Kharyan/Butyan*. The total arable land is only 62.39% on which the households rely for producing crops and vegetables. The average arable land per household is 10.37 *ropani* (1.49%). But the households vary in the profile of land they own.

Table 8: Distribution of Households by Size and Type of land holding, 2008.

| Landholding Size (<i>Ropani</i>) | Households by Land Type | | |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------|-----------------------|
| | <i>Khet</i> | <i>Bari</i> | <i>Kharyan/butyán</i> |
| 0 | 35 (52.24) | - | 14 (20.90) |
| 0.1- 4.9 | 14 (20.90) | 30 (44.78) | 27 (40.30) |
| 5- 9.9 | 12 (17.91) | 25 (37.31) | 18 (26.87) |
| 10+ | 6 (8.95) | 12 (17.91) | 8 (11.93) |

Source: Field Survey, 2008

Figures in brackets are percentages.

Out of the 67 households surveyed for the study, 52.24% do not own irrigated field- *Khet*. 20.90% of households own less than 5 *ropani*, 17.91% own between 5 to 10 *ropani* and 8.95% own more than 10 *ropani* of *Khet*. The range of ownership of *Khet* is between less than one *ropani* to 27 *ropani*. Almost all of the households own *Bari*, although land size tends to be quite small. About 45% households own less than 5 *ropani*, 37.31% own between 5 to 10 *ropani* and 17.91% own more than 10 *ropani* of *Bari*. The range of ownership of *Bari* lies between less than one *ropani* to 40 *ropani*. About 79% households own some *Kharyan/Butyan* and the rest 20.89% households do not own it.

Distribution of land by size and type of land indicates whether the access to land is equitable or not. Predominance of small sized holdings and few comparatively large sized holdings is an indication of skewed distribution and access to land. Smaller holdings have inadequacy of land resource for operating farming activities at an economically efficient and viable level. Fragmentation into a number of small plots, except in some households, is the common feature of most of the land ownership. The availability of *Khet* the land that can be irrigated is limited. The households have differential access to the land determined by ancestral land inheritance and their economic strength to some extent.

Purchasing and selling of land occurs in a lesser degree. When the household needs cash amount and if there is not any other source of obtaining it, selling of land is an easy way for solving economic crisis. The purchasing of land occurs mostly when their next door neighbors leave the village to settle somewhere else. Mostly, purchasing and selling of

land is confined within the Muslim community. The numbers of households which purchased and sold the land during the past two decades are shown in Table 6.

Table 9: Distribution of households which purchased and sold the land during the past two decades.

| Land type | No. of Households | |
|--------------|-------------------|-----------|
| | Sold | Purchased |
| <i>Khet</i> | 8 | 12 |
| <i>Pakho</i> | 10 | 7 |
| Total | 18 | 19 |

Source: Field Survey, 2008

Out of the total households surveyed, Only 18 households purchased the land- 8 households purchased the *Khet* and 12 households purchased *Pakho*, where as 19 households sold their land- 12 households sold *Khet* and 7 households sold *Pakho*. According to the informants, the trend of purchasing and selling of land before two decades ago was rare, which got accelerated after 2046 B.S. After this few households migrated to settle somewhere else by selling their property to adopt new livelihood strategies.

There is the continuation of the practice of land giving or taking for *Adhiya* (share-cropping) and *Kut* (rent-cropping) from the past to present, but in a declining order. Only 11 households are involved in share and rent cropping at present.

5.2 Forest Use and Livestock Raising

No systematic information regarding the forest resources and livestock raised by households are available to make chronological comparison. Nevertheless, an elderly person recalls that some 60 to 70 years ago the Muslims raised considerable number of milch buffaloes and cows as well as oxen and goats than they do at present. There were small and scattered but dense forests on the north-eastern and south-western regions of the settlement. But with the increasing settlements forest shrinkage started and at present very little forest area is preserved. There was no long term scarcity of grass, fodder, firewood, dried leaves, etc, earlier. They obtained these things either from private forests or from their common forests. A small forest area registered in 1972 B.S. in Baglung

under the ownership of Muslim community is existing today also. This forest, from then is utilized and managed by the Muslims only.

Livestock raising, since the past was not for commercial purpose rather just for household consumption. Smaller proportion of household capital is generated from livestock. As the crop productivity and resources are decreasing, the importance of livestock in livelihood pursuits is also decreasing. The number of livestock owned by a household is subject to considerable fluctuation from year to year, and even between seasons. The livestock kept by Muslims of this area are principally buffaloes, oxen, goats and chickens. These livestock are used as a source of manure for fertilizer, as a source of energy yielding foods- milk, ghee, meat, etc, and as a source of power for traction.

Table 10: Distribution of Households by Number and Type of Livestock owned 2008*

| No of Life stocks | Households by livestock type | | | |
|-------------------|------------------------------|------|------|-------|
| | Buffaloes | Cows | Oxen | Goats |
| 1 | 27 | 2 | 1 | 9 |
| 2 | 15 | - | 16 | 16 |
| 3 | 7 | - | 1 | 8 |
| 4+ | - | - | - | 12 |
| Total | 49 | 2 | 18 | 45 |

Source: Field Survey, 2008

*A number of households keep more than one type of livestock.

The data in Table 10 show status of the livestock raising activities in Muslim *Gaun*. The animals and animal products are no longer produced locally, but are rather imported from outside. Out of 67 households at the time of research, 27 households have kept one buffalo, 15 households have kept two buffaloes and 7 households have kept 3 buffaloes. Only two households have kept one cow each and 18 households have kept the oxen. Raising goats carry cultural significance among Muslims as he goats are needed for sacrifice in their festival- *Bakar Id*. Only 45 households have kept goats in varying numbers- 9, 16, 8, and 12 households have kept one, two, three and four or more goats respectively. These data imply that Muslims do not give more preferences to ghee, milk, etc, because of which the number of cows and buffaloes they hold seems to be small. But

the main reason for this is the unavailability of grass, fodder, etc, needed for livestock raising, high cost of fodder and food, as well as the holding of small farm lands, and little access to forest and pasture land. Hence, Muslims livestock raising patterns are shaped by land ownership, cultural values and customs of forest and pasture use.

None of the households owned large number of animals to form a herd traditionally and also presently. Ten households have not kept any livestock whereas 6 households have kept goats and 2 households have kept only cows and oxen. The oxen are not their home grown animals but are purchased from outside.

Not only the forest resources are interwoven with farming and livestock raising but also make an essential contribution to the provision of fuels. Forty four households are not self-sufficient for fuel supply. They need to purchase the firewood from neighboring settlements. Not all the households which have raised livestock are self-sufficient for grass and fodder. Twenty seven households purchase fodder, straw, etc needed for livestock. The common forest opens up once in a year to collect only the leaf-litter and dried firewood. But they do not depend upon common forest for fodder and firewood.

5.3 Cropping Pattern and Extent of Production

The principal crops cultivated by Muslims in this area are rice, maize, wheat, and mustard. Rice is cultivated in *Khet* (irrigated terraces) along the stream sides and gorges. During the second half of June, prior to the commencement of the monsoon rains, seed-beds are ploughed, leveled, fertilized with green leaves, inundated and then seeded. About four weeks later, seedlings are transplanted into the terraces, which have in the meanwhile been prepared as were the seed-beds. The seedlings are transplanted from the seed-beds to the rest of the fields by a team of women (*Khetari*) while the men continue to prepare the fields which is about to be planted. During September, the fields are weeded, which is also performed by *Khetari*. Finally it is harvested in November by the members of both sexes. Among the households which own *Khet*, some cultivate rice twice a year while others cultivate wheat in winter. The second planting of rice is carried out in March.

Maize is the chief crop grown in *Bari* (dry fields). The fields are first fertilized with compost manure and then ploughed into the soil. In April, with the onset of brief and intermittent spring rains, the maize seeds along with beans, soybeans, and pumpkin in

small quantity are sowed. After a month, maize *Bari* is weeded and again after another month of first weeding, weeding is repeated. The maize is ready for harvesting in late August or early September. Mustard and wheat are cultivated in the same fields. Mustard seeds are sowed in September along with peas and grams, where as wheat is sowed in the field containing some moisture in late November or early December.

Majority of the Muslim households have never been self-sufficient in producing food grains. They do not produce enough food to meet their annual food needs, i.e. there is a substantial food deficit. The degree to which each household produces its food grains varies considerably, depending upon the size and quality of land. It is thus useful to classify the households into categories on the basis of sufficiency level of food production. Two major categories of households are distinguished: those which produce sufficient food for the whole year and those which do not produce sufficient food. The last category has the largest number of households.

Table 11: Distribution of Households according to food self-sufficiency, 2008

| Food self-sufficiency | No. of Households |
|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 0 – 3 months | 10 (14.93) |
| 4 – 6 months | 34 (50.74) |
| 7 – 9 months | 13 (19.40) |
| 10 – 12 months | 10 (14.93) |

Source: Field Survey, 2008.

Figures in brackets are percentages.

Out of 67 households, 14.93% of households are self-sufficient from their own food production for 0 – 3 months, 50.74% are self-sufficient for 4 – 6 months, 19.40% are self-sufficient for 7 – 9 months and rest 14.93% are self-sufficient for 10 – 12 months. The data reveal that about two-third of the households do not produce sufficient food to meet their consumption needs for more than 6 months in a year. Only 14.93% of the households produce sufficient food needed for yearly consumption, among which households producing surplus maize sell to others and purchase rice.

The incidence of food insufficiency from their own production is far greater in the cluster Myaltuppa as compared to Arbun. The sample households of Myaltuppa produce

sufficient food for less than 6 months. In addition to own production, purchasing the food is the main strategy to cope with food deficits. Mostly rice is purchased from the local shops. Rice is often imported from Butwal and Taulihawa. Bartering and exchange system to obtain food are hard to find

5.4 Organization of Agricultural Work

The household is the basic economic unit within the Muslim *Gaun* (village). Household composition; the number, age and sex of its members, and structure; whether nuclear or joint or extended, play important roles in determining households' labour force to be allocated in different activities. The greater part of the Muslims' agricultural work is performed by predominantly family labour supplemented by reciprocal labour exchange (*Parma*) among the neighbours, which is the persuasion of their tradition. Women perform most of the agricultural work like planting, weeding and harvesting. The sexual division implies that the cultivation and rearing of livestock for the most part carried by the women with some specialized assistance like ploughing and other more effort needed works from the men. Usually, women join together with other neighboring women in reciprocal labor arrangements to work in the field. These reciprocal working groups are called *Khetari* and are organized for a variety of agricultural tasks including field preparation, planting, weeding and harvesting. The group arranges alternate days for working in one another's field of its members. But not all Muslims field labor at present is performed by reciprocal labor groups. Wage labor system introduced in the recent past also has been an additional feature of agricultural organization. Wage laborers are mostly non-Muslim: *Dalits* and *Kumals*.

Previously, majority of the households kept oxen; draft power, for agricultural activities but keeping oxen in the recent years is declining. It is because the oxen need long term caring and feeding but are used only for few days in a year in farming activities. Hence, the cost of keeping oxen is more expensive in comparison to the benefits drawn from them. The respondents recall that some 10 to 15 years ago many households used to keep at least one or two oxen. For instance, 11 households have left to keep the oxen in the recent past. At present, only 18 pairs of oxen are kept by 17 households. Few households

owning large *Khet* have started to use tractor for ploughing. Those households which do not own oxen need to hire or borrow them in turn of which human power is exchanged.

Even when there was a trend of leaving home by men for trade in different places, they used to return in the planting and harvesting seasons to participate in the work. Their trade was temporary and mobile. Usually, they used to go for trade in the dry winter season during the periods after harvesting rice and before sowing the maize. Currently, their trade pattern has changed. Some individuals have established permanent shops in different places away from their home district and some have gone to India and Gulf countries for employment. Therefore, at present, those who leave the home do not involve in agricultural works. The members of household who are permanently living in home carry out the agricultural tasks. School going children (above 10-12 years) help their parents and other adults in various ways during peak agricultural seasons.

Most of the households are joint type and hence there is no scarcity of human power needed for farming. But, these households have little to contribute in farms as they have little land. Animals are stall fed rather than taking them for grazing to the fields regularly. This too has reduced labour use of the Muslims.

5.5 Changes in Agriculture during the last two decades

The kinds of changes occurring in agricultural practices are difficult to depict here. The reason for this problem is lack of historical data which could be used to analyze how farming techniques have changed over the years. In recent years, Muslim households have faced greater hardships in earning their livelihoods from their farm due to rapid growth of their population and decline of the resource based production. As a result, they are shifting their emphasis from subsistence farming and mobile trade to other sources of income to maintain their livelihood. In the past, the proportion of households depending on multiple sources of income for survival was comparatively small as their farming and seasonal small scale trade could fulfill their requirements of survival.

Youths in the current situation are not that much interested in agriculture, rather they tend to search other alternatives like foreign employment and shop keeping. The migration of labour force from the village is often cited as a constraint on agricultural productivity.

There is a transition of agricultural economy in Muslim community. They had had more cultivable land where as labor was the limiting factor in production in the past and the condition is reversed at present. Instead of moving towards intensive agriculture, Muslim farmers tend to minimize agricultural activities. Marginal lands which were cultivated in the past are now left fallow. Although, the most Muslim households regard agriculture as their primary occupation, they derive most of their income from other sources. Very little investment is made in agriculture at present. The main reason for this, they argue, is the disequilibrium between agricultural expenses and production, i.e., expenses in farm work far exceeds the return.

Mixed cropping has been a widespread technique in Muslims' small farming system since the past. This technology and strategy of farming have been continued over considerable periods of time. Agricultural equipments like spade, metal-tipped wooden plough, hoe, sickle, etc have been extensively used till now. Local varieties of crops were cultivated by using only the locally made compost manure (mixture of animals' dung and leaves). With the entrance of improved seeds, chemical fertilizers and pesticides in the area, after the establishment of Sajha (Shop for selling seeds, fertilizer and pesticides, under the control of District Agricultural Office) in 2035 B.S. at Balkot, cultivation strategies began to change. Shajha made availability of improved varieties of paddy, maize, wheat, potato and various kinds of vegetables along with chemical fertilizers, pesticides and new methods of farming. After the establishment of Ilaka Agriculture Office in Balkot after 2046 B.S., modernization in agriculture got a bit more accelerated, however, it could not bring any remarkable changes in agriculture, i.e., land productivity has stagnated in spite of the increasing use of improved seeds, chemical fertilizers and pesticides. Likewise, tractors began to be used to plough *Khet* in place of plough drawn by the oxen since 2060 B.S. by six households who owned larger plots of *Khet*. Untimely rain is considered as one of the major problems of agriculture

The years after the political change of 2046 B.S. (1990 A.D.) were marked by some other changes including the agricultural strategies. Old irrigation system was improved. Chemical fertilizers, pesticides and improved varieties of seeds began to be available in private shops. Muslim farmers received loan from District Agriculture Development

Bank for various commercial agricultural activities like raising goats, potato cultivation, etc. This provision also could not enhance the income from agricultural sector. Some Muslim farmers are still unable to pay the loan to the Bank as the inputs in farming could give fewer outputs than expected.

The farming system of Muslims have still remained subsistence oriented and they have not been able to commercialization it. Agriculture has no longer represented the sole means of livelihood for Muslims.

CHAPTER- SEVEN

VILLAGE ECONOMY: TRADE

7.1 Trade Up to 2046 B.S.

The Muslims, since their arrival in this area, were involved in bangle selling and hence were called *Churaotes*. They established *Chura Bhatti* (bangle production factory) in Balkot (then called Arbun Danda), where they first settled. The *Chura* (bangles) were made up of special type of soil and color chemicals brought from India, by using fire to give shape for them. The *Chura* were called *matte Chura* (clay made bangles). *Matte chura* were thicker and flatter than glass made *Chura*. The adult men carried *Matte Chura* to different localities for selling them. With the onset of winter season, a group of men traveled eastward all the way to Mechi zone and even Darjeeling with their locally produced *Chura*. The group used to spend 4 to 6 months and return with some cosmetics and cloths.

Prior to the unification of petty hill principalities by P.N. Shah, the Muslims used to provide gifts including bangles, cosmetics, cloths, etc, to the *Rajauta* of Gulmi, Isma and Argha. At that time their mobility was restricted within these principalities. But later, they were encouraged to promote their trade after the unification of states by the rulers. Due to this, they could travel without any hindrances to various parts of the country to carry out their trade. Around 1800 B.S. the *Chura Bhattis* were closed because the *Matte Chura* was replaced by glass made bangles imported by Muslims themselves from India. The increasing demand of attractive crystal bangles in one hand and the production cost, time consuming production method and risks of wastes of *Matte Chura* on the other, forced them to stop producing *Matte Chura*. After this, the Muslims were completely dependent on Indian market places- mostly, Delhi and Banaras for bangles and cosmetics, Kanpur for cloths, and some other border cities to import their trade items.

Some Muslims were also involved in trading of ghee and marijuana. They collected ghee and marijuana from different villages and supplied to Batauli/Khasyauli (now called Butwal), Jhandinagar (now called Krishnanagar) and Indian border market places. Few Muslims were confined in trading of ghee and marijuana only while others invested the income derived from selling ghee and marijuana in purchasing cloths, bangles and

cosmetics to sell in the rural areas for profit. The trade of ghee and marijuana could not last for long time because of their declining production. The production and trade of marijuana was considered illegal by the state. Therefore, trade of marijuana declined to a large extent.

Since 2000 B.S., the Muslims' trade pattern expanded with the increase in their family size. Previous trade was mostly limited in the villages of Arghakhanchi, Gulmi, Palpa and Baglung. But later, one or more than one member of family involved in mobile trade considerably westward to Pyuthan, Dang, Salyan, Rukum, Rolpa, Surkhet, Dailekh and Doti, northward to Gulmi and Baglung and eastward to Palpa. It shows that the trading area was in the several directions and often in the different localities. Most traders had to decide where to opt for, as a major selling area, and this choice partially determined the range of trade items- bangles, cosmetics cloths, etc, they bought from Indian market places. There was diversity both in trading strategies and in the total volume of goods transported and sold. Some traders sold cloths in high quantity while others confined to bangles and cosmetics. So, the trading pursuits of Muslims exhibited distinctive multi-dimensional time space patterns.

The factors that combined to determine the degree to which a Muslim family was able to engage in trade were size of family, age and sex composition of its members and cash that could be allocated for the trade purposes. Few of the traders with considerable purchasing power of trade items could engage in profitable, large scale and long range trade that contributed to the family's economic well-being beyond merely supplying yearly needs. But most of the traders engaged in trade just to fulfill the needs of yearly food consumption. In other words, the majority of Muslim traders, however, had little surplus capital on which their business depended. Thus, they could engage only in low risk, low gain small scale trade that met only their subsistence requirements.

For most of the households involving in trade, trading activities needed to be put aside in the pursuits of other livelihood strategy, especially agriculture, for labor inputs, during the cultivating and harvesting seasons. In the face of these time binds, all seasonal farming activities directly or indirectly tied to trade were managed carefully. The Muslims agree that their economy articulated with the growing mobility of individuals and trading activities could be the result of small size of land holding and insufficient agricultural

production. The agricultural production and earning of men from trade could not keep pace with the increasing size of family. Hence, women also started selling bangles and cosmetics by visiting the surrounding villages of their settlement to support their livelihood. Consequently, due to the involvement of both the sexes in trade, less emphasis was given to the farming and livestock raising.

For the first time in this area, a shop was established by a Muslim in Arbun at 2004 B.S. The shop was large in size as it made the goods like sugar, salt, kerosene, cigarettes, soaps, metal wares, rice, cloths, bangles, cosmetics, etc, and even gun powder available. It was the only shop where the customers from various parts of Arghakhanchi and Gulmi district used to purchase their necessary goods. This shop was completely destroyed by fire in 2011 B.S. After this, another shop was established in Arbun but not as large as the first one. The trading center was shifted from Arbun to Pali; to a distance one and half an hour walk, with the establishment of a large shop in 2018 B.S.

Since 2015 B.S. onwards, non-Muslims too started engaging in shop keeping throughout the region. Then, some of the Muslim traders changed their trading strategy whereas others continued the previous one. The changing trade strategy was that Muslim traders started doing whole-sale trading of mostly cloths and other goods. They imported the goods from Indian market places and supplied to the shop keepers of rural area in a large quantity. Gradually, the Muslims perceived that doing business by establishing shops was associated with prestige and stability. Realizing this fact, shop keeping got priority among some Muslims whose houses were on the roads. Three Muslim households established shops on the edges of road in this Muslim *Gaun* to sell bangles, cosmetics, cloths including some groceries as well, in 2035 B.S. The trend of establishing shops away from home district began since 2032 B.S. Najir Miya of this Muslim *Gaun* was the first person to establish a shop away from homestead side (i.e., in Gaudakot of Gulmi district).

Periodic market system was introduced in Balkot about 40 years ago which lasted only for few months. This brought the concept of market system and initiated others too, in business and some other commercial productions. In periodic weekly, open-air markets Muslim traders sold cloths, bangles and cosmetics whereas others circulated their agricultural and non-agricultural productions. The Muslim traders used to sell large

volumes of goods in Hindu's occasional religious and cultural fairs conducted in surrounding areas. Hence, in one way or the other, the trade of specially bangles and cosmetics was strongly dominated by Muslim traders prior to 2046 B.S. Their trade network was directly interlinked with non-Muslim settlements. There was a strong interaction between Muslim traders and other people including shop keepers of diverse physiographic locations. The Muslim traders were the suppliers of goods like bangles, cosmetics and cloths while other people (non- Muslims) and local shopkeepers were the consumers/ receivers of these goods. Such traditional relationships have declined considerably due to the greater integration of village economy with the national and international markets.

7.2 Trade- 2046 B.S. onwards

The situation of Muslims' trade pattern as it existed up to 2046 B.S. has radically changed as a result of the emergence of new traders and merchants beyond the Muslim community, introduction of transportation facilities to the villages due to the construction of motorable roads, and improved access of people to the market centers, and the consequent decline of their trading networks. However, the first and most dramatic development in the rural areas has been the large increase in the numbers of establishments in almost every type of trading activity. Road provision has undoubtedly altered the linkages in the trading network. The mobile trade has lost its role as one of the main economic strategies and new trade strategy- establishing shops in different urban and urban oriented centers has taken its place. Though, the trading pattern has changed from mobile to permanent shop keeping, the emphasis on basic trade items- bangles and cosmetics has remained same. The newly emerged merchants other than Muslims, invested considerably more capital in shop keeping, incorporating the bangles and cosmetics items throughout the rural localities, where the Muslim traders used to visit for selling their items. This has affected the Muslims' trade to a large extent. The local shop keepers started importing the goods from market centers directly by themselves, while previously some of them used to depend on Muslim traders to purchase the goods. This trend reduced the Muslims' whole-sale trading too.

Migration of a bulk of population of non-Muslims, who were the consumers of the Muslims' trade from different villages (which were the Muslims' selling areas) to the Terai and cities/ towns followed by the political change of 2046 B.S. also contributed for the reduction of Muslims' mobile trade. The people whom they supplied goods needed to wait for the arrival of the Muslim traders as they used to visit the villages periodically, but, when the number of shops increased in the villages, people could easily purchase the goods at any time when they felt necessary. Similarly, the Muslim traders used to carry the limited varieties of items but the shop keepers provided large varieties and choices as compared to them, which declined to their declined trade. Therefore, the monopoly of Muslims' trade of bangles, cosmetics and cloths came to nearly an end as they could not compete with the local shop keepers' expansion of business. In other words, it can be said that the penetration of globalization to the villages compelled the small scale mobile traders to leave their occupation. It means globalization/ development dispelled Muslims away from their traditional trade pattern and led them to adopt different strategies.

It is reported that, out of 67 households surveyed, 31 men and 11 women from different households have abandoned the mobile trade in the recent past. They said that there was a little profit from mobile trade; i.e., the daily earning from trade was not enough even for owns a days food consumption. At present, only four men and two women are involved in mobile trade. It is said that since 2050 B.S., the trend of shop keeping at various parts throughout the western region by the sons of those who were involved in mobile trade in the past and others too, has brought a major shift in trade pattern. The establishment of shops in the district headquarters and other densely populated areas by some of the members of the households, the Muslims regard, is the result of growing livelihood insecurity in villages which have arisen because of the ongoing unsustainable and unstable economic and political developmental processes. Though, in the past, most part of the Muslims' trade was generally related to the needs of subsistence and was an independent means of livelihood, in the current situation, Muslim traders are devoted to accumulate more profits for the economic prosperity of their family. At present, in this Muslim *Gaun*, there are seven shops among which four shops are selling cloths, bangles and cosmetics, two shops are selling only the groceries and one is selling all of the above

mentioned items. The Muslim traders who have shops away from their homestead sites are shown in the table 12.

Table 12: Number of Muslim traders having shops in different Districts/ Places, 2008*

| District/ Place | No. of Individuals |
|-----------------|--------------------|
| Arghakhanchi | 2 |
| Gulmi | 20** |
| Butwal | 13 |
| Baglung | 9 |
| Rolpa | 4 |
| Kapilvastu | 3 |
| Dang | 3 |
| Nepalgunj | 2 |
| Dipayal | 2 |
| Pyuthan | 1 |
| Salyan | 1 |
| Dailekh | 1 |
| Total | 61 |

Source: Field Survey, 2008.

* Only the main responsible male individuals and owner of shops are included here. Their wives, children, brothers or sisters are not included since their role in trade is assistant.

**One is medical shop.

These individuals who are away from their home for business are not separated from their family; rather they need to bear economic responsibility to their family. Their income plays vital roles for the sustenance of household life. More than one individual are involved in business from most of the joint type of households. Most of them have taken their spouse and children, and in some cases, brothers and sisters as well, together with them. Majority of the individuals have performed their business in urban centers and district headquarters, while a few are centered on small towns. Greater concentration is seen in Gulmi and Butwal where more than half numbers of businessmen have their shops. The substantial number of Muslims doing trading activities in different parts of Gulmi is due to the closer distance from home district. Some traders are involved in

whole sale trading in Butwal since it is the transit point from where bangles, cosmetics and cloths purchased from Indian markets are supplied to rural areas. The number of traders in westward is less. Their mobility for earning livelihood through business is found up to Dipayal of far western region. When the Muslim traders used to visit western districts, they might have selected the specific location for the establishment of shops. The data reveal that long term but non-permanent migration constitute an economic strategy that relieves to some degree the economic stress caused by accelerating population and degenerating resource based production.

Many households have their member(s) in different places for trade. Table 13 shows the number of trader(s) involved in trade away from Muslim *Gaun*.

Table 13: Number of Muslim traders by household, 2008

| No. of individual traders | No. of Households | Total |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------|
| 1 | 19 | 19 |
| 2 | 13 | 26 |
| 3 | 4 | 12 |
| 4 | 1 | 4 |
| Total | 37 | 61 |

Source: Field Survey, 2008.

Out of 67 households, 37 households have their member(s) away from home for the purpose of trade. This is the evidence for that trade stands as a significant means of livelihood for majority of households. Generally, large size of household has enabled them to allocate its members for trade. These traders are from those households which were involved in mobile trade in the past. This is the reflection of different households' abilities to take advantage of opportunities with new developments/ changes. Despite a shift from mobile trade to shop keeping away from home, the Muslim migrants have maintained strong links with their household and have increased remittances in response to food shortage and other consumption requirements of household.

CHAPTER- EIGHT

VILLAGE ECONOMY: RECENT INTRODUCTION

The Muslims' mobility for earning the livelihood in recent years has shifted. In the past they were mobile for trade within the country but at present their mobility is confined to city/ towns for business and foreign employment. Foreign labour migration is the recently introduced livelihood strategy among the majority of Muslim households. Foreign labour migration of Muslims is conditioned not only by the internal factors, but also by the externally superimposed structural and material forces. It seems to be the direct result and cause of peripheralization and underdevelopment of the Muslim community.

The trend of labour migration to Gulf countries has increased since 2058 B.S though to India was the continuity of the past phenomenon. The growing incidence of labour migration out of the country is primarily in response to the shortage of cash for meeting the basic requirements. The basic reason is that very little cash or not at all is generated from the local economy, i.e. agriculture. While at the same time every Muslim household requires cash to purchase cloths, medicines, metal wares, sugar, and many other consumer goods. The growing availability of various imported consumer goods on their door has increased the trend of consumerism which in turn have resulted the high family expenses. Less interest of the younger generation towards agriculture in one hand and the increasing demands and desires of the Muslim households on the other have become the stimulant for labour migration.

The political turmoil that grew out nationwide since 2058 B.S. also enforced Muslim youths to become foreign labour migrants. The Muslim youths felt insecure in the villages and adopted foreign employment as an easy way to become secure and earn survival. The considerable economic well-being of the non-Muslims of the neighbouring settlements also has strong influence in their livelihood strategies. Various opportunities of facilities and jobs/ services are available from local to national level. However, the capabilities of exploiting the new opportunities are predetermined by the factors like education and financial conditions. The educational attainment of Muslims is very poor due to poor economic condition. Because of this, they lack the knowledge, skills and dexterity which do not permit them working in good posts and higher salary paying jobs. They are not specialized in any activities. There remain no alternatives for them besides unskilled

wage labour. They know very well that selling labour within the country generates less income while in the international labour market similar labour generates more. Hence, foreign labour migration, the Muslims conceived, is an effort to spread household labour and thus to enhance the family survival.

Table 14: Distribution of Muslim Individuals in Foreign Employment by Countries, 2008

| Country | No. of Individuals |
|--------------|--------------------|
| India | 26 |
| Qatar | 23 |
| Saudi Arabia | 12 |
| Total | 61 |

Source: Field Survey, 2008.

A total of 61 Muslim individuals from 67 households were foreign labour migrants in the village under study. Of these, 26 individuals were found to be working in India. Second to India is Qatar where 23 individuals were working, and only 12 individuals were working in Saudi Arabia. As per the respondents there is a consistent increase in the number of labour migrants. The main source of cash income in the Muslim Gaun especially among the households which have sent their member(s) for employment is remittance. It signifies that the subsequent injection of outside income into the Muslims' economy contributes for the sustenance of household life. The number of individual labour migrants from the different households differs based on the family size and chronic cash shortage.

Table 15: Number of Muslim Individuals in Foreign Employment by Households, 2008

| No. of Individuals | No. of Households | Total Individuals |
|--------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| 1 | 16 | 16 |
| 2 | 13 | 26 |
| 3 | 5 | 15 |
| 4 | 1 | 4 |
| Total | 35 | 61 |

Source: Field Survey, 2008.

Out of 67 households, more than half number (see table 15) of households have individual(s) working in foreign countries. Majority of the households, 16 out of 35, have only one individual in foreign employment, 13 households have two individuals, 5 households have three individuals and one particular household has four individuals in the foreign employment. More than one individual involved in the foreign employment is mostly from the large families. Some individuals working in India have taken their spouse and children as their dependent. Even though the job opportunities in the Gulf countries are not restrictive based on caste and religion, Muslims' religious and cultural affinity with these countries have attracted them for seeking employments there. The Muslims not only import cash and goods from Gulf countries but also Islamic customs, values and ideas. This has enabled them to strengthen the Muslim identity and to enrich their culture. One interesting pattern to be noted is that females are not involved in foreign employment. It seems that their cultural attitude is restrictive for females' independent mobility, especially in foreign employment. Females are also deprived of the ownership of the property, decision making and involving in the public sphere. They are bound to carry out only the domestic activities.

The household members of the foreign labour migrants provide information that an individual migrant from the Gulf countries sends around one lakh and fifty thousand rupees throughout the year. But those who are working in India earn comparatively less. Going to India for work in the recent years is declining because of the little earning. The informants say that those who are able to manage the debt go to Gulf countries but those who can not, go to India. But, still there is a significant number of Muslim individuals working in India. They have chosen India as their destination because of the requirement of less investment, no need of special skills, easily understandable Hindi language, easy entry and exit process, i.e., no requirement of passport and visa, and no official restriction on access to employment.

Table 16: Number of Individuals in Foreign Employment by age, 2008.

| Age group | No. of Individuals | | Total |
|-----------|--------------------|----------------|-------|
| | India | Gulf Countries | |
| 10- 19 | 9* | 6 | 15 |
| 20- 29 | 9 | 22 | 31 |
| 30- 39 | 3 | 6 | 9 |
| 40-49 | 3 | 1 | 4 |
| 50- 59 | 2 | - | 2 |
| Total | 26 | 35 | 61 |

Source: Field Survey, 2008.

*Notes: * 4 individuals are between the age of 10 and 15.*

From the data summarized in Table 16, it is evident that the proportion of foreign labour migrants working in the Gulf countries has the highest concentration in the age group 20 and 29. This is the indication of the attraction of youths towards these countries for earning the livelihood. Nine individuals each from the age group 10- 19 and 20- 29 have gone to India. With the increasing age, i.e. 30 years onward the number of foreign labour migrants is found in declining order. It is revealed that most vigor and energetic spans of life, the Muslim youths, spend in international labour market. Some youths who are involved in foreign employment but found at home in their leave at the time of this research said that the increasing importance of cash, lack of appropriate earnings with wage labour and outbreak of conflict in the nation has initiated the self- motivation towards the international labour market and mobility of Muslim labour force.

The remittance income has brought few structural changes in few households besides the fulfillment of consumption needs and debt repayment. For instance, it is invested in housing, land purchasing and business. But most part of the remittance income, most of the Muslim households spend in fulfilling basic requirements like food, cloths, medicines, and so on as well as unproductive luxury goods like Television, Mobile phones and other commodities. Though remittances play a vital role in leading the Muslims' economy, foreign employment can not be regarded as a sustainable livelihood strategy.

CHAPTER – NINE

CONCLUSION

Field study was carried out in Muslim *Gaun* with the goal of describing and explaining the persistence and change in livelihood strategies of Muslims' during the past two decades. Initially this study was planned from the point of view of ecological perspective and political economy in tracing the dynamics of Muslims' livelihood strategies. Both, ecology and developmental processes are found to have influenced in determining the Muslims, livelihood strategies. However, the facts and data obtained from field that are presented and analyzed in the preceding chapters reveal that various developments have dominant role in evolving and shaping their strategies over time in comparison to the ecological conditions.

The continuing survival of these hill Muslims amid the special constraints and opportunities of development and environment is testimony to the Muslims' ability to adjust to the changing contexts. Diverse factors have been involved to bring about transformation in the livelihood of Muslims. The developments/ changes which are going on can be seen to relate to the three principal catalysts which have been introduced in the rural areas since the last two decades. These are the extension and development of road transport network, accessibility of modern goods and commodities which are not produced locally and declining local resource based production.

The expansion and commercialization of farming has not taken place to any great extent despite the availability of improved seeds, chemical fertilizers and pesticides. There is the lack of dynamism in agriculture as well as other non-farm/ off-farm work opportunities within or near the village. Subsistence oriented agriculture from earlier has been continued. In reality development occurring in and around the village did not profoundly change farming systems and promote a significant expansion of local agri-business. The Muslim households are far from self-sufficiency in food production. They try to meet the pervasive and substantial deficit in food production through the purchase of food grains from the market. There is a remarkable lack of human and financial capital investment in agriculture as it is constrained by the size and quality of land the households hold. Another reason for this is little relative returns from agriculture as compared to other alternative economic activities.

In the past, mobile trade was supplementary strategy of livelihood which declined to the great extent at present. It is because of the increased net flow of the goods and commodities including Muslims' trade items from urban/ market centers to the villages facilitated by road transport network. The mobile trade has oriented towards permanent shop keeping but the emphasis on trade items like bangles and cosmetics have remained same. The change in trade pattern represents Muslims' responses to factors other than physical environmental conditions. The Muslim individuals have their shops in different localities, i.e., in districts' headquarters, cities and densely populated villages. The large size of households tends to allocate human power in other alternatives like foreign employment besides agriculture and business. Foreign labour migration has undoubtedly grown in importance in Muslim Gaun in the last decade. The trend of shop keeping and foreign labour migration began when the village land and mobile trade could no longer support the growing population. In other words, the changes in life ways, basically relying on outside income sources, is because of the inability of their local economy to supply the vast weight of their subsistence needs. Hence, non-farm sources including shop keeping away from home and remittances from foreign employment have been more significant in maintaining the livelihoods. It implies that many Muslim households seeking food and income security have come to rely on business and foreign employment for a livelihood.

Market dependency is growing in Muslim Gaun at present. This has increased the household expenditure. The economic linkage between Muslim Gaun and markets is characterized by the inflow of goods and commodities from markets to Gaun and outflow of cash (generated from outside income) from Gaun to market. Such a linkage has forced Muslim individuals to be involved in more income generating activities. Several factors: both internal and external, have been operating in shaping the livelihoods of Muslims. Little access to local resources, financial vulnerability, low educational status, lack of skills and dexterity in productive works and penetration of globalization in the rural areas are the principal factors, amongst others.

Over the course of many generations these Muslims have devised and refined a set of different livelihood strategies attuned to the opportunities and constraints of environmental, economic and political conditions., i.e., to accommodate new situations. Muslims are not strictly farmers, having retained control over their primary productive resources; they are traders and foreign labour migrants as their livelihood has been poised at the threshold of various developments.

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