

## **Chapter: One**

### **Introduction**

#### **1.1 Background**

Tamang are an ancient as well as major ethnic group of Nepal. Their traditional area is the hilly region between the Budhigandaki River and the Likhu River. Their basic common features are; they are considered to have migrated from Tibet, speak Tibeto-Burman languages, follow Buddhism, animism, and engage in subsistence agriculture, animal husbandry, and labor services. At present, they live in large numbers in the districts of Rasuwa, Nuwakot, Dhading, Makawanpur, Sindhuli, Ramechhap, Dolakha, Lalitpur, Sindhupalchok and Kavrepalanchok in the Central Development Region. They are also scattered all over the country and outside Nepal, they are found in large numbers in Darjeeling, Sikkim, Assam, and Nagaland of India and in Burma and Bhutan (Yonjan 2006). The total population of Tamang in Nepal, according to the census of 2001 is 1,282,304, i.e. 5.6 per cent of the total population of the country. The Tamang language occupies fifth place in the country in terms of the numbers of languages spoken and first place among the Tibeto-Burman languages. They also have a unique life style, religious beliefs, with preference for cross-cousin marriage.

The word "Tamang" apparently did not come into general usage in Nepal until well into twentieth century. A proclamation of the central government issued in 1932 made 'Tamang' an official legal category superseding 'Bhote' and 'Lama' used previously. Those now labeled 'Tamang' constitute the largest Tibeto-Burman speaking ethnic group in Nepal (Holmberg 1989:17). Tamang had or have a sense of ethnic commonality. The name applies to quite diverse groups occupying a central location in Nepal's middle hills. There is no uniform Tamang culture, social structure, no overarching political institutions and people speaking different Tibeto-Burman dialects, some so different as to be mutually unintelligible. Tamang is an ethnic label created to facilitate interactions with the state and created to place the group in a higher position than their former status as Bhotiya (Levine 1987:73). Tamangs have retained old religious traditions, including the

practice of animal sacrifice (Salter and Gurung 1999:51). According to Hamilton, Tamangs were prohibited to enter into Kathmandu valley in the past because they ate carcass and therefore the community of Newars used to call them "*siyna votya*". The Tamang are strong. Their main occupation was agriculture and they worked as porter mainly for the Newars. Most of Tamangs living in the compact traditional settlements have sufficient food production although many of them borrow money at times. Almost all are the owner-cultivator of their land and those who are living outside the traditional Tamang territory are generally very poor. They are not able to grow enough on the marginal land they cultivate and usually are found going out to earn wages as potters, domestic servants, in other villages and towns such as Kathmandu.

Even though Tamang is one of the oldest ethnic groups, they came to outer world very late. It was since 1932 when the late king Tribhuvan and Prime Minister Bhim Samsher permitted them to write 'Tamang' after their name. Tamangs were prohibited to join in British and Nepalese armies at that time. They were not provided opportunities to serve in government officers, to get education in schools and get admission in police force (Tamang 1993:56-57). During Rana's regime Tamangs were forced to perform various works in Rana's houses such as carrying loggers, ploughing the fields, construction works, postal carrying, painting, paper making, grazing the cattle etc. Similarly the Tamang women had to perform various household works in Rana's palaces.

Tamangs were extremely exploited by higher caste rulers since ancient time. Such exploitation continues although democratic system has been established in Nepal. Though Nepalese law has absolutely prohibited discriminating any person based on sex, caste, tribe, race, language, and religion (Interim Constitution 2063, Article 13 (1), (2), (3)) it has not been successfully and absolutely implemented in practice. Due to lack of education, they are one of the backward communities. Their occupation status has not still changed. Their representation in executive, judiciary and legislative bodies is negligible, in comparison of other major castes.

The majority of Tamangs live in the ten districts of central Nepal. One of them is Sindhuli. I have carried out my research in Kerabari village in Sindhuli district. A village where all the residents are Tamang. The culture of Tamang in Sindhuli district is different from the Tamangs of other areas. It is a culture that was developed between the Mahabharat Mountain in the north and inner Tarai in the south. During my fieldwork, I lived with Tamang families that helped me in understanding their culture, language, and values. At the same time it was helpful to create the atmosphere of trust and informal relationship with them.

## **1.2 Statement of Problem**

Generally the "Tamang" people are assumed to be single, homogenous entity but in reality, there are great variation which can be found in important details in their socio-cultural dimension, language, economy and ritual practices. It is important to deal this specificity by focusing on the Tamang community. The Tamang communities have their own religion, culture, and tradition. This is distinct from the rest of Tamangs. The Tamang have diversity in language, culture, and tradition. Tamang are not conjoined into common society and intense social relation among themselves tends to be confined to a circle of natal and affinal kin in a small radius of villages (Holmberg 1989:20). The Tamang and their cultures have been of a great interest for many researchers and studies. Issues from the number of clans, how member of one clan is related with the other member of his/ her own clan, their way of life, the changes and adaptation in their cultural, social and economic practices. It has been estimated that there are more than 196 clans within Tamang but in the earlier documents, the numbers of clans mentioned are only about 54/56 (Tamang 2005). From this fact also, we can imagine the complex structure of the Tamang culture and society.

Like other caste/ ethnic groups, the Tamangs resides in different regions of Nepal. Tamangs' culture and beliefs are influenced as well as shaped by the environment of the areas where they live; this is not just because of their contacts with different groups but also due to their need for survival. The Tamangs are also different in terms of their language, at least different dialects. The language can be divided into three groups; The Trisuli River that lies in the Nuwakot district is taken as the basis for division of the language. The language in the western area of the river is called the western language and the language of the eastern side is called as the eastern language (Yonjan 2051BS, 2054 BS). The eastern language is further divided into two dialects; the Tamang language of the northeastern part of the Sunakoshi is called "*Sailung*" and the language of the southern part of the Sunkoshi river is called as "*Temale*" (Yonjan 2006: 64- 65). Anthropologists have done studies of Tamang in certain regions. In the northwestern part, Holmberg (1989), Hofer (1981) and Fricke (1993) have carried out the ethnographic studies of Tamangs. Similarly, in the eastern part, Antwelier (1984) and Haimendrof (1956) have carried out research about the Tamang.

I argue that the Tamangs of Kerabari hill are different from Tamangs of other areas of the country. According to Yonjan's (2006) division, the Tamangs of Kerabari belong to the *Temale* group in terms of dialects. Tamangs are found in majority in the research area, that lies in the Sindhuli district; southeast part of Kathmandu valley. There has been no single anthropological study of Tamangs in this district. Therefore, in this context my research will serve an important basis for understanding the Tamangs of Kerabari.

This Research aims to answer following questions. What are the major means of their livelihood? When do they go to India for work (purpose)? What type of works they are involved in? How much income do they make? What are their expenditure areas? When do they go to the local government office? What type of responses or treatment they receive from government officials and workers? What type of perceptions do they

have towards the government offices? This study will also compare the Tamang of Kerabari with the Tamangs of other areas.

### **1.3 Objectives of the study:**

#### **General objective**

The main objective of this research is to provide concrete ethnographic document of Tamang community in Kerabari hill.

#### **Specific objectives**

- ) To analyze the livelihood of Tamang.
- ) To compare the culture of Tamang in Kerabari with Tamang of other areas.
- ) To analyze the trend of long term migration in India especially New Delhi; explain their job, income and expenditure.
- ) To analyze the relationship and perceptions of the Tamang of Kerabari towards the government offices in Sindhulimadi (District Headquarter).

### **1.4 Rationale of the study**

The propose of this study is to fulfill the partial requirement for Master degree in anthropology from Tribhuvan University in Nepal. The study expected to emphasize on theoretical and substantive anthropological approach in lifestyle of Tamang. This research will be carried on the means and resource of livelihood, the trends of long migration to India. The relationship with New Delhi (India), where most of the Tamang in Kerabari seek employment and have spent most years of their life.

### **1.5 Chapter organization**

This work is organized into seven chapters. The first provides the introduction of the study; second chapter discusses the various literature related to the Tamang; third chapter presents the methodology of the study. The fourth chapter has sketched geographical setting, settlement patterns, and history. Fifth chapter has discussed the society and culture. Sixth chapter has drawn various aspects such as economy and politics. Finally, the seventh chapter presents the summary and conclusion of the research.

## **Chapter: Two**

### **Review of literature**

This chapter presents the review of books, academic research papers, reports, dissertations, magazines, website and other material of related to Tamang cultural and social. I have done thematic review of the Tamang's economic, politics, history, culture, and religious aspects.

#### **Economy**

Tamang communities are generally found in higher elevations, with the peasants engaging in the shifting cultivation and extraction of the forest products. They make baskets and mats from mountain bamboo (Salter and Gurung 1999). Tamang settlement span environment and economic orientation from strongly subsistence oriented agriculture (Haimendrof 1956, Hofer 1981, Peters 1978, Bista 1967). Apart from the agriculture the most important part of Tamang adaptation is the pastoral economy. A significant part of household capital is bound up livestock (Fricke 1993, Bista 1967). Besides the farming non-agriculture occupation are also carried out such as painting *thankas*, carving wooden masks and making musical instruments, mats and baskets. Besides these, some as porters, postural worker, carpenter, daily labors and carriers (Haimendrof 1956, Bista 1967, Antweiler 1984, Tamang 1993). In the past, Tamang held *Kipat* land system which has been carried down through their various clan divisions over many generations (Bista 1967:48 also see Salter and Gurung 1999, Haimendrof 1956).

Dahal, Frike and Lama (1996) studied the Tamang in the Upper Ankhu Khola. It describe that in spite of a well-developed system of labor exchange, it is the domestic unit which is the main unit for production, consumption and reproduction in which the children were seen to confer economic advantages for the whole family. Beside it was the increasing monetization of their economy with the people combining wage labor (such as portering, road construction and in factories) with other subsistence economy in local

areas as well as outside their village. The marriage structures ensure unity and cooperative labor between families who exchange labor work, where the marriages play a role of organizing relations between families but the changes in wide range of individual experiences will have important implications in all such links. The wage work of Timling women is nearly all seasonally available road construction and portering, rather than year-round factory work as can be found elsewhere (Dahal, Frike and Lama 1996: 382).

Campbell (1994) explore the idea that different forms of cooperative reciprocity can be understood in terms of divers idioms and realizations of the economic solidarity, that hinge on very different operationalizations of the notion of household. According to Campbell, "The rank of local categories employed in the classification of labor relationship, then discussed their various political strategic implications for the way in which interacting household are mutually articulated and finally consider some comparison." He categorized five major labors types; household, kinship, festive, exchange, and wage and comparison of the social relation of Tamang community of cooperation (ibid: 5).

Widespread illiteracy among Tamang is primary contributor to their participatory absence in Nepal government. Tamangs are one of the poorest ethnic groups (Peters1998:25-27, also see Tamang 1993). "By historical processes, accident or design has resulted in the Tamang continuing role in the Nepalese economy being that of porter and Labor"(Campbell 1997:206).The head of household arranges the daily and seasonally occurring work. Ploughing, digging and reconstruction of the terraces are men's work. Women are working in the kitchen garden, at home, on the fields and winnowing after the harvest. Children help with sowing and washing up (Antweiler 1984). More and more Timling's household sent members from the village to participate in the wages labor economy of Nepal for short period. As the rule, this occurs during the month of *Posh* through the beginning of *Falgun* (late December to throughout the February).When the labor requirements in the village are reduce and when porter work is most available. In



addition to porter work, the Tamang often make the difficult trip to Bhutan where they obtain jobs on Indian government road construction crews. Other avenues for the wage labors including employment of Ghorka soldiers in the British and Indian armies (Fricke 1993:83 , Dahal, Fricke and Lama 1996, Holmberg 1989).The trekking industry has become over the last decades, one of most important sector of the contemporary Nepalese economy. Tamangs from the Kathmandu hinterland are recruited by agencies in Thamel and bused out to the head road starts of the trekking routes. The Tamangs do not get rich from trekking but they do earn some cash to supplement other subsistence activities (Campbell 1997:227).

Parsuram Tamang (1993) explained that more than 90 percent '*Thankas*' (Buddhist religious painting) is prepared by the Tamangs but major portion of benefit is received by the Newars and Tibetans. The labors of the carpet factories, hotels, restaurants are mostly the Tamangs. Many Tamang women, due to their very poor economic condition are enforced to go to India and adopt prostitution. Young Tamangs have been used for smuggling purpose by the smugglers who have been escaping from police custody (Tamang 1993).

### **Politics and History**

At the extreme end of what might be called ethnonymic artificiality in the application of "Tamang" label is case referred to Levine of seemingly arbitrary manipulation of categories by the state. Speaking of Humla, in the west of Nepal. Levine says, Tibetan speakers long were considered Bhotiya. Some decade ago, they were instructed by government representatives that their *jat* (caste and ethic label) had become Tamang. The reason given was that the government needed to circumvent Tibetan claims to Nepalese populations and territories and that the change in *jat* was their advantage, Tamang being of higher caste status (Levine 1987:78-80). Clearly the decree issued in 1932 that first recognized "Tamang" as caste which not only served the purpose of self-identification as separate from *Bhotiya* but also enabled the state to extend the term's use

for its own ends of national integration in administrating geographically and culturally marginal peoples (Campbell 1997:222). Levine's argument is that Tamang label was created "to facilitate interaction with the state" was argued against Hofer's notions of "the ancestor of present Tamang had minimal or latent identity, base on common culture, mostly mythically substantiated origin"(Hofer 1979:148).

Holmberg has developed an analysis of the ethno-construction of Tamang grounded on research in particular locality, but claims some generality to its applicability to many if not Tamang. The central twist in his argument is that though much ethnography in the early phase of research in Nepal, was overly obsessed with the notion of "autonomous 'tribal' group", in Nepal "a social order has emerged that is irreducible to separate Indic, Tibetan, or tribal perspective"(Holmberg 1989:15), at the same time he considers that the historical and social condition behind the emergence of the Tamang reinforce some quasi- tribal features. In particular, what we can tentatively characterize as in secular or "tribal" character of Tamang culture emerged in response to the evolvement of sociopolities in the greater Himalayans where local sector of Tamang turned in upon themselves in process of involution (ibid:12).

The essential feature of this "tribal" character for Holmberg is the predominant equality of "restricted exchange" between exogamous clans, rather than the asymmetrical relation of endogamous castes. However, the involuted effect of restricted exchange produces an appearance, filtered by perceptual frame of Hindu ideology, of Tamang as an endogamously separate caste. Holmberg describes any notion of pan- Tamang identity as "a recent phenomena", but he does suggest some objective features, as perceived by the Hindu Gorkha rulers, common to *Murmi* people who later became Tamang. "They were incorporated into the state as a subjugated population; they were marked off from other groups in Nepal as the consumers of beef and particularly carrion beef; and they were associated with lamas and Buddhism"(ibid: 23).

Various terms are used to designate the large tribal group known as Tamang. One is *Bhote*, to indicate their Tibetan origin and the other is Lama of northern habitat. The term *Tamang* itself has been interpreted to mean 'horse trader' ( ta- horse; mang -trader) or cavalryman on other hand, the word may be related to *Tamu* (Gurung) and *Tamhang* (Thakali), term that generically means "highlander " as an antithesis to *Lhomi* or *Lopa* ( Lowlander) (Salter and Gurung 1999:49).

The headman of Tamang is called *Mulmi*, he is elected by the people for a definite number of years in some cases, while in other cases the post *Mulmi* is hereditary. The *Mulmi* is agent for collecting land revenue from the village, from which he receives certain percentage when he takes it to the district revenue office. He is also entitled to one day's free labor from each household within his jurisdiction. He is entitled to settle disputes (Bista 1967:56 also see Haimendorf 1956:172-3, Gautam and Thapa Mager 1994:261-2).

Tamang culture has changed, especially in the domains of religion and ethnic identity, but also according to economy. These changes have connection with the inner political development of Nepal (Antweiler 1984:99). Tamang entered into Kathmandu valley before three thousand years ago. They came Kathmandu valley from adjoining hills such as Rasuwa, Dhading, Makwanpur, Sidhupalchow and Kavre. The ancestor of Brahmin, Chhetriya and Tamang were same. Maheshor was ancestor of Tamang (Sharma 1995).

Tamangs have been characterized as intermediate in the status of women, lying in the middle of the continuum between those strictly controlling females and those with widest flexibility in female options. This is reflected in the range of marriage options within the single villages, where the type of marriage can run from "kidnapping" of wives to arrangement by parents to mutual consent of the spouses themselves. Variations in ritual complexity crosscut these forms and earlier evidence suggests that variations in marriage style are associated with variations in marriage age with implications for fertility (Acharya and Bennett 1981).

## Culture and Religion

Holmberg (1989) mentioned eight ritual specialists among the Tamangs. They are prominent and recognized as focal persons in ritual system: *Lama, lambu and bombo*. Five fulfill subsidiary roles: *gurpa, shyepompo, pujari, Hindu priests, and sangtung*. "The rituals revolving around the practice of the prominent specialist mark out three spheres: the Buddhist, associate with Lama; the sacrificial, associate with Lambu and Shamanic, associate with Bambo" (Holmberg 1989:2). Lamas are most respected practitioner among the Tamang. Lamas preside over memorial death feasts that rescue the shadow souls of the death into rebirth and regenerate order in the local society. In addition to overseeing these large scale celebrations, lamas provide an array of protective, propitiatory, and exorcistic rituals service. The Lambus sacrifices to propitiate divinities and exorcise an array of harmful agents who constitute a society separate from, but in direct engagement with human society. Much of everyday concern and ritual activity focuses on these being. Lumbus honorifically entreat divinities to stabilize the cosmos and society, to bring rain, to stave off earthquakes, landslides, and violent storms and to resist evil onslaughts. The Bombos recall lost shadow-souls, raise up life-force, and divine. They have special powers of mediation between human and divine (Holmberg 1989: 3).

According to Dor Bahadur Bista the Tamangs are professedly Buddhists. There are *ghyangs* Buddhist temples, in every village of considerable size. The gods and religious paintings in the temples are all after the *Sherpa* style; the religious texts are all in Tibetan script. The few festivals and rituals ceremonies conducted in the *ghyangs* are after the proper Buddhists fashion like those Sherpa and other northern border people. The Lama of Tamang community, are trained in these Lamastic Buddhist ritual procedure (Bista 1967:54 also see Haimendrof 1956).

Most of the books are useful to get common understanding and characteristics of Tamang in Nepal. Most of the literatures are about the Tamangs of the western Nepal.

But the reality is that the Tamangs reside not only in the western but also in the eastern part of country. Sindhuli district is one of the multicasite as well as multilingual areas of Nepal. In Sindhuli out of 74 identified caste and ethnic groups Tamang are in the greatest number in terms of caste and ethnic group in Sindhuli and it occupies 25.36 percent of the whole population in the district (DDC 2004). Tamang are second largest community of the Kamalamai municipality of Sindhuli district (Census 2001). Since Tamang have diverged in various parts of country their cultural practices differ from place to place.

## **Chapter: Three**

### **Research Methodology**

#### **3.1 Rationale of the selection of study site**

Kerabari hill consist entirely of Tamang community which includes Lo 19 households, Moktan 22 households, Yonjan four households and all together there are 47 households. The total population is 267 (141male and 126 female). There are not single representative in municipality, district development committee or any governmental services such as police, army, and other fields. I have noticed that not a single villager of Kerabari have passed S.L.C till date of my fieldwork. The available literatures show that there has been no anthropological study of Tamang in this area. Most of the studies of Tamang are limited to the western and northern part of country. This area is new for ethnography study for anthropological discipline. Hence, the Tamang community of Kerabari hill has been selected for in depth anthropological study.

I had great interest about the Tamang and their culture in past and keen desire had already evolved in the mind to make deeper study and identify their culture. Fortunately I received an opportunity to fulfill my desire through the World Bank Research Project, Measuring Empowerment, and Social Inclusion Part- II (MESI-II). During this period I went to Kerabari for a six months fieldwork and at the same time I undertook this research for my dissertation as well. This study fills the gap in the research studies about different caste/ ethnic groups of the nation. These are the major rationales behind selecting the Kerabari hill for Research purpose. I have done my field work from the last week of March to the second week of September 2006.

#### **3.2 Research Method and Design**

For ethnographic research, primary data have been collected during the fieldwork of six months, which is mostly qualitative in nature. I stayed for six months with a

Tamang family of *Phalametar tol* in Kerabari. Standard ethnographic methods such as participant observation, narrative, interview, life histories, and case study approaches have been used to collect data for the research. On the other hand, secondary data have been collected from published and unpublished documents.

To meet my objective, I interviewed local knowledgeable people about long term migration, the relationship with local government and livelihood of Tamang community of Kerabari hill. The data collection method is entirely based on the principle of triangulation. Ethnographic method is conventionally an important one for data collection in anthropological study. I collected the data through narrative approach with those who had worked in India and now settled permanently in Kerabari as well as those who were in the village on their leave. I used the participatory observation and narrative method to observe the villagers perception towards the government.

I took long interviews with the local Shaman for the genology and historical chart. Ethnographic method in this study generated qualitative data on Tamang community and their livelihood and their relationship with the local government offices. Using the method of field observation (a foundation of anthropological research), I have observed, listened and conversed with informants in a free and comfortable environment as far as possible. Daily field notes have been maintained for records. The names of the informants have been given pseudonym to protect their identity and privacy.

### **3.3 Field Work**

"Establishing trust and gaining a working relationship with the subjects is a crucial part of successful ethnographic fieldwork." (Shah 2004:34). I belonged to the Chettri caste, born in my native village in Gulmi District but spend most of my years studying in Kathmandu. Initially, starting fieldwork in a different place, culture, and language was a big challenge for me. When I first went to Kerabari for field study, the local people did not respond well. The Tamang people do not like to mix up with outsiders instantly and rather enjoy within their own community (Tamang 2061 BS). I

also found the similar nature among Kerabari's Tamangs. Two weeks passed by but none of the villagers spoke openly with me, they would reply not more than what I asked them. This worried me as how I would be able to spend six months when no one would speak with me properly. I could not understand the language and I was missing my family and friends back in Kathmandu.

After two weeks, there was a small gathering (party) in the area where I stayed (I was staying at house of Tirtha Bahadur Lo). The next person with whom I got acquainted was Bardaman Lo and he remained my good friend and key informant till the end of my stay. I also got introduced with Mangale Moktan who turned out to be a good informant. Many villagers had gathered, the family with whom I stayed also invited me to attend the party. I sat down with all the villagers, drank *aairak* (home-brewed liquor), and ate meat, we all laughed and enjoyed the party. By that time, I had learnt few sentences in Tamang and started to salute them saying *Lasso* (greeting in Tamang) and other few lines that I had learnt. They were all quite amused and some were laughing at my pronunciation. This incident broke the ice and the villagers started to talk with me. During the party I also met Birman Yonjan, Ganesh Bahadur Lo and Bishman Lo. All the villagers had helped me a lot but those, whom I have mentioned here, had personally helped me to socialize with the villagers. I began to receive invitations from the villagers; they would come and share their day-to-day experiences. It had been 20 days in Kerabari and this entire friendly environment made me very happy and enthusiastic. Everyone recognized me and treated me like one of them. The fact that I began to use few Tamang words made it easier and they appreciated my interest in their life and culture.

Initially some local elites of the Tamang were suspicious and thought that I might be a spy and it was only after they found my personal conduct satisfactory their suspicion was over. I came to know about this much later. I explained to the villagers the objective of my fieldwork in Kerabari that as a student I was doing a research about their culture and society. Once the villagers understood my intention, they were happy that I was there



to study and understand their culture. They began to share their experiences to me. After this, I did not realize how fast the time of my fieldwork went by. On the last night of my stay, I could not sleep properly. I was finding it hard how fast the time went by. I remembered my first day and other many incidences flashed back in my memory. It was the longest night of my stay in Kerabari.

### **3.4 Limitation of the study**

Each study has its own limitation. The main objective of this study is requirement for master degree in Anthropology from T.U. The research area is small and a single Tamang community is chosen for the study. This study concerns one community only and may not confirmed similarities for other communities of Nepal. Detail ethnography for theoretical and methodological study may be another limitation. At the time of my fieldwork, I used Nepali language. My lack of Tamang language is also another limitation.

## Chapter: Four

### Geographical Setting, Settlement Patterns and Clans history,

Kerabari hill lies in Kamlamai Municipality (Before 1996/97, it was called Sideshwor VDC) ward no- 9 in Sindhuli district of Janakpur zone. The village included infrastructure only for the need of the population and lacked infrastructure necessary for the minimum requirement of the municipality. It is in south east part of the central development region. It ranges from 900 meters to the height of 1200 meters from the sea level. It lies in the lower part of Mahabharat range (DDC 2004). It can be reached after 10-12 hours bus drive from Kathmandu to Sindhulimadi, headquarter of Sindhuli district and there is also another road to reach Sindhulimadi, about 3 hours bus drive from Janakpur. Then, after 3 hours of walk from north of Sindhulimadhi, Kerabari hill can be reached. It is surrounded by forest. It is located around east- south slope. There is no facility of roads, electricity, and telephone in spite of a Municipality area.

In Kerabari the history of Tamang is not very long. The *Jharkari* (Shamans) and religious priest of different clans of Tamang agree that the Tamang have been living in Kerabari for the past 7/8 generations. Before the settlement the village was surrounded by banana trees and because of the reason the village was named as Kerabari (*Kera* means banana and *bari* means field)

Table 1

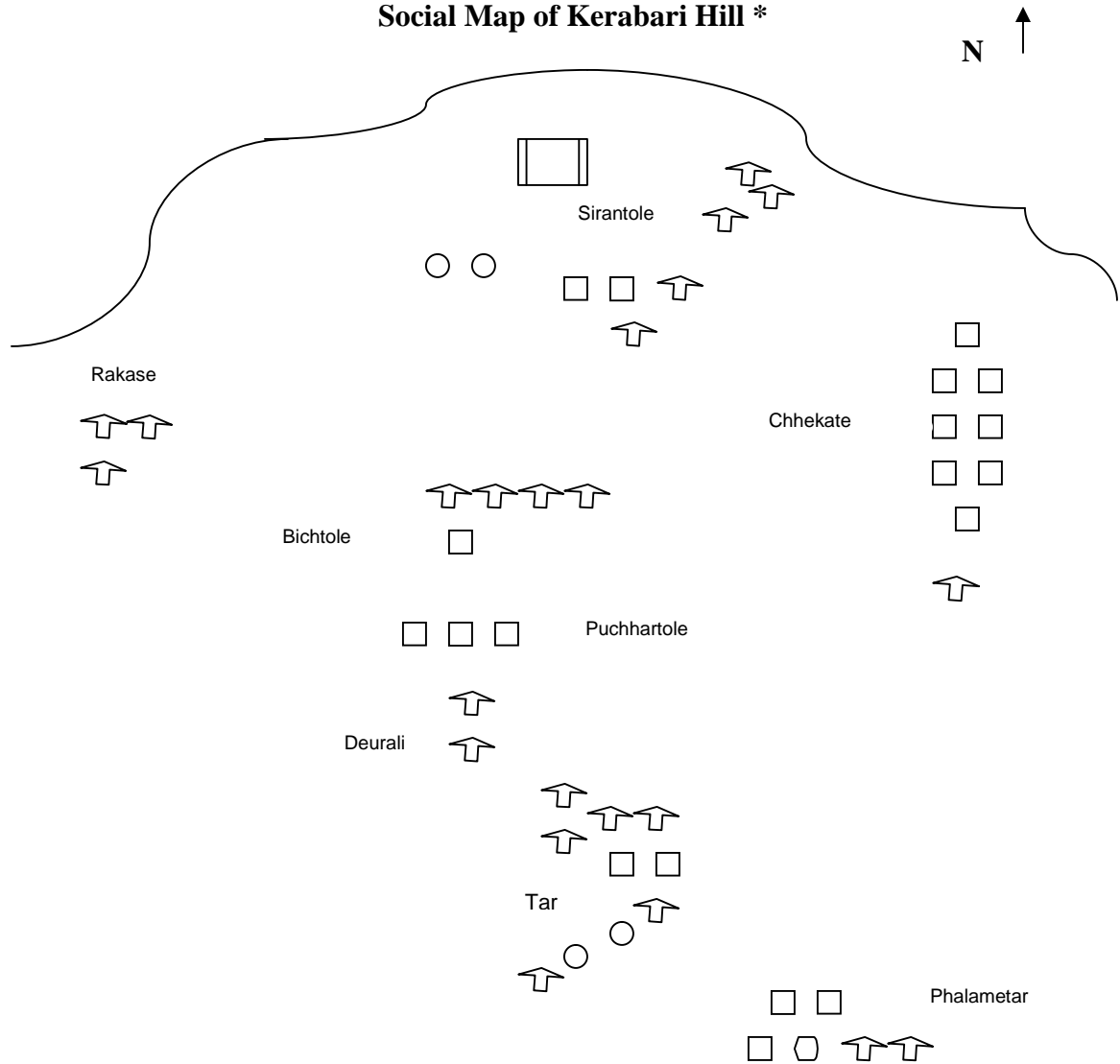
#### (Population composition by settlement)

S.N	Settlements	Male	Female
1	Phalametar	22	17
2	Tar	21	19
3	Deurali	8	12
4	Puchhartole	7	6
5	Bichtole	14	10
6	Sirantole	22	25
7	Rakase	13	15
8	Chhekate	35	25
Total		142	129

(Source: Fieldwork August2006)

The largest settlement is Chhekate of Kerabari hill and smallest settlement is Puchhartole. Male occupies 52.39 percent and female occupies 47.61 percent of total population of Kerabari hill.

**Social Map of Kerabari Hill \***



**Symbols**

	= School	1
	= Moktan	22
	=Lo	19
	=Waiba	1
	=Yonjan	4

(Source: fieldwork, August 2006)

(\* No Scale)



There are eight clusters of settlement. The east part within the Kerabari hill is Chhekate. There are nine households out of which eight households belong to Lo and one to Moktan. The Western part within the Kerabari is Rakase. There are three houses, all belong to Moktan. The Southern part in Kerabari is Phalametar. It has total six-households including three belonging to Lo, two Moktan and one Waiba. Five clusters of settlements are central parts in Kerabari. The cluster names are Tar, Deurali, Puchhartole, Bichtole, and Sirantole. In the Tar, total household are ten including six households of Moktan, two Lo and two Yonjan. In Deurali, only two households belong to the Moktan. In Puchhartole there are three households of Lo. In Bichtole, there are total five households including four belonging to Moktan and one of Lo. In the north in Kerabari hill is Sirantole, there are total nine households including five of Moktan, two Lo and two Yonjan. One primary school is in Kerabari hill. It is situated on the top of the settlement.

Total household in Kerabari hill are 47 out of them twenty-two belongs to the Moktan, 19 to Lo, four to Yonjan, and one to Waiba clans. Moktan and Lo are majority Yonjan and Waiba are minority in Kerabari hill.

Table 2  
**Basic composition of Family Types**

S.N	Clan	Family		
		Joint	Nuclear	Total
1	Moktan	4	18	23
2	Lo	5	14	19
3	Yonjan	2	2	4
4	Waiba	0	1	1
Total		11	35	47

(Sources: Fieldwork August 2006)

Out of 47 households, 35 households are nuclear family and only 11 households are joint family. From this figure, we can say that Tamangs prefer nuclear family. Generally, the young couple separate from their parental home after they have one or two children and start their own family. This is a common feature in all the clans of Tamang in Kerabari hill. 75 percent families are nuclear family whereas only 25 percent are joint family. There are no extended families.

Table 3  
**Gender and Clan composition in Kerabari**

S.N	Clan	Male	Female	Total
1	Moktan	56	58	114
2	Lo	70	60	130
3	Yonjan	15	10	25
4	Waiba <sup>B</sup>	1	1	2
Total		142	129	271

(Source: Fieldwork Aug 2006)

#### 4.1 History of Clans

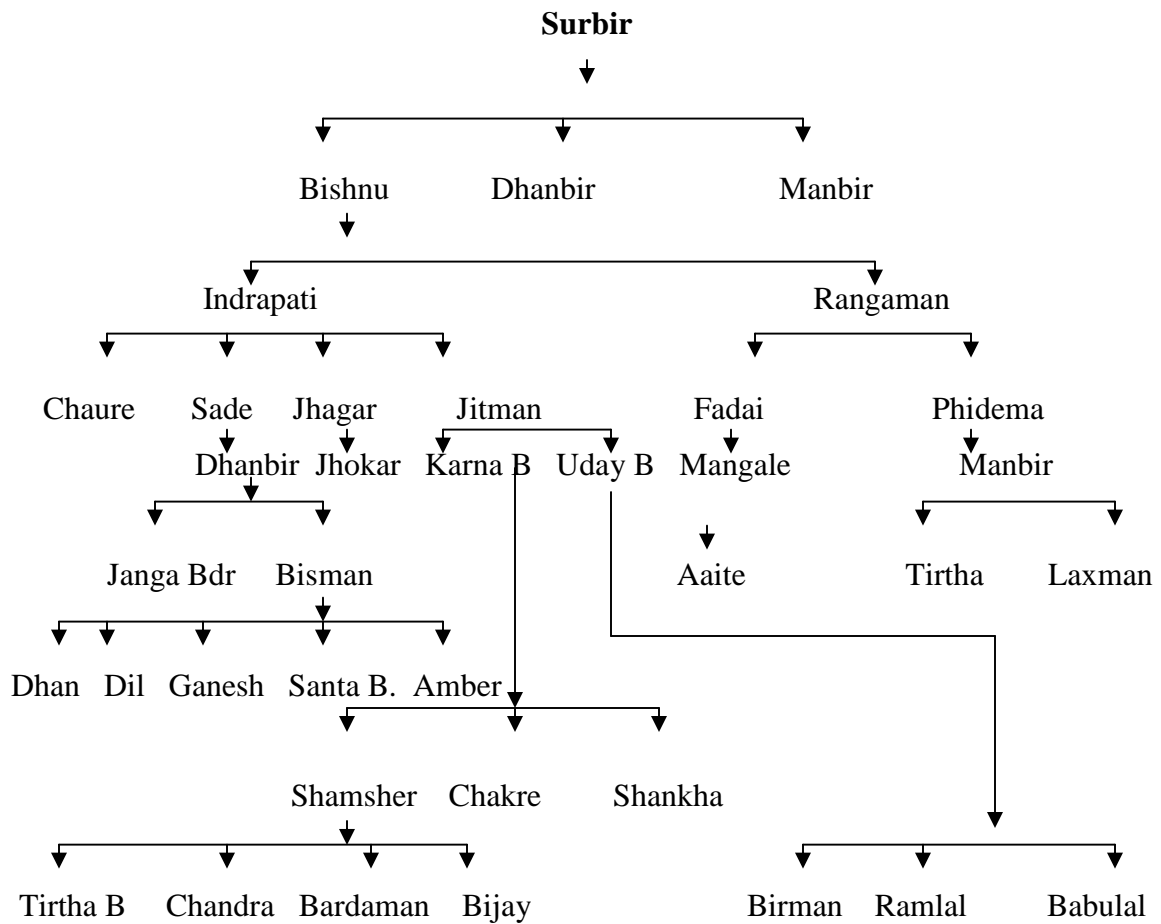
The first generation of Tamang who came here were Lata from the Moktan clan, Siridev from Yonjan clan and Surbir from Lo clan. Their history is oral. They have history about how the different clans of Tamangs came to Kerabari. The brief history of settlement of different clans is given below; besides, these clans there is another clan called Waiba Who has arrived in the village around 20/ 25 years ago but there is only one family of Waiba clan in the village. I have collected the clan history through the informants of the respective clans orally as there is no written clan history.

##### **The Lo Clan**

They are believed to have come from the Lhasa in Tibet then they came to Patan in Nepal then to Dabcha dahda (Nau Buddha). Later they came to Timal dahda then migrated to nigale (near to Sindhuligadi) then to Dhura bazaar in Kamalamadi and then finally to Kerabari. Surbir is believed to be the first person from the Lo Clan. The generation of Surbir till at present is provided in the diagram below.

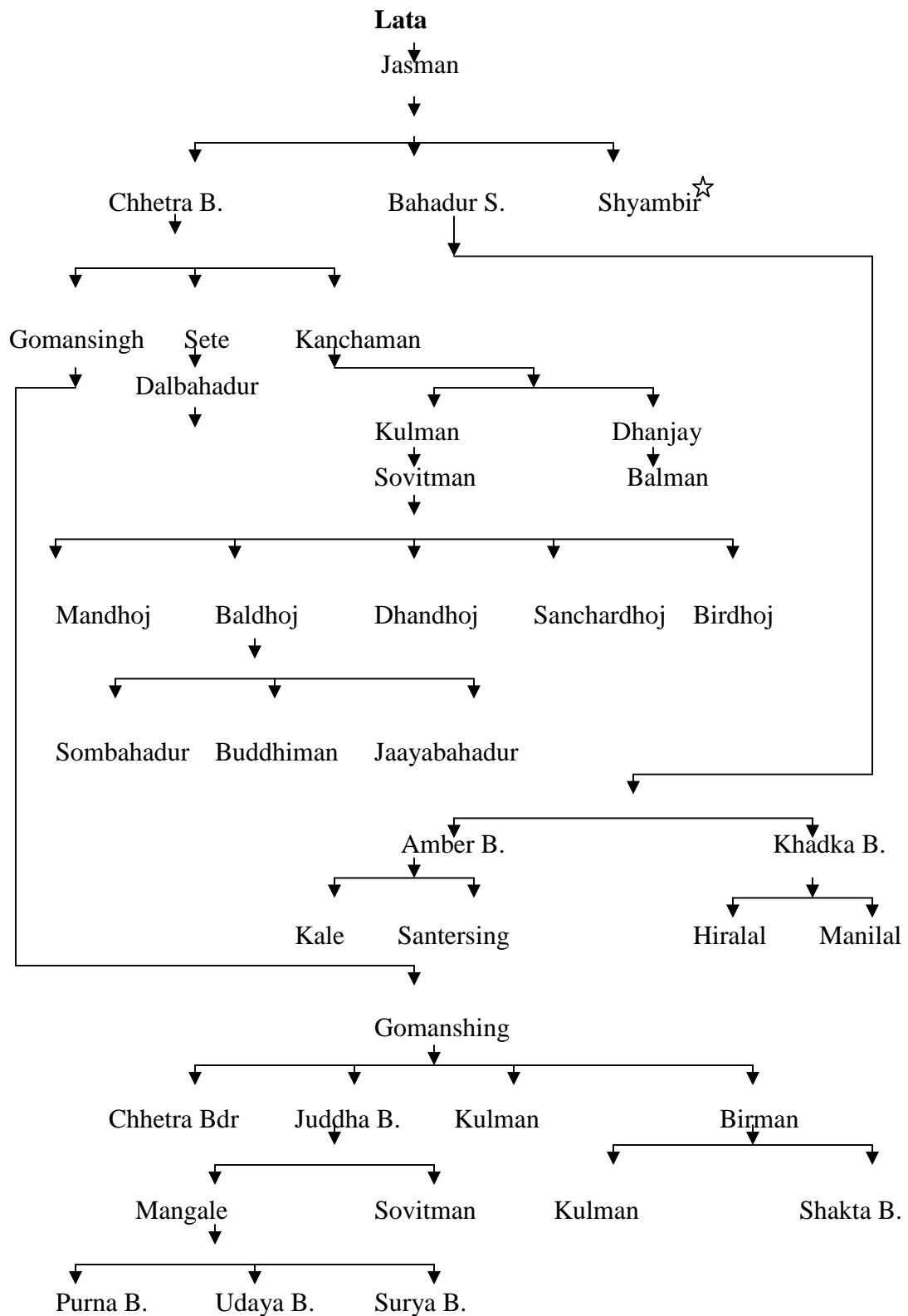
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<sup>B</sup> After my fieldwork, I had met the relative of the Waiba couple in Kathmandu. They told me that the Waiba couple had expired.



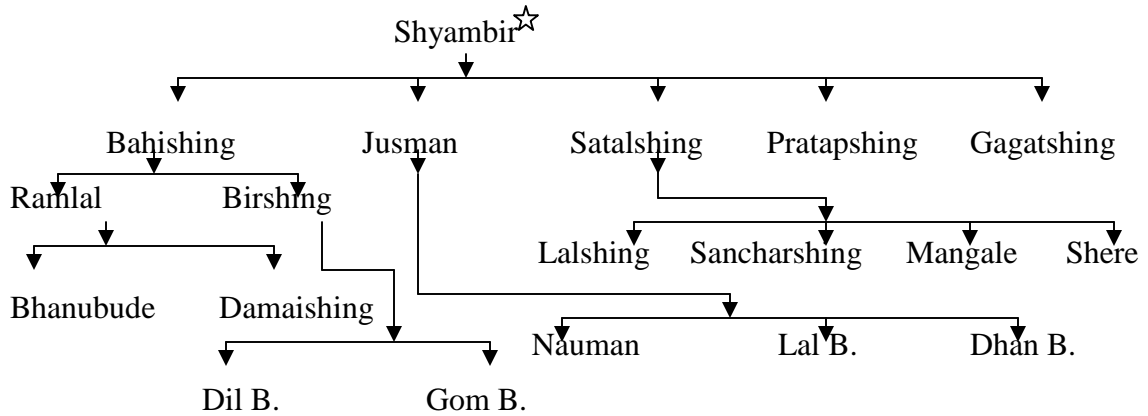
### The Moktan Clan

The Moktan clan are believed to have come from Mukpa (Lhasa Khasa) and later migrated to Rishing and to Chauthali. After there they moved on to Barabise and to Patan in Nepal. Later they again migrated to Khawang then to Sanggo and to Simalchour and again they continued to Temal then Roseh and later to Koshi Dunja then to Jhagajuli (Sindhuli) and then they further continued to Ratamata and finally settled in Kerabari. Lata is believed to be the first person of the Moktan Clan. The generation of Lata till at present is provided in the diagram below.



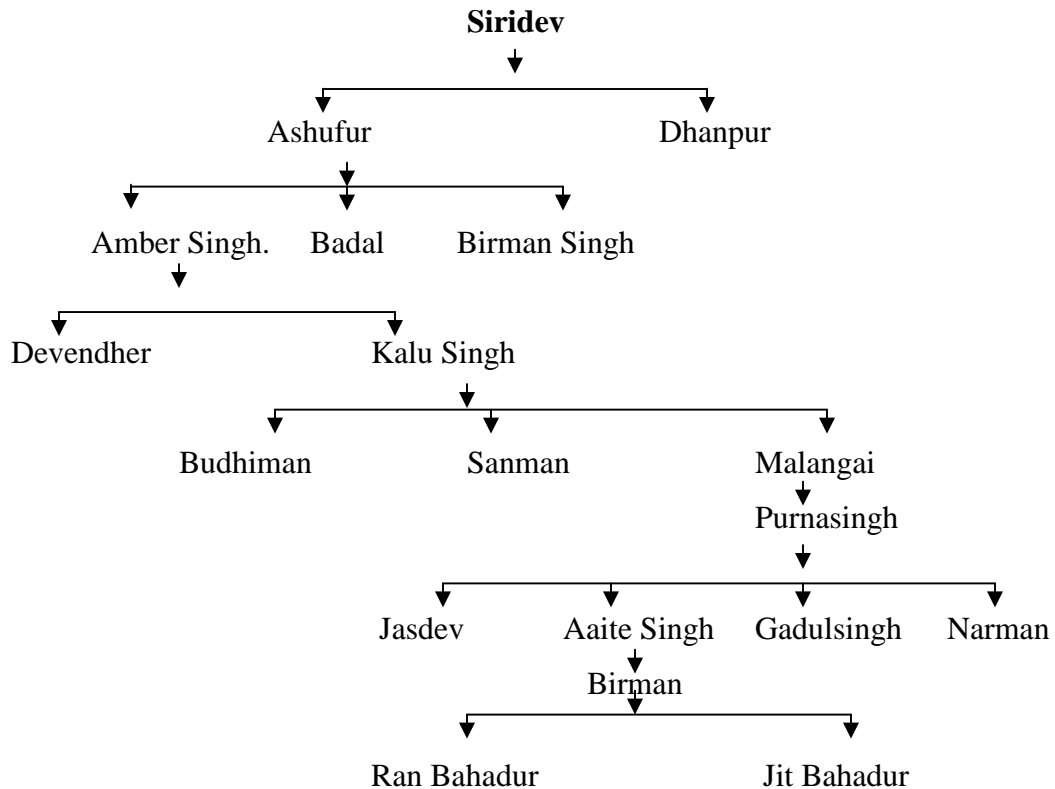


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### The Yonjan Clan

The Yonjan clans are believed to have come from Lhasa and then from there they migrated to Rishingo then to Khurkot. Later from there, they migrated to Nigale and finally settled in Kerabari. Siridev is believed to be the first person of the Yonjan Clan. The generation of Siridev at present is provided in the diagram below.



According to Bishman Lo (age around 78) since the names of the women are not required in most of the governmental works, it is not necessary to remember all their names. From getting Citizenship to legal papers of ownership of lands, the name of the women is not required to be mentioned. He further said "Unless you mentioned the names of your father and grandfather it is not possible to get citizenship and also when you have to transfer your property rights to your heir. The names of your mother or grandmother are not required to be mentioned anywhere, even when you are observing the ancestral worship you need only the names of male (Patrilineal line)". Therefore, it is difficult to mention the names of the women for the genealogy chart.

### **The Waiba Clan**

The Waiba clan was among the other clans settled in Kerabari some 20/25 years ago but today there is only one single Waiba clan in the village. It is believed that they had come from Shikarpur (it takes three/ four hours from Kerabari to reach there). According to the Waiba couple, they had come to live in Kerabari when their cousin married a man of Lo clan. They had left Shikarpur because they had no children of their own (The cousin is the daughter of their elder brother but they had looked after her for a long time and treated her like their own daughter), they had no other close relations (relatives) in Shikarpur. Therefore, once she got married they came to live near her in Kerabari. As it would be easy for her to look after them and after their demise, they could give her their property.

I have prepared the genealogy charts through interviews with different clans in Kerabari; Shaman Bishman Lo, Samsher Bahadur Lo, Bardaman Lo, Baldhoj Moktan, Mangale Moktan, Sakta Bahadur Moktan, Bir Bahadur Yonjan and Nar Bahadur Waiba.

## Chapter: Five

### Tamangs of Sindhuli: Culture and Society

Like other community in Nepal, the Tamangs of the Kerabari follow their own culture, clearly visible in their rituals and ceremonies; from ancestor worship to observation of Dashai and Tihar in their own cultural settings. Most of the marriages take place within the village or at least within their adjoining areas as it would be possible for the married women to take care of both her husband's family as well as her natal home. Inter caste marriages are not accepted and such couples are usually looked down. Nepali language is not spoken unless required. Usually, the local Shamans are always preferred to doctors. The most interesting features include the differences between of the Tamang of Kerabari with Tamangs of other parts of Nepal; from not observing Losar festival to social restriction among the women to work outside Kerabari as well as other such relevant differences.

#### **Kul Puja (ancestor worship)**

It is celebrated in every three years, during the month of *Falgun* (February/March), on Monday and Thursday. Every clan observes *Kul Puja* (ancestor worship) but types of the animal meant for sacrifice is different according to the clan. The Yonjon sacrifices an old she- goat and old hen (which has already laid eggs). The Moktan sacrifices a cock and an older goat. Lo uses a hen (it should not be black) and a white goat. Everyone observes the Kul Puja at their respective home.

**Bhimshing Puja:** On every Dashain, the day before the Phulpati (sixth day of Dashain) each clan gather together in separate places (The Moktan clan gather together in one place and so do other clans). They worship by sacrificing hen and cock.

**Bagwati Puja:** Every Dashain on the day of Phulpati (seventh day of Dashain), all the clans worship the Bagawati (the Goddess of Power) by sacrificing hen.

**Kali Devi Puja:** falls on every year during *Baishak Purnima* (on the full moon day of Baishak month). Each household gather at the southern part of Kerabari and worship the Kali Devi by sacrificing a young she- goat. There is a general belief that women should not attend this ritual. The Priest has to be a young boy of less than 16 years of age (The reason is that the Priest should be a virgin. The priest is appointed by the common consensus of the villagers. Once the boy attains the age of maintaining sexual relationship, the young priest is replaced). The Priest receives *one pathi* (four kilogram) grains from each household. In the Kerabari, all households raise goats, it is a religious belief that by observing this ritual, their goats are protected from diseases and wild animals.

In the recent three/ four years, the Tamang of Kerabari is realizing that they are Buddhist and since then they have been observing the birthday of Lord Buddha (*Baishak Purnima*). They observe it on a day before the Kali Dev Puja. In a way, they are in a gradual process of becoming Buddhist.

The major festival of Kerabari's Tamang are *Dashain, Tihar, Maghe Sankranti, Chaitai Dashai, Baishak Purnima* and *Sawane Sankranti*. There are three households who are Christian and do not observe any of the above-mentioned festivals nor any local *pujas* (rituals). They also do not observe sacrifice. Every Saturday they go to the Church in Sindhuli market and celebrate Christmas (birthday of Lord Jesus Christ).

## **5.1 Marriage Pattern**

Almost all marriages took place within the Kerabari hill. Marriages within the village make it easy for the women to take care of both of their maternal and husband families. In such case, the woman can watch both home and share all information. All parents want their sons / daughters to marry within the village as far as possible. If not

possible within the village, they try to arrange their children marriage, in the adjoining villages where there are related kin relationships. Chandra Bahadur low has married at adjoining place of Kerabari called- Fitting. His brother Bardaman low has married sister of Chandra Bahadur's wife.

Within 50 married couples in Kerabari hill, 32 couples were married in Kerabari hill, which is 65 per cent of all married couples. From Moktan clan the number married to Lo clan was 15, from Lo clan to Moktan was seven, from Yonjan to Lo clan was just one, from Yonjan to Moktan, it was six and from Moktan to Yonjan it was three. 18 brides were from outside the Kerabari hill and 15 brides were from adjoining villages their maternal home can reached after two/three hours by foot whereas three brides were from far away Kerabari hill which takes one whole day to reach. In the above mention, we can say that the trend of marriage system among the Tamangs in the Kerabari hill is limited mostly within the village and adjoining areas.

When a Tamang man/ woman get marry to other caste besides Tamang, he becomes 'Ghale' who is considered as low caste within Tamang. He is not allowed in the kitchen and/ or to participate in religious rites conducted within the clan household. When married to other caste, it is considered that he has boycotted and degraded the Tamang culture and social life. Tamang are very strict in case of inter caste marriage system. In Kerabari hill two couple had inter-caste marriage. One of the couple is living in Kathmandu. After their marriage this couple had come to Kerabari hill in the groom's home but the groom's mother did not allow them to enter the house, after the incident they have not returned to the Kerabari. The villagers also avoided the second couple socially and culturally. After such treatment from the villagers, they could not live normally in the village and very soon migrated and settled in an urban area. Such incidence clearly shows the strict nature of the Tamang in the Kerabari regarding inter caste marriages.

Here I would like to mention an incident which took place when I had come to this village for the first time on October 21, 2005 with my Thesis Supervisor, to get

introduced to the villagers for my six months of field work. At the time of departure, my Supervisor requested the villagers to cooperate with his student, at that moment one 55 years old woman joked and said "You can stay here but you should not marry any daughters of our village" but with her joke was the underlining clear message (and warning!) that I should mind my own business and my business should not extent to affairs with any girls of the village since I was not from a Tamang community. This statement has great meaning to the perception of inter-caste marriage in this hill.

## **5.2 Language and education**

All the Tamangs in Kerabari speak in their mother tongue - Tamang language. With outsiders, they speak in Nepali Language. They also call the Nepali language as *Prabate Bhasa*. There is one primary school. After completing class five, the students can go Sindhulimadi for lower secondary school. It can be reached after 2-3 hours, so very few students continue their studies after grade five. At present only 11 students are continuing their study. Six students are in grade seven and five students are in grade six. There is only one female student. During the agriculture seasons, they do not attend the classes. In Kerabari hill, not a single person has passed even SLC until my fieldwork.

## **5.3 Health**

In Kerabari, when anyone falls sick he/ she first tries to cure oneself at his/her own house. They will first get a cock/ hen and sprinkle water on it and pray to God for the recovery of the illness and in case one does not feel better after such ritual then they call a shamans (*dhami*) to take off bad spirits and cure them, to see whether the cause of their illness is some good or some Bad Spirit (if so which ones) and chant prayers calling out to the spirit to cure the illness and offering the hen/ cock and even a goat. (A hen/ cock, a goat or both are included in the rituals and the shaman frequently sprinkles water on them while praying or chanting mantra). In case the sick person does not feel better then they call another Shaman for treatment (they may call upto three/ four Shamans). Finally even after following such rituals one is not cured, then family member of the sick asks villager who is going to the market, to bring some medicine for such and such illness

(fever, stomach ache, dysentery). The medicines are brought from the pharmacy in the market. There is one government hospital in the market but almost all the villagers purchase the medicine from the pharmacy. Usually the villagers do not go to the hospital for treatment unless they are seriously ill. According to the villagers the persons who sell the medicines at the pharmacy are considered as doctors and even addressed as 'Doctor'.

In Kerabari, there is a strong belief of witches (women who practice evil witchcraft) who can harm you, they believe that if a witch sees you at the time when you are taking your food or when you are having menstruation, then one gets sick or the witch put on evil spells/ spirits upon the person. Interestingly, the villagers have identified which women in the village are witches and in case they saw them coming towards their way, they try to avoid them, or if they are eating they would hide their food, even the children are hidden, avoiding the look of such 'witch'. There is a general belief that if the witches make them sick then they should consult a Shaman and offer cock/hen or pigeons to wrath off the evil spell of the witch. Once an elderly woman told me not to take food from particular houses because the women of those houses are witches and I might get ill (she used to ask me regularly where I had gone and where I had taken my food and always said that I should avoid certain houses of 'witches'). Whereas the shamans would tell me do not worry, as he is there to cure me and throw away the witches and their spells. Such talks of witches were more common among the womenfolk than men. They complaint that the witches cause them stomachache during menstruation and other illness and it was only after they brought a shaman they recovered.

One 45 years old woman in the village said to me, "The witches ate up my mother (killed her) and now they want to eat me up. She had been suffering from diarrhoea, headache and fever since the last four/five days then she went to the Shaman but she was not recovered so the next day she called another Shaman, the Shaman took some rice and looked through them pushing around the grains (*jokhana herne*) and had told her that the witches had awoken the evil spirits. He then offered incense (*Gai ko Dhoop*) in the fire and offered the woman to drink little water after he chanted a few *mantras* over it. There was only slight recovery." The woman further told me that two years ago she was sick

and taken to the hospital where she was kept for five/six days but she did not feel better and it was only after she came back home and went to a Shaman she was told that an evil spirit called *Sansaremaya* was upon her. She offered one small she-goat, one pair pigeon, and one cock to the ritual process and finally she was recovered. "Whenever I see the witches I hide to avoid them. The witches who ate my mother are dead but there are new witches" she shared.

Another 28 years old woman, who was frequently sick and did not recover from treatment at hospital, said that it was only after she showed a Shaman, she felt much better. She had offered cock, pigeons, and small female – goat at the ritual process. She hides herself and her child in case she comes across any witches. In another similar incident a 22 years old man who had fallen sick after he had consumed food given by a woman said, " I did not believe in witches and though my sister had warned me not to consume the food offered by that woman (believed to be a witch), after two days I had high fever and diarrhea, I had to call a Shaman and later I became well, after this incident I have started to believe in Witches."

The Shaman is regarded as a very important person of the village and he is held in high position for example- more than the Chief District Officer. During the festive season, he is generously offered locally made wine and meat. Usually in a year one person per household, provide free labor for one day to work in the Shamans' fields. This is all done out of respect and to make him happy. Though there are plenty of cocks and hens in the village, the villagers rarely sell them (except for the Christian households); they are usually kept to offer the God and Spirits at times when they fall sick. They are needed at the time of ritual rites to wrath off evil spell. One villager even told me that to eat a cock one has to be a Shaman.

#### **5.4 Nature of Tamangs villagers**

The Tamang usually perceive those who speak Tamang as 'we' and those who speak Nepali language as 'them'. They do not perceive Nepali language as their language;



they call it '*Parbate*' or *Khas* language. Those who can speak Tamang and eat their food (meat) and drink wine they are considered as 'we' (even if they are outsider they are considered as close to them) and those who cannot speak their language there is not much respect for them and they address them with verbs like '*ta*', '*timi*' (these words means 'you' but these terms are particularly used like '*timi*' when addressing younger person, the verb '*ta*' is used with disrespect) to such outsider they don't share their feelings or talk much. Generally, people of Kerabari do not like to talk strangers when they meet them the first time. According to Keshav Tamang "new people ask too much questions they want to know many things but we have no time to talk with them. Besides, we are really not interested to meet or talk with such strangers and we also feel it is better not to visit them as well.' (Keshav is son of the former revenue collector of Kerabari). One early morning, Keshav Tamang came to me and told me that three new people had arrived in the village and he had found that they had arranged meeting in the village. Keshav requested me to ask the strangers and find out who they were. Where they had come from? Why they were here and so on. Since I had been there for the last three months, the villagers were getting used to me, I have become like one of the villager in Kerabari. Because of this Keshav shared his curiosity and feelings with me.

I also faced similar problems during the initial period of my fieldwork; after few days in Kerabari. I have visited an old woman (She is from the Moktan clan); just for a chat. I asked her ask about Tamang culture, at that time she responded normally but later on she had inquired about me with other villagers and told them to be cautious and why should they share their culture with me. I came to know about this incident after two months. Later I began to visit her frequently; gradually she began sharing with me all things and treated me as a family member. Whenever a new person arrives in the village, the news of his/ her arrival is spread rapidly. Once the villagers of Kerabari know the strangers properly then they treat them in friendly ways. The Tamangs of Kerabari are very frank, hard working, respectful, cooperative, and gentle. They do not want to visit strangers in the village unless they have some work or purpose. It was only after my long

stay in the field and interaction with every villager that I was treated as one of them and trusted. They were very frank in sharing their opinions and stories of their life.

## **5.5 Tamangs of Kerabari Compared with other area of Tamangs**

Tamangs of Kerabari claim their mother tongue is the actual language of the Tamangs. The Tamangs of Kerabari could not completely understand Tamang program aired in the Radio Nepal. Bartaman Lo said, “The Tamang language program is broadcasting in the Nepal Radio is the language of western Tamang so we cannot understand it completely. Similarly, we cannot also fully understand the Tamang language of Sindhupalanchok as they mix Sherpa language while speaking. The pure Tamang language is ours. The Tamang languages differ according to the areas. The Tamang language spoken in the districts of Nuwakot, Rasuwa and Dhading is the one used in the Tamang program in Nepal Radio. Therefore, it cannot represent the Tamang language of all the Tamangs living in different areas. The Tamang people in these areas (Nuwakot, Rasuwa and Dhading) are in power that’s why they have used their own Tamang language for the Tamang Program in Nepal Radio”

Weaving is also considered as an important part of the Tamang culture especially in villages. According to Katherine March who have done an extensive research on the Tamang women share that "Weaving, especially the weaving of women's shirts is a vital symbols of the Tamang women's world. Tamang women evaluate one another in terms of their weaving: a skilled weaver is thought of as a clever, hardworking, admirable woman" (March 1979). However, the women in Kerabari do not weave at all, in fact, they do not have any idea about what actually is weaving all about and are engaged mostly in agricultural work and animal husbandry. Not only the weaving but the Tamangs of Kerabari as mentioned earlier do not paint *Thankas* or make wooden masks, this is interesting when we compare them with the Tamangs of other areas, like Antweiler has mentioned about the Tamangs that "in the core part of Rishango (southeast of

Sindhupalchowk) 34 out of the 64 families are engaged in non- agricultural works. Six families are producing *Thankas* and five are carving wooden masks with painting of the Buddhist Pantheon and wooden musical instruments" (Antweiler 1984: 105). I was told that there were no such practices in the Kerabari villages since the ancient times. But I found out those only five households out of the 47 households who made *Nanglo* (wicker work tray) and sell them to the near Sindhulimadi market.

The most interesting fact is that the Tamangs of Kerabari do not observe Losar at all. Losar is a major Tamang festival some other part of Nepal. It is observed by the Bhote, Tamang, Lamas, and the Tibetans. Indra Bahadur Tamang (2061BS) has written about Tamang culture and said that Losar is the main festival of Tamangs but surprisingly the Tamangs of Kerabari do not observe this festival and many of them do not know about it either. Tirtha Bahadur Lo said, "I have heard that in other places the Tamang celebrate the *Losar* festival with great celebrations but here we don't observe it since the times of our father and grandfather's days". Similarly, Mangali Maya, 82 years said that she did not know what the very word *Losar* means.

Unlike the Tamang of other areas the Tamang of Kerabari do not mind been called a *Bhote* - a term that many Tamangs do not prefer to choose, though the term 'Tamang' was given by the Government to those who spoke the Tibetan language, long ago the Tibetan Speakers were considered as *Bhote*. The Tamang are interesting in that they lacked official recognition before 1932 (Levine 1987: 73). It has the term that outsiders use with caution as it is generally found that the Tamang do not like being called a *Bhote*. Levine in his study of the Tamang, said that "Tibetan Speakers (or *Bhote*, a term I avoid because of its negative connotations) (Ibid 76)". But The Tamangs of Kerabari are happy to be called a *Bhote*. Baldhoj Moktan, 56 years said, "We are called *Bhote* because we won the *Bhot* (Tibet) after a great war. We are the brave *Bhote*. We also won the Tibet in war that's why we are *Soon Bhote* (Golden *Bhote*)". They take the term *Bhote* as winning the war in *Bhot* (Tibet). Mangale Moktan also shared the same

view that they were known as *Bhote* after their great conquest of *Bhot*. Therefore, for the Tamang of Kerabari the term '*Bhote*' is taken with pride and not 'degrading'.

It is commonly seen that the women of Tamang do not have to change their surname after marriage. "The Tamang women do not have to change their surname after their marriage" (Tamang 2005:3). Their surname remains with them for life. If a 'Moktan' women is married with a 'Yonjan'. Her surname remains 'Moktan' as per the tradition. Hence, "The Surname at birth remains till the end" (Yonjan 2006: 157). But in Kerabari, I found that all the Tamang women have changed their surname after marriage. In case a Moktan woman had registered her name as Moktan in the voter list before marriage then after her marriage she has changed her surname from the voter list and used the surname of her husband. Women in Kerabari who have made her citizenship after marriage have made it on their husband surname. They do not include their own clan name in such citizenship and it is only the surname of their husband, which they use for any government documents. So the statement of Yonjan mentioned above that "Tamang women do not change their surname" cannot be taken as the ultimate truth when seen in the context of the Tamang women in Kerabari.

Another fact is that the women in Kerabari do not go outside for work unlike the Tamang women in other areas. In the Tamling village, the Tamang women participate in the seasonal wage labor opportunity and road construction as equally as their men. "The wage work we report for Timling women is nearly all seasonally available road construction and portering, rather than year round factory work as can be found elsewhere. Some young women from Timling have begun to express a desire to live in the excitement of Katmandu rather than their village (Dahal, Fricke and Lama 1996: 332)." In Kathmandu they are many Tamang girls working in carpet factories" (UN 2004) but the women of the Kerabari do not go outside for wage labor.

In Nepal due to extreme poverty similarly its economic and political relationship with India has facilitated the trafficking of Nepali girls/women in brothels in India. Mostly the women from Tamang (in majority), Sherpas, Lama, and Gurungs have been targeted for trafficking by brokers (Human Right Watch 1995). It is generally found that trafficking of Tamang girls/ women are mostly from the areas where the Tamangs are found in large numbers such as in the remote hill villages of Nuwakot, Sindhupalchowk, Kavre and Dhading. However, in Kerabari I did not find such cases, the reason may be the Tamangs in Kerabari do not consider their women working outside as good trend. Almost all the men of Kerabari are used to go to New Delhi to work. The womenfolk even if they go, they join only their husband and confine themselves within the domestic life.

It is not considered good for women in Kerabari to go outside for work. This could be the main reason why the Tamang women in Kerabari have not worked even if they join their husband in New Delhi or other places. Chinni Maya Yonjan, 27 years had gone to New Delhi with her husband and stayed there for seven months but she did not do any work though she had found one because her husband did not allow her to work outside. She further explained that in Kerabari there is no such practice for a woman to go outside and work. Bijay, 25 years shares the same view, "The women should do the household work. They should not go outside to earn money. Even if they have to join their husband, they should not be involved in any wage labor." Hence, unlike the Tamang women in other regions who work along with their men, the Tamang women in Kerabari do not travel outside for work because it is not considered good for the Tamang women in Kerabari to work outside the household. Until the end of my field stay, I did not found any Tamang women who had gone to work outside Kerabari.

From the above-mentioned different aspects of the Kerabari Tamangs from their language, beliefs, and cultural practices, we can say the Tamangs of Kerabari are different and distinct from the Tamangs of other areas.

## **Chapter: six**

### **Tamangs of Sindhuli: Economy and Politics**

Agriculture is the major source of livelihood in Kerabari, it depends entirely on rainfall. Beside agriculture, they are also involved in selling oranges, pears, bamboo products, as well as wage labour in construction sites. The villagers spend significant time guarding their fields from monkeys. However their major source of income is gained from long term migration to India especially to Delhi. Most of them begin as domestic workers and gradually move to other areas such as helpers, wage labours and security guards. Local politics is dominated by the Lo and Moktan clans whereas the Yonjan do not have a single representative in any local institutions. The women representative is at minimum. The Tamangs depend on the Sindhulimadi market for their day to day necessities such as groceries, small business transactions, meetings with friends, and relatives. The Tamang villagers do not trust the government offices and avoid them as far as possible.

#### **6.1 Livelihood in Kerabari**

Kerabari villagers depend on agriculture, animal husbandry and especially wage labor, seasonal selling of oranges and generally by working in India for their livelihood. Agriculture is the major source of livelihood. They depend on the rainfall entirely as there is no water drain for irrigate land. They generally have to plant rice when it is raining and sometimes they bring in the drinking water pipe to irrigate fields. The plantation depends entirely on the rain unless there is good rainfall the plantation is not good. The major crop is corn, which is planted during the season of *Baishak* (April/May) when the corn starts to ripe, it is attack by the monkeys from the nearby village making it difficult to protect the corns, the fields are guarded by the members of the family. They usually build a shed (they call it *tawa*) around the field and stay there from 4 am to 7:30

pm at night. Those who guarded the field were from the age of six to 76 years of age. The field should not be left unguarded even for a minute.

During my field work I had several encounter with such incidences where the corns were eaten up by the monkeys, this is a common problem in the village. Once I was having a chat with Birman Yonjan (age 76) nearby his field within this moment, the monkeys had eaten up the corns thrice, his tireless attempts to drive away the monkeys was fruitless as they would somehow always managed to return back. In another such case of a 75 years old woman, who had left her field earlier than the usual time, as the sky was covered with black clouds but an hour later she came rushing back to her field shouting and screaming that the monkeys have eaten up her corns but it was too late.

Since all the villagers have dry land (fields) and they grow corn and millet, and at the time of harvest, the fields have to be guarded properly against the monkeys. All the household of Kerabari are busy guarding their fields during *Asar* (June/July) to *sharwan* (July/August). In Rakase cluster, five members per house guard their cornfields. The Rakase cluster is surrounded by jungle. In this season, the hot news (or screams that can be heard) of Kerabari hill is "*Magarse makai jhiripai chaji*"(The Monkey has eaten up all the corns).

Table 4

**Average Distribution of Land, Grains, Animal husbandry per household**

Land distribution		Grain distribution			Animal	
Irrigate	Dry land	Paddy	corn	millet	cow	goat
5.24( <i>Kattha</i> )	11.66( <i>kattha</i> )	536 kg	712 kg	640 kg	4	7

Bigha= 0.677 hectares

Kattha=0.0339 hectares

(Source: Household survey July 2006)

In Kerabari hill the average irrigated land distribution is 5.24 *Katha* per household. Dry land distribution size is 11.97 *katha*. The grains distribution size of paddy is 536 kg; corn 712 kg, and millet 640 kg. Likewise, in animal husbandry distribution

numbers of cows are four and seven goats. Cows are kept for ploughing and goats for meat, the male goats are especially reared for sale.

Within the 36 households only 25 households have irrigated lands; which are of two types in the Kerabari hill; one is monsoons irrigated land which totally depends upon monsoon rain (*Aakase khet*) and the other type of land are those which get easily destroyed from flood from the Gairamtar *khola* especially if it is a heavy rainfall. In local terms, this type of lands is known as *Bagare khet* and most of them have such type of irrigated land. On such irrigated land, they grow rice and corn.

During the month of *Mangsir* (November/ December) to *Magh* (January/ February), almost all the villagers of Kerabari hill are busy carrying oranges from Ratanchura VDC (which can be reached after three hours of walks from north east of Kerabari hill) The villagers usually buy the oranges in whole sale rate and sell them again in Sindhulimadi market in small profits. They earn from one thousand to seven thousands in the transaction. Male and female participate equally in this work. Out of 47 households, only five households do not carry the oranges, they weave baskets from stripes of bamboo. They sell the bamboo products in Sindhulimadi market in both wholesale and retail prices. They earn about four/ five thousands per year and manage their household expenditure. Some people also carry peaches from the Ratanchur VDC, and sale them in Sindhuli market, making around fifteen hundred per year. They also work as wage labor if any construction project runs in the adjoining areas. During my fieldwork period, 38 people have been working in India.

Male members of the Kerabari, become free from farming when they join the wage labor. For example, whenever they would complete their rice plantation or take few days break, they work as a wage labor on the construction of, on going semi urban Sindhuli drinking water project on the lower side of Kerabari. They would join the construction work early morning and later work in their field planting corn. Ninety



percent of Kerabari male work there. Earlier they have been working placing pipeline but this project has stopped in midway. After that, the people of kerabari worked in the community forest, where timber was sold by the community. They work with the timber broker as a wage labor. Then they started to plant rice. During such plantation whenever they get spare time, they carry cement for the reservation tank of the *Sana Saharikaran Khanepani Yojana* (Mini Water Drinking Project). During the month of July 2006 there was reservation tank casting program where 25-30 male were working day and night continuously for NRs three hundred per day. After the season plantation of millet is over (July/ August), most of the Kerabari people carry pears (*Naspati*) from neighboring VDC Ratanchura and sale them in the Sindhuli bazaar to retailers businessman. Therefore, we can say, they are hardworking people. At the time of wage labor if the weather is not good or it is raining, then they go to their fields to work even if it is just for one hour.

## **6.2 Long term migration: Pattern, Place, Age, and Gender**

Generally, from the age of 14-15, the people of Kerabari start to go to India but it was also found that man of around 20- 30 years old had gone to India for the first time. Gom Bahadur Moktan, (34 years) had gone to India with his Uncle when he was nine years old. Similarly, Purna Bahadur Moktan 36 years, after Primary education in Kerabari had gone to Delhi with his village friends. He was just 12 years old. Sankha Bahadur Lo (46 years) had first visited India when he was 20 years old. He said that since there was no source of income he had to go to India for work. Sakta Bahadur Lo (48 years) had gone to India with his brother when he was 30 years of age. Santa Bahadur Lo (54 years) shared his experience of going to a foreign country when he was just 15 years of age. He had left his village to go to India when he reached Jaleswor (near Janakpur), he met a friend who told him that they should go to Bhutan where they can make good income, after this meeting he went to Bhutan with his friend. He further said that since at the beginning, he could not go with his village friends to Delhi he ended up in Bhutan otherwise he would have been in Delhi.

According to Mangale Moktan (56 years old), When one of the villager had gone to India for the first time and returned to Kerabari, he had taken two/ three men of Kerabari along with him to work in Delhi. After this, the trend of Kerabari men going to Delhi for work started. "Since he was the villager to go out of village for the first time, everyone used to call him a *Lahure* (someone who works abroad and earn good money). He earned a lot of money and made a house in the Sindhuli market. No one has earned money like he had earned from India". At the time of my fieldwork, 36 of the man had gone to New Delhi, three of them in Shillong (North-eastern part of India) and two of them in Kathmandu. Most of them used to go to New Delhi because there were many other villagers working there and they used to help the other new villagers to find works. All the man of Kerabari had at least once gone to Delhi. During my fieldwork, Chandra Bahadur Lo (34 years) who had come to the village to work in his fields (during the season of plantation) said, "in Delhi it is more fun than in Kerabari, we can meet all our village friends there, it is so lonely in the village. I can't wait to get back there".

Overall, I found that nine to 30 years old men go for work in Delhi for the first time and around the age of 45 most of them make the last journey to Delhi then they stay in Kerabari. There is no practice of Tamang women in Kerabari to go to India or outside the village for work. At the time of my fieldwork, only three women had gone outside Kerabari with their husbands but they had returned after one year. It is not considered good for women in Kerabari to go outside for work. Therefore, even if they join their husbands they do not work outside. Chini Maya Yonjan (26 Years) had gone to Delhi with her husband for nine months but did not work outside. The men of Kerabari had gone to Delhi atleast once in their lifetime whether it was for work or to meet their relatives. Hence, Delhi is the main destination for work and for long migration outside Kerabari.

### 6.3 Type of work

Most of the men in Kerabari who went to work in Delhi began job as domestic servants and later after they become aware of the city, they would move on for other jobs. The work as domestic servants for the beginner villager, is considered as the good start as it gave them time to get used to the new place and it also ensure proper fooding and lodging from the owners. Gom Bahadur Moktan, 34 years shares his experiences, "When I was nine years of age I went to Delhi and till the age of 14 I worked as a domestic servant, at first I used to clean the house and the utensils and later I learnt to do the entire household task. After that I again worked as a domestic servant in another place." At present he works in a beauty parlor, his job is to trim and make hair/ beards of the Punjabis (a community in India).

When Chandra Bahadur Lo had gone to New Delhi for the first time he had also worked as a domestic servant. Similarly Ran Bahadur Yonjan (30 years), he had gone to Delhi when he was nine years old and worked as a domestic servant. He said "when you worked as a domestic servant, it is easy to learn the language, the work is also easy and the village friends find the work for you when you first go get there, you don't have the problem of fooding and lodging as it is provided by the owners. Though the salary is less but it gives you the time and opportunity to understand the new place and its environment." According to Purna Bahadur Moktan he worked as a domestic servant for seven months because of the fooding and lodging facility. He said that it is like a trend that those who first go to Delhi work as a domestic servant and later on move to other jobs. Shankhar Bahadur Lo said, "When I first went there I worked in a hotel cleaning utensils, working in a hotel means you do not have to worry about food and lodge and it provide you time to understand the new place and find other works. It is first important to survive, as for works you can find them with time. My friends had found the job in the hotel for me. "

After working as a domestic servant and once the villagers learn the language and understand well the new environment (place), they search for new works like wage labor, helper at shops etc. Tul Bahadur Moktan used to previously work as a domestic servant then later he worked in a beauty parlour as a cleaner, it was only after seven months that he began to work as a helper in the parlour and for the last 15 years, he is still working in the same parlour. Similarly, Babu Lal Lo used to previously work in a hotel and later he worked in the beauty parlour. Surya Bahadur Yonjan, also worked as a domestic servant then in a beauty parlor. Finally he worked in a Tailoring shop as a helper and after three months he started to stitch the cushion covers and later he was paid on piece basis.

Purna Bahadur had also started his work as a domestic worker and later he worked as a security guard and for the last eight years, he has been working in a Beauty parlor Whereas Sakta Bahadur Moktan worked as a security guard in American Embassy for six years and later after his father called him back in the village and after that he has never returned to India. Similarly, Sakha Bahadur Lo, had earlier worked at a hotel then he began working as a security guard in a biscuit factory for one year then later he came back to village and after two years he went the Shillong (North- eastern part of India) and worked in a coal mine for six months and he later went back to Delhi and worked as security guard. After this, he returned back to his village and then he went to Kathmandu and collected sands from the rivers of Bishnumati for 16 days and earned 16 hundred and finally returned to Kerabari and after that he said he never went outside for work.

Most of the men in Kerabari work at the National Beauty Parlor in Delhi. The reasons were that the work was skill oriented, the work was not heavy and the owner was also good, he would allowed any old helper (basically to trim the hair/ beard of the Punjabis) to work again when they return back to Delhi even after two/four years. Hence, once they get the job in the parlour nobody tried to leave the job. Most of them return to their village during the season of agriculture (March to August) and after the season is over they return to Delhi (September to February). Since they could work in the parlour even after six months and they need not look for other jobs, most of the villagers prefer to

work in the parlour. Tul Bahadur said, "Even after two/three years when we go in the parlour we are given the job, as we were the earlier helper. Besides the salary, there are tips and if we work on off days we were given seven percent of the sales and these are the reasons why everyone wants to work there." The owner has 3/ 4 beauty parlor and the most of the villagers work there.

The people of Kerabari whenever they go outside to work whether its New Delhi, Shillong or Kathmandu, they are sincere and hard working. Chandra Bahadur Lo said that during his two years of work as a security guard, he did double duty of 16 hours per day. Similarly, Sankha Bahadur Lo worked in a biscuit factory for six months for upto 16 hours per day. Babu Lal said that he used to work even during his day off in the Parlour.

#### **6.4 Pay scale and expenditure**

Sankha Bahadur Lo said, "When people first go to Delhi they work as a domestic servant and as a helper at home and hotel but the money covers only fooding, lodging and some little expenses." Before 26 years ago he used to work in a hotel cleaning utensils, he was paid Rs. 60 IC (Indian Currency) per month as a salary besides food and lodging. After six months he worked as a security guard, he used to receive 300 IC per month. He used to spend Rs. 150 IC per month on food and saved the rest Rs. 150 IC. In two years he was able to return home with Rs. Three thousands and five hundred NC (Nepali Currency). All this saving was spend on household expenditure. After one month, he again went to Delhi and worked in a biscuit factory he worked for 16 hours (double duty) daily and received nine hundred IC per month. He used to spend two hundred IC on personal expenditure such as food and lodging. After one year, he returned home with eight thousand NC but most of the money was spent on clearing previous debts and for other household expenses.

When Surya Bahadur Yonjan had started out as a domestic servant, he used to receive 150 IC including food and lodging. Later while working at a beauty parlour as a

helper he used to earn 250 IC per month. After four years, he returned home with ten thousand NC. He spent all the money on his marriage and in other related expenses. After two months he again went to Delhi and worked as a helper in a tailoring shop after three months, he began to stitch mattress cover at piece rate. He used to earn three thousand IC per month. He brought ten thousand NC when he came to his village. His tailoring job was seasonal (August/ September to December/ January) and the rest of the year, he used to work in his fields (village) in Kerabari. All his earning from New Delhi was used for household expenditure such as rice, meat, kerosene, clothes, kitchen, oil, treatment etc.

Similarly, Babulal Lo shares his experiences, “Twenty years ago when I had first went to Delhi, I worked in a hotel cleaning utensils. I was given Rs. 150 IC besides food and lodging, after two months I worked as a domestic servant for Rs. 250 IC per month. After four months, I did similar work in another house. At the beginning, I was paid four hundred IC that was increased to seven hundred IC after four months. I worked there for nine months and then worked in a beauty parlour and I am still working there. The salary per month is one thousand and six hundred IC and seven per cent of the sales as commission. I saved two thousand and five hundred IC per month. Until now, I have earned about one hundred and fifty thousand NC. I brought a dry land for Rs. 35 thousands and irrigated land for Rs. 30 thousand. I built a house and got married. I have also given Rs. 50 thousand loan on interest”

In case of Chandra Bahadur Lo, 17 years ago when he had gone to New Delhi for the first time he worked as a domestic servant, he used to get two hundred IC per month including food and lodging. After two years he worked as a security guard he used to get one thousand IC per month and at the same time he also worked as a salesperson, all together he used to earn one thousand and nine hundred IC per month. After food and lodging expenses, he used to save one thousand and two hundred IC per month. Presently for the last eight years, he has been working in a beauty parlour in Delhi. His salary per month is eighteen hundred and seven percent of sales as commission; all together he

earned three thousand and five hundred IC. One thousand and five hundred IC is spent on food and lodging and other expenses he is able to save two thousand IC per month. He said, "Till now I have earned two hundred thousand NC, with the money I brought 15 *katha* of dry land and three *katha* of irrigated land (last year it was destroyed by flood). I spend sixty thousand for building a house, paid back the loan I had taken for my marriage. I did not get any inheritance from my father. All this, I earned on my own. Earlier there were many problems but now it is fine, with hard works we are surviving. If I had not worked in New Delhi then we would had very weak economic conditions."

Purna Bahadur Moktan had gone to Delhi when he was 12 years old, for six months, he worked as a domestic servant just for food and lodging only. "After that I worked in a hotel for three years for 50 IC per month. I returned home with three thousand NC. After one month, I returned to New Delhi and worked in a shop for 150 IC per month for six months then I worked at a beauty parlour and I have been working there for the past 13 years, at present the monthly salary is two thousand and one hundred, and seven percent of the sales commission. He said, "Till now I have earned one hundred thousand NC. I brought five *Katha* of field and build two houses, (in one, my father lives). Before I started to work in India, it was difficult to see any money in the village. There is no source of income in the village. In New Delhi, no matter what, we can still have some money".

Tul Bahadur Moktan had worked for the first time in a beauty parlour for a monthly salary of 150 IC as a cleaner and later he started to cut as well as trim hair and beard, he was paid six hundred IC. He is still working in the same beauty parlour and all together with the salary and seven percent of the sales commission, his total salary is four thousand IC. Fifteen hundred IC is spent on food, lodging and the rest money is spent on playing cards, watching movies and for other entertainment. He said, "I spent all the money there and till now I have not saved any money at all. Once I lost twenty thousand IC while playing cards. During the *Tihar (Deepawali festival)* I play lot of cards and

drink a lot" He further said", what is life? We should enjoy while we live after all we can't take anything along with us after we die".

Gom Bahadur Moktan when he was working in Delhi for the first time as a domestic servant, he was paid 150 IC. Later he worked in another house where he was paid Rs one thousand and one hundred IC and after four years he started to work in a beauty parlour and has continued working there for the last 16 years. He said, "At present altogether I get three thousand and five hundred IC as salary and seven percent of the sales commission. Once a year I sent home four/five thousand NC for household expenditure and the rest money I spent it on playing cards, drinking and watching movies. All my other friends also do the same thing, while enjoying out, we do not realize how fast the money is spent especially during the festive seasons. It is very difficult to save money".

Similarly, Sakta Bahadur Moktan had worked as a security guard in the American Embassy in Delhi for 6 years. He was paid two thousand and five hundred IC per month along with food and lodging. He said "in six years I managed to send only six thousand NC at home, all the rest money I spent it on playing cards, watching movies and enjoying out. After six years my father called me back after that, I never went to India to work again. Sometimes I go there to visit my son who works there".

It was found that those who stayed in India for a long time developed certain skills. Such as, in case of Tirtha Bahadur Lo, aged 43 had worked for 22 years in New Delhi and such long migration has certainly helped for his personality development. Presently he is the Chairperson of the Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Committee (supported by the World Bank). Everyone in the village admire his ways of working. According to 76 years old Birman Yonjan, "Titha Bahadur Lo has leadership qualities, he knows how to deal with different types of persons and how to mobilize the community for community service".



It is a common belief in Kerabari that those who live outside the village for a long time, understands and knows national and international things (issues) and it also helps in personality and skills development. A son should go outside (within his country and abroad) and then only he becomes a real man. Only then, he understands what life is. I also agree with their view, as those who had spent a long time outside were comparatively forward and progressive as compared to others. Amber Bahadur Lo had worked and learnt to repair watches, radios, CD, DVD in New Delhi for five years. At present, he has found a job in the market near the village. Similarly, those who had spent a long time in New Delhi can all speak and understand Hindi language but at the same time, they have got into the bad habit of heavy drinking, playing cards, enjoying out, and not saving money while working.

Many of the Kerabari people go to India especially New Delhi and many of them start as a domestic servant in the initial period. After some times they take up other works. Usually their income is used in household expenditure, to build home and usually the rest, they spent in drinking alcohol, playing cards, watching movies. Few people invest in land. The trend of going to New Delhi is very high as compared to any other places outside Kerabari, after Delhi they go to other places such as the northeastern part of India like Shillong and Sikkim and within Nepal; they mostly go to Kathmandu, the capital city of Nepal. Still now, no one has gone to any other foreign countries beside India.

Two people earned a lot of money in India; one had migrated in Sidhuli Bazar (headquator of Sindhuli district) whereas the other person lives in Kathmandu. He worked in carpet factory for a long time and got married. At present, he is doing business in Chabhil in Kathmandu. He does not want to settle or go back to Kerabari. Those people who earn a bit more money, they migrate from Kerabari. Mostly those who work in New Delhi in India spent a lot of money for drinks and playing card.

## 6.5 Politics

Among the four clan of Tamangs in the Kerabari Hill, the Lo and the Moktan have heavy influence over the local politics. The Yonjan and the Waiba who make up the minority in the village do not have any representation in the local politics or any other local institution/ organization. In Kerabari, there are three local institutions- Kerabari Primary School Management Committee, Gairam-Thakur Community Forestry Committee, and Kerabari Drinking Water User Committee. In the School Management Committee, among the nine representatives the Chairperson including four other members are from the Lo clan and four others members are from the Moktan. There is only one woman member from the Lo clan. Similarly, in the Community Forestry Committee there are 11 representatives in which the Chairperson and the Secretary including the three other members make up the five representatives, from the Lo clan and there are four representatives from Moktan and two from Thapa village - the upper village of Kerabari. There is only one woman in this committee from the Moktan clan.

The construction project of the Kerabari Drinking Water User Committee has eleven members which includes six members from the Lo clan (Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and Treasurer and other three members) and four from the Moktan clan whereas the Secretary is the headmaster of the Primary School (He is not the resident of Kerabari). There are three women member in the committee, two from Moktan and one from Lo clan. Though in terms of population, the Lo and the Moktan clan are in equal number, the Lo clan is leading the local institution (higher level of representation). They stand out as the elite members.

When I observed the social structure of these institutions (the Primary School and the Community Forest), the Moktan clan has never headed (though they have representation). Whereas, the Waiba and the Yonjan clans never had any representatives till date. When I look at the historical background of those who headed these institutions, the Chairperson- Shanka Bahadur Lo is the youngest son of the former *Zimindar* (who

collected revenue in the local level during the early years) of Kerabari- Karna Bahadur Lo. Tirtha Bahadur Lo, the Chairperson of the Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation- is the grandson of the former *Zimindar* Karna Bahadur Lo and cousin of Shanka Bahadur Lo. Santa Bahadur Lo, similarly the Chairperson of the Primary School Management Committee, is a popular Shaman of Kerabari. During the 2053 local level election, Baldoj from the Moktan clan had won the election as the ward member of Sideshor Village Development Committee, Ward no- 9. He is also the son of the former *Zimindar* Dal Bahadur Moktan. Shamsher Bahadur Lo had won the election as a Ward Chairperson in Sideshor Panchayat, ward no- 9 both in 2022 BS and in 2028 BS. But he did not continue his political career. Shamsher Lo shares his experiences that after he had finished all his property in politics, he was pressurized by his family to leave politics. At present no one in Kerabari is active in politics.

But in the local level politics in Kerabari, Lo clan is in greater power, this is possible as they have sound economic position to compare with the Moktan, Yonjan and Waiba and their influence is visible in the local politics. Since the Moktan and the Lo clan, were landlords, they are considered as economically sound. Even at the present times, the influence of their descendants can be seen in the village. During my fieldwork, the Kerabari Drinking Water Project was under construction. The Chairperson of this Drinking Water Committee was from the Lo clan. He used to oversee the whole work and decide who would work for the day, the division of labor, evaluation of the work and other related aspects. Similarly, the Chairperson of the Community Forest Committee used to oversee and head all the works related to the Community Forest. During my field stay, the Community Forest Committee had decided to sell the timber (*Sal*), the Chairperson and the Secretary of the Committee headed all the process from overlooking the cutting of the timber, measuring them, dealing with the contractor for selling. I was also present during such transactions. The chairperson and the secretary are both from the Lo clan. In this way, the Lo clan is at the foremost place (leadership) during such social activities.

Most of the works in the district headquarter are done with the support of the Principal of the Kerabari Primary School. His house is at the headquarter, at Kerabari market, and he has relations with many officials and whenever any works has to be done he is always consulted in the village. According to a villager Birman Tamang, whenever there are works in the District such as in Land Registration Office (*Malpot*), Chief District Office, Police and other such places, the villagers always seek the help of the Principal. He knows all the important people and if he asks them for any help, the works are easily done. Besides this, the villagers also seek help from those whom they know well in the district headquarter.

## **6.6 Link between Kerabari hill and Sindhulimadi District Headquarter**

Daily usage thing such as salt, Kerosene, chilly, clothes, medicine, tobacco, rice, spices, kitchen oil, ginger, turmeric(*besar*), toothpaste, wine, meat, biscuit, insecticide, small cardamom (*sukumel*), fertilizer (*bikasimol*), cove (*Lwang*) are brought from the Sindhulimadi bazaar(market). The surpluses are sold in this market production such as corn, millet, vegetable, he-goat, cucumber, chicken. Those villagers, whose sons and husbands are in India, go to the Sindhulimadi market on Saturdays to telephone their relatives. They also visit their relatives. Especially youths go for movies in the market. After they finish their work, they would take lunch especially chowmin (most of the children prefer it).

The people usually go to Sindhulimadi bazaar depending on their work. If they have to visit any government or non- government offices they would go there during the office hours from Sunday to Monday. Once a week a small market (*haat*) is set. The villagers from the surrounding areas come to the market to sell their productions as well as buy the necessary goods. Each household member from Kerabari comes to the market to buy necessary commodities for one week. It is also a common meeting place for

friends, families, and relatives. Tik Maya Moktan (30 years) said "On Saturdays I have to go to the market to receive calls from my husband and to buy necessary things such as oil, rice, spices for the whole week as well as to go around the market. The rest of the days we have to work at home, on Saturdays it is more relaxing, you get to meet your near and dear ones in the market".

During my field visit, Tirtha Bahadur Lo told me that he was going to the market to sell millet grains so that he could repay the money for the meat that he had taken during the *Sawune Sankranti* (one of their major festival). Similarly, Chakra Maya Moktan was going to the market to sell her hen and cucumber from her field and she wanted to buy some rice, spices, oil, and salt for her house. It is a general practice of the Kerabari villages to go to the market on Saturday every week, not only to buy necessary things but to sell their production as well for some cash that they can make from the transactions. The villagers told me that if they go to the market on other days, then there is no business it is only on Saturdays when the *haat* (small market) is set then they can sell and buy as well as complete other works.

The villagers of Kerabari have no close relationship with any of the political parties. Their only part is that of a voter and nothing else. The villagers told me that during the election the political leaders come to the village and ask them for support and promise that in case they win they would fulfill this and that things but once the election was over, they were never seen again and even if they come across in the market the leaders pretend as if they don't know them (villagers). Because of such attitudes of the political parties, the villagers do not trust any of them. Krishna Tamang further said "during the election for the member of Legislative Parliament, the candidate of the Nepal Communist Party (UML) Shankar Prasad Sharma had promised that he would bring electricity and road in the village if he wins the election and so all the villagers voted for him in 2056 BS (1999) but after he won the election, he never came to the village again and even if he meets villagers in the market he would say that he does not recognize us.

We are just 'vote banks' and nothing else. During the election the leaders come to the village and after the election they go back to Kathmandu and are never seen again until the next election " .

Three households belonging to the Moktan clan (the three houses belong to the same family, the two elder sons had separated long ago) of Kerabari are Christian. Every Saturday the old senior member of this house goes to pray in a church in Sindhulimadi and then he goes to the market and buys necessary household things. His wife, sons, daughters, daughter in laws go to in church only when they have free time.

#### **6.7 The Perceptions towards the Government offices at District Headquarter**

Generally, they go only to the market but they do not visit government office unless it is necessary. They usually go to district government offices for necessary works such as citizenship from Chief District Office, Municipality for recommendation letters, treatment from district hospital, compensation for old aged and widows from municipality etc. they do not believe in the functions of government. According to them, the government employees are all educated and over smart people. They do not have faith in government activities. They say that the government employees are more concerned in fulfilling the government requirement process for each work rather than understanding the need and problems of the villagers. "When my irrigated land got destroy by flood, I went to District Development Committee (DDC) for metal wire (*jali*) to stop the flood in my field but they rejected my application and told me that I would need at least 10 to 12 households application with similar problems. How could I go searching for other owners when my own land was flooded?" said Rakesh Tamang. He further said that not only the processes in the government offices are lengthy but also very little work is done that's why he is not interested in acquiring metal wire from the DDC. There are only four/five owners affected by flood. They would have been happy if the DDC could provide metal

net to those suffering from flood even if there are few villagers in need. He complaint about the bureaucratic system in Nepal.

Such complaints were common from the victims of flood in 2051 BS. After the flood, they were continuously demanding for metal wire in DDC but the DDC could not fulfill their needs, they were provided with only 30 pieces of net though the villagers needed 100 pieces of net. Therefore, they could not protect their land from flood. Damber Tamang told me, "if there is heavy rain at night I can't sleep worrying about my irrigated land being flooded. Only if we have good relationship with DDC or other office employees then we can get all facility easily otherwise we cannot enjoy such facility since we do not have such a close/good relationship with the employees. We have no time to go there regularly with our demands."

Another villager said that they had gone to the Municipality demanding electricity but they were always told us that they do not have the facility now and it will take some time. Likewise, Suntali Kumari Moktan, resident at Rakase in kerabari, said that during the election time the leader of political party came asking for votes with promise of building canal for irrigation. "So we voted for them and they won the poll but they never came after the election," she added further. One old grandmother in Kerabari said, "I can't go to Municipality office to get my old aged compensation as I am physically weak due to my age, so I send my son, to receive it but the worker of municipality mistreated my son, saying how they can be sure if his mother is still alive? You should send your mother. Later I signed a letter of consent (*manjurinama*) for my son. Nowadays, the municipality provides the old age compensation money to my son."

"People in Kerabari did not like the working style of the Chairperson of the school management committee so we all went to District Education Office (DEO) for replacement of the chairperson of school management committee but the DEO reject our appeal because the headmaster of this school has a good relations in DEO. Later on the DEO appointed a new Chairperson who was close with the Principal and always worked

according to the Principal wishes rather than the people consensus. Since this incident, we have stop believing the DEO and there are no person from our kinships or close to us. Because of such activities, we do not like to go to government office" Said Suren Tamang.

"When our field was flooded during the rice-planting season, I had gone to District Development Committee for help, for things such as pipes to control the situation. The officer told me to register the application for pipe, which can be used in drain. I requested our ward secretary to write the application for DDC for pipe. He wrote the application and I give him NRs 50, he was pleased with me. I went to DDC to register my application but it was not accepted, the DDC officer told me that I had to put the signature of all the consumers. Next day I went to the office with signature of consumers for drain pipes and register this application. The officer told me that this year we should plant millet as this year they did not have budget for the canal and that he would try next year. Then I went back to home, we planted millet that year in our irrigated field. I used to go to this office and greet all the staff. I went there in Mangsir (Nov / Dec) they said that they have not allocated budget. Then I went there again during poush (Dec / June) with oranges for staffs I did this many time. One day when I had gone there, the officer called me and said, "I have allocated budget for you with first priority", then I was told to fill up a demand form. Later an overseer, *khardar* (assistant officer) and a peon came after two days for detail estimation. I prepared chicken and wine for them because I wanted to make them happy but the overseer did not drink wine, I searched for honey in the village to give to the overseer. Then they went to estimate the total area. I said to the overseer- "Sir ! you have to manage this budget anyhow. He said he would do it. Then after a week he called me from the DDC for carrying a pipe then I carried the pipe for drain." he further told me that if he had not given oranges, chicken, wine and honey they would not have allocated the budget for pipe. These kinds of service are actually the facility provided by the government office for the village but we have to always do such things to please the officers. Therefore, I feel very irritate and difficult to get service from government office" said Rakesh Tamang.



Another villager shared his experience, "Our grandmother was ill. We admitted her in District Hospital for treatment. She was kept for five/six days but in spite of such medication, she was not recovering. Doctor of the hospital told us that she needed no further treatment and sent us home. We brought her back at home, no one hoped for her recovery. We gave her a kind of indigenous medicine then her health began to improve day by day. After a week, she became healthy. Therefore, we do not believe in the Doctors. We think the doctor does not know anything. So, why to visit the doctor? Said, Chandra Bahadur Lo and his sister.

One sunny day I was going around the village when I met 73 yrs old, Nar Bahadur Waiba he was sitting under a tree. He was not looking well; he told me that he had been sick since the last 15/16 days. He could not eat anything beside *irak* and *jhi* (wines). I asked him, why he did not go for treatment in the hospital? He told me the Doctor of Sindhuli hospital does not know any thing. So why should he go there? He further said, "The Doctor told me that my wife needed no further treatment and that she will leave this world soon but now she is fine and eats well so, I do not believe the doctor. When I tried to persuade him to see a doctor, he said he would call a Shaman.

One morning during the month August, the Secretary of the Gairamthakur community forestry committee- Bardaman Lo asked me to come along with him. He told me that the Committee had decided to sell the timber of the community forestry trees. When we reached the forest, we found that the broker for the timber and state representative (Ranger) were measuring the timber with witnesses of committee members. The committee members expected that the timbers would be quantitative but when they were told it was less, the user of that community forestry doubted the outsider people (broker and Ranger). They thought that they were being cheated and asked me if I had any idea about timber measurement. They further told me that if they trusted the state bureaucrat they would cheat them and they were very innocent, without any defense

against them. They further said that such people are very intelligent, shrewd and have well connection with all bureaucrats and politicians.

After the use of chemical fertilizers, the agricultural production increased significantly but there were also side effects due to use of such fertilizers. When the dry hay was feed to the cattle, they became sick; they were infected with insects called *Namle* inside their stomach. Many cattle died because of this disease. The villagers told me that prior to the use of chemical fertilizer they had never heard about such diseases.

The Nepali officials (Bureaucrats) consider themselves as the representatives of the State and more than considering their job as service to the common people, they use their position to show up their power. Due to the traditional concept that the government officials are the first citizen where as the ordinary people are the second citizen, a widening gap can be seen between them. Such similar gap can be seen between the Tamang of Kerabari and the government officials in the Sindhulimadi. This is not a surprising part as such things are quite common everywhere in Nepal. To get work done from a government official's one need to rely on nepotism, favoritism, flattery, and bribes. Rather than getting the work done (output) they are more focused on the procedural or process (rules and regulations) and are very good in making a simple process complicated.

The Tamang of Kerabari is also victim of such State mechanism. One of the main reason the government officials ill treat the Tamang of Kerabari because they are illiterate and do not understand how the government procedure works and they have difficulties in understanding the Nepali language properly (as their mother tongue is Tamang but in governmental works the Nepali language is mandatory). Because of such humiliating treatment the Tamang of Kerabari presume that the government officials are there to rule upon them rather than to provide them services for which they have been appointed. The Tamangs of Kerabari feel that the governmental working processes are irritating and unfaithful towards them.

## **Chapter: Seven**

### **Summary and Conclusion**

#### **7.1 Summary**

Tamangs are generally assumed to be a homogenous community in their ethnic identity from outside but when they are observed closely from ethnographic standpoint great variation can be found in their social, cultural, language, economy, and ritual practices. In order to understand the variation of Tamang, independent and separate studies in different clans need to be carried out depending on the socio- cultural environment in which a particular clan resides. Overall a need of comparative research is required. In the similar situation, I have also tried to compare position of Tamangs of Kerabari with various Tamang groups living in other parts of Nepal. In such context during the research, I have observed and studied carefully their livelihood, their daily life, the age when they set out for work to India, type of works, income, and expenditure. Similarly their attitude towards the government officials at the district Headquarter. During the process of understanding the Tamang community, I have found many variations among the Tamangs of Kerabari when compared to Tamangs of other areas.

The history of the Kerabari Tamang is not very old. It has been only 7/8 generation since the first settlement took place. The first settler were one Moktan, one Yonjang and one Lo, they came and cleared the jungle and made settlement. The economy in Kerabari is subsistence. Agriculture, animal husbandry, foreign labor, wage labor are the major source of economy. Maize, paddy, millet are the major crops as well as potato and mustard are the other agricultural production. They also depend on animal husbandry, they tend animals such as cows, bull, goat and chicken.

The language spoken by the Tamang of Kerabari is different from the language spoken by the Tamang of other areas. Even the language spoken by the Tamang of Sindhupalchowk is different from the languages spoken by Tamang in other eastern regions. The Tamang in Kerabari do not paint *Thanka* or make wooden masks unlike Tamang of other regions. Interestingly the Tamang of Kerabari do not mind when they are called as '*Bhote*' in fact, they liked being called one. This is not something common if we compare the fact that most of the Tamangs feel uncomfortable if they are called '*Bhote*' whereas the Tamang in Kerabari claim that, they are '*Soon Bhote*' (Golden Bhutia). Another different aspect is that the women in Kerabari once married they changed their surname to their husband but the Tamang women in other regions retain their surname. Another interesting fact is that the Tamang women are generally more independent and their movements are not restricted but the Tamang women in Kerabari hardly work outside their home, culturally and socially it is not considered good for a Tamang woman in Kerabari to work outside (wage labors) and is met with disapprovals from the villagers. Only the menfolk go outside to work as a wage labour and are the major earner of the household.

The main destination for work among the Tamang is New Delhi. There are very few men who have gone to other regions for work there were one/ two men who went to Shillong (the northeastern part of India) and one/ two who went to Kathmandu – the capital city of Nepal for work. There are very few men in Kerabari who had not gone to New Delhi once in his lifetime. Most of the men return to their village at the time of agriculture season (March to August) and after it is over, they again go back to New Delhi for work. They work for six months in their village and the rest six months in New Delhi. The age when the men of Kerabari went to New Delhi starts from the age 9 to 30. The first work they generally do is that of domestic worker and some in hotel. This gives them the chance to learn the language and understand the new place properly without worry of food and lodging which are provided beside some salary. After they get well acquainted with the new environment and learn the language. They start to look for other

alternatives for works such as wage labor, security guard, as helper in shops/ beauty parlours. In the beginning, the works are done mainly for food, lodging and some pocket money and later after they start to work as wage labor, security guard and other jobs, they manage to save 2,000-2,500 IC in a month.

Most of them spent the earned money in household expenditure, invest in dry/ irrigated land and to built houses while some other spent most of their earned money in playing cards, watching movies, drinking and other entertainment like going around for site seeing and so on. Most of the villagers do not go back to work in India once they reach the age of around 45. They work in fields and other agricultural works in their village.

The villagers of Kerabari feel that they have been ignored and treated as second-class citizens by the State and State representatives. They hope that they do not have to approach the government offices for any work as far as possible. They share their experiences that it is the nepotism that works in such offices. Unless you know someone there or someone is ready to favor you, it is very difficult to get your work done. Moreover the nature of the work in such offices are complicated in other words there are less results/ work and multiple processes to get your simple work done making the whole process very complicated and frustrating. Ranku Tamang said that, “The government workers do not treat us well and dominate us since we are illiterate and cannot understand much of the official works. So, as far as possible we try not to go to government offices”. Such experiences have been common for most of the villagers who have gone to such offices. They feel that the government officials are not responsible towards the common people and the political parties use them only as ‘vote bank’ and treat them so. The people of Kerabari prefer to enjoy within their community. They trust their own people more than the government or their officials. The ill- treatment from the government officials and the false promises made by the political leaders, have left bitter taste and bad impression in the minds of the simple Tamang villagers.

## **7.2 Conclusion**

I would like to reiterate the key Conclusion of my study; the Tamang of Kerabari while earning their livelihood mostly go to India at a young age (above 9 years). They work as an unskilled labor and are underpaid. Most of them spend their income in household expenses; very few buy lands and construct or repair their houses.

The Tamangs of Kerabari find the working procedures in the government offices in the district Headquarter, complicated and tiring. The ill- treatment by the officials towards the Tamang has further disillusioned the simple villagers to the extent that they try to avoid and stay away from the government offices as far as possible.

The major festival of Tamang is Losar but the Tamangs of Kerabari do not observe it. Similarly, in a Tamang culture it is believed that the children are born out of the mother's blood and bone of the father and so the Tamang women do not change their surname ever after they are married to a different clan (Nepal Tamang Ghedung 2058 B.S). But interestingly, the Tamang women in Kerabari change their surname after marriage.

It is quite prevalent among the Tamang of other areas to go abroad for work especially to India irrespective of sex but the Tamang women of Kerabari do not go out for work. It is not considered good for a Tamang woman in Kerabari to go outside for work. Overall many important variations in various aspects whether its economy, political, social, or cultural can be found among the Tamangs of Kerabari and Tamangs of other areas.

So far there is no contact between the Tamang of Kerabari and the Tamang national organization called the Nepal Tamang Ghedung (NTG) or Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities (NEFIN) situated in Kathmandu. Whenever there are programs

conducted by this organization in the Sindhuli district or in the central office in Kathmandu, the Tamang of the Kerabari are not informed and at the same time the Tamang of the Kerabari do not try to attend such programs. If there are regular contacts and involvement of the Tamang of Kerabari with NTG, there are possibilities that the Tamang of Kerabari may start celebrating *Loshar* and the Tamang women of Kerabari may retain their surname even after marriage like any other Tamangs of other areas. To conclude my findings, the Tamangs of Kerabari are double marginalized people of Nepal. In the future as ethnic movement in Nepal develops further and there is more contact between Kerabari Tamangs and organizations like NTG and NEFIN, the Kerabari Tamangs will most probably change identity and adopt *Loshar* and other markers.

## Glossary of Tamang terms

aairak -	Wine
kan-	Rice( Meal)
aapa-	father
aama-	mother
mam-	grand-mother
meme-	grand-father
aapthewa-	uncle(elder)
aapchang-	uncle(young)
aamgen-	aunt(elder)
aapchang-	aunt(young)
aasang-	mother's brother
aaiee-	mother's brother's wife
changa-	daughter in -law
kon-	nephew
konme-	niece
ja-	son
jame-	daughter
koi-	water
mager-	monkey
chaji-	eat
gyaba-	fine/ good
mola-	yes/ have
aaryam-	no/finish
lasso-	namaste (hello)



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