

# Chapter-I

## Introduction

### 1.1 Background of the Study

This is a study of dairy farming in Bishaltar village of Dhading district. As a member of Measuring Empowerment and Social Inclusion (MESI) study, I got an opportunity to stay in Bishaltar village of Dhading district to conduct qualitative study of drinking water. I have not been rural part of the countryside since my late childhood. I have not got such opportunity to observe village women's roles which are significantly different for urban educated women. As an urban woman, I am interested by village woman's roles.

There is not clear demarcation line to separate urban and rural area. As a student of Anthropology, I try to distinguish certain characters of rural and urban societies. Rural society is characterized by its small size, agrarian economy, physical isolation, degree of social homogeneity and group solidarity. Kinship ties prevail in rural society and behaviour is strong interpersonal and traditional. The purity is the dominant mode of experience and action. Urban society, on the other hand is characterized by its greater size, role diversification and individualism. Kinship ties are disorganized. A society could be placed at a given position along the rural-urban continuum according to extent to which it possessed the features regarded of rural or urban ideal types (Smith 1986).

Uma Bisural (name changed) is a typical woman of Bishaltar village. She usually wakes up early morning, sweeps in and out of the house, pests floor with red mud and dung, cleans barn, feeds animals, makes tea, cooks foods, milks animals, sells milk at local market, feeds family members, collects grass, firewood's and fodder, participates agricultural activities, again milks animals, feeds them, cooks food, feeds family members. This is her cycle routine domestic chores in the village. Most of the domestic chores are related to animal husbandry especially milking activities. These domestic and nurturing chores are taken for granted regular roles of women. Agricultural activities are seasonal and male members play significant roles in the family. After 10 days initial observation, I decided to see how women's labor, gender relations are culturally

embedded in the production, sale and consumption of milk in subsistence economy in rural Nepal.

Bishaltar is quite close to Kathmandu that makes possible my frequent visits. Villagers have close interaction with capital city as well as traditional socio-cultural values. Road head settlement may provide them many alternatives but most of them keep up milk production as their regular income source. During my initial observation I saw many people have been involving in commercial milk production activities. Milk is considered great source of economic and social change. As an urban student, I didn't have any idea about dairy and animal husbandry. So this new subject is another cause of selection of topic under my study.

In Bishaltar, dairy farming is a major part of economy. It remains as one of the major employment, income source, which raises standard life of farmers and plays a vital role in their socio-economic life. Farmers mostly keep a number of buffaloes to support livelihood, promote well being of the family, education, medical care, consumption needs and other domestic requirements. Similarly, dairy farming is a labor intensive work which utilizes family labor of women, children and old member. Many reports have been written to show the economic value of the dairy production both institutional and personal levels. Government and non-government agencies have published annual reports acknowledging dairy farming as integral part of agriculture. According to the report of FAO (1979) buffalo and cow are the major sources of income and milk production. The contribution of buffalo, in milk production is considered more efficient converter of crude roughage into milk. On the other hand buffalo can sustain under relatively adverse husbandry condition.

Moreover, milk production activities are labors intensive that have great opportunities of employment and income for small and marginal farmers. This occupation which can reduce enormous magnitude of unemployment of agriculture labors. Department of Agriculture (1991) shows that milk production is a significant source of income for those household who can sell their milk. The sale of milk accounted for 15% to 36% of the total household income of the dairy surveyed farmers. Net cash return per wage labor per day is low down in comparable to the net cash returns obtained in production of various crops (1991).

Mixed economic character has been emerging in the country and urban sector has different economic pattern with fast increasing commercial character. While rural areas focus problem from different things related to milk production. Likely farmers of Bishaltar are occupying mixed economic character as dairy farming and seasonal cultivation. Farmers' couldnot earn their livelihood from seasonal cultivation, so they adopted the dairy farming system as a subsidiary and supplementary occupation. In Bishaltar not only medium and small farmers but also high castes have been involving as well. Caste/ethnic aspects of the dairy farming are another interest of the study because all dalit's and ethnic people have not involved on dairy production.

The dairy product has great economic and health values among the farmers. Singh and Maharjan (2005) examine economic characteristics of dairy farmers, dairy production costs and net returns to farm from dairy production and examining the share of different economic activities among the dairy farmers. This sector can contribute for the betterment of the rural livelihood particularly to the small household, which has less opportunity to engage in other economic alternatives.

Today, many small dairy farm holders and enterprises have been established. Many farmers sell milk to urban areas, private dairies and small shops. However, milk production and sales are one of the few possibilities which many farmers have to obtain the cash required to pay for certain necessities. Milk is a medium of urban cash flow into the village. The whole activities donot only help to maintain rural urban linkages but also strengthen ties of the relatives. Compared to crops, milk production provides more constant cash inflow which is appreciated because the family's cash expenditure is relatively constant. Apart from economic values dairy has lot of social and cultural dimensions. The practice of rearing dairy animal is so deep-rooted that in society the presence or absence of a milking animal of the family is the second most topic of conversation between relatives after well-beings of the family members.

Similarly, in village dairy animals is influenced by socio-cultural and religious values too. Milk is considered sacred product in Hindu culture. Hindu people need milk in every rituals and ceremonies. From birth ritual to death ritual and major festivals of Hindu, milk and milk product are essential. On death ritual Hindu family has to donate milk on the name of dead. On the occasion of Teej festival milk and milk products are

considered sacred and precious eating materials. In Bishaltar, villagers practice on different beliefs and traditional practices about milk production.

In many newspapers and books, researchers mainly focused on large milk producers, groups as co-operatives, livestock and its by-products, profit planning, milk supply schemes etc. But the socio-cultural and gender aspects of the milk production strike in my mind because women of Bishaltar formed a Buffalo milk producers group which has different functionalities and cultural phenomenon about milk production. Researchers have not noticed ritual, cultural and gender aspects of the buffalo milk micro organization.

On the basis of this background, I am trying to answer following questions: what are the cultural practices and ritual beliefs regarding buffalo milk production? How are milk and cultural ties interlinked? How are women and milk production related? What are stories of purity and pollution, bokshi (witch), ghost belief related to milking animal? What are farmers' perception on milk holiday and strike? What are genders based division of labor and decision making?

## **1.2 Objectives of the Study**

This study is an academic document on local dimensions of the dairy farming in Bishaltar. Specific objectives are:

To analyze local beliefs related to milk production.

To understand household decision making process on market and labor.

To analyze household income and consumption.

## **1.3 Significance of the Study**

This study has two major academic significances. First, this study tries to link between buffalo milk production, culture and gender. Second, this is also a study of urban periphery linkage through milk. Bishaltar the nearest periphery of Kathmandu has got valuable but still invisible place for dairy farm. This area could not draw attention of

prominent researcher. So, this study tries to find out dynamic of dairy farming, which makes a small contribution in this field.

#### **1.4 Organization of the Study**

This dissertation has been divided into six chapters. First chapter describes the background of the study. Second chapter deals with review of literature related to dairy production, gender relation and economic value. Third Chapter describes methodology. Fourth chapter gives glimpse of the Bishaltar village, settlement and livelihood strategies. Local beliefs of milk production, local knowledge and consumption patterns are included in fifth chapter. Chapter six tells about division of labor, sale and purchase of buffalo, dairy income, formation and functions of the group. Chapter seven is conclusion.

## **Chapter-II**

### **Literature Review**

In this chapter, some of the available literatures have been reviewed thematically by giving subtopics. Main themes of the reviewed literature are: women and decision making, women group, women and division of labor, and economic value of dairy farming.

#### **2.1 Gender Relation**

##### **Women and Decision-Making**

Parajuli and Thapa (1993) found that low level of decision making authority is the female and they have little decision-making authority in economy activities. Although major policy level decisions are taken by men, operational level decisions are taken by women. There must be increment in productivity of the available resources so that they lead for better status to uplift their own socio-economic condition of the family and society as a whole (Parajuli and Thapa 1993).

In the family, male and female member decision making system has different impact. In their research N.G.L. Sherpa and L.T Sherpa (1996) analyzed that decision making varies across ethnic groups. Joint decision-making amongst Brahmin/Chhetri is high whereas decision making made by female household heads was highest among occupational castes (67%), Matwali (ethnic) group (65%) and Brahmin/Chhetri (52%). Cash earned through various on farm activities forms the major source of income for males. Whereas working as hired labor and firewood selling are the sources of off-farm and on-farm income for females of subsistence families (Sherpa and Sherpa 1996).

##### **Women and Division of Labor**

In most sociological contexts labor is synonyms with wage labor. In anthropological discussion of laboring or analysis of domestic labor, the term may be

equated with work rather than the more restricted category of paid employment. However, in Marxism attention is often drawn to the conflicting interests of labor and capital. The former is here a reference to the proletariat, and alludes to the theory of the exploitation of labor-power by the capitalist class (Marshall 2005:348). The revised definition by UN system of National Accounts and ILO suggest that if large proportion of men or women time is spent on market and subsistence activities, it should be counted in the labor force. Translation of this definition to Nepalese context it would mean if the definition of economic activity is revised to include the subsistence activities, women's economic activity rates will go up substantially. Similarly, Meena Acharya had given the data of women role and status of their contribution in household requirements. She states that women constitute the backbone of Nepalese agriculture, especially in hill areas. Their contribution to household production and income was found to be at par with men, both interms of labor input as well as in decision-making (UN 1992; ILO 1993; quoted by Acharya 1995:464).

Similarly on the economic side, women's participation in formally defined labor force has increased substantially. Much of the definitional problems in the economic activity rates are also being taken care of slowly. As Meena Acharya presented the data of census 2001 "women constitute more than 43% of the labor force, 73% in agriculture and 27% in non-agriculture sectors. A positive trend is also visible in their empowerment as reflected among the professionals and technicians in administration and management" (Acharya 2003:232). Similarly, CEDAW-New Zealand Report 1998 and NDDDB 2001 report indicate rural women are increasing their participation in livestock too either as self employed, wage, salary earner and they are playing a leading role in keeping farms. But they are deprived of the accessibility to credit and extension for various reasons (CEDAW 1998; NDDDB 2001:2).

In Africa, the tradition is that men and boys care for cattle; women are assuming this responsibility because the males are engaged in off-farm employment or at school (FAO 1984:8). Similar case is found in Jenny Dey (1984) who has studied African women's labor and found women have important roles in animal production. These roles are also affected by cultural factors and economic constraints. Women's contributions to household animal production enterprises are closely inter-related with their own personal

investment and marketing activities. She further indicates in animal production system women's predominant role is processing particularly milk products. They are also involved in non-animal production systems and give primary responsibility for husbandry of small animals. They collect animal dung for fuel, manure and occasionally take part in ploughing and carting (Dey 1984:20). Thus, women are the key players and their role is very prominent in the household dairy production both in Nepal and Africa.

CEDAW (2003) describes (Nepal Shadow Report) that cultural patriarchy has popularized a belief that women should be dependent on males for income, from the cradle to the grave. Men are considered the sole bread winners of families; women are viewed only as domestic and maternal. 'Women's work' is confined to the household, goes unaccounted for by the state and the family itself. Female responsibility are to cook, wash, collect fuel and firewood, engaging in agriculture, maternity and service to male family members. Nepalese women workload is immense and work about 16hrs every day, who are engaged in employment as agriculture, domestic capacity or other wage labor activities (CEDAW 2003:1). Similarly, more than half a percent of the labor force is accounted for women, yet their occupations are limited to agricultural, unskilled and semi-skilled labor and the wage rates for women are lower than those for men (UN 1981:63). Thus it can be said that comparatively work burden of women is higher. Women as unseen labor force are the product of culture.

In the case of labor allocation, various ethnic communities and their gender roles have been reviewed in Nepal and other country. Acharya and Bennett (1981) reported variations among ethnic communities regarding role on the control of labor allocation amongst household members, i.e. decisions on who should participate in exchange labor, paid work, family farm production, outside income work, reproductive/domestic away and social. The authors noted that men take whole responsibility for these decisions in Parbatiya, Tharu and Maithali villages whereas women are entirely responsible in Magar communities and also tend to have relatively stronger decision-making power in Rai and Tamang communities. It is concluded by Acharya and Bennett that Rai and Magar ethnic groups have considerably more decision-making power both outside and inside the household than Maithali, Brahmin, Chhetri and Tharu women. Newar and Tamang



women are somewhere in between (Acharya and Bennett 1981, quoted by Bajracharya 1994:26).

B. Bajracharya argued that gender role and responsibilities play a crucial role in determining labor allocation. Society has allocated different roles, responsibilities and activities to gender according to what is considered appropriate. So, he state this action is called 'gender division of labor'. The difference between men and women work is a source of division and sometimes conflict, among them. It is also a source of connection, interdependence, exchange and co-operation in their combined efforts to meet household survival needs. Thus he focused on responsibility between men, women in the household affected by cultural, social, economic and agro-ecological division as well as political structures and status (Nurnayetti et.al.1990; quoted by Bajracharya 1994:6).

Similarly, "Boserup has identified that in African countries women work to produce food crops for domestic subsistence and men work in production of cash crops for the market sale. She further identified in the developing countries women are found to be engaged in income generating activities, explaining why the poorer the households the greater the farm work and income generating activities hours of women are clearly observed" (Boserup 1970, quoted by Mishra 1994:13).

### **Women Group**

Saubhagya Shah (2004) presents that Mahila Karyakari (women's group) was not only involved project related development activities, but also pulled in a different unforeseen activities and issues raging from violence and property rights. In Bishaltar women group was directly assuming milk related activities but the group indirectly involved unplanned social and cultural issues of the society.

Geeta Athreya (1986) described Indian women roles in dairy movement in Tamil Nadu. This study is mainly about co-operative with a history of problems but a promising outcome. Some poor women wanted to form a dairy co-operative. The development agency was not keen. The women persisted. The co-operative was formed. But male secretary swindled it. The co-operative was dissolved. It was reborn where women were the members and elected representatives. Now they are managing entirely independently.

Today Sathumadurai women all want milking animals and there is a great awareness amongst the women regarding dairy farming. There is no male support in running the co-operative. From this work, there is an increasing demand among other villages to form co-operative societies (Athreya 1986:107). Thus without male support women seem capable of participating, running a dairy cooperative. They understand economic value of dairying and management of dairy co-operative.

## **2.2 Economic Value of Dairy Farming**

Aruna Rao (1995) focused on the Muek-Lek women's dairy project in Thailand and women's work around the world. The major aim of the project was to increase income and status of rural women's families by focusing on cash crops such as cotton and animal feed or dairying, to integrate women into dairying activities, access to credit, government and private sector resources and to identify way to improve the productivity. The study conclude many families were able to escape a yearly cycle of debt and finally several of the women have managed to pay off their entire loan, poor women achieved access to governmental support systems, women develop skills to control over project management. Now they have experienced financial success, also firmly established as dairy farmers and there is no seasonal unemployment (Rao 1995).

FAO (1985) talks about animal dowry and bride wealth in Kenya societies. The ownership of cattle is important to women in getting income from commercial milk production, in the event of divorce and for women's standing in the household because they obtain cattle through inheritance, dowry and bride-wealth (FAO 1985:67).

Manjeshwori Singh and Keshab Lal Maharjan (2005) in their case study of Chitwan district analyzed contribution of dairy production to household income and examined the occupational structure of the rural households. They further examined socio-economic characteristics of dairy farmers, dairy production costs and net returns to farm from dairy production and examining the share of different economic activities among the dairy farmers. The finding shows that the contribution of the dairy farming to the total household income is found to be significant in household level. This contribution is higher in small farmers and medium farmers as compared to large farmers because

large farmers have other economic opportunities as compared to small farmers. Dairy farming is consuming household labor more efficiently as almost all labor use in the dairy is family labor (2005:213). This indicates dairy sector development has direct impact on the contribution of household income in rural areas. The demand of livestock products like milk and milk products is increasing day by day as population increasing. Therefore, this sector can contribute for the betterment of the rural livelihood particularly to the small household, which has less opportunity to engage in other economic alternatives.

Kamal Raj Gautam (1999) analyses more than 9,000 small dairy holders in Biratnagar milk region are directly benefited from dairy enterprise; through this sector they are earning more than 9 million Rupees in cash per month. So, the economic status of the small dairy holder is good, their daily cash need is met through this sector. This sector can be used as a good model for the rural urban partnership in development and benefit sharing. He also talks about the benefits of biogas. The use of bio-gas is mainly for cooking food the family and lighting the house. Use of bio-gas has saved about 20-25 percent of wage labor and time (Gautam 1999). Thus it is observed among the small dairy farmer, the bio-gas also has increased the importance of livestock at the farm level and save environment.

Kabindra Pradhan (1995) has revealed that the Sikkim co-operative milk producers union limited ('Sikki Milk') targets to uplift and strengthen the socio-economic condition of the rural people. To achieve this objective Sikki Milk has organized 'Anand pattern' dairy co-operative societies through which milk is procured from the villages, sold in the urban market after being pasteurized in the dairy plants, to assist and encouraged the rural people to produce more milk so that it becomes their primary source of income and they may not necessary go for any other employment for their livelihood. Besides this, it will give a very good boost to their agricultural farming by keeping milking animals. The price being paid by Sikki Milk to the rural producers is one of the highest in the country whereas the sale price offered to the urban consumes is the lowest one (Pradhan 1995). This sort of activities has undoubtedly benefited the lower sections of the society both in rural and urban areas. In the marketing process good employment avenues are opened for the local youths, women by their appointment as commission agents for sale of milk.

Narendra Kharel (2005) in his "Turung-Bikmat Milk Producers in Sikkim", discusses about the dairy farming, co-operative society, dairy cows are dominant livestock, lack of bull but buffaloes are found. He found dairy farmers receive regular income from selling milk. The percentage of cross breed cow is less in comparison to local cow. All the ethnic groups are involved in dairy farming that comprises about 56.70% at Turung and 35.23% Bikmat milk producers respectively. Milk is collected in collection center and marketed by Sikkim Milk Union/Co-operative. Collection center buys only the milk of morning. The farmers also sell to local consumers, to the distant consumption (2005). At last, it can be concluded milk production activities as alternative sources of employment.

Sukdal Limbu (1995) has studied impact in socio-economy and farming of milking sector of Itahari Utpadhak Sahakari Sanstha (IUDSS). His main aim was to organize all the dairy farming in Itahari, encouraged the farmers to be independent or self dependence in economy, to make farmers free from unnecessary exploitation, available of cattle feed to farmers, to give simple veterinary facilities to the farmers and other consumable goods. Dairy co-operation is not self sufficient to loan. All farmers wanted to insure their cattle but they are limited by insurance companies. IUDSS has only provided loan for farmers by 2% with the help of ADB/N because it has considered only 2% of interest for co-operation specially. Similarly, IUDSS has raised the income for milk production, marketing of the milk and generates the income of farmer (1995). So, if dairy farmers increased their investment then they maximize their profit and there is a possibility of bright future of dairy co-operation.

Pradipman Tulachan, et.al. (2002) in his 'Smallholder Dairy of the Hindu Kush Himalayas', studied socio-economic, gender, trends and patterns of dairy development, characteristics of smallholder dairy production, post-production systems, natural resource management issues related to smallholder dairy farming and institutional issues for dairy development. He made conclusion, dairy animals are a source of cash income and soil nutrients in the form of manure. Dairy production system in Hindu Kush Himalayas region based on two types: First, focuses on production of milk for sale and second is to converted milk into ghee or butter and taken to a distant town or market for sale. Women play a critical role in dairy animal production and management in Hindu Kush Himalayas

but their role has not been well recognized in past development planning (2002). As a result, dairy development strategies are now being increasingly tuned to reflect the role of women.

Buddhi Raj Sharma (2001) has made a comparison between the incomes of the milk producers before and after the establishment of DDP (Dairy Development Project), to see the impact of DDP on the economic status of milk producers. He concludes people of Pumdibhumdi village/Kaski-Pokhara have been keeping cows and buffaloes from the very beginning of their economic life. Activities of DDP have affected the economic life of the farmers positively. Productions of milk, farmer's money income and real income, employment, etc. have increased and the livestock keeping is going towards its commercialization. The impact of DDP on the economic status of the milk producers of VDC is positive. It was found before the development of co-operatives, farmers' sell milk in open market by means of "Theki" (cans) and after the development of four co-operatives, farmers collect their milk and carry it to DDP, Pokhara.

Durga Dutt Joshi and Tarak Bahadur K.C. (2001) state cost of producing 1kg of milk in Nepal is Rs.13.5 to Rs.15.5 depending on the type of farm and location. In an international prospect, the cost of milk production in Nepal is considerably higher (50% or more) compared to countries like New Zealand and Australia. The relatively high cost of producing milk of a general low quality is a major constrain in achieving the goals of the Nepalese dairy industry. They further state the problem of milk quality worsens when there is a deliberate attempt in quality deterioration made with the intention of monetary gains. So, the problem of quality in milk collection will be solved to a greater extent if chilling of milk can be performed as close to the milk production point as possible.

Dairy farming in Nepal alone contributes 78% in total Agricultural Gross Domestic Production (APP 1995, quoted by Singh and Maharjan 2005). Milk production contributes about 20% to AGDP (NDDDB 2001) and contribution of milk in the national gross domestic product is nearly 50% (Thapa 1995:1). Livestock statistics for 2004/05 A.D. shows that overall buffalo's population is higher than cows. Milking buffalo's number is 1050977 metric ton and cow is 902286 mt. (Statistical Information on Nepalese Agriculture 2004/05:32). Similarly in another study, about 75% households raised cow, 47% raised buffalo for milk draught power and manure (Luitel 2006:123;

Singh and Maharjan 2005) and 85% farmers raising bovine with less than 0.5 hector per family (Ministry of Finance 1998).

However in Nepal 80% milk is produced by buffalo and it has been increasing at a rate of 3.4% per year/million heads and is estimated to reach to 1.6 milk metric ton/per annum in 2010 (Singh and Maharjan 2005). So, the average annual milk yield from buffaloes is almost two and half times that of cows, 894591mt. and 379637mt. respectively (GIS 1996).

In general, dairy production system is mostly traditionally one which accounts for 98% of the total milk market collects about 2% of total milk produced in the country (LMP 1993). Thus, the growth of dairy sector has a vital bearing on the overall development of the country and in this way these farmers have few sources of generating cash income. Likely DDC alone collected 54 million liters of milk from 40 districts through the network of 772 dairy producer's associations. This has provided self-employment opportunity for more than 90,000 farmers (Pradhan 2000). In Kaski district 200-300 buffaloes are sold monthly, a two-fold increase over the last decade by one trader (Tulachan 2000:128). Further more this has helped to develop the institutions of the farmers and to develop their capabilities. Comparatively in case of Ethiopia, animal power is used for 15 different types of farm operation more than 90% of the crops are cultivated using about 6 million draught animals, mainly oxen (Zinash and Azage 2000:97).

Department of Agriculture (1991) revealed in 'Development Plan' that Nepalese farmers typically keep 5-8 cattle/buffalo. Bigger holdings have more animals but not proportionately and thus their livestock cropland ratio is lower. About 87% milk production is used for home consumption. Average annual milk consumption is about 45 liters per capita which by Asian standard a high level is. Farmers in remote rural areas mainly use informal marketing channels and sell their raw milk to the local shops in the village or process it into various products which can be preserved and later consumed by the household or sold to private vendors.

According to Pradipman Tulachan (1987) livestock rising is significantly influenced by caste system; landholding and livestock rising are positively related and dependent to each other. Caste system prevailing traditionally has played important role

in determining the type of livestock raised. He had arisen various constraints on livestock development activities as lack of marketing services, inadequacy of credit facilities, medicine, etc.

Given the high growth rates expected of the livestock sector efforts to improve the lot of rural women and should be targeted on this sector. Likely, study in Nepal have shown women contribute 70% of the work in raising livestock and are more knowledgeable than men about treating sick animals. But Farm women are never recognized as individual farmers but are referred to as farmer's wives, sisters, daughters, etc. Women farmers generally receive second hand information partly because of cultural barriers and partly due to the belief that they can obtain information, new technologies, can have access to credit, land and other resources through their husbands (Bajracharya 1994:2; Sharma and Awasthi 1993:130).

Anju Joshi (1998) argued, in her dissertation, 'Women's participation in semi-commercial dairy farming for income generation in Jhobang village-Kaski' that level of awareness of women farmers on livestock husbandry and participation in different extension activities that are supposed to be sources of new information and technologies. The study found the level of awareness of women about the improved breeds and feeds, improved animal health, market information, etc. She claimed most women had medium level of awareness. But the reasons for low level of awareness related to livestock husbandry were further analyzed and it was said that illiteracy was the root cause of problem. Participation of women in training was quite low and they depend on other.

Department of Food and Agriculture (1986) focused on inputs and outputs of livestock sector. It has cited animal's food balance in three ecological regions in all seasons is unfavorable. Due to over population of livestock there is a fodder, health and marketing problems in the development sector. The study concludes problems of fodder shortage could be tackled by planting more fodder shrubs and trees, crops rotation with high yielding seeds of fodder and checking the animal's population (DOA 1986). But this study has not focused on Indigenous knowledge of the farmers.

Narayan Prasad Upadhyay and Puran Choudhary (1973), in their research paper, find out the nature of dairy enterprise and economics of dairy farming. They took 40 cases for the study. They conclude factory made dairy milking animal feed is not popular

in hills as well as in terai. Most of the dairy farmers prepare their dairy milking animal by using cereal grains like barley, maize and sometimes rice, pulses by products like oilcake and rice bran, green roughages, stall feeding system. Dairy animals became a major economic activity providing an independent as well as supplementary source of livelihood to a large section of the population in the hills and terai too (1973).

Dairy Development Corporation-Pamphlet (2005) states dairying has been recognized as an important tool for development and poverty reduction and is today accorded the status of a thrust area by the government DDC, an under-taking of Nepal government has made significant contribution in bridging the gap between urban consumers and the rural milk producers. It has provided its valued services to the farmers at their doorsteps. Sizable increase in milk production has forced DDC to utilize milk in best possible ways (2005). So, today massive diversification of dairy products has not only benefited the urban consumers but has helped in the economic development of the rural milk producers.

### **Milk Holiday**

The term 'Milk Holiday' was coined for the first time in Nepal in the Fiscal year 2048/49 BS (1991/92 AD) when DDC could not buy about 123,000 liters of milk from its regular suppliers. The problem was some what resolved due to export of milk to Siliguri of west Bengal for about one and half year in 1992/93. This was done with limited success again in 1999/2000. Milk Holiday is a phenomenon of the flush season, which usually starts in Bhadra/Ashwin. A recent study shows that the difference between the lean and flush season milk supply is high. The milk holidays are not homogeneous across the milk sheds by seasons. The problems of seasonal trend occur mostly in buffalo milk production due to calving pattern of buffaloes (APROSC 1999:5; Upadhyay, et.al. 2000:1). Thus, milk holiday has temporal, seasonal and spatial pattern. But in future, problem dimension will increase due to fast increase in milk offer caused by rapid development of transportation network.

Different studies analyze how milk farmers perceive and describe on 'Milk Holiday'. Recently in Illam (Annapurna post 2063/7/30), 'Biratnagar Dugdha Bikas



Sanstha' made milk holiday and milk farmers faced loss of milk as 10,000 liter in once a week and 'Bihariya Buffalo Group' member named Shivanarayan Mandal argues that three day holiday in twice a week caused a great loss of milk for the farmers. Similarly, in MahadevBesi, Dhading district 'Dugdha Chisyan Kendra/Chilling Center' stops to collect the milk from Makawanpur, Dhading and Nuwakot district villages (Annapurna post 2063/8/15). This activity has created great loss of 7,000 liter milk. Many farmers argue that this Sanstha is violating its rule and responsibility. On the foundation of mentioned literature I have tried to analyze how the farmers perceive milk holiday and whether this holiday effect in their socio-economic life.

To sum up, various authors have mentioned about dairy production and its economic values. Most of them have focused on contribution of dairy products on national and individual family income. Apart from economic support, social and cultural dimensions of milk are prominent. None of them has addressed cultural values and women's involvement on the processes of dairy production which present study attempts to cover among the villagers of Bishaltar. The mentioned conceptual discussions over dairy production and its economic landmark have laid the foundation for the analysis of the field data.

## **Chapter-III**

### **Methodology**

In this chapter, I am talking about nature and source of data, tools of data collection, participation and observation, field experiences and limitations of the study. After 10 days initial survey, I started to search existing literature about milk production and it's cultural and gender interlinks in particular

#### **3.1 Nature and Source of Data**

Apart from ten days initial survey, my field work started on March 2006 and completed on September 2006. The collected data are mostly qualitative and descriptive in nature. Local contexts of milk production-consumption process established culture and gender link that are collected individual and community levels. In individual household level data present livelihood strategies of particular farmer and group level data focused on social, cultural and gender relations. Both of them ultimately present a mirror of village. Required data of the study are collected both primary and secondary sources.

To gain detail information about history of settlement and dairy production key informant's interviews are obtained. Local women daily activities are taken for the main source of data. Observation and participation in village life set the foundation of the writing. In course of my field work, I have gobbled everything but I have select only relevant data for the writing. Some informants have been given pseudonym to protect their privacy and identity.

#### **3.2 Tools of Data Collection**

Participatory observation, listening, hangouts, case studies, key informant interviews are major tools to obtain data for the writing. Mostly I spent time with villagers and knowledgeable persons mainly women. During my field stay I did not miss public meeting, user groups' discussion, decisions and local gathering. Even on peak hours of agricultural work, few people were available at ropeway line and local tea-

shops. As a woman, I was intimate friend of women by helping them and sharing foods and experiences. Most of the nights, either I have invited them or I have been invited to share bed with the women who told different stories and events of the village. From children to old people are my friends and they want to go with me. After my departure I have frequently called them and I have kept on meeting them in Kathmandu. Some of them came my house.

### **3.3 Participation and Observation: Watching and Listening**

I have collected the primary data from participatory observation method. During my field work, I have observed all activities of 'Devasthan Bhainsi Palan Samuha' or 'Buffalo Group'. I have observed group interaction with each other and different group meeting. I also participated in meetings of Buffalo Group held in each month. By creating the atmosphere of trust in village I keep the warm relation with them. First, I have made friends by giving gifts then they offer food. They have invited me all local rituals and any delicious foods. Even if I stay as a paying guest in Navaraj Pandey's family I have eaten most of my food other people' house. All the villagers are like my family members and behaved cooperatively. Different beliefs and rituals are watched in families of different castes. I closely observed Mohi making, butter formation and offering of fresh butter to the Kul Debata (god) and other forest gods. Case studies are conducted and crosschecked with interview and observation. This study includes both qualitative and quantitative data.

Similarly, both primary and secondary data are used. I have consulted the documents from different sources. I have interviewed with dalit, non-dalit and women farmers (who are involved and who aren't involved in milk production). I have interviewed with experienced, elderly and knowledgeable persons, representative of different users groups for more reliability of data. I have noticed farmer's beliefs on witch/bokshi, ghost and different rituals related to milking animals. Unstructured interviews are conducted wherever I got chance without disturbing farmers.

My field work is no exception from general rule of participation and observation, watching and listing. During my field work I have observed women's household chores,

agricultural work and social roles of village women. Being a woman, I was called on all local meeting gathering, discussion, picnic and ceremonies. I closely observed ritual related to milking animals and roles of woman. Local beliefs and method of treatments and fulfillment of god's demands are observed. Local Dhami chanted mantra and offer colorful rice, Dhup and colorful pieces of clothes to satisfy ghost and witches.

During the field work, I collect so much data and information from key informants which I could not obtain from my presence. In this purpose, I sought help of some selected people who are old, knowledgeable about history and society. In my study, case study method is employed to obtain detail historical change, politics and caste tensions among high caste and Dalits. These cases helped to know grassroot situation of caste discrimination in the village. I became a kind of village reporter whose presence was wanted in local user group meeting of drinking water, irrigation, community forestry, wedding, puja, ritual celebrations. In Pandey families women should not make mohi and offer butter to the Kul but in Bisural families women are free to make mohi and worshipping of Kul and other gods.

### **3.4 Field Experiences**

In the beginning I felt both excitement and fear. I was excited to live with new people in new setting (village) for my research. On the other hand, being a girl out of home town is obvious fearful. I scare political activities because both Maoist and government did not prefer for the arrival of newcomer in the village. Few weeks I was suspicious person for them because rare urban women dear to go village for research projects. Villagers trust upon me because my own mother and father came to manage all the logistic of my field stay. My mother has built good relation with my home stay family and other family by giving presents. There was 19 days strike and people's movement two on the second week of field work. Rather than research project I was concentrated for rapport building. I was invited on picnic program on auspicious occasion of New Year 2063 organized by women of the village. I was forced to dance which I did not feel easy. I got good entry point to be intimate with many women. Then I felt as a member of the community.

As a paying guest I lived in Navaraj Pandey's family. He is a head master of a primary school in the village but he is careless about family management and sanitation. He has six daughters and a son. I was worry at eating time from water and food born disease. I taught health education to mother and sisters in the family. Being Newar my home stay family did not allow me to touch cooked food and go near hearth. Mother served food on same plate everyday. I used to visit everyone's house and eat whatever they offer. I had tea in Kale Sunar's house but I scare my home stay family's objection to enter in the house. Luckily they did not notice. There is strong sense of untouchability in the village. When Kale Sunar's grand daughter touched cooked food in the local hotel, all the cooked rice was thrown and she was beaten. She was almost fined. I remember words uttered by Kale Sunar when local hotels and tea-shops ordered him to wash used tea cup and plate. He said, "Loktantra came only in Kathmandu not in this village". His voice lost in the air because nobody understood ironical statement of current political change.

I participate meetings of woman group and listen their family problems. All women love me, trust me as a sister and share their problems. I felt easy to stay with them. I frequently go to the market to buy gift for them. They did not doubt upon me. I was offered free lunch, dinner, cups of tea and milk. I ate few in one place and go to another house to respect their invitation. I did not felt loneliness. They all are like my family members and behaved as my own neighbor and relatives. Whenever I returned home I received gift of ghee, foods and vegetables. Similarly, I was welcomed in meetings, festivals, marriage celebration, etc. Sometimes I have to visit next village to participate on relative's marriage ceremonies.

A month ago Indradevi was worried because her buffalo was not pregnant. That buffalo was slaughter and found few lizard in the stomach. Then she called Dhami to perform ritual so that god and evil eyes will not harm her other animals. The Dhami sacrifice a goat in the name of Kul and forest god. He enchanted mantras of gods which I found same process for human treatment.

On the last day of my field, I could not sleep for a whole night. I experienced completely different than what I expected. I lost nothing but I gained love of the people. Next morning I have to leave the village. I could not meet all the friends and elder person. But villagers came to meet me bringing gift of foods and vegetables. At first I

refused to take but they forced me. They said, "All the time you are welcomed in this village because this is your own village. If you do not come back again don't take our gifts". I gave chocolates and money for sad children.

### **3.5 Limitations of the Study**

As a student, I am carrying out the research for the partial fulfillment of the requirement for the master's degree in anthropology. It is not fair enough to conclude that a student researcher's findings are limited because of its applicable and academic knowledge, however the resources I invested to obtain data and method of presentation are limited. Next, what I conclude about the cultural and gender aspect of milk production may not be applicable to generalize the other areas, because the conclusion emerging from this study is based on spatial, temporal and social context specific.

## Chapter-IV

### Bishaltar Village

#### 4.1 Setting

Bishaltar is a small settlement of Benighat VDC on the side of Trishuli River in Dhading district. Trishuli river bed is almost 100m down from the settlement. Prithvi highway divides the settlement into two halves. It is 80km. southwest from Kathmandu. Most of the people have been passed thorough the settlement but they may not have knowledge about the village. It lies in between Benighat and Charaundi. There are 105 households. In this village, there is a primary and secondary schools that are only government institutions. The primary school is middle of the settlement and secondary is at the end. Bhumisthan Mahila Krishak Samuha and Grahmin Bikas Krishi Bahuudyeshaya Sahakari Sanstha are micro credit and cooperative. European Commission assisted Ropeway Line<sup>1</sup> hooked the settlement with top hill called Lamidanda. Top hill villagers are encouraged to product commercial vegetable because of easy access of market through ropeway. Everyday chunk of green vegetables can be seen at Bisaltar both collected by the villagers and carried by ropeway line. It supports to transport other materials less than 100kg at one side. The hydro-electricity has connected the settlement since 2054 BS. Because of electricity, many of the households have TV channels and VCD player. They are quite familiar with urban media, serials and different channels. Few telephone land line are available and many young people have mobile phone. Drinking water problem is still the first demand of the villagers even if drinking water project, unfortunately bad water quality, has been completed in 2060 BS by a NGO named SAPPROS.

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<sup>1</sup> Ropeway Line: - It was formed on 2062/2/28 under European commission/ITDG. There are 7 members in a committee. At least 179 household and 496 people are benefited. Method of working Machine is; using of gravity force from top level and sending weighty things in down level which help to exchange goods from high level to low level. Total Money spend was Rs. 863,175. People from Janagaounle and Bishaltar have contributed Rs. 41, 6314. While constructing Ropeway line villagers carried stone, wood, sand and soil. Fly wheel/kaste iron, Brake/wood su-brake, Girni/M.S.Metal, track cable/steel wire and haling cable/steel wires are used to make Ropeway Line.

Many temples named Bhumesthan, Devisthan, Bhirabisthan and Gaumati Bhairavi are around the settlement. Venighat in the east and Charaundi in the south-west are the oldest and nearest market place for Bishaltar. The climate is hot and humid in monsoon season (March-September) and very cold and dry in winter season (October-February). Irrigation system formed by District Irrigation Office is also counted as failure project. This village has its own ancient tales. Balram Bisural an old farmer age of 68 said that this place was first called 'Mahadev Ko Agena' (Mahadev/God food cooking place). Once upon a time 'Bisura Monk (Rishi)' came there for meditation, so place was known as 'Bisural Tar'. The highway was built by Chinese government in 2024BS. They felt complicated to pronounce the word 'Bisural Tar' and changed place name 'Bishaltar'. After completion of highway, villagers closely contact with Kathmandu and people of eastern and western part of Nepal.

To trace oral history-myths of the area, Sita Ram Bisural an old farmer and chairperson of irrigation committee said, "My 10<sup>th</sup> grand father Balram Bisural with his two wives came to work as business of animals from Lamjung, Rainastar and settled here. At first, he married with Bahun woman and again he eloped with Chhetri girl". Until today Bahun wife children are categorized as Bahun Bisural and Chhetri wife are categorized as Mukhiya Chhetri Bisural. "I belong to Chhetri Bisural", he said without hesitation. The settlement was started with one household and named as Bisural Gaun. The place was filled by Jungle covered trees. This was also malaria affected area before eradicated in 1960's AD. From the very beginning of settlement there was a business of animal. "My ancestors cut down the trees and made a place as 'Tar' to cultivate crop and vegetables. They also went to purchase animal in India, Birgunj, Baglung and Chitwan. They walked one week for selling animal in Kathmandu. I too have done this Job" Balram told.

In village some rich Bahun Bisural changed their last name 'Thari' and Chhetri Bisurals named were 'Mukhiya'. Mukhiya title was granted because they were supposed to collect taxes from the villagers. So, villagers commonly called them 'Mukhiya'. The ancestors of Bisural began to invite other castes to fulfill their occupational needs. Naharki family migrated from Nalang, Dhading to Bishaltar which was Sita Ram's mother's natal homeland. Because of extreme poverty his family compelled to live as



refugee. His maternal uncle gave him a piece of land. Pandeys' were migrated from Naubise to Bishaltar. Gaulis' (Chhetri) were migrated from Satrasaye Baradi of Tanahun. Ojhas' and Poudels' were migrated from Jivanpur village of Dhading and Dallakoti's were migrated from Jogimara of Dhading. Shah's family migrated from Maldi village of Dhading and Tiwari's family migrated from Chitwan to Bishaltar. Kamis, Damais, Newar, Magar and Tamang came as labor but they have been living by making houses. In Gairi Gaon Tol there are ten households of Dalits, three households of high caste and one household of Janajati. This Tol is called Sukumbasi Tol because none of Dalits have landownership. Following table shows the caste/ethnic composition of the settlement.

**Table 4.1 Caste/Ethnic Composition of Bishaltar**

| <b>Population</b> | <b>No. of Household</b> | <b>Male</b> | <b>Female</b> | <b>Total</b> |
|-------------------|-------------------------|-------------|---------------|--------------|
| Brahmin           | 33                      | 110         | 107           | 217          |
| Chhetri           | 56                      | 149         | 154           | 303          |
| Newar             | 1                       | 3           | 2             | 5            |
| Tamang            | 1                       | 2           | 1             | 3            |
| Magar             | 1                       | 3           | 3             | 6            |
| Kami              | 10                      | 18          | 30            | 48           |
| Damai             | 3                       | 9           | 4             | 13           |
| <b>Total</b>      | <b>105</b>              | <b>294</b>  | <b>301</b>    | <b>595</b>   |

Source: Field work, 2006.

## **4.2 Livelihood Strategies**

The villagers of Bishaltar classify land into three basic types: Khet, Pakho-bari and Kharyan. Khet, Pakho-Bari and Kharyan are types of land owned by villagers. Terrace and irrigated land system is called khet. Khet is terraced or irrigated land type which is used to cultivate rice, maize, wheat, potato and other green vegetables. Rice and maize are planted in monsoon season (June-July) and harvested after four months later in Kartik-Mangsir (October-November). During these planting periods, villagers are busy in the fields. Wheat is planted in khet and pakho-bari in the month of Mangsir (November-December) and harvested in Baisakh (April-May). Wheat and other green vegetables are

grown in winter season. Pakho Bari is slightly slope and dry land. Similarly, potatoes are planted in khet and pakho-bari in the month of Poush-Magh (January) and harvested in Baisakh (April). Maize is planted in khet and pakho-bari in Baisakh (April-May) and harvest in Bhadra (August-September). Maize, wheat, soyabean, sesamun (Til), lintels (Dal) and other vegetables like pumpkin, snake gourd (Cichinda), bitter gourd (Karela), bottle gourd (Lauka), lady's finger (Bhindi), etc. are grown during rainy season. When there is plenty of vegetables like cabbage, cauliflower, carrot, tomato, potato, etc. villagers dry in sun, pack in the plastic and put it safely in bottles. They used these dry vegetables in dry season. Farmers grow 'Khari Dhan' (Rice) in the month of Chaitra-Baisakh (March-April) in Pakho Bari. Some villagers used tap water for micro-irrigation of Karesha Bari around their houses. There are many fodder trees on Pakho Bari land. Oxen are used to till both khet and Pakho Bari land. Grassy and forested area is called Kharyan which is used to grow grass and fodder for livestock's.

These all agricultural tasks are organized by both men and women. The senior family members meet with village farmers to make sure for extra labor on his/her paddy planting days. On those days villagers used Parma system (labor exchange) where each household send members on a given day. In return, those household have same number of free laborers when their planting days come. If they agree paying system then wage for male members and female members are same. They earned Rs. 60 within morning. In the month of Ashad, whole day villagers are busy to plant the rice and turn by turn they took water from Kulo in their field. In the evening villagers go in their field and wait for whole night for irrigation (kulo water). In Bishaltar rice is mostly consumed food crop. So, entire villagers focused on planting the rice. Oxen are used to till the field during paddy plantation .During the paddy planting season whole villagers must prepared rice for the labors as an afternoon snack. If villagers want to eat beaten rice then they buy from the shop because there is not beaten rice mill in the village.

'Krishi Upajha Sankalan Tatha Bikri Kendra' (Agricultural product collection and distribution center) buys all farmers' vegetables. When vegetables are collected, whole sellers from Kalimati (Kathmandu) come to buy collected vegetables. They load on truck. Most of the Brahmin and Chhetri have khet, Pakho Bari and Kharyan land. Tamang, Magar and Dalits have not their own land. All of them are Sukumbasi (landless) and

survive wage labor. Only few Damai and Kami have been continuing their traditional occupation. In a Magar family, Hem Bahadur Magar age 40 is working petrol pump in Bishaltar. He was happened to be there when he was ten years old. He does not know his birth place. His mother told him that his father was dies. His mother left him there. He does not know where she went. Villagers helped him and gave free small plot of land. He got married and has four children. Sai Baba LP Gas Company bought eighty four ropany pakho lands. Construction has started since 2062 BS. Rishi Bisural, a local young man got job in the company. Rest of all construction laborers were taken by contactor. Villagers especially landless people are hopeful for wage labor and job opportunity in the LP gas factory because company has promised to use local men power for all management of the factory.

In Bishaltar tap water is used for animals drinking, cleaning sheds, bathing and washing cloths. Basically, Gairi Gaon Tol's people go in Ghumati Khola/Turture Khola, Majha Tole and Sadak Tol's go in Dhunge Dhara. People of Chhipchhipe Tol go in Chhipchhipe golcha Khola and Gharbari Tol goes in Thapaliya Khola and Bhainsi gauda for drinking purposes. Untouchability is observed in the village. During my field stay, I have been regularly visited to Dhunge Dhara for shower and washing cloths. I (as a Pani Chalne Jaat) was keen to help my house owner by carrying their water pot but he did not allow me to help. He frequently said to me that "Saharma Jat ko Niyam-Kannun namane Pani Ma Tallo Jat ra Mathillo Jat ko bishwas garchu". Literally, though there is equality of all castes in town, he still believes in high caste and lower caste. Once a Dalit girl (granddaughter of Sete Sunar) touched non-dalit pot which was full of water and non-dalit women bang her so much that she was got injured in her head. When Sete Sunar asked help from non-dalit high caste, people ignored and refused to help him. Because all non-dalit thought that it was Sete Sunar's granddaughter fault because she should not touch the pot of non-dalit. Not only his granddaughter but also other Dalits have many stories of touchability in the village.

There is also belief in ghost while they fetch water from Dhunge Dhara. When villagers carry water from Dhunge Dhara, they should not take rest on the way. Because there is a belief that ghost will come with them and harm their family. Rupak Bisural, a young boy aged 18, said that once he took rest by putting his water pot on the way and

his whole family members got sick. Then he called the Dhami, who said ghost came when water pot was put on the ground. By giving his own medicines, Dhami treated his family members.

Among the Bishaltar villagers, few people went for foreign countries Malaysia, Katar and Dubai and different towns for employment. Foreign employers are as Deepak Bahadur Bisural, Deepak Gauli, Narayan Bisural, Phadindra Bisural, Prem Nath Bisural, Tek Bahadur Bisural and Rajan Bisural. They have sent money in the village after four to six months of their departure. Deepak Gauli has sent Rs. 50,000 that is saved in bank account by his wife. During my field stay, there was death of Shiva Kumar Bisural in Dubai. It was said that he was a bus driver and he got died at mid-night on road accident. His parents got unnecessary trouble to get dead body. The accidental loss of a young boy caught whole village in grief. They talked many negatives aspects of labor migration. Family members received dead body after a month of the news. Ultimately, they curse fate for his untimely demise in foreign country.

Teaching in school is considered standard government job in the village. The most of the educated people want to be teacher. Similarly, Netra Prasad Bisural, Bhim Bahadur Bisural, Ram Hari Bisural, Purna Prasad Dallakoti, Uddab Prasad Dallakoti, Kedar Bisural, Navaraj Pandey, Sanubabu Pandey, Rajendra Pandey, Shiva Raj Bisural, Geeta Bisural and Balram Poudel are teachers. Among them Geeta Bisural is only one female (daughter-in-law) teacher. Primary school teachers earn Rs. 5000-6000 per month government salary. Secondary school teachers earn Rs. 8000-9000. There is only one daughter-in-law name Radhika who is sewing the clothes of villagers though she is from Bahun caste. By sewing the clothes, Radhika earns Rs. 3000 per month. Young girls go to sew their clothes in Venighat market. Keshab Bisural, Gokul Bisural, Giri Bahadur Bisural and Rohit Bisural work in Kathmandu. They earn Rs. 10000-12000 per month. Prakash Bisural, Ramhari B.K. and Raj kumar B.K. are truck drivers. They earn Rs. 8000-10000 per month. They usually come back on Saturdays and holidays.

There are two stationary shops, fifteen tea shops, four 'kirana shop' (retailers), a petroleum pump and one rice mill. Villagers adopt personal strategies of livelihood, because all people are not equally rich and land size. Many of them sustain by their own land and some of them entirely depend upon dairy and vegetable cultivation. Similarly,

Sitaram Bisural has three sons and he had 50 ropanis land. Very few villagers rely upon job and business.

Agriculture and Animal husbandry are integral part of the farmers in this village. All Brahmin and Chhetri have own livestock. Buffalo, cow, oxen, goats, chickens, are main integral economic sources with agricultural production. Among them buffalo husbandry is given high priority because of ecological sustainability, having more milk production capacity, physical immunity and posterior use of buffalo. All aged buffaloes can be profitable because male and old buffalo can be sold for meat. One day I asked Ganga Didi, "where is your old she-buffalo"? She jokingly said, " My old buffalo went on the plates of city dweller in Kathmandu in the forms of MoMo and various kinds of meat dishes". Buffalo dung is important part of organic fertilizer. Some families join Gobar Gas (bio-gas) to cook food to save firewood. Navaraj Pandey, Bishnu Bisural, Sitaram Bisural, Kalyan Raj Naharki used bio-gas for cooking food. Most of the villagers used firewood and few families used L.P gas stove occasionally.

In this way, I can conclude that people of Bishaltar adopt various mixes of livelihood strategies. Most of them produce cereal crops, vegetables and milk. Few households depend upon cash wage labor in the village as well as out of village. Teaching is only one government service available in this settlement. Government service holders also adopt mix-strategies of agrarian and animal husbandry. Foreign country labor migration is recent phenomena in this village. Unemployed youths migrated for labor. Remittance became another attractive strategy of better life in the village. Milk production is another attraction of the villager because it can produce all seasons and source of everyday cash. Women play significant roles in production, selling and overall decisions making of milk production. It occupies significant portion of work as well as economy and social relations of the family.

## **Chapter-V**

### **Cultural Dimension of Milk**

#### **5.1 Local Belief and Custom in Animal Husbandry**

The significance of local beliefs and livestock in human socio-cultural life is very important. Rituals are performed to avoid natural calamities, supernatural impacts and epidemics. Therefore, development of rituals and livestock is associated with the dependence of local people on livestock, to pay regards for their ancestors and local gods who avoid risk of loss and epidemics. There are different types of purification rituals for animals. Particular rituals are performed for particular types of animals. Before and after delivery of buffalo, local people make offerings to god. Sometime they promised offering of rooster or pigeon or male goat for the successful delivery of buffalo. After successful delivery family head offers 'Dhup' (incense) in the shed to remove evil things around shed. Then he/she milks the newly delivered buffalo, boils milk that turns into soft solid called 'Beuti'. First he/she offers to the 'Kul' then four sides around the house. Then family members taste and villagers, neighboring are also invited to test 'Beuti'. The successful delivery of the buffalo is most talked subject matter among the villagers for few days. Children seem excited to eat Beuti and they share the news with their friends.

When there is a delivery of buffalo then after four or five days farmer held a process of purification for the animal and baby. From first day to fifth day milk coming from dairy animal is called as 'Beuti-Dudh', which is very important for giving baby animal. That sort of milk cannot be sold by farmer. They themselves drink and gave it to the neighbors by boiling. After five-six day milk turns pure then also they would not sell. They offer newly delivered buffalo's ghee to all gods and goddesses. After all offering people start to sell milk at the market. First five or six months of delivery local buffalo gives 14 Mana milk twice a day. Crossbred buffalo gives 25-30 Mana milk per day. One buffalo generally becomes pregnant 10-12 times in her life time.

During my field stay, there was a delivery of animal in Binda Bisural house. They perform whole process of ritual for female buffalo and baby buffalo after four days. They clean mother and baby buffalo. They put 'Tika' on buffalo's foreheads. During those four days they invited other villagers, neighbours and friends to have 'Beuti-Dudh' in the

house. I was invited and welcomed to have 'Beuti-Dudh'. Binda elder daughter gave me Beuti Dudh. It seems like thick milk. It was my first time to taste Beuti. During our conversation, Binda was sitting far from my place. I asked her why she was sitting so far from me; she laughed and said that from two days she became a 'Bahun Baje' (It symbolizes menstruated women). During menstrual periods women should care greatly and strictly forbidden to touch both milk and milking animals. On the fourth day they are purified and they should touch anything at all. Some women used the term is 'na chune' and 'para sarne' which literally means 'not touching and 'moving away'.

Villagers of Bishaltar build long two stored shed. On ground floor livestock are tied and upper dry grass, straw and firewood are stored. To build buffalo shed, high caste villagers pick up sample soil around the house and take to the local astrologers or Dhami to select best and blessed place for the betterment of livestock. They build shed according to the guidance and order of the Dhami or astrologer. According to Balbhadra Bisural they offer a ritual of purification of shed and remove ghosts. Without performance of this ritual they do not think safety place to keep buffaloes. Basically they build near to their house so that they can care better for animals. They think ghost and witch can kill their animals. They believe that there are number of Bokshi (witch) in the settlement. According to them woman exclusively can be Bokshi. Bokshi has learnt special mantra to harm human being and animals of anyone. If woman is not satisfied with the family she will cast harmful mantra to harm that family asset. Different families silently blame different woman as witch. They are aware with the negative consequences of witch's anger. So they want to satisfy neighbor first. That system of beliefs promotes social exchanging and reciprocity among the villagers.

One day, Puspa Dhakal said me "I built buffalo shed near to my house because there are number of neighbours who are witch. They can come at night in form of black cat. They suck all the milk of female-buffalo and later kill them. One night when my buffalo was delivered, I saw a black cat which was going to suck milk of buffalo. I threw a stone to kill the cat. The cat fell down from the wall. The Cat enters the house of suspicious woman. Next day suspicious woman leg got injured. When I asked her what had happened then she replied she fell down from stairs of her house. But I was sure that the woman was lying. She was the witch who disguised herself as a black cat. From that

day, I did not milk animal when she was visiting my house". After conversation, I was just started returning, she said me, "Do not eat food here and there, some women are witch in the village". There are some farmers who think that the witch kills their buffalo but few farmers do not believe on witch, built shed far from their house. They said," it will be easy for them to carry dung in field". Ganapati Bisural and Rudra Bisural are those who have built their shed far from their houses.

Similarly there are also belief system for buying and selling buffalo. When the farmers purchase buffalo they usually see animal's horn, whether it is twisted horn or straight because twisted horn cost lower than straight horn. They purchase animal on any day but they do not sell them on 'Wednesday', they think it will harm their family and rest of their livestock. Villagers believe white spot in head, tail, and body of animal harm for people and healthy animal. So, they immediately sell white spotted animals. White spot in head is called as 'Tare' for male and 'Tari' for female animal. Spot in tail called 'Phurke' for male and 'Phurki' for female animal and spot in body called as 'Maale' for male and 'Maali' for female animal.

Milking and storing milk are done by female whereas male members of family participate selling and consumption. Buffaloes are milked twice a day, mostly by female. Milking buffalo at 6:30 am in the early morning and 7:30 pm in the evening are general milking time among the villagers of Bishaltar. During the menstruation period female are not allowed to touch anywhere in kitchen, milking the dairy animals and selling in the shops and market. Similarly, girls and women who have no children cannot touch anywhere for six days and women having children can touch after fourth or fifth day after having bath. They can only bring grass; tree fodder and bring water for dairy animals. Either they feed without touching them or next person of the family feed grass and water. In those menstruation days male or other family members as daughter, son and neighbours or relatives help by milking and selling milk. Similarly, delivered women are not allowed to touch female buffalo and kitchen. After 11 days' purification, they are free to do a household work. But in other day, female members decide for milking and selling milk in shop. Male members conduct outdoor work.



When Chitra Devi Ojha was in menstruation period, her son conducted milking and selling milk. Sometimes when her son was not at home then her neighbors helped her for milking and selling milk. Similarly when Ganga was in menstruation 'period' her husband or neighbours helped her milking the animal and selling milk in small shop. During my field stay, my house owner wife gave birth to child and she was not allowed to touch female buffalo and kitchen. There were no other members to work in her house because her husband was in Kathmandu for his official work. She felt very difficult to work in her house. Luckily, her mother-in-law came and helped her till pollution period. In those days, I too have helped her by washing baby clothes and kitchen utensils.

There is a belief that while milking the animal, if animal's tail hits milking person, he/she immediately should go to bath to wash out bad luck. One day Rambabu Bisural was hit by buffalo tail, immediately he went for bath. I asked him why he was doing so. He said "Bhainsi (Buffalo) ko pucharle hane pachi chitai nuhaunu parcha kinabhane teys Bhainsile malai dasa lageko cha bhanera sanket diyeko ho ra yadi chitai nuhayo bhane paap Hatcha". Literally, when buffalo hits by its tail then it shows that something is going to happen upon him and immediate bath may washout possible trouble.

Similarly if some suspicious women visit to their house when they are milking and animal stopped giving milk, they think that the visitor is witch. Then they call a Dhama to conduct puja for Bhimsen God and forest God named Kalchin-kali. Women hides ill animal by their sari and say 'Dolo' for seven times and remember 'Rakshayas/Danab' (ghost). Once, I have been talking about witch/bokshi with Indra Kumari, she remembered her event and said "when my last delivered buffalo was cut by butchers they found a big lizard in buffalo's stomach. Whole body of lizard was seen clearly but eyes were closed. If the eyes were opened then buffalo would die". She replied my queries of lizard in the stomach by saying witch doctor's statement, "One woman came in her house when she was milking. The woman was witch and spelled upon buffalo. This was cause of lizard in the stomach"

Some farmers still believe in local knowledge on ghost, witch, and god and frequently treat animals by themselves and offer local practices by giving turmeric, garlic, tomato and Kharani Pani (ash water/powder that remains after something firewood has burnt) and some donot believe on ghost, witch, and god. Devkumari Bisural is a dairy

farmer. She does not believe in witch. She argues that the grasses have taken from vegetable cultivated land then animal gets sick. The animal does not give milk. The villagers blamed to witch, ghost and god without knowing real causes of illness. Due to the different pesticide applied for the vegetable crops, animals get sick when they eat pesticide spraying grass and leaves of vegetables. Kumari Poudel blames Bokshi for her buffalo's diarrhoea. Some knowledgeable farmers of the village talk about unintended consequences of chemical fertilizer and pesticide. They argue that the use of chemical and pesticide not only degrade human health, but also they cause harm to livestock and dairy production. Because of chemical and pesticide green vegetable decay quickly or they can not store longer time. Another remarkable effect of the chemical is it gradually decreases the productive capacity of the soil. They talk about multiple linkages of agriculture and dairy production. They are aware about the effect of the chemical in quality of the milk. They have different ideas of utilization of the milk products.

## **5.2 Consumption of Milk**

Milk is considered prestigious food as well as remarkable symbol of socio-economic status of the household in the rural village. Demand of milk and its products is increasing due to large population of Nepalese people and tourist. To fulfill the demand, farmers of Bishaltar are trying to increase milk production. In village, consumption of buffalo milk is high than cow. In village all the young people, old people and children consume milk. They consumed milk three-four times a day. In morning at 7am young people, elder people drink milk or milk tea. Children and old people basically drink milk. In afternoon young people and elder people drink tea at home or move at shop. Milk tea and black tea have different social status. Milk tea consumer family has higher social status than black tea consumer family in the village. Sometimes they have milk or curd in beaten rice. Again, in the evening young people prefer milk tea, children and old people prefer milk. Daily villagers invited me to have cup of milk. Sometime I have to go in 3-4 houses in same time to drink milk.

Generally people do not notice social importance of consuming milk product. Consumption of milk (Dudha Khane) sounds drink milk or having milk with other materials. But milk can be consumed in different forms. They are: milk, curd, mohi, butter and khuwa. It depends upon the interests of the family member and needs. Apparently milk itself is visible and other materials are derivative of the milk. One member may like milk but not curd and mohi and other members may like curd or mohi. Mohi is made of from collected curd. Villagers have own knowledge getting butter from the curd. When they mix-curd and water in the wooden pot (called Theki) and stir with the help of Sara (rope), Phirka, and Madhani (having wooden wheel at the end). Then butter comes on the top and mohi remains liquid. If mohi maker leave before butter is completely done, it will be difficult to separate butter from the mohi. So, villagers have adequate knowledge of making mohi.

In winter, it takes longer time to separate butter from the mohi, because of cold water. Mayadevi Gauuli said that all villagers mix warm water and curd, so that they can obtain butter other wise it is very hard. She added if water is hot all butter melts in the mohi and they can not get butter. She explained the storing methods of milk, mohi and ghee too. When they obtain ghee from the curd, they boiled it at certain temperature. It should not boiled neither too hot nor before it has been done. The perfect boiled ghee seems grain that they called 'Kanika' (small pieces of rice). The perfect ghee can be stored for a year but it depends upon storing pot. If it is tin-pot, it gives bad smell after three-four months. If they store in wood pot, glass and steel pot it remains perfect long time. Uncooked ghee cannot store longer than a week. Bindira Bisural said curd and mohi can be stored three days. After that it turns into bitter and bad smelling. During spring and seasons, curd and mohi are highly consumed but in winter people prefer hot milk and ghee.



Photograph 1: Stirring Mohi in Theki

Most of the family used ghee to cook curry and very few families use oil. Villagers consumes ghee daily that may be little amount. Ghee is also used prestigious gift for the relatives and out stay family members. Milk has strong social and cultural significance. Ghee is a part of family exchange and it helps to keep the kinship tie strong. Mayan Bisural has sent 2 kg ghee to her husband and son who have been living in Kathmandu. Sabina Dallakoti has sent 1 kg ghee to her married daughter. According to Sabina, ghee is easiest material for gift and it keeps on family's status high. "If I put ghee as gift, my daughter's mother-in-law becomes happy and my daughter will not get more trouble". Daughter-in-law's family status is determined on the basis of her gift from Maiti. Very few families produce as sufficient as to sell it and make money. It costs Rs.120 per Mana (almost half kg.). Some family serves ghee to guest with food which is considered great respect. Only few families served ghee without asking and some

families asked whether I like ghee or not when I was invited to have dinner in their houses.

Khuwa is also considered prestigious gift as well as highly respected food. Usually relatives feel easy to take it. Khuwa is made of by boiling milk long time. They mix rice-flour or pieces of biscuit to make it soft. They put some sugar and other materials according to the taste they like. It can not be stored long time. Another way of consuming milk is by making 'Khir' (rice-pudding). I observed the method of cooking Khir. First they boiled milk and put rice according to the quantity of milk and number of family they need. Then, they put sugar, ghee and other material. After 15-20 minutes it has been done. Another method of making Khir that I have seen in the hotel at Bishaltar. The hotel owner first cooked rice separately and later boiled milk. Then she mixed cooked rice and boiled milk. She put sugar and other materials and stirred for a while. It became pudding which tasted similar. In Bishaltar, villagers have store-house of local knowledge about consumption and storing of milk and milk products. But my house owner did not allow me to touch in kitchen and at any time they sat me far from their cooking place. They usually gave me on same plate and glass. One day I minutely watch they again washed my plate which I have already washed it.

Dalits prefer for black tea and if they want milk for baby then they buy milk from non-dalit. This kind of tea symbolizes social status. Milk tea feeder family is considered well-up in the village. When there was a delivery of goat in the house of Bhelkumari Bisural, there was scarcity of milk for baby goats. She feeds two Mana milk for two-three baby goat each day for a month. She also distributes freely one or two Mana milk for neighbours or relatives, those who do not have she-buffalo or whose she-buffalo are pregnant. Milk products, as a social gift, help to strengthen social relationship and sense of neighborhood. The concept of reciprocity and neighborhood in peasant society is reflected in Bishaltar when farmers give Mohi freely to neighbors. Next time he/she will support by other who has been supported. The reciprocity of milk product among neighbors and kin people can be observed Marcel Mauss's *The Gift* (1954) that is an analysis of gift exchange and social fabric. According to him, in simple societies economic and social purposes are fulfilled by kinship relationships. Farmers also used milk in religious and social ceremony. Milk product has significant part of peasant

culture and it fulfills needs of their cultural and religious ceremonies. Farmers used ghee only on some ceremonies and local festivals as Teej, Father's day, Dashain and Tihar and some occasions. They do not make 'Mohi and Curd' on the day of 'Aunsi'. Usually all women farmers make mohi and its 'Nauri' (butter) is offered for the God 'Tulsi' and 'Kul Debata'. But male members of Pandey's family make Mohi because they believed that male are sacred than female.

### **5.3 Local Knowledge of Fodder and Grass**

Grass and fodder have effective relationship on milk production. Farmers of Bishaltar depend on the forest and grass fodder for their livestock's. They also observe the environment actively and experiment with their local knowledge. Local knowledge has often been neglected in the past and this may have contributed to the failure of many development programmes because they have not given focus on interest of the farmers. Farmers of Bishaltar have extensive local knowledge about individual trees, fodder and their management that is a reflection of their day to day needs and the extent of their dependence on trees. They use various terminologies to signify and differentiate fodder quality attributes. Their selection of tree species, fodder and green grasses to animal is related to their local practices or experience and by the different visible performance on animals they intended final outputs, i.e. whether it is for milk or butter/fat or both.

They have more or less fodder trees and green grasses around homesteads either naturally growing or in few cultivated. Generally trees and forests are now managed by user group of community forestry. According to Chitra Ojha 'Grasses which offer more milk are Hiunde/Tanki, Epil, Gindari, Gauo, Napier, Oat, Bhatte, Dumri, Kutmero, Pipal, Odar, stylo, Gauju, Koiralo, Dabdabe, Kharseto, Bharlo, Dubo, Kas, Bakhare, Nivaro, Simal, Arkhu, Kharuka, Vechha, badahar, etc. and grasses which creates less milk for the buffalo are Barkhe, Kapro, Khanue, Sal, Chanp, Siru, Harchhul, Dudhe, Khayer, Sisau, Anikale, Jalma, Khari, Sadhan, Kadam, Jamune, etc.' Some household planted off seasonal grasses

In Bishaltar Fodder leaves and green grasses are easily available during monsoon time. By the farmer's tree fodder are usually given to the animal as a sole source of

energy, nutrition, protein and mineral elements. Thus milky animals receive adequate nutrition from available fodder resources and in general they remain in a productive condition. During dry season it is very difficult to grass for feeding. The farmers' knowledge system appeared to be crucial in making decisions for the management and use of available fodder resources. Most farmers have various strategies to adjust in the seasonal food supply. Animals are fed on dry roughage supplemented with tree leaves, graze at roadsides and give forest fodder. They store or collect the cereal/crop straw or crop residue and feed it to the animals only at one time when they are busy. They also supplied Khole<sup>2</sup> to lactating animals. On the other hand due to the work pressure, some farmer's could not manage sufficient time for grazing and provide minimum fodder.

As a result of the scarcity of fodder and forage, there will be less productivity of milk drops and milky animal's need to satisfy with limited foods which are generally low quality roughages. Some farmers sell out their livestock during crisis periods or keep them with neighbors or relatives. Ganga Bisural usually carried her milky animals to her parents' home when she could not feed them.

During my field stay Buffalo Group encourages all people to involve best activities of farming. All the group members, first plant non-local grass named Oat, Stylosanthes, Napier and Bhatte in 2063. Having heavy weight of grass within six month comparing to other place Buffalo-Groups, they won 1<sup>st</sup> prize from District Animal Service Office and got free Napier grass (300-1500 set grass) to plant for a year. Being a member of this group they realized that they have known a lot of knowledgeable things of animal treatment and new grasses. They plant new patterns of improved grass, fodder trees on their marginal land, around homesteads, forest, pakho-bari, uncultivated khet and other waste land in order to overcome feeding problems especially in dry season and producing other feed particulars of cheap cost and high yields. Among the members there is competition to grow more grass and fodder. In this way, women are connected with milk, grass and fodder knowledge. Because of women's attachment with grass and

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<sup>2</sup> Khole: - Khole is a variety of ingredients. Such as Cereal by products (rice bran, maize flour, wheat bran, maize and rice grits), legume haulms, mustard cake, vegetables tops and assorted vegetables.

animals they have more knowledge about kinds of grass and fodder. They give priority to milking grass and fodder.

At the end, local people developed sets of knowledge to cope with natural and supernatural world. They link human being and domestic animals with god and goddess. Supernatural spirit and human evil eyes (witch) have significant space and roles among villagers. Roles of woman to fabricate social and kinship relation through milk are important to acknowledge. Beliefs of witch, menstrual pollution are attached with women. First they want to satisfied evil eyes (human and non human) and use milk product. In the family they offer milk product and other material by means of mediator (Dhami/Jhakri). Milk products fabricate various social and cultural ties. Thus milk product is a prominent entry point to understand village life like Bishaltar.



Photograph 2: A Woman is Cutting Fodder





Photograph 3: Bringing Grass at Home

## Chapter-VI

### Socio-economic Dimension of Milk

#### 6.1 Formation of Milk Management Group

As subsistence farmers, most of the villagers own agricultural land as well as dairy producing animals. The history of systematic milk collection in Bishaltar goes back almost six decades. From the very beginning three villages: Gyalchowk, Bahuntar and Bishaltar decided to open milk collection center at Bandare (0.5 km southwest on the highway) in 2032 BS. There were twenty representatives in each village. Then farmers had bought many local and hybrid buffaloes from Chitwan and other part of village. These representatives raised socio-economic consciousness to all the villagers to domesticate milking animals in Bishaltar. By seeing good income source, few Dalits also started keeping milking animals. They got cash money daily so that it was easy to solve common day to day problems. This was succeeded to give new message of Dalits who can also involve dairy production. There was competition among the villagers to have best buffalo because properly raised buffalo and best quality milk were rewarded. There were 100 buffaloes at the beginning. Four tanks, each contains 40 liters, were filled in each day. By this good start, farmers were benefited long time. The collection center was managed with the agreement of the DDC by a villager. After the death of Gunaraj Silwal, the manager, his successor cheated both villagers and DDC. Then the DDC stopped collecting milk from this center. Other people could not win the beliefs of the DDC. Then, they were compelled to close the collection center in 2055 BS.

Closing of the collection center was great loss for the villagers. But the high castes farmers did not stop domesticating dairy animals. They managed their milk around local tea-shops and hotels. It was hard for the Dalits to win the consent of the local tea-shops owners. Then, Dalits stopped to keep animals. The local market is competitive but I have not heard the story of milk loss because of small market. To revive inspiration, financial support and manage buffalo milk, women of Bishaltar village formed a group name 'Devasthan Bhainsi Palan Samuha' or 'Buffalo Group' in 2062/6/4 BS. The name 'Devasthan' is derived from the local pilgrimage temple where high caste people usually worship. Initially there were thirteen women members but later this group has enlarged

upto thirty members. They are planning to open new collection centre at Bishaltar. After six month of my field departure I came to know that the group runs a collection centre and provides service to the villagers.

All the 30 members are Brahman and Chhetri women from 'Majha Tol' and 'Sadak Tol'. To talk about Dalits and Janjati households, neither they are member of the group nor have single dairy animal. One day, in the meeting, Sabina Bisural one of the member of the group said "hamiharo Gairi Gaon Tol lai samuha ma basa bhanera bhandainoun kinaki uniharule samayama paisa kahile Pani Didainan" (we did not inform Gairi Gaon Tol women because they do not deposit amount on time). Kale Sunar, an old man, has neither land nor domestic animal. He sold milking buffalo because of closing of collection centre five-six years ago and reconstructed his house. Another reason of selling buffalo was local teashops did not buy Dalit families' milk. He further said that he heard Sabina Bisural's statement about Dalit. None of the Dalits are interested to participate in 'Buffalo Group'.

Women from 'Gharbari Tol' and 'Chhipchhipe Tol' do not want to be member of that group because women of 'Majha Tol' and 'Sadak Tol' are affiliated CPN-UML. 'Gharbari Tol' and 'Chhipchhipe Tol' women are the supporter of NC. Women of Gharbari Tol and Chhipchhipe Tol do not know political ideology of NC and UML. They support NC only because their household head (mostly male) support NC. They heard that NC protects their purity of caste ideology and private property. On the other hand CPN-UML tries to bluer the boundary of caste hierarchy. They argue that traditional caste principle became weak because of strong influence of communist. Adopting this unclear ideology, they donot feel easy to participate women's meeting of UML block. This party affiliation also reflects on women's Buffalo Group and drinking water user committee. Because of local political conflict between chairperson (NC) and secretary (UML) water project delayed six months. Women of Majha Tol and Sadak Tol are supporter of UML. They are forward about political issue and directly involve politics. Parvati Bisural won ward candidate from UML side though they are also influenced by their household head.

Even if some women are not member of the buffalo group they engage dairy production. Devkumari Bisural, a dairy farmer from 'Gharbari Tol' argued that they are

observing functions of 'Buffalo Group' to form their separate Group after a year. The main objective of the Buffalo Group is to give loan to buy buffalo for the poorer villagers as well as encourage members to keep best quality buffaloes. The group is just gateway to share common problems related to dairy animals and women. They thought that this group represents women's unity in this village. In each 10<sup>th</sup> of month, they call meeting of all members and collect Rs.50 from each member. They give loan on cheap interest rate i.e. 12.5 percent. If none of them need cash money they deposit collected amount in agricultural bank at Gajuri. This year, each 30 members of the Buffalo Group have succeeded to get NRs 25000 loan from Agricultural bank to buy milking buffalo. Few of them put their land as collateral to get loan from the bank. All of them bought buffaloes and now they are paying back bank loan by selling milk.



Photograph 4: Mahila Bhainsi Palan Samuha

Today, out of 105 households in Bishaltar, only 65 households have dairy animals. Among them 58 farmers have 78 milking buffaloes and 31 non milking buffaloes. According to the farmers keeping cow is harder than buffalo because buffalo can survive on harder situations and cows are easily affected by different diseases. Another reason of not keeping cow is cow's milk is not as fatty as buffalo. So it is less profitable to collect in centre. Some of them are interested to keep cow because there is same price for both milk at local market. But hotel owners prefer buffalo milk. In Bishaltar only seven farmers have local and hybrid cows to continue Hindu culture (cow as god Laxmi) and to produce milk.

Many times I have also participated in Women Group's meeting. They talked about household chores to economic activities to woman and current political issues. They are quite interested to know caste and political affiliation of the newcomer. Similarly, there are some villagers who have not milking buffaloes are member of the Buffalo Group. Indra Kumari Bisural who stopped to rear dairy animal but she is still member. She said, "I usually visit on different trainings held in different places, which bought me confidence and knowledge about animal health, planting various new grasses in uncultivated land and Pakho Bari. By participating in this group, today I can teach and share my knowledge with the community". Though group has not involved dalit people and other Tole women, this group has done the better work in social aspects. Women's participation in dairy co-operative is becoming more profit and fruitful for their own activities too.

In Bishaltar, women's Buffalo Group is successfully functioning as an income generating source. Group activities have multiple influences on socio-cultural life of the women. Group sent some efficient and dedicated women for training in rural areas to investigate and participate in co-operative societies. In addition, District Animal Service Office has provided training on basic hygiene of milk, animal health and better management of milking animals.

To talk group function, Bishaltar is not exception of male domination on high caste decision making processes in general. But women members of the group are not ready to accept whatever male decide as typical high caste rural women. In Bishaltar exclusive women's Buffalo Group seems quite empowered. They can share personal and

family problem with other women. They collectively try to solve problems. They are so forward; they are challenging the different problems of society, exercising equality in the society and are successfully practicing their loan activities. But the level and degree of empowerment of women differ according to caste and economic status of the family. Daughters, daughter-in-laws and old women of high caste participate most of the meeting.

I cite a case of a young widow named, Sabina Bisural aged 27 who is a secretary of 'Buffalo Group', has a daughter and a son. She usually wakes up early morning, feeds buffalo, milks and sells milk to the tea-shops. She always participate all meeting and speaks without hesitation. One day, she talks about polygamy marriage of Krishna Bisural. He has three children from his first wife named Roma. She is laborious. Her father-in-law and mother-in-law love her very much. Three years ago, her husband got married with a young girl from same village and kept her at Kathmandu. When all villagers knew the case, Sabina called women's meeting to condemn the case. But village women did not care much because Krishna's father is wealthy man. Another interesting aspect is the second wife belongs to Krishna's blood relatives. First wife's parents are poor. But Sabina frequently talk the issue of suppression. Later all the villagers supported his first wife and fight against polygamy marriage. At last women group succeeded to make an agreement Krishna has to give 75 percent of his income to his first wife. Now he is in Dubai for labor work.

This group talks about domestic violence against women. Raman Pandey (name changed) is a school teacher. Having six daughters, he frequently accused his wife as sinner. He did not follow villagers' and health workers' suggestions to use contraceptive nor he allowed his wife to stop permanently. He some time gave torture by telling about next marriage. This issue is widely talked in the group but it was not solved. Another secretly talked issue among the women is extra marital relation of males with a Dalit woman. They did not want to disclose secrecy because their husbands also may have been involving. Most of the group member knew that who have elicited relationship. Because of family reputation most of the extra marital relations are not disclosed.

Saubhagya Shah (2004) presents that Mahila Kalyankari (woman's group) was not only involved project related development activities, but also pulled in a different

unforeseen activities and issues ranging from violence and property rights. In Bishaltar woman group was directly assuming milk related activities but the group indirectly involved unplanned social and cultural issues of the society. On the same context, woman group gave pressure to Monica Bisural (name change) to stop alcohol hotel. There was a long line of vehicles on the road side at night. A girl running alcohol hotel is considered distrust. She stopped selling alcohol and got married. After her marriage, though she has still small teashop Apparently Bhainsi Palan Samuha is viewed as a separate women group only concern about buffalo-milk related activities, but the group also indirectly involved in economic, political, social issues and issued related to women sexuality and social norms.

## **6.2 Dairy Income**

Dairy product is one of the major sources of income in Nepal. According to Agriculture Perspective Plan 1995 (quoted by Singh and Maharjan 2005) dairy product contributes 78 percentage of the domestic production. Bishaltar is not exception of the rural livelihood strategies. Most of the high caste farmers involved in milk production. They sell their production at the collection center as well as teashops and small hotels along the highway. The price of the milk is determined on the basis of DDC. One Mana (local unit of measurement contains almost 500ml) milk costs Rs. 12 along highway of Bishaltar. By selling milk to teashops and hotels a farmer earns Rs. 100 to Rs. 150 per day. It is regular income. They all get same milk price because there is no system of leveling fat percent of Milk. But when they give collection center, price is fixed on basis of the level of fat. First five or six months of delivery, local buffalo gives 12-14 Mana milk in a day and Improved/Crossbred buffalo give 25-30 Mana milk in average.

Basically women get control over cash earnings of milk. Since women invest more time for milk production, they handle income according to needs and priorities of the family. They invest dairy income different ways. Paying electricity bill, medical expenditure, school fee, ornaments/cloths and different regular festivals and rituals, are main areas of expenditure. Goma Bisural told me that she fulfills basic needs of the

family by selling buffalo milk. By saving, she has built a Toilet. Similarly, Yekmaya Bisural has been spending her son's college education in Kathmandu.

Milk production is more attractive among the women than seasonal vegetable cultivation. They have to wait long time for the preparation of vegetable and crops but they can earn cash money everyday from milk. Another reason of attraction of milk is fixed customers and relatively stable price. Farmers felt easier to sell milk because they do not need bargaining and wait for customers. According to Ushamaya Bisural, a member of women Buffalo Group, milk is more economically profitable than commercial vegetables and crops. She makes almost Rs 50,000 per year from milk production and more than this her family members make better health. She said that farmers often do not notice regular income of milk because of apparent insignificant amount. She involves commercial vegetables production too. But she said, "I got Rs. 30, 000 to Rs. 40,000 per annual cycle. So, she compares dairy farming is better than crop cultivation because cultivating vegetables sometimes create problem of disease, season, customer, market, etc. Supriya Bisural lends Rs. 10, 000, saved by milk selling, higher interest rate than bank to her natal father so that she can secretly accumulate. Chitra Ojha, Sita Bisural and Maya Bisural have invested milk income for their children in Kathmandu for study. Last year, Januka Bisural bought clothes for her daughter and gold ornaments for herself on the occasion of Teej festival.

Hidden aspect of milk income is reflected in education, health, marriage and general way of life. Nirmala Bisural organized big wedding party of her daughter's wedding. By lending money saved by Buffalo Group and her income from milk production made easy to maintain good social status. She bought expensive Jewellery, cloths, dowry. Even if she did not like dowry system she felt cultural pressure of high caste status in the village. Dowry is a measuring rod of the family's economic status and most talked subject matter of marriage among the women of the village. An old man argues that this kind of system not only creates social hierarchy but also reflect good image and warm relationship among bride's natal and new home. What I have observed on the field is farmers celebrate and invest money in their children wedding day safely and properly. During my field stay Sanubabu Pandey spent Rs. 60, 000 for his elder son's wedding. Thus, economic dimension of the milk production can not be undermined.



Buffaloes are considered valuable for women in the form of 'Pewa' and 'Daijo'. In Bishaltar high castes families gave animals to their Daughters for their better life. Pewa is considered bride's personal property whereas Daijo can share for all members of the husband family. Saubhagya Shah (2004) "clearly differentiates Pewa and Daijo. In material terms, Pewa refers to any cash, jewellery, utensils livestock and land that a married woman owns separate from the estate of her husband and his lineage. What gets Pewa possession apart from the rest of the property relation is its social recognition as such by the woman's affine (2004:104)". Pewa relations are not only economic assets for the women, but also embody deep social and emotional value, mediating their longing and belonging in a patrilocal kinship arrangement transfer from a woman's Maiti to her father-in-law's house and there is sense of finality in use and consumption but pewa is imbued with the potential of growth, individual will. The pewa owners will invest their assets among relative and neighbours so that it not only grows as it accumulates interest but also earns the proprietor social esteem and recognition as women of means (2004:205). There are some examples of buffalo Daijo taken by the women of the village. Kalpana Bisural's, parents gave her a buffalo 'Daijo' in her wedding day. This buffalo is still alive and provides lot of properties through milk. Similarly, Radhika Bisural gave two female-baby buffaloes 'Pewa' to her daughter after 12 years of her marriage.

I have read many articles about milk holidays, their consequences on milk producers and protested against strike. But in Bishaltar I have not noticed any negative impact of strikes and milk holidays. The producers sell their milk at local tea-shops and hotels along the high-way. Instead of loss of milk on strike there is higher demand of milk because large number of villagers hangout in the tea-shops. During my field work period, nineteen days continuous Nepal Banda (strike) has been held. All local hotels and tea-shops were busy all those days. Milk producers were happy because they had not faced serious problem on selling milk as they have heard the news of farmers of other parts. Vegetable producers and milk producers are the same farmers. On the strike period they could not sell their green vegetables but they did not throw on the road. Having own milking buffalo, they fed remaining vegetable to their buffaloes. So that buffaloes gave more milk than usual days.



Photograph 5: Milking Buffalo

### **6.3 Sale and Purchase of Buffalo**

The trade of milking buffalo season begins from June and ends in September when most of the buffaloes are delivered and appropriate in milk production. In the case of buying dairy buffalo, male are more active than female because they had to go in different places and female have not enough time. Women have children and other livestock to engage in household works. Males decide to buy milk animals from Dharke, Charaudi, and Chitwan. The local newly delivered buffalo with baby generally costs Rs. 20, 000 to Rs. 25, 000 and Crossbreed buffalo costs Rs. 25, 000 to Rs. 28, 000. A pregnant buffalo generally costs Rs. 15, 000 to Rs. 20, 000 depending on delivery date. Buying pregnant buffalo is quite risky because she may have delivery problem. Sometimes pregnant buffalo could not give birth to baby and died. Therefore farmers do not prefer buying pregnant buffalo. Butchers from Kathmandu pay Rs. 10, 000 for old buffalo on the basis of health condition. Male baby buffalo less than a year old costs Rs. 5, 000 to Rs. 8, 000 depending on weight.

Radha Bisural husband has started animal business since 2050 BS. Her husband usually buys both local and crossbred buffalo from Baglung, Birgunj, and Chitwan at the rate of Rs. 2,000 to Rs. 3,000. He supplies them in Kathmandu. Butchers from different parts in Kathmandu used to buy old buffaloes comparatively cheaper rate. He has made profit Rs. 3,000 to Rs. 4,000 per buffalo. He left business because of his age and loneliness. Now, her husband works as a farmer. Her whole families members decide jointly to buy animal but male members go to buy and sell animal. Since 2050 BS they had only reared one Crossbred buffalo, which had bought at the rate of Rs. 22,000. When it became old they sold at the rate of Rs. 17,000 in Bahuntar of Dhading. This buffalo gave birth to five female-baby buffalo and one male-baby buffalo. Similarly Bhagwati Bisural bought local buffalo from Chitwan rate Rs. 17, 000 which is still alive at home. This buffalo gave birth to five male buffalo and one female-baby buffalo. They sold at the rate of Rs. 3,000 to Rs. 4,000.

Keshab Bisural has got one crossbreed buffalo while distributing parental property among four brothers. Buffalo stopped giving milk after two-three months of separation. He sold it at the rate of Rs. 14,000 for butcher of Charaundi of Dhading. Then his wife bought cross buffalo at the rate of Rs. 14,000 from same place and sold after a year at the same rate. His wife bought cross-buffalo in Rs. 17,000 from Charaundi. Again they could not rear and sold it in same month. But all the activities of selling and purchasing of buffalo work are decided by his wife, due to his official work in Kathmandu. But, most of the decisions regarding selling and purchasing buffalo are taken jointly by husbands and wives.

Physical structure of buffalo makes difference on their selling price. Having straight horns, brown color and big breast cost higher price than uneven horns and black color. On the other hand, villagers do not prefer white spot any parts of the body because that spots are symbol of harm and evil. Spotted buffaloes cause health hazard and loss of other animas and owner's family. On the basis of white spot on the part of the body farmers named buffalo like white spot on head, is called 'Tari' on tail 'Phurki'. So, spotted buffaloes are tried to sell as fast as they can and in cheaper price. Villagers believed that selling buffalo on 'Wednesday' is not good for remaining livestock's and family members but they do not have any day's restriction buying them.

## 6.4 Division of Labor

Allocation of personal to perform agricultural, animal and commercial tasks is not random but determined by a specialized division of labor which is a behavioral unfolding of certain norms dictated in part by religious beliefs (Fisher 1987). The division of labor in Bishaltar can be discussed in terms of gender, age and religious beliefs. The permissive (who may and may not do certain tasks) and the normative levels (who should or should not do what work) are there because Bishaltar is rural settlement. As Durkheim mentioned people in rural communities tend to occupy very general positions in which they perform a wide variety of tasks and handle a large number of responsibilities (Ritzer 2000). In Bishaltar, agricultural livestock and household chores are not specialized in general. For example, family does not allow women member to plough field in Bishaltar.

During my field stay I noticed that day to day family distribution of labor and decisions are made both male and female members of the family. Sex and Age both play a critical role in determining labor allocation in dairy farming. Female engaged in all indoor and outdoor works. Decisions regarding dairy production, marketing, household consumption and dairy income are made among family members. Family structure also makes difference on the labor work and decisions of the family. Nuclear families are liberal about women's involvement whereas in joint families female members are passive listener. To talk female headed families women are bold, active and empowered. Ganga Bisural, aged 36 is a chairperson of the buffalo group. Her husband and two children consists her family. She has sent her children in Kathmandu for better education. Her married sister takes care of children. Ganga participate all social meetings and household decisions. Her husband is a farmer who allows her to involve social work. Muyan Thari is daughter-in-law of Ganesh Thari. There are 13 members in her family. She is always busy doing household chores. Cooking, cleaning, grass cutting and animal grazing are her everyday activities. Neither she is a member of any user group nor does she know household decisions. She complains her husband and father-in-law for their strict control. She said, "I am not allowed to participate public meetings". Those women whose husbands are foreign countries or Kathmandu are more active and forward about social and women's issue. They do not hesitate to talk in front of male member of the society.

Female consistently contribute well over half the labor hours. Generally, women carry out most activities including collecting green fodder, tree forage, feeding and grazing animals, cleaning animal/sheds, composting animal dung, milking and selling the milk in shop, treating animals with modern drugs, planting, harvesting, weeding, hoeing the soil and selling vegetables and prepare Khole. Women do the bulk of the animal work so that they are more knowledgeable about dairy matters. According to local women, lactating and growing animals are better cared and given better feed or two-three times a day and other high quality fodders more regularly through out the year.

Among the routine jobs, feeding the animals in the early morning at 6am is mostly done by the women and oxen are sent out for grazing to the children before opening the school. In whole household work woman especially spends around 4-5 hours a day on livestock and farm yard manure activities, 3-6 hours a day on crop related farm activities, 30 minutes for selling milk in shop, almost 3 hours a day on fodder and fuel collection, and about 2 hours a day cooking food activities or cooking daily meals. Before cooking food they have to make the fire with wood. Females are busier and work harder than males. In addition, women must spread the grain out to dry and they store inside the house if rain threatens. They must remove the corn from its stalk and store inside the basket.

In general, there are three categories of works; household chores (cooking, cleaning house and clothes and washing dishes), animal works (milking, fodder and grass cutting, cleaning shed, and grazing) and agricultural tasks (ploughing, cultivating, harvesting, farm preparing, weeding, carrying manure, thrashing etc). Family members' involvement in different types of labor can be displayed by making table.

**Table 6.1 Division of Labor Performed Mostly or Entirely by**

| Type of Work           | Men | Women | Children | Old |
|------------------------|-----|-------|----------|-----|
| Cooking food           | -   | +     | -        | +   |
| Cleaning               | -   | +     | -        | -   |
| Washing dishes         | -   | +     | +        | -   |
| Water fetching         | -   | +     | +        | -   |
| Milking                | -   | +     | -        | -   |
| Selling milk           | +   | +     | +        | -   |
| Grass/fodder cutting   | -   | +     | +        | -   |
| Feeding food and water | -   | +     | +        | +   |
| Shed cleaning          | -   | +     | -        | -   |
| Grazing                | -   | +     | +        | +   |
| Ploughing              | +   | -     | -        | -   |
| Weeding                | -   | +     | -        | -   |
| Carrying manure        | -   | +     | +        | -   |
| Harvesting             | +   | +     | -        | -   |
| Irrigating             | +   | +     | +        | -   |
| School                 | -   | -     | +        | -   |

Note: - (No), + (Yes)

Source: Field work, 2006.

On the basis of this table, women do most of the work in the family. Except religiously forbidden tasks, they involve all types of labor work. To talk about work burden in household, animal and agricultural spheres, women's involvement is higher in terms of time and activities.

Kalimaya Bisural and her husband are dairy farmers. She carries animal dung in the field, collects grass, feed, care and milk the animal. Both husband and wife cultivate vegetables, crops. It seems she does a work more than her husband. Oxen are grazed on public land by their grandsons before opening of the school and after their school time. Similarly, Rashmila Dallakoti said "My granddaughter aged nine cooks' foods, carries

water from Dhunge Dhara (situated 20 minutes far from the village), collects grass, forages, and grazes goats. I and Buhari (daughter-in-law) go to collect grass, work in vegetable cultivation and go to sell milk. Every morning and evening I milk buffalo and give water for animal. Sometimes Buhari (daughter-in-law) does this work. Cleaning animals and shed have been done by whoever has a free-time. My husband sometime cooks food and grazes animal. He helps to purchase buffalo but never go to sell milk and never collects grasses. Selling she-buffalo and baby buffalo is decided by whole elder family".

Generally, women milk the animals and go to sell in hotels and tea shop. Again women become ready to collect grass/fodder in the jungle, in their terrace lands, etc. At home other family members cook food. In a Mid-day time, they go for vegetable production in the field or go for another work as 'Parma system'. They sometime get free in mid-day after returning from labor work in field and have rest. They again have to feed for the animals grass and fodder. In the evening they go to collect grass and fodder, feed the animals and milk the animals. They are usually the first to notice sick animals and then bring this to the attention of their husband or household head. Women have gained valuable skills. This has increased their status in the community and some roles previously allocated to men have been released to skilled women.

Sometimes when they get free, they gather in one place, discuss on various topics which are related with their life, cropping pattern and share with their friend, neighbours. They clarify the problems. Old mothers care their grand children. Only in a busy time they used to collect grass, feed animal, and wash cloths. Mostly in village when there is busy hour at home, then old mothers milk the animal; prepare curd, mohi and ghee. Children of both sexes (mostly male) graze the animals. Similarly Young boys graze animals, work in field and sometimes sell milk during menstruation of female members. Usually when they go to graze the animals, they play football or swim in river. Male and children fetch water from Dhunge Dhara when female members of the family absent. Young girls' age from 7-12 collect grass, fed and graze animals. They rarely go to the river for swim. They help their mother in all household chores but few sons are not obliged to share such household activities. In many cases the work is carried out mutually.

Men's role is limited. Male dominates outer strata like, social meeting and agricultural decisions of seeds, tilling, buying buffalo. Younger, elder and old people (male) usually sit in 'Pratikchayalaya' (waiting place) and share their family problems. They spend time discussing on different topic issued in the village like land system problem, dairy problem, development of village, about their children and grand-child future life, etc. They also talk life of those people who are in foreign country, their types of work. When teachers (Rajendra Pandey, Shiva Raj Bisural, etc.) and other job holders get free time after office hours they do both indoor and outdoor works. Elder people collect grass, grazing animals, provide service to the dairy animals, and sometimes participate in marketing milk and cleaning sheds. Older men make decisions regarding the breeding of animals and have free time to market and work in field comparing to old women. Thus, time spent by women everyday activities are much more than men but apparently men seem busier because they are mostly absence in the family.

To sum up, women have greater social and economic roles in the field of animal husbandry. Formally, women group contributes not only individual family's milk production but also solves other sphere of social problems. Informally, women are busy in agricultural work at seasons and milking activities rest of the time. Income of milk production is significant in the village. A number of milking animal signify both social and economic status of the family in the village. Milking animals are counted as bank cheque because they can easily and quickly convert to cash. Buying and selling of dairy animal is skillful transaction in the village.



## **Chapter-VI**

### **Conclusion**

Throughout this thesis I have talked about cultural (socio-economic) and gender dimensions of buffalo milk production among the farmers of Bishaltar. As I discussed earlier chapters, farmers of Bishaltar practiced different rituals, beliefs and values related to milk production and domestic animals and human relationship. Apart from economic value, socio-cultural values of dairy production are hidden. Latent aspect of milking animals reflects social status of the family in the village. Rituals related to milking animals are performed for the better production of milk. Similarly, whenever milking animals give birth, they are considered profane. Their milk is not mixed with other animal's milk and not used for religious work. After performance of rituals, milk is considered sacred. Then they offer to the gods too. If rituals are not performed carefully, there will be loss for the household. Abrupt loss and animal's denial to give milk is considered witch eye's effect. They call witch-doctor (Dhami) to find out demands of witches and Dhami performs certain rituals to satisfy evil eyes. Thus, in Bishaltar people are very careful about rituals of animals.

As a home industry, dairy farming creates new opportunities of employment and cash economy for rural people. It is hidden source of income generation and empowerment of women through institutional functionaries. It has found that socio-economic condition of rural farmers has improved and become economically better for every household. Implicit relation of milk production can be realized on family health, education, and different rituals like birth, marriage, and death. A number of milking animals reflect the social status of the family. Milk products (milk, ghee, curd, khir, khuwa) are prestigious food to serve guest as well as popular present for the close relatives. It helps strengthening kinship and neighborhood ties.

Since the main objectives of the study are to document local beliefs, socio-economic and gender aspects of milk production in the village, I have tried to explore all of these areas. Economic contribution and gender roles of dairy production are conceptual background of the study. Methodologically, this study has applied a number of methods to answer a set of research questions. Participatory observation, listening,

formal and informal hangouts with the villagers, case study and key informant interviews are tools to obtain data. This writing is based on six months field work.

Women of Bishaltar have formed 'Devasthan Bhainsi Palan Samuha' like an 'Ama Samuha' micro-credit activities, plays vital role of economic and social unity. Though all women are not educated they attend in all the meetings and fortify their knowledge in mass meetings. They try to remove false conceptions regarding witch (Bokshi), ghost etc that harms the milking animal. Their discussions of chemical fertilizers and pesticide on animals present their consciousness of negative impacts of chemicals. After my field work, I have frequently talked with the group members about their improvement by managing collection center and co-operative. Study indicates women's participation in dairy co-operatives has encouraged women to improve their access and opportunities. Women become capable to absorb specialized knowledge and understanding economic activities. They have been overburdened by agricultural operations; participate towards different development programmes and extension activities. Group activities create opportunities sharing knowledge, power among the peoples of both sexes in the community. Women are found to be more knowledgeable about indigenous fodder trees, grass and local treatment method. This happened because institutional programmes as 'Buffalo Group' are geared towards providing training and exposure opportunities for women. Thus this group provides social and economic aspects of women. They are saving money as micro-credit that is helpful to poor farmer to get cheap loan. This saved cash can be used to solve accidental problem for the villagers. Through organized way women increase their social capacity as well.

Milk and woman are naturally related. Socially animal related work and milking spheres are women's burden. Females are more responsible and tightly attach with animal activities as milking animal, cutting grass, selling milk, fetching water are regarded exclusively female's job. The entire household major decisions are shared but ended as male thinks good. Investing money or selling livestock and social activities male's domination can be reflected even if female member passively presence. Labor work and household activities are the areas of female's self decisions. Both public and domestic spheres of milk production are largely dominated by women. All domestic activities of milking, storing, grass-fodder collection, caring of milking animals and selling of milk

market are conducted by them. Their roles and decisions are accepted a production, consumption, selling, gift-giving and utilization of milk-income. Buying and selling of buffaloes are considered male's job. Women formed their groups for the betterment of buffalo milk production.

Dairy production is not free from caste domination. Devasthan Bhainsi Palan Samuha in Bishaltar is exclusively formed by high caste women. Dalits are not included in the group because they do not have milking animals and they are blamed not to return loan back in time. Caste seems as major ties that bound village women in one group but political affiliation seems as divider within high caste women. Most of people of Gharbari Tol are supporter of NC and women of this Tol do not involve in Bhainsi Palan Samuha formed by UML supporter at Majha Tol. All members of the woman buffalo group belong to high caste but all high caste women are not member of that group. This group seems a platform to talk about economic (buffalo husbandry and agriculture) as well as socio-cultural issue. Women not only involve micro-credit activities but also talk about social problems like polygyny, extra-marital relationship and domestic violence. Functions of the women group shape women's empowerment and they enjoy more freedom-which is also based on milk income-because milk income goes to women's hand. So on the absence of male member in the family, they do not have to face economic crisis. Most of labor works related to dairy production are regarded women's responsibility-except buying and selling dairy animals. Women have to cut grass-fodder, clean shed, feeding milking storing etc. so gender domination is reflected in the sphere of milk production. Gender based division of labor is another insight of study because most of the household works are considered women's burden.

Milk is accepted mean of income and easy marketing whereas vegetables are seasonal, market based on bargaining. Disease and quick damage create great loss and uncertainty among the farmers. Because of local market, milk holidays do not make any differences for the milk producer. The farmers have fixed customers who used to buy milk during strike and holidays. They sell milk local teashops and hotels along the highway. The price of the milk is locally decided on the basis of DDC milk. One Mana (about 500ml) milk costs Rs. 12 and farmers earn Rs. 100 to Rs. 150 per day. Since women have invested more times for milking activities, they handle income according to

the need and priorities of the family. Areas of expenditures are diverse: medical, school, ornaments, clothes, ritual, marriage and loan return. Buffaloes are given in forms of pewa and daijo to the married daughter which is not only economic assets but also embody social and emotional values mediating belongingness with kinship ties.

Farmers gave greater knowledge about consumption and storing of milk and milk product. They make different varieties of milk which is considered prestigious food as well as remarkable symbol of socio-economic status of the family. Milk tea and black tea are micro symbols of family status in the village. Milk, curd, mohi, ghee, khuwa are basic forms of milk product. Ghee, khuwa, khir are use as gift for relative. So it helps to strengthen kinship ties and social relation. It helps to maintain family status of Maiti of the married women.

At the end, I would like to conclude my dissertation by emphasizing roles and relation of woman are culturally embedded in the production and consumption of milk in subsistence economy in village. Milking activities and roles of women are culturally constructed. Cultural and socio-economic values of the milk are realized when villagers are deprived from milk. Cultural dimension of dairy production is an important anthropological insight for upcoming researchers.

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