

## Chapter - One

### Introduction

#### 1.1 Introduction of Research

Ethnic group or indigenous nationality, referred as *adibasi janajati* in Nepali, has the characteristics of distinct collective identity; own language, religion, tradition, culture and civilization; own traditional egalitarian social structure; traditional homeland or geographical area; and written or oral history. Indigenous nationalities are spread out almost in every part of the country.

According to the 2011 census, the indigenous nationalities of Nepal comprise 36% of the total population of 26.5 million. Even though they constitute a significant proportion of the population, throughout the history of Nepal indigenous peoples have been marginalized in terms of language, culture, and political and economic opportunities. The 2011 census listed the population as belonging to 125 caste and ethnic groups including 63 indigenous peoples, 59 castes (including 15 Dalit castes), and three religious groups (Muslim, Sikh and Bangali).

Of these indigenous nationalities, Chepang, also known as Praja, is the least known group of Nepal who are living in their traditional regions consisting of the western part of Makwanpur district, the northern part of Chitwan district and the southern part of Dhading and Gorkha districts. Most of Chepangs are illiterate and ignorant and they are economically poor and marginalized. Their livelihood mainly depends on agriculture and animal husbandry. They seasonally grow maize, millet, buckwheat, mustard, wheat, different kind of beans and seasonal vegetables using traditional farming techniques. Because of traditional practice of farming in inhospitable hill terrain, the yield is low that prompt them to practice shifting cultivation. These economic hardships have huge impact on the socio-economic condition of Chepang communities.

Since Chepang are more dependent and attached with nature and its resources, their culture and value system is governed by the natural environment. Chepangs are traditionally animists and they still practice shamanism. Shamans play important role in their life as they perform rituals in almost all cultural and religious festivals and events. But their traditional belief and practices have been influenced by other communities living close to them. In many places, Gurung, Magar, Tamang and Chhetri are coexisting with Chepang and mix culture is flourishing in these places accordingly. But more prominent is the impact from Christianity that aggressively converting people especially marginalized groups into Christianity.

## **1.2 Statement of Problems**

Chepang has its own language, religion, tradition and culture that makes them distinct group. Their rich traditional culture is another color in the spectrum of cultural diversity in the country. With more exposure to outside world and also due to encroachment by other groups in their traditional homeland, their culture has been immensely influenced. This study has identified the following specific issues:

- 1) The economic hardship for rural Chepang communities in Dahakhani VDC is apparent that drive them outside of the traditional homeland to find the alternative source of income. This economic situation should have impact on their socio-cultural life.
- 2) Gurung, Magar, Chhetri and Tamang are also coexisting with Chepang in their traditional homeland which is instrumental to develop the mix culture. This is also affecting their traditional value and belief system.
- 3) Chepangs are traditionally believers of animism and they practice shamanism. With more religious invasion, especially Christianity, their traditional belief and practice have been greatly influenced.

There are some studies and research on Chepang culture in general but there is no proper and specific study on socio-cultural influence upon the life of Chepang of Dahakhani VDC. This study will focus on these specific issues.

### **1.3 Objectives of the Research**

This study intends to assess the socio-cultural impact on traditional life of Chepang communities living in Dahakhani VDC of Chitwan district. The specific objectives of the study are:

- 1) To observe and study their traditional way of life which is still prevalent there. This study will systemically document their oral history, family and social structure, shamanistic rituals and their social and cultural activities.
- 2) To study their social and cultural life in term of economic situation and opportunities.
- 3) To study and assess the change on their traditional life with impact from economic circumstances, and cultural and religious influence by other groups.

### **1.4 Importance of Research**

The history, culture, religion and tradition are unique for each ethnic group and in many circumstances they are intermingling with each other in such a way that they are living together with mutual harmony and cooperation. This unity among the diversity is the most significant aspect of Nepali society. However, the traditional culture is gradually changing with economic circumstances and introduction of new thought system. As this study would assess the influence upon the traditional value system of Chepang, it will help to understand how this is shaping the Chepang society in general and what their implications are in Dahakhani VDC.

### **1.5 Literature Review**

Many studies and research have been done by the prominent scholars to understand the Chepang culture in general which are very useful source for further in depth study. These ethnographic studies are much helpful for this particular research work to understand the social, cultural and economic perspectives of Chepang.

*Bista, Dor Bahadur, People of Nepal, Ratna Pustak Bhandar, Kathmandu: 2004 A.D.*

People of Nepal is the first and foremost book on systematic ethnographic study on diverse ethnic groups from Terai, Mid-hills and Himalayan regions. The custom, traditions and rituals of Chepang have been described in this book. There is story about the origin of Chepang and Kusunda who are the descendants of two sons Lohari and Kusari of Sita, of the famous Hindu epic Ramayana. This book identified two distinct economic groups among Chepang, those who have developed a purely agricultural economy and others who still partly depend upon food-gathering, hunting and fishing. The former group lives in the eastern part of the region and is known as the Pukunthali; the latter lives in the western part and is known as the Kachhare.

*Dhungel, Rammani*, Chepang Samaj Ra Sanskriti, Sajha Prakashan, Kathmandu: B.S. 2051

Rammani Dhungel carried out the in-depth study on Chepang society and culture, and its outcome is 'Chepang Samaj Ra Sankriti. This book deals with the social and cultural aspects of Chepang with greater understanding of their specific religion, language, customs, rituals and festivals. This book also describes the significance of shamanism in Chepang life, religious and social relationship with other groups and gradual development process of Chepang society.

*Hodgson, B. H.*, Essays on the Languages, Literature and Religion of Nepal and Tibet, Bharat - Bharati, Varanasi: 1971 A.D.

Brian H. Hodgson, who first conducted the ethnographical study of Chepang and Kusunda tribes back in early nineteenth century, found Chepangs living in primitive stage. In this book 'Essays on the Languages, Literature and Religion of Nepal and Tibet', he described "They have bows and arrows of which the iron arrow-heads are procured from their neighbors, but almost no other implement of civilization, and it is in the very skilful snaring of the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air that all their little intelligence is manifested." He found much lingual similarity of Chepang language with that of Lhopas of Bhutan that asserted the connection and derivation of Chepangs from Lhopas.

*Gurung, Ganesh Man, The Chepangs, S.B. Shahi, Lalitpur: 1989 A.D.*

The study of Chepang conducted by Ganesh Man Gurung is based on his doctoral dissertation submitted to Benaras Hindu University. The book deals with people and social ecology, economic aspect, social aspect, village administrative aspect, religious aspect and the development scenarios of Chepang communities. This book is useful to understand social, cultural and economic aspects of Chepang with technical details and statistics.

*Rai, Lagan, Conversion to Christianity and Social Inclusion: A Comparative Ethnographic Study of Chepang and Santal Communities, Social Inclusion Research Fund, SNV Nepal, Kathmandu: 2012 A.D.*

This report deals with the comparative ethnographic study of an historical social phenomenon of religious conversion to Christianity among the Chepang and Santhal communities. The report has explored the implications of the religious conversions on social exclusion and inclusion in the Chepang and Santhal communities.

## **1.6 Limitation of Research**

The research was conducted in all wards of Dahakhani VDC of Chitwan district. The study was not conducted in Dahakhani because Chepang has not lived in this village. From each ward, some 15 Chepang people were interviewed with structured questionnaire sheet. There were half male and half female respondents. Some of cultural activities such as rituals, festivals, shamanistic practices were observed during the field visits and these events were documented and photographed accordingly.

## **1.7 Methodology of Research**

This is very crucial that proper research methods are applied to get the information for social and cultural research works. First hand information is essential in the context of gradual progress and

change in social and cultural aspects of the community. Both primary sources and secondary sources are used for thorough study and analysis for this research.

### **1.7.1 Primary Sources**

#### **1.7.1.1 Interview**

People were interviewed with the structured questionnaire sheet for primary source of information. Questionnaire sheet includes set of questions about general information of respondents, their oral history, family structure, occupation, economic situation, health, education, religion, shamanism, language, rituals, and relationship with other communities and development initiatives. Fifteen Chepang people were interviewed in each ward except in ward no. 4 where there is no Chepang. So total 120 Chepang of Dahakhani VDC were interviewed which is 9.47 percent of total population of Chepang in the VDC. Almost 50 percent of respondents were female.

#### **1.7.1.2 Observation**

Whole lot of information and ideas could be gathered through the observation of various social and cultural activities of Chepang people. Various rituals, festivals and shamanistic activities of Chepang people have been observed and photographed. In fact, I have personally involved in some of the activities like participating in shamanism and Bayu Puja of Chepang people. Since I have a small cottage in Upardang Gadi, I visit to Chepang village at least once in a month, that also is much helpful to get the cultural information through the observation of their life.

### **1.7.2 Secondary Sources**

The published and unpublished books, articles and reports have been reviewed and used as secondary sources of information. These information are very useful to crosscheck with the information gathered in the field. Some maps and data have been derived from the reliable sources from internet.

## **Chapter - Two**

### **Introduction of Chepang in Dahakhani VDC**

#### **2.1 Geography of Dahakhani VDC**

The Chitwan District (area: 2238.39 sq. km.) lies south center part of the country and is surrounded by Mahabharat range in the north and Churia hills in the south. There are total 16 Village Development Committee and 6 municipalities in Chitwan district. Dahakhani VDC is one of the 9 VDCs which are located northern hill region of Chitwan which is surrounded by Chandibhanjyang VDC in the north, Shaktikhor VDC in the east, Jutpani VDC in the south and Kabilas VDC in the west.

Some southern part the Dahakhani VDC have been extended towards the lowland as the altitude ranges from 302 m in Gardas to 1290 m in Torke. But most of the areas of the VDC have been covered by the mid-hills.

There are nine wards (the administrative units) in the Dahakhani VDC out of which Khetbari, Simaldhap, and Gardas, Bhalumara and Jhanjhange lie on the lowland at the base of the Mahabharat hill. As the graveled road goes to all these places, they have easy accessibility to main touns: Narayangarh, Bharatpur, Tandil and Padampur. Rest of the places are located in the hills and only Dahakhani (also the place name) and Upardang Gadi has the road connectivity. The road connects Dahakhani to Gaighat, Dahakhani has a health post and vdc office. The trail goes from Shaktikhor to Upardang Gadi which is generally inaccessible during monsoon.

Upardang Gadi, the historic place, is the first district headquarters of Chitwan till 1957 AD. On the summit of the Upardang Gadi hill has the historic fort which was built in early 1800 AD by Shatrubhanjan Shah, the youngest son of Bahadur Shah and grandson of Prithvi Narayan Shah to defend the country from the invasion from south. Architectural engineering is remarkable as the fort is built by giant stones and lime, and is surrounded by deep canal. The fort is stood in

strategic location so that entire Chitwan Valley in the south and mammoth hills and mountains in the north are visible.

In each ward, there are many villages which are as follows:

Ward no. 1 : Upardang Gadi, Saltana, Darsingh, Kape

Ward no. 2 : Torke, Bhorle, Naya Gau, Tar, Ghale Dada

Ward no. 3 : Lakhan Kot, Syandi, Jhosebesi, Dhadbari

Ward no. 4 : Dahakhani

Ward no. 5 : Patisara, Lama Ahal

Ward no. 6 : Kuyalghari

Ward no. 7 : Khetbari

Ward no. 8 : Simaldhap

Ward no. 9 : Gardas, Bhalumara, Jhanjhange

## **2.2 Population Demography of Dahakhani VDC**

According to the National Population and Housing Census 2011, there are total 939 households with total population of 4803 (male: 2304 and female: 2499) in Dahakhani VDC. Population of Gurung and Chepang is higher than other ethnic groups (Chettri, Magar, Tamang, Newar, Kami, Damai/Dholi and Gharti/Bhujel). Of the 1266 total population of Chepang, there are 629 are male and 637 are female (National Population and Housing Census 2011). There are Chepang everywhere except in Dahakhani (ward 4) which is inhabited by only Gurung and Magar ethnic groups.

## **2.3 Chepang of Dahakhani VDC**

Chepangs are living in all the wards of Dahakhani VDC except in Dahakhani but their distribution is uneven. Their population is higher in ward 9 followed by ward 3, 7 and 2. Now more Chepangs are tend to move the lowland, population is increasing in lowland areas. There is huge influx of Chepang in Gardas and Khetbari areas where people are clearing the prime forests for the resettlement.



Chepang generally live in the steep and inhospitable hill terrains with harsh climatic condition. Life is obviously very difficult with limited facilities. In some villages, they have walk for hours to get the drinking water. There is no proper health and education facilities. Their cornfield is raided by monkeys during day and by porcupines during nights. During monsoon, land is infested with numerous leeches which is really irritating. The threat of natural calamities (erosion, landslide, flooding) is always looming especially during monsoon. They obviously tend to look better place for survival.

Chepangs came to live in the Dahakhani VDC from the different parts of hill region of Chitwan and Dhading districts. As their life depends mainly on agriculture and the forest resources, they migrate from higher altitude to lower in the search for the better place. They came from various places of Kabilas, Chandibhanjyag, Korak and Shaktikhor of Chitwan and Kurintar and Jogimara of Dhading. They often migrate within the same VDC.

### **2.3.1 Origin**

There is no proper answer about the origin of Chepangs though the story of Chepangs being the descendents of Lohari, one of sons of Sita, of the famous epic Ramayana, is still told by Chepangs in slightly different versions. According to the story, Sita showed his son Lohari (also Lava) to hanuman (monkeys) when she went to river to get water. Seeing the cradle empty sage Balmiki created another similar child with *kush* grass and he was called Kushari. Descendents of Lohari were called Chepang and of Kushari, Kusunda, the food-gathering and hunting people living in the forested areas west of the areas where Chepangs live. Chepangs and Kushari are natural enemies and Chepangs say that Kusundas kill them with bows and arrows on sight. According to other version of story, *lohor* (pestle) and *kucho* (sweeper) were placed by *buju* (grandmother of Sita) on the cradle. Lohari was created from *lohor* and Kushari was created from *kucho*.

Brian Hodgson identified that the Chepangs, the Kusundas, and the Haiyus to be the fragments of an original hill population prior to the present dominant races of inhabitants of these

mountains, and to be Tamulian extraction from their great resemblances of form and color to the aborigines of the plains, particularly the Kol's or Uraons, the Mundas, and the Males (B.H. Hodgson, 1971: 46).

There are also various assumptions about the origin of word 'Chepang'. In Chepang language, *che* means dog and *pang* means arrow. It is believed that they use to take the help of the dog and arrow in hunting long ago thus they were name Chepang (Ganesh Man Gurung, 1989: 23).

Some anthropologists believe that Chepang word is derived from chyo and bang. In Chepang language, meaning of chyo is hill and bang is stone. They are called Chepangs because they used to live in the hill or cave (Rammani Dhungel, 2051: 6).

### **2.3.2 Physical Feature**

Physical feature of Chepang is much similar with that of Mongolian people. Their height is short like Mongolians but the complexion is darker unlike Mongolians. General features of Chepang are slightly small suspicious eyes, small nose, black lank hair, sparse hair, salient cheek-bones and darker complexion. Facial features of some Chepangs are similar with Magar and some are similar with that of Tharu (Rammani Dhungel, 2051:16).

### **2.3.3 Clan System**

Gotra (thar is also used as synonymously), the clan system, is the group of several generations who are the descendent of a unbroken male line from a common male ancestor. Children get gotra from their father but a girl's gotra is changed to her husband's gotra after her marriage. Sagotri are the people having same gotra.

Chepangs have many clan divisions. This study reveals mainly three divisions according to their social status: Bhujel Gharti, Sun Praja and Dudh Praja. Bhujel Gharti are the highest in the social hierarchy followed by Sun Praja and Dudh Praja. Many regard them different group but now they identify themselves as Chepang and they write the surname as Chepang or Praja in their

citizenship card because of the privilege given upon the Chepang by the government. There are many exogamous clan divisions like Mangkunge, Lojaki, Samathoke, Mathoke, Kalipote, Khopreli, Mampunge, Dunthorke, Maththorke, Mukhipare, Tiprangi, Jenthoke, Maisbare, Gofle, Tante, Moitbare, Syakpare, Tunkali, Robangi, Thumkali, Mujukote etc. Chepangs observe the strict clan exogamy. If people get married within same clan, they are expelled from the society as the punishment.

Dor Bahadur Bista recognized two economic groups among the Chepangs: Kachhare, backward and primitive group, who like to be called Sunpraja and have no sub-divisions, and the Punkanthali, developed group, are called Praja and have a number of exogamous clans (Dor Bahadur Bista, 2011:120). Chepangs of Dahakhani are not aware of the term Pukanthanli but the Chepangs of eastern side of hill is referred as Kachhare, and this term is used somewhat as derogatory.

The clan division is based on 1) region or origin where Chepangs inhabit 2) occupation and, 3) marriage relationship. Rupkote and Nuwakote clans are originated from that particular region's name. Rom is clan of people who used to make doko and Petare are the descendent of Chepangs who used to carry the doli during the marriage ceremony. Nagarkoti clan are referred to the descendents of Nagarkoti Newar who had married Chepang girl (Rammani Dhungel, 2051:14).

#### **2.3.4 Language and Script**

The basic elements of social composition include: race as ethnicity, religion or belief, and language or mother tongue. Nepal is multicultural and multilingual country with some 125 different ethnic and caste groups and 123 different languages.

Chepang speaks Chepang language with slight variations relevant to different geographical locations. Two dialects were reported: one is relevant to Eastern part of Chitwan hill and other is relevant to Western part. Almost all Chepangs speak Nepali language which is more commonly used in the village where other ethnic people also live. Use of mother tongue is diminishing in the villages where there is more influence of other cultures. Most of people informed that they

understand Chepang language but could not speak because they do not have opportunity to practice it as everyone speaks Nepali in the village. Chepang does not have their own script.

Chepang language falls on the category of Tibeto-Burman which is closely related to Thami and Hayu language (Ram Mani Dhungel, 2051:42). Brian H. Hodgson, who first conducted the ethnographical study of Chepang and Kusunda tribes back in early nineteenth century, found the much lingual similarity of Chepang language with that of Lhopas of Bhutan that asserted the connection and derivation of Chepangs from Lhopas (Brian H. Hodgson, 1971:47). He identified some 27 prime words that are almost same in both language (table below).

List of Chepang words derived from the Tibetan language, and specially the Bhutanese Dialect of it.

<i>English</i>	<i>Tibetan</i>	<i>Lhopa</i>	<i>Chepang</i>	<i>Chepang (present)</i>
Eye	Mig	....	Mik	Nik
Sun	Nyima	Nyim	Nyam	Nem
Sky	Namkhah	Nam	Nam	....
Ear	....	No	Navo	No
Mountain	Ri	Rong	Rias	....
Star	Karma	Kam	Kar	....
Tree	Shing	Shing	Sing-tak	Sing
Wood	Shing	Shing	Sing	Sing
Leaf	Lo-ma	....	Lo	Lo
Salt	Thsa	Chha	Chhe	Chhe
Road	Lam	Lam	Liam	Lyam
House	Khyim	Khim	Kyim	Kim
Moon	Lava	....	Lame	Laau
Bone	Ruspa	....	Rhus	Rhus
Fire	Me	Mi	Mi	Mhe
Arrow	Dah	Dah	Lah	La
Dog	Khyi	Khi	Kui	Kui

Buffalo	Mahi S	Meshi	Misha	.... (Michhaa for goat)
Day	....	Nyim	Nyi	....
Earth	....	Sa	Sa	Sa
Fish	Nya	Gna	Gna	Nga
Hog	Phag	Phag	Piak	Kasiya (deer)
Horn	Ra	Rong	Rong	Rong
Two	Nyis	Nyi	Nhi-zho	Nijo
Three	Sum	Sum	Num-zho	Sumjo
Give	Buh	Bin	Bui	Bayu
Take	Lan	Ling	Li	Leu

## Chapter - Three

### Social and Economic Aspect

#### 3.1 Social Aspect

This chapter deals with the social and economic aspect of Chepang communities of Dahakhani VDC. In social aspect, habitation and traditional house design of Chepangs, their family, kinship structures and their education opportunity have been discussed. They involve with agriculture, animal husbandry, hunting and gathering, labor work to sustain the life.

##### 3.1.1 Habitation and Traditional Houses

Social harmony and relationship is important aspect of Chepang people as they have to depend upon each other for almost every daily activity. However, their settlements are spread over large terrain in the hill and generally 4-5 houses are found in one settlement. Generally close family relatives lives in one settlement. Unlike in the hills, more houses are found in one settlement in lower areas because of the flat, open and more accessible land.

Most of the houses are one storied, which are made of stone, mud, wood and thatch grass (photo 16). Now people are also making two storied houses. *Khar* (thatch grass) is used to make roof that they harvested from steep hills every year during December. Old *khar* should be replaced by newly harvested *khar* or just new *khar* is placed upon the old ones annually before the monsoon to protect house seeping from monsoon rain. Front face of house has the the raised platform of stones and above it is the *khar* roof attached to the wall. This is place where people can rest and work, and children can play. This is very useful during monsoon when people could not work outside. There are similar extended parts at the either side of house which is used to keep goats and chicken. Small sheds are also built near the house for goats, buffalos, cows and ox. They make small wooden cage to keep chickens. If there are only few chicken, they are kept inside the house in the half *doko* (a bamboo basket).

In typical Chepang house, the open oven is made inside the house. Oven is made of using stone and mud or just put the iron tripod in the middle of fireplace. Metal iron tripod is common as people can easily put firewood from all directions and it gives more fire that prepares the food quickly and keeps room hot. Because of economic condition of Chepang people, they could not afford to buy warm clothes. So all the family members sleep by the side of oven or fireplace. This poses risk for children getting into fire in the night. There are many incidence of injury to children caused by these incidences. One of the reasons they prefer traditional oven is that lot of smoke coming out of oven helps corncobs get dried. They generally put the corns and other food stuffs on the upstairs. Corn is harvested during monsoon (Sawan/Bhadra) in the Chitwan hills. Smoke keeps corn safe from moisture and insects. They also make the bundle of eight corncobs which are intertwined together by the its outer skin (photo 18). These bundles are hung on the strings or horizontal sticks which are attached just below the roof.

Generally toilet is not found in typical Chepang village. But now things are changing in many Chepang villages where people are more aware about health and sanitation and they have also received support from various organizations to build toilets. With influence from other communities they learn the significance of toilet. Some of the remote villages of Torke, Bhorle, Tar and Ghale Dada have less number of toilets.

### **3.1.2 Family Structure**

Family is important unit in the social life of Chepang people. They all work together for existence as they live the subsistence life all year round. This hardship makes strong bond and affinity towards the family. All the members should work all day long as they are busy with agricultural work whole year round. From early childhood, they learn how to do household and agricultural works and where to collect wild food. The notion of struggle for survival has been ingrained in them from early life.

Nuclear family is common among the Chepangs. Chepangs are generally prolific having children so they have lot of members in family. Once son gets married and brings wife, he tends to live

separately because it is difficult to accommodate the extended family in same small house. In fact, his parents also encourage him to live separately and leave him to struggle for survival providing some land. There is mutual cooperation and support among all which is essential feature of village life. Parents generally lives with their eldest son.

### **3.1.3 Kinship**

Mutual relationship among the relatives is stronger among Chepang because they require them in the various rituals and ceremonies from life to death. Relatives play important roles during various rituals, sacraments, festivals and ceremonies. Maternal uncle is required in weaning ceremony and Chhewor. Married sisters and daughters (*chelibeti*) should come bringing various food items in *soli* (bamboo baskets) in many occasions. They observe clan exogamy in marriage. Shamans often happen to be a close family member or close relatives. Generally relatives live in same village so that they could help each other during agricultural works. Parma system is still prevalent among the Chepang communalities. Even if relatives are far from the village, there is constant and communication and visits.

### **3.1.4 Education**

Chepangs are among the least educated people in the country. Lack of education and awareness devoid them from mainstream development. Because they live isolated life in the hills, many of them are still shy and timid. Though Chitwan is considered better district in term of education, most people residing in hills are uneducated. Economic opportunities for Chepang is less because of lack of education and awareness that obviously impact upon their health that ultimate affects their economy. So this vicious circle of poverty remains for them for whole life.

Now Chepang kids are getting primary education in government schools which are established in every ward except ward no. 4. Many kids have to walk about an hour to get to the school. This is very difficult during monsoon season because the path is slippery and infested with leeches. As there is one secondary school in Gardas and one lower secondary school in Dahakhani, many students from far flung villages could not continue their higher education after primary level



education. After finishing class 5, they either involve in household and agriculture work or go outside the village to work as labor. Elder children have to take care of their younger siblings when their parents are busy in other works. As parents are also ignorant and economically poor, they do not take much care about the education of their children. They are happy when their children do the household work. So, many kids even do not finish the primary level education. But now things are gradually changing in such mix communities where other ethnic groups are giving emphasis on education.

The literacy program for elders has been conducted in Dahakhani VDC occasionally. With intention to eradicate illiteracy District Education Office organized was organized in every ward in B.S. 2068. Since then no such programs have been organized.

## **3.2 Economic Aspect**

### **3.2.1 Agriculture**

Chepangs are primarily farmers. The main crops are corn, millet and buckwheat in the hills (photo 6). They also grow paddy (*ghaiya dhan*) and wheat in lower altitude. Many varieties of lentil, beans, cereals, vegetables, and tarul (yam) are also produced in different climatic and geographical conditions in different seasons. Some of the variety of bean includes soya bean, *masyang*, and *guras*. Mustard is grown for cooking oil. Mustard is taken to the mill in the nearest town to get the oil out of it. Few Chepangs also grow *kaune* and *sama* but farming of *sama* is diminishing in the Chitwan hill because of difficulty in processing and extracting the grain. Corn is their staple crop which is cultivated almost all the land available to them with utmost care. These main crops are produced for their own consumption. Some excess beans and vegetables are sold in the nearest market but only few Chepangs could get the excess crops.

As their main food is *dhido*, they use corn flower to make *dhido*. Sometimes they mix millet flower or buckwheat flower with corn flower to make *dhido*. They also use corn and millet to make *jaad* and *rakshi*. Drinking *jaad* and *rakshi* for these ethnic group is also a culture that

develops with geography and climate. This is the other reason that they will not have sufficient grains for whole year as substantial portion of it is used to make liquor.

Procedure of cultivating corn is almost same everywhere in the hills. People prepare the land by burning the dried plants and spreading well-rotted manure. They do not use the chemical fertilizers and pesticides. They plant corn ploughing the field generally at the end of February. After a month of plantation, they manually turn the soil to get rid of weeds and after two months, they plough the field using ox when corn plant is about 2-3 feet high. It takes some 5 months before corn is ready for harvest around last week of July. People select the best grains as seeds from the harvest for next year. These agricultural activities may vary depending on various factors: location, variety of seed, and preference of growing next crops after corn. They generally grow millet and buckwheat after harvesting corn.

Chepang people live the subsistence life working very hard in the difficult terrain but their agricultural produce are not sufficient for whole year round. Generally the agricultural produce mainly corn is enough for 6-7 months when harvest is decent. In the lowland, some Chepang families have just enough corn for whole year if the weather is good that yields good harvest. It is found that most of families in the lowland (Gardas, Bhalumara, Syandi and Khetbari) have corn harvest that is sufficient for some 8-9 months. Food deficit month generally starts from Fagun (February/March) and lasts to Asar (June/July). During Asar or Sawan, they could have the new harvest of corn.

Having their cornfield raided during the corn harvesting season by monkeys and porcupines is common in the areas in close proximity of forest. So they should guard their their cornfield against monkeys which come to feed on corn during day and porcupines which come only during night. Despite all their effort, they incur huge loss of yield from the destruction caused by herd of monkeys. Farming is done in the steep terraced hills that are prone to erosion and landslide during monsoon. With no trees around to hold the earth, the fertility of land is lost as the topsoil is washed away by monsoon rain. As the hill is fragile, the landslide is common feature almost everywhere during monsoon. Not only crops and farmland, there is the threat to the settlements also.

Age old tradition of *parma* system (*parma laune*) is still prevalent in the Chepang and other communities. Parma is practised in agricultural works mainly cultivation of corn and millet such that all the villagers help each other in turn working in the field. They won't be provided any wages for the work by the concerned family but the *jaad* (local beer made from millet and corn) and food (mainly *dhido*) is provided to them (photo 2). All ethnic groups in the village involve in this sort of work that develops the cooperation and social harmony among them. People of different faith for instance Christians also participate and there is no discrimination among people of different faiths. Yugal Chepang of Bhalumara informed that Christians go to help in *melapat* (agricultural works) of others but others hesitate to come to their *melapat* because Christians abstain from drinking *jaad* and *raksi*.

*Guhar* system (*guhar magne*) is also prevalent in the villages. In *parma* system, family who receive the services of others during his/her *melapat*, must go to help in their *melapat*. But family could ask *guhar* from others during emergency or some important works (health problem, building house etc.) and villagers help him/her without taking any remuneration or services in return.

Average land holding of all the respondents is 13.66 kattha. Chepangs living in the hills have more land than that of lower altitude. Most of the land is *oilani* (not registered in Land Revenue Department). Some 4-5 *doko* of corn could be harvested per *kattha* in the hill. Few Chepangs are involving in vegetable farming in commercial scale. They generally grow tomato, beans, coriander, cucumber etc. Chemical fertilizers and pesticides have been used in commercial farming.

### **3.2.2 Hunting and Gathering**

Chepang used to live nomadic life by hunting, fishing, food gathering, and partly food bartering. Now they gradually progressed from their traditional life style and they are involving in agriculture and animal husbandry a lot. Because of the traditional way of farming practices in the difficult terrain, the produce are not sufficient for whole year and they have to depend upon the

forest resources. Because of rapid deterioration of the forest, there is not much resources to gather and hunt. So, Chepangs have to find the other alternatives for survival. However, *gittha*, *vyakur*, *tarul*, *tyaguna* (*pangdam* in Chepang language) are still found in the jungle which are used as supplementary diet. These are underground roots. *Gittha* is commonly found in the jungle even in the lowland (photo 20). They also collect edible mushroom (*dudhe chyau*) and wild *niuro* (*dothe niuro*) from the jungle. There are many kind of mushroom and some are very poisonous. Experienced people go to jungle to collect the *dudhe chyau* which is reddish color and very delicious. This kind of mushroom is found in the jungle for short duration just before the monsoon. *Dothe niuro* is found near the stream during the monsoon. Some people also sell this to nearest market.

They also collect honey from the jungle and also keep the local bee (*Apis cerena*) in traditional beehives. Local bee is generally kept in *kathe ghar*, the wooden hive and also in the wall of house. A piece of round log is made hollow inside and wooden covers are placed in both ends. A small hole is made on the log for bees to enter inside. When people make house they make a small space inside the stone wall for bees (photo 19). Local honey is regarded good for its medicinal property and has good value. People also sell local honey.

They like to eat *chhyuri* fruits which ripe during July August. *Chhyuri* tree is very useful for Chepang. The seed of the fruit is used to make the oil. Seeds are first dried under the sun and then they are crushed into pieces (photo 17). This is boiled and put in traditional made wooden frames to press it to extract oil out of it. The remaining part is also used as natural fertilizer and pesticide. This oil is used in cooking. Chepangs used to sell this oil in the monasteries in Kathmandu as *chhyuri* oil is regarded the best for lamp but later this oil is replaced in the monasteries by cheap vegetable oil. *Chhyuri* seed is also used as a raw material to make the soap. It is said that parents give the *chhyuri* trees to their married daughter as dowry. But this practice is not there in Dahakhani VDC now.

Chepangs really like to go to river and stream to fish and go to jungle to hunt bats taking the nets that is woven by themselves. They go to the Rigdi River to fish *asala machha* (a variety of fish found in this river). But fish population is dwindling because of overfishing and use of pesticides

in fishing. They love to eat bats. During flowering season, bats come in flocks to suck nectar and people put the net on their way between two trees.

They occasionally (during Asoj Kartik) collect hive of *aringal* (wasp) which is much bigger and they eat larva of *aringal*. As *aringal* is dangerous, they go to jungle in the midnight when all the *aringal* are intact in its beehive. People put fire on the hive that kills *aringal* and they take the whole hive. They also hunt porcupines occasionally. Some people also barter these food stuffs for corn or money. They generally barter wild yam for corn.

Chepangs are gradually turning into sedentary life but still they always seek for better place with plenty of good resources for survival. When they migrate to new places, they clear the prime forests to extend the agricultural land. The practice of slash-and-burn has destroyed huge forest areas that has tremendous impact on the environment.

### **3.2.3 Animal Husbandry**

Besides agriculture, animal husbandry is other main source for income for Chepang. Depending upon the economic status of family and geographic location, they keep number of chickens, goats, buffalos, cows, pigs and boars. All the Chepangs keep these domestic animals either for their own use or sell them to get the much needed cash. These animals like goat and chicken are sold to pay off the debt that generally incurred when they buy food stuffs during the food deficit months. For agricultural work, they need at least a pair of ox (*ek hal goru*) to plough the field. So they keep ox for this purpose. For their shamanistic culture, they need goat and chicken (mostly chicken) for sacrifice. They require these animals for almost all the rituals and festivals. They need to take chicken when they go to their wife's parents' house after marriage (*maita mannu*). So, it is common to see at least few goats and chicken roaming around the houses of Chepang.

Most of Chepangs are so poor that they could not buy goats so that *adhiya* system is prevalent in Chepang communities. This is the practice of keeping and rearing the cattle especially goats that belong to rich people of village or nearby village (rich person who also lend money is called

*sahu* in Nepali) and when number of calf is born they are equally distributed to farmer and *sahu*. Number of goats they keep as *adhiya* ranges from few to some 20 goats.

They keep cows and buffalos for milk. Buffalo, pig and boar are for meat which is killed during big occasions and festivals, and meat is sold to local people in the village. They also kill animals whenever they feel like to consume. They employ traditional practice of sharing meat when they kill buffalo. The price of buffalo is fixed by *jamani*, a person who will be responsible for collecting money from consumers and pay the price of buffalo to its owner. *Jamani* get certain time duration (*bhaka*), generally two months from the date of kill, to pay the price. There are normally 3, 4 *jamani* and they also do the all the work of slaughtering, dividing, distributing and keeping account. Villagers also help them. After killing buffalo, meat is equally divided such that each share (*bhag*) values NPR 1000 that will be distributed to consumers. *Jamani* will collect money from the consumers within the *bhaka* and pay the price of buffalo to its owner. *Jamani* will not get any monetary benefit but get *ek bisauli* (about 1.25 kg) of meat as remuneration of their work.

People incur huge loss when the domestic animals especially chicken die due to unknown disease that spreads like epidemic in the village every now and then. Kamal Maya Praja of Pipaltar told that she lost 13 local chicken and 5 *giriraj* variety of chicken that worth some 12,000 rupees even if she gave medicines to them. Goats also get sick and they are given the local medication in the hills. Marijuana is regarded useful medicine to treat animals when they have stomach problem or diarrhea. But some people use the veterinary medicine which is available to them because of close proximity to town.

As Chepang settlements are close to forests, there is plenty of resources for animals to graze and for people to collect fodder and grass. Few people also have *kabuliyat ban* where they take their cattle for grazing. *Kabuliyat ban* is the category of government forest which is granted to local people by community forest or village development committee for 40 years. People can plant fruit trees and grass species and take their cattle for grazing but they are not allowed to cut the trees and do the agricultural activities in the forest.

Animal husbandry is important economic source for many poor Chepangs especially in the context of insufficiency of their agricultural produce. This gives them alternative to sustain life until the next harvesting season.

### 3.2.4 Labor Work and Services

Chepang people involve in varieties of work in and outside the village to sustain their life. Mostly they work as labor but some also involve as skilled technicians. They always intent to work whatever opportunity available to them that will help them for some economic benefit. They have to go outside of village to work as laborer because there is not much opportunities in the village. They go to other districts where they mainly involve in construction works. Some Chepangs have also landed to overseas countries to work and this trend is getting higher in lowland areas. When they run out of corn, male members of families start to leave their house and family to seek the outside work.

Chepang people carry the things from nearest market for other people. The wages for this service ranges 200 to 400 rupees depending on the distance and weight of the stuffs that they carry. They also involve in various works in school building construction, road construction and house construction. The development is slow in the villages, so people could not involve in this sort of activities regularly. People work as labor collecting the stone pebbles (*gitti*) in the stream and loading it on tractor. Collection of *gitti* will be stopped during monsoon. Some people also make coal in the jungle and sell it. Some people also involve in logging of trees for selling timbers which are illegal. People are involving with these illegal activities knowing the potential risks involved in these activities because, they say, they do not have other alternatives. Many people wish to have good work or services in their own village.

Tourism is being developed in some of the places such as Upardang Gadi, the historic place, where numbers of visitors are increasing as many visitors are interested to observe the unique culture and tradition of Chepang. Because of tourism activities, people have got opportunities to involve as porters and work in the hotel and homestay as service providers. People make some income by selling the local products like honey, basket, *theke* and *puchai* to the visitors. They also sell the fresh vegetables for homestays and visitors.

People go to Damauli, Pokhara and Gorkha to work for big projects mainly the road construction projects. They have to work under *thekedar* (contractors) who are generally unfair in providing



wages for workers. Shyam Chepang of Simaldhap informed that when workers ask *thekedar* for their wages, he often tells the same story that company or *sahu* have not given money for his contract. Some also work for hotels, restaurant and shops in Narayangarh, Pokhara and Kathmandu.

Chepangs have gone Malasia, India and some other Gulf countries to work. As more people are interested and attracted to overseas work, the visa processing is going on for many people. It is found that Malasia is favorite destination for many.

People who have gone out of village send money regularly that is huge support for the family. For many families this is the only source they could get the much needed cash. However, it is very difficult for family when their member/s leave them for work (*kamauna jane*). They suffer mental and physical trauma when they need them most especially when someone in family get sick. Enormous work is required in the main farming season. In the absence of men, the responsibility comes upon women. However, social cooperation and harmony among the villagers is much instrumental for extending support in the difficult time.

### **3.2.5 Skilled Work**

Chepangs are generally not skilled craftsmen and they do not have much technical ideas of making the delicate handicrafts. But they know how to make the items that is needed for daily works such as *halo* (wooden plough), *theki* (wooden vessel to put yoghurt, milk and *ghee*), many different shape and size of bamboo baskets, *gundri* (mat made of straw), *mandro* (made of bamboo) etc.

The things they make are mainly for their personal use but they also make excess of these things for sale. Some make *doko* and *solli* (bamboo baskets) and sell them in the village and also take them to nearest market. They also make the *theki*, the traditional wooden vessel made from *daar* tree (*Boehmeria rugulosa*), which are used to store yoghurt, milk and *ghee*. *Daar* trees used to be plenty in the jungle but it is fast declining now because of its excessive use. Instead of *daar* they also use the *sandan* tree. *Theki* is made in the locally designed water mill. The downward flow of

water rotates the turbine blades which then rotate the shaft connected to it and the *teki* is attached to the other end of shaft. Generally people make different sizes of *teki* that is sold in Tandi, Narayangarh and Muglin Bazaar. Santa Bahadur Chepang of Lamidada usually make small size of *teki* and *puchai* for tourists as souvenirs. *Puchai* is mainly used by the people in the mountain region to drink *rakshi*. He supplies these items to curio shops in Pokhara and also sells to visitors who come to Upardang Gadi.

So, Chepangs of Dahakhani VDC are living in their traditional homeland with mutual respect and cooperation among themselves and other groups in the village. There is good social and economic support among the people to sustain the difficult life which is much important for social progress.

## Chapter - Four

### Cultural and Religious Life

This chapter deals with the cultural and religious aspect of Chepang people of Dahakhani VDC. They conduct various rituals and sacraments and celebrate festivals in traditional way. As they are traditionally animists they follow the shamanistic traditions. This chapter also discuss how Chepangs are converting to Christianity.

#### 4.1 Rituals and Sacraments

##### 4.1.1 Birth Ritual

All the Chepangs observe the birth ritual (*janma sanskar*). This ritual is observed either on 3<sup>rd</sup> day, 5<sup>th</sup> day, 7<sup>th</sup> day or 9<sup>th</sup> day since the day when baby is born. This day is chosen by family in their convenience. Most families conducts the ritual on 3<sup>rd</sup> day because once it is done everything will be purified and they could resume their normal chores. Some families require birth ritual be conducted by daughter and son-in-law or sister and brother-in-law. *Jhankri* (shaman) is not required to perform the birth rituals. *Chelibeti* also come but it is not required bring *sol* with them. There is the tradition of tying the thread around the waist, wrist, leg and neck of baby. Thread is colored with turmeric. If the child is boy, thread is tied on his right hand and if girl, thread is tied on her left hand. Baby's parents also get the thread on their wrist. Name is given to the child by their parents.

The purification of house is done by sprinkling mixture of *sun-pani* (water touched by piece of gold) and *gahut* (cow urine) around the house with *pati* leaves. All the houses of close relatives (*daju vai khalak*) which are around in the village should also be purified by sprinkling *sun-pani gahut-pani*. Depending upon their tradition and economic condition, ritual practices would vary slightly. Some family will offer food mainly *dhido* and chicken meat to the relatives who come to attend the ceremony. Some will provide the new cloth to *susare* (woman who help baby's

mother). There is not the tradition of making *jata* or *kundali* of the child. They conduct the birth ritual in simple way.

Chepong people of Christian faith follow the Christian rituals when child is born that is called *bal arpan*. Child is taken to church within a week from day of child birth to give her/his name by pastor. The belief is that child is creation of God along with other creatures and things. Pastor pray for the child and give Christian name like Yakub, Patrus, Mona, Kristi etc. Name is generally derived from holy book Bible. Parents may suggest the name (Christian name) for their child which will be accepted by pastor and he will pray with that name.

#### **4.1.2 Weaning Ceremony**

Only few Chepong families conduct the weaning ceremony (*bhat khwai*). If a child is boy, the weaning ceremony is conducted on 6 months and in case of girl the ceremony is done on 5 months since the birth of child. On this ceremony all the close relatives and villagers are invited and *chelibeti* will come with *solu*. Parents first give *tika* and feed rice pudding to the child. Then other invitees follow suit. They also offer some *bheti* (money) to child. Then the feast will follow. Food consists of rice, *dhido* and meat. They celebrate this occasion by singing traditional songs, playing *madal* (traditional drum) and dancing.

Many Chepong families do not afford to conduct the weaning ceremony mainly because of economic condition. But they happily participate in weaning ceremony of others.

#### **4.1.3 Chhewor**

*Chhewor* is similar to *bratabandha sanskar* conducted by Brahmin and Chhetri according to Hindu culture. Many ethnic groups: Gurung, Magar and Tamang who are living along with Chepong conduct this ritual. *Chhewor* is done only for boys before the marriage ceremony. Ethnic people believe that child remain in animal life (*juni*) until they gone through this ritual. It is regarded that boy is converted to human life from animal life after *chhewor*. All the relatives,

friends and villagers are invited in this grand event. Maternal uncle should be present and he initiates the proceedings.

Most Chepangs do not conduct the *chhewor* because of the economic condition. Only few well off families could afford to do this event. All the respondents informed that they do not conduct the event because of economic situation of the family. But they are all happy to participate in the *chhewor* of other ethnic groups.

#### **4.1.4 Marriage**

Proper way of marriage among the Chepang community is *magani bibaha* (also called *magi biha*). Boy's family formally proposes to parents of girl for the marriage. But now *bhagi biha* (marriage by elopement) is more common among Chepang and other ethnic groups.

In *magi biha*, people accompanied by boy's father (or his close relative in absence of father) visit the girl's family with *pong* (earthen vessel full of *rakshi*, the millet alcohol) which is offered to them. This is called *salla pong*. When girl's parents accept the *pong* and drink *rakshi*, marriage proposal is formally accepted. Before they accept the *pong*, they inquire with their daughter about the proposed marriage. *Pong* is only accepted with both daughter and her parents agree with the marriage. They also have meat with *rakshi*. Then they discuss about the proceeding of marriage ceremony. Marriage is done very simple way according to the economic status of family. Procession is organized at bridegroom's house which consists of family friends and relatives and they leave for bride's house. Usually the procession is preceded by *panche baja* (musical band with five types of traditional musical instruments) in the case of other well off ethnic groups. But Chepangs could not afford to have the musical band. Parents give *tika* to bride and bridegroom. There is not much marriage proceeding but basically people enjoy eating, drinking and dancing. Then procession return back to home with the bride. The thread is tied on the door, when bride and bridegroom enter the house, they have to break the thread to enter the house. Inside the house, bridegroom put the *sindur* (red powder) on the parting of bride's head. Wedding feast is organized in bridegroom's house and the standard of this ceremony depends on the economic status of the family. Generally Chepangs could not afford grand ceremony and

organize the program in the simplest way. Food generally includes cooked rice, *dhido*, meat (chicken or goat) and *jaad*, *rakshi*.

*Bhagi biha* is now common in Chepang communities like other ethnic groups of Tamang, Gurung and Magar. This is the tradition of Gurung and Tamang, and Chepangs learn from them. In *bhagi biha*, they could marry girl of any caste and ethnic group with their choice when they both like each other. When boy brings girl with elopement, family of bridegroom has to go to bride's house with pong (*chori pong*) to settle the issue. This generally known as *sodhani janu*. But in some culture, family of bride come to village to search for their *cheli* (daughter or sister). This is called *khojanti aaunu*.

When they go for *sodhani janu*, they have to take *pong* with millet *rakshi*, cooked meat and *selroti* (a kind of bread made of rice flour) which are offered to bride's family and asks for the apology for the wrongdoing of their son and their formal consent for this marriage. Some families only take *pong* with millet *rakshi*. If they give the consent, then *dhog vet* will be followed, which is formal way of introducing and respecting each other.

After the marriage, bride and bridegroom have to go to bride's parents' house taking with *solli* (bamboo basket) of food and drinks. This is called *maita manna janu*. Generally they have to take one small drum of *jaad*, one *gagri* of *rakshi*, 100 *roti*, 1 cockerel, a shoulder part of goat or buffalo that had been killed in the feast organized bridegroom's house. In case of *magi biha*, they need to take all the food stuffs mentioned above except the *jaad*. This practice varies slightly in different places. In some cases, whole chicken without feather should be presented. It's internal and external parts should be intact. If they find no intestine inside the body of chicken, they ask how their daughter survives without intestine. If there is no one leg, they wonder how their daughter elopes with only one leg. This culture of *maita manna janu* is also referred as *durgan feriyeko*.

They only need to go one main house of bride's parents taking *solli* with foods when they go for *maita manna janu*. But in Gurung culture, they have to take *solli* to all house of close relatives of bride. The marriage only becomes complete after they go for *maita manna janu*. If they do not

go for *maita manna janu*, the *maiti* (family of bride) will not have any responsibility to care them at the time of difficulty or to involve in any rituals and festivals. They can go for *maita manna janu* at any time. Some Chepangs are so poor that they could not manage the things for this event and wait for some year when are economically capable of arranging the things necessary for this event.

The tradition of *sodhani janu* is common but in some Chepang villages the tradition of *khojani aaunu* is also prevalent. *Maiti* will come to search for the *cheli* within a week of her disappearance. *Maiti* asks girl if the marriage is done with her consent (*raji khusi*) and also asks boy if he gives right and respect to her as his wife. After settling this issue, they will go for *maita manna janu*. In some tradition, they return from *maita* but again get back to *maita* because they could not stay in bride's house overnight. This is called *dailo kulchane*. According to some culture (like in Charaudi, Dhading), they have to take a chicken to *maiti* for 3 consecutive years. In some places (like in Kalikhola), the tradition is that they have to take a chicken to *maiti* for whole life. So there are different practices in different regions due to age old tradition of that particular region and also due to influence from other cultures.

There is practice of getting married the daughter of maternal uncle (*mama ko chhori*) but it is not common and also limited to only *bhagi biha*. There was also practice of getting married of *phuphu ko chhori* (daughter of father's sister) before but this is not prevalent now. But the family and society do not reject outright when one brings *phuphu ko chhori*. Chepangs call *mama* (maternal uncle) as *sasura* (father-in-law) and this could be the reason that this marriage practice has established in the society.

When a man bring other's wife he has to pay *jari* (payment as punishment) to her former husband. Normally *jari* would be in cash amount but it could be also land or both. The amount of *jari* will be negotiated by both parties in mediation of villagers. Marriage is monogamous but there are few cases in the villages that men have more than one wife. Now people get married as early as 14-15 years of age. They observe clan exogamy as they are free to marry any member of the Chepang and other groups, except with members of the same clan.

Christians Chepang of Dahakhani VDC do the marriage ceremony in church which is called *pabira pibaha* (literal meaning: pure marriage). Marriage is allowed with people of any caste and ethnic groups but they should be of same Christian faith. Pastor at church conducts the marriage ceremony for bride and groom among the congregation. They exchange wedding rings or small bible books. Chepang girl also elopes with her preferred partner without consent of her family. On this case, Church does not accept them as married couple for some six month as a punishment, though their respective family accept them immediately. After six month, upon the confession of their wrongdoing or sin, they are allowed into the church.

#### **4.1.5 Death Ritual**

Traditionally Chepang people bury the death body in the hill and this trend is still widespread in most Chepang villages. In the places where is much influence of other cultures especially Hindu custom, Chepangs cremate the death body. Cremation is also done according to the wish of deceased person who had expressed his wish before the death.

When person dies in the family all the close relatives, friends and neighbors gather to help family to take the dead body to graveyard. They collect money to conduct the death rituals if the family is poor. A pit is made in the hill and wooden platform (*taad*) is placed on the ground inside the pit upon this *syaula* (leaves and fodder) is put. Some people also put the bed sheet of deceased person. Upon this, body is placed with its head position on west. Head position would be towards west because sun sets on west and this is symbolic representation of setting off the person. Before the body is covered by earth, the wooden platform is placed above the body. Graveyard is chosen in the hillside but the pit should not be dig in the area higher than the previous graves around that areas. Graveyard should not be close to river or any water sources. Food is given to *malami* (people who participated in the funeral ceremony).

Family members observe the 13 days of mourning period. After the mourning period, *jhakri* beats *dhyangro* (traditional drum) reciting mantra and calling *ri* (the departed soul). He urges departed soul to rest in *pirti lok* (adobe of the ancestors) and not to trouble the family and the community. On this day, *chelibeti* (married sisters and daughters) bring chicken and various



types of food (apple, orange, meat, fish etc.). The food is given to chicken. Particular item chosen by chicken is regarded as the food the departed soul would like to have. Food preferred by dead person is given to his/her soul putting at the *dobato* (crossroads). Some people also hang the bottle full of water for the departed soul. After this rituals it is considered that soul has been rested in *pitri lok* and now onward he/she becomes the ancestor deity.

*Pitri puja* (ancestor ritual) is done annually every month of Mangsir. *Pitri* is always worshipped and offered the food and drinks in the important rituals and festivals like Nwagi, Dashain and Sangranti.

In case of Christians, the death ritual is also conducted by church and pastor. Dead body is kept in the coffin which is buried in the ground. People gathered at the graveyard and pray for deceased person holding bible on their hand. A wooden cross is erected upon the earth above the coffin.

## **4.2 Festivals**

Chepang people celebrate many different festivals without much fanfare. In their world view festivals and rituals mean sacrificing domestic animals, offering some pieces of cooked meat to ancestor deities and feasting among family, relatives and friends. So obviously the festivals are directly associated with their economy. So some families celebrate particular festival or ritual but others do not celebrate the same because of the economic condition. Though traditionally Chepang culture is animistic, they celebrate most festivals which are common to the cultures of Hindu and that of other ethnic groups. The way of celebrating festivals slightly vary among Chepangs with regard to geographical location, economy and age old tradition. They celebrate Dashain, Tihar, Saune Sankranti, Chaite Dashain, Chandi Purnima, Janai Purnima. They also conduct the Kul Puja, Bayu Puja and Nwagi.

### **4.2.1 Dashain**

Most of them celebrate Dashain by putting tika on the forehead. Generally boar is killed on this occasion for the feast and also for pitri. Uncooked piece of meat with a rib and 1 mana rice grain

are placed on *bhaar* (hanging *mandro* just above the traditional oven). These food stuffs are offered to *pitri* on *astami*. Goat and chicken are also killed instead. Even the poor family celebrates Dashain by borrowing money from *sahu*.

They will receive tika from their sisters on Tihar. Some will perform *deusi vailo* in Tihar. *Deusi vailo* is the tradition that the group of young people visit different houses in the evening asking money and food by performing acts of singing and dancing with traditional music.

#### **4.2.2 Saune Sankranti**

Chepangs also celebrate Saune Sankranti and they offer food to their *pitri*. On Saune Sankranti, cooked meat of buffalo is offered to *pitri* placing it on *bhaar*. Some leave meat on the *dobato*. Some celebrate Ekadashi and Ausi. They abstain eating rice in Ekadashi. Some do not perform Nwagi but conduct Bayu Puja instead. Some worship *kalo bhairb* by sacrificing goat during Chandi Purnima. Some also do the puja of Satyanarayan. Chepang used to organize dance Ghatu during Chadi Purnima but now they don't do but other ethnic groups mainly Gurung organize the Ghatu dance.

#### **4.2.3 Nwagi**

Nwagi is typical festival of Chepang which is generally celebrated during Bhadra (August-September) when new crops are ready for harvest. This the time when new produce like ginger, yam, chilli and citrus species are harvested. A chicken is sacrificed at the field and *pitri* (ancestor deity) is worshiped by offering cooked meat and cereal harvested from the field before family consume the new harvest. Along the crops whole green plant (*buta*) is also offered to *pitri*. Brothers and sisters are invited in this occasion. After this worship, they come back to house and involve in feast eating rice and meat and drinking *jaad* and *rakshi*. People do not need *jhankri* for this ritual. Not all the Chepangs celebrate Nwagi. Generally Chepangs who celebrate Nwagi do not celebrate Bayu Puja and vice versa.

#### 4.2.4 Bayu Puja

Soul of person who died by drowning in river, by burning and by falling from the cliff is called bayu, and Bayu Puja should be done for his/her soul every year during month of Mangsir (November-December) and the exact date is fixed consulting the *jhankri*. All the brothers gather in one house where the event is held. Bayu Puja is done on Sunday. Jhakri (also called *dangre* or *gurubau*) first shivers taking *jhakri-syaula* (bundle of branches of *jhakri-syaula* plant) in his hand and invokes the *bayu* (photo 9). He does not use *dhyangro* on this occasion. Fire, rice, *khukuri* (knife), *rudrakchha mala* (beads) are placed on the ground and *jhakri* and family brothers sit around the fire. Jhakri asks *bayu* about their well-being and they respond with rhythmic speech uttered by *jhakri* himself. *Jhakri syaula* is given to brothers and cousins of the same family and *jhakri* transfers bayu to them as well and they start to shiver and utter in rhythmic speech. These brothers and cousins are called *brinde bhai*. Bayu inform them not only about their well-being but also inform them what will happen to the family in future and what should be done to prevent misfortune. *Bayu* also inform the inevitability of the future incidences that befall upon the family. *Jhankri* tells *bayu* that 'all the brothers are gathered after a year to call you, come and tomorrow we will offer you chicken'.

Next morning all the brothers gather nearby makeshift shrines which are known as Thani and Bayuthan (photo 12). Each family sacrifices each male chicken in two shrines. *Jhanki* sprinkles water drops upon the chicken and ask *bayu* to be calm and not to give any trouble to family, people and livestock. If chicken make involuntary movements that symbolizes acceptance of *bayu* which is called *mannu*. Then chicken is sacrificed, head is offered to the shrine and rest is eaten by the family members (photo 13).

#### 4.2.5 Kul Puja

Bayu Puja is done every year but Kul Puja can be done anytime but it is done at least once in 3-4 years. The meaning of *kul* is greater family of all brothers. When there is some problem (family members being sick, livestock are not good etc.) befall upon the *kul* that implies *kul deuta* (ancestor deity) is not happy. Then Kul Puja should be done to appease ancestor deity. Kul Puja

is conducted by *jhakri* beating *dhyangro* all night. Boar is required on this occasion but people also offer goat if they do not manage boar. Boar is killed viciously by piercing the metal rod through the armpit. Meat is boiled in water mixed with turmeric. Head and half part of chest are offered to deity. Half of the head should be cooked and other half should not be cooked. *Achheta* (rice grains) and *bheti* (some money or coins) are also offered. All the stuffs offered to deity are later taken away by *jhakri*. People eat rest of cooked meat putting salt and chilly powder upon it. Ancestor deities are remembered and offered blood and food stuffs on the other occasions also like *Nwagi*, *Dashain* and *Saune Sangranti*.

Christians celebrate the Christmas visiting church, praying God and feasting among the congregation. Some also celebrate Easter. They involve in major Hindu festivals: *Dashain* and *Tihar* lightheartedly which is limited to just eating and drinking with family, friends and relatives. They do not receive or offer *tika*.

### **4.3 Religion**

#### **4.3.1 Shamanism**

Shamanism is regarded as more ancient than Hinduism or Buddhism and is practiced in diverse way throughout the world by native people. Concerned with maintaining the correct balance between the physical and spiritual realms, shamans are employed to cure illness and exorcise demons. Shamans typically use incantations and musical sound of drum and fall into trances, during which they enter the spirit world to mediate with the forces of the cosmos on behalf of their people.

Shamanism is the traditional religion of most of Nepal's native ethnic groups. While many have adopted at least outward forms of Hinduism or Buddhism depending on their location, shamanism is still widely practiced mainly in the mid-hills.

Traditionally *Chepangs* are animist though they adopt the outward forms of Hinduism now. Their age-old traditions and practices suggest they are worshippers of nature and the spirits. The

belief on spirit possession and its implication on daily life is still ingrained in their mind. Because of exposure to outside world, interaction with other people of different cultures and faith and introduction to modern medicines, the traditional thoughts have been gradually changing. But still there are many shamans in the Chepang villages who perform various rituals and practices to heal people from their illness and problems. But their number is slowly declining in those villages which are more exposed to outside world. Along the ordinary Chepang people, shamans are also converting into Christianity.

Whenever people get sick, they first go to a shaman. If it does not work then they go to hospital or medical for the treatment. They believe that if the case is about the spirit possession (*vut*, *pret*, *boksi* are regarded as malevolent spirits), they will be cured by only *jhakri*. If the problem is about medical or disease that should be treated by doctors and *jhakri* could do nothing in this case. Good *jhakri* honestly inform people if the patient need to be taken to hospital. In most cultures, the shaman is concerned with the ultimate problems of life (birth, death, sickness, hunger) and their solutions. Shamans are distinguished from priests in that their authority rests on their personal experiences with the supernatural, whereas priests are liturgical officiants presiding at rituals and over congregations with the necessity of a personal direct experience with the deity (Larry Peters, 1998:8)

There are also Magar, Tamang and Gurung *jhakri* among the Chepang *jhakri* in the village. Generally people seek *jhakri* of their own group but they can go to *jhakri* of other groups. Modus operandi of different *jhakris* vary slightly but main concept is same. They generally set the imaginary boundary and protect themselves within that boundary with mantra and *dhup* (incense) so that other malevolent spirits or rival *jhakris* could not disturb and harm his proceedings. With the rhythmic beating of *dhyangro* and recitation of mantra, *jhakri* put himself in the temporary trance state such that they could visit the *pitri lok* (abode of spirit) and negotiate with troubling spirits (photo 3). *Jhakri* may suggest the family of patient for the sacrifice of chicken or goat according to the wish of spirits and the negotiation between them. Patient recovers once *jhakri* is able to soothe and appease the troubling spirits (photo 4).

During the death rituals, *jhakri* invokes the *pitri* of the deceased person, offers him/her favorite foods and urges him/her to rest in *pitri lok*. During Nwagi, Kul Puja, Bayu Puja and Dashain, *jhakri* ask the *pitri* of their well-being and offers them food and blood from animal sacrifice.

*Jhakri* receives shamanistic knowledge (*biddhya*) in his dream. People believe that *biddhya* does not come to everyone neither it comes with desire of person. He should be chosen (*racheko hunuparchha*) by omnipotent God or power. However, people can also learn the knowledge and skills from experienced *jhakri* but they are not regarded good *jhakri*. Everyone believes the existence of ban *jhakri* but no one has seen. Everyone tells the same story about ban *jhakri*. He is dwarf and lives in the cave along the forested hill slope. He comes to village and takes young men to his cave and teaches the *biddhya*. His wife is of malevolent nature and she tries to kill young man and feed her children and herself. But *ban-jhakri* protect him from his wife and he gives him food on opposite side of his palm. After the completion of training, he leaves him on the same place where he has abducted him before. Some people also believe that feet of *ban-jhakri* is opposite (front side back) and his hair is long. Some people told that their grandfather had seen *ban-jhakri*. *Jhakri* trained by *ban-jhakri* has not been found in Dahakhani VDC.

The generic Nepali word for shaman is *jhakri* which is widely used everywhere. But other terms are also used by Chepang for shaman like *pande*, *faal*, *dangre* and *gurubau*. Also each ethnic group has its own term, like *ghyapring puret* is used in Gurung community.

#### **4.3.2 Christianity**

The religious faith of Christianity is spreading in rural villages like a wildfire. Christian churches and charities are converting economically poor and backward people to Christianity aggressively. Dalits (untouchables) and ethnic groups are being easily converted. In Chitwan hills, many Chepangs are also converted from their traditional faith to Christianity and this trend is steady as more churches are being built in remote areas with more converts.

There are total 7 churches in Dahakhani VDC, 6 churches are related to Protestant faith and one is related to Catholic, which is established in Bhalumara. Protestants consider themselves true

Christians and Catholicism is false doctrine. Protestant churches instruct the followers to visit church every Saturday for prayers and they abstain from drinking *jaad* and *rakshi*. They are also well instructed by church not to follow any traditions and practices of other faith. But, there is no such restrictions for people who are Catholic. Pastor is in charge of the church who delivers sermon to the congregation. These churches are independently established having no centralized system. However, a church can extend its braches to other villages. Bam Bahadur Tamang, the pastor of Nepal Evangelical Holiness Church at Shaktikhor, estimates that there are some 875 followers in Dahakhani VDC.

One of main reasons of Chepangs being converted to Christianity is their economic situation. In the traditional shamanistic practices, they need to offer chicken and goats to shaman every now and then. They also need these animals and money to maintain traditional practices and conduct various rituals and festivals, which is expensive for poor Chepangs. Because of this they are always in debt. Almost all Christian Chepangs admitted that they converted to Christianity to get rid of this economic burden. Their traditional habit of drinking *jaad* and *rakshi* has also been changed because they are not allowed to drink. Many people now abstain from alcohol or at least they do not drink much like before. This is helping poor Chepangs for their social and economic progress.

Chepangs used to follow their traditional culture before they convert to Christianity. But once they become Christians, they follow Christian practices to conduct the various sacraments and celebrate Christian festivals. Newly born child is taken to church and pastor gives the Christian name for the child. The marriage ceremony also takes place in church and the pastor declares them married couple. Marriage in church is only allowed between people of Christian faith. Death ritual is also conducted by church and pastor. Dead body is kept in the coffin and buried in the ground and wooden cross is erected upon it. They celebrate Christmas and Easter. As a great festival, Christmas is celebrated in church with praying, chanting and feasting. Whenever they get sick, they go to hospital and they do not go to shamans now. They no longer believe in shamanism. Some people take the patients to church for prayer from pastor and congregation for the recovery. They also partly involve in the major festivals of Hindu: Dahain and Tihar but their involvement is limited only to feasting and drinking among family and friends and they do not

receive or give *tika*. People of other groups like Tamang, Gurung, Magar, Chhetri, Bahun, Newar also involve in the congregation among the Chepangs. Few people feel that non-Christian people do not like them. But, there is no such religious strife among the communities for different faith and cultures. In some cases, only one member of a family goes to church but other members of family do not mind him/her following Christian faith.

People go to church every Saturday. In most of the villages, church are not very far, some 10 to 30 minutes of walking distance. But people of Upardang Gadi descend down to Shaktikhor to attend the church which is about 2 hours of walking distance. There is also church in Jyamire near Upardang Gadi (this church has been damaged by recent monsoon flood) but some families prefer to go Shaktikhor because they had been initiated there before Jyamire Church was established. Congregation gather in the church, sing the song dedicated to God, and listen the sermon preached by pastor. They also offer some veti (money) to church, it is not mandatory. Generally they stay in the church for some 2 hours.

People shared their previous stories about illness or problem before they converted to Christianity which was not cured or solved by any means. Their illness was gone when they went to church and did the prayer that motivated them to convert to Christianity. There are no formal procedures to enter into church or to convert to Christianity.

Pastors instruct the followers to encourage and motivate non-Christian people to convert them informing them about the Christianity. Pastors, church and different Christian charities organize various programs in the villages with intent to entice and motivate people to change their faith. They often give some incentives to poor people, emphasize good things of Christianity and denounce the drawbacks of other religions and faith. They often conduct free health camps, distribute medicines, cloth and foods, and also organize fun and entertainment programs to attract attention of non-Christians. They inform people that medicine only does not have effect until they believe in God. During these programs they preach about the Christianity and distribute the Bibles books. In Bayadada, one jhakri was converted into Christianity and immediately after this Christians burned down his dhyangro.



## **Chapter - Five**

### **Socio-cultural Influence**

This chapter deals with social-cultural influence of Chepang people of Dahakhani VDC. Their social and cultural relationship with other groups, economic influence and religious influence especially of Christian influence have been discussed.

#### **5.1 Relationship with other Groups**

As geography of Dahakhani VDC stretches from lower elevation of 302 m. to higher elevation of 1290 m. along to the Mahabharat range, the mix communities of Chepang, Gurung, Chhetri, Magar, Tamang, Newar, Kami, Damai/Dholi and Gharti/Bhujel are living together in mutual harmony. There is good social, cultural and economic relationship among diverse groups of people. Though each ethnic group has its own unique culture, tradition, language and faith, there is strong social cohesion and harmony among themselves.

Life in the hills is very difficult because of steep and inhospitable terrain and harsh weather conditions. People could not survive without mutual cooperation and support among them. There is not much facilities so almost all the agricultural work should be done manually that require much labor work. So villagers help each other during main farming season. Since there is not transportation facility and no health post, people must carry sick person themselves to get to health post or hospital nearby village or town. The sense of mutual cooperation naturally develops that is much helpful for social progress.

Chepangs still posses the traditional belief system and primitive life style. Accordingly the mental development is slow and gradual. But the change is much faster in the places where there is more interaction with other people. They learn new ideas and skills seeing them and practicing themselves. Before, they do not pay much attention to the education of their children but now

they want the children get educated. The development is faster in the lower elevation than the higher elevation where they do not have much interaction with others.

The social interactions with new cultures also diminish the traditional value and belief system. Traditional rituals and practices have been gradually changed giving the way for the mix culture. Many Chepangs forget the native Chepang language and speak only Nepali language. They are slowly inclining toward the Hindu practices of celebrating festivals and performing rituals. Chepang shaman was mandatory before but now they also get the services of shamans of other groups. Some families also start celebrating birthday of their children.

## **5.2 Economic Influence**

Chepangs of Dahakhani VDC are one of the economically poor ethnic groups of Nepal. They are living the subsistence life in the difficult terrains with traditional agricultural practices as main source of living but unfortunately it is not sufficient for whole year. They also involve in animal husbandry which is essential source of existence during food deficit months. This economic conditions have directly impacted on their daily life and traditional cultures, rituals and festivals. They simply could not conduct the rituals and festivals which cost more. Chhewor is age old traditional ritual that is performed by various ethnic groups: Gurung, Magar, Tamang and Chepang in Chitwan hills. Now, Chepangs could not organize this grand event because of their economy. There are many Chepang families which conduct either Nwyagi or Bayu Puja. But some well off families conduct the both rituals. They celebrate various festivals in a very simplest way. This is limited only to eating and drinking. So economy have tremendous impact on their traditional practices and rituals.

Many Chepangs men have to go outside of the village to seek work to sustain family. Most of them go nearby cities and towns or other districts but some have also gone to Malayasia, India and Gulf countries. They obviously learn new culture and ideas that they share with their family and friends when they get to village. This also have impacted on the traditional thought and practices. More young people are being attracted to work outside. Once they visit outer world

and involve in outside work, they do not feel like to work in the village and always seek to go out of village.

Family especially women go through enormous mental and physical stress when men folks leave the village for work. As all the family responsibilities come to their shoulders, women miss their husband or son most during the time of main farming season or when someone in the family get sick. They could not celebrate festivals and conduct the rituals properly. This also provide the opportunity for women to lead the family and involve in social life. They have greater decision making power in term of family issues. At the time of difficulty people need support among themselves that develops the culture of mutual respect, harmony and cooperation.

### **5.3 Religious Influence**

Shamanism plays important role in the life and believe system of Chepang people. They have strong believed that shaman is responsible for their existence and survival. Whenever they have problem or if someone in the family get sick, shaman should be consulted for cure. Shaman should be appeased continuously by providing whatever he asks for. Shamanism is traditional religion of Chepangs though they have adopted the outward form of Hinduism. With the intermingling with other faith and culture, they have blended others faith and culture in their fold. While accepting other's culture, they also retain their own traditional practices and rituals. They celebrate the main Hindu festivals: Dashain and Tihar in their own way. They also conduct the Nwagi and Kul Puja which are age old practices. Though traces of Hindu practices are accepted and blended with traditional cultures, they do not follow the path of orthodox Hinduism. They do not have caste concept.

Unlike Hinduism, Christianity has greater impact on traditional culture and belief of Chepang. Motivations of the early Christian Chepang were multidimensional, integrated and embedded on the historical and socio-political context (Lagan Rai, 2012: 2). Exploiting the economic and social position of ordinary Chepangs, Christianity has been introduced much aggressively in most of Chepang communities. With more converts, Christian religion is replacing the traditional practices and rituals with Christian practices.

People used to follow the traditional rituals of birth, weaning, marriage and death before they convert to Christianity. After they convert, they follow the Christians rules to perform these rituals or they avoid doing the traditional practices. Birth ritual and marriage are conducted in the church in inspection of pastor. During the birth ritual, newly born child is given the Christian name. During marriage ceremony, red sari and *tika* are not allowed, which are common in Hindu practices.

Christian churches and charities have initiated various programs to motivate and proselytize non-Christian people denouncing the drawbacks of other religions and appreciating the Christian religion. Their first target is village leaders and shamans. Their intention is also to sabotage any traces of sign and symbol of other faith. For instance, *dhyangro* of a shaman was born down in Bayadada after he converted to Chritianity.

There should be some uneasy situation and stress among the general populace with introduction of new ideas and doctrine. There was some sort of social and religious tension when Christianity was introduced first. But, Christians gradually adapt themselves in local life providing economic incentives and support to deserving people. Poor people like Chepangs realize the good option when they do not have to spend much effort and money to shamans and to old system. When they abstain from drinking *jaad* and *rakshi*, their social and economic life is gradually getting better. Barring occasional cases, there is no such social and religious strife and stress among the communities of different faith and culture.

Finally, the social and cultural interaction with other communities of different ethnic groups has giving the way for flourishing mix culture in Dahakhani VDC. Because of economic hardships, their age old traditions and cultural practices have been immensely influenced. The impact on traditional value and belief system is much greater due the introduction of new faith of Christianity.

## **Chapter - Six**

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

#### **6.1 Conclusion**

Chepangs have subsistence life in the hills and are still depended upon the forest resources. As agriculture is not sufficient for whole year, they seek the alternative source of income that drive them out of their traditional homeland. The economic hardships have impacted not only education and health but also the traditional culture and belief system.

In the context of economic hardship, Chepang could not continue with traditional practices and rituals that is generally expensive for poor families. This leads many Chepangs being converted to Christianity that has more influence upon their traditional culture and religion. Though it gives them the economic sustainability to some extent, their traditional value is gradually depleting.

The social interaction with new cultures is diminishing the traditional culture and giving the way for flourishing mix culture and new value system. One of the fascinating aspects of rural life is efficient cooperative system in the community level that unites the diverse ethnic groups. Chepangs have strong sense of communal harmony and cooperation among different groups in the village. This helps to develop strong productive labor and high adaptive propensity at individual and social levels. The value system is the forefront to flourish, develop and sustain the social structures.

#### **6.2 Recommendations**

Cultural diversity is important aspect of rural life in Nepal. The cultural diversity adds more color to the spectrum of natural beauty. Chepangs have age old traditional culture, belief and value that gives them the identity as one of the culturally rich ethnic groups in Nepal. It is very crucial to protect the traditional culture and value by safeguarding the traditional practices and

developing of local economy. Economic opportunity is essential for Chepang people for their health and educational development that ultimately is crucial to retain their traditional cultures.

Community based programs function smoothly only with proper support and willingness of that particular community. External idea should be there to improve and enhance their indigenous knowledge and traditional value system but not to replace them. We have to work for the social and economic progress of Chepang communities respecting their indigenous knowledge and traditional values.

Social and economic aspect of the rural communities improve with the proper development of education. The education and awareness for general populace is crucial for overall social progress. There is also the potential for development of culture tourism in the rural Chepang villages such that the benefits accrue to local people without influencing their traditional culture.

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## Photos Related to Chepang Life and Rituals



Photo 1: Chapang man in Bagkhor village.



Photo 2: Chepang women preparing *jaad* for villagers who come to work (*parma laune*) in the field.





Photo 3: Chepang shaman beating *dhyango* and treating *patient*.



Photo 4: Chepang shaman treating a girl and exorcising the evil spirits.



Photo 5: Chepang shaman among the villagers.



Photo 6: Chepang woman extracting millet in Sherbas.





Photo 7: Chepang, Gurung and Magar girls are planting millet in Upardang Gadi.



Photo 8: Relatives having *jaad* in Chepang house in Syangdi.



Photo 9: Performing Bayu Puja using *jhakri-syaula* in Kolar.



Photo 10: Shrine where chicken is sacrificed during Bayu Puja.





Photo 11: Sprinkling water on chicken and offering it for *bayu*.



Photo 12: Chicken heads have been offered in shrine.





Photo 13: Rest of chicken meat is being prepared for feast.



Photo 14: Typical Chepang village/ settlement Jamundada in the hill.





Photo 15: Chepang village, Syangdi, in the lowland



Photo 16: Typical Chepang house in Bagkhor.



Photo 17: Chyuri seeds.



Photo 18: Bundles of corncobs.





Photo 19: Beehive in the stone wall of house.



Photo 20: Chepang woman peeling off the outer skin of *gittha*.