

**CHANGING MARRIAGE PRACTICES IN THE LIMBU COMMUNITY OF  
GAIRI GAUN, SOYAK VDC,  
ILAM**

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**ARCHAEOLOGY**  
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**LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION**

This is to certify that I have been supporting Mr. Bishnu Prasad Gautam's Masters Dissertation entitled '*Changing Marriage Practices in the Limbu Community of Gairi Gaon, Soyak, Ilam*' to be submitted to the Department of Nepalese History, Culture and Archaeology for some time now.

Now that he has completed the draft write-up, I had the opportunity to evaluate/assess his writing. He has quite skillfully organised the writing and I feel satisfied about his draft. This draft can now be submitted to the said department for final examination.

I wish him all success.



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## ABSTRACT

Nepal, inhabited by over 60 different indigenous tribes, is a multi ethnic, multi cultural and multi-lingual country. These tribes have their own cultures, which look not only interesting but unique in many senses to the world outside the tribes. Certain indigenous groups are dominant in number in the particular areas of the country. The Sherpas live in the high mountains, the Magars in the western hills, the Rais and Limbus in the eastern hills, the Tharus in most part of the Terai, the Dhimal and Santhals (Satar) in the eastern Terai, the Tamangs in the mid hills and so on. They have their own cultures which have undergone several changes with the changing of times.

Among these indigenous groups, the Kiratas, one of the ancient tribes of Nepal, have been living in the eastern hills of Nepal, and in Sikkim, India, for centuries. Even the Vedic literatures make mention of the Kiratas. They have been living in Nepal long before the Vedic period when the Aryans arrived in the Indian sub continent. They were even in the helm of power in Nepal in the ancient period.

These Kirata people, who fall under the Mongoloid race, are now divided into a number of ethnic groups with Rais and Limbus being the majors. Today Limbus live in the mountains east to the Koshi River and up to Sikkim in India. According to the latest political map of modern Nepal, Limbus live in districts like Ilam, Panchthar, Taplejung, Dhankuta, Bhojpur, Terhathum and Shankhuwasabha. Over the years, cultures of the Limbus have witnessed changes. Penetration of information technology, education and growing influence of the western cultures have led to the change.

The present study is focused on the changing trend of marriage practices and the agents of such a change in the Limbu community of Gairi Gaun of Soyak Village Development Committee Ward No. 2 of Ilam district. The main objective of the study is to identify the changes in the marriage practices in the Limbus and the major factors leading and contributing to the changes. All 24 households of the Fagos of Gairi Gaun were taken as samples. Interview, observation and case study method are applied in the process of field work. The major findings of this study is the marriage practices among the Limbu of Gairi Gaun have undergone a change over the years.

Bishnu Prasad Gautam

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# CHAPTER ONE

## Introduction

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION TO LIMBU

Nepal is a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-lingual country. Official record shows that Nepal is inhabited by over 60 different indigenous tribes. These tribes have their own cultures, which look not only interesting but unique in many ways to the world outside the tribes. Interestingly, certain indigenous groups are dominant in number in the particular areas of the country. In other words, certain indigenous groups have chosen certain parts of the country to inhabit. The Sherpas live in the high mountains, the Magars in the western hills, the Rais and Limbus in the eastern hills, the Tharus in most part of the Terai, the Dhimal and Santhals (Satar) in the eastern Terai, the Tamangs in the mid hills and so on. They have their own cultures and languages which have undergone several changes with the changing of times. Most of them use Nepali language to communicate with the people outside their tribal groups. This has made it possible for them to live in harmony for centuries. Despite such a geographical division of the settlements of our indigenous people, Nepalese people have successfully maintained unity among the diversities, the sole base of national integrity and unity.

Among these indigenous groups, the Kiratas, one of the ancient tribes of Nepal, have been living in the eastern hills of Nepal, and in Sikkim, India, for centuries. Even the Vedic literatures make mention of the Kiratas.

Therefore, one can conclude that Kiratas have been living in Nepal long before the Vedic period when the Aryans arrived in the Indian sub-continent. They were even in the helm of power in Nepal in the ancient period. The period when Kiratas ruled Nepal is known as the Kirata period. However, in the absence of archaeological evidences and recorded history, many things are unknown about the Kirata history.

These Kirata people, who fall under the Mongoloid race, are now divided into a number of ethnic groups with Rais and Limbus being the majors. Today Limbus live in the mountains east to the Koshi River and up to Sikkim in India whereas the Rais live west to the Arun River. Normally, the area where Rais have been living is now known as Wallo Kirat and the area inhabited by Limbus is Pallo Kirata.

Limbus occupy the 14<sup>th</sup> position in Nepal in terms of population. These indigenous people follow different rituals, with marriage being one of the important rituals. They practise different types of marriage. However, over the years, marriage practices among the Limbus have witnessed changes and different factors have contributed to the changes.

The name Kirata is for the first time found in the Yajurveda. (Suniti Kumar Chatterji, The Asiatic Society, 1951)

Kirata is a name applied to a people living in the caves of mountains...(ibid) Even in the Mahabharata, the mountain regions of north and northeastern India--the Himalayas, particularly Nepal is known as well attested as the abode of the Kiratas. In the Mahabharata, the Kiratas are dwellers in the Himalayan regions, particularly in the eastern Himalayas (ibid).

According to the latest political map of modern Nepal, districts like Ilam, Panchthar, Taplejung, Dhankuta, Bhojpur, Terhathum and Shankhuwasabha fall under Pallo Kirata and the mountainous districts of Sagarmatha zones under Wallo Kirata. Over the years, cultures of both the Rais and Limbus have witnessed changes. However, hardly any serious study has been carried out to identify the actual agents of such change. Penetration of information technology, education and growing influence of the western cultures have also led to the change. Therefore, I have made an effort to identify the changing trend of marriage practices and the agents of such a change in the Limbu community of eastern hill. I have chosen Gairi Gaun of Soyak Village Development Committee Ward No. 2 of Ilam district as the sampling universe for this purpose.

As said above, the Limbu has been a demographically and culturally dominant tribe of eastern hills. Lately, the Limbus have been migrating to the Terai and Kathmandu as well.

Quoting Khagendra Singh Angbohang, J. R. Subba writes, "There are several (218) sub-grouping among 16 major groups of the Limbus. These are Mabohang (26 sub-groups), Thegim (11 sub-groups), Shreng (10) Fago (20), Sanwa (19), Bokim (5), Khoyahang (17), Nembang (140), Hukapahang (17) and Khewa (22)."

It is difficult to ascertain when and how the Kiratas particularly Khombus and Limbus came to occupy their present habitation. Some sources reveal that these people must have come to their present abode sometimes between 600-100 BC. However, the arrival of the 10 Limbu in Limbwan has been estimated to earlier than the 7<sup>th</sup> century AD.

Today too Ilam is a Limbu settlement though people belonging to other castes are also living in harmony with Limbus. Most of the Village Development Committees of Ilam have Kirata –dominated population and Soyak is no exception.

According to 2001 census, the total population of Limbus of Nepal stands at 359,379 among them 174, 760 are males and 18,619 females. Of the total 345,025 live in the eastern development region. Ilam district has 40,524 Limbu populations.

Among others, Fagos are one of the dominant groups in Soak VDC. In Gairi Gaun, one of the villages of Ward No. 2 of the VDC, there are 24 households of Fagos having a total population of 205. Almost all the families write Fago as their family name. These Fagos belong to Banem sub-group and in the recent years some of the youths have started adding Banem in their family names.

According to the manuscript of Banem genealogy, the total population of Banem Fagos is 11,000 in Nepal. These Banems live in 1,700 households, mostly in the eastern part of the country. (Devendra Banem, chairman of Banem Genealogy Preparation Committee, personal interview ).

## **1.2 MARRIAGE**

In the simplest term marriage can be defined as the process of bringing bride from her parental house to the house of the bridegroom. However, different rituals have to be performed to bring the bride. The rituals vary based on cultural, religious and personal factors In the Hindu society marriage is one of the 16 rituals that are performed in one's life .

It is the marriage through which a man and woman come to union as husband and wife. It is a formal union and social and legal contract between two individuals that unites their lives legally, economically and emotionally. Marriage is regarded essential to continue creation, hence it is a religious and social duty to marry and produce children.

Marriage is an institution which admits and inducts men and women to family life. No one can challenge this institution. It is a stable relationship in which a man and a woman are socially permitted to have children implying the right to sexual relations.

However, marriage practices vary depending on the religions the people follow, geography they live in and according their castes. Considering the nature of the marriages, they are given different names like arranged and love marriages.

The marriage rituals also vary and with the changes in time, the rituals and modes of marriages also change. We have noticed this over the years. For example, practices of arranged marriage have been reduced while love marriages have become common in all communities. Inter-caste marriage, which used to be rare in the past, have now become common. Similarly, due to advent in information technology in recent years, marriage practices have also been influenced by the cultures of the western as well as neighbouring countries. Similarly, financial condition and political situations of the concerned country also lead to changes in marriage practices.

However, most communities tend to follow the tradition while adopting the new practices simultaneously. And this can be noticed in the marriage practices in almost all communities of Nepal although the essence of marriage as defined by Malinowski is still a contract for the production and maintenance of children.

According to Horton and Hunt, “Marriage is the approved social pattern whereby two or more persons establish a family.” (1984)

Mazumdar, H.T., defines marriage as a “socially sanctioned union of male and female, or as a secondary institution devised by society to sanction the union and mating of male and female, for the purposes of establishing a household, entering into sex relations, procreating and providing care of the offspring.”

In almost all the societies, one or the other form of marriage exists.

### **1.3 INTRODUCTION TO STUDY AREA**

Gairi Gaun, the universe of this dissertation, lies in Ward no. 2 of Soyak VDC in Ilam district. Altogether 377 people live in the 64 households of this ward. Of the 64 households, 25 are of Limbus and 24 of them are in Gairi Gaun. Gairi Gaun is entirely

a village of Limbus as 100 per cent population living in this village is Limbu of Fago. Banem clan.

Gairi Gaun as the name suggests lies in the foot of a hill. Lungruppa, a village of Rai settlement, lies in the north, Bahun Gaun in the south, a paddy field lies in the east and a sloppy hill in the west. It is a bordering village with ward No 1 and 5 of Soyak VDC. It is a small village, most of the residents of which are farmers. Some have taken up carpentry as their main occupation. Almost all people of this village write Fago as their family names. But recently, they have started adding Banem in Fago claiming that they belong to Banem sub-caste of Fago. Like other farmers, they grow paddy, maize, millet and pulse. Ginger, broom and orange are the major cash crops produced in the village. However, most of the farmers have the paddy fields away from their village, near the river banks below their village.

Ilam Bazaar, the district headquarters, is the main market of the people here. They visit the market to sell their products and buy everyday goods like kerosene, sugar, spices, oil, clothes etc. They have also the local fortnightly markets in the neighboring villages which take place on the Full Moon and New Moon days to sell and buy home brewed liquors and piglets, potatoes etc.

Most of the houses are thatched roof though a few of them have roofs of galvanized zincs. Mainly, the better off families have managed to have the roofs of galvanized zincs. During the summer, the people work in the farms and in winter engage in other works like carpentry or cutting timbers.

#### **1.4 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Social change is a universal phenomenon. No one can stop the change, be it political, social or cultural. Nepalese society comprised of various ethnic groups cannot be an exception. Changes have been everywhere and in every element of the society. We have witnessed such changes in our cultures over the years. Likewise, the Limbu community has adopted changes in their cultures, including the marriage practices. Various factors cause cultural changes in a society. However, not all cultural changes are studied in depth at least in Nepal.

Marriage practices have undergone several changes in the past two decades, especially after the Maoists launched the armed revolt from 1996. The practice of performing marriage ceremonies in the night time has almost disappeared not only

from the villages but also from the towns. The practice of organising fairs and erecting swings during the time of festivals has also come to almost an end in villages. This has had a direct impact on the marriage practices of the Limbu community as fairs and swings were the suitable places for the Limbu youths to select their life partners. However, absence of these things alone is not responsible for the changes. There must be other reasons as well. Also outsiders cannot come across the changes in marriage rites and rituals unless they are observed closely. For example firing during the marriage rituals is no more in practice these days.

The present study is an attempt to identify the changes in the marriage practices of the Limbu community of Gairi Gaun, Soyak VDC, Ward No. 2, Ilam. Attempts have been made to explain and compare the marriage patterns of the present and past including the changes in the marriage practices in Fagos or the Limbu community of the above said village on the basis of the above mentioned theoretical statement.

### **1.5 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The study is conducted to meet the need of the dissertation writing for partial fulfillment of Masters' Degree in Nepalese History, Culture and Archeology. Therefore, the study basically aims at meeting the purpose. Still the study has presented a considerable range of description about the changes occurred in the marriage patterns of the Limbu (Fago) community of Gairi Gaun, Soyak-2, Ilam.

The general objective of study to explore the marriage practices prevalent in the Limbu community whereas the specific objectives of this study are as follows:

- I. Identify the changes in the marriage practices in the Limbus and
- II. Identify the major factors leading and contributing to the changes

### **1.5 RATIONALE OF THE STUDY**

Nepal's ethnic diversity has been regarded as one of the most typical features of Nepalese population. At present there are more than 60 ethnic groups in Nepal. According to 2001 census, the total population of Limbus stands at 359,379 among them 174,760 are males and 18,619 females. Of the total 345,025 live in the eastern development region. Ilam district has 40,524 Limbu populations.

The effect of modernisation has been rather negative in the context of protecting the cultural practices of these ethnic groups. Especially the cultural practices of ethnic groups are in the verge of extinction. And the marriage practices of

the Limbus are not an exception in this regard. Along with other cultural practices, their marriage practices are also in the transition phase. They need to be well documented and preserved. This study's rationale can also be proved in the sense that it would help bring the changes seen the marriage patterns of the Limbus to the fore for all interested persons and anthropologists and other academicians.

Like other several ethnic communities of Nepal, the Limbus are relatively a disadvantaged community and now it is culturally and socially in a transition phase because of growing literacy among the youths and the *Sanskritization* process. Though several studies have been done by both native and foreign scholars on the different aspects of ethnic communities of Nepal, there has not been any study on the changing marriage practices among the Limbus in the past two decades so far. Therefore, this study has tried to fill up the void as the study is based on both primary data collected from the study site and the secondary data available in libraries, department of statistics etc.

## **1.6 ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY**

This dissertation report has been organised into six chapters. The First chapter gives introduction to the study, including the background of the study, statement of problems, objectives of the study, rationale of the study and the organisation of the study. The Second chapter is about the review of concerned literature. The Third chapter is about research methods. It includes research design, rationale for the site selection, universe and sample, nature and sources of data, methods of data collection, data analysis and presentation and limitation of the study. Chapter Four deals with the study area and the people. It includes an overview of the study site, education and population.

Chapter Five is about the marriage practices, including the changes seen over the years in the Limbu community of Gairi Gaun. It deals with the popular marriage practices and the major changes occurred in the marriage practices in Gairi Gaun.

The Sixth chapter is about summary and conclusion of the whole study. References and appendices are presented at the end of the study report. Appendices of the study report include various instruments used for gathering data information from the field.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 MARRIAGE**

Edward Westermarck defined marriage as the “more or less durable connection between male and female, lasting beyond the more act of propagation till after the birth of offspring.” (Sahdeva (1999). “An Introduction to Sociology”)

Earnest R. Groves defined it as “a public confession and legal registration of an adventure in fellowship.” (ibid)

Lowie defined marriage as a “relatively permanent bond between permissible mates.” Malinowski defined marriage as a contract for the production and maintenance of children.” According to Lundberg Marriage consists of “the rules and regulations which define the rights, duties and privileges of husband and wife, with respect to each other.”

According to Horton and Hunt, “Marriage is the approved social pattern whereby two or more persons establish a family.” (1984)

Mazumdar, H.T., defines marriage as a “socially sanctioned union of male and female, or as a secondary institution devised by society to sanction the union and mating of male and female, for the purposes of establishing a household, entering into sex relations, procreating and providing care of the offspring.”

According to Anderson and Parker, “Marriage is the sanctioning by a society of a durable bond between one or more males and one or more females established to permit sexual intercourse for the implied purpose of parenthood.”

According to John Levy and Ruth Murone, people get married because of the feeling that being in a family is the only proper, indeed the only possible, way to live. People do not marry because it is their social duty to perpetuate the institution of the family or because the scriptures recommend matrimony or because they have fallen in love with each other but because they lived in a family is the only proper way to live in society. In almost all the societies, one or the other form of marriage exists.

There are several practices of marriage in the world. Some of them are:



### 2. 1.1 Polyandry

In different parts of the earth polyandry long existed as part of ancient culture. It is a form of marriage wherein one woman marries more than one man at a given time. It is thought to be widespread in the Himalayas of Nepal and in Tibet where the conditions of social life are harsh and where perhaps the efforts of two or more men are needed in order to support a family.

In the Mahabharata, five Pandava brothers shared the same wife (Draupadi). Polyandry is also said to be existed in some tribes as the Namib Bushmen, the Yaruro of Venezuela, the Lengua of El Chaco, the Singhalese the Mundas and some ancient tribes of the Malay Peninsula.

Polyandry may take two forms:

- (1) **Fraternal Polyandry:** In this form of Polyandry one wife is regarded the wife of all brothers who have sexual relation with her .The children are treated as the offspring of the eldest brother. The Todas practiced Fraternal Polyandry.
- (2) **Non-fraternal Polyandry:** In this form, one woman has many husbands with whom she cohabits in turn. It is not necessary that these husbands be brothers. If a child is born then any one husband is chosen as its social parent through a special ritual.

### 2.1.2 Polygamy

Under this system one man has two or more wives at a time. Polygamy existed among Eskimo tribes, Crow of North America and African Negroes. In primitive times, it was quiet prevalent among the Assyro-Babylonians and the Hebrews. In India, till today it exists among Muslims and also among the Hindus. It is more frequent than polyandry. Polygamy is closely related to the institution of slavery. Generally, women captured in war were made wives and concubines by the captors. Sometimes a chieftain or Rajah would purchase a dozen women for wives. At times, it was taken as a status symbol of high society males. Even in Nepal, this practice was popular among the kings and Rana Prime Ministers some 70 years back.

### 2.1.3 Monogamy

Under monogamy one man marries one woman at a time. This is the popular and leading form of marriage. Its advantages are now well recognised. It produces the

highest types of affection, and sincere devotion. The children are well looked after. Both father and mother give earnest attention to the upbringing of their offspring. Under monogamy, the old parents receive favouring care by their children; under polygamy their days end in bitterness. According to Malinowski “Monogamy is, has been, and will remain the only true type of marriage.”

#### **2.1.4 Companionate marriage**

This is “the marriage of two persons on the understanding that as long as there are no children the marriage may be dissolved simply by mutual consent.

Famous American Judge Ben B. Lindsey was of the opinion that this system is better than free love or trial marriage because the knowledge that in case there are no children, divorce may be obtained and will provide wholesome attitudes towards marriage. (Companionate Marriage. By Judge Ben B. Lindsey and Wainwright. Evans. (New York: Boni & Liveright, 1927)

#### **2.1.5 Experimental marriage**

Some thinkers have proposed experimental marriages to find out the compatibility of the two people before they settle down to a life of permanent union. A man and a woman may be allowed to lead marital life temporarily in order to find out if they can settle down permanently in matrimonial relations. This approach is believed to lessen the chances of divorce at a later stage. During the period of experiment they would become acquainted with each other and come to know each other’s personality intimately. If they find that they have compatible personality, they may enter into permanent marriage relations; otherwise depart from each other.

Marriage thus is very important social institution prevalent in almost all societies of the world. No society allows a couple quietly to pair off and start living as husband and wife.

The Hindu Samhitas makes mention of eight types of marriage (Subedi, 2066:9). They are:

##### **a. Bramha Bibah**

In this form of marriage, the bride is donated by her parents to a beautiful and well-mannered groom by performing rituals. Manu has termed this as the best form of marriage.

**b. Daiva Bibah**

In this marriage, the father of the bride organises a Yajna for which capable unmarried priests are invited. The father selects the best priest present in the Yajna and arranges the wedding of his daughter with him. In this type of marriage, the father of girl does not have to spend time searching for a groom to his daughter.

**c. Aarsha Bibah**

This form of marriage was popular among the Rishis (saints). Although saints normally do not tie nuptial knots, some tend to marry with a hope of producing talent sons. In this type of marriage, the father of the bride gives the bride and groom cows and oxen so that they could maintain their life happily.

**d. Prajpatya Bibah**

The main objective of this form of marriage is reproduction. No feast and other celebrations are performed in this marriage. Both bride and grooms are kept together in the Yajna and are ordered that they would live happily together by showing respect to the religion.

**e. Asura Bibah**

In this form of marriage the bride is bought by paying her and her family members.

**f. Gandharva Bibaha**

This is a love marriage in the present form. In this type of marriage, the bride and groom elope secretly. They can have sexual relations even before marriage. Today, this form of marriage is popular worldwide.

**g. Rakshas Bibah**

In this form of marriage, the bride is abducted by the men of the grooms. As the girl is forcefully dragged towards the groom's home, it is called Rakshas or devil marriage. The Satar of eastern Nepal practice this marriage even today.

**h. Paisach Bibah**

If a man has sexual relations with an intoxicated or sleeping woman and brings her his home as his wife, this form of marriage is called Paisach Bibah.

And the Limbus of Nepal practise many of these types of marriage. However, they use different terms to refer the kinds of marriage popular in their community.

**2.2 Studies on Limbu**

There have been extensive studies on the Limbus both in Nepal and Sikkim of India. Scholars like Iman Singh Chemjong initiated the process of studying history

and cultures of the Limbu in Nepal. Later, scholars like Dor Bahadur Bista, Chaitanya Subba and others gave continuity to study on the Limbus. Likewise, extensive studies were carried in Sikkim by the local scholars like J. R. Subba. The process of study on Limbus further got momentum following the political change of 1990 in Nepal when different organisations of ethnic groups, including the Limbus emerged with an intention of preserving and promoting their history and cultures. Such newly formed organisations began publishing journals and magazines with special focus on their cultures, traditions and languages.

### **2.2.1 Kirata**

Kiratas are one of the ancient indigenous tribes of eastern Himalayas. According to Iman Singh Chemjong, in the past the mountainous areas of present Nepal used to be called Kirata Pradesh. Even today the eastern Nepal is known as Majh Kirata and Pallo Kirata. Chemjong further writes that Majh Kirata is the settlement of Jimdar or Barabomwa whereas Pallo Kirata is the settlements of the Limbus or Yakthumba. (Chemjong, 1948).

The Yajurveda and the Mahabharata also make mention of the Kiratas, which clearly indicates that Kiratas are as old as the epic Mahabharata.

In the Mahabharata, the Kiratas are the major dwellers in the Himalayan regions, particularly in the eastern Himalayas and the Limbus are well known to be one of the principal Kiranti (or Kirata) tribes, together with the Rai (or Khambu) tribes, such as Bantawa, Chamling, and Khaling and the Sunuwar tribe. (Dr. R. K. Sprigg in his foreword in “The Limbus of the Eastern Himalayas”)

Iman Singh Chemjong links Kiratas with Saumar, an ancient tribe of present Egypt. These Saumar were also called Mongol and these Mongols moved towards east some 3,000 years ago and established China. One of the branches of the Mangol came down to the Ganges plain for settlements. Later the Aryans began to call them Kiratas. Likewise, Perceval Landon in “*Nepal*” writes that Kiratas were rulers of Nepal some 15,000 years ago during the Dwaper Yuga.

A Hindu text entitled “*Yogin Tantra*’ mentions that Kirata was first born to Lord Maha Dev from a beautiful damsel named Kangati. As the man enjoyed roaming in the jungles hunting and drinking, he was christened as Kirata. ( Chemjong, 1948). After the 28<sup>th</sup> generation, the Kirata (s) were popular as Saumer who ruled the Kamarupa areas until 1611 (Sake Sambat). These same tribes entered Nepal through

three directions. Those who entered from the west were called Kashi Dynasty, those who entered from the east were Taisyan dynasty and those who arrived from north were called Lahsa Dynasty. The Kashi king ruled the present Persia and they also conquered Babylon in 1570 BC and ruled. When they lost their kingdom to the King of Ilam Dynasty in 1300 BC, they arrived in India *in masse* led by Royal priest Namdiver and settled first at Golaku of present Afghanistan. After the demise of the priest, the Kashis were divided into two groups. Seeing many people from north-west migrating *in masse* towards east, they also moved towards the plains of the Ganges and the Yamuna near Varanasi.

After the 12<sup>th</sup> generation, one group set up their kingdom at a place called Suki Ganga near Varanasi. They were called Kashi Thangba in Kirati language. Another group moved towards the Himalayas and set up a village by clearing the dense jungle. They named their village as Simangad. This was the first tribe to develop settlement in mountains by clearing the jungles. Later, two brave men of Simangad—Maha Chand and Lauha Chand set up kingdoms in Doti and Pyuthan respectively. Following the footprint of these two men Yalamber set up a kingdom in Nepal Valley in 800 BC. Likewise, Khimchi set up a kingdom on the either side of the Sun Koshi River. Then the place was called Nnama Doplau. Now the same area is known as Kirata Pradesh.

Chemjong claims that those who created settlement across Sunkoshi in present Morang were Meche, Koche and Dhimal. Those who set up settlements in Fedap were Sunuwar and those who settled in Ilam were Lapcha or Ime and those who moved towards Udayapur were Barbomba, a branch of Limbu.

Likewise, a group belonging to Taishan dynasty that spread to Thailand and Burma from China arrived in Syanpur (present Chainpur of Sankhuwasabha) and set up a kingdom. Again a group from Syanpur moved towards Ilam and established marital relations with Lepchas. (Kirat History, Iman Singh Chemjong, 1966)

According to the Mahabharata, Kiratas of Saumor dynasty set up a kingdom in Kamarupa. During the arrival of Aryans in the Indian sub-continent, these Kiratas were badly tortured by Naraksur and compelled to move towards north and settled in Manya of Tibet. A warrior, Munafehang, son of Subahang, of this dynasty later captured Upajong and settled a new kingdom there. But a few years after the demise of Subhahnag, the locals revolted by killing Munafehang. He had two sons—

Ubahnag and Changbahang. When the ministers made Changbahang, the younger son of Munafenghang, the new king of Upajong, his brother became unhappy and moved towards south with his supporters and arrived in Taplejung of east Nepal. By the time they arrived, the Kiratas of Kashi dynasty had developed settlements there. Though they quarreled in the beginning, they turned friends and got united as Lhasa dynasty. As Ubahang was knowledgeable, his influence spread among the Kirata kings of the small principalities and united them under him. He taught them the Rig Veda. Later, he shifted his capital to Chephuwajong from Taplejung. After the demise of Ubahang, his son Mabohang became the new king who introduced Yuma or Yasokeni religion to his people. The religion is still popular in the Kirata communities. (Chemjong)

During the rule of Mudahang, the fifth successors of Mabohang, yet another group of Kirats entered Nepal from Tibet and settled in Yamphu on the banks of the Sobhayakhola. Later, they spread to the banks of other rivers like the Tamakoshi, Sunkoshi and Kankai. A group moved towards Sikkim. But they were chased back by a group of Bhutan. These new group also belonged to Lhasa dynasty. Thus, the three groups of Kirati who arrived in eastern Nepal from three separate directions led to the birth of new groups. Today's Kiratas are believed to have descended from these group.

### **2.2.2 Limbus**

Palpa, the Kathmandu Valley, Fedap and Moran(g) were the major kingdoms established by these Kiratas. But after the attacks of Sahlibahan in Palpa and Nimesh in the Kathmandu Valley, these Kiratas also moved to Morang and got united with the Kiratas, their breakaway groups.

Meanwhile, 10 Chinese Sirdars took shelter in Fedap or Limbuwan. The newborns of these Chinese Sirdars were called Yakthumba. But when the population of Yakthumbas increased, the Fedap kings (there were eight Fedap kings at that time) were suspicious that they might revolt against them. So they introduced tough laws to suppress them which resulted catastrophic for the Fedap kings. In the wars, the Fedap kings were killed by Yakthumbas, famous in using bows and arrows. As they had won the war with bow and arrows, they named the areas captured by them as Limbuwan which means the land won with the help of bow and arrow. (Chemjong)

The Limbuwan was bordered to Tibet in the north, plain in the south, Mechi River in the east and Arun River in the west. These Yakathuma further divided their

kingdom into 10. The tenth of their kingdom was Charkhola, which is now called Ilam. Imehang was the king of Ilam at that time. As the Limbuwan was divided into 10 small kingdoms, the Limbus are called Dash (ten) Limbus.

J. R. Subba writes, “Thus, in my opinion the word “Limboo” is derived from three Limboo words “Li”=“Bow”, “Toong”= “Arrow” and “Abu”= “Shooter” or “Li’+Toong+ “abu”=“Bow and arrow shooter” or Li+abu=Liabu=Bow shooter (arrow kept silent) or Archer. The word “Li-toong-abu” or “Liabu” later on was corrupted with only two words Li+abu= Liabu. The word “Limboo” was popular amongst the Limbus as they were familiar with the bows and arrows. Consequently, after they defeated the eight kings in eastern Nepal they named the defeated land as “Limbuwan” and named themselves as “ Limbus”...This proves that the word “Limbu” was in use long before the Gorkhas came in contact with the Limbus.” (86).

Dor Bahadur Bista, the missing anthropologist, writes in his ‘Sabai Jatko Phulabari’ about the Limbu settlement, “Limbus live in Pallo Kirat or east to Tamor river to Sikkim India.

(Bista, 2030, page 101)

### **2.3 Marriage Practice In Limbus**

The Limbus of Nepal practice many types of marriage. However, they use different terms to refer the kinds of marriage popular in their community.

Likewise, regarding the marriage practice Bista writes, “There are sub-castes within the caste. They do not marry within the sub-caste.” (Bista)

Marriageable age of Limbu youths is 18-20. Most of the Limbu youths choose their mates on their own. (Ibid)

In festivals or marriage ceremonies the boys and girls dance catching their hands each other. They called it ‘Yalang’ or Dhannach. This dance helps them keep in contact. If they like each other, the Limbu boy, as per the date fixed by their priest (Fedangma) goes to the girl’s home with his friends to bring her.

“Kirat-Limbu’s marriage ritual looks unique. What rituals were in practice in Limbuwan centuries ago is still there. (Tej Yakso, Collection of Sangalo 15<sup>th</sup> special issue 1998). Love marriage is dominant in Limbu community. (ibid).

If a girl likes a boy, she sends a message to the boy to come to her parents to ask for her hands. If the boy also agrees then this type of marriage has both

characteristics of love and arrange marriage. (Nara Bahadur Yanhang , Collection of Sangalo, 1998)

Marriage ceremony in Limbu community takes place in the boy's home, not in girl's home. ...So no procession goes to bride's home. (ibid)

Various types of marriage practices exist in Kirata people. However, marriage practices vary due to financial, social and political factors. (Khatry, 2060 BS: 172).

Among various forms of marriages, arrange marriage, elopement, chori and jari marriage are important. However, arrange and love marriages have, of late, become more frequent than chori and jari marriages. (ibid)

## **2.4 Types of Marriage in Limbus**

J. R. Subba has mentioned almost all forms of marriage prevalent in the Limbu communities. The marriage rules in the Limbu community are strictly endogamy and Thar exogamy. In the early Limbu social laws, we come across 15 types of marriages (J. R. Subba (Pondhak (1999); The Limboos of The Eastern Himalayas, with special reference to Sikkim).

They are:

- 1 Na\_Aksingma Metkhim (arranged marriage)
- 2 Na\_nupna Khepma Metkhim (elopement)
- 3 Marriage after having children,
- 4 Jari Marriage
- 5 Namna Metkhim (Defeating the girl in a dancing competition)
- 6 Marriage with in-laws,
- 7 Khupna Metkhim (elopement marriage)
- 8 Marriage with Agreement,
9. Polygamy Marriage,
10. Marriage with Papchokma (Marriage with divorcee),
11. Widow Marriage,
12. Widow Widower Marriage,
13. Dependent relative's marriage
14. Orphan's Marriage, and
15. Yokwa's Marriage (servant's marriage).



## 1. Na- Aksingma Metkhim (Arranged Marriage)

Out of all the above marriages, *Na-Aksingma Metkhim* (Mangni) is considered to be the best form of marriage. In this type of marriage, the Limbu rituals of “*Char Kalam Dos Rite*” are performed completely. However, the expenses involved in such marriages are very high. Nowadays people cannot afford to organise such marriages, resulting rare occurrence of such a marriage. The various social rituals involved in such type of marriages could be described in brief as follows:

### The First Stage – Naksingma

Once the girl is selected, the boy’s family explores the possibility of marriage between the two families. Then, the boy’s family select an *Ingmeba* of *Pantumyanghang* and two to three others to accompany him. The *Ingmeba*, his helper friends, the boy and his friends go to the girl’s house in the evening. The boy and his friends hide near the girl’s house. The *Ingmeba* and his friends go to the doorstep of the girl’s house, place a bottle of *Sechongwa* (wine) (*Peliphak Hukwa*), a flower and one rupee on a leaf, in front of the door and take permission with his folded hands with the head of the family of the girl to get into the house. The head of the family of the girl understands the purpose of their approach, and if he is not willing for the girl’s marriage, he also places a bottle a *Sechongwa* near the *Peliphak Hukwa* from the boy’s side, and expresses his unwillingness of the marriage. Discussion takes place from the both side about the marriage and if the *Mangsingdangba* is convinced, the *Ingmeba* touches the *Manghenaphung Hukwa* and takes his *Peliphak Hukwa*, flower and coin and goes away. The *Ingmeba* and his friends return empty handed from the targeted house. Now, they may go to the next house, repeat the same process as above with their introductory speech of residence, their names and the purpose of their coming, etc.

If the head of the family of the girl welcomes, the *Ingmeba* and his friends enter the house with the *Peliphak Hukwa*, flower and money that he had placed at the doorstep. He places these items in front of head usually the father, grandfather or the uncle and takes permission to speak. In the mean time *Pantumyanghang* and the elderly people from the girl side are also assembled. In the presence of these people the *Ingmeba* speaks about the desire of the boy’s family. Once the family agrees, the *Ingmeba* takes consent of the girl. The girl may like to see the boy. The boy and his friends are presented before the gathering. The girl’s willingness to marry the boy is

conveyed to him. The girl's father or grandfather or uncle accepts the Hukwa. The boy personally makes some token presentation (*Thupparung* or *Baina*) to the girl. Then confirms the decision of marriage and the date is fixed. After that they discuss about the details of *Thokkeywa*, marriage date, the date of arrival to take the girl, date of rite, number of *Metkeysama* etc. Now the friend of the boy takes out the flower, *Thokkeywa* or *Sewa Yang* and two bottles of *Sechonwa* on a brass plate and then places them in front of the girl's father (or head of the family). The *Pantumyanghang* of the girl side counts the *Sewa Yang* or *Thokkeywa* and hands it over to the girl's father (*Mangsingdangba*). Then, the people from the boy's side return home on the same day or stay in some other house and return the next day.

Once the date of marriage, or the date of the rite is fixed, all arrangements of marriage have to be made by both sides. The arrangements in the case of the boy side are usually, the place for stay of the girl and the *Metkesamas* (10 to 15 Nos) after they are brought from the girl's house, clothing arrangements, food arrangements, etc. The *Ingmeba* or *Pantumyanghangba* is requested (*Kulang Temma*) with a bottle of *Sechongwa* and a rupee coin to kindly help the family to complete the marriage formalities as spokesman. Other arrangements may be that of music, dance, food for the main *Bhatiyer* (feast), *Thitongba*, invitation of relatives and friends, various animals required for the rites, *Phedangma* for *Metkam* ceremony, etc.

### **The Second Stage – Bringing of the Bride**

At the time of marriage, a party consisting of the bridegroom, his father or his uncle, the go-between *Ingmeba* and few friends (*SANGOPLA* or *Lokandey*) go to the bride's house to fetch her. The marriage takes place at the groom's residence. The bride is accompanied by her mates, a group of 10 to 15 girls, called *Metkesama*. Out of these one is her *Nya*, father's sister, who should act as a *Pantumyanghangma* and one of her sisters act as *SISAGOPLAMA* (*Lokandi*). Once everything is ready, the people from the boy's side bring the bride and the *Metkesamas* without doing any rite over there. Usually, they reach the boy's house in the evening and stay away from the main house in a tent. On the way, they will be received by other people from the boy side with *Chyabrun*, *Thitongba* and *Lamthan* for a rest. All the guests of the girl's side take rest in the tent that night. Food and clothing for stay are served over there only.

People from the groom's side take care of the guests. (The Limboos of Eastern Himalays, J R Subba, 1999)

The Chyabrung or Ke is the most important musical instrument of the Limbu which is extensively used in any happy occasion. A group of Ke Kelangba (Ke Dancers) is invited for Kelang during the occasion. They circle around the groom's house and dance on the house terrace. They have a variety of dances such as Manglang, Kusokpa, Kakwalang, Watorlilang, Yasalang, Putukeylang, Tookmibalang, Parewalang, Kendalang, Pengwalang, etc. They dance in rows and in turn.

The invited people of the village start assembling at about 10.00 AM. The people turn up with their best dresses and ornaments. The young boys and girls look more attractive with the seasonal flowers such as Kokphung (Magnolia), Thokiphella (Rhododendron), Maruti, Ondong etc. on their Sangchin (Choli). The boys come with a variety of caps and flowers on it. (ibid)

When the gathering is complete at about 1.30 P.M., the bride and the groom are taken away from the house. If anyone of the groom's elder brother or his uncle is unmarried, he places a rupee coin and do Sewa in the presence of Tumyanghang and asks forgiveness for getting married before his turn. This ritual is known as Singok Kakma. The groom then changes into his formal marriage dress. Once the groom is ready, his parents put *Tika* on his forehead and give Muing (blessing). In the absence of his parents his uncle performs this job. Now, the parents grant permission to bring the bride. The Lokondey puts umbrella on the groom to protect from Yunshikpa (Sandhya Tara). The gun is fired at that time to inform the bride people to get ready for the occasion.

Now the bride is taken away from the marriage place and there she changes into her bridal dress. The bridal dress ornaments and make up materials are handed over to Pantumyanghangma. The Lokandi puts umbrella to sisamey to protect her from Yungsikpa. A gun is also fired from the bride's side. Hearing this the Nalingsang Nalingsangchum, Tumyanghang, Pantumyanghang and the Mayjirisaba(Janti) proceed to bring the bride. The people remaining at the house clean the main door, stretch

secret-cloth just in front of the main door, prepare a Lashari and a Namshari and two copper pitcher full of water and flower to welcome the new guest.

When the Mayjirisaba of Sisamey and the Maygirisaba of Nalisang meet, they stop for sometime. During that time the Pantumyanghang and the Pantumyanghangma talk each other, take Lamloyee (Thintongba) and the procession proceed towards the house of the groom, lead by the Nowmatibaja, Chyabrung, Nagara etc. followed by Nalisang and then the Sismay. The Lokondey and the Lokondi held the umbrella on the groom and the bride respectively. Following them are Pantumyanghangma, Pantumyanghang, and marriage Mayjirisaba. They stop at the terrace in front of the main door. The musicians and the dancers of Nowmatibaja and Chyabrung continue singing and dancing on the terrace, the copper pitches full of water and flower are placed on the two sides of the house terrace and stretch the Sanglatyet from there up to the main door step. Then, head of the family light the Ladiyo and Namdiyo of the Lashari and Namshari praying the moon god and the sun god. After that only the bride stands on the cloth,, on the right stands the Nalisang and Lokondey and on the left side of bride stands the Lokondi without stepping on the secret cloth. While standing on the cloth, the bride prays to god of household for the success of their marriage life in this house. That time the entire gathering bless and sprinkle Acheta (coloured rice) on both the bride and groom for their happy marriage. The bride and groom should also pray to Yuma Sam. They should pray in their mind that their heart should remain as pure as that of Lashari and Namshari and their life should be as shining as that of the moon and the sun. The Yuma Sam may help them to fulfill the blessings being given by the people.

After that, both the bride and the groom step in towards the main door first with their right foot. The lokondey and Lokondi close the umbrella and accompany the bride and the groom. Immediately after bride steps forward, they erect cloth is collected and handed over to a responsible member of house. The family members accompany the bride and the groom up to the main door. Now, the groom's parents put tika to the bride and bless. The mother in law and others take her inside. The gun is fired, musical instruments are blown, a great moment of joy happiness surrounds the atmosphere. Now all the Metkesama and Pantumyanghangma are also taken inside the house. Inside the house, Nalisang sits on the right side while the bride sits on the left side and the Lokondey and Lokondi sit on each side of the respective groom and bride.

After a pause of sometime, the groom and the bride are taken out for public audience at the main assembly ground. They are placed at the top most area of the assembly. They are also asked to sit in the same position as that of inside the house. The people garland the bride groom with flowers, Khada presents etc. The invited village people and relatives pay money depending on the economic condition of the payee and the payment made has to pay back to the payee by the groom's family on his turn. After a considerable time at the main assembly the bride and the groom are now taken inside the house. The guests from the bride side are served inside the house. Food is served to all the people present. Nagara is beaten, Chyabrung is beaten danced, Nowmatibaja is blown, the entire atmosphere is in joy and happiness.

### **The Third Stage-Metkam Thim**

Metkam Thim is most essential in Limbu society. The man and the woman living together without Metkam (LAGAN) are regarded as animals and their children have no right to become Tumyanghang and Tumyanghangma, Metkam thim of the sons and daughters of such people cannot be done. In such cases, Metkam Thim of the parents should be done before performing Metkam of the sons and daughters. Metkam thim of a pregnant woman should not be done. Metkam Thim of such woman could be done only after six month of delivery.

Before starting a Metkam Thim, a Tumyanghang asks to bride whether she is willing for the Metkam or not. Because sometimes the girls are married by their guardians without their consent. Metkam Thim should be performed only after the girl's consent.

All the materials of Metkam Thim should be ready by 7.00 P.M. evening. These materials consist of one cock and one hen, a banana leaf on a *Nangloo*, placed on it are two brass plates with a little quantity of rice in each; two Lashari with flowers; vermilion powder, *chandan*, eight pieces of ginger; a green bead necklace; rain water collected on rocks or on tree trunks; a mixture of water from a river, burning coal etc.

The bride and the groom are made ready for the Metkam Thim (Mandap). The bride occupies the left flank of the groom. The bride groom should face the north-east direction. The Lokondey sits on the right side and the Lokondi sits on the left side of the bridegroom without touching the sitting material of the bride groom. The Phedangma (priest) who performs the Metkam sits in front of the bride groom. The groom's relative such as his nephew and niece, sister's sons and daughters, sister's

grandsons and granddaughters, people under death pollution, women with menstrual cycle, people from other caste and religion etc, should not be allowed to sit at the site of Metkam Thim.

Once everything is ready, the Phedangma takes permission of the Tumyanghang to start his job. A shawl (Muyeshup) covers over the head of bride on one side, and both the arms of groom on the other, and the two ends of the shawl are held by the Lokondey and the Lokondi. The groom keeps his left knee on the right knee of the bride, the bride's right hand is held by the right hand of the groom from above. The Phedangma now performs Metkam Thim with a few words of inactions and murmurs over the bridal pair, who are now sitting cross legged on the floor holding each other's hands. One cock and one hen are sacrificed for Mangenna of the bridegroom. The Phedangma snaps off the heads, of the birds and the blood is allowed to mingle into a plantain leaf which is held below. From the blood thus collected he seeks for omens and explains their portent to the assembled company. The bride and groom are fed with the rice and water three times each. The groom is fed first and then the bride. Now the bride and groom are asked to stand up. The groom garlands a green bead necklace or Poteymala or Pona to the bride. Then, the groom puts vermilion powder on the forehead of the bride with his right thumb pointing downwards, right from mid forehead up to head. He promise that "Let us always stay happily." The bride also prays the same thing. Next time, he puts Simrik, another type of vermilion powder, from bride's mid forehead up to head the same way. Then he promise "Let us promise not to part each other till our death."nShe also prays the same thing. Then he mixes both types of vermilion powder on the forehead of the bride the same way as above and prays and promise Yuma Sam "Let us stay without parting throughout our life, let God Yuma Sam help us to achieve our promise." Then the bride, touching the hands and legs of the groom with her forehead promise "Let your promise be fulfilled. Let me fulfill your promise." After that the bride and groom are allowed to sit.

Now, the Phedangma strikes Mipoklung and Miphonglung with the Michak and produces the fire chanting Mundhum of Mi. Now the Michak is strike with the groom's Manghenayang three times and chanting Mundhum, the Phedangma hand over the Yang to the groom to give it to the bride. Once the Maruhena Yang (Luruchekma Yang) is received by the bride from the groom, the Tumyanghang present declare the bride groom as a lawful wife and husband. The Namuksam and the

Yettiba Yekhyaba Yettimba also agree the declaration and say that now onwards we consider you to be a lawful husband and wife. Gun is fired. Every body shout “Metkam Pokhey roo...” Chyabrun, Nagara, Nowmatibaja etc are beaten and blown. Everywhere the atmosphere of joy and happiness spreads.

### **Phungnawa Samlo**

After the completion of Metkam Thim, the Phedangma, Samba, Yeba, Yema and Tummyanghang present in the Metkam Thim sing songs of Mundhum known as Phungnawa Samlo throughout the night. The singers recall the master singers, Kewa Phungba Mangden Hangba with reverence who set convention of singing Phungnawa Samlo by the command of Sodhung Lepmuhang, the patron deity of Sawa Yethang, the ancestors of Limbus, at the marriage ceremony of Pajai Tentumyangba and Lupli Adanhangma. After a few discussions among the Shamanistic priests and Tumyanghangs through songs, well versed in the Mundhums among them, leads the deliberations towards the legendary events of marriages, right from the beginning of human settlement on earth. Three allegorical stories of the Mundhums relating to youthful life and marriages are mentioned in the song.

### **The Fourth Stage – Char Kalam Das Riti (Limellung)**

Sometimes immediately after the marriage it is performed in the house of the boy, arrangements are made for Char Kalam Das Riti which is performed in the girl’s house. For this following items are made ready these days (Yakthungba, 1992) :

1. Yangthokma: One rupee, one Cheyp meat decorated with flowers, one bottle Sechongwa ore one Saptu Thi.
2. Mantakma: One rupee, one basket meat decorated with flowers, one bottle Sechongwa for well-wishers of Sisamey.
3. Sepma Toomma: one rupee, right front thigh of the buffalo or any animal sacrificed on the day of marriage decorated with flowers.
4. Sadakoppa: one full Hoktang, cleaned and visceral, moved and decorated with flowers, five rupees placed on Hoktoba. The rupee is for Lokondi.
5. Thisap Temma: one rupee, one Saptu Thi.
6. Yangsingma: one rupee, one Cheyp meat decorated meat and one bottle Sechongwa for Ingmeba.
7. Phungdongyangma: Five rupees, one Cheyp meat decorated with flowers for Kutuni of Sisemy’s paternal aunt.

8. Turayepma: Five rupees for village headman who write the agreement of marriage.
9. Metkesama Yang: two rupee fifty paise, one Lingdok Thi with flowers, one Cheyp meat for Metkesamas.
10. Pan Chupma: Five rupees for the Tumyanghangs who witness the Dasrititi.

The Metkesabas may go straight to the house of the bride. The bride, the Lökkonday and the people of the groom side stay behind for sometime before they reach the house, and then proceed. Now, the Pantumyanghang (Ingmeba) standing on the house terrace says that they have come for Riti. Then the representatives (Yangmeba) of the girl's house open the door and stand inside the house. The Pantumyanghang now submits the first Riti of day.

Yangthokma Yang places on a leaf, and requests for shelter tonight. The Yangmeba of the girl's side grants permission. Now, one basket meat decorated with flower and one bottle Sechongwa are also placed near the Yang. The Ingmeba, the bride-groom and some people from the boy side get into the house but they stay away from the site of Dasturi submission.

The girl's side Yangmeba also asks some helpers to receive the Dasturi materials. The Tumyanghang officiates the Das Riti. The parents and the family members do not sit on the site of Dasturi. Most of the people from the boy's side stay outside with the materials. The Yangmeba presents these items to the Tumyanghang sitting inside the house.

Usually, the above people reach the house of the girl's parents only in the evening. After the Das Riti is finished, introduction, Sewama etc. are performed. The Yangmeba now acts as a Pantumyanghang and introduces the girl's parents, Paben-Maben, all the elderly family members.

## **II. Nanupna Khepma Metkhim (Elopement Due to Liking)**

A Limbu may marry any girl he likes, provided she does not actually belong to his Thar. A common way of selecting a bride is by open singing competitions known as Yiaklakma (paddy dehusking dance) and Khyali held in every festive occasion like marriage, Maghey Mela, Das Riti of any newly married couple in the village, new house construction ceremony, religious ceremonies etc. The boy or the girl will commence by singing a couplet to which the other must reply. The couplets are composed on the spur of the moment, and each succeeding one should improve on the one before it in wit and humour. The contest goes on until neither party is able, for



lack of ideas, to continue, and in order to win a bride the man must produce such a couple that the girl is unable to reply. If the man is defeated in the contest, he at once runs away, leaving some other competitor to win his fair victor's hand. Sometimes the contest goes on for many days or several occasions in a year until the young boy and the girl like and love each other. In many such cases marriages are usually contracted without the parent's consent, and take place, as a rule, at a somewhat later age. It is not uncommon amongst the poorer people.

### **III. Marriage after Having Children**

**(a) Yakthungsama :** When a son comes away from home with his wife and children, he should be asked the details of his wife such as her Thar, her mother's Thar, grandmother's Thar etc, before he enters the house. If his wife is found Kaiysodok (Penyit of Mayit Thar endogamy), it is very difficult to separate the son and his wife from each other due to their children. In such cases, neither the parents of boy nor the parents of the girl recognize the family. Hence in such a case the son goes away with his family and settles somewhere in an unknown place.

In the case of matching couple, all the rituals of Metkhim, Metkam, Char Kalam Das Riti are done as in the case of Naksingma Metkhim. However, the children of the couple should be kept away from the Metkam Thim during that occasion. The children should not be taken while going for the Char Kalam Dast Riti.

**(b) Phutyit Girl :** If the wife of the son is found Phutyit (Girl's father Yakthungsa or mother Yakthungsama and mother or father other than Kiranti) all marriage rituals are done same as that Putyit girl of Nanuma Metkhim.

**(c) Senyit Girl (Girl's father and mother Kiranti other than Limbu):** If the wife of the son is found Senyit all the marriage rituals are done as that of sanyit girl.

**(d) Penyit Girl (Girl from non-Limbu non-Kiranti parents) :** If the wife of the son is found a Penyit all the rituals of marriage are done as that of Penyit Chokthi, Kayit girl.

### **VI. Marriage with In –Laws**

**(a) Marriage with Younger Sister-in-law:** The Limbus have tradition to marry the unmarried younger sister of their wife (Sali) in the case of wife's death. The marriage is either through negotiation or through elopement but the marriage rituals are performed same as in the case of a Nanupna Khepma Metkhim. Usually, only Metkam rituals are performed. The man does not wear a Nalisang dress and the Lokondey is not required. The Char Kalam

Das Riti are also done as in the case of Nanupma Khepma, Methim, but while submitting Das Riti-Sepmatomma, Sadakapmma, Thisaptemma and Meytkesama Yand rituals are not done. Because in a Limboo tradition the ritual of Sadakapmma and Thisaptemma are performed only once from an individual son-in-law. In such cases the girl's parents or Maity submits a goat as Phudong for the girl's friends. All other rituals such as introductory Sewama, preparation of marriage documents. Phudong submission, Hamsikwa submission are done same as that of Naksingma Metkhim. However, the Hamsikwa is submitted from the front left thigh of the Phudong material.

- (b) Marriage with Niece (daughter of a brother-in-law or a sister-in-law):** After the death of his wife a Limbu can marry the unmarried daughter of his brother- in-law or sister -in -law (niece). If the sons and daughters from the dead wife are at the stage of Naligen Thangben and Sisagen Menchin, an arranged marriage is done as in the case of Thokeywa Riti, but it is not done if the children of dead wife are below that stage. While preparing the documents of Thokeywa, the name of the grown up children of the dead wife are also mentioned. In this case, even if it is an arranged marriage, the rituals are performed same as that of a Nanupma Khepma Metkhim II(a). There is no use of Nalinsang dress and Lokondey.
- (c) Marriage with Elder sister-in-law:** This type of marriage is very rare. However, sometimes the circumstances like difficulty to take care of the infant children of dead wife compel a man to marry his wife's unmarried elder sister-in -law. This type of marriage is usually arranged by the dead wife's children's grand mother and aunt. In this case the bride is directly taken to the main door where the elder members of man's family put Tika and blessing and follow the house entry rituals.
- (d) Marriage with Sister-in-law (the dead brother's wife) :** After the death of her husband, sometimes the deceased's wife marry with the dead husband's younger brother. This type of marriage usually takes places when the children of the dead brother are infant and the sister-in-law alone may not be able to support the children or due to the fear that the mother of the child may go away with someone leaving the infant child in dismay. After the death ceremony of the dead brother, a few relatives and Tumyanghang are

collected and in the presence of them the younger brother garlands Pona to the dead brother's wife.

### **VII. Khupna Metkhim (Elopement Marriage)**

Sometimes the Yakthumbas do *Magani* to a girl for an arranged marriage, but the parents of girl refuse to give their daughter. In such cases some people forcibly or willingly elope such girls when they are alone. They collect a few Tumyanghang and relatives and immediately perform Metkhim rituals such as crossing of Wateptepwa, stepping of Sanglatyet and house entry. They perform Metkam same as that of Nanuma Khepma Metkhim without sending any message to their parents. The Char Kalam Das Riti are also performed same as that of Nanuma Khepma Metkhim but they have to pay five rupees and get punishment for elopement. The boy has to pay 51 rupees or 101 rupees to Tumyanghang. Sometimes the boy is given punishment to walk on his knee and pay five rupees fine with it. After that the Ingmeba Submits the Char Kalam Das Riti. The Ingmeba submits rupees five for Pantakma Yang, Sepmatomma, Thisaptemma and Yangsingma Yang same as that of Naksingma Metkhim. Turayepmma is submitted as per the desire of Ritbhatey. No other rituals are performed.

### **VIII. Marriage with agreement**

Sometimes a boy likes a girl, but when he goes for *Magani*, her parents place some agreement to be fulfilled before marriage. Usually such agreements are in terms of work to look after agriculture, cattle rearing, sheep or goat rearing etc, for period of one or more years. After the agreement is fulfilled, the boy marry the girl same as that of Nanupna Kheypma Metkhim Thim. In such cases only Metkam is done. The Char Kalam Das Riti is also done as that of Nanupna Kheypma Metkhim but Yokthokwa is not done.

If that girl elope with some other boy during the agreement period, the father of the girl has to pay the entire wages of the boy for that period. He has to find out another girl for that boy.

### **IX. Polygamy Marriage**

Usually the Limbu avoid polygamy. Some people do second marriage. For Metkam with the second woman, the first wife has to pay a fine of one rupee and one bottle Sechongwa and then should do Sewa. Metkam and Char Kalam Das Riti are done same as that of Nanupna Kheypna Metkhim. However, the parents of the boy do

not go to the parents of the girl during the char Kalam Dasriti. They boy and the girl are usually accompanied by Tumyanghangs, the boy's uncle and others. Sometimes people marry their younger sister in law as a second wife. In that case the Char Kalam Das Riti are submitted same as that of Nanupna Kheypma Metkhim.

#### **X. Marriage With Papchokma(Divorce Marriage)**

In Limbu society there is a tradition of divorce marriage. The marriages are done either by arrangement or by elopement. However, in both the cases the marriage rituals are performed as in the case of Nanupna Kheypma Metkim. One the day of bringing home of the divorced woman, Metkam and Metkam rituals are performed. The Char Kalam Das Riti rituals are done in the same way as that of Naksingma Metkhim except Metkesama Yang which is not required in the case.

#### **XI. Widow Marriage**

In a Limbu society remarriage by widow is a common tradition. In this case normal ceremony is not held. The union legitimized by the Phedangma same as that of a Nanupna Kheypma Metkhim by sacrificing one hen and one cock. But she is regarded as his wife and her children are considered legitimate and they get a share in their father's property on equal terms he has to pay damages to the man she was living with just as if she was his regular wife. If a Limboo widow who has no children, eloped with a man from her parent's house, the Yangmeba and the Turayepma receiver during their first marriage, go to the house of her dead husband. Marriage expenses incurred during their first marriage are usually not accepted. The old Saino (kinship) are not changed. If she has eloped from her dead husband's house, the head of the family sends message to her parents or Maity through a messenger. Usually, the family of the new husband returns the ornaments of her dead husband with the messenger. The Riti of the widow could be done at her parent's house but the dead husband's family would like to see her and her new husband once.

Sometimes the widows are also remarried with Magni from the dead husband's house. This is possible only through her and her in laws consent. The re-marriage rituals are done in the same way as in the case of Nanupna Kheypma Metkhim. The message is sent to her parents only after her re-marriage. Her parents are also invited to her dead husband's house at the time of Riti submission which is also done as in the case of Nanupna Kheypma Metkhim.

## **XII. Widow/Widower Marriage**

In a Limbu society there is a tradition of remarriage between a widow and widower. Such remarriage is performed in the absence of their children. The widow is straight way taken inside for Metkam. A few Tumyanghangs and a Phedangma legitimize the remarriage sacrificing a hen and a cock same as that of Nanupna Kheypma Metkam. After the remarriage the husband and wife go to the widow's parents or Maity to change the Saino with one Perengo and two bottle of Sechongwa.

## **XIII. Dependent Relatives' Marriage**

Sometimes some boys and girls live with the family of their relatives due to the absence of their parents. These relatives are usually their maternal uncle, aunt, sister and brother-in-law, parental uncle, aunt etc. During the course of time they may attain the age of Nalingen Thangben and Sisagen Menchin (marriageable age). In such cases the entire responsibility of their parents for their marriage also is borne by these relatives. The marriages are done accordingly as in the case of Naksingma Metkhim, Nanupna Kheypma Metkhim or any other type depending on the circumstances.

## **XIV. Orphan's Marriage**

Sometimes the people do not have their own sons and daughters and adopt orphans. They grow up to adulthood. The boys may marry a girl mostly by elopement. The entire arrangement of marriage, expenses of marriage, the Char Kalam Das Riti etc. are done or borne by the head of the household. The marriages are done in the same way as that of a Nanupna Kheypma Metkhim.

## **XV. Yok Yokwa Metkhim (Servants' Marriage)**

In the early days the Limbu used to keep bonded labourers. When they attended youthful stage they used to do marriage of Yok and Yokwa by the owners. The Yok and Yokwa had no caste or religion and had to adopt the caste and marriage rituals of their Malik. In the marriage of Yok and Yokwa two Diyo Kalash are made. The Yok and Yokwa were asked to sit cross-legged in front of the Diyo Kalash. A Tumyanghangs of the Malik with Mundhum used to ask the Yokwa to garland a flower to the Yok. They Yok used to put Sindur at the forehead of the Yokwa.

## **Marriage of Chhori-Cheli**

While writing about the types of marriages in a Limbu society, it is essential to know something about the marriage of Chhori Cheli. If a Sisagen Menching of a Limbu society is married to a Limbu Nalingen Thangben by an arranged marriage, the

Maity of the girl takes a complete Char Kalam Das Riti, but if the girl is married through elopement by Phuty or Senyit boy (Rai and Limbu), the Maity takes only Char Kalam Nine Riti(except Metkesama Riti). The Riti receiving rituals are performed as in the case of a Naksingma Metkhim or Nanupna Kheypma Metkhim described earlier. But if the Chori Cheli are married to a non Kiranti family, the Maity receives only Yangthokma, Pantakmma, Sadakapmma, Yangsingma Yang, Turayepmma and Panchupmma Rities. In addition to these Riti a fine of rupees fifty one is paid to her Maity. After that an introductory Sewama is done. In the document of Riti receiving documents the amount paid as a fine is no documented.

Sometimes remarriage of Chori Cheli takes place with a Kiranti castes. In such a case, other than that of Sepma Tomma. Thisap Temma, Yokthokwa(Phungdongyangma) and Metkesama Yang, all other rituals are received. However, for Sadakappma only the front right thigh of Hoktang. In the case of remarriage of a Chori Cheli with a boy other than Rai and Yakha, the same rituals are received as submitted in her first ritual.

If a Chori Cheli is remarried for the third time with a Kiranti boy, her Maity receives only a basket of pork and a bottle of Sechonwa for an introductory Sewama. But if she is remarried for the third time to a non Kiranti boy, the Maity receives only a bottle of milk and sweets are introductory Sewama.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **Research Methods**

This chapter mentions the various methods applied to complete the dissertation work. Required information was collected through a two-month field work. The researcher applied various tools and techniques for the collection of primary and secondary data in order to explain the changed marriage patterns among the Phago (Limbu) community of Garigaun, Soyak VDC, Ilam.

#### **3.1 Research Design**

The research design of this study is of descriptive nature. Efforts have been made to bring the fore the changes in the marriage patterns in the Limbu community by analyzing the both primary and secondary information collected by the researcher. Descriptive research design is found useful to describe the population, family size, academic status of the people, prevalent marriage practices in the Limbu community, literatures related to marriage practices and the opinions of the people of Gairi Gaon regarding the changes they observed in the marriage practices over the years. Only the persons of marriageable age and above of were interviewed, observed and provided with open ended questionnaires to collect the primary data. The entire population aged above 16 years was divided in four groups as follow:

Group of marriageable age (aged between 16-28 years)

Group of married people (aged 29-40 years)

Group of parents of grown up wards (aged 41-60 years)

Group of grand parents (aged 61-above years)

#### **3.2 Rationale for the Site Selection**

The present research was conducted in Gairi Gaon, Ward No. 2 of Soyak Village Development Committee of Ilam district. The study is focused only on the Limbu community. Interestingly, only the Phago clans of Limbus live in the village located 12 Kilometre west to Ilam Bazaar, the district headquarters of Ilam district. The small village is linked by a fair weather road so that the farmers carry their farm products mainly broom and ginger to the markets by carrying them in tractors. In general observation the entire population of the site looked poor; however, most

villagers have maize and millet fields around their homes and paddy fields below the village. Most farmers rear cattle for milk, meat and compost to use in the farms. Almost all children of school-going age attend primary school. Many of the youths of this village have studied up to class 10 with a few exception of acquiring up to Diploma Level. Among the elderly population most men can read and write but the women can't.

Till now no study has been carried on the changing patterns of marriage in this particular village however, most people have witnessed a gradual change in the marriage practice over the years. Such changes are mostly positive with adequate reforms in feast and Rit system. However, the youths are facing problems particularly in finding their suitable mates due mainly to the disappearing practices of erecting swings during the festival time and organizing local fairs. Many of the respondents told that they first met their spouse in the local Satake fair and swings.

### **3.3 The Universe of the Study**

There are 24 households of Fagos in Gairigaon. Each household is identified as a unit of the study. A structured interview schedule has been used to acquire information for this study thus employing the census method.

### **3.4 The Nature and Sources of Data**

Both primary and secondary data collected during the field works were used in this study. The primary data were collected applying various data collection tools and techniques, especially household survey, observation and informants' interview and the secondary data from the government offices, books, articles; journals research findings, movies and magazines.

### **3.5 Methods of data collection**

Different types of tools and techniques were used to collect data for this study. Qualitative and quantities data were collected through primary source of information. Observation, field study and interviews were conducted by providing the informants with questionnaires. The following research tools and techniques were used for the study.



### **3.5.1 Household Survey**

The house survey is conducted by providing the persons of the marriageable age with structured questionnaire to gather comparative information about the marriage practices of the past and present, modes and rituals of marriage. Both male and female members of the family surveyed were provided with the questionnaire so as to collect their opinions about the marriage practices and major changes seen the marriage patterns in the village in the recent years.

### **3.5.2 Observation**

As observation is an important method in research works. Major activities of the married people were observed while opinions of the close observers of the marriage practices were also observed. As the universe was a bit little, no marriage occurred during the time of field study. So the researcher had to depend on other observers to acquire needed information about the changed practices of marriage.

### **3.5.3 Key Informant's Interview**

This method used primarily with a view of collecting more general data and in order to crosscheck the data collected in the first round. Altogether 18 persons were provided with questionnaire for the crosscheck purpose.

## **3.6 Data analysis and presentation**

The collected data were processed and analyzed in the tables, percentage and pictorial forms as per the requirements. The analysis of data tables has been based on the cases count and frequency distribution. The results were compared with the information acquired from other secondary information.

## **3.7 Limitation of the Study**

Each research work has its own limitations. The present study was done to meet the partial fulfillment for the Masters Degree requirement in Nepali History, Culture and Archaeology. So carrying a detail research was not possible due to lack of sufficient time and financial resources. Moreover, the frequent strikes called by the different political organizations across the country caused problems to frequent the research site for more information and to observe the marriage ceremonies. This study

was carried out on a small Limbu community of Gari Gaon, Soyak VDC (Now in Ilam Municipality Ward No 11) of Ilam district. However, the findings may reflect changes taking place in the marriage practices in the Limbu communities of areas as the major agents of the changes have been found to be universal—Education and politics of violence. This study is basically concentrated on the changed marriage patterns in the Limbu community. The ignorance as well as the unwillingness of the unmarried respondents to openly interact with the researcher caused some problems in course of collecting primary data.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### STUDY AREA AND THE PEOPLE

#### 4.1. Ilam

Known as the queen of eastern Nepal, Ilam is regarded to be the most beautiful place in Nepal. Located in the mid-hill region adjoining Darjeeling district of India, Ilam is also famous as a district of tea gardens. Tea farming that began in Ilam during the reign of first Rana Prime Minister Jung Bahadur Rana in 1862, is now the major cash crops of the district. Besides the three old tea gardens—Ilam, Kanyam and Saktim, several big and small tea gardens have emerged in the district in the last two decades, thanks to the privatization policy which encouraged many farmers to take up tea farming.

Ilam takes its name from Lepcha word the meaning of which is bending road (I=bending, lam=road). It lies 300 metres to 3636 metres above the sea level and spreads from 26°40' to 27°8' in northern longitude and 87°40' to 87°90' latitude in the east covering an area of 1703 square kilometres. Its length varies from 50 to 57 kilometres whereas its width is in between 38 to 45.8 km.

The district was previously divided into 48 village development committees and one municipality. Now it has six rural municipalities and four municipalities. Today almost all hillocks in the eastern part of the district have turned into beautiful tea gardens and a number of new tea factories have been set up with the increasing number of tea estates. Besides tea, cardamom and the broom plants are there to maintain greenery and beauty of the district. The hardworking farmers here grow potatoes, ginger, paddy and other crops and supply them to other parts of the country as well as abroad.

Ilam is a home of multi ethnic people. From Lepchas to Yalmus and Limbus to Rais claim them as the indigenous people of the district. Although the population of Rai and Limbus outnumber other ethnic groups, a significant numbers of Brahmins, Kshetris, Newars, Kamis, Gurungs, Tamangs, Damais and others have been living here in a perfect harmony for centuries.

The table below shows the population distribution of the district:

Table No: 1  
Total Population of Ilam

|                                   |                   |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------|
| <b>Total Population</b>           | <b>282,806.00</b> |
| Male                              | 142,434.00        |
| Female                            | 140,372.00        |
| Percent                           | 1.22              |
| No. Of House Hold                 | 54,565.00         |
| Average Household Size            | 5.18              |
| Area in sq. Km.                   | 1,703.00          |
| Population Density Person/Sq. Km. | 166.00            |

Source: Census, 2001

According to census of 2001, of the total population of 282,806, Brahmins share 15.14 followed by Limbhus which share 14.33 per cent. Kshetris occupy the third position with 13.55 per cent and Tamang fourth with 6.83 per cent. Similarly, 12.86 per people of this district have Limbu as their mother tongue.

#### **4.2 Soyak**

Soyak is a Limbu word, the meaning of which is a place where juicy fruits are grown. Soyak is one of the main orange producing VDCs in Ilam. Similarly, the farmers here produce lemon and other sour fruits in abundance. The oranges produced here are supplied to Birtamod of Jhapa and other towns of eastern Nepal. The VDC is also a major paddy product zone of the district. Dihitar of ward No.1, Chalise of ward No. 2, Hulake of Ward No. 3 and Nirphuk of Ward No. 9 of Soyak VDC are famous for paddy production.

The people of this VDC also grow maize, millet, ginger, wheat, mustard seeds etc. Ginger has lately been the major cash crops in the VDC. Unlike in other VDCs, farmers here do not grow tea for business purpose. The VDC is rich in jungles though they have lately been destroyed for the smuggling of the timbers. Most of the houses of Ilam Bazaar have been constructed from the woods smuggled from the jungles of Soyak. The sal timber of Soyak VDC is smuggled to Jhapa as well.

Soyak VDC lies 7.5 kosh south from the district headquarters. Ilam Municipality and Chispani VDC lies in the east of Soyak whereas Siddhithumka VDC

in the west. Likewise, Sangrumba and Siddhithumka VDCs lie in the north and the Mai River and Chisapani VDC in the south.

The VDC spreads from 27° 48' 30" to 27° 52' 30" in northern latitudes and from 77° 51' to 87° 55' to in eastern longitudes.

The VDC lies above 336 metres to 1110 m. The VDC spreads in an area of 23.24 square kilometres and it has 1020 hectars arable land.

The table below shows the population of the VDC:

Table No: 2  
Total Population of Soyak

|                                   |            |
|-----------------------------------|------------|
| Total Population                  | 3,778.000  |
| Male                              | 1,712.00   |
| Female                            | 1,666.00   |
| No. Of Households                 | 619.00     |
| Average Household Size population | 6.01       |
| Area in sq. Km.                   | 23.24 sq m |
| Population Density Person/Sq. Km. |            |

Source: Census, 2001

Soyak VDC that spreads in an area of 23.24 square metres has 619 houses. It's total population is 3,778, with 6.01 average household population.

The population distribution of the VDC on the basis of ethnicity is as follows:

Table No: 3

Population Distribution

| Ward No. | Limbu | Kshetri/Bahun | Rai | Tamang | Kami | Magar | Nevar | Damai | Bhujel | Gurung | Sunwar | Total |
|----------|-------|---------------|-----|--------|------|-------|-------|-------|--------|--------|--------|-------|
| 1        | -     | 138           | 119 | 5      | -    | -     | -     | -     | 31     | -      | -      | 293   |
| 2        | 149   | 210           | 8   | -      | 5    | -     | -     | -     | -      | 5      | -      | 377   |
| 3        | 135   | 136           | 54  |        | 75   | -     | 38    | -     | -      | 7      | -      | 445   |
| 4        | 142   | 40            | 18  |        |      |       |       |       |        |        |        | 200   |
| 5        | 149   | -             | 34  | -      |      |       |       | 20    |        |        |        | 203   |
| 6        | 219   | -             | 17  | -      | 66   | -     | -     | -     |        |        |        | 302   |
| 7        | 145   | 290           | 4   | 10     | 12   | 113   | 7     | 4     |        |        | 1      | 586   |
| 8        | 169   | 85            | -   | -      | -    | -     | -     | 17    |        |        |        | 471   |
| 9        | 119   | 148           | 102 | 188    | 15   | 6     | -     | 45    | 6      |        |        | 584   |
| Total    | 1431  | 969           | 315 | 200    | 172  | 134   | 48    | 40    | 37     | 12     | 1      |       |
| %        | 41.22 |               |     |        |      |       |       |       |        |        |        |       |

(Source: Census, 2011)

Table No: 4

Household distribution on the basis of ethnicity is as follow:

| Ward No. | Limbu | Kshetri/Bahun | Rai | Tamang | Kamis | Magar | Newars | Das | Bhujel | Gurung | Sunwar | Total |
|----------|-------|---------------|-----|--------|-------|-------|--------|-----|--------|--------|--------|-------|
| 1        |       | 22            | 20  | 1      |       |       |        |     | 7      |        |        | 50    |
| 2        | 25    | 35            | 2   |        | 1     |       |        |     |        | 1      |        | 64    |
| 3        | 25    | 22            | 9   |        | 13    |       | 7      |     |        | 2      |        | 78    |
| 4        | 25    | 8             | 3   |        |       |       |        |     |        |        |        | 36    |
| 5        | 30    | -             | 7   |        |       |       |        | 3   |        |        |        | 40    |
| 6        | 39    | -             | 3   |        | 15    |       |        |     |        |        |        | 57    |
| 7        | 25    | 46            | 1   | 2      | 2     | 22    | 1      | 1   |        |        |        | 101   |
| 8        | 57    | 15            |     |        |       |       |        | 3   |        |        |        | 75    |
| 9        | 23    | 24            | 19  | 31     | 3     | 1     |        |     | 1      |        |        | 102   |
| Total    | 249   | 172           | 64  | 34     | 34    | 23    | 8      | 7   | 8      | 3      | 1      | 604+  |

(Source: Census, 2011)

People of different 11 ethnic communities live in Soyak VDC with Limbu having the largest population. According to census 2001, Limbu shares 41.22 per cent of the total population at 1431 followed by Brahmin/Kshetris of 969. They share 30.17 per cent whereas Rai has a share of 10.24 per cent. The total population of Rai stands at 315. Similarly, 5.86 per cent are Tamangs (200), 5 per cent Kamis and 3.44 per cent Newars.

#### 4.2.1 Gairi Gaun

Gairi Gaun, the universe of this dissertation, lies in Ward no. 2 of Soyak VDC. According to the tables above, 377 people live in the 64 households of this ward. Of the 64 households, 25 are of Limbus and 24 of them are in Gairi Gaun. Gairigaun is

entirely a village of Limbus as 100 per cent population living in this village is Limbu of Fago.Banem clan.

Gairi Gaun as the name suggests lies in the foot of a hill. Lungruppa, a village of Rai settlement, lies in the north, Bahun Gaun in the south, a paddy field lies in the east and a sloppy hill in the west. It is a bordering village with ward No 1 and 5 of Soyak VDC.

#### **4.2.2 Geographical Setting**

Gairi Gaun village lies in the west slope of Puwa and Rate rivers and on the southern slope of Khani stream. It is isolated by Khani River and small hillocks from other villages. A paddy field lies in the east, Pingdando in the west, Lungruppa in the north and Bahungaun in the south. The village has a total population of 205, all of them are Limbus.

#### **4.2.3 Natural Resources**

A tiny village of the eastern mountain, Gairi Gaun is endowed with natural resources like water, forest, soil and minerals. The locals meet the demands of water both for drinking and irrigation purposes, timber, fodder and food from their own areas. They grow orange, ginger, millet, maize and paddy and tame domestic animals. The bamboos and the green trees grown up by the locals in the fields have added a beauty to this village. The village has lately been familiar with the modernity with the supply of the electricity. They now enjoy Television programmes, talk on phones with their relatives and friends living away from their homes.

#### **4.2.4 Climate and Weather**

Like other mountainous village, Gairi Gaun experiences hot days during the summer and cold during the winter. However, as it lies just below the hills and is surrounded by trees, it has a comfortable climate even in summer. During rainy season, it experiences heavy rains which help irrigate the farmers their paddy fields.

**Religions:** The Fagos of this particular village are divided into two groups in terms of religions. Although most of the people here follow the Hindu and Kirata festivals with equal importance, some families have become disciple of the new religion Satyhangma propounded by Atama Nandan Lingden.



Lord Shiva is the main God of this sect and their practice resemble the Hindus' practice. Interestingly, the most influential and learned men have joined this sect and spend most of the time in Larumba, Ibhong where Lingden have been living with his followers for the past one and a half decades. The followers of this sect erect three bamboo trees in their home fluttering three separate flags of Shiva, Laxmi and Sarasawati. They called it Surya Banshi Jhanda. They change the flags including the bamboos every year. Followers of Satyahangma do not take liquor, do not kill animals for meat, wear white clothes and recite Mundums. However, some of them eat meat bought from markets. The practices of this sect resemble the practices of the Brahmins. Presence of influencing number of followers of this new religion has brought about a change in cultures and food habits of the Fagos of this tiny village. Others follow the tradition Kirat dharma. However, the practice of killing animals and taking liquor has declined significantly.

**Foods:** Like in other villages rice, dal and vegetables are the main food of this village. As many of the villagers grow paddy in their own farms, rice is the main food staple here. Even those who cannot grow the needed rice, buy it in the village or from the markets. Besides rice, people here eat wheat bread, maize and millet food. They also grow Dal, mustard oil and vegetables in their own farms. Potatoes, mustard leaves, beans, cauliflowers, cabbages, skus and yams are major vegetable products. The farmers grow ginger and orange for commercial purposes. Orange is the key fruit although they grow bananas, guavas and papayas only for their personal consumption. Gundruk is a popular curry item. Those who have not joined Satyahangma love to eat chicken, pork and buffs in festivals like Dashain, Tihar, Saune Sakranti, Maghe sakranti, Udauli and Ubhauri. Normally, these people enjoy meats on the day of Full Moon and New Moon.

**Festivals:** Although the people of this village used to mark Dashain and Tihar with much fanfare until two decades ago, they do not give much importance to these festivals due mainly to their political affiliation to the then Mangol National Organization, a local political party. The villagers who used to whitewash their houses during Dashain even stopped doing so. However, those families affiliated with Nepali Congress and CPN-UML have been marking the festival as they used to in the past. But with the fading away of the MNO, the people have again started marking these

festivals. They mainly mark it by taking delicious food and drinks. Unlike the Brahmins and Kshetris, these Limbu people put on white rice-tika on their foreheads. They visit the elderly relatives and in-laws during Dashain. They erect swings and involve in other games. But lately, the television and mobile phones have been alternative tools to the traditional games.

**Education:** With the establishment of Maheshwora Primary School in the middle of the Fago village in Ward No. 4 in 1960, most of the men and a few girls of this village could obtain primary level education. However, only a small number of boys could continue their study until lower secondary and secondary levels schools were set in Siddhithumka, a neighbouring village in 1980s. By now eight men and three girls of this village have obtained higher education. One of them has worked as a lawyer at the Supreme Court in Kathmandu. A few boys of this village are obtaining higher education in Kathmandu. Others have enrolled the colleges based in the district headquarters in Ilam. Five boys and seven girls have stopped studying after completing their SLC exams. Now almost all children of the school going age attend local Maheshwora Primary School or the private English School and a higher secondary school of the neighbouring village. Most of the men of this village, however, could read and write as they learned to read and write on their own or by attending the informal education classes.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **CHANGING MARRIAGE PATTERNS IN THE FAGO COMMUNITY**

This chapter focuses on the data presentation, interpretation and analysis of the marriage practices of the Fagos of Gairi Gaun, Soyak VDC, Ward No. 2 of Ilam. Marriage practices include a number of individual, cultural and social aspects associated with marriage. It also contains cultural and demographical variables such as age and rituals.

This chapter is based on the information obtained from the 24 households of the Gairi Gaun of Soyak VDC-2 in Ilam.

#### **5.1 Population**

Population is a key factor to trace the fundamental structure of any human society. Population can be defined as the total number of individuals of the same species occupying a particular area at a particular time. Thus by population means the total number of people, be they children, adults or the oldies of a certain locality village or towns of a country. The population is defined as the organisation of people who are living their life with respect to socio-economic and cultural background. Thus, demographic features of a particular place have a decisive role in determining the cultural and social conditions of that locality. Some features of the population of the Gairigaun are presented below.

One of the key features of the population of Gairi Gaun was that it was one of the densely populated villages in terms of the number of households. There were 24 households but the total population was 205. It is because a few of the households have joint families with a half of its members staying away from home temporarily. A single household have as much as 21 family members. The average population per household is 8.54 is higher than the average household size of Soyak VDC, which was at 6.01 during the national census 2001. One of the interesting findings during the field survey was that a few of the respondents identified themselves as Antare (the fifth of at least six sons born to a parent) and Kahinla (the fourth of at least five sons of a parent) instead of telling their real number. As such, it was not unnatural to have greater average household population in this particular village.

As the dissertation topic is related with marriage, I have included below the age-wise population of the marriageable people who are above 16 years of age. Out of total 205 people, 104 are in this age group. The share of the population of 16+ aged groups is 50.7 per cent in Gairi Gaun. The age-wise distribution of population in Gairigaun is as follows:

Table No: 5  
Age and sexwise distribution of respondents

| S.N.         | Age-Group | Female    | Male      | Total      |
|--------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|------------|
| 1            | 16-28     | 20        | 23        | 43         |
| 2.           | 29-40     | 13        | 12        | 25         |
| 3            | 41-60     | 12        | 12        | 24         |
| 4            | 61-above  | 4         | 8         | 12         |
| <b>Total</b> |           | <b>49</b> | <b>55</b> | <b>104</b> |

Source: Field Survey, 2009

Like in other villages, the 16-28 age-group people have the largest share of the marriageable population in Gairi Gaun. Some 21 per cent of the total population of the village belongs to this group while among the adult population, they shared 41.3 per cent. The males outnumber the females among 16+age groups. Though a small village, it has 12 persons who are aged in between 61-83, which also indicates the rising life span of the people in this village. It means 4.8 per cent people in the village are aged above 61 years. Likewise, the total population of the people aged 29-40 years is 12.1 per cent and among the respondents their share is 24 per cent

The following table shows the marital status of the 104 people of the village during the time of the primary data collection:

Table No: 6  
Marital Status of respondents

| S.N          | Age-Group | Married Female | Unmarried Female | Married Men | Unmarried Men | Total      |
|--------------|-----------|----------------|------------------|-------------|---------------|------------|
| 1            | 16-28     | 7              | 13               | 6           | 17            | 43         |
| 2            | 29-40     | 11             | 2                | 10          | 2             | 25         |
| 3            | 41-60     | 12             | -                | 12          | -             | 24         |
| 4            | 61-above  | 4              | -                | 8           | -             | 12         |
| <b>Total</b> |           | <b>34</b>      | <b>15</b>        | <b>36</b>   | <b>19</b>     | <b>104</b> |

Source: Field Survey, 2009

The table 6 above shows that 67.3 per cent population aged 16 years above is married and remaining 32.7 per cent are unmarried. Similarly, among the females 69.38 per cent are married and 30.6 are unmarried. Likewise, 65.45 per cent males are married and 34.54 are unmarried.

In the group 16-28 years, 17 males are unmarried while 13 females are unmarried and in the 29-40 age groups two females and two males are unmarried.

In the first group, 30.23 per cent people of the village are married and 69.77 are unmarried. Among the girls in 16-28 aged groups, 65 per cent are unmarried and 35 are married. Likewise, among the males 73.9 are unmarried and 26.1 per cent are married.

In the 29-40 groups, 84 per cent people are married and 16 unmarried. Among the females in this group, 84.6 per cent are married and 15.4 per cent unmarried. Similarly, among the males, 83.33 per cent are married and 16.66 per cent single.

In other two age groups all males and females were found to have married. Only two of the 61 plus above group were widow/widower.

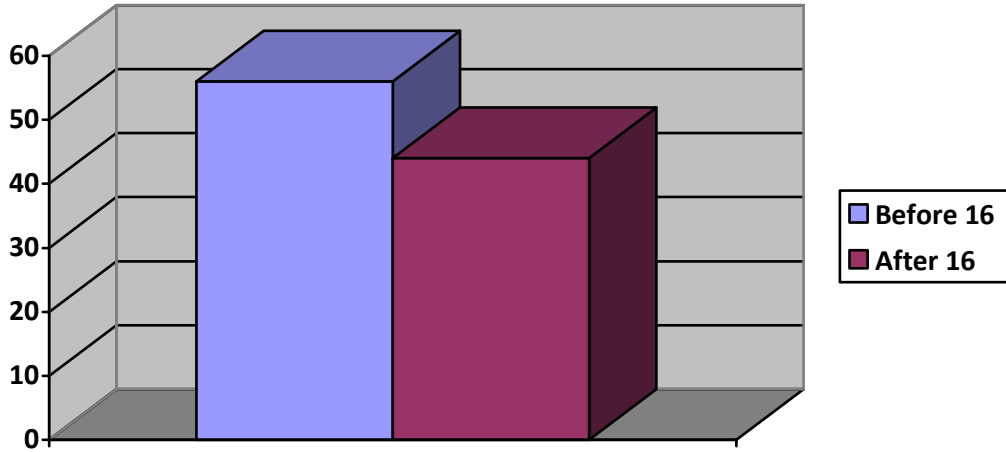
When the primary data were analysed under nine headings directly linked with the marriage practices such as marriageable age and type of marriage, the outcome was as follow:

## **5.2 Marriageable age**

### **5.2.1. Group aged over 61 years:**

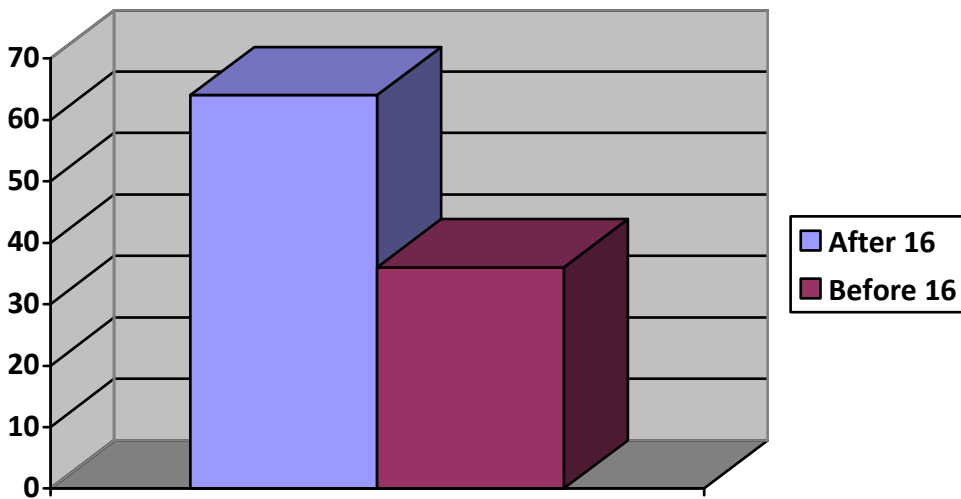
Most of the people of this age-group were found at their home during the time of the data collection. However, as they knew well the interviewers, they took the questions lightly and answered in their usual colloquial languages. Yet they managed to tell about their marriage and the practices associated with it as well as the marriage of their sons, daughters, grandsons and granddaughters.

Of the total respondents of this age group, 56 per cent married before they were 16 years old and 44 per cent after completing 16 years of age. However, 67 per cent of them arranged the marriage of their sons and daughters when they crossed 16 years of age. Only 33 per cent of them arranged wedding for their children aged below 16.



**5.2.2. Group of 41-60 years:**

Sixty four percent of the respondent of this group said they married after they crossed 16. But 36 per cent of them married before they were 16.



**5.2.3. Group of 29-40 years:**

All people of this age group married after crossing 16 years of age.

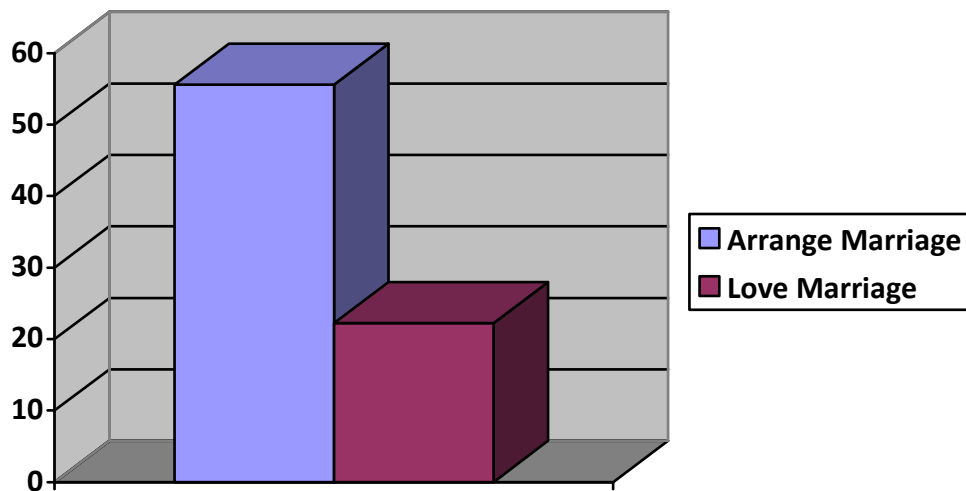
**5.2.4. Group of 16-28 years:**

Of the 90 per cent married people of this age group all tied their nuptial knot after crossing 16 years of age. Only 10 per cent youths of this group were still unmarried.

### 5.3. Types of marriage:

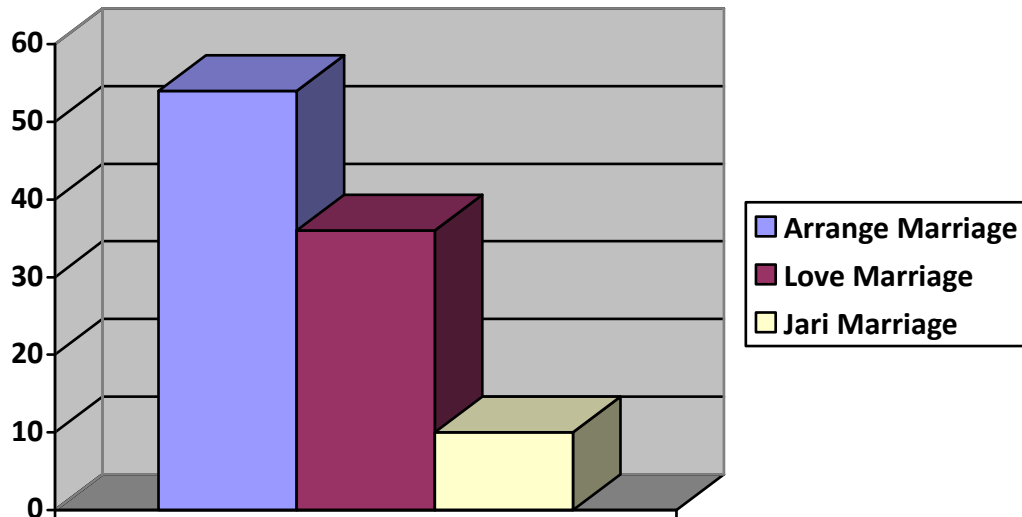
#### 5.3.1. Group aged over 61 years:

Of the total respondents of this age group, 55.55 per cent had Na\_Aksingma Metkhim (arranged marriage) or magi marriage. Likewise, 22.22 per had Na\_nupna Khepma Metkhim (elopement) or Gandhaava marriage while equal number practiced Jari marriage. None of the respondent had exogamy marriage. Similarly, no man of this group married the wife of their deceased elder brother.



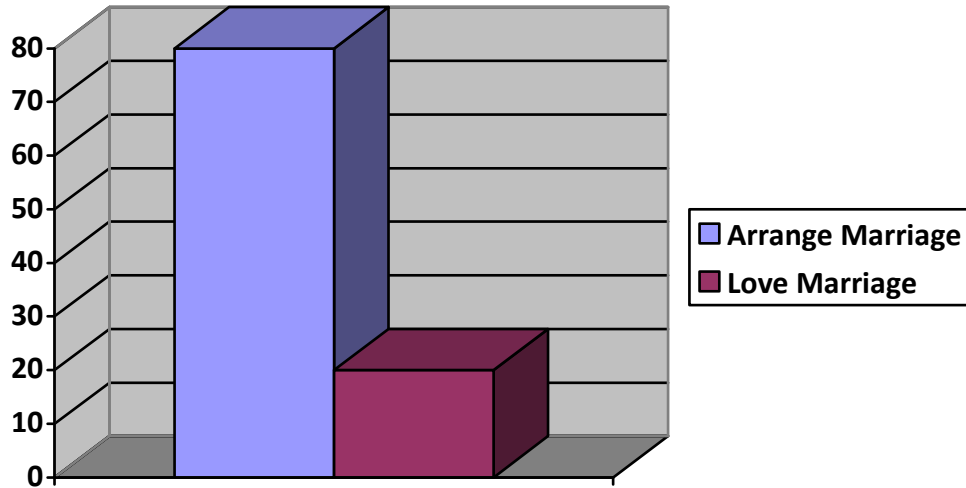
#### 5.3.2. Group of 41-60 years:

Of the total people of this age group, 54 per cent had Na Aksigma Metkhim or arranged (Magi) marriage and 36 per cent Na Nupna Khepma Metkhim (elopement) or Gandhrva marriage. Likewise 10 per cent had Jari marriage. About 9 per cent men of this age group had practiced polygamy. However, all those who practiced polygamy do not stay in the village permanently. They stay with the youngest wife in Kathmandu or elsewhere and had built houses for their first wife in another village.



**5.3.3. Group of 29-40 years:**

In this group, most preferred arranged or magi marriage as 80 per cent had arranged marriage and 20 per cent had Na nupna Khepma Metkhim (elopement) or love marriage. None had Jari or other type of marriage.



**5.3.4. Group of 16-28 years:**

In this group 30 per cent of the married people had arranged marriage while 60 per had Na nupna Khepma Metkhim (elopement) or love marriage. Ten per cent people of this group in this village are still single.



None of the respondent had inter-caste marriage. However, during the interview, the parents said that two of the girls had inter-caste marriage and both girls married the boy of the Rai community. As the two girls were not the residents of the village after the marriage, they were not among the respondents.

Similarly, of the 15 types of marriage prevalent in Limbus, the Gairi Gaun people practiced only three types. Although most of the respondents said they liked the arranged marriage most, they wanted their sons and daughters should have love marriage because arranged marriages are highly expensive.

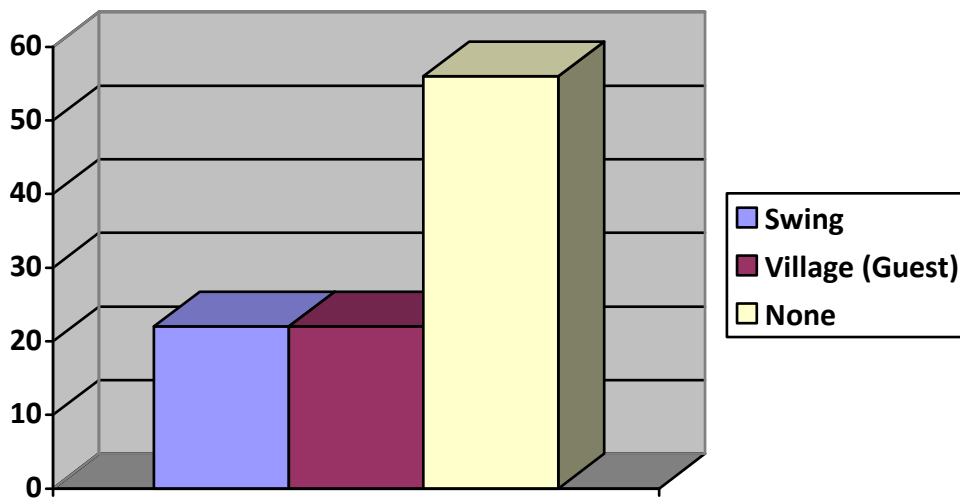
#### **5.4 Meeting (dating) points of the bride and groom**

Normally, in Limbu communities both the boys and girls know each other before deciding to tie nuptial knot. Even in the arranged marriage, the groom and bride have known each other before they decide to marry. Traditional swings, local fairs, Bazaars, farms, marriage ceremonies and relatives' homes, schools and colleges have been the key places where the Limbu boys and girls know each other and fall in love before their wedding. However, lately the practice of erecting swings and holding fairs have decreased significantly after the political change of 1990s, especially after the armed violence launched by the Maoists in 1996. The political changes caused a division in the society on the basis of the political ideologies and the parties the people supported. The Fagos of Gairi Gaun were also divided into 'Congress', 'CPN-UML' and 'Mangol' (supporters of the Mangol National Organisation Party, which now does not exist), immediately after the 1990 changes. The supporters of MNO said that Dashain was not their festival, which brought the practice of erecting swings and cleaning houses during Dashain to an end in this particular village. However, after the collapse of the MNO, some of its supporters joined CPN-UML and others the religious sect known as 'Satyahangma' or 'Kirata Dharma' propounded by Atma Ram Lingden. As a result, the swings do not serve as a major place to choose the Limbu youths their life partners. Findings regarding the meeting points of the Limbu girls and boys were as follow.

##### **5.4.1. Group of 61 + years:**

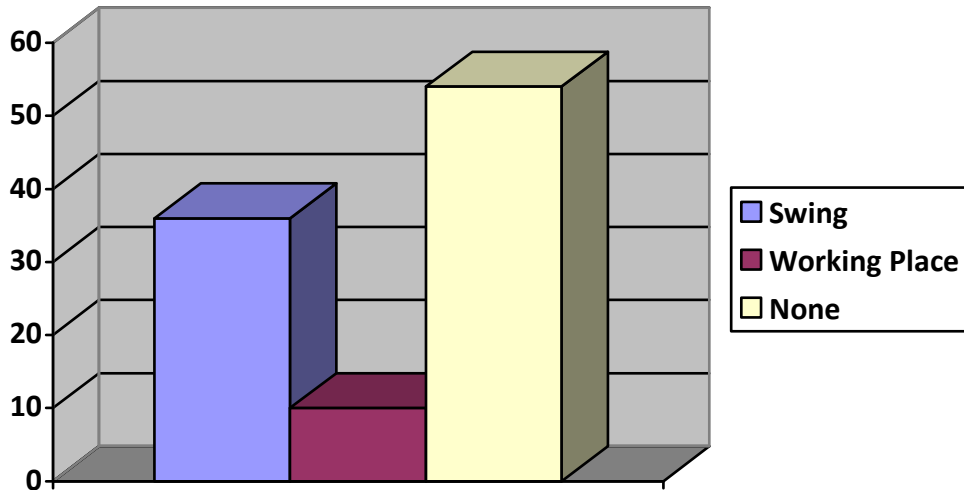
Among the people of this age group, 22 per cent said that they first met their life partner either in the swings or farms (while working as farm labourer). Likewise, 22 per cent said they met their life partners in the village where they have been either

guests or hosts of their would-be life partners. However, 56 per cent respondents of groups denied telling the places where they had first met their partners. When asked where their sons or daughters met their life partners, 44 per cent of them said that they first met either in the swing or the local fairs. Likewise, 34 per cent said that their sons or daughters met their life partners when they were guests to a new village or hosts to their guests in the village. Interestingly, 11 per cent resorted to middleman to find the bride or groom for their offspring while 11 per cent met their partners during their college days.



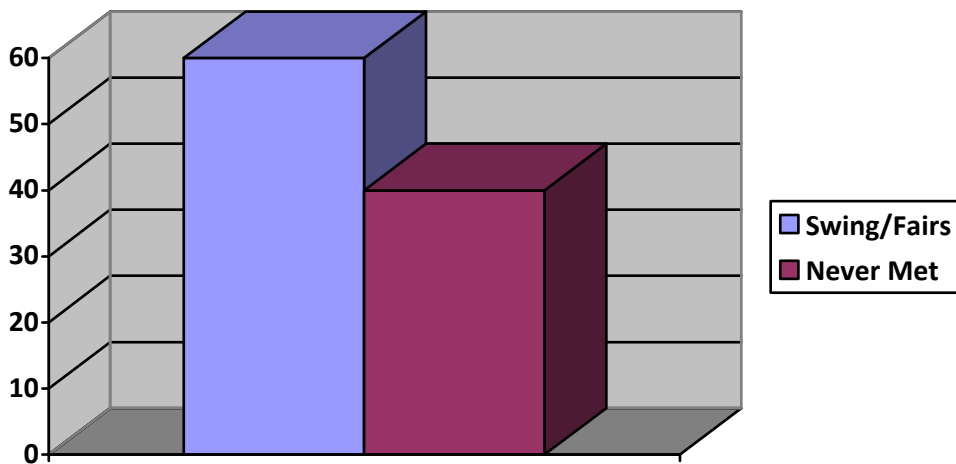
#### 5.4.2. Group of 41 + 60 years:

Of the people of this age group, 36 per cent said that they met their life partners in swings, which they played during Dashain and Tihar festivals, and local fairs. Likewise, 9.9 per cent said they met first during farm works. However, the largest number of respondents of this age group hesitated to tell the place they first met their would-be wife or would-be-husband. However, 44.44 per cent said that their sons or daughters met their would-be-spouses in swings and local fairs whereas 33.33 per cent said they met them while hosting guests or becoming guests. Interestingly, 11 per cent resorted to brokers to find the bride for their sons. Remaining 11 per cent said that their sons or daughters find their life partners in colleges.



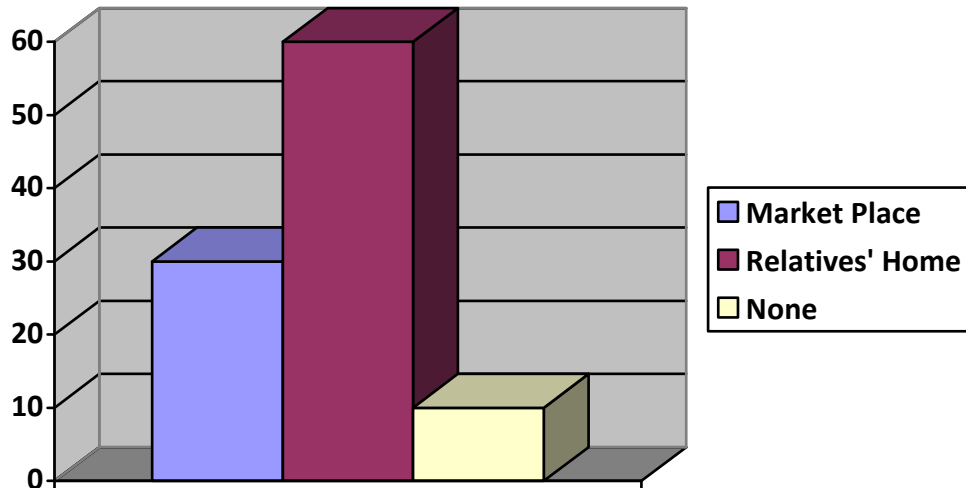
#### 5.4.3, Group of 29-40 years:

Respondents of this age group look more open to share their love life. Sixty per cent of them said that they met their life partners first either in the swing or local fairs and market places. But 40 per cent said they did not meet them before tying nuptial knot, which may not be true.



#### 5.4.4. Group of 16-28 years:

Almost 30 per cent respondents of this age group said they first met their life partners in local fairs and market places while 60 per cent said they first met in the relatives' homes, mostly in the homes of the fathers-in-law of their brothers and sisters. But 10 per cent people of this age group did not tell the places they first met.



### 5.5 Marriage time

About two and half decades back, most wedding ceremonies used to take place in the night time. However, due to poor law and order situation during the Maoist insurgency from 1996, the practice of organising the wedding ceremonies in the night time declined sharply. And the Limbu community was not exception to this. Now marriages are hardly held in the night time. However, in the Limbu community, the lagan (auspicious marriage ritual) is done in the night time, mostly in the groom’s home unlike in other communities.

#### 5.5.1. Group of 61 years:

Sixty three per cent respondents of this age group said that their marriage ceremony was organised in the day time and 37 per cent in the night time. Obviously, people of this age group had tied nuptial knot before 1990. However, 100 per cent respondents said the lagan of their wedding was in the night time.

#### 5.5.2. Group of 41-60 years:

All the respondents of this age group said that their wedding held in the day time and only 90 per cent of them performed the lagan ritual.

#### 5.5.3 Group of 29-40 years:

People of this age group though married during or after the conflict period, when the practice of marrying in night time has virtually come to an end, responded

somewhat differently. Forty per cent of the respondents said they tied nuptial knot in the night time while 40 per cent in the day time. But none of them tell when their lagan was held.

#### **5.5.4. Group of 16-28 years:**

Men and women of this age group tied nuptial knot with the introduction of the latest information technology like mobile and facebook. Almost 60 per cent of those who have married said their marriage ceremony held in the day time while 20 per cent said their marriage ceremonies were organised in the night time.

#### **5.6 Musical instrument**

Chyabrung (drum) is the most popular instrument in Limbus. People of this community play this instrument during important rituals and celebrations. Playing chyabrung is compulsory in marriage ceremonies. Besides, the Limbus used to fire in air during marriage ceremonies, especially during the auspicious Lagan time. Likewise, knife-wielding was also a common practice. However, the two practices now do not exist.

During data collection, only the people aged over 61 years recalled the existence of the practices of knife-wielding and firing in the marriage. But they also said the practices disappeared gradually as the people were not allowed the keep guns in their homes.

Respondents of all four age groups said that presence of two Chyabrungs, a Fyachha, and a Damaru are required in the marriage. All respondents of three age groups said the practice of firing gun and wielding knives had disappeared by the time they wedded.

#### **5.7 Priest/Fedangma**

Most Limbus tend to use their traditional priests, who they call Fedangma in their rituals. And marriage is no exception. However, the respondents were divided regarding the exact number of priests they need with some telling that they need 29 priests in a marriage while others said four or five priests are enough to complete the marriage rituals. The Limbus of Gairi Gaun who follow Satya Hangma faith propounded by Atma Nanda Lingdam, prefer conventional marriage rituals, in which

Astama Yagya (eight fire offerings) or Pancham Yagya (five fire offerings) are held, and they need more priests. But others said that in normal marriage five priests will be enough to complete the marriage rituals. In big marriage, they need 11 priests—nine for Nawa Graha (nine planets) one each for Narayan and Samdhi (parents of son-in-law or daughter-in-law).

#### **5.7.1 Group of 61 years:**

Among the respondents of this age group, 77 per cent said they had eight priests to conduct their marriage and remaining said they had only two priests for the same.

#### **5.7.2 Group of 41-60 years:**

About 28 per cent respondents of this group said they had two priests in their wedding. Likewise, over 63 per cent said they had only one priest. But 9 per cent did not like to tell the number of priests they had in their marriage.

#### **5.7.3 Group of 29-40 years:**

Forty per cent respondents of this group had two priests and remaining 40 per cent only one priest. Others hesitated to tell the number of priests they used.

#### **5.7.4 Group of 16-28 years:**

Half of the total respondents of this age group said that three priests were in their marriage while 30 per cent said they had one priest. Interestingly, 11 per cent respondents said they had Brahmin priests to complete their marriages. Of course, of the total respondents 89 per cent said that the Limbus has started imitating the marriage rituals of Brahmins. For example, gift giving practice to bride was not in the past but in recent years, it has been introduced.

### **5.8 Lokanti (Lokondy)**

In Limbus, when the bride comes to the groom's home, she is accompanied by her female friends, who are popularly called as Lokanti or Lokondi while the groom is accompanied by Lokondey. It is still a popular practice. However, there is no fixed number of Lokantis.

### **5.8.1 Group of 61+ years:**

Nearly 78 per cent respondents of this group said there were 10 to 12 Lokantis in their marriage. Likewise, 11 per cent said they had as many as 20 Lokantis. But other 11 per cent did not like to mention the number of Lokantis.

### **5.8.2 Group of 41+60 years:**

Of the total respondents of this age group, 28 per cent said that they had four or five Lokantis and 36 per cent said they had 10 to 15 Lokantis while 18 per cent said they entertained 22 Lokantis. But remaining 18 per cent did not respond the question.

### **5.8.3 Group of 29-40 years:**

In this age group, 80 per cent said they had 15 to 20 Lokantis. Others did not mention their numbers.

### **5.8.4. Group of 16-28 years:**

A great variation was in the response of this age group with 10 per cent arguing that they have 29 Lokantis whereas another 10 per cent said they had only four or five Lokantis. Again another 10 per cent said they had 15 to 16 Lokantis. But 70 per cent hesitated to tell number of Lokantis in their marriage.

## **5.9 Feast or Marriage Party**

A big change has been noticed in throwing marriage feasts in the rural areas. And the Limbus of Garigaun is no exception. But unlike in other areas, use of meat and liquor in marriage feast has dropped in this particular Limbu settlement.

### **5.9.1 Group of 61 years:**

Almost 100 per cent of this age group said that use of meat and liquor dropped in the marriage feasts. And 89 per cent respondents said the Limbu marriage feast were influenced by the feasts of the Brahmins.

### **5.9.2. Group of 41-60 years:**

Almost 37 per cent of this age group said the use of meat and liquor has dropped in the marriage parties of the Limbus. All respondents agreed the influence of

Brahmins in the feasts and other rituals like giving Goddhuwa (gift given after washing the bride's feet).

### **5.9.3 Group of 29-40 years:**

Almost 60 per cent respondents of this age group said that use of meat and liquor in the party dropped but other things remain the same. Similarly, 60 per cent respondents said the feasts were influenced by the feasts of Brahmins.

### **5.9.4. Group of 16-28 years:**

Almost 50 per cent respondents of this age group said that they saw a drop in the consumption of meat and alcohol in the marriage in their village. They also said that the practice of taking meat and local wine while visiting the in-laws has almost disappeared. (In the past a Limbu man had to carry a whole pig and several bottles of home-brewed wine while visiting his in-laws in Dashain and other occasions.) Similarly, 70 per cent respondents said the the Limbus have started copying the practice of Brahmins and Kashetris while throwing wedding feasts. But 10 per cent men of this group said their marriage feasts were not influenced by the Brahmins' feasts.

Likewise, slight changes have also been in the selection of ornaments. They wear large gold and silver ornaments. Limbu women traditionally wore a pair of Nesse (a large flat designed gold earrings), a gold mundri as a nose ring, and a dhungri, a stud nose ornament. On their hands, Limbu women wore gold or silver bangles. Silver kalli are worn as anklets. Reji, made of silver pieces which look like coins, kanth and Chepte sun (flat ear ornament) are used in marriage. However, of late use of Reji has declined. However, no change was noticed in the attire of groom. They wear white Daura Suruwal but the bride tend to wear cotton sari in place of the traditional bridal wear of dark colourful Makhamli sari bearing flower marks.

## **5.10 Major factors leading and contributing to the changes**

When the changes in the marriage patterns were observed, the respondents also shared the major factors contributing to the changes, which are described below in brief.



### **5.10.1 Financial factor**

Almost all the respondents prefer Na\_nupna Khepma Metkhim (elopement) to Na Aksingma Metkhim (arranged marriage) only because organising an arranged marriage was highly expensive. Even if they practise arrange marriage, they tend to organise in the form of elopement marriage. Many parents said that they would accept if their daughters elope with a Limbu man only because they could manage for her arrange marriage.

However, the intriguing fact is that almost all respondents said that they would have opted for arranged marriage had they been able to organise them. Of the total respondents 51 per cent like to have arranged marriage and 35 prefer to love marriage while 14 per cent favored other forms of marriage.

But citing financial problem, all 100 per cent respondents of 41-60 years and 29-40 years groups prefer love or elopement marriage to arranged marriage. Sixty four per cent respondents of 41-60 years group said they would accept if their son or daughter eloped. Likewise, 80 per cent respondents from the 29-40 years group said that organising arranged marriage were more expensive than other forms of marriage. But all 100 per cent respondents said the bride or groom should allowed to decide the form of marriage they want. Of the total respondents 15 per cent said that financial factors were responsible for the changes in marriage practices.

### **5.10. 2 Education Factors**

Growing population of literate people has also been a factor for the change in marriage practices in Gairigaun. Most of those who have obtained higher education have shifted to the urban areas, including Kathmandu. Unlike their forefathers, they do not have to depend on local swings and fairs to meet their life partners. They find them in their work places or through friends. Altogether 69 per cent respondents said that education contributed to the changes in the marriage practices. The boys and girls who used to meet in fairs, market places and swings in the past could meet in schools and campuses to choose their life partners.

### **5.10.3 Social Factors**

As only the younger generation people of Gairigaun are educated, only 9 per cent respondents pointed at social factors for the change in the marriage practices.

With the advent of democracy in 1990, the people were divided in different political parties, with some organising in communal groups like National Mangol Organisation. This division caused a sort of rift among the people, and a few people stopped marking traditional festivals like Dashain. Consequently, the practice of erecting Rote Ping (a type of traditional wooden swing) disappeared gradually. Moreover, the practice of erecting such swings became totally extinct during the conflict period. As a result, swing became no more a spot for the boys and girls to meet. Likewise, the practice of organising fairs also declined.

At the same time, the Limbus started copying the practices of so-called high class people, and this brought about a change in the marriage practices, especially in hosting feasts and giving gift.

As handful families of Gairigaun have become followers of Satyahangma, use of meat and liquor in marriages has also dropped.

#### **5.10.4 Information Technology**

Most of the respondents credited the use of mobile phones, access to television and radios for the change in marriage practices. They said that one did not have to wait for a fair or an occasion to play swing to meet their sweetheart when they had mobile in their hands. They remain in close contact round the clock.

Likewise, the youth who used to gather in swings during festivals now stay in front of Television sets or laptops. Due to excessive use of communication technology, the men and women of productive age have no time to erect swings and play them. Of course, they have more interest in TV programmes and mobile phones.

## CHAPTER SIX

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This chapter, divided into three sections, presents a summary and conclusion of the study. The first section provides a short overview of the study. The second section consists of the concluding remarks of the findings of the study on the marriage rituals of the Fago Limbus of Gairi Gaun, Soyak Ilam. Details of each are given under separate headings below.

#### 6.1 Summary

This dissertation is mostly focused on the changing marriage practices and rituals in the Limbu community of Gairin Gaun, previously Soyak VDC 2, in Ilam district. The main objective of the study is to analyse the marriage practices and rituals, changes in such practices and rituals and the main agents to bring about such changes in the selected community of Gairi Gaun. This is a descriptive type of research with a household survey method. As this study is on changes in the marriage rituals, history of marriage practices among Limbus is also analysed. Both primary and secondary data were collected. The primary data were collected through a field survey. The secondary data were used to reach a conclusion and evaluate the findings. The sample houses were selected for study.

In the study 24 households of the tiny Limbu community was selected. However, the total population was 205. It is because a few of the households have joint families with a half of its members staying away from home temporarily. A single household have as much as 21 family members. The average population per household is 8.54 is higher than the average household population than the average household size of Soyak VDC, which was at 6.01 in the national census 2001. Altogether 104 men and women were interviewed by dividing them in categories for primary data. Selected key informants, household census, structured questionnaires, interviews and observation were used for the collection of the primary data and to prepare this research.

Nepal, though a small country in size, is rich in ethnic and cultural diversities. Nepal is known as a multi ethnic, multi cultural and multi-lingual country. Official

record shows that Nepal is inhabited by over 60 different indigenous tribes. These tribes have their own cultures, which look not only interesting but unique in many senses to the world outside the tribes. We can notice diversity both in ethnicity and climate even in smaller locality, where the people belonging to different caste and ethnic groups live in harmony. Soyak of Ilam is also no different from these characteristics of the Nepali society. However, the selected Gairi Gaun was a small settlement of only Limbu with Fago as their family names.

Limbus are one of the indigenous ethnic community of Nepal who had also ruled the country for centuries as Kirata rulers.

Kiratas have been living in Nepal long before the Vedic period when Aryans arrived in the Indian sub continent. They were even in the helm of power in Nepal in the ancient period. The period when Kiratas ruled Nepal is known as the Kirata period. However, in the absence of archaeological evidences and recorded history, many things are unknown about the Kirata history.

These Kirata people, who fall under the Mongoloid race, are now divided into a number of ethnic groups with Rais and Limbus being the majors. Today Limbus live in the mountains east to the Koshi river and up to Sikkim in India whereas the Rais live west to the Arun River. Normally, the area where Rais have been living is now known as Wallo Kirat and the area inhabited by Limbus is Pallo Kirata.

According to the latest political map of modern Nepal, districts like Ilam, Panchthar, Taplejung, Dhankuta, Bhojpur, Terhathum and Shankhuwasabha fall under Pallo Kirata and the mountainous districts of Sagarmatha zones under Wallo Kirata.

Several native and foreign scholars have done a lot of studies on the Limbus. Iman Singh Chemjong, the popular scholar of Nepal, has explored both history, culture and language of Limbus in his works. Studies have also been on the marriage practices of this tribe. However, not much study has been done on the changing rituals and practices of marriage of this community.

According to the 2011 census, the population of Limbus in Nepal is 387,000, which is 1.4 per cent of the total population. Ilam, that lies in the traditional Limbuwan (Limbu dominated) area has 14.33 per cent of the district's total population of 282,806. Soyak VDC, where different 11 ethnic communities live, Limbus have the largest population. According to census 2001, in Soyak, the Limbu shares 41.22 per cent of the total population of 3778.

Of the respondents, highest number of respondents (21 per cent) belongs to the age group of 16-28 years followed by the people of the group of 29-40 years, whose share is 12.1 per cent of the total population, and 24 per cent of the respondents. Similarly, 24 per cent of the respondents belong to the age group of 41-60 years.

Similarly, 47.1 of the respondents were women and 69.3 per cent of them were married. Likewise, 52.8 per cent of the respondents were males and 65 per cent of them were married. Marriageable age among the Limabs is growing gradually. It is evident from the fact that 69.7 per cent of the respondents of the group of 16-28 years are still single. Likewise, 16 per cent respondents of the age group 29-40 years were single. However, in other two groups 100 per cent respondents were married.

Of the total respondents, 67.3 per cent population aged 16 years above is married and remaining 32.7 per cent are unmarried. Likewise, 65.45 per cent males are married and 34.54 are unmarried.

In the 16-28 age-group, 30.23 per cent people of the village are married and 69.77 are unmarried. Among the girls in 16-28 aged groups, 65 per cent are unmarried and 35 are married. Likewise, among the males 73.9 are unmarried and 26.1 per cent are married.

In the 29-40 groups, 84 per cent people are married and 16 unmarried. Among the females in this group, 84.6 per cent are married and 15.4 per cent unmarried. Similarly, among the males, 83.33 per cent are married 16.66 unmarried. Only two of the 61 plus above group were widow/widower.

In the age group 61+years, 55.55 per cent had Na\_Aksingma Metkhim (arranged marriage) or magi marriage and 22.22 per cent had Na\_nupna Khepma Metkhim (elopement) or Gandhaava marriage while equal number practiced Jari marriage. None of the respondent had exogamy marriage. Similarly, no man of this group married the wife of their deceased elder brother. Similarly, 54 per cent respondents of 41-60 years had arranged (Magi) marriage and 36 per cent Na\_Nupna Khepma Metkhim (elopement) or Gandhrva marriage. Likewise 10 per cent had Jari marriage. About 9 per cent men of this age group had practiced polygamy.

In the age group of 29-40 years most preferred arranged or magi marriage as 80 per cent had arranged marriage and 20 per cent had love marriage. None had Jari or other type of marriage. But in the 16-28 age group only 30 per cent of the married people had arranged marriage while 60 per cent had love marriage.

Likewise, most of the respondents of the age groups of 61+years, 41-60 years and 29-40 years said they first met their would-be-spouses in local swings, fairs and markets. However, 60 per cent respondents of the 16-28 years said they met their life partners first in the relatives' homes where they had been guests. But still 30 per cent respondents said they met their would-be-spouses in the local markets.

Most of the respondents said they married in day time, although some 37 per cent respondents of the 61+age group said they married in the night time. Almost 100 per cent of the respondents of 41-60 years age group married in the day time. However, they performed their lagan in the night.

The practice of taking Lokantis (those who accompany the bride to groom's home) still exists with unexpected fluctuations. The number of Lokantis vary from four/five to 29. However, 80 per cent respondents said they had 15 to 20 Lokantis in their marriages.

The Fagos of Gairi Gaun have no fixed number of priests to perform their weddings. They had one to 11 priests to perform their marriage. However, the bigger the marriage the larger is the number of priests. Similarly, nearly 90 per cent respondents said that their marriage rituals and feasts were influenced by the marriage practices of the Brahmins and Kashetris. About 11 per cent of the respondents of 16-28 years age group said that they had Brahmin priest to perform their marriage rituals. Likewise, they have started giving Goddhuwa (gifts) to the bride, which was not in practice in their community. Likewise, there has been a gradual decline in the use of liquor and meat in the marriage feasts whereas no-son-in-law has to carry meat and liquor while visiting his in-laws.

## **6.2 Conclusion**

The name Kirata is for the first time found in the Yajurveda. Even in the Mahabharata, the mountain regions of North and Northeastern India--the Himalayas particularly, are well attested as the abode of the Kiratas.

Therefore, one can conclude that Kiratas have been living in Nepal long before the Vedic period when Aryans arrived in the Indian sub continent. They were even in the helm of power in Nepal in the ancient period. The period when Kiratas ruled Nepal is known as the Kirata period. However, in the absence of archaeological evidences and recorded history, many things are unknown about the Kirata history.

These Kirata people who fall under the Mongoloid race, are now divided into a number of ethnic groups with Rais and Limbus being the majors. Today Limbus live in the mountains east to the Koshi river and up to Sikkim in India whereas the Rais live west to the Arun River. Normally, the area where Rais have been living is now known as Wallo Kirat and the area inhabited by Limbus is Pallo Kirata. The Limbu has been a dominant tribe of eastern hills. Lately, the Limbus have been migrating to Terai and Kathmandu as well.

There are several (218) sub-grouping among 16 major groups of Limbus. These are Mabohang (26 sub-groups), Thegim (11 sub-groups), Shreng (10) Phago (20), Sanwa (19), Bokim (5), Khoyahang (17), Nembang (140), Hukapahang (17) and Khewa (22).”

It is difficult to ascertain when and how the Limbu came to occupy their present habitation. Some sources reveal that these people must have come to their present abode sometimes between 600-100 BC. However, the arrival of the ten Limbu in Limbwan has been estimated to earlier than the 7<sup>th</sup> century AD.

According to 2011 census, the total population of Limbus of Nepal stands at 387,300, which is 1.46 per cent of the total population. Ilam district has 45,624 Limbu population and Soyak is a home of 1475 Limbus.

Among others Fagos are one of the dominant groups in Soak VDC. In Gairi Gaon, one of the villages of Ward No. 2 of the VDC there are 24 households of Fagos. Almost all the families write Fago as their family name. These Fagos belong to Banem sub groups and in the recent years some of the youths have started adding Banem in their family names.

According to the manuscript of Banem genealogy, the total population of Banem Fagos is 11,000 in Nepal. These Banems live in 1700 households, mostly in the eastern part of the country.

These Limbus, like other tribes of Nepal love nature as God. They take everything of this creation as God. They follow their traditional culture and rituals.

Traditionally, they practise 15 different types of marriage. But of late arrange and love (elopement) marriages have been the major forms of marriage. Over the years, there has been a change in the marriage practices. Gairi Gaun of Soyak is no exception. The Limbus of this tiny village mostly follow two forms of marriage--- Magi or arrange and elopement or love. As the arrange marriage has become costly, most people resort to love marriage. Their marriage rituals have been influenced by the

so-called high class people, especially in marriage feasts and in offering gifts to bride. Some of them even hire Brahmin priest in place of traditional Limbu priest called Fedangma. Again, when many a Fagos of Gairigaon has of late been follower of Atam Nanda Lingden, they have stopped taking meat and liquor. They display three flags— One each of Shiva, Narayan and Saraswati in their yard and change them once a year.

Consequently, marriage feasts have gone a drastic changes with less presence of meat and liquor. Likewise, the practice of erecting swings and organising fairs has dropped with the declining law and order situation after 1990s and the villagers got divided between Congress, Communists Mangol (followers of Mangol National Organisation). Thus the boys and girls who used to meet in swings and fairs started meeting in campuses and schools and homes of their relatives.

Education, political changes, communication and information technologies like mobile phones and access to television are attributed for the changes in marriage practices.

A sort of conflicting situation could be noticed in the Limbu community. They have been follower of the identity movements while giving continuity to the Sanskritisation process. They have copied the marriage rituals of Brahmins and Kshetris while supporting the movement for the identity of their community. The older generation people looked open to tell how the marriage practices were changed over the years. But the people of younger generation familiar with the identity movement outright reject the presence of Sanskritisation process in the community. But they shared only 9 per cent of the total respondents. Likewise, a slight change has been noticed in the use of ornaments by the brides, but there has been no change in the bridal dresses.

No matter, what the political ideologies the people Gairi Gaun have, their marriage practices have undergone a change in their community over the years.



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## Appendix - 1

### Household Survey Open Questionnaire

Name of the respondents:

Age:

Sex:

Address:

Number of family members:

1. When did you marry and in which year?  
Age:                      Year you married:
2. What type of marriage was it?  
a. Arranged b. Gandharva/Love c. Jari d. Others
3. Yours was an...  
a. Exogamy marriage              b. Endogamy Marriage
4. Where did first meet your spouse?
5. When was your marriage ceremony organised?  
a. Night                              b. Day
6. How many priests were in your marriage?  
...
7. How many Lokantis you had?  
...
8. Which ritual was followed in your marriage?  
...
9. How and when did you perform the wedding of your sons and daughters?  
a. Age:              b. Type:                      c. Exogamy      D. Endogamy
10. Where did your offspring meet their life partners?  
...
10. What was the difference between your marriage and your son/daughter's marriage?  
...
11. How did you perform your grandson/daughters' wedding?  
...
13. Were there differences in marriage rituals?  
...
14. What differences have you noticed between your marriage and the recent marriage practice?  
...
15. Have you noticed the influence of the marriage practices of Brahmins/Khetris in the marriage in your village?  
...
16. Which marriage practice you prefer to-  
a. traditional              b. modern

## **Appendix - 2**

### **Key Informants' Interview**

1. How has been the marriageable age in your community? Has it increased or decreased?
2. Have the incidents of exogamy increased?
3. Whose decision will be last while deciding one's marriage?
4. Has there been any change in organising the marriage ceremony?
5. Have the marriage rituals changed?
6. Have members of the marriage procession gone up?
7. How is the wedding cost?
8. Has there been reduction in the cultural events where the boys and girls meet?
9. Where do most of the men and women meet before deciding to tie nuptial knot?
10. Is the marriage practice of the Limbu influenced by the marriage practice of Brahmin and Kshetris?
11. Which, traditional or modern marriage practice is better?
12. Do people accept inter-caste marriage in your community?
13. What changes have occurred in the use of musical instruments in marriage?
14. Has there been any change in organising marriage parties?
15. How is the Rit practice?
16. What is the main cause for the changes in marriage practices?

## Appendix -3

### Map of Nepal



## Appendix - 4

### Map of Ilam District



Study Area (Soyak VDC 2)