

## **CHAPTER-I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 Introduction**

This study explores the effect of conservation practices on indigenous people's cultural practices and life ways in a Terai village. The study is based on a research carried out in Patihani, a village situated in the Chitwan district of Nepal. This study compares indigenous Tharu people's cultural practices and life ways before and after the establishment of Chitwan National Park.

Far-reaching environmental changes and the establishment of national park over a short span of time may not have totally changed the lifestyle of the local communities but it certainly has impacted the way they have been constructing their social, cultural and economic narratives. With the establishment of national park, Tharu people were deprived from using forest products, which compelled them to seek other alternatives or to adapt with the new practices. Hence this study attempts to explore the changes in cultural practices with particular reference to occupation, forest utilization and agricultural practices. Here cultural practices denote two types of practices, viz; material and non-material. Non-material culture covers: fair, festivals, religious rituals, marriage and death rituals. In this research material culture denotes agricultural practices, forest utilization and occupational practices.

The processes of infrastructure development in Chitwan national park have brought many important effects in the socio-economic and cultural milieu of Patihani village. National parks initiate rules and regulation for the inhabitants or the users of the forest in their proximity. Hence, local people need to follow park rules and regulations which restricted them from entry into the park areas without the permission of the park management. Permit (*Purji*) to enter the forest was initially given by national parks authority and later on the authority was handed over to the local people in the form of community forest. Local people have their relationship with forest and its wildlife. Earlier their relation was related to satisfying their basic needs only. But today their relation not only concerns with the utilization of forest products but also enjoying the development activities

launched by national park, which has direct effect on the cultural practices of Tharu people of Patihani village.

In recent years, in order to increase the number of national and international tourists in Chitwan National Park, park authorities have launched different development programs. These programs have brought many changes in Tharu people's traditional cultural practices in Patihani village. Before the establishment of National Park, Tharu people were totally depending on agriculture and forest. But today National Park management has prohibited local people from entering the forests at their convenience. In recent years, the young people have had no interest in traditional cultural practices- agriculture, forest utilization and occupations, because it was impossible to survive from the traditional practices. So, Tharu people have been motivated to migrate to foreign nations for employment opportunities.

## **1.2 Declaration of the Problem**

Most of the people's life ways depend upon the land and forest resources. Because of the dependency on forest resources for survival, they have special indigenous knowledge in forest development. Through experience and experimentation Nepali rural people have developed detailed and sophisticated knowledge about natural resources, including forests and trees. They also tend to possess special indigenous technical knowledge which they use to utilize and manage forest resources. Warren and Cashman (1988:3) define indigenous technical knowledge as "the sum of experience and knowledge of decision-making in the face of familiar and unfamiliar problems and challenges".

In Nepal different indigenous people had been surviving in the forest by using the forest resources and they were used to protect forest as their own traditional habitat. There are numerous forests in Nepal which have been referred to as forest of certain villages or ethnic/caste groups. So, they used forest as according to their culture such as Jhakri ko baan, paleko baan. These people used forest resource on the basis of their norms, values and cultural practices and protect forest in the name of Gods and Goddess. When conservation practices related to preserving the wildlife, flora and fauna together with the forest itself are introduced, the practice of protecting forest in the name of Gods and

Goddess is threatened. Like that, Tharu people of research sites, protected forest around the Chhitamaye deity area but this practice was heavily affected due to the national park establishment.

Around 1970s the concept of protected areas comes to protect endangered wildlife, flora and fauna. This is the concept totally different than indigenous forest management system used by the local people, which has special target to preserve endangered wildlife, flora and fauna. The concept of protected areas comes under the scientific forest management system, which is a concept distinct from indigenous management system. Moreover, it is based on strict conservation practices, which is manipulated by the technically skilled peoples like foresters. Through the years, the establishment of national parks has had adverse impacts on local traditions and cultures in some instances resulting dramatic effects in their way of life. Since insufficient attention was paid to indigenous people and their customary rights, many cultures, which otherwise could have been valuable in reinforcing conservation, have vanished gradually. According to Kumar (1993), relocation, obsolescence of cultural values, social disintegration, economic dependency, unsustainable harvesting and severe conflicts over resources use are some of the major negative impacts of the establishment of national parks

Similarly, parks establish new sets of rules and regulations which tend to be different than that of the indigenous people's traditional rules and regulations related with forest. Due to this local people become dissatisfied with the new sets of rules and regulations of parks, and may violate these rules and regulations. When local people started to violate park's rules, park management system realized that local people were the major problem to the resource management. Then park started to include local people to the resources management in the form of collaborative management system. This seems to have brought changes in generation-long cultural practices of indigenous people.

When the concept of Park came to protect endangered species then local people were deprived to use forest resources as they used before. Not only that but park also interrupted indigenous management system which had been in practice for a long time. Then there are two types of management practices that come into contact. On the one hand indigenous management system which had been in practice for a long time is basically practiced by local people and is focused on their culture. On the other hand

scientific management system or conservationist agenda that is practiced in the form of park by focusing endangered species. Because of the different concept of scientific management system or conservationist agenda, local peoples may need to change their life ways and their norms, values, social relations. Moreover, after the malaria eradication and establishment of park, so many peoples have migrated into the study area from different places which has also affected indigenous people's cultural practices.

### **1.3 Research Questions and Objectives**

The study seeks to answer the following questions;

1. What type of cultural practices prevailed among the indigenous Tharu people before the establishment of Chitwan National Park? What changes in cultural practices are felt by the people after the establishment of National Park? Are their cultural practices being continued even after the contact with conservation management system? Are there any discernible differences found in indigenous people's cultural practices, norms, values, and social relations before and after park establishment?
2. How are people affected by the National Park? How indigenous people adapt with different practices of scientific management system/conservation practices? Are indigenous people satisfied from the conservation practices? Are there any discernible differences found in indigenous people's forest utilization pattern, agricultural practices, and occupation before and after park establishment?

On the basis of the questions laid down above the study proposes to ascertain the effects of conservationist practices on indigenous peoples' cultural practices and life ways.

The specific objectives of this study are:

1. To examine the change and continuity experienced by the Tharu people in forest utilization, occupation and agricultural practices: and
2. To identify the change and continuity experienced by the Tharu people in social relation, religious rituals and fair and festivals.

#### **1.4 Significance of the Study**

It has been said that Tharu people in Nepal for a long time used forest resources for satisfying their day to day needs. They have special knowledge about their forest because of their long dependency upon it. At the time of their dependency upon forest resources, they had their own cultural practices which were mostly determined by the forest. But things began to change for the Tharus when Chitwan National Park was established in 1973 based on the idea of strict conservation. It has been said that the Park had been established for the habitat protection and species conservation because from the world various wild species were gradually declining. The introduction of the park restricts local people to use forest resources as they had been using. Then local people's life ways started depending upon other resources. Moreover, that type of conservation practices and norms were new for the local people, so they had difficulties in adaptation with such practices and rules. Hence there might be a conflict of interest between indigenous peoples' and conservation agenda.

This study has contributed to find out the adaptation and changing practices of indigenous people's resource management system with conservationist practices. Not only that, my study contributes theoretically and substantively to the anthropological study of indigenous people's interaction with conservationist. This research has also relevance to those interested in the question of indigenous people's interaction with conservation and management in protected areas.

#### **1.5 Conceptual Framework**

In this research there are two different types of management practices or two different cultural practices that come in contact. On the one hand local indigenous management

system practice for a long time and on the other hand conservationist practices which comes in contact with indigenous cultural practices as new concept of strict conservation. Both of the practices could influence each other and require them to adapt with each other. However, the effects and changes in the park conservation practices in response with the native people is not a subject of the present study.

Due to the conservationist cultural practices which restrict local people in their use of forest resources, they become obligated to accept new cultural practices, norms and values. Then indigenous people had to struggle in order to adapt with the new practices and changes along with the new system. The new system has brought changes which could be seen in traditional forest utilization system, occupation and agricultural practices. On the other hand the changes might be seen in their non-material cultural practices such as: fair and festivals, faith over gods and goddess and the way the Tharu people regarded God. To add it all, significant changes in family size, marriage system, and other ritual practices such as death were found.

There are other factors which have affected indigenous practices but these factors remain as extraneous variables.

**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework change and continuity in economy and culture of Tharu**

.....Effects

.....Result

.....Effects

In my research area local people are also affected from the people who have migrated from different places of Nepal. In this research I have focused on the effect of national park over Tharu communities but have not concerned with the effects due to the migrated people. The effect of migrated people on indigenous people's cultural practices is taken as extraneous variable in my research. Hence I have sought to study the relations and effects of national park on Tharu people's cultural practices.

## **CHAPTER- II**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The review of literature on effect of conservationist agenda over indigenous people's life ways and their knowledge system over natural resource management is divided into two sections. First, some general studies have been reviewed from which some conceptual ideas are derived. Then this is followed by a review of the studies on Tharus were takes indigenous people in this research to indicate the kind work that has already been done on Tharus and details description of the impact of protected areas on indigenous culture.

#### **General**

The study of effect of conservationist agenda over indigenous knowledge system has importance in studying Natural Resource Management. There is plenty of literature on indigenous knowledge system and scientific knowledge system in resource management (Saul 1991, Gill 1993, Chhetri. 1993, 1994, Fisher, 1991). Saul (1991), in his research based paper "Indigenous Forest Knowledge: Factors influencing its social distribution", asserted that, forest knowledge is context specific. When people use forest regularly, they tend to have special knowledge about forest, than those people, who do not use forest. He also asserted that, settlement pattern may also influence Indigenous Forest Knowledge system. Those people who live in cluster have greater knowledge than that of the people who live in isolated from other community member. In Chitwan, Tharu people, when they lived in forest, they lived in cluster, but after the establishment of National Park, they were chased from forest. As a result, their settlement pattern has been isolated at present, than that of traditional settlement in forest area. Similarly Fisher (1991), talks about the indigenous management system and asserted that common property is not a problem of forest management.

There are abundant studies dealing with the effects of National Park over local population (Mishra 1990, Muller -Boker 1999). For many hundreds of years humans and wild animals have coexisted in Chitwan not always without conflict, but on the whole without



fighting over living space. In the middle of the 1950s, following the opening of the region, the situation changed; a stream of migrants came to Chitwan under the pressure of state settlements projects ( Muller-Boker,1999:187) has effect over indigenous Tharu people. After the establishment of National Park the conflict between the need to protect nature and needs of the local population have increased and intensified. As the population increases and so the pressure on natural resources, have risen. Muller-Boker asserted that proposal for harmonizing by means of integrated planning, the need to protect nature with the basic requirements of the local population were not discussed. The park has radically lowered their agricultural productivity and disrupted their life style (Milton and Binney, 1980:18, cited by Muller-Boker 1999). Muller- Boker (1999) cites a number of reactions from Chitwan Tharus about Royal Chitwan National Park among them some of the reliable reaction is as follows:

Before, they could bring many kinds of vegetables from the forest. Now they have to grow them; that takes more time and requires land. When they go into the forest nowadays, the forest rangers fine them. They put the money into their own pocket; if they ask for a receipt, then they have to pay much more.

Since the park has been around, everything has become harder. There's no more timber, so their houses are getting smaller and smaller. Grass can be obtained only with difficulty, so they have to cover roofs with expensive tiles. If they let their cow roam in the forest, they immediately have to pay a fine. If they go into the forest just to evacuate, that'll draw a fine to them. They think that, the National Park is very bad for them because they were allowed to enter only when the park authority gives them an entrance ticket. Moreover, they said that the National Park is robbing them of their livelihood.

From the above mentioned reactions made by locals, which is closely matched with this study, we know that there are studies inclined towards answering the effect of National Park over local people and their indigenous knowledge to resource management.

Kumar (1993) asserted that with the establishment of national parks, relocation has been sought as one of the conflict resolution mechanism. While relocation in the case of the IK tribe in Uganda had a disastrous effect on their culture and social organization (Calhoun, 1991:61-67, cited by Kumar 1993),

Such types of studies are relevant for the present research in identifying the effect of conservationist practices over indigenous people's cultural practices.

## **Tharus**

Most of the published works on Tharu people concern with their culture, life ways, religion, origin of Tharu, their adapted technology with the environment, effect of migrants on their cultural practices, relationship of Tharu with other communities, and ethnic differences between Tharus and other ethnic groups. Such studies have shed lights on various aspects of life and culture of Tharus as indigenous people. Sigrun Eide Odegaard in her writing "BASE and the role of NGOs in the process of local and Regional change" asserted that movement of education brings change among Tharu Community. Similarly after the eradication of Malaria so many people emigrated from different region and from the different cultural background come into contact with Tharu people (Muller-Boker, 1999, Guneratne Arjun, 2002). The causes of migration from the different regions are not only the eradication of Malaria but more with the establishment of Chitwan National Park. Muller-Boker found that after the establishment of the paper mill in Chitwan, so many Tharu people got working opportunity in paper mill which makes changes in their occupation and life ways.

Kumar (1993) described that Tharus are the original inhabitants of Chitwan about whose origin little is known. They have their ancient customs, religious beliefs and moral values which are closely attached to the hill in trespassing into the park. Aside from the agricultural crop production, the Tharu rely heavily on wild edibles available in the forests. Collection of roots and tubers is part of their way of life which they find difficult to live without. Tharu usually live in a big family. Their 'longhouse' which is mainly built from local raw materials available in the forest, is typical and different from houses of other recent settlers. But after the park establishment they have scarcity of resources then it is impossible to continue their traditional practices.

Muller-Boker (1999) asserted that they have especial environmental knowledge and practices and they also have ecologically adapted technology that is categorized as eco-technology. She points out that after park establishment agricultural practices are

changing from the shifting cultivation to permanent cultivation, size of herds of livestock going to be decreased and use of livestock in agricultural practices shifted by the tractors. It brings change over their traditional knowledge system and practices. Before the national park existed, male/female regularly went every four or five days into the forests to collect tubers, leaves and fruits. Only potatoes, pulses and chilies were grown in the garden.

Kumar (1993) focused on the indigenous methods of conservation which has harmony with nature which leads conservationist to formulating sound management plans for natural resource conservation in CNP. The native Tharu have devised certain energy conservation methods such as adaptation of a *Chulo* that seemed to be more energy efficient than that of the hill migrants. Similarly, they were also found to be prominent in using crop residues for fuel (Studrød et.al 1988:129-165, cited in Kumar 1993).

### **Impact of protected areas**

Contemporary protected areas not only affect people living in them, adjacent to them, and displaced by them, but also people working for the nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and government agencies that create and manage the protected areas ( West Paige, James Igoe and Dan Brockington, 2006). They asserted that the IUCN process of listing and cataloging protected-area types and its attempt to create a world-wide category system, National governments have to fit their protected lands into these international categories that separate people from the nature (Chape et al. 2003). This case is closely related with my study area, where Chitwan National Park was remained in IUCN's category system, and people living around National Park were separate from the land and forest resource. In this sense protected areas separate local people's culture from nature. Anthropologically speaking, the ideas and concept of nature-culture separation was imposed on much of the world (Seeland 1997, Strathern 1980).

Nygren (1998) shows that concept of western division between nature and culture extended and imposed on much of the world due to NGOs. Because NGOs rely heavily on the concept of western division and its publications frequently present nature as a static object, separate from human beings. NGOs present the ecological effects of human

activities, where they think that culture is unnatural. In other cases, they may present indigenous peoples as ecologically noble savages, whose cultures are somehow closer to nature. (Igoe 2005, West 2001) assert that whether indigenous peoples are imagined, project themselves as inside or outside nature, however, the imposition of this western imagined concept of nature/culture dichotomy has had significant material and social impacts, either by forcefully excluding peoples from their land or holding them in to discursive standards that are nearly impossible to live up to in practice.

The Thai concept of nature includes humans but that international NGOs impose Western ideas about the separation of nature and culture in their work with Thai protected areas (Roth 2004). Roth demonstrated that separation of people from the protected areas was the major cause of NGOs, who follow the western concept of nature/culture dichotomy. This has direct effect over the local people's culture practices, practiced for a long time. Protected areas make separation from not only their cultural practices but also from their life ways. For example the creation of Gates of the Arctic National Park in Alaska was brought about by an alliance between intuit activities and conservationists seeking to block oil pipeline (Catton 1997). Kakada National Park in Australia's Northern Territory was brought about by a similar alliance to block uranium mining. West (2005) further demonstrates the connections between these separations of people and surroundings and a neo-liberal conservationist agenda that needs biodiversity or nature to become commodities and natives to become labour. In such setting natives may also become commodities, because conservation agenda makes their culture becomes part of the selling point for ecotourism marketing. Like that in Chitwan, Tharu peoples become the commodities and their Culture becomes the selling point for ecotourism marketing. In order to promote park tourism and attract park tourist in their hotel, they used to show different cultural program of traditional Tharu culture.

Similarly, protected areas have brought the changes in social practices of native people. Protected areas and conservation efforts have profound effects on gender relationships worldwide (Agrawal 1997). For example, in the Maya Biosphere Reserve in Guatemala, projects planners targeted the men as the "primary agents of social change" where as the planners initially virtually ignored the women (Sundberg 2003,). But on the other hand, Vivanco (2001) shows the case from Costa Rica that, women's participation in handicraft

production projects aimed at tourist markets have given them economic power that they did not have in the past.

Holts (2005) asserts that conservationist efforts change the ways people see themselves in relation to their social world. Today, because of their involvement in conservation, nature and culture are separate for them. Due to the fact, in some instances, local people have begun to monitor their own wildlife consumption. (Peter (1998) demonstrates that deeply embedded socio-ecological practices such as Tavy in Madagascar have been approached by conservation actors as environmental practices that have little or no social significance. These practices, seen as simply environmental usages by ecologists and conservationists, are stopped or changed to the detriment of local social life and custom. In some cases, of course, resource depletion causes social changes such as intensification of land use and dependence on market economies. In case of Chitwan, Tharu people were also limited in very few land and started to get benefit from maximum utilization of land, they were now depend on market economies because of their resource depletion by National Park. Some authors show that the language of environmentalism and protection has come to permeate local language and speech. This appropriation of environmentalism discourse is used in Cerro Azul Meambar National Park in Honduras when people wish to gain access to the benefits of the park, yet it also works to change local views of people's relationship with their surroundings (Pfeffer et al. 2001).

Some of the most pervasive and far reaching changes worked by protected areas are visible in the spread of ecotourism and commodification. Ecotourism enterprises are symbolic with protected areas. If there is a protected area, some form of ecotourism likely uses it, and if ecotourism enterprises are present some protected areas exist in the vicinity. Because of this connection, people living in and around protected areas interact with ecotourism as a revenue source, as a set of social relationships that brings nature and culture to areas where they did not exist before and as a conduit for visitors from other places. It brings new ways of seeing and using people's surroundings to already existing socio-ecological landscapes and creates new boundaries (Vivanco 2001).

Seeland (2000) described that, because of the land depletion by the protected areas local people were remained under the economic burden. So, in some instances, when animals are turned into commodities in local people's minds, they react against national parks

because of the financial burdens imposed on them through the killing of wildlife. Then certain species have gone from being little known or valued by local people to being highly valued commodities (Vivanco 2001). As a result of that, the commodification of plants may erase their social value and lead to over production within protected areas (Mwelin and Rayner 2005). Local people and their image can also be turned into commodities, as can their intellectual property that is concerned with their surroundings (Brush 1993, Filer, 2000)

In this way protected areas has problem of dichotomy of nature and culture has led effect to the people's culture. This makes forceful participation to the native people to the environmental projects due to the distinct objectives of the protected areas. Drijver (1992) demonstrates that Waza National Park Cameroon has objectives; conservation of nature from an ethical and aesthetic viewpoint. Where two tribes' kotoko and the Mougoum live for a long time, Kotoko has the flood plain and they practice a floating rice culture (Vandes Zee 1988). The Mougoum (relative newcomer lives in small compound and combines cattle herding, agriculture and fisheries (Van Dijk (in preparation). But after the park restrict to the local people their traditional practices being in crisis. Similarly, Parks development has advantages of the park only benefit a small number of people – guides, craftsmen, waiters or those in charge of park management or tourism (Noordzi (forthcoming). Same case found in Amboseli National park in Kenya which has objectives; conservation of nature from an ethical and aesthetic viewpoint and the promotion of sustainable use. This also makes the restriction to the local users; local users react with conservationist that makes nature and culture conflict. And then nature makes culture's participation for the development has remodeled to the culture.

## **CHAPTER-II**

### **METHODOLOGY**

This chapter contains an outline of the methodology that the researcher has employed at various stages of this study.

#### **3.1 Rationale of the Research Site Selection**

The Chitwan National Park (CNP) is Nepal's first National park established in 1973. On the basis of its management objectives, it falls in IUCN's category II which has strict protection against consumptive human activities. Before the CNP establishment, local indigenous people, especially Tharu people used forest resources and managed forest based on their cultural practices.

The research work was conducted in two adjoining clusters inhabited by the Tharu indigenous people in ward no. 6 and 8 of the Patihani VDC in Chitwan. These two clusters contain about 36 houses of the Tharu people whose everyday life is of primary interest to the researcher.

There is an on-going research on park-people conflict in this area by different peoples, but no research has been done yet on the effects of National Parks on indigenous peoples cultural practices. This area is thought to be suitable for the present study in the sense that Tharu people have unique cultural practices, which has now changed in rapid and extensive way.

#### **3.2 Nature and Sources of Data**

This study includes both primary and secondary sources of data. As an anthropological study this research mostly concerns with primary data. In order to investigate the adaptation and changes in occupation, forest utilization and agricultural practices, it was indispensable for the researcher to collect primary data for the present study. On the other hand, in order to find out the similarities and differences in forest utilization, agricultural

practices and occupation, it was indispensable for the researcher to collect some of the secondary sources of data.

The primary data were collected through observation, formal and informal interviews, focus group discussion, and key informant survey. This helped the researcher comprehend a holistic picture of the Simal Gairi and Patalahara society. Inhabitants of the Simal Gairi and Patalahara village provided the researcher with qualitative primary data required for the study. On the other hand secondary data were collected from published and unpublished articles, digital data discs, reports, documents, websites, books, thesis of various individuals, library.

### **3.3 Data Collection Technique**

The data for the study were collected by using the following techniques:

#### **a) Household Survey**

All households (36) of the Tharu people lying within two different settlements, namely, Simal Gairi and Patalahara were surveyed. Survey helped the researcher analyze the socio-economic status of the Tharu indigenous people. By using the survey method the researcher collected data on age and sex composition, educational status, major occupations, access to forest resources, access to agricultures and so on.

By this method researcher tried to comprehend several aspects of the effects of Conservation Agenda or National Park to indigenous peoples cultural practices and life ways studied by investigating the continuity and change in major occupation, education, marital status, family size and so on.

#### **b) Key Informant Interviews**

Key informant interviews were conducted during the fieldwork in order to comprehend the history of the traditional cultural practices, forest utilization, occupation and agricultural practices which were practiced just before the national park establishment. These traditional practices had been affected by the national park due to the restriction over forest, seizing their land and altering their settlement patterns. Key informant interview has helped to contextualize the information taken from the study area by using other methods.



In order to meet the basic objective of the research as well as to accumulate data before the establishment of Chitwan National Park (CNP), I took key informants such as elderly people, political leaders, school teachers, buffer zone chairman, community based organizations and various governmental line agency officials etc., from the study area, who were interviewed for in-depth information pertinent to my study. All the informants were from the Tharu community except of two teachers.

#### **c) Focus Group Discussions**

Focus group discussions were conducted among the indigenous people of different age group and sex. These discussions helped the researcher to understand the collective views of the Tharu communities, about the effects of National Park on their cultural practices. It also provided an important opportunity to understand the collective reaction of the villagers towards the effect of National Park. By conducting different age group and sex's FGD, researcher got opportunity to comprehend different group's understanding towards National Park's effects.

#### **d) Observation**

In this study the researcher used observation as a realistic way to know the effects of National park on community life. This also helped the researcher to examine pattern of houses, tools and technique used in agricultural practices, number of domesticate animals, forest product they use and bring from forest and so on. Moreover, researcher examined traditional cultural instrument used by the indigenous people, their dress pattern, way of carrying load, etc. The researcher observed the way the local people 'live'. This enormously helped the researcher to contextualize the compatibility of National Park with the indigenous people's cultural practices and knowledge system.

### **3.4. Data Analysis and Presentation**

Information collected from the different groups for certain purposes, and in order to meet the objectives of the researcher the information were broken down into two relevant parts- before and after the establishment of National Park practices for each heading of data analysis.

In the analysis of the data from this research, combinations of qualitative methods have been used. Knowledge system and cultural practices since the establishment of the National Park were compared from different respondents and informants. The data collected from different sources have been analyzed by using simple statistical tools and techniques as needed. This is possible through collecting raw information, reading descriptive notes and identifying the pertinent themes; comprising applicable materials under applicable themes.

The presentation of data on effect of conservation agenda over local practices by cohort and the comparison of practices by different age group and other qualitative analysis is to visualize the effects, changes and adaptation practices taking place. The presentation of the information based on observations, formal/informal interviews and key informant interviews were used to support the qualitative analyses, based on cultural explanation.

### **3.5 Limitation of the Study**

The study has been carried out on a small geographical area- focused only on around Chitwan National Park. The results may not be extrapolated for other protected Areas of the country. This study only deals with the Tharu community of Patihani and Simal Gairi Village. Therefore, the conclusions and generalizations reached from the study would be applicable only in similar situation as that of the Patihani and Simal Gairi Village area. This research has used adopted more anthropological tools and methods.

### **3.6 Outline of the Study**

This study has been divided into six different chapters. The first chapter opens with a brief introduction of the research which is followed by the statement of the problem, the main research questions and objectives, significance of the study, and conceptual framework of the study.

The second chapter contains review of relevant literature. This chapter includes concise reviews of works well known in the field of Tharu and impact of protected areas.

The third chapter includes a sketch of the research methodology. The fourth chapter will present a picture of society, culture and economy of the village. The fifth chapter will deal with the traditional as well as other new forms of cultural practices, viz; settlement,

agricultural practices, forest utilization, occupation and animal husbandry. In general, this deals with the two different practice, viz; traditional and those that have emerged after National Park. This chapter will also deal with the practices of Tharu to adapt in the changing practices of conservationist. The sixth chapter will deal with the social and cultural activities and strategies.

And the final chapter will present the summary and conclusions of the study.

## **CHAPTER -IV**

### **The Area and People under Study**

In this chapter I mention the basic features of the study area, viz; physical feature, social organizational feature, cultural features and economic features.

#### **4.1 physical setting of the Study area**

Simal Gairi and Patalahara Gaun, which falls under the central Chitwan, are the local villages of this study, situated in the Central Developmental Region of Nepal. These villages are under the jurisdiction of Patihani Village Development Committee (VDC) ward number 6 and 8. These two villages remain adjoining to Chitwan National Park. Moreover the study area remains under the Bellsahar Buffer Zone Community Forestry User Group of Chitwan National Park which lies in the South-west from Narayangarh.

An 18-km long metalled road links Pakaudi, the market center of Simal Gairi and Patalahara, with the Mahendra high-way. Narayangarh-Madi road (Hulaki Road) passes through the Pakaudi Market center. A regular bus service provides the transportation facility to go to the Pakaudi from Narayangarh Bazaar, and it takes about half an hour to reach the village by bus. A small graveled road pass through the Pakaudi to Patalahara and Simal Gairi Gaun and it takes 5 and 15 minute to reach the study area on foot.

These study sites are situated in the buffer zone of Chitwan National Park. Chitwan National Park (IUCN categories II Protected Area) was established in 1973 as the first National Park to conserve the wildlife habitat of many endangered wildlife species and biodiversity richness. Chitwan National Park, one of the World Heritage Site, stretches

mostly across the Churia region and has been accommodating the Rapti Valley, lowlands of Terai.

Chitwan National Park spread over an area 932 square km. is known for its Sal (*Shorea robusta*), tropical, subtropical and riverine forest and grassland. The park hosts 570 species of flowering plants, 56 species of mammals, 925 bird species, 47 reptiles and 68 fish species (DNPWC, 2002). Recognizing its unique ecosystem of international significance, UNESCO declared CNP a World Heritage Site in 1984. Buffer zone of Chitwan National Park was established in 1996 which covers 43 percent of forest area. Chitwan National Park contains wetlands habitat key to the survival of a globally endangered one horned rhinoceros (*Rhinoceros unicornis*) and many other endangered species. There are human settlements in and around the protected areas. Over 250,000 people in 36,950 households live around Chitwan National Park. Thirty five Village Development Committees (VDCs) and two municipalities attach the Park. The establishment of buffer zone for the park and the implementation of community development activities there are aimed at fulfilling local people's need of forest product and improving their socio-economic conditions so as to reduce their dependence in forests (MOFSC, 2002).

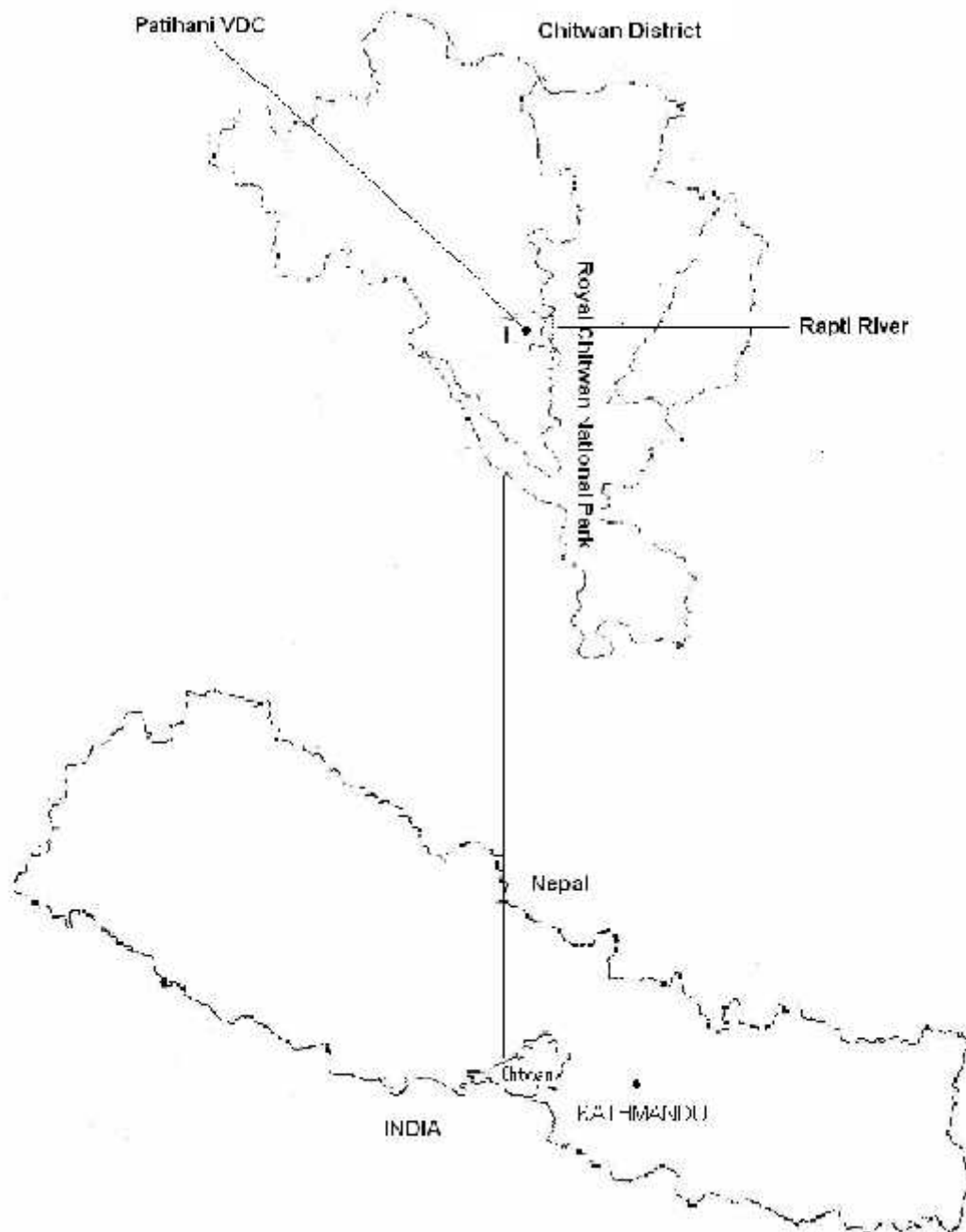
Rice is the major agricultural product in this area. Patihani boasts one of the most distinguished tourist centers surrounded by the Religious sites; Chhitamaye, Bikrambaba, Rapti River and its Crocodile view, and Bishajari Tal. Tourist visits these areas for their traditional cultural instruments. New-sprung hotels, restaurants and shops demonstrate the scope of growing tourism industry in this area.

A household survey carried out in 2065/66 shows that there are 2450 household in Patihani Village Development Committee (VDC census 2065/66). Map 1 shows the location of the Patahara and Simal Gairi gaun as research site in central Nepal. Patihani VDC has 9 wards and the number of households' researcher surveyed in two different clusters of Patihani village which lies in ward 6 and 8- Patahara and Simal Gairi gaun. There are 36 households of the Tharu indigenous peoples in 2 clusters; Patahara and Simal Gairi of ward number 6 and 8. In addition to the Tharu Mahoto indigenous peoples, high caste Brahmins and Chhetris, ethnic groups such as Magar, Gurung, Disadvantage group- Damai and Kami reside in this area. Some of the Tharu households

are located inside the settlements of Brahmins, Chhettris and other ethnic groups. But the study areas cluster remains separate with other communities.

In Patalahara and Simal Gairi Gaun, only the Tharu indigenous people live in cluster. Even the separate cluster, Patalahara settlements have regular contact with other communities than that of Simal Gairi Gaun. Market center of Patalahara and Simal Gairi Gaun remained near from the Patalahara. Simal Gairi Gaun is still inside the jungle, and remained far from the market center of the study area. Simal Gairi gaun has no manageable settlements due to the fear of flood of Rapti River but in Patalahara settlements, in comparison with the Simal Gairi Gaun situate as manageable settlements. On the other hand, in comparison with the other non- Tharu settlement, their household seems to be unique and traditional.

**Map 1. Location of Research Site in Central Nepal**



#### 4.2 Tharus and their Traditional Cultural Practices

The Chitwan district constitutes 2.03% of Nepal's total population of which the Tharu form the largest group with a population of 60 thousand (population census 2001). The various ethnic groups subsumed under the shared ethnoym Tharu inhabit the region of Nepal known as the Tarai, of which they account themselves the aboriginal inhabitants (Guneratne 2002).

Tharus are one of the prominent castes among other castes from ancient period. Overall Tharus have greater number of population among other ethnic groups in Chitwan extended from eastern to the western Tarai of Nepal as well as Vabar region. They have been living on the banks of river, forests, malarious valleys and fertile lands of Tarai from eastern to western Nepal. Some people have named this caste as Mangol, some say Aryan and some claim mixed group- Aryan-Mangol. There are lots of debates found about the native place of Tharu people, who were the Tharus and where are they from? One of the young informants (from non-Tharu community) tells me that they were the migrated people belonging to Rajput clan that came from Thar Desert in India. He also tells me about their faith and about their origin. According to him, Buddhists were located in two different kinds of state- stationary and mobiles states. Due to the war, stationary states people migrated here and there from the Shakaya republican. Later on these people became Tharu, changing from Sthivar to Thivar and finally became Tharu (Pokheral 2065).

According to Janaklal Sharma (2058) even though there are 48 sub-castes found under the Tharu ethnic groups, other languages like Maithali, Bhojpuri, and Aabadi are mixed in their language, which has become their own traditional language. Tharu language remained in fourth position in Nepal after Nepali, Maithili and Bhojpuri languages on the basis of number of people speaking different languages.

Almost 4 lakhs people live in Chitwan district, out of which 12% of the population, 60 thousand people fall into Tharu castes. Gardi of Madi, Bhaguda, Sukranagar, Jagatpur, Patihani, Padampur, Kathara, Vandara etc. are the main habitat of the Tharu people, mostly plain areas. The current people living in the study area don't know about their native land from where their ancestors migrated to this area. They said that despite the harsh climate and fear of wild animals they didn't migrate to India and hills of Nepal.

Chitwan district was known as the 'Kalapani' before 2000 B.S. Moreover it was also recognized as the home of Malaria. Even with these harsh conditions of Chitwan district, Tharu people lived and still have been living in Chitwan for a long time. Elderly people told me that, it takes about 3000 years for humans to develop resistance capacity against Malaria in our genes but the Tharus have sustained in Chitwan for almost 400/500 years ago.

Tharu people have used agriculture, domestication and fishing as their major occupation for a long time. They have their own knowledge system in the agriculture practices. They have their own traditional types of houses and these houses look like natural houses- which match with the natural environment, totally different practices than that of other castes. Bhakari (Large basket for storing grain), Dhadiya (a kind of basket made of bamboos for catching fish), net, for fishing, etc, are the related instrument of their occupation which were made by themselves, and they also have their own skills to develop their own equipment they require. They have deep knowledge about medicine and medicinal herbs, shrubs and roots, along with wild animals and wild plants. They have technique to castrate elephants.

Tharu communities have a kind of priest called Goraha<sup>1</sup>. In each and every health problem, they seldom go to the medicinal specialist rather they go to the Goraha who practices exorcising of charm to cure the disease. They believe that their Goraha have supernatural powers like God. There are two types of Goraha found in the Tharu community- Raj Goraha and Ghar Goraha, among them Raj Goraha have got governmental affiliation. The major works of the Goraha are related with-recitation of charm, cure of diseases by herbs and charm, decision of religious ceremony, fair and festivals. Similarly, at the time of religious ceremony, he has the right to give decisions on how to perform the task. In each village, they have common deity named as Gram Devata and have "Vhumausthan".



<sup>1</sup> A kind of priest, working in traditional tantra/mantra practice, doing ritual practices in Tharu community. Tharu people also believe that he possesses super power as like god.

Tharu people follow their culture and religion, which is distinct from other communities. However their cultural practices are almost like Hindu culture. The religious practices of Tharu People are started only after the worshipping of Chhitamaye in every practice. There is a myth concerning with the Chhitamaye; according to my respondent Bikram Mahato, the myth about Chhitamaye is as follows:

*“At the time of Rana regime, one of the Maji or Bote went to catch fish everyday. One day, in his Dhadiya(a kind of equipment to catch fish) a small stone entangled. The same stone entangled in his net and made obstacle to catch fish regularly for three/four days. One day he became angry with this stone and threw it towards the jungle from the Rapti River. Then that stone became huge by itself and remained as Chhittamaye, which was worshiped by the Tharu people and to this day they have been worshipping it in some modified form.”*

According to the respondents, Tharu people do not believe on temples, Gods and Goddess as human-like symbolic form (idols). But they worship deity as in natural form and they assert that they worship nature but not human-like gods and goddess. Clearly it is seen that they have good relationship with nature and surrounding ecology. Their behavior in terms of their interaction with the environment portrays a close relationship between human beings and nature as well.

Tharu cultural value system has injurious effects due to National Park. For example, the sacred faith on holy Chhitamaye is being lost in the younger generations and is equally being fading away in the older generations as well. However, the National Park has influenced to the Tharu communities and their cultural values, the people of the study area managed to retain their oral tradition and the spirit of their indigenous culture and institutions. Similarly many of the cultural ceremonies have become mere historical facts for the younger generations. The older generations regret the deterioration of their culture and express a growing concern about its rapid degradation.

Muller-Boker (1990) asserted that a compilation of the various historical and ethno-historical sources fail to produce a clear and unambiguous picture of the origin and history of the Tharus. The Tharus of Chitwan and mostly in this research sites portray

themselves as 'without a history', and in this research some respondents claimed that they didn't migrate from anywhere but have been living there since ancient times. But some informants believe that their ancestors migrated inside the Terai jungle from India. Due to this fact, their language and dress pattern still match with Indian language and dress.

They have unique ritual status which is somewhat different from the Hindu culture. Initially they lived inside the jungle and they claim that jungle is their only home. In jungle they are threatened by the dacoits and wild animals. In order to take defense against the wild animal and dacoits, Tharu people live in cluster. They told me that, in jungle, they had no possibilities of surviving single households due to the fear of wild animals, and on the other hand they could not cultivate land with the little manpower. As a result, their present settlement pattern of cluster has been the continuity of traditional settlement.

Because of their settlement and farming practices in and around the forest area, their agricultural crops were threatened by the wild animals. In order to protect their agricultural crops from Rhinos and other wild animals, they need to watch wild animals. They watch wild animals on rotational basis-turn by turn. They build a kind of shelter and live inside the shelter to watch and chase wild animals, which are named as Machan. In this sense, they need large number of manpower not only in agricultural practices but also for self protection, so, they have large number of family size living in cluster of society.

They named their habitat as Praganna and in each Praganna they had one Jimidar, who led certain cluster of Praganna, who held large number of land for cultivation. Jimdars paid the tax to the government but other people did not pay tax because they worked under the Jimdar. In some areas, Tharus Jimidar did not pay tax to the government but they used to collect tax from other social members. In the study area, there was no Jimidar who collected tax but they did have a Jimidar who paid tax. In Jimidar's house, in order to manage lodging and fooding lots of local people worked as retainers. Albeit the workers had their own land, Jimidar kept them so strictly that they could not work on their own land rather had to work in Jimidar's land. Tharu people had difficulties to pay tax to the government, hence most of the Tharu people worked in Jimidar's house, where they could easily spend their life. If they tried to cultivate land by themselves they

became distressed from the wild animals, from where they could accumulate only few crops for their life but it was not sufficient to pay tax to the government. As a result, working in Jimidar's house was more beneficial for them than working by themselves on their own land.

The occupation of Tharu people concerned with hunting, fishing, collecting edible foods, collecting fire woods and agricultural practices in the form of shifting cultivation before the establishment of National Park. Animal husbandry was another major occupation of Tharu people. They had very simple farming practices in agriculture and they had no difficulty in Animal husbandry.

Tharu people feel that, inside the forest area, they could not live in isolation with society, because they have fear of wild animals to their agriculture and for self protection. As a result of the above mentioned fact, Tharu people live in cluster of society and they have strong social ties that have remained from a long time.

#### **4.3 Demographic Features of the Study Area**

Demographic features reveal that the Patihani Village Development Committee (VDC) has around 15 hamlets with 2450 households. The research concentrated on two hamlets; Simal Gairi and Patalahara, which comprises a total 36 households. The total population of the studied hamlets is 181, of which 55% are female population and the remaining are male. The average family size is calculated to be 5.11 which is slightly higher than the national average. The data in Table 1 shows the distribution of study population by age group and sex composition. The population structure in terms of age and sex composition depicts normal distribution in comparison to that of the other mountain regions as well as other communities living around the studied area.

According to field survey about 9% populations are found to have moved to the foreign nations in search for employment. These migrants include people working in Dubai and Qatar as unskilled labor. Some others have migrated towards other parts of the Chitwan district for various works as agriculture labor in Bharatpur, Pakaudi, and more in Tandi. The major migratory destination of the people living in the study area in terms of

permanent migration is Tandi, which is located in Ratnanagar municipality. Moreover, Tandi is also the place for seasonal migrants from the village.

**Table: 1 Population distribution by Age Group and Sex**

Age Group	Sex		Total
	Male	Female	
0-4	2	3	5
5-9	5	13	18
10-14	12	12	24
15-19	10	13	23
20-24	9	11	20
25-29	7	16	23
30-34	9	10	19
35-39	10	4	14
40-44	2	5	7
45-49	3	2	5
50-54	5	2	7
55-59	1	3	4
60-64	2	4	6
64+	5	4	9
Total	82	102	184

Source; field survey, 2009

By presenting the data of Population distribution by age group and sex shown in Table 1, we knew the total number male and female population separately in the study area. From which we knew the normal demographic features of the study area.

#### **4.4 Social Organizational Features of the study Area**

The people in Patihani exhibit a unique particularity in terms of their social organization. Map 2 shows a sketch map of the Patalahara and Simila Gairi village of Patihani. The collective organization of Patihani operates within a complex set of social system which has a paradox of mutual conflict and competitions. They were not competing with each other among the same caste, but rather worked with each other to fulfill their fundamental needs. On the other hand they have no competition for holding or earning good income but they have competition for getting facilities of infrastructure.



## **Map 2; Village Sketch Map: Patalahara and Simal Gairi village**

Shree Ram Devkota asserted that after the emergence of communist party in Nepal, Chitwan district was the place where its influence was highly experienced, more than in other districts of Terai. The study area was not an exception to this influence. In this area, those people who involved in political parties became elite than other people. People who were not involved in any political parties realized that they became very poor and backward because they did not involve in any political activities. They feel that the traditional leadership system of Jimidar system was disappeared due to the political leadership system. But the family from Jimidar background is still named as Jimidar khalak or clan of Jimidar. People who have been engaging in active politics have become village leaders. They have multiple roles in political, social and cultural spheres of the Patalahara and Simal Gairi village life. Even the village is politically divided into different political parties. They had to stand together to face the adverse effects offered by the National Park to their daily life. This is because the people who were rich before the establishment of National park have become poor.

However, the traditional leadership pattern found in the Patalahara and Simal Gairi village has increasingly been influenced by a growing shift in leadership values and political parties influence. Due to these influences a lot of youth have emerged as potential leaders and the elder leaders do not participate in leading rather play a role of advisors for the betterment of the community. Thus, the traditional system of village organizations on the leadership of the elders and patron is slowly disappearing.

Nowadays, the youths are engaged in protecting their traditional cultural practices. In order to protect their traditional cultural practices these younger people organize different cultural program. They have to engage in sharing and borrowing different culture, socio-cultural exchange etc. But the fact is that Tharu culture has become the matter of showing in stages rather than practicing tradition and culture in day to day life. In some ways these stage programs have helped to survive the Tharu cultures but not enough to bring the culture to daily life.

Due to the influence of political parties the older generation's ideas and voices have been suppressed by the younger generation. Hence, younger generation's ideas, interests and their organization handle the management of community property regimes, innovations for village development and more to struggle with park and government for their right.

Whatever may be, the changes in leadership pattern and domination of older generation's organization by younger generation's organizations, they have their common goal just getting life sustainable and secure. An analysis of the village history revealed that the people of the locality were organized collectively for achieving benefits whenever a need was felt. From the study it was revealed that none of the past collective efforts of the villagers are now regarded as major events in the history of the village. At that time they had their common interest only concerning with the life ways and protecting themselves from wild animals. Moreover, they want to collect more and more forest product from the National Park's areas whatever they can. Since most of the time they are engaged either in collecting forest product, fishing and snail catching or in celebrating fair and festival but they have no more time for the improvement of their life standard. Nonetheless they never want to change from their forest life which is revealed by the resettlement program of the government, where they seem to claim the same forest land than other alternative settlement areas provided by the government. For the conservation of the National park, the National park intervened their community and drove them out of the forest area but since the Tharus were more inclined towards their own land and culture, they didn't want to leave the forest so it was difficult for the National park. Not only that some of the non-Tharu migrated people claim that Tharus would still be traditional and backward but due to the establishment of National park and the people who migrated to that site they have changed. But in this research effect of migrated people's influence is not mentioned. In this sense it is seen that before the national park, they had their common interest mainly concerned with living the life not to developing or changing.

Nowadays, in order to get basic infrastructure facilities from the National Park forest, they have to be organized not only for the living but also to get infrastructure for the community development such as road facilities, irrigation, electricity, etc. There were no separate women's organizations in the study area. But the younger generation has been

organized in the form of youth forum such as Janajoti Yuba Club in Patalahara. Tharu people claim that they have strong social ties than that of other neighbor communities because of their separate language and distinct cultural practices.

#### **4.5 Village economy of the study Area**

The village economy of Patalahara and Simal Gairi village is based more on subsistence agriculture and less with animal husbandry. Nowadays, Tharu people's animal husbandry has become in crisis due to the lack of grazing land for their animals. However they manage their occupation by feeding straw they get from their field. Chitwan district is recognized as the main supplier of rice in Nepal. My study area is not an exception of this reality. Even they have very little land they manage their subsistence farming because of high production. Soil in Patalahara and Simal gairi is very fertile and rice is the main production. Beside rice, they grow wheat, millet and other vegetables for the fulfillment of livelihood and cash needs. So they no longer use forest product for vegetables and other purposes. They divide land in two forms one is concerned with the wet lands used for rice farming named as *Ghol ko khet*, and the other is concerned with the dry lands used for vegetables and cash crops named *Tandi*. Actually due to the National park and Nepalese government's biased land reform program as well as their own traditional thinking, they are still deprived from land ownership right. Though they do not have land ownership certificate for the land they have been utilizing the land from long period of time. In Simal Gairi village most of the people have 10 kathha lands, which, according to them is sufficient for them to sustain for only 7 or 8 months. For other remaining months they need to supplement by their other occupations like laboring in *Tandi*.

Now-a-days some young females have learned technical training about tailoring and have continued their livelihood from that occupation. Tailoring was not a new occupation for other communities but in case of my study area it was different occupation which was



never before followed in their village history. On the basis of my field work most of the younger generations have interest to go to the foreign nations for the employment, which is also presented by showing Table 2. Some of the respondents are working as labors in non Tharu people's house.

**Table 2; Primary Occupation by Age Group**

Age Group	Agri culture	Ho tel labor	Dri ver	Tou rist guide	Stud ent	Fore ign labor	Carpe nter	Tai lor	Agricu lture labor	Mainte nance work	Da iry work	Groc ery work	No wo rk	To tal
0-4													5	5
5-9					17								1	18
10-14					24									24
15-19	4				18	1								23
20-24	6	2		1	2	4		3	1	1				20
25-29	12	1	2			2		1	2			2	1	23
30-34	9		1			4	1	2		2				19
35-39	5		1			2	3	1	1	1				14
40-44	5								2					7
45-49	2										2	1		5
50-54	7													7
55-59	3								1					4
60-64	6													6
64+	9													9
Total	68	3	4	1	61	13	4	7	7	4	2	3	7	184

Sources: field survey, 2009

**Table 3; Total number of Male and Female in Occupation**

SEX	Primary Occupation													Tot al
	Agric ultur e	Ho tel labor	Dri ver	Tourist Guide	Stude nt	For eig n Labor	Car pen ter	Tai lor	Agricu lture Labor	Main tenance Work	Dairy Worker	Groc ery Store	No Wo rk	
Male	20	3	4	1	24	13	4		3	4	2	2	2	82
Female	48				37			7	4			1	5	102
Total	68	3	4	1	61	13	4	7	7	4	2	3	7	184

Sources: field survey, 2009

None of the village respondents hold government job or any permanent job. Some of the farmers grow cash crops, onions, cauliflowers, cabbages, tomatoes, potatoes, etc. and sell these products in the market area as well as to their neighbor from other caste groups. Since they have no cash incomes other than traditional occupation; fishing, gathering forest product and farming, occupations which can only sustain at the time of traditional barter system, now-a-days that type of occupations are totally declined and new occupation such as tailoring, metal working, maintenance, wage labor, etc. are being followed by the local people. Shifting in the traditional occupation by the new occupation as I mentioned, local people claim that this is because of the National Park's restriction over them. National Park's restriction compels them to seek alternate jobs. Table 2 shows the occupation of the villagers to sustain their economic status as well as their subsistence economy.

According to the field survey data 2009, shown in Table 2, there is large number of people who were mostly dependent upon agriculture. With the establishment of national park, new hotels were built so tourism became main business around the National Park area. From the park tourism and hotel business some of the local people also got job opportunities in hotels, restaurants, and as tourist guide. Among three hotel job holders in the study area, only one works as skilled labor but the remaining two work as unskilled labour. There are four young boys involved in driving vehicles; among them one does not have another source besides his driving job. This area has some influence of tourism and a young boy has got tourist guiding job with the help of a hotel staff.

Carpentering and tailoring has become an effective technical job for the local villagers. Local people get carpentering job opportunities at small furniture industries, in Pakaudi. All of the four respondents involved in carpentering occupation from where they manage the basic cash that is needed in their family forcefully.

Tailoring has become the new and emerging occupation for local female youths. With regard to my field study there is only one young female tailor who has been able to sustain her life by tailoring. Her tailoring occupation makes her busy all the time. She has been sewing cloths for people in Patahara as well as neighbor villagers.

Some of the people search for labor jobs. Mainly people from hilly areas give them jobs as labor and give them Rs 100 per day together with meal. Since the amount is not able to support their family, they are unsatisfied with the hill people for not giving them reasonable wages.

There are comparatively less people who work in maintenance jobs as digging well, dragging pipe for water, etc. In these kinds of jobs they get high amount of money than that of other jobs except foreign labors. Similarly, only two people are involved in dairy, and three in grocery. In grocery, two people have their own shops whereas one person works on other's shop. From the grocery occupation two people have been easily managing their daily life ways, where they don't have any other option out of the grocery.

With the establishment of National Park, the lands are not sufficient for them to grow crops because parts of their land were seized by the National Park at the time of establishment. When they became deprived from their land, they became poor as their traditional life ways had totally depended on land. In the poor family background, there was crisis in the every day life. Because of these situations none of the youth in my research area have got good opportunities for education. The data of educational status of the village presented in Table 4 has shown the education of the villagers. But nowadays, the government has launched scholarship schemes intended for the poor family students, which inspire local people for education. In spite of that the guardians never take education of their children seriously, because of their poor economic condition. This can be shown clearly by presenting data in Table 4 about the educational status of the villagers.

**Table 4; Educational Status of the different age group**

Age Group	Illiterate	Literate	Primary	Lower Secondary	Secondary	+2	Total
5-9	1		17				18
10-14			3	21			24
15-19			4	3	13	3	23
20-24	2	2	2	6	5	3	20
25-29	7	3	3	5	4	1	23
30-34	7	3	1	3	4	1	19
35-39	6	2		2	4		14
40-44	3	3		1			7
45-49	2	1		2			5
50-54	3	1	1	1	1		7
55-59	3	1					4
60-64	2	3	1				6
64+	7	2	32		31		9
Total	48	21		31		8	184

Sources field survey: 2009

On the other hand, because of the National Park's development practices related with local people, traditional barter system has gradually declined in the research site. Due to the shortage of cash, in order to seek employment opportunities most of the young generation has now started taking interest in foreign countries for employment. According to the field survey 2009, foreign labor is the second largest occupation, after agriculture.

## **CHAPTER-V**

### **SETTLEMENT AND ECONOMIC STRATEGIES: CONTINUITY AND CHANGE**

Under this chapter, I have tried to analyze data with regard to my objectives. I have broken down this chapter in three different parts to analyze the data- Tharu Settlement and Economic Activities and Strategies. In order to compare data from before and after the National Park practices, headings are divided into two sub headings viz; traditional practices and practices after the National Park. In late National Park practices, I have tried to analyze adaptation strategies followed by the Tharu people in study area.

#### **5.1 Tharus Settlement**

Traditionally Tharu people were believed to be forest dwellers because of their settlement in the forest area. In Chitwan district before 1970s Tharu community remained in isolation from other communities. They have their own living style and pattern of household. Tharu people in Chitwan district remained around the Rapti River which was passing across the jungle. Traditionally, they were situated in the form of group which can be seen as small hamlet which is in cluster. During this condition, they have necessity to remain in group due to the fear of wildlife species and dacoits. Their cluster settlement helps them to be safe from the threatening of external factors like dacoits and wild animals. On the other hand, wild animals such as rhino and porcupine destroyed their crops at night and birds at day. If they live in cluster they have chances of farming with the help of each neighbor. In each cluster, they have one person as leader known as Jimidar, who sets rules and regulation of the hamlets and others follow the rules and regulation. Normally, other hamlets member works on Jimidar's houses, where a kind of society can be imagined with its own system, run in its own distinct ways.

##### **5.1.1 Tharus House before National Park**

The traditional household of Tharu community is simple, but of great elegance. On account of the specific construction methods that go into it, it is immediately recognizable as a house belonging to the Tharus in extreme contrast to the cement-

plastered brick building representative of a kind of “universal culture” ( RUF, 1975:63, cited by Muller-Boker; 1990:177).

The Tharu house (photo 1 and 2) consisted exclusively of natural building materials. The supporting pillars (*Khama*) were of sal wood (*Shorea robusta*). For the superstructure, and in order to stabilize walls, non-supporting posts woods or bamboo were added and almost all household articles were made from natural products. They used organic materials like wood and bark, canes and grasses, and large leaves or downy fruit capsules and further processed within the traditional technology of the Tharus. They had lots of forest products available; had no scarcity of forest products for their houses. The most valuable hardwood from which tools, simple furnitures and the like were produced and were used for supporting elements in house construction as Sal (*Shorea robusta*). They used *khar/khadai/khadani* for the roof of the house and partition of the house respectively. Similarly, they used Sal (*Sorea robusta*) timber for the pillar of the houses. They used sticky soil to fasten the partition of the house, which was made by the *Khadani/khadai*, which is supposed to make the house’s partition strong and protect from wind. They used to spread out a pallet of *khar/khadeni* over the floor of houses, to be safe from the coldness of ground. They used Bamboo and cane-forming grass for house construction and for many household works. At that time they had long houses which had numerous rooms and separate kitchen which was possible for them because they could bring the required forest products for their house construction.

**Figure: 2 Model of Traditional Tharu House**

Source: field survey, 2009

Figure based on sketch map made in yard by using small stick by Shree Ram Mahato,

By presenting the sketch of the house, we can know the traditional house of Tharu community. According to the respondent, that type of houses were normally related with the Jimidar of Tharu people because Jimidars had larger number of worker on their house. They had no difficulties for the raw materials as well as timber for their house construction. In some areas, they could face the government accusation from the rhino patrolling unit if they had made very good and big houses. It might be the cause that indigenous Tharu people never built fine houses in the study area even when they could have built.

### **5.1.2 Tharus House after the National Park**

Later on along with the establishment of national park, Tharu people explained their grief about the problem of forest product to build household due to the restriction over forest. They get firewood and other material in limited quantity, according to park's rules, which makes difficulty in reforming the roof of the household. Similarly, they make partition from the Khadai, which has remained for a long time but was not necessary to change regularly as like Khar. In large house they need large quantity of Khar and less in the small households. They have difficulties in building large house because of the lack of sufficient forest products for house construction. Hence, they could not build large houses. As a result of this traditional large houses has been gradually declining and the small houses have been replaced instead of the old ones. Small houses were seen to be cute and attractive than previous big houses. Though they had not built small houses because of their interest and needs but due to the scarcity of forest resources. Some people, who earn money from foreign labor have made cemented house, not in large size, but in small size. Very few houses built from the cement can be seen in Patalahara but not in Simal Gairi. Present forms of small houses were as like in the photo 1 and 2.



Photo 1: Present House of Tharu community



Source: field survey, 2009

The two photos, photo 1 and 2 were taken from the research site, and remaining houses of Tharus were also similar to these houses. Remaining traditional Tharu houses look small in size as presented in photo 1 and 2.

According to a respondent since it is hard to manage resources in large family the Tharus started living in small families which could easily fit in a small house and which was easier to manage for small family. But they realized that, in small family they didn't have maximum pressure of food so they began living in small family size. For a small family it was not necessary to build large houses. They claimed that present form of Tharu houses match with the traditional Tharu houses, but smaller in size. They have no fear of Maralaria in present days, so, they started to make windows in each household, which is the only difference than the traditional Tharus houses.

Photo 2: Present House of Tharu Community



Source: field survey 2009

## **5.2 Economic Activities and Strategies**

In this section I discuss traditional practices and the practices after the National Park in relation to forest utilization, agriculture, occupation and animal husbandry. These practices constitute the major economic activities of Tharu people. In order to identify the change and adaptation strategies of Tharu people after the establishment of National Park, researcher divided each headings into two viz; traditional practices and practices after the establishment of National Park.

## **5.2.1 Forest Utilization**

Tharu people assert that forest had not only been their habitat for a long time but also plays a critical role in the way of life for the Tharu people. Here I have explained the forest utilization practices of Tharu people before and after the National Park.

### **5.2.1.1 Traditional Forest Utilization System**

Local people conceptualized forest as a 'way of life'. In this sense their all culture has close relationship with the forest. Most of the requirement had been fulfilled by the forest product, which they used to bring largely from the forest. At the very early period, before the establishment of National Park, they had a belief that, in whatever quantity they cut forest product, it would still increase in the same manner and was more than before but never less than before. Everywhere their settlement was cover by forest. On these surplus forests, they had open access that they could bring forest product in whatever manner, and in whatever quantity they wanted.

They argue that, before the establishment of National Park they had no interruption to collect fuel wood and any other forest product from the forest. They could bring fuel wood and timber from the forest by wooden cart or Gada (a kind of carrier pulling by ox or he buffalo). Thus they used to bring firewood, timber and other product from the forest in whatever quantity in a vehicle. They also fulfilled the vegetable requirement from the forest raw material, which made their every day task related to the collection of forest product.

They said that *Jimidar* had large number of workers in his house, so, he brought large quantities of timbers from the forest. In the time of their forest life, those people who had very few number of family members could bring less forest materials than that of other

community members. Due to the open ended facility over the forest they had inequality on using forest products because those people who had larger number of family members brought in more quantity than other community members.

In the dense forest, many wild animals were living inside the jungle that destroyed the agricultural crops. Because of the wild animals, they had very few crops grown from the agricultural land. They claimed that if there was no forest around their agricultural land, they could grow more crops, so they had negative feelings for the forest they had. Due to this fact, they wanted to clean the whole forest. But they thought it was an impossible task because they believed that no matter how much they destroyed the forest, it flourished in the same manner. In some areas, they destroyed the forest for agriculture. For agricultural practices, whatever instruments they needed, they built from the forest product. At this period they used plough of wood, carrier, boat, sandal, etc that were made from the forest wood. Similarly, they made houses by using all the requirements from the forest as well as various cultural instrument like; *Delli* (a kind of basket to keep snail and fish), *Ghaunka*( a kind of instrument for fishing), basket for grain storage, fishing net and its stick, etc.

They didn't cut grass for the domesticate animals due to the availability of grazing lands before the park establishment. Inside the present National Park area, along with the dense forest, open grass land was also present. Local people had no restriction to feed their cattle over the grazing land. Hence, they used to leave their cattle on open grass land to feed. They brought their cattle to the house when they needed their cattle for- milk products, to plough field etc. during other times they left their cattle inside the jungle.

### **5.2.1.2 Forest Utilization System after National Park**

In Chitwan the main intention of National Park establishment was to protect endangered wildlife species together with the protection of habitat but there was no agenda for protecting the right of the indigenous community members. Hence, at that period, the park totally banned the local or indigenous Tharu people from the utilizing of forest products. Elderly people recalled the past scenario, at the early period of establishment of National Park, there were great upheavals on the indigenous people, even threatening on

their day to day life ways. Not only that they had difficulties in their life because forest was their culture or way of life. Then, the Tharu people started to use the forest products in illegal ways even acting against the rules and regulation forwarded by the park and government authorities. At that very time, park had remained under the protection of *Gaida Gasti Unit*, whose members came from the government's armed security force. The local people now work in co-ordination with this unit, where local people help the unit in trapping wild animals because of their familiarity and experience with the wild animals. In turn the armed force also helps local people in using firewood, grass, and other products. People used forest product only for their basic requirement, but they were ignorant about the value of timber like Sal (*Sorea robusta*), which has a huge market not only in India but also in Nepal. The local people had been using Sal and other valuable timber mainly for fuel wood and also for their house construction whenever they needed. They said that, along with the establishment of Mahendra Deer Park, they were deprived of the use of forest product freely. They used to bring forest product from the present National Park's forest but after the Mahendra Deer Park, they were totally banned from using forest product. This compelled the local people themselves to become the enemy of the forest resources. Deprived of their right over forest resources in such a way that they could not even bring small pieces of sticks from the forest, they appeared to be enemy of the forest, park authority and government. Due to the fact that they had negative feelings towards the forest and since their feelings towards the forest as being their own were lost, gradually, the local people started to violate the rules and regulation of park illegally started to destroy the forest. After that they also started to steal forest products behind the eyes of park authorities as well as parks patrolling unit.

Most of the respondent of the study area stated that along with the establishment of the Timber Corporation Nepal (TCN) in Chitwan, Tharu people realized the values of timber/woods. When they knew the values of timber they also became heavily engaged in deforestation, which further extended the extreme illegal export of forest timber without clearance. They were used by other elite people, who were mostly from the non-Tharu communities who did the illegal export of forest timber without clearance. At that time, heavy trees were destroyed by them as well as other migrated people but they did not get more illegal benefit than that of external non Tharu people, because they didn't have

good idea about the value of timber and wood. They only got chances of collecting firewood, fodder, grass, in addition to the wages they got from those people. Clearly the Tharus were used by them for the illegal export of forest product.

Similarly, along with the Nepal's political instability so many non Tharu people got benefit from the forest and these non Tharu people used them for the illegal export of forest product. At that time most of the Tharu people had negative feelings towards the forest due to the parks restriction as well as their displacement from the forest area, which was their initial habitat. As a result, in 2035/2036 B.S National Parks forest had become affected by extreme deforestation in illegal manner. Then the national parks forest had been gradually decreased from the sides of its boundary.

According to a school teacher, this created crisis not only to the wildlife and to the ecology but also more on the Timber Corporation Nepal. Then, Timber Cooperation Nepal launched the program for planting Sissoo (*Dalbergia sissoo*) in about 200 hectare area of National Park. By this time they had realized the fact of their resources degradation, so they were also engaged in the plantation activities of TCN. Even though they actively took part in the plantation program of the TCN, illegal export of forest product was not stopped, neither by them nor by the non Tharu people. Then in 2044 B.S. District Forest Office Chitwan introduced a new program of planting Sissoo (*Dalbergia sissoo*) inside the Sal (*Shorea robusta*) forest and made fortified fence in surrounding areas of the forest.

Shree Ram Devkota- a school teacher living in the same area asserted that, even after the plantation and fencing, illegal export of forest without clearance was still not stopped. Everyone appeared to be rival of the forest. If they got chances, they would bring forest product illegally. Even single tree was not the matter to them, if they got chances they would cut it right from the bottom, not concerning about the deforestation. That situation of deforestation was further strengthened by Nepal's political instability. The political instability helped to vandalize rules and regulations of National Park as well as Country as a whole. Political instability happened more in 2048 B.S, which further increased the deforestation in Chitwan's forest. From that some of the educated people became highly concerned with the heavy deforestation of National Parks forest and crisis in endangered

wildlife animal species. People from the non-Tharu communities were more worried than that of the native Tharu communities' people. Then, these educated people realized that, if the National Park did not participate with the local people in forest protection, the forest was not preserved for a long time. It is because the local people were the first hand users of the forest, they also had the long term experience about the forest. Due to this fact in 2049 B.S., these people inaugurated the forest user group organization.

Then the native people also started to work with the migrated people. On the one hand they were on their way of the forest user group registration process in the District Forest Office, on the other hand the local people and migrated people started to work together for the sake of common will of utilizing forest in systematic manner. At the same time in 2052 B.S. National Park launched the concept of Buffer zone, where the Patihani village was also included under the Buffer zone. According to the rules and regulation of Buffer Zone, their Forest Users Group was reorganized in 2054 B.S. After that the local people remained under the rules and regulation of community forest user committee which was mobilized by the buffer zone committee. Along with the establishment of community forest under the buffer zone concept, local people started to feel the forest as their own, which developed the sense of ownership of forest to the local people. In 2057 B.S., heavy flood from the Rapti River had destroyed the forest of community users group as well as the national park's area adjacent to the community forest. Then the national park included the flooded area inside its boundary which caused the community forest boundary to be included inside the National Park's area. Around 80 houses were displaced by the flood of Rapti River. They were then resettled inside the Sal forest which created further degradation in forest resources. Hence the ideas and knowledge of the forest and traditional utilization system of the Tharus was threatened not only by the national park but also by the natural calamity.

According to the buffer zone chairman of Patihani, they registered forest user group constitution on Ashad 29, 2058 in the Chitwan National Park. After registering the constitution to the Chitwan National Park, they had debate with neighbor communities for community forest boundary. Their community forest boundary debate shows the consciousness of all the members of community forest group about the forest, because at

that time community forest was managed by themselves and a sense of ownership had been developed in the people. Then all the members of the community forest started to work together to make rules and regulation of their user committee. From Mangshir 2062, they proceeded to make community forest plans with the help of Chitwan National Park and technicians of participatory conservation program. In this way after solving the boundary debate with the neighbor community, in Falgun 21 2062, Chitwan National Park handed over the community forest to the local community. While the local people got the right to the forest, in the form of community forest and then they too came under the rules and regulation of their own community forest, which were made by themselves.

After the National Park launched the concept of buffer zone, National Park gave them chances to utilize the forest resources for limited time and in limited condition. In order to bring the forest resources they needed, they had to take receipt from the Buffer zone at certain cost. Later on, this right also hand over to the community forest user committee, which makes more responsibility to them. In this way, the park management system made the forest to be gradually controlled by the local people themselves. After the community forest was handed over to the local people, they appeared like conservationist to the forest eventhough sometimes they illegally went to cut grass to the park area because they had no grass for their domestic cattle.

Belsahar community forest user committee secretary Parkash Chaudary explained that, through the community forest office, buffer zone launched different programs to reduce poverty and helped them to use alternative sources of fuel other than firewood. Similarly, many projects were introduced which helped the local people for toilet construction because forest was not only the source of firewood, fodder, grass, khar, khadai but also forest was also used for their latrine purposes by the local people from a long time. With the establishment of community forest under the buffer zone, the local people got authority of forest, hence they were now under the system, which was passed by their own consent.

In this way, when they got their right to utilize the forest resources in the form of community forest, they themselves now started to make rules of forest utilization with the



consent of all forest users and their user committee. Then the rules of the national park forest product utilization also started depending upon the community forest users committee. Charges of park entry in each year for the *khar*, *khadai*, and dry firewood were also taken by community forest users committee. A community forest user committee member said that, with the realization of National Parks ecology, community forest users committee decreased the park's opening days which comes from the 25, 20, 15, 10, 5 and now it opened for three days each year. Eventhough the opening days has decreased, Mina Mahoto asserted that they come in assent of rules made by themselves because park gives some sort of authority to manage and use of the forest. Thus the park entry fee taken by the forest users committee is used for the community development and the improvement of community forest. Local people were penalized by themselves, if any of them used forest illegally.

Prakash Chaudary, the secretary of community forest users committee, Belsahar claimed that, now the people have remained under the system and rules and regulation of community forest. Local people have replaced timber with bamboo for the construction of house. Bamboo is planted by local people themselves with the helps of community forest user group. In this way, local people have now isolated themselves from the National park and pattern of forest utilization system. Moreover, local people have now remained under the conservationist practices, changing from open forest users to legal forest users, use three days of each year under the rules of National Park.

### **5.2.2 Agricultural Practices**

We know that Nepal is an agricultural country and most of the livelihood of Nepalese people depend upon the agriculture. Chitwan district is not an exception to this reality, and the study area depends even more upon agriculture. Chhayaguru Mahoto said that Chitwan district is the store house of rice of Nepal. Rice is the major crop not only in Chitwan district but also all over Nepal which is produced from the land like Chitwan and other plain area. It is known that, the plain area like Chitwan produces more rice than hilly area of Nepal. Chitwan district has favorable climate for rice farming and it has

fertile soil. Not only that, Chhitwan district is also geographically suitable for agriculture, which has plain soil formation. In Chitwan district, because of the fertile soil and plain area, people do not need more land labor for the cultivation of land in comparison to other parts of the country. In order to get excellent agricultural production- more in rice production, water is the major necessity, but the respondent of the study area claimed that, Chitwan district's soil produces rice even when irrigation facilities are present or not. But comparatively in these two cases- rice production with irrigation facilities and without irrigation facilities, they get more rice production in irrigated land.

### **5.2.2.1 Agricultural Practices before National Park**

Before the establishment of national parks and even more before 1970s decade, none of the development activities had affected the Tharu communities and their agriculture practices. Buffer zone chairman Shankar Mahato told me that, they had rarely used irrigation during rice cultivation and other crops, because they had been practicing dry rice cultivation inside the present National Park area for a long time. They applied their own indigenous knowledge during agricultural practices. Before 1970s decade, Tharu people used to produce crops in dry soil even when they had no irrigation facility. They dug the soil and made smooth by breaking the hard soil and then sow rice seed directly over soil. With these practices, Tharu people used to get sufficient food, because of the sufficient land they had.

According to an elderly respondent, Chitwan most of the employed population were engaged in agriculture. In the case of the Tharu population, virtually everyone who had some form of employment depended directly or indirectly upon agriculture. The spectrum of farm employment opportunities ranges from day-labors to people holding down side jobs, all the way from small to large scale farms. Since most of the Tharus lived separated from their family and community unwillingly, they preferred employment in their own village. The career and income of Nepal's other population groups is unthinkable for the Tharus. Hardly any Tharu would see any economic alternative to agriculture, regardless of whether he has his own land or works someone else's.

Muller-Boker, 1999, asserts in the case of Tharu people, agriculture is their existence. She further describes about the Tharu people's agricultural practices. According to her initially Tharus engaged in shifting cultivation (*sari kheti*). Land was sufficiently available for this type of extensive land use. The preferred areas for cultivation were the slightly elevated tracts of river terraces; the lower areas within the flood plain were avoided because of the risk of flooding and the excessive moisture of the soil, but also because there was particularly great fear that wild animals would destroy the crops. They used a parcel of land for cultivation for two or three years with wet or dry rice, and in individual cases with mustard. Fine long-grain rice was planted in irrigated fields. The rice was sowed directly or transplanted. Dry rice and mustard were cultivated in dry field farming. Only one year harvest was brought in.

In 1951, following the issuance of land title, shifting cultivation was prohibited, and with the coming into force of the various forests acts (HMG, 1957). Forests were declared to be state property, and thus were no longer disposable as potential farmland. The only land recognized as belonging to the farmers was the land that they were currently farming; they lost *de facto* part of their old cultivated tracts. The Tharus had to abandon their traditional shifting cultivation system in favor of permanent cultivation, for which the regular application of fertilizers was unavoidable.

Most of the respondents told me that at the time of living in the forest area they had no income sources, and they remained in very poor condition. They had no capability to pay land tax to the government, because of the lack of income. Hence, most of the Tharu people did not have their own land but they worked in Jimidar's house. Jimidars had sufficient land and production of crops over the fixed land because they have sufficient workers in their house. Similarly, Jimidars had capability to pay tax but it was not necessary for them to pay land tax like other normal communities members. If they cultivated over the fixed land in each and every year, they had to pay tax to the government, otherwise, it was not necessary for them to pay the land tax. As a result of that, most of the Tharu communities people could not farm in fixed land, so, they carried out shifting cultivation practice (*khoriya*) for agriculture. According to a 70 years old elderly man Shree Ram Mahoto, they had done *khoriya* inside the present National Park. For the shifting cultivation or *khoriya*, initially they cut herbs and grass and left it where

they cut, but they never destroyed large trees. Then after some days later they set fire over scorch leaflets and other herbs, bushes etc. which made the soil fertile because of their ashes. They had a belief that when they set fire over land then it makes easy to plough land, because fire makes the root of bushes and other grasses weak which caught soil strongly. On the other hand the ashes of fire made land fertile and flourishing for rice farming.

An elderly respondent Bikram Mahato told me about the plough that, they used wooden plough to cultivate the land. At that time they did not use iron plough for land cultivation because they believed that iron plough would go deep inside the soil thus overturning the layers of soil, bringing the unfertile soil above the top fertile soil. But the plough of woods according to them could not bring inner soil to the surface. If soil comes from inner level to the surface, it was believed by the Tharu communities that, in the dry land, it became unfertile. They never used any chemical pesticides to make the land fertile but left their animals to graze in the fields, so they used the cattle's dung as manure but they never collected the dung. On the other hand, their crops straw also became their compost because they left all straw over the field. After some days these straw decayed on land and then it became compost for their land. After they brought all crops from the terrace, they left their domestic cattle over the cropped terrace, where some of the dung had been deposited at the time of cattle grazing over the terrace. That dung became manure for the next season but they did not use the same land for a long time. Similarly their terrace had got some of the manure from the dung of wild animals too, when these animals came to graze over their terrace. At that time, they kept few number of cattle in house for the milk purpose, and if they needed to cultivate terrace, they brought ox in their house otherwise they left all domestic cattle inside the forest area. Hence, they had used very less manure in the field, so they produced very poor crops from the terrace. But since they had enough land they had been getting sufficient foods. They never practiced to produce vegetables by themselves but in some they practiced potato farming.

Shree Ram Mahato told me that, at the time of living in the forest areas, they had no irrigation facilities for farming. Due to this fact they produced only one crop each year. In some areas, out of rice farming, Tharu people used to produce cash crops like Mustard and potato in separate land but they did not produce these crops where they produce rice

merely in the same year. Whenever they produced rice or other cash crops both of the farming practices gave very poor crops to them.

Buffer zone chair man Shankar Mahato told me that, even when they had found crops had problem of insects, which scorched their crops gradually, they did not use chemical pesticide to destroyed insects. But they got remedy from the problem of insect by setting *Barna Puja* in the land of crop diseases by Raj Goarah (priest of Tharu communities). After *Barna Puja* their crops came in normal condition and they believed that, their Raj Goarah had that type of intelligence which drove away the insects from Tantra/Mantra. Not only that they also believed that the Barna Puja brought fertile and healthy crops and it also changed the decayed crops gradually into green making them healthy. Basically *Barna Puja* concerned with the medicine of insects which was occur in the roots of crops. The security guard of Belsahar community forest users committee, Sukram Mahato told me about the rice found in forest area. Before 1970s, inside the present National Park forest area wild rice could be found, which was not grown in the forest by anyone. That wild rice has very short steam and it did not take long time to produce crops. Tharu people also collected such rice from the forest. Sometimes, while they did not have seed for the rice farming, they brought wild rice crops for the purpose of seed. If they could collect more rice crops from the forest, they could use remaining crops for the food. However sometimes they went to the forest and scattered the seeds in the forest without cleaning the bushes. From this practice, they also got some sort of food from the forest in a very short period of time. Although this practice did not remain for a long time, that type of rice is found inside the jungle even at present time. But the wild rice is found in the jungle with other herbs, grasses, bushes and trees. Hence, to collect wild rice from the forest area it requires more time. So the practice of collecting wild rice and using wild rice seeds is almost going to be disappeared gradually.

#### **5.2.2.2 Agricultural Practices after the National Park**

After the issuance of land titles 1951 inauguration of National Park, their shifting cultivation practices had been threatened by the new practice of National Park. On the basis of field observation, the traditional shifting cultivation practice has almost

disappeared. Now they practice agriculture in fixed land, because national park restricts them from their traditional agricultural practices concerning with forest land where they produce only one crop in each year, which is the rice culture. National park's restriction over forest makes very difficult for the local people just to carry on living, because they have no more land, which had been used from a long time. This situation compels them to cultivate more than one crop in each year.

Majority of the respondent say that, while National Park restricts local people and their cattle from grazing in the park, it makes local people to limit their animal husbandry in their house. For a while, they had not collected cattle's dung to their houses but after they became deprived of the forest, they started to collect cattle's dung on their houses. They used cattle dung for farming purpose as a compost fertilizer, which makes land fertile more than the agricultural practices they used before the establishment of National Park. Due to the restriction over grazing land, their all cattle remain in their houses, so, even from the few number of cattle they can collect more dung or compost fertilizer than they could before the establishment of National Park. Soil is made more fertile by compost of cattle's dung. Similarly, by using regular farming practices in the same terrace in each and every year it makes them easier for farming practices.

But because of the lack of good irrigation facilities they could not produce sufficient crops to their annual diet. They were dissatisfied with the national park because of the limited land and limited crops they can produce from the land, but if they had good irrigation facilities they could produced more crops for their annual food. They transplant rice in dry land, there is natural rain they obtain more rice, if not they just obtain very few production.

Bikram Mahato from Simal Gairi said that, while the National Park restricts them from the forest resources, they can get very limited woods from the forest. They used woods' plough for the land tilling for a long time but after they have the problem of woods they had a need of making iron plough. But they believe that iron plough makes land less fertile than that of wooden plough.

According to Jeni Mahato, after they became restricted from the pasture land of the National Park area, they started to collect rice straw from the terrace, because they needed to use rice straw to feed their cattle. They have started to cut rice straw from the very bottom level and the remaining parts of the stem is used for the purpose of garlic farming. They just put seeds of garlic inside the remaining stem, and roots of stem decayed inside the soil which became fertilizer to the garlic, in this way they easily produce garlic from the stem of rice. Similarly some of the cash crops like mustard are also produced from the same land which remains uncultivated after rice farming rice.

On the basis of an elderly man, Shree Ram Mahato, after 1990s decade many projects have been launched for the National park development as well as for the poverty reduction of local Tharu people. Also some local NGOs and INGOs have gradually come to promote tourism in the National Park and started to investigate wild life species found in the National Park. Under these organizations, some of the organization officials help them with water irrigation for qualitative and quantitative farming, but more on quantitative farming for the local people's requirement. These organization officials found that, due to the lack of irrigation facilities local people can not produce sufficient crops. The less crop production of local people affects the National Parks forest. If they have less crop production they try to find alternative resources going to the forest for illegal exporting forest resources without clearance. With the realization of the fact that in Simal Gairi village, an organization helped them for the water wells construction. They used the water on the basis of turn pattern, one well used by the upper villagers and the other by the lower villagers. After the construction of wells, they could produce rice not only in one season but also in two seasons. Similarly, after getting irrigation facilities, they started to produce vegetables by themselves. For the vegetables production NGOs and INGOs provide seeds and give trainings to the villagers. Different programs related to animal husbandry and agriculture were launched by NGOs and INGOs through the community forest.

After the National Park was established, Tharu people could not get vegetables from the forest area, which compelled them to produce vegetables by themselves. But sometimes they brought *Ghungi* (a kind of fish like species used for curry) from the Rapti River also.

Community forest users committee encouraged local people to produce cash crops, and then with the help of community forest and NGOs and INGOs they started to produce chilly, cauliflower, cabbage, onion, garlic, etc. From this practice an elderly man of 70, Shree Ram Mahoto claimed that, he has been able to fulfill his basic needs of his houses, for instance; Sugar, Salt, Oil, Clothes, and Children's school fee and their dress. In his opinion, it was not his interests but his compulsion, because they were satisfied inside the forest area and practices of that time, but now in each and every moment they are suppressed by the monetary value. On the basis of his experience, monetization was developed for them initially from the agriculture itself. For the agricultural practices they needed ox for cultivating land, but because of the restriction over grazing land they are limited with the number of ox found in their houses, but in some of the houses they don't have even one ox. Hence for the cultivation, whether they can or can't, they need to hire Tractor to cultivate their terrace. If they have no money, they borrow money in debt from the neighbor or rich people to cultivate the land. Due to the fact that they need cash, their new vegetable production practice has been able to cover their needs more or less. I found a similar case in changing practice in agriculture during my research which is based more on cash crop production for the life ways; Shree Ram Mahoto, an elderly man of 70 involved in vegetable production, I asked him about why and how he did this new practice in agriculture. On his own voice he said me about cash crops production:

*“Marna vanda baulauna niko” (to become insane is better than to die)*

*‘Similarly, I needed money day by day, whether I liked it or not, I had to bring potato from Tandi (present Ratna Nagar municipality) and western Chitwan. Then I started to sell potato in the market, from where I collected a bit of money. At that time I carried potato in my head which has made me bald now. Later on so many organization/institution came in National Park, which brought different package for the poor people like us. These organizations helped me by providing seeds in very cheap price as well as I got training from these organizations. After training I started to produce onion, cauliflower and cabbages. But more than that, I sold plants of onion, cauliflower and cabbages to my neighbors who were not only from Tharu community but also more from the non-Tharu communities. Though from this income I have fulfilled my household expenses, I haven't been able to do anything else from this income. These*



*organizations are not seen nowadays, I don't know the reason why they do not come over here anymore?*

*My cash crops farming practices is mainly because of my ego. I had difficulty in cash, then one day, when I went to Tandi to seek potato, at the very time I saw that some of the farmers produced potato as well as other vegetables. This practice of Tandi remained in my mind. They were also man as like me; they also had two legs and red blood like me, if so, why don't I produce that type of vegetables? I asked myself. Then I started to work with the help of parks organization, which gave me seeds in very low price as low as half the price of the seeds.'*

From the above statement narrated by Shree Ram Mahoto, people's motivation to produce cash crops as well as their compulsion to change their traditional agricultural practices was the major effect of National Park on them. Before the National park system, they practiced barter system and hence; they did not know the value of cash. Similarly, they fulfilled their needs of vegetables from the present National Park forest area. But after the park curtailed local people to enter into the park and collect forest product, they were compelled to seek alternate way of life. In addition, due to the park not only they had to alter their way of traditional life but also needed cash to accomplish their basic requirement. So, the local people themselves started to produce vegetables, it was not only for their household use but also for marketing purpose in order to obtain money. Moreover, the park has radically lowered their agricultural production and disrupted their life style (Milton and Binney, 1980:18) which forced the local people to seek another life style.

On the basis of my field observation, it was found that, they used small types of tools (hoe, spade) for digging the terrace to cultivate land and make land viable to produce vegetable crops. Those people who domesticate cattle or more specifically domesticate ox by feeding grass or straw, still plough land by iron plough instead of wooden plough to cultivate terrace. People from the Jimidar clan cultivate terrace by using Tractor and they also separate crops from straw by using Tractor's thresher's machine. Majority of the population separate crops themselves where they thresh over the wooden bed. Similarly, they cut all the straw from bottom level and spread all straw with crops in the

fields. After straw becomes dry and scorch by the natural sunlight, they store all the straw in one place. If they have space in their house, they bring all the crops to their house, otherwise, they store the crops in their field. After separating crops with straw, they bring straw and crops separately to their house. They store rice in a '*bhakari*', a cylindrical shaped basket made by bamboo covered by the sticky soil used for storing rice. They put rice basket outside the house where they make small cottage to keep basket safe from rain and light. Likewise, they store straw for a year by making '*Tauva*' over ground, which was made by just spreading bamboo and other long woods on ground, the straws are stacked on top, shaped like a dome. And some of the people who have wood pillar start making Tauva from the wooden base which is at certain elevation from the ground, otherwise they make base of Tauva right from the ground level.

### **5.2.3 Animal Husbandry**

Animal husbandry was another major economic activity of the Tharu people. They had practice agricultural activities and animal husbandry together. Here I have described practices of animal husbandry in two parts- Animal husbandry before the establishment of National Park and after the establishment of National Park.

#### **5.2.3.1 Animal Husbandry before National Park**

Animal husbandry had played the central role in the Tharu people's economy. The economic significance of the livestock laid primarily in the breeding of draught animals for the plough and cart. According to the respondent Ram Raja Mahoto, they had 50/60 cows, 15/20 yoke of oxen, 9/10 Chicken, and some of the water buffaloes up to 1970s decades. They slaughtered a chicken everyday. The ownership of large numbers of oxen was a sign of well-being which raised the prestige of the owner. If a field was to be ploughed for a whole day, at least four to six oxen were needed, the pairs being relieved at each two hours interval. The oxen were fit for extensive farming as the oxen did not have too much to do at the same time. Since the milk production of cow under the

extensive form of livestock breeding was enough only for the nurturing of calves, water buffaloes were kept for the household's dairy requirement. They used forest land for the pasture land, similarly after the rice farming, that terrace became the pasture land for their cattle, so there was no problem in providing fodder to their cattle.

### **5.2.3.2 Animal Husbandry after National Park**

Since the various laws related to the forest protection within the National Park were introduced, Tharu people had very limited pasture land. The areas around the National Park boundaries are well patrolled, any grazing is strictly punished because it may lead to heavy grazing over forest. Within the forest protection rules and regulation shifting cultivation practices has been abolished. Jeni Mahato said that the only possibility is to graze the stubble in the fields, which has been harvested only one time in a year. With the intensity of cultivation increasing to two or three annual harvests, the grazing of fields has been completely abandoned. From the observation, I realized that between the people, there was competition in grass which was not only needed for the animal husbandry but also for the thatched roofs, this situation further made problem in animal husbandry which gradually led them to decrease the number of cattle from their household. Now, we can find just one or two oxen but greater number of goats because according to them, it is a source of fast economy. In some of the houses, cattle were totally disappeared and they used tractor to cultivate land. A young female said that, if they domesticate more cattle they have problem not only in feeding cattle but also in thatching roof. On the other hand however, they accumulate dung from the cattle which could not be utilized in field because they had also started using cattle dung for the purpose of firewood which also created competition in using dung either in field or for firewood. Since they have not been able to use the domestic manure like cattle dung for cultivation, they can not produce enough crops. This situation has gradually increased in Tharu communities.

Hence, in Tharu community's animal husbandry has become problematic. They domesticate only few cattle, because of the availability of very less grass for the cattle to feed. So, they need very few mechanisms for animal husbandry. Hence, they can now

mobilize to seek other opportunities. Not only that, their traditional practices of animal husbandry is gradually declining, in some of the household I could not find even one domestic animal.

#### **5.2.4 Occupational Practices**

Most of the Chitawan's economically active population was engaged in agriculture. In case of the Tharu population, virtually everyone who has some form of employment depends directly or indirectly upon agriculture. The continuum of farm employment opportunities ranges from farmhands and day-laborers to persons holding down side jobs. Since most Tharus very unwillingly live separated from their family and community, they prefer an employment in their own village. The career and spatial mobility typical of Nepal's other population groups<sup>1</sup> is unthinkable for the Tharus. Hardly any Tharu would see any economic alternative to agriculture, regardless of whether he/she has his/her own land or works someone else's (Boker; 1999, p.112). They assert that "agriculture is our existence and it's the major occupation for us".

##### **5.2.4.1 Occupational Practices before National Park**

Majority of the respondent asserted that, before the establishment of National Park, most of the Tharu people were busy in their fields, because at that time they used to have enough land. Their land became sufficient to the everyday life ways of the community. For their survival they did not have necessity to go out of their field to live. Even though

they had enough land they didn't need to engage on land most of the time because of their simple farming<sup>2</sup> practices.

<sup>1</sup> One may recall the large army of porters in the mountains, piece-wage earners from the Terai and professional mercenaries.

<sup>2</sup> where people showing crops or transplant crops and come at the time of collecting crops

Ram Raja Mahato told me that, they had never produced vegetables at that moment, and rarely produced pulse in their terrace. They fulfilled vegetables needs from the forest product. Hence, they were engaged in collecting vegetables from the forest which were used on curry. Similarly they collected various forest products for different purposes which were found in forest. They used bark of tree to make thread, woods and timber for house construction. They also made various Tharu cultural instruments such as; Delli, basket, mattress, sitting chair etc. from the forest product. Moreover, they used raw materials from the forest for the soap purpose. At that time Tharu people had no further fruitful and productive profession, but their jobs only concerned with their everyday life, where they had their most important task related with survival only.

They told me that, majority of their clans were working on Jimidar's house, due to the difficulty to pay tax to the government, but if they worked on Jimidar's house they had no problem of paying tax. Jimidars didn't want their workers to leave their houses so they always limited the servants inside their houses whenever there was no work in the fields, keeping them occupied with the household chores. Some times the workers were dissatisfied with the Jimidar's exploitation over them, but they could not do anything because at that time they have no option due to poverty. Not only that, since Jimidars did

not give chances to go outside their house it made them deprived of any other opportunities like day labor jobs. If they left Jimidar house forcefully, they could not fulfill their basic needs by themselves. On one hand they could not cover enough land and farm permanently over same land because if they did so they had to pay to the government tax, and on the other hand, shifting cultivation practices had been threatened by the wild animals. In shifting cultivation practices they needed large number of people to safeguard their crops and they could produce only few crops than permanent farming. Hence only few people were involved in shifting cultivation practices. If they practiced, they needed to spend most of the time over their field, and remaining time they had to collect forest products for their basic requirements like vegetables, Ghungi (for curry found in water), fish, fire woods, khar, khadani etc. These practices made Tharu people limited only on the forest, from where they could fulfill only their basic requirement.

Sankar Mahato, Chairman of Buffer zone of Patihani sectors said, on their traditional agricultural practices, they had their own traditional division of labour on the basis of age groups and working capability. Tharu people involved in different occupation concerned with agriculture. Children were reared and trained differently on the basis of their age and capacity along with the increase in age they had promotion in their occupation. But Mahato didn't know the exact division of work according to age. Generally they were promoted as they grew from child to the young man and so on. The type of work they did at different phases of their ages and work experience is shown in following way.

First phase: In this stage, Tharus' children who can walk perfectly were involved. At the time of sowing seed to plant in the field, birds destroyed their seeds and ate the seeds. Hence, children were engaged in chasing the birds from the field.

Second phase: In second phase, those children who became perfect in watching birds and matured in age, after bird watching stage, they were then involved in taking Goat for grazing in pasture land.

Third phase: Third phase included those children who became perfect in Goat grazing and capable for cow grazing. Those who were involved in cow grazing also had to take milk of cow.

Fourth phase: In this phase, children became gradually matured in both age and agriculture; they accumulated knowledge about cows and oxen at the time of grazing. They were called *Younia*, the Tharus have a belief that Younias had the knowledge about ox whether the ox was fit for ploughing, and which oxen were ready for ploughing was determined by the Younias. The Younia used to determine the time for oxen for ploughing, moreover, they also had to have knowledge about the right time for ploughing.

Fifth phase; In this phase, these children had become totally matured, after crossing fourth phase their occupation was promoted in farming. In this phase they had to practice different work:

### **1. Futkeria**

In farming practices, those people who were involved in making ridge of terrace or mound were called Futkeria in Tharu communities. When people were promoted from the Younia, they were involved in farming practices. They first got chances of making ridges of terrace. When Futkeria had finished to made mound then at the leisure time they could learn to plough the fields.

### **2. Haruwa**

Those people who used to plough terrace were known as Haruwa. When people were promoted from the Futkeria then he got chances of becoming Haruwa. But they needed to learn to plough the fields at the same period when they were working as Futkeria. If those people who could not learn to plough the land were not promoted from the Futkeria to the Haruwa.

Until the government had not taken the forest land as state property, the Tharu people had enough land which needed more than one ploughman at the same time. Among the

ploughman, one of the ploughmen who became expert than other ploughman, used to lead other ploughman at the time of land cultivation, and were known as Yekli Haruwa. Similarly, out of farming practices some of the people were involved in Buffalo grazing, known as Vaiseriya. Jimidar had lots of workers, among them some of the people were involved in cattle grazing who were called as Gothalo. Among these Gothalos, one of the experienced Gothalo became the leader of Gothalos, he had more responsibility at the time of cattle grazing than other Gothalos. When their cattle entered into others terrace or others crops, then leader went for the dispute resolution. Whether they needed to pay fine or anything else, leaders solved the problem.

At that time, they believed that those people who knew how to read and write, or in other words, literate men did not have to work in agriculture because he became recognized as more superior than other people who worked as physical laborers. Those literate men were called as *Baidar*<sup>1</sup> in Tharu communities. But now they do not have any biases in any of the works. Any kind of people have to do any kind of work in Tharu communities, if they aren't involved in other professional job.

<sup>1</sup> in Tharu community those people who has knowledge about read and write

A school teacher, Santa Ram Mahato told that, before National Park establishment, and more before 1950s, most of the Tharu people were living in Jimidar's house. In Jimidar's house there were lots of people who shared the same kitchen for food, so they needed to cook more food at the same time. Mostly female were the kitchen workers and more than five females remained to work in the same kitchen turn by turn after each month.

Hence, it was found that the Tharus were not involved in any kind of professional occupations. The only occupation they had was agriculture, animal husbandry, forest resource collection and working in Jimidar's house. However they did have different types of work divisions within those occupations.

#### **5.2.4.2 Occupational Practices after National Park**



After the establishment of Chitwan National Park, people were compelled to seek cash based opportunities due to the lack of enough agricultural land. Later on they could no longer depend on agricultural land after the land issuance by government and took forest land as state property, more, after the National Park establishment. Then they started to seek alternative job opportunities, based on cash based prospect.

Although, they were deprived from the National Park, they got some of the opportunities from the National Park. Inside the National Park, few people got tourist guide job for forest, because they were more familiar with forest and its wild animals for a long time. With the establishment of National Park and development of tourism, so many hotels and restaurant were built for the purpose of parks tourism. Some of the people have got employment opportunities in hotels and restaurants. On the basis of household survey 2009, non of the Tharu people got skill labor job opportunity in hotels and restaurants, but they only got chances in unskilled labour such as; waiter, cleaning utensils, cleaning hotels etc. due to the lack of knowledge about technical work.

Chhayaguru Mahato said that, nowadays they can not get market goods from the barter system, which they had been practicing for a long time. He also asserted that, they needed cash in each and every moment even for their crops because of the limitation of land and maximum utilization of the limited agricultural land. This forced them to seek alternate sources of income. Local people get some opportunities from the Park because of its development activities. Local people started get first priority to work for the promotion and development of Park's Tourism, as for example local people get more chances in jungle safari because of their long time familiarity with forest and its wild animals.

Now the Tharu community's people work in hotel, restaurant, driving vehicles and work in foreign nations as unskilled labour which can be shown by the field survey report is presented in Table 1 of fourth chapter. Most of the respondents said that, in Tharu communities, helping one another for different works have not remained but have changed into the wage labor. In farming practices, they are not only concerned with the fulfillment of basic needs but also concerned with the market value, which is required for the cash crop production. With the help of National Park's NGOs and INGOs, local

people get idea about the cash crops production which has become the major occupation to some people in the village.

Most of the young respondents said that, nowadays they have very negative feelings to the agricultural practices, because from the agriculture, they can hardly fulfill their basic needs. Hence, nowadays they are motivated to foreign country such as; India, Dubai, Qatar etc. from where they can earn more money than that can be earned through agriculture and other opportunities they get in Nepal. I found that, because of the low income and difficulty in their everyday life ways, they have no interest in traditional occupational practices such as; ploughing the land, animal husbandry, collecting forest product, fishing, and so on.

Sankar Mahato said that, before National Park establishment there were different kitchen workers found in Tharu communities, where in each and every month kitchen workers were changed because they remained in large joint family, but nowadays, lack of resources has compelled them to stay in small family. Not only that, they no longer work in Jimidar's house but they now work in their own house. Due to the small family size only one kitchen worker is sufficient for them. Moreover, they have no rule about the kitchen worker; any of the family members can involve in kitchen, if he/she has interest and leisure time. In large family, they need to bear food crisis and few people have more trouble to take care of other people in large family. Hence, they started to live in small family size and motivated for the cash based job opportunities, which makes them to loose the social relation with their Tharu communities due to which feeling of co-operation isn't found in them at present.

Thus in Tharu communities, in present context, they are not only limited to agriculture and animal husbandry as their major occupation but also the employment opportunities aroused due to the establishment of national park and more on their self efforts of income through working outside the village and foreign countries.

## CHAPTER - VI

### CHANGE AND CONTINUITY IN SOCIO-CULTURAL PRACTICES AND RITUALS

Tharu people were rich in their cultural practices and they said that, most of the cultural practices of Tharu people were concerned with the forest and agricultural practices. They also claim that nature is culture for them. Under this subtitle, I have only tried to describe some of the non-material cultural practices- marriage, death ritual, faith over Chhhitamaye and fair and festivals of Tharu people.

#### 6.1 Exchange Relation

Under this section I have tried to analyze the exchange practices of Tharu people with reference to marriage system.

##### 6.1.1 Exchange Relation National Park System

Most Tharu marriages occurred when the children were quite young. Somewhere a boy of 8 to 9 years of age was married to a girl of 15 to 16 years old. But normally they married when they were 15-20 years old. According to Parsant Mahato, they had very simple and economical marriage system. They had no dowry system in their marriage, as like other communities. They had normal marriage system like the Hindu marriages celebrated with the traditional music and dance. Before 1970s, they had a typical tradition for marriage; before marriage a female must make tattoos in her hand and leg, if she didn't make tattoos, she was not suitable for marriage. Hence, in their community, females had to make tattoos before their marriage. When the ladies made tattoos then she was believed to be sacred and food made by her became pure otherwise not. On the day of the marriage, bride-groom had to carry the load of bride, bride-groom carried umbrella for the bride. In the name of dowry, bride's family gave her a pair of ox, one or two buffalos, one or more goats etc. They gave domestic cattle on the basis of their capacity but normally they had to give at least one cattle to their daughter. On the other hand, they had another unique tradition that at the time of marriage, the bride's family had to manage a similar vehicle which was used by the bride-groom to come to the bride's house.

From the practices of dowry at the time of marriage, we can analyze that Tharu people had their traditional culture concerned with the agriculture and Animal husbandry.

### **6.1.2 Exchange Relation after National Park**

According to Parsant Mahato, the ritual practices during the marriage system before and after the establishment of the national park is more or less the same. At present none of the Tharu people give dowry to their daughter at the time of their marriage concerned with agriculture, because they think that if they give such type of dowry to their daughter, their daughter gets pain in her husband's house. Even though, this system has not totally disappeared and they still give one cattle to follow the traditional cultural practices. They have decreased the number of cattle dowry in marriage because they have no pasture land to serve the cattle due to the restriction over grazing land by National Park. Nowadays, they give other forms of goods to their daughter in the name of dowry than cattle dowry. School teacher, Shankar Mahato said that, nowadays in Tharu communities, female choose those boys who had enough land, where as boys choose those females who have good facial complexion, education and property. This has made their simple marriage system transform into expensive marriage system. On the way of my field observation, I got a chance to observe a marriage in females home, where I found a tractor of dowry goods but could not find even single cattle to be given as dowry. They celebrate marriage on ladies house with the traditional music and dance. Similarly, female have no necessity to make tattoo on her hand and leg for the purity before the marriage. However they make tattoos if they have interest of it. On the other hand, now the time for marriage has changed from 15-20 years old to an age above 20 years.

## **6.2 Death Ritual**

Death is considered as one of the events of great significance among the Tharu societies as in the other tribal communities. The rituals of death of Tharu differ according to the place of habitation. I described here the rituals of death practices of the study area.

### **6.2.1 Traditional Death Ritual Practices**

According to Mina Mahato, before 1970s, Tharu people had enough land to bury their dead bodies on land. Most of their dead bodies were buried on the banks of Rapti River, and in some cases they buried their dead bodies on the forest land. They used to bury their males on the face down and their females on the face up position.

### **6.2.2 Death ritual Practices after National Park**

When Chitwan National Park was established in 1970s decade, local people were deprived not only of the forest product but also deprived of the land they had been using for burying their dead bodies. Due to this fact that, Tharu people gradually changed their death ritual, thus started to cremate their dead bodies. According to Mina Mahato, after the establishment of National Park they have very few lands to cremate their dead bodies. So they used the bank of Rapti River repeatedly to burn their dead body.

## **6.3 Belief and Practice on Chhitamaye**

### **6.3.1 Practice before National Park**

Tharu people had great faith over Chhitamaye, the forest deity which is why before in each and every religious practices as well as fair and festivals they worshiped the Chhitamaye forest deity. They had strong belief on Chhitamaye that they would face trouble if they had made any mistake over Chhitamaye. Tharu people had belief to the superpower of Chhitamaye and said that Chhitamaye could do whatever she wanted if the people made any mistake in and around the Chhitamaye forest area. So, they didn't have courage to pollute the Chhitamaye forest deity area because if they did they believed that they would have been penalized by the Chhitamaye by whatever kind of punishment she wanted. Because of this fact, Tharu people never tried to pollute the surrounding Chhitamaye forest area, neither did they involve in illegal forest product export around the Chhitamaye area.

According to Chhyaguru Mahato, in each and every month they gave sacrifice to the Chhitamaye deity of buffalo, chicken, he goat etc. in very large number. They had believed that when they gave animal's sacrifice to the deity, then the deity would be

happy and keep them safe from each and every evil and disease. In order to achieve and fulfill the desire and responsibility of Tharu people they worshiped the Chhitamaye.

### **6.3.2 Practice after the National Park**

When the Mahendra deer Park was launched in Chitwan Forest, they realized that they had very less access over the forest area. According to Jeni Mahato, after the concept of National Park was brought in Chitwan, Tharu people and other migrated people had equal access over the forest deity. That made contradiction in worshipping idea over the Chhitamaye forest area, than from the Tharu people's concept of sense of ownership gradually declined. When their access over the forest was subjugated by the park authorities, according to the Tharu people, Chhitamaye could not get enough slaughter from the local Tharu people so Chhitamaye's super power faded away which they faced before establishment of National Park.

Ram Raja Mahato said that to develop Park tourism, National park started to make temple in Chhitamaye deity area, which made further trouble over local people because they claim that they were not the prayer of the idols or temples and did not pray the human-like forms of deities, but they were the prayers of nature. While National Park started to make temple in Chhitamaye to developed park tourism, which was different to the local people's long practices of natural deity worshipping tradition, faith over Chhitamaye deity gradually decreased from the local people's mind.

Nowadays, for the local people worshipping the Chhitamaye have become just a formality, enthusiasm with which they celebrated before has also been lost. However, their worshipping practices is still continued even after the National Park's effect, but their pattern of worshipping in Chhitamaye and sacrifice has changed to just complete formality and very rear number respectively. On the other hand local people's fear over Chhitamaye has faded away due to which illegal export of forest product from that forest area has increased and pollution is also increased in Chhitamaye deity area. Pollution has increased to such an extent that Tharu people themselves use Chhitamaye Temple area for the latrine's purpose. Hence, the belief over Chhitamaye is being faded away.

### **6.4 Fair and Festivals**

Among other ethnic Group, Tharu People were richer in cultural practices for a long time. But their cultural practices are now being threatened by conservationist practices. Some of their cultural practices have totally disappeared while some of them still remain in some modified form. Here I have tried to portray some of the practices of Tharus; which was described to me by Shankar Mahato, President of Patihani buffer zone sector.

### **1. Khichara (Magesakranti)**

It is celebrated each and every New Year with the *Baramasa* (a kind of dance danced at the time of Magesakranti) dance. Tharu people's New Year starts from the Magh month with this festival. They celebrate it so enthusiastically that they never celebrate Nepali calendars new year. Practice of celebrating New Year with this festival is still being run, but nowadays the *Baramasa* dance can hardly be seen.

### **2. Faguwa (Fagupurnima)**

Tharu people call Faguwa to Holi or Fagupurnima. Before National Park establishment Tharu people used to celebrate Faguwa as a big festival. They celebrated Faguwa with the *Faguwa dance* (the dance danced at the time of Fagupurnima), where all villagers gathers and played with different colors, more especially, they ate meat at the time of festival. When the National Park chased them away from the jungle, Tharu people spent more time for survival, because they had very few land and had restriction in jungle. This made trouble in their festival and gradually their Faguwa dance and practicing it with lots of meat has declined at present. Hence, nowadays they say that, they celebrate this festival, not like Faguwa but like Holi or Fagupurnima. Because Fagupurnima and Holi can be celebrate in simple way unlike there traditional Faguwa practice.

### **3. Chaitra Labami (Ram Nabami)**

They called Ram Nabami as Chaitra Labami. They celebrate it in Chaitra month. The practice of this festival still continues in Tharu communities. Initially they celebrated it with the meat of he goat, chicken and local wine. But now they rarely celebrate this festival with the varieties of meat item.

### **4. Gawa lei (Aasad ma dhan ropne)**

At the time of rice transplanting they worshipped, and set Puja at the field and called this Puja as Gawa lei. This is also continued at present, but while they set Gawa lei they do not worship Chhitamaye, which they had practiced from a long time.

### **5. Hariyari Warna**

When the rice started to become green, rice can be infected from the diseases. To save rice from the diseases, they set a kind of worship, which is known as Hariyari Warna. It has another reason concerned with the man themselves, because at the time of rice planting they were dirty and can be affected from the diseases. Hence, this festival also has meaning of cleanliness.

This festival is also celebrated at present but they do not worship Chhitamaye before celebrating this festival. In spite of worshipping in field, when they have the problem of diseases in crops, they now have started to use chemical pesticide. But before 1970s decade they had no problem of diseases on crops, if they had they got remedy from the worship. On the other hand, since they had enough land, even if some parts of the fields were affected by the diseases, overall it did not affect them so much.

### **6. Jitiya Pawani (Teej)**

It is the festival of females in Nepal, and the study area also is not exception of this reality. In Tharu communities, male were also engaged in celebrate this festival, but now males don't show any interest as like they did before. This festival is almost celebrated similar to other Nepalese Hindu women.

### **7. Yemosha (Pitri Aaunsi)**

It is called as *Babuko Mukha Herne Din*; they celebrated this festival by sacrificing he-goat, and making different items of meat. In this festival, Tharu people used to feed different items to their father. But nowadays, they are unable to sacrifice domestic cattle because they have very few number of cattle found in their community due to National Park restriction to the local people. Hence, now-a-day they just wish the festival to their fathers.



### **8. Sohorai (Tihar)**

They didn't give emphasis on this festival when they were forest dweller. But in some areas they celebrated this festival though with less importance. Tharu people claim that it is not the festival of their communities but it comes from the other migrated hilly people. But after the national park initiation and they came in contact with the hilly migrants, they started to celebrate not like Sohorai in the same way as they perceived and celebrated, but now celebrate as Tihar, the same way as hilly people celebrate.

### **9. Nal Warna**

In Kartik month, at the time of rice collection, before they cut the crops, they used to set a kind of worship called Nal Warna. They set this festival to keep rice ready for food. First they gave rice to the God at the time of this festival. In this practice they have been no changes before and after the establishment of National Park.

## CHAPTER VII

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

#### 7.1 Summary

Discussions on the preceding chapters reflect the effects of Chitwan National Park in the lives of Mahato Tharu people. Traditional culture of Mahoto ethnic group is basically connected to the forest of Chitwan, which is indeed forest of Chitwan National Park at present. Most of the previous researches which were related with National Park and buffer zone have only done on the subjects like the conflicts of park people with the National Park and so on, but the effects of National Park on traditional cultural practices of Tharu people have not been studied yet in a systematic way. Due to the effects of National Park on the lives of Tharu people, most of the traditional cultural practices of Tharu people are largely affected- some of them are continued in another forms, some are in the process of fading out and some have already disappeared out of their lives. Thus, they have to adopt new cultural practices by changing and forgetting their generation-long previous practices.

This study has been conducted with the objective of exploring the effects of Conservationist practices on the cultural practices and life ways of Tharu people. In this research, efforts also have been made to investigate the adaptation strategies and the change in cultural practices of Tharu communities. The researcher has examined the adaptation strategies and changes found in socio cultural milieu of the Patihani village. Besides collecting the necessary qualitative and some quantitative data, the researcher has also studied the narratives of villagers through which the study of the process of adaptation strategies, changes in their cultural practices and life ways have become more authentic and reliable. The views and opinions of the people of study area regarding the traditional agricultural practices, forest utilization and occupational practices on the changing environment have been included after the establishment of Chitwan National Park. Besides this, the views and opinions before the establishment of National Park are also included. The researcher has summarized the effects of Chitwan national park on the traditional life of the Tharu people as follows:

The Tharu people have lost their traditional belief and faith over Chhitamaye, because of these reasons: First, the long worshipping practices on a stone-a natural stone of

Chhitamaye- has been replaced into a temple by Park authorities in order to attract the national and international tourists. Even the park authorities have made the statue of the Chhitamaye, which the Tharu people will never accept in their whole life as it is against their tradition and culture of worshipping nature. Because Tharu people never pray the statue in any human-form idols but they pray nature as a God. Therefore, due to the direct attack on local people's culture, people lost their belief and faith over Chhitamaye. Second, due to the increasing number of tourist in park area, the holy place Chhitamaye for Tharu people has become dirty and careless. Third, after the establishment of National Park, the park system has not let them to enter into the forest area to worship Chhitamaye. So they are prohibited to enter into the forest and to worship their God which was the generation-long ritual practice of Tharu people. It was the necessary ritual practice before starting their other fair and festivals. But now due to the prohibition of park system, they had to change it.

Tharu people, before the establishment of National Park, used to live inside the forest area and remained isolated from other society. But now, park lets equal opportunities to Tharu and non Tharu communities to use the forest resources, which makes Tharu people in contact with other communities. Then social ties among the members of Tharu community have become weakened which was very strong during the forest inhabitation. The Park gave equal opportunities to all members of Tharu and non Tharu communities for the forest utilization and handed over community forest to Tharu and non Tharu by making them members of same community forest group. After that, Tharu people started to assimilate other community's cultural practices. For example, they celebrate Dasain and Tihar as big festivals as they used to celebrate their traditional big festival Faguwa (Fagupurnima).

To talk about agricultural practices, they used to practice traditional shifting cultivation for a long time. But now, National Park system has banned them to use the land and forest resources so that their traditional shifting cultivation practice has been totally disappeared and this practice has been changed into the fixed cropping.

In order to reduce the impacts and activities of local people into the National park area, National Park launched different development programs like poverty reduction, modern

irrigation facilities which have changed their traditional agricultural practices. For example, their dry rice cultivation practice has changed into the wet rice cultivation.

Because of the limited land formed by the National Park, Tharu people have to produce maximum crops from the limited land. In order to produce the maximum crops from the limited land, traditional practices of Tantra/Mantra that were used to reduce the problem of diseases in crops have been replaced by the chemical pesticides.

Traditional tools and techniques for the agricultural practices are disappearing from the life of Tharu people. Because for the maximum production from the limited land, they have to use modern technologies like tractor, iron plough, fertilizers and pesticides etc. in their agricultural practices so that their traditional tools and techniques have been replaced by modern tools and techniques.

When they had to settle and use very limited land, they could not get sufficient grazing land for their cattle. So, they had to keep domestic cattle into their own house and they started storing rice straw in their home while they used to leave it in their own field before.

Tharu people of study area got opportunities for professional job neither in the past nor at present. In addition to this, the low production of crops caused them to engage themselves in traditional jobs likes hunting and gathering. Though, they consider these jobs not sufficient for their survival, they don't want to change it and if they get chance, they want to return back into their own forest habitat. But the younger generations of Tharu do not believe in these traditional jobs and say that these jobs are neither lucrative nor prosperous for them. That is why most of the younger generations are against the continuation of traditional occupations. This is the fact that the conservationist practices have made the indigenous people think that their traditional cultural practices are not sufficient for themselves.

Due to the above mentioned conviction of a young Tharu and new practices of National Park, the new generation is enormously interested in other forms of occupation such as civil services, business, works in hotel, restaurant, tourist guide and employment opportunities in the Gulf countries, India, and local area of Chitwan valley.

Tharu people's unlimited forest utilization practices and use of forest product in each and every perspective have been changed by the establishment of National Park. After the

hand over of the forest by the National Park to the local people as a community forest, has made the local people conscious about the system of proper forest utilization. After that, local people have begun to construct rules and regulation, plans and constitution for the proper utilization of forest by themselves. Specially, those rules and regulation are led by the National Park. This process of decision making about the forest and giving them right and authority, through formation of buffer zone and more through the formation of community forest users group, to the Tharu people has changed their thinking from stealing forest resources and illegal export without clearance of the forest resources to authentic conservationist.

It is clearly illustrated that the traditional indigenous cultural practices and their life ways in Patihani village are being changed in other practices determined by the conservationist. The limited access to the forest resources have weakened the traditional cultural practices and life ways and compelled them to adapt with the new practices of Chitwan National Park. Consequently, they are now unable to bear the burden of the contemporary practices, thus they have to follow the tradition of conservationist practices for adaptation.

Different adaptation strategies adopted by the people of Patihani can be summarized as follows:

- ) They left the traditional shifting cultivation practices and started to farm in fixed land where they farm wet rice cultivation with the help of different organizations launched by the conservationist.
- ) They no longer leave their domestic cattle to forest area for grazing and keep their cattle in their own house from where they can collect compost for the farming, which helps to produce good crops than that of previous days.
- ) They left the traditional practices of collecting forest product for the vegetable purposes and started to produce themselves.
- ) They bring forest product on the basis of rules and regulation of their own community forest, which remains under the Park authorities.

- ) Because of long time familiarity with the forest and wild animals, they help to guide park tourist inside the forest. With this effort, not only National Park has benefited but also Tharu people get benefit from the park.
- ) Similarly, Patihani villagers motivate to alternative occupation such as wage market wage labour, foreign labour, driver etc. than involvement in agriculture and collecting forest resources which they had been practicing for a long time.

The above points clearly illustrate that the Patihani villagers have started to follow different agricultural practices, occupation and have remained under the system of National Park to utilize forest products. However, they have become dissatisfied from the conservationist practices as they have to follow the conservationist practices to adapt with new practices for their life ways.

Discussion in the preceding chapters and the above summary, the researcher reached the following similarities and differences found in Patihani village before and after the National Park where similarities shows continuity and differences shows change in the lives of the Tharus.

#### **Similarities**

- ) Although they involve in different occupation, they mostly depend upon the agriculture, because the majority of their occupation is concerned with the agriculture.
- ) In agriculture, they use oxen to plough the terrace, and use similar plough although, sometimes they use tractor and iron plough for the land cultivation.
- ) In forest utilization, they used to bring firewood to cook meal, which they practiced before the National Park. But very few people who are the clan of Jimidar use gas for cooking, except them, others still bring wood for the purpose of fire sometimes.
- ) To build their house, majority of the Tharu people used the forest product such as Khar/Khadani and wood. They had similar practices to build their houses before the National Park.
- ) They have similar type of basket fabricated by the forest product to keep rice.

## Differences

<b>Practices before National Park</b>	<b>Practices after National Park</b>
In agriculture, they never used tractor like technologies	They started to use tractor, and thresher machine for rice
They practiced shifting cultivation	They use cultivation in fixed land
They practiced dry rice cultivation	They practice wet rice cultivation
Left rice straw in field	Do not left rice straw in field, collect straw in house
At the time of crop diseases they use tantra and mantra by their Goaraha	They use chemical pesticides
In occupation, they spend most of the time in hunting and gathering forest	They started to seek other employment opportunities
They have no cash based occupation	They have cash based occupations
Never moved from their community for employment	They started to move in and out of Nepal for the employment
In forest utilization, they used forest product whatever they can	They can used limited forest product
They have no rules and regulation for the forest utilization	They are bounded by the rules and regulation of the National Park
Those household, which had maximum family members brought maximum forest product, and those who had less family member brought comparatively less forest product	All the household bring equal forest product
Brought whatever kind of forest product they got in forest	Can bring only determined by the rules and regulations of park
They had no formal forest users group, for the forest utilization and management	Now they have formal forest users group, but not exactly after the National Park
They had never felt to save the forest, because of the enough forest	After the establishment of community forest hand over by the Chitwan National

	Park, a sense of ownership have been developed in the Tharu people and act for the conservation of the forest
They have no system in forest utilization	National Park binds local people in system for forest utilization

## 6.2 Conclusions

Discussions in the preceding chapters about the effects of conservationist practices on indigenous Tharu Mahoto people's cultural practices and life ways, I reproduce some of the conclusion drawn in the following ways;

- ) While the two different cultural practices come in contact with each other, at that time, there are some sorts of upheavals that appear on both sides. These different cultural practices affect each other at the very time. But indigenous cultural practices are affected more by the imposed conservationist practices.
- ) In order to save biodiversity, wildlife flora and fauna conservationist launch different programs to the local people such as community development program, poverty alleviation program, and so on. To reach the desired goals of these programs conservationist get local people participate in the name of participatory development practices. In the participatory approach of development, local people's cultural practices are dominated by the conservationist cultural practices.
- ) While using infrastructural facilities provided by the conservationist, local people themselves gradually leave their generation-long cultural practices and ultimately these local people also become conservationist.

## Annex 1

### CHECKLIST OF THE STUDY

1. Forest utilization practices before and after the establishment of National Park
2. Agricultural practices before and after the establishment of National Park
3. Occupational practices before and after the establishment of National Park



4. Animal husbandry before and after the establishment of National Park
5. Pattern of houses before and after the establishment of National Park
6. Marriage practices before and after the establishment of National Park
7. Death ritual before and after the establishment of National Park
8. Belief on Gods and Goddess
9. Fair and festivals
10. Benefit from the National park
11. Influence of National Park
12. Social relationship before and after the establishment of National Park
13. Size of family before and after the establishment of National Park
14. Tharu people's understanding to National Park

## **Annex 2**

### **Glossary of local terms**

<b>Baidar:</b>	A man who knows to read and write
<b>Baramasa:</b>	A kind of dance, danced in the time of Faguwa festival
<b>Chaitra Labami:</b>	A festival celebrate in Chaitra month in the name of victory of god Ram; syn. Ram Nabami

<b>Delli:</b>	Simple and small bamboo basket used for the purpose of storing ghungi
<b>Faguwa:</b>	A kind of festivals celebrate with colors, syn. Fagupurnima
<b>Futkeria:</b>	A people involve in making ridge of terrace,
<b>Ghungi:</b>	A kind of species, living in water and used for the purpose of curry, similar like fishes
<b>Goraha:</b>	A priest having spiritual power
<b>Gawa lei:</b>	Before transplanting the rice in Asad month, in order to get good crops and finished transplanting rice without any difficulties, a kind of puja was set
<b>Ghaunka:</b>	A kind of net use for the purpose of storing Ghungi
<b>Hariyari warna:</b>	In order to save rice from the diseases Tharu people set a f puja
<b>Haruwa:</b>	A people involve in ploughing terrace
<b>Jitiya pawani:</b>	It is a festival of female, other hindu people recognized it in the name of Teej
<b>Kitchara:</b>	A festival celebrate in Magh month- tharu people's new year, with Baramasa dance
<b>Khar:</b>	A kind of long grass used to feed to cattle and thatching roof
<b>Khadeni:</b>	Grass having strong and long stem than Khar, which is used for the purpose of making wall of house
<b>Nal warna:</b>	Tharu people set a kind of worship before collecting rice in kartik month
<b>Sohorai:</b>	A kind of festival, used to celebrate after Dashain, like hindu big festival Tihar
<b>Vaisereya:</b>	A person involve in buffalo grazing
<b>Yekli Haruwa:</b>	A ploughman, having good knowledge of ploughing, who lead other ploughman at the time of cultivation,
<b>Yemosa:</b>	It is a festival of father ( babu ko much herne din), celebrate with different meat item

**Younia:**

A person involved in cattle grazing having special knowledge about oxen, whether they are fit for ploughing or not

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