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**Nepal Centre for Contemporary Studies**

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## Anatomy and Physiology of Political Class<sup>1</sup>

Madhu Ghimire

### Abstract

*The defining characteristics and structures of political class in different types of societies and political systems remain fluid. The concept of political class needs to emerge through further studies, researches and discourse. In this review an attempt is made to put forth and discuss critical concepts hitherto developed in the available literature on the subject.*

Historically, heredity determined who ruled over whom. This has continued even to this day in absolute monarchies. Even in constitutional monarchies, monarchs tend to retain some residual powers. Having said that, one has to hasten to add that ruling classes even in the present day do tend to become hereditary as a matter of course, if not by law or legislation. The concentration of political power among the Bushes and Kennedys in the United States of America, the Gandhi clan in India and Sukarno dynasty in Indonesia and in my own country Nepal, the Rana regime, and Shah dynasties have been the glaring examples. The advantage is not

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<sup>1</sup>The author acknowledges the many across-the-table discussions with Dr. Claude Bobillier, a social scientist and educationist from Geneva, Switzerland, which helped him immensely in developing the theme of this paper. And, also deep gratitude to Prof. Dr. Lok Raj Baral, Kathmandu, Nepal for making useful suggestions in editing and refining the subject matter discussed here. The author submits no corporate or personal financial gains from this work.

hereditary intellectual superiority but the upbringing in an environment that is conducive to fast learning of the art of ruling because of the right kind of social position, family traditions and habits. Horizon for information is wider in certain families than in others. It is change in the dynamics of social forces rather than a break in inheritance of the ruling characteristics in an individual that leads to the decline and fall of one ruler and the takeover by another who is more suited to the new social dynamics. The new comer is better able to manoeuvre the newer forces and maintain the masses in their illusionary state. Rapid alterations of social forces occur after an external invasion or after a revolution brings about a period of renovation, or new formation, whereby individual energies gain the opportunity for a free play in the newly created political arena. Individuals with more passion, energy and shrewdness are able to force their way forward from the distant periphery to the centre of the seat of political power. In such environments, there is no set ruling class but one is in the process of formation. Admittance to it is gained very easily. Last decade of the last century and the first two of the twenty-first century have painted many such pictures on the international political canvas spanning from the Russian Federation to Eastern Europe to South Asia. This phenomenon has generated new political class with new energies and ambitions and with these also the new greed and deceptions. The phenomenon is likely to remain vigorous to reach a climax of long social instability from continuing deception until the emergence of newer forces in the arena.

### Elite theory and oligarchy

There is one hard-core fact about any political setup in a non-utopian world: the universal but undeclared existence of the ruled and of the rulers as different classes of human beings. The concept of "authority" takes centre stage in political science: physical and psychological strength or power that few individuals command or

hold over many others in the community. Elite theory describes the power relationship in contemporary society.

Elites are a group of people who possess power and influence society because of their uncanny and undeclared hold and authority over available and potential resource (Etzioni-Halevy, 1994:9). The ruled class comprises the large mass of unorganized majority population and is generally engaged by the ruling class to produce and streamline the *national* products. The actual power in any country or society is wielded neither by one executive head nor by the entire mass of citizens but by a much smaller group of people from the elite group. And, this group of elite has generally been termed the **ruling or the political class**.

This *political class*, even though often seen to be comprising of disparate individuals headed in divergent or even diametrically opposite directions, forms an impalpably cohesive group because of their core interest and inherent desire to rule. Even without formal organisational structure and common stated policies and paths, they stay organised, visibly and often in an invisible manner too! This group commands direct or indirect authority over the national resources and the people at large. Individuals within the group have common interest of expanding, consolidating and perpetuating their power base. The group, almost invariably, does not represent the entire community of citizens, and often, not even the majority in whose name it claims to rule in modern days. The group comprises members of the economic elite that essentially determines the core policy and planning networks and claims to obtain its political authority and power through appropriate organization and division of labour, roles and responsibilities.

It is in this scenario that the rule by oligarchy comes into play in any system of governance, hitherto observed and studied. As the group assumes a cohesive and consolidated form, their formulated policies and planned execution are shouldered and carried through

by bureaucracy. Thus, bureaucracy becomes the essential tool in the running of the day to day governance. The emergent hierarchical axis created by the members of the ruling class and the bureaucrats and the many linkage systems between them lead to centralization of crucial decision-making process, planning and implementation. The elite group that forms the political class tends to recruit and promote only those bureaucrats who share their opinions. For certain special decisions, the political class requires specialist inputs and they too get recruited in a similar manner. Thus, the actual rank and file in the society as a whole get pushed out from the arena of governance by these elites and are kept at distance from the decision-making process. Real power therefore ends up in the hands of a few (Michels, 1915): Bureaucratization and specialization become the driving force, with which the central authority is able to further strengthen and consolidate, and also expand and perpetuate itself.

### **Expansion and growth**

In recent times, the domain of political class has further widened. With growing strengths of the political class in governance, large corporations and business houses have tended to compete in influencing the decision-making process, by infiltrating strongly both into the government and organizational units of the political class. Political class has profited in every way through this phenomenon across the developed and developing world. Peter Osborne in his book, 'The Triumph of the Political Class' observes that most large charity institutions too have become the arms of the State in recent years and pursue politically determined objectives in return for large funds from the State (Osborne, 2014). Similar situation exists with the academic and research institutions as well with the risk of consequent bias and skews in the generated information. This is true not just of Britain but also of most countries, especially the less affluent ones in Asia and Africa. Osborne also observes that this

phenomenon of close linking, networking and influencing by the political class does not spare the print and the broadcasting media either. In Nepal on 28 December 2019, several journalists were summoned by the two co-chairmen of the Ruling Party to a public forum and made to commit themselves under oath to follow the line of the establishment in reporting and analysing events in country or related to the country. The political class journalists who serve the interests of the political elites or the oligarchs are fast emerging and spreading across the board, and naturally then, their loyalty to honest journalism becomes quite a suspect.

To define the political or the ruling class in its concrete form, it is necessary to invoke their core function, which is to wield and control the social forces essential in running the society itself. The movable and immovable wealth, military and other physical strengths, knowledge, science, religion, etc. comprise such forces. Based on G. Mosca's classical definition of the authority class, if an individual or a group of individuals has the authority and is able to control and coordinate these social forces and their functioning, the individual or the group successfully possesses and retains the political power (Mosca, Hannah & LIVINGSTON, 1939:50-69). Such individuals occupy the highest 'authority' positions in the social structure and exercise this authority at various socio-political levels in making decisions that impact the entire community. An individual or a group occupies the position of authority either because it is placed in a high position in the vertical social structure or because of its acquisition of authority by virtue of its performance or service quality. Authority, thus, appears to be an essential criterion in defining the political class.

In his recent review, Manolov (Manolov, 2013:161 – 175) analyzed the concepts of 'political class', 'elite' and 'oligarchy' and emphasized the characteristics of oligarchy in the context of 'the basic characteristics of the democratic political systems'. Placing

'authority' at the centre, he further laid down certain criteria for defining the political class: *the content and the formal criteria*. The *content criteria* included the top state authority-institutional pyramid, the way of practicing authority, adequate realization of all authority phases in the political process, specific functioning of the authority elite, the elite's right and skills to control all authority resources effectively, and the final results of the authority elite's overall activity. *Formal criteria* with which the wide public views the political class include privileges, representation, immunity and a number of other eternal symbols of authority. Manolov suggests that the specific group of people within these criteria, compactly constructed with inner structure, and relevantly independent be called the political class. He summarized, "The political class is a group of people, which are directly (when they are entitled with authority) or indirectly (when they are in opposition) engaged by power, making political decisions and governing the state. They possess particular privileges and professional qualities, high personal incomes and good material state. Moreover, this class has a particular structure, specific contents and different layers."

In his wider sense, Manolov considered the political class as a united subordinated entity with an established innermost layer surrounded by substructure and parts, components and elements.

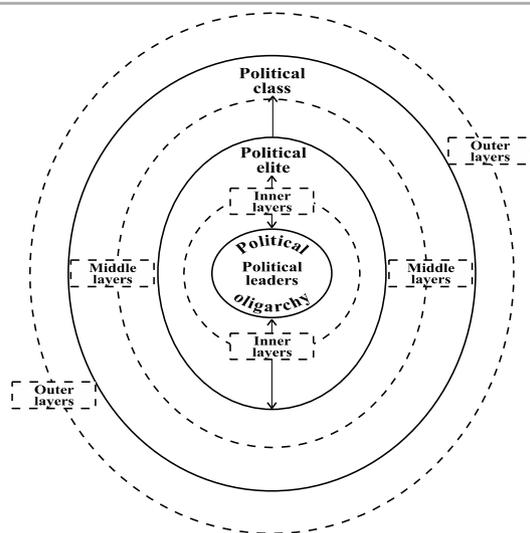


Fig 1. Manolov's schematic representation of the Political Class

Manolov's defining criteria appear quite suited for evaluating the performance and effectiveness of existing political classes in the context of scientifically performing advanced stages of modern democratic systems. In his concept, there are regulations and norms that bind both the content and formal criteria and the independence exercised by the Class has to be relevant. But how do we classify the ruling class that does not bind itself with any norms or regulations and exercises irrelevant independence. At the end of the day, it all boils down to authority. Political class has to be simply accepted as an authority class in a community.

What needs to be accepted from Manolov's proposition, however, is that the authority class also has a certain gradation, and on top of the pyramid, reside the political elite, the real oligarchs, a small social group and the most important part of the contents of the political class, which manages, possesses and controls authority resources. They are responsible for the decisions, possess different

types of privileges and have a huge political influence in society.

With widened domain, power wielded by the political class is further strengthened. It thrives inexorably, especially if there is no *effective* system of checks and balance. It can often remain informal and independent of the State's legally outlined political process. Elites loom large in any society for reasons of personal resources, for instance finance, intelligence and skills, and their vested interest and competence in maintaining uninterrupted governance. Their social, political and economic resourcefulness gets closely linked with governance without interruption. They will strive in every possible way to make the government work. For, in reality, it is the elite that loses the most in a failed government.

#### Determinants of the urge to rule

What determines who in a given society emerges as a ruler or ruled? Facts regarding the fundamental psyche of an individual that makes him or her a ruler or ruled are still not in sight. Different sections of human society react and decide differently when similar social impulses or stimulants are applied to them at the same or different time periods. Certain psychological behaviours however assume serious significance. The innate urge among a few members of the community to dominate, rule and drive the rest is very likely determined by a definite form of class psyche. Is it an inherited characteristic? It may be, but is perhaps not so in its entirety.

The urge to rule in any individual is very likely borne out of the interaction between his or her in-born characteristics or traits inherited at birth and the environment and conditioning he or she has been subject to. Says Arthur Livingston in his introduction to 'The Ruling Class' by Gaetano Mosca, "Not all Sicilians are politicians, but when a Sicilian is a politician, he is a good one. The Sicilian takes to politics as a duck in water".<sup>5</sup>

Class is a visible external factor of everyday life anywhere in the

world, and in some subtle form it tends to exist in every society, no matter how egalitarian it is in its formal legislative depiction. Once born into a political class, the urge and motivation to enter into the same flock can be fairly strong. In some form, this tendency is visible both in advanced political families in the west and not so advanced political families in Asia and Africa.

### **Psychological make up**

The science of psychology has not yet come up with a clear-cut analysis of the political mind. It is apparent to most observers that the manner in which a person engaged in politics thinks is quite different from how a non-politician does. Cunning is perhaps a basic requirement of the political mind. Niccolo Machiavelli (Machiavelli, 2008) in his work, *The Prince*, advises rulers to always serve their own interests by every means available to them: manipulation, deception, and exploitation of others to achieve their goals, but at the same time exercise prudence. It is this psychic difference between a politician and a non-politician that should be explored if we are to understand the political class.

Human civilization has progressed to the current level by some making laws and enforcing them, others abiding by them, and few others breaking them. An inherent criminal mentality has not been proved by bio-science. Genetic predisposition may exist but this has to be fostered by the growth environment and life situations and events for the criminality to manifest. Similarly, we can assume that the politicians are quite "normal" before they start politicking, barring some exceptions, both in a positive or a negative way.

Craving for power is common to all politicians. The key component of the operational definition of power must lie in having control over resources. This allows the power wielder the ability to influence others in the community by rewarding or denying them the use of the resources. Power corrupts, in almost all social

conditions with few historical exceptions. Power has many transformative effects on an individual. Disinhibition is one that promotes impulsive actions, often self-serving. Objectifying and viewing others as a means to satisfying one's own needs and goals is another. Disregard for the perspectives of others in the group is yet another norm of power monger. Power also heightens sexual goals and can create an environment of exploitation of the subordinates (Kunstman & Maner, 2011 cited in Maner&Case, 2013).

Vast majority of power wielders acquire the temptation to use their power in self-serving ways. Leadership becomes an essential aspect in any group to coordinate affairs and achieve important goals. However, concentration of power in one or few individuals can lead to exploitation of the followers.

To reiterate here, the political mind is probably an acquired characteristic in an individual with an inborn predisposition, which gets either fostered or suppressed by environment and life situations and events. Thinking pattern of a politician revolves mainly around the formulation of laws. But by virtue of his ability to formulate laws in relation to the existing social conditions, the thought pattern is also often active in circumventing certain laws when they come in the way of his firm hold on the power base. Political mind is always concerned with gaining of power over people irrespective of whether they belong to law abiding or law-breaking sects. It concerns itself only with exercising power through the monopoly in persuasion, coercion and regulation as a means to continue to dominate others in the community. The name given to this kind of thought pattern by Frank Chodorov is 'power complex' that can be explained as a mental fixation that regulation, control and domination bring about the highest good (Chodorov, 2011). There may be various gradations of this psychological complex. Bottom-line is that the law is supreme and therefore those who formulate the laws are supreme!

Observing the psychology of the ruled, Freud viewed democracy as authoritarian as any other form of government. An authority figure looms before all authority formation. And, every system of government rules by virtue of its identification with that one authority. Freudianism maintains that even a “leading idea” refers back genetically to some concrete person. Moreover, Freud also maintained that politics and religion originated together as different names for public authority. He does not view statehood as a source of optimism with regard to the future of humankind. To him, State was the manifestation of the ‘worst elements of human desire’.

### **Progeny**

Successful ruling classes are continually generating, launching and controlling newer social forces around which they are able to mobilize the masses with the aim of preventing the emergence of alternative and uncontrollable social forces from within the mass itself. Max Weber noted that they not only live for politics but also make their careers off politics as policy specialists and experts on specific fields of public administration. Existing ruling class tends to crumble and give way to a new one when newer social forces emerge in the community from outside the ruling establishment and cannot be controlled. Such an event becomes the starting point of decadence and decimation of the old establishment. The fall of the Roman Empire and the French Revolution have been the classic examples and the fall of the Soviet Union, end of the South African Apartheid, regime change in the Eastern European countries are all the visible recent examples of this phenomenon. In my own country, Nepal, this very phenomenon led to the fall of monarchy in 2008. The issue of identity politics and inclusion and empowerment of the many and widely divergent minority groups is playing havoc among the incumbent ruling elites and the traditional nationalists even in a small country like Nepal. These are new social forces and

the outcome as to the ultimate beneficiary from this will depend upon who can best drive these forces.

### **Physiology: The Essential Organic Processes and Functions**

Common citizen knows that if he/she produces less and spends more he/she will turn bankrupt. Politicians in power have a monopoly in manufacturing money so the governments never have to go into bankruptcy and be troubled by deficit financing. Come to the next election, even in advanced democracies, the electorate need not know or understand that. Political economics limits itself to two basic outcomes: helping those in power to stay on in power and those outside the seat of power to climb onto the seat. For those behind the law, or the formulators of law, the thought pattern is definitely different from that of the law-abiding or law-breaking member of the community. Different, certainly! ‘normal’ or ‘abnormal’ are probably just the semantics.

Deeper reflection on the nature of politics in general always leads to the same conclusion: deception of the majority by a few oligarchs in order to perpetuate their hold on power. Politics is about deception, deceiving the masses, and to add to that, political deception is never a straightforward phenomenon. It involves not just the holding of power but its ‘justification’ on the basis of entrenched beliefs, inherited ‘norms’ or ethical attributes to which the ruled has been conditioned during its lifetime. To cite an example of how the public gets hoodwinked by the political class in one country that prides itself with having the Mother of All Parliaments: about ten years ago, the then Prime Minister Gordon Brown announced Chilcot Inquiry to bring out to the British public the United Kingdom’s part of the truths related to the Iraq war. Inquiry was completed in February 2011. Up until five years after the completion of the Inquiry, all attempts at publicizing the results of the Inquiry were blocked, allegedly by the top brass bureaucrats working for the Prime Minister of the time, Tony Blair. Report of the

Inquiry was finally made public more than five years after the end of the Inquiry and almost 13 years after the end of the Iraq War. The Chilcot inquiry has delivered a damning verdict on the decision by Tony Blair to commit British troops to the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003. Justification given for blocking the report: American pressure that anything the then President George W Bush had said or written in his conversations and letter exchanges with Tony Blair should remain private (Glover S., 2015). Such attempt at justification denotes a much deeper need among some to subjugate others and enjoy authority, and the need to appear superior to everyone else. These breeds are successful in asserting their dominance by weakening others and by strengthening the self by using any means, very often, unscrupulous ones. Some analysts have recognized this to be a stark manifestation of ego, and therefore of a deep-seated sense of immaturity, somewhere at the subconscious level.

The political class functions on the ground by creating collective illusions and by organizing the societies around that illusion. Social forces are also made to work around that illusion. To seek an example of this from more recent political world events, one can look at the illusion of democracy created during the final decade of the last century by alternative political groups that emerged in the then USSR, Eastern Europe and some parts of Asia including Nepal. A new social force was created around this illusion by a group of individuals outside the existing establishment in order to bring the establishment down. The objective of bringing down the establishment was achieved in almost all the cases but 'democracy' proved simply to be an illusion.

Organizational acumen appears to be a crucial characteristic among all the members of the ruling class. Single focus on dominating the unorganized majority by a well-organized minority brings about the inevitable success. Power of the organized minority far exceeds the

resisting power of dissatisfied individuals among the general public, even when the latter far outnumber the organised minority.

Organization alone is not a sufficient requisite for the minority to transform itself into a ruling class. The minority needs to be able to acquire some extra attributes that distinguish it from the large majority that is to be governed. It needs to be stronger physically and resource-wise, both in intellect and material wealth, and also seem to be morally superior to the majority that it wishes to govern. These qualities combine to enhance their esteem and influence in the society. In the early stages of social progress, the physical strength alone could render an individual or a group the ability to rule over the rest but with social progress to more advanced levels of civilization, the number of social forces increases. The ruling class, then, needs to have all or most of these forces under their control. Among advanced civilizations, exhibition of physical strength, such as the victory in a war, does not have to be an essential tool in establishing one's ruling authority over the others. But it is always necessary to seem physically strong irrespective of the number of other social forces already under one's command.

With further advancement of civilization, wealth emerged superior to other social forces. With wealth, military-might and other/ newer social forces could be generated, launched, strengthened and controlled in society. Human resources could be strengthened. Knowledge generation, storage, control and dissemination became a routine affair and with this, the ruling class with wealth emerged stronger by the day. Wealth generated more political power and the latter more wealth. North American 'democracy' seems to be the classic example of this phenomenon.

Do moral principles have a role in the emergence of an effective ruling or political class? Does higher moral standing ever come in the way of overwhelming assertiveness of wealth in determining the political path? Political history has been able to outline few rare

examples in which individuals rather than a class have been able to charter the political path on the basis of moral principles in modern times. Thomas Jefferson, A. Lincoln, M.K. Gandhi, N. Mandela, V. Havell, etc. may be cited as relevant examples. In theory, moral principles seem to have emphatic roles in political affairs and decision-making process but in real politic they seem to have a very limited application, employed mostly in the deception of the majority by a small but powerful minority. In the United States of America, power seems to emerge from the electoral barrels; the suffrage is equal for all genders and races in all states of the Union. But delving into the real politic makes it quite clear that those electoral barrels are expensive tools beyond the reach of a common citizen and one cannot really fire out a successful candidate from less expensive barrels.

Almost all electoral dramas, especially in 'democratic' countries, are played out in theatres lined, floored and roofed by shiny green dollars! To cite one example coming from a country of lesser wealth, the election of Mr. Arvind Kejriwal as Chief Minister of Delhi, India (the largest democracy!), on the political slogan of eradicating corruption was a spectacular dance on the floor of shining green dollars. In countries, less suave politically such as China and North Korea it is purely the physical might of the political class that determines the political path. One Tiananmen Square incident and watch: the real political path is laid bare for the next three or four decades without any stumbling block in sight. Physical-might in modern days, and also in the old, bears a tendency to grow in tandem with the amount of wealth invested on it.

In every country, every other social force that influences the political course such as personal charm and charisma, education, newer technology and training, public position in religion, society or administration and above all the physical strength – the army and law enforcement agencies – are much more easily accessible to the

rich than to the poor, irrespective of how egalitarian the society on paper. The American Ruling Class is a 2005 dramatic documentary film written by Lewis H. Lapham and directed by John Kirby. It has attempted to explore the most tabooed topic of that country: class, power and privilege in a nominally democratic republic. Wealth seems to have the final say in this too.

Recently Martin Gilens and Benjamin Page reported from their research on different sets of actors having different grades of influence over public policy in the United States: average citizens; economic elites; and organized interest groups representing the wishes of different voter segments, and interest groups advocating for particular policies (e.g., pro-business groups) using a single statistical model. They utilized a data set that included measures of the key variables for 1,779 policy issues. Multivariate analysis of this set of data indicated that economic elites and organized groups representing business interests have substantial and independent impacts on U.S. government policy, while average citizens and mass-based interest groups have little or no independent influence. The acclaimed leader of Western democracy leans heavily on the domineering force of the economic elites, hinting strongly at biased pluralism, and affords much less credence to majoritarian electoral democracy or majoritarian pluralism (Gilens & Page, 2014: 564-581). Gilens and Page (2014) defined affluent Americans as the top 10% of income earners. This research tends to reinforce the unhappy idea that democracies, the way they are practiced, are oligarchic deception of the ruled population.

Religion is yet another force that the political class has control over, either by induction and exaggeration of differences between the various religious groups influential in the community or by infiltrating into the powerful hierarchy within the religions. Many a time both strategies are brought into play. British authorities in India did often try both strategies successfully until the end of the

Indian freedom movement. Historically, religious leaders themselves have often entered into the political arena to emerge as a strong ruling class made up of clergy. French revolution, it can be said, was a result of the decadence of all three components of the old monarchy, the crown, the clergy and the nobility. Often again, the clergy monopolized in the area of knowledge, both in politics and economy and thus gained possession of a good share of the wealth and political power. This was a crucial factor in ancient India and Egypt and also in the medieval Europe. Clergy strategized, launched and won wars then. Monopolizing in specialized knowledge and technology remains a powerful tool of the political class to this day. Keeping the nuclear bomb technology close to one's chest is the classic example of how the political class maintains its authority and dominion over the rest of the world. To hold on to the political power and extract the maximum from the common citizens through a clever amalgamation of the words of moral principles, use of specialized knowledge and technology, economic rewards and deprivations, societal divisions and manipulations, and of course, the final tool, the threats and implementations of annihilation by using physical force.

In the nineteenth century United States, new lands were being continually colonized and new industries were being established. Men who started with nothing attained much fame and wealth. This helped to inculcate in the people of that country the illusion that democracy is a fact. However, in reality, it was the same old oligarchy that continued; it was only the change in the structure of the ruling class. A new ruling class replaced the old one and the deception of the masses forged on.

Only in the 'ageing' societies, where very little shift is noted in the religious beliefs, knowledge base and internal socio-economic dynamics, for example, the present day Saudi Arabia, the basic political/ social forces are always the same. The class that

traditionally holds and handles those forces also continually holds all the political power under little overt dispute, if any at all.

To summarise what has been said above about the ruling or the political class, one comes to the conclusion that the political class is an antithesis of democracy, the way Abraham Lincoln used the terminology: of the people; by the people and for the people. The class, comprising a small minority, is quite distinct from the major mass of people in its basic characteristics such as the inherent desire to dominate others and the indomitable urge to fulfil self-interests at any cost. It does so by controlling social forces and by deceiving the people it rules over. The political class does inhabit a different moral universe to normal human beings. Did Abraham Lincoln belong to the political class? Yes, most certainly yes! But he must have been too much of a Machiavellian not to ignore prudence in his political life while practising manipulation, deception and exploitation of others in achieving his goals.

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## Tharu Identity Movement : Past, Present and Path Ahead

Anil Belbase

### Abstract

*This article tries to provide an overview of researches on Tharus cultural and identity movements and identity politics. For that it applies historical approach and new social movement (NSM) approach to analyse identity politics, cultural movement and identity movement of Tharu cultural groups in Nepal. The Tharu identity movement is one of the oldest identity movements on the history of Nepal. They are fighting for recognition of their unique identity even through their everyday activities. The Tharu identity movement was initiated by a few Tharu elites in 1950s with establishment of Tharu Kalyankari Sabha. Tharu identity movement is not sporadic. This identity movement can be understood in terms of social structure and state's policy in Nepal. This identity movement is not based on orthodox social and revolutionary movement and its primary aim is to bring change within an existing social structural system. According to social movement theoretical framework Tharu identity movement is based on New Social Movement (NSM). This identity movement is for their ethnicity and for their ethnic, collective and cultural identity. The article concludes that Tharu identity and cultural movement is a process of fighting against the cultural hegemony or domination that the state employs to maintain power.*

The Tharu identity movement is one of the oldest identity movements on the history of Nepal. They are fighting for recognition of their unique identity at policy level (Sheppard, 2009) as well as in everyday life. The Tharu identity movement was initiated by a few Tharu elite individuals in 1950 (UNRCHCO, 2013). After 1950 in-migration of hill people started in large scale towards

the Tarai region of Nepal. This massive migration was also the result of government policy to settle other communities into the Tarai because before 1950 people hesitated to migrate to Tarai due to the risk of malaria and other insect borne diseases. But when malaria was eradicated in 1950, hill people were keenly interested to migrate to the Tarai due to its fertile agricultural land as well as rich natural resources. With the onset of migration of hill people, the significance Tharus for the state gradually declined. Before that, Tharus' labor was essential to the state for 'extracting resource from forests and jungles' (UNRCHCO, 2013). Hence, Tharus known for their immunity from malaria<sup>2</sup>, were gradually marginalized and deprived from state facilities and resources. During the Monarchy as well as the Rana hereditary oligarchy both regimes recognized their importance and both regimes provided for their local authority for protection of their culture and identity. Both regimes considered them as 'part of the architecture of state governance' (UNRCHCO, 2013). In this context, the state granted some elites of Tharu special responsibility of 'administrators' and to collect taxes. They were irate after losing their importance and local authority. These privileges were transferred to the hill peoples. Shifting responsibility to hill people is mainly accountable for fomenting discontent among Tharu community with State governance. Similarly, after the fall of the Rana regime, the traditional system of governance that benefited elite Tharus were replaced by more centralized state structure (UNRCHCO, 2013) which also created anger among the Tharu community toward state. Ending their monopoly on resources and increased competition for same resources as well as increasing landlessness irked them towards state governance and hill migrated people resulting in discontent among elite Tharus. They, therefore, started to demand their separate Tharuhat state in the Tarai (UNRCHCO, 2013). In this context, according to some authors they

established Tharu Kalyankari Shaba (TKS) which in English is called Tharu Welfare Council, with initiation and involvement of Tharu elites who owned large areas of land. The people owning large areas of land were/are popularly called *Jimidar* (Guneratne, 1998). There is a debate about the date of establishment of this organization. Whereas some authors say that TKs was established in 1949 (McDonaugh, 2005), others say that it was established in 1951 (Guneratne, 1998). Throughout this article, Tharu elite means large landowners who have good relations and meaningful network with Kathmandu based and other national elite. They are typically the descendants of the revenue collectors of former times, educated men (school and college teacher, college students, and those with professional degree) who are generally but not invariably, also drawn from the large landowning class (Guneratne, 1994). Their involvement on TKS and Tharu Identity movement were because they had financial resources and political power (Bhattarai, 2015). But they have vested interest and they raised voice of Tharus for their own benefit which are the primary reasons the Tharus have not been able to come to mainstream (Bhattarai, 2015).

Similarly, due to major posts occupied by eastern elite Tharu in TSK focused on their benefit. Tharu community of the western Nepal especially known by radical group of Dangura Tharu in 1970 set up an organization calling itself 'The Association for the Improvement of Tharu language and Literature' in the Western part of Nepal which aims to reform cultural practices such as drinking alcohol, publish books of songs in their language and to promote Tharu unity among peasant Tharus. The association also aims to stand together in the struggle for their rights against exploitative landlords. Later this group was banned and all members were arrested by government (McDonaugh, 2005).

<sup>2</sup>Tharus are indigenous community and are famous for having strong immunity from malaria.

Since 1951, TKS forwarded these demands and raised other different issues of Tharus. In early days, Tharu Kalyankari Sabha started publication of a magazine to promote common ethnic consciousness among Tharu community. At the same time they demanded with government the support for development of Tharu communities (Guneratne, 1998). In the meantime the *Jimidar* system was abolished (Guneratne, 1998) by government and that created discontent in Tharu community. Thus, when Tharus felt that they have not benefited proportionately and fairly in the allocation of resources after the hill people migration into Tarai region then ethnicity comes into play as a “mask of confrontation” (Guneratne, 1998). Similarly, the *Muluki Ain (Civil Code)* of 1854 B.S., the first codified law applicable throughout Nepal, defined and based itself on discrimination by caste and ethnicity, dividing society into a fourfold social hierarchy which saw people ranked as either un-enslavable or enslavable (PBI, 2010) on the basis of their ‘relative purity’. In this codification *Tharus* are codified under the enslavable alcohol-drinking caste considered almost at the bottom of the social structure (PBI, 2010) with “low social status”(Guneratne, 1998). This codification was one of the main reasons of expanding discontent among elite Tharus as well as whole Tharu community because they do not practice caste system within them.

Though the discontent was there right from 1949 it was not noticed well until 2009. In 2009 “Tharuhat movement for Tharu identity” (Chaudhary, 2009) headed by Tharuhat Joint Struggle Committee (TJSC) created a sense of collective Tharu identity which comprises of 11 different Tharu organizations involved in different Tharu movements including first Tharu organization, the TKS/TWC. These 11 organizations are Tharuhat Autonomous State Council (TASC), Tharu Indigenous NGO Federation (TINF), Tharu Student Society

(TSS), Backward Society Education (BASE), Tharu intellectual and National Research Centre (TINRC Nepal), Nepal Democratic Socialist Party, Bardiyali Tharu Development Forum, Tharu Women Society, Tharu Artist Society, Tharu Youth Front and Tharu Women Awakening Centre. The Central Committee is led by chairperson and/or vice-chair from each organization through collective leadership system (Chaudhary, 2009). The Tharuhat movement was not just against the Brahman/Chhetri autocracy but for social identity, cultural and political equality, and an inclusive democracy through “state restructuring” and “forward moving reforms” were the key issues (Chaudhary, 2009).

### 1. Cultural Symbols and Tharu Identity Movement

Starting as a non violent movement from 1950, Tharuhat movement at its peak in 2009 became violent and this movement got four martyrs (Chaudhary, 2009). In 2009, the Tharuhat movement mainly had a stronger focus on agitating against the ‘One Madhesh One Province’ political movement led by some Madhesh centric political groups (Maycock, 2011). In meantime, the Tharu community created a myth that they are descendents of Lord Buddha (Ranjan, 2010) which was used for mass mobilization from 1950. But later after 2009 movements they used those four individuals who became martyrs during 2009 as symbol of Tharuhat movements. Thus, four martyrs as symbol and descendents of Lord Buddha as myth helps them mobilize the mass for success of their Tharuhat movements.

Art is also important in identity movement because art keeps people in movements by creating a feeling of group unity and collective identity (Adams, 2001). Similarly, music and dance can also create solidarity (Adams, 2001) to keep Tharu people active in movement by creating an emotion of group unity and solidarity. In

this context Tharu culture, known for its song and dance used some dances and songs from the beginning of movement to stimulate the mass for the movement (Krauskopff, 2008). These songs and dances are especially from their own traditions. Furthermore, comic performances were also part of Tharu dance to attract mass attention and response for their collective actions (Krauskopff, 2008). Thus, like other identity movement Tharu movement also use cultural symbols and arts in their movements for mass mobilization and collective actions.

In this regard, it is important to understand that in using Buddha as symbol and creating myth as descendents of Buddha was meaningful because Buddha opposed the caste system (Krauskopff, 2008) but the Civil Code 1854 codified Tharu under the enslaveable alcohol-drinking caste considered almost at the bottom of the social structure (PBI, 2010) with "low social status" (Guneratne, 1998). Therefore, to oppose and show their dissent against caste system and hierarchy they created a myth that they are descendents of Buddha. Similarly, through their tradition music, songs and dance they created solidarity to keep Tharu people in movement by creating a feeling of group unity and collective identity.

## 2. Contemporary Situation of Tharu Identity Movement

Before we discuss about the contemporary situation of Tharu movement it is necessary to discuss briefly the Madheshi Movement of 2009. Madhesi communities have been feeling a sense of discrimination, deprivation and exploitation by the state controlled and dominated by hilly ( Pahadi) communities. On the other hand they are dissatisfied with the Citizenship Act of 1964 amended in 2006 (Nayak, 2011). They feel that since 1964 Act they could neither acquire land ownership papers nor avail government

benefits (Nayak, 2011) and therefore they announced their movement against the state on January-February 2007. According to the 2004 Nepal Living Standard Survey (NLSS) literacy rate of ethnic groups of Nepal is 51.3 percent and 43.5 percent of ethnic people never attended school (CBS, 2004). Similarly 78.6 percent have less than 0.9 hectares (ha) of land (CBS, 2004) which is not sufficient to produce food needed for all the year around. It indicates that most ethnic groups live below poverty line (BPL) with 35.1 percent of them being below BPL (CBS, 2004). Income disparity among poor and non-poor ethnic groups is also high with 3.5 (CBS, 2004). The unemployment rate is also significantly higher with 3.8 percent (CBS, 2004) among total ethnic population. The mass protest was due to "systematic exclusion" of Madhesis from Nepali public life, and economic and social wealth over a long period of time (Hachhethu, 2007). Thus central agenda of the movement was Madheshi identity based on "One Madhesh Single Autonomous State". The movement ended after signing the agreement by state authority and representatives of Madhes based parties. But after signing the agreement the government announced considering all Tarai Indigenous groups as Madheshis in February-March 2009. This irked the Tharu community and intensified their Tharuhat movement (UN RCHCO, 2013). The incident described below shows the degree to which Tharu youth were irked with the state after their decision to keep them into Madheshi group.

*"As the march moved towards the condolence meeting at Bhadrakali, angry Tharu men chanted slogans. At Tundikhel, the army was having a parade rehearsal. Even as protestors walked on, the side gate of the field opened and an army jeep pulled out on to the Old Bus Park road. Someone shouted: "Stop it." Two young Tharu threw stones at the jeep. The army man inside hid for cover. The front window pane was shattered. The driver immediately shot into reverse*

*gear, put one hand on the horn, and drove straight back into Tundikhel. The crowd went silent for a minute, with a leader asking who threw the stone. A youth protestor remarked calmly: "This is what happens when you wake up someone who is sleeping. Everyone thinks we are stupid and will not do anything. Here is the answer." (Jha, 2009).*

This incident shows Tharu youth's anger towards the state and government agencies as well as mainstream people. Therefore, Tharu who have many issues with state and government carried out protests many times. Tharus carried out several rounds of protests against the government decision of enlisting Tharu on the list of the Madheshis and 'one Madhesh one province' (Ranjitkar, 2009). Therefore their movement was against erasing the independent identity of Tharu and causing the loss of the political rights they could enjoy as indigenous people because they proclaimed themselves as indigenous people of the Tarai but not Madheshis (Ranjitkar, 2009).

Tharus claim that they have been living in Tarai from time immemorial. They have even developed immunity against malaria. Hill people could settle in Tarai only after the eradication of malaria otherwise for hill people spending even a single night in Tarai meant death from malaria (Ranjitkar, 2009). Therefore, they do not recognize the Madheshi state. Thus, they demanded that the government do not suppress the voices of Tharus while trying to please Madheshis.

Moreover, Tharu are economically deprived, socially and politically marginalized and disadvantaged as well as poverty is a key problem in Tarai where Tharus live (Chhetri, 2005). The literacy rate of Tharu community is 47.5 percent and 25.4 percent never attended school (CBS, 2004). Therefore, it shows that more than half population of total Tharu ethnic group is illiterate. Similarly, 88.4 percent of Tharus have some kind of land but most of them have less than 1 ha

of agriculture lands (CBS, 2004). Out of total population of Tharu 35.4 percent (CBS, 2004) of Tharu live below poverty line where as poverty disparity among Tharu poor and non-poor is 2.02 (CBS, 2004). Unemployment rate is also more than 2.5 percent where as their total income from self agriculture is 70.2 percent and from non-agriculture is only 5.2 percent (CBS, 2004). Therefore, low participation of Tharu community in non agricultural sector and significantly higher number of Tharu households have less than 1 ha of land shows that they are economically deprived community of Nepal. Thus the economic plight of the Tharus seems to be associated with the unequal relations with the landlords fostered by the Kamaiya practices (bonded labour) and such unequal socio-economic and political relations go back to many generations (Chhetri, 2005 and CBS, 2004). Similarly, they had been made bonded laborers for generations for small loans their forefathers had taken. They worked for generations but they were unable to pay off the loans (Ranjitkar, 2009). In 2000, government officially decided to free the bonded laborers and declared the system of bonded laborers as illegal (Chhetri, 2005). Though they are freed, government did not appropriately adjust their issue of livelihood so they faced a lot of problems for their daily life. The Government only gives a very small plot of land (*1 to 2 Katthas*) which is insufficient to fulfill their livelihoods. Such situation compels most of them to go back to the same landlord to work again as bonded labour (Chhetri, 2005). State's failure to properly adjust bonded labour issue is also one major factor for uprising of the Tharuhat movement of 2009.

Similarly, they think themselves "backwards" mainly because of lack of education. This lack of education is one key reasons for their backwardness in politics and economic life (Guneratne, 1998). Therefore, in 2009 Tharu movement was born out of a new form due to discrimination and anger having a major impact on Nepal

politics (Jha, 2009). They think that their real enemy is the state structure that made them landless and despite the facade of democratization, rarely gave them rights (Jha, 2009). In this context, one of the participants of this movement Bidyanand Lekhi says:

*"There is not a single Tharu Chief District Officer (CDO). We have no access to power. In everything, we want seven per cent representation. This movement is no longer about only withdrawing the Madhesi tag. It is about winning equal rights and representation"* (Jha, 2009).

The first Tharu organization TKS or TWC is not influenced by any political party but in 2009 Tharu movement leaders were loyal to different parties. Some of them were loyal to political parties led by leaders of hilly origin, some were Madhesi party defectors, conservatives, Maoist defectors who are strong but untested and even thugs (Jha, 2009). Since it had leaders from different backgrounds and ideologies there were differences among them about ways of pressurizing government to address their demands (Pokharel, 2009). In this context some of the Tharu leaders who participated and led movement in 2009 registered their own party named "Tharuhat Tarai Party Nepal"<sup>3</sup> for the Constituency Assembly election which was held on 19 November 2013. This party gave candidacy in all constituencies of Tarai regions for ensuring their ethnic identity agenda through formal legislator in Nepal's Constitution Assembly<sup>4</sup> as part of their movements. Therefore, through this party Tharu community asserted a demand for recognizing their identity and creating a separate Tharuwan or Tharuhat state when devising federal states. This was their key agenda for this constituency assembly election (Republica Daily

Newspaper, 2013). Primarily, the rift in Tharu organization is due to the ideological differences in oldest and first Tharu organization - TKS that has promoted reformist ideas in line with the Nepali Congress ideology and most of its members are associated and devoted to Nepali Congress which always avoided raising specific agrarian problems of the Tharu (Krauskopff, 2008). Due to this, Tharu people not satisfied, with TKS objectives and its members' association with Nepali congress, established other satellite organization like BASE, Tharuhat Group. Those who believe in progressive land reforms and changes are devoted to the Nepal Communist Party (Maoist) and involved in Maoist insurgency (Krauskopff, 2008). In this context, Maoist stressed on economic reforms agenda especially land reforms, ethnic identity and their recognition mainly to garner support from Tharu community in Maoist insurgency. In this way, there is increasing rift between those who want to limit their demands to cultural reform and those who believe in economic reformist agenda.

In this context, Tharu movement of 2009 was mainly vis-à-vis state after it appeared to be lenient to "One Madhesh Single Autonomous State". This demands of Madhesh based political groups was there since 1950. Therefore, 2009 Tharu movement is that explosion of erasing independent identity recognition. After the dissolution of first Constituent Assembly, the Tharu movement which was at peak in 2009 gradually got weaker (Bohara, 2013). However, just before the promulgation of constitution by the Second Constitution Assembly in 2015, the Tharu identity movement once again caught momentum. The Tharu leaders and people expedited their identity movement demanding an autonomous Tharuhat province within federal Nepal. In this movement there was clash between Tharu protestors and police at Tikapur, western Tarai of Nepal. This Tikapur incident resulted in deaths of nine people including the district Senior Superintendent

<sup>3</sup> Election Commission of Nepal,

[http://www.election.gov.np/EN/downloads/nirwachan\\_chinha\\_125.pdf](http://www.election.gov.np/EN/downloads/nirwachan_chinha_125.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Party Manifesto of "Tharuhat Tarai Party Nepal" for upcoming Constituency Assembly Election 19 November 2013.

of Police (SSP) and a two-year-old child. It shows to what extent Tharus were determined for recognition of their identity and in their demand of political unit based on Tharu identity (*Nepali Times*, 2015). It was warning to the constitution makers who didn't care much about the demands of the Tharu people for recognition (*Nepali Times*, 2015). It was also a warning to the state that they can no longer afford to stay aloof and it was explosion of discontent of Tharu people towards state (Gurung, 2015). But with arrest of the Tikapur Tharuhat protesters and then subsequent imprisonment of many Tharu leaders, political activists and their followers by judiciary and state the Tharu identity movement again slowed down. Now, it can be said to be almost at the state of dissipation.

### 3. Tharu Identity Movement and Social Movement

For analysis of any movement, social movements' text is very important. Written or spoken texts (Johnston and Klandermans, 1995) are very useful to analyze text of social movement. Social movement text yields structures of meaning that are useful insofar as they help explain movement growth, recruitment or mobilization (Johnston and Klandermans, 1995). It also helps us to categorize mass mobilization as movements, protest or sporadic action. In this context, available written document, reports, articles and news are considered for analysis of Tharu movement.

Social movement refers to a specific form of collective action of individuals of different kinds which have some degree of formal organization, specific goals, discontent, mass mobilization and finally sustainable movements (Dinerstein, 2013). We can evaluate Tharu movement based on these criteria. Tharu communities have discontent with state which did not recognize their identity and marginalized them from resources including that of Tarai region. They started their movement from 1950 with specific goals to retain erased identity of their community. They sustainably engaged in the movement since 1950 and mobilized in mass under the leadership

of Tharu Welfare Society as formal organization previously and later through 11 Tharu organizations under Tharu NGO Federation Council. Therefore, from this description we can categorize Tharu movement as a social movement.

Social movements are a product of the social structure and hence emerge out of certain conditions in the social structure (Mukherji, 1977). Tharu movement is also the emergence of social structure. Poverty, backwardness, lack of education as well as exploitation of Tharus as bonded labour are some driving structures for emergence of Tharu movements. Discrimination through state policy and lack of recognition of their identity are those conditions from which pushed Tharus to a mass movement. Therefore, Tharu movement is product of social structure of Nepal. Change due to social movement occurring within the system is accumulative where as displacement of existing societal structure without any replacement is transformative change (Mukherji, 1977). The Tharu movement is occurring within the existing system. Thus, this movement is accumulative change instead of transformative change.

Moreover, any type of collective mobilization for action directed explicitly towards an alteration or transformation of a system can be properly understood as a social movement. There are three phenomena of movement – quasi movements, social movement and finally revolution which should be understood in terms of hierarchy of controls (Mukherji, 1977). Quasi movement is one in which the goal is to bring changes within the system only. Social movement is not only to be identified by the change that it accomplishes but by the change that it intends to accomplish. Revolution much more than social movement because it demands overall changes in social structural system (Mukherji, 1977). Therefore they are distinguishable in scale of change. Tharu movement is a quasi movement because its aim is only to bring changes within a system. For instance they only want identity

recognition which they understand has been erased by government assimilating them into the Madheshi group. They want to change it only within the existing social structural system but not the overall change in existing system. Similarly, social movement is organized conflicts or conflicts between organized actors over the social use of common cultural values. It requires inner studies of a socio-economic system or a societal type or a mode of production (Touraine, 2002).

Furthermore, resistance is described as a wide variety of actions and behaviors at all levels of human social life (i.e. individual, collective, and institutional) and in a number of different settings, including political systems, entertainment and literature, and the workplace with recognition and intent. Therefore resistance is simply understood as an aim of achieving some kind of change (Hollander, 2004). Tharu community elites who are landlords (*Jimidar*) resisted government decision to abolish their “administration authority” as a responsibility of tax collection granted by the Rana regime after establishment of multiparty democracy system in Nepal in 1951. They were also against state agreement on ‘one Madesh one Province’ demanded aggressively in 2005/06. They perceived state’s leniency on ‘one Madesh one Province’ as an attempt to erase their identity. Therefore, they resist against this agreement to change this decision as well as to achieve assurance from government for their ethnic identity and recognition of separate province.

Movement means conscious, organized and sustained expression of resistance where as protest is sporadic, more individualized and evanescent but both have an element of resistance (Kumar, 2008). Tharu movement is a social movement because Tharu are conscious about their backwardness, attempts of erasing of their identity and recognition. They organized this movement under leadership of their organization and for a long time beginning from

1950. Thus, Tharu movement is a movement with the aim of changing within in existing social structural system.

Networking is one of the key elements to mobilization of people in collective actions. New kinds of networks have been emerging nowadays. Social networks may increase individual’s chance to active involvement and participant as well as strengthen activists’ attempts to further the appeal of their causes (Della Porta and Diani, 2006). Similarly, individuals often become involved in collective action through their personal connections to people already involved (Della Porta and Diani, 2006). Tharu movement when starting in 1950 was only confined to some Tharu elites but after establishment of Tharu Kalayankari Sabha (Tharu Welfare Council), it gradually paved the way for a mass movement. This organization extended its network to most of the Tarai districts. In 2009 a network of more than 10 Tharu organizations and social networks helped to connect Tharu people. This extension of networks was also one of the major sources of fueling intensity of Tharu movement in 2009. Therefore, networking personnel as well as organizations and social networks are the key elements to help mobilization of Tharu mass for their collective actions.

Social movements are group actions. They are large informal groupings of individuals and/or organizations focused on specific political or social issues, in other words, on carrying out, resisting or undoing a social change (Manandhar, 2010). Similarly, Tilly (2004) defines big social movements as a series of contentious performances, displays and campaigns by which ordinary people make collective claims on others as well as on social movements. These are a major vehicles for ordinary people’s participation in public politics (Tilly, 2004). On the other hand Tarrow (1994) defines a social movement as collective challenge (to elites, authorities, other groups or cultural codes) by people with common purposes and solidarity in sustained interaction with elites, opponents and

authorities. Tharu movement is group action by which ordinary Tharu participate as collectives and challenge authority for common purposes and solidarity. Therefore, presence of these all elements qualifies Tharu movement as Social movement.

According to Nancy Fraser proclaimed socioeconomic injustice is rooted in the political-economic structure of society (Fraser, 1995). In this context, Tharus felt that they did not get proportional and fair benefit from allocation of resources after the hill people settlement in the Tarai. In the meantime, once state recognized their identity during the Rana regime, it was gradually erased by state with abolishment of Rana regime and formation of new government with new regime. According to Fraser state policy is mainly responsible for creating injustices to Tharu communities. State policy is mainly the product of political decision and they believe that state policies marginalized them economically as well from using their traditional resources like forest and land. Therefore, the state either deprived or ignored Tharu communities from redistribution of resources of Tarai which they inhabited from ancient time after state policy of settlement of hill communities people in Tarai began. Social justice centered on distribution is now increasingly divided between claims for redistribution as well as it claims for recognition (Fraser, 1999). Therefore, deprivation and injustice on resource distribution are the major factors for the emanation of Tharu movement for social justice for recognition of identity.

Cohen (1985) argued that New Social Movement (NSM) is a new type of movement and NSM have two approaches: resource-mobilization and identity oriented paradigm. Similarly, Buechler (1995) mentions that new social movement theory speaks to the macro level of structure and context, resource mobilization theory addresses the meso level of organization and strategy, and social

constructionism accounts for the micro level of identity and grievances. He further said that NSM refers to a diverse array of collective actions that have presumably displaced the old social movement of proletarian revaluation associated with classical Marxism. Similarly, it recognizes a variety of submerged, latent and temporary networks that often undergird collective action rather than assuming that centralized organizational forms are prerequisites for successful mobilization (Buechler, 1995). He further said that NSM is cultural symbolism, autonomy or self determining, post materialist, identity/group interest, fragmentary localized, finally socially constructed, latent/submerged and centralized networks. Furthermore, NSM deals about class like identity, autonomy and networks. Tharu movement is for their ethnic identity and autonomy by using their own networks. Thus, Tharu movement is loaded with characteristics of NSM.

Tharu movements mostly have characteristics of the old or traditional and new social movement. Therefore it is social movement. Though it is a social movement it is not reformist or revolutionary movement as per old social movement. But it is identity movement, therefore, it is NSM. It is only a quasi movement by scale which is less than revolutionary movement because Tharu elites who led this movement had the only aim for recognition of ethnic identity rather than change in overall social structure although they have injustice and inequalities in social structure and resources utilization.

#### **4. Analysis of Tharu Identity Movement**

Tharu movement was started with an aim of cultural reforms but now it changed into identity based movement. First it was insisted on by elite of Tharu community in 1950 but later almost all Tharu people were/are involved in the movement for their identity. This movement's main goal is to establish their identity which has been marginalized by the state. The Tharu Kalyankari Shaba (TKS) was

established as formal organization in 1949 to lead movement and still it is the main organization with other satellite organization to lead ongoing Tharu movements. Establishment of these satellite organizations actively support Tharu movements in several ways. Similarly, some Tharu elites had registered Tharuhat Nepal Party for second constitution assembly election held on November 19 2013. However, this brought some rift in Tharu politics. Erasing their identity was done through the enacted Civil Code 1854 B.S. and which announced Nepal as Hindu Kingdom and Nepali as national language in 1962. And the agreement with Madhesh based parties about possibility of having Single Madhesh Province in Tarai Madhesh also undermined Tharu identity. These factors created discontents among Tharus in Tarai. Similarly, secondary issues like abolition of previously granted responsibility of 'administrator' such as tax collector during Rana regime, backwardness and marginalization from access to resource and loss of agriculture are responsible for creating discontent and for fueling their identity movement. Therefore, presence of these characteristics of social movement drove and led Tharus towards a social movement.

This movement was not only limited to its initial aim of social reforms to establish identity but later aimed at establishing separate Tharuhat federal state through upcoming constituent assembly. Therefore as the movement proceeded ahead, its aims and goals were changed according to the contemporary situation. Changing movement goals according to time and adoption of new strategy against social structural system are key elements to make the movement successful. Such tendency was found in Tharu movement. It is main factors for sustainability of Tharu movement since 1950 to date.

Similarly, Tharu movement is not a class based movement. It is identity based movement. Therefore, it falls under the New Social Movement (NSM) because it is related to cultural identity and their

movement is against the cultural hegemony of hill Brahmin and Chhetri group who are ruling groups of Nepal. It is like a women movement which is focused on identity recognition but class consciousness like in labor movements is not found. .

Furthermore, this movement is against the injustice and inequality created by state towards them on distribution of resources and facilities. State's policies directly or indirectly have played catalyst's role to promote hill Brahmin and Chhetri groups access and dominance on natural resources. This is injustice for these inhabitants of Tarai from ancient period. Therefore, Tharu movements are against unequal distribution of resources and in favour of ruling groups which are mostly from upper caste groups. Similarly, erasing their identity in the name of implementation of dominant culture and language of ruling groups as national culture and language in the name of Nepali nationalism is injustice towards their identity. Thus, Tharu movement is primarily focusing against these two factors-inequality and injustice shows that it is a social movement whose main goal is to change social structural and system of Nepalese society.

Moreover like other social movements, Tharu movement also implemented and used art for creating feeling of solidarity and unity for their collective action to establish their identity and recognition. Using of emblem of the four martyrs after 2009, creation of myth as descendents of lord Buddha against including them in caste system, use of music, dance, songs and drama for creation of solidarity and unity for stimulating collective action to make Tharu people take part in these movements actively . Thus, Tharu movement also used these components in their identity based movement for massive mass mobilization. High mass mobilization showed strength of movement on the one hand and on the other hand it supports success and sustainability of movement. As a social movement Tharu movement also benefitted by using art not only for creation

of emotional attachment among Tharu peoples on movement but also to mobilize resources and collection of fund.

## 5. Conclusion

Tharu movement initially was initiated by Tharu elites who were gradually deprived of the granted “authority of administration” by state after 1950s. The fact that more than 35 percent are poor and about 68 percent are either landless or have less than 1 ha agriculture land has added fuel to the Tharu movements (CBS, 2006). In this context, maximum number of Tharu are either poor or have less than sufficient amount of land for agriculture. Poor and illiterate Tharu are not much aware about the Tharu movement because before 2009 this movement was largely confined to Tharu elite only. Therefore, few elite Tharu initiated movement which was therefore not widely noticeable until 2009 but in this year the movement turned violent finally resulting in martyrdom of four Tharus which in turn sustained the Tharu movement.

Increase in socio-economic inequalities and injustice are the main factors for marginalization of Tharu communities. Unjust distribution of resources and lack of access to the state is one of the main causes for backwardness. Misrecognition and rejection of their identity by the state is another main reason for increasing social injustice and inequalities. All these are responsible for the emanation of Tharu social movement as a Tharu identity movement.

The Tharu movement remained dormant for long time but after the movement has gained the momentum some detractors are saying that the movement has happened due to tremendous external support. It is also accused that material wellbeing of Tharu elites is the main factor that keeps Tharu movement alive. Most of the critics suggest that the agendas of Tharu movement are largely based on identity issues instead of the pro-poor agendas (Sapkota,

2014). One of the main problem with the Tharu movement is that it has not focused on inequality among Tharus and on agendas of poor Tharus, it is mainly focused on identity. That may be the reason for intensification of their movement when elite Tharu feel that they are isolated from state policy.

The Tharu movement of 2009 basically began in opposition to ‘One Madhesh One Province Concept’ and put forward the demand of Tharuhat in what has been claimed as Madhesh by Madheshi community. But now the movement has lost momentum because Tharu elites who were almost on the same page in Tharu’s identity movement in 2009 are now in different political platforms.

Tharu movements also used cultural symbols like in other social movements for creating emotions of unity and collective action as well as collective identity. The symbols were the four martyrs during 2009, creation of myth as descendents of Lord Buddha and arts like dances, songs and comic performance for mass mobilization and to stimulate changes to create feeling of solidarity and unity for collective identity. Tharu culture which is also called as song and dance culture used some dances and songs from beginning of movement for mass mobilization.

We can find resonance of Gramsci’s concept in Tharu identity and cultural movement and based on that can interpret Tharu movement as a process of fighting the cultural hegemony or domination that the state employs to maintain power (Krauskopff, 2008). Therefore, Tharu movement is for emancipation from cultural domination or hegemony of hill people and to establish their identity erased by state. They also focused their movement on economic issues like poverty and land ownership system and on proper and just distribution of resources. Thus Tharu identity movement’s main goal is to regain their identity marginalized by the state in the name of Hindu culture.

Tharu identity movement is not sporadic but it is due to state policy and social structure of Nepal. Although it is not based on revolutionary movement its main aim is to bring change within an existing social structural system but not aiming to go beyond structural system. Similarly, as per NSM it is identity movement for their ethnicity, ethnic identity and cultural identity. Finally, as manifested Tharu movement is seen to demand a separate Tharu state which was there right from 1950, it can be said to be a movement against discrimination and marginalization prevailing in Nepal for a long time. The discrimination reflected not only in distribution of resources such as land in favour of hill elites migrating to Tarai but also in the form of marginalization of identity. Maoist insurgency used ethnic groups' sentiments by promising for structural changes and quest for a more justice and equitable society but this insurgency ended without these achievements (Thapa, 2012). Maoists were in many government after they ended their armed insurgency they also could not pay much attention to poverty alleviation and ethnic identity or cultural identity which were the main agenda of their armed struggle. Their government too did not appear much different from previous governments. However, some other political groups have tried to keep the demands and movements of identity alive.

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## Cross Border Medical Travel to India: An Anthropological Exploration of Lakhapur Area of Nepal's Tarai/Madhesh<sup>5</sup>

Kapil Babu Dahal

### Abstract

*This paper analyzes the prevailing phenomenon of cross border travel from a town located in Southern plains of Nepal called Tarai to neighboring towns and cities in India in general and highlights the situation of cross border medical travel in those locations in particular. It shows that cross border medical travel from Nepali towns to bordering Indian towns and cities mainly due to the weak health care system in Nepal and the promotion of Indian private clinics and hospitals in Nepal has also lured local people to arrive at such decision and destination. While analyzing cross border medical travel, in the context of open border between Nepal and India, it is apparent that health care system of a culture should not be understood within the realm of a national political boundary, rather, it may go beyond that.*

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### **Background: omnipresence of border crossing**

Anthropologists have studied national borders and border crossing in different national and cultural context. In his auto-ethnographic description of border between Afganistan and Iran, Khosravi (2010, p.1) states that it is the age of the beating of borders, an era of border fetishism. Borders are made to attribute and validate the difference. In present time, borders seem to be unalterable in such a way that they have permanently been there. However, as Gellner (2013) argues, demarcated frontiers are fundamentally the modern origin. Uses of natural barriers, such as deserts, mountains and rivers, define borders, also imply their naturalization, which eventually implicate the idea that 'borders are timeless' (Khosravi, 2010, p.1). In contemporary globalized epoch, borders signify the sovereignty of states, thus a nation-state can be imagined only through its borders (Anderson, 1983).

Not contented with the conventional anthropological incarceration in a typical community setting, Clifford (1997, p.22) has accentuated on the significance of both the 'roots' and 'routes' to understand a cultural group. To create comprehensive ethnography, he argues for the significance of understanding traveling cultures, and thus points to the need of multi-locale ethnography. He argues that routes-based research should be foregrounded and feted rather than being concealed from the readers' sight or written out of official fieldwork monographs. Engaging with Clifford's paper 'Travelling Cultures', Russell (2007) has described about what it means to be Yakkha (of East Nepal) in different circumstances. He has underscored that to cognize these Yakkha as an unabridged, their migration needs to be taken into account (Russell, 2007, p.378).

Steady and sizable flow of people, goods and ideas across the geopolitical borderline (Alvarez, 1995) are prevalent reality in many international border settings. Anthropologists have initiated studies of mobility of the people across the national border in different

parts of the world. Anthropologists and other social scientists have done studies on different facets of experience of border and border-crossing in adjoining countries, including the border between Nepal and India. In his classic study, very rare among the social scientists choosing the area and the people from Tarai during those days, Gaige (1975) had shown that there was no restriction on the movement of people across the border and it corresponded to no geographical, linguistic or cultural divide line. The existence of border lies in the experience of people when they encounter it (Gellner, 2013), and thus it may vary as per the context of encounter.

The frontier between Nepal and India has remained open for the general people for a long time and the relations across the border are there from time immemorial. Though there are some instances of upheavals in the relation, for example, during declared and undeclared blockade by the Government of India in 1989 and in 2015, the open border between Nepal and India is among the one of the unique examples in today's global society. It is fascinating to note about the kind of relationships that exists between the two countries. Generally, people move freely across this border and there are no dividing lines between linguistic, religious and cultural arena (Gaige [1975], 2009; Hausner, 2007). There is a long history of Nepalis going to Indian cities to look for work, and Indian nationals also come to work in different parts of Nepal in different seasons.

Prior to the rule of India by the British East India Company, both Nepal and India were separated into small kingdoms and principalities. Nevertheless, Nepal was never colonized by the British imperial expansion. Unlike its border with China, the demarcation and delimitation of the Nepal-India boundary has a rather recent origin, which took place after the Anglo-Nepal War of 1814-16. Nepal's boundary with India lies on three sides: East, South and West. Kansakar (2001) regards Nepal-India border as unique in

the world in the sense that people of both the countries can cross it from any point, despite the existence of border check posts at various places. In these check posts, people have to come upon different state and non-state actors stationed to regulate movement of the people. Sharma (2018) states that this 'open border' offers some paybacks for Nepali labor migrants to get independence and experience of residing in a distant world.

Hausner (2007) conducted a study during the intensified period of Maoist led conflict in Nepal. It had focused on the contemporary geopolitical reality of the Tarai as a place in which hill migrants assemble and advance to India in search of work, safety and opportunities. While analyzing the dynamics of migration and particularly the realities of border town prostitution, she had described both the voluntary and forced nature of migration. Based on ethnographic data collected from three Tarai border towns in Nepal, she had presented the women's experience of their migration.

Hausner and Sharma (2013) had come up with an article based on the studies carried out on various aspects of border crossing through different parts of Nepal-India border. They contemplate that borders are the national boundaries up to which a nation state can claim its sovereignty. Borders are not geographical lines on the sand, but rather emergent locations in the relations between states and their peoples. They have shown that their research participants would not have migrated to India had the Nepali state been able to provide them prospects for food, land, and work or cash income within its national boundary. For them, labor migrations demonstrates the diminished capacity of Nepali state to cater to all kinds of needs of its people.

I have developed this article based on ethnographic information generated from my doctoral fieldworks conducted in different times from 2012 till 2015 (Dahal, 2017). This fieldwork was conducted in

southern part of Nepal and extensive interactions with the Maithili Brahmin women and their cross border medical travel to Bairginiya, Motihari, Sitamadhi and Darbhangan India was an important part of my research. Female patients, their family members and significant others who accompanied with them in their medical journey, medical doctors and other service providers in some of the clinics and private hospitals in these border towns were my research participants. In-depth interview, key informant interviews, and observations were the main techniques I have employed to generate information. To respect the privacy and maintain secrecy of information of acquired from the research participants, I have given pseudonym Lakhanpur to my field site in Nepal. Lakhanpur lies in the vicinity of borderland with the regular flows of people, goods and ideas back and forth across the 'geopolitical borderline' (Alvarez, 1995). I have adopted both the conventional anthropological approach of studying people in their own community as their 'routes' and also followed their 'routes' (Clifford, 1997, p.22) to understand their health seeking practices across the border.

Tarai region in general and Lakhanpur in particular is no exception to this tradition of cross border relations. There is a saying in national discourse that right captures the understanding and saying in the locality about relationship between bordering areas of Nepal and India which is '*roti aur betika sambandha*' which recapitulates the age old relationship especially between the Tarai and India in general and neighboring areas in particular. This means interdependence and interactions in terms of food materials and marital relations. As outlined by this very famous saying, people from both sides have economic linkages. They also marry out their daughters and sisters to the other side of the border. Following the marital relation, relatives from both sides invite their relatives from the other side on different social, cultural and religious occasions.

Marital relation across the border has added to form transnational 'alliance through the marriage' (Strauss, 1969). While commuting to and from Lakhanpur and district headquarters one can frequently find that the person sitting in the horse cart, jeep or a three-wheeler is from India and visiting his/her neighbor in Lakhanpur or the nearby areas.

I have found that medical doctors in these border towns in India would also like to relate themselves with Nepal. While chatting to one of the most popular female doctors in Sitamathi, she told me that she does not like to consider Nepali women as 'others'. It is because, her mother-in-law's mother was from one of the Tarai district of Nepal. Unfortunately, all her kids died except her husband's mother. This made her husband the ultimate successor of her property in Nepal. People from both sides broadly accept that there is cultural, religious and social relations among the people across the border. They think it is there from time immemorial because of similar cultural values and practices among the people.

In addition, people go to the other side of the border to look for work, be it part time or full time employment. However, the flow of Nepalis going to India is far greater from Lakhanpur than that of people coming from the other side of the border into their area. Ordinarily, they go not to bordering areas but to India's megacities like Delhi, Mumbai, and Calcutta to look for work. This practice has been gradually declining recently with the new trend of migration to work in the Gulf and Malaysia.

People from the Indian side of the border come into Nepal to make money by selling different varieties of goods. More than this, the adjacent Indian cities are famous for 'cheap' goods not only for the residents of Tarai region but also for many other Nepalis who happen to visit bordering areas of Nepal. People think they can get quality goods at cheaper price over there so they have to go for shopping for their everyday needs on a regular basis.

Likewise, going to India for education has a long history. People go up to Banaras and Delhi, whereas for many people from Lakhanpur and surrounding areas, still the neighboring towns are more important. Though this trend has sharply declined now, some thirty years ago there was less choices for the people in Nepal if they wanted to have formal education. My landlord, where I stayed for my fieldwork in Lakhanpur, also studied in Bairginiya and for other locals Muzaffarpur and Banaras were also the convenient places. He still praises his education in India which made him capable of getting a job of teacher in a lower secondary school. He stayed at his relative's house while studying in the school.

Some popular religious destinations in India such as Badrinath, Kedar, Puri and Rameshwaram collectively known as *Char Dham* (four abodes or four pilgrimage sites) entice many Lakhanpur residents. It is considered highly sacred by Hindus to visit *Char Dham* during one's lifetime. They also go to other religious places in Banaras and other neighboring areas. Similarly, the Durga temple in Lakhanpur has also remained a holy place which attracts many Indian pilgrims especially during Durga worship in the autumn season.

In addition to corporal mobility, the shared cultural values and ties, which also provided the basis for such multifaceted relations, have been there from time immemorial. Local people mentioned dress patterns, festivals, food, and language as the common form of culture which bring people on either side of the border closer despite having the evident national political boundary. In such common cultural ground and recurrent mobility of people from both sides of the border, for a variety of purpose, cross border medical travel takes place in Lakhanpur.

These days both sides of the border are further related through the market mechanism. Nepal imports different consumer goods from India not only for these border towns and localities but also for the

other parts of the country. While passing through the border area, one can see many Nepalis fetching everyday consumable goods. Nepali travelers returning from the other side of the border can be seen as holding bags full of goods bought from the shops across the border. Difference in economic development in two sides of the border makes Nepali nationals buy such goods in India for their daily consumption and promote 'informal sector cross-border trade'(Peberdy, 2000).

Lakhanpur residents know that many people from Tarai region buy their vehicles, register them in India, and retain them with their relatives in India. It is essentially because of the extreme custom and duty charge on four wheelers in Nepal which makes buying vehicle in India much cheaper. People call them 'vehicles in Indian plate', implying that only the registration is there in India but the owners are Nepali. As per the rule, vehicles in Indian plate can commute into Nepali side up to five kilometers without paying any taxes. If they have to go outside that coverage, then, every day they have to pay certain amount of money. Though Lakhanpur is a bit far from the Indian border but its district headquarter is within one kilometer's distance from the Indian border.

People have experienced that the political border has not been able to create boundary between the people of the two countries for everyday interactions in different avenues of their social life. Though there are some occasions of barriers from the side of Border Security Force (BSF) from the Indian side, people of think that it is basically for the people who want to smuggle goods across the border, without paying any customs. As commoners, they do not have any restraints on cross-border mobility. In fact, people know that they began to feel the presence of BSF following the Maoist insurgency in Nepal.

### **Medical journey across the border**

The history of modern Western medicines shows that it had spread into different parts of the world along with and as part of Christian missionaries and colonization. After 1858, India officially became a British colony as British crown took control of India from East India Company. Along with transportation, medicines came into India as means of modernization in the colonial era (Arnold, 1993). It also expanded in different parts of India along with the intrusion of colonization process. Development of biomedicine has longer history in India compared to Nepal. Biomedicines there had been regarded by Lakhanpur people as effective means of treatment considering its capability to make effective diagnosis and instantaneous treatment.

As Streeflandmaintains (1985) modern Western medicines are essentially a centralized medical system. They reveal urban biasness not only in terms of concentration of institutions of knowledge productions, store and training but also in terms of treatment and care giving. Therefore, people have to travel to get such services to the urban areas. In case of Tarai region, such proximate areas are mostly located across the border.

Lakhanpur is situated in the proximity of about 15 kilometers from Indian border. Along with the expansion of modern Western medicines across the border, Lakhanpur people began to look for their medical care in India. As they have matrimonial relationship across the border in India, some of their daughters-in-law have come into their village from their natal home in India. They are already familiar about the hospitals and medical care existing in the neighboring Indian towns and cities. Similarly, their daughters are married across the border in India and they also come to discern from them and their relatives about the available medical treatments on the other side of the border.

Cross-border medical travel is very common in Lakhapur. People from different walks of life know about this situation. Even the government officials, who are liable to deliver health care services across the whole district, also take this as a very common phenomenon. In fact, the District Health Officer (DHO) clearly and in a candid way told about the need of cross-border medical travel:

*It could be because we have not delivered proper services and facilities. A medical officer obviously cannot treat all the diseases. Consequently, people go to India (for their treatment). Government has not planned to deliver specialist services at the district level. Therefore, people go to Sitamadhi, and Darbhanga. Wherever they are from, they go through the road in front of our district hospital.*

Nowadays, biomedicine has expanded up to Lakhapur area. As pointed out by the DHO, certain specialized services are not existing even in the district hospital. Hence, people need to go outside to seek for the treatment. What Hausner and Sharma (2013) have claimed in the context of labor migration, applies to the state of health care services in Nepal. They said cross border travel points to the diminished capacity of Nepali state to cater to all kinds of needs of its people. This also follows the arguments that biomedical practices in different parts of the world are mediated by local socio-cultural and politico-economic context (Van der Geest & Finkler, 2004) and Lakhapur is not an exception.

Lakhapur people had experienced that all the towns across the borders are not same in terms of medical facilities. Not only in terms availability of the medical facilities, the cost associated with, and the quality of service available also affect their destination. Some other social factors too influence their medical destination. Some of the patients have stated that even local doctors also advise them to take the patients across the border. While travelling to Sitamadhi, I have seen crowds of patients in front of many clinics or

pharmacy, whereas, I never saw such crowds in Bairginia and Motihari. An experienced patient/guardian who had been to all these neighboring towns for the treatment of himself or his family members told me :

Many people work as brokers to take the patients to a particular clinic in Darbhanga whereas it is less in practice in Sitamadhi and it does not exist at all in Bairginia. By the time you get off from the train, brokers will approach you and ask you if you needed to avail services of any clinic. Even if they take us to the clinic, they do not charge us even a single rupee.

The other common brokers are rickshaw pullers and pharmacists. At times, the rickshaw pullers advise the patients to go to some other clinics than the one the patients ask to go. If patients agree with their advice, then they take them to the same clinic. These rickshaw pullers get commissions from the clinic for getting the patients.

Not only the patients and community members told me about the practice of brokering but also a medical doctor in her clinic in Motihari told me about the presence of this practice. Though she denied existence of such practice at that times she accepted that such practices were prevalent some years ago. She also claimed that she never allowed such *Tatar* (broker) in her clinic. She had heard that these people used to collect patients visiting them in their corresponding communities and bring them to the clinic. Entwined into the process of commodification (Henderson & Petersen, 2002), people from different walk of society are involved in brokering medical care, often euphemized (**Fernandez, 2008**) in the form of altruistic advice.

As a procedure, when a patient reaches the clinic, he/she has to register his/her name at the register. Sohan Mishra, a local resident from Lakhapur, had experienced that when a patient approaches at a clinic in India, the clerk asks him/her, among other things, about

the person in Nepal who had referred him/her to visit there. He thinks it is a strong evidence to show that the clinic provides commission to the referee.

Lakhanpur people think that it is not only because of the quality of health care or better skilled doctors but also because in local towns people commonly know the doctors and/or the staff working there. They do not need to go through the broker in small towns. In the big cities like Darbhanga, it is difficult for people to find the particular clinic and the complexity increases when the patient is a first time visitor. Some people might have earlier ideas about which hospital or clinic they are visiting or doctor they would want to see but those who do not know about whom to consult end up accepting the assistance of the brokers. The indiscernible cost of brokerage is indirectly levied upon the patients by the clinic or the service providers, which ultimately makes the patients pay extra for the medical care/services they look for.

The availability of kin or social network, recommendations from the knowledgeable or experienced person in one's own network are factors that affected where people went for their treatment. Bochaton's (2015) study of cross-border medical travel of Lao people also shows the crucial role played by social networks in patients' decision making and on the routes they choose to seek treatment in the neighboring Thai side. Remarkably, in case of less severe disease, they even chose the destination based on their other needs such as shopping. If they have to buy something which is available in reasonable price in particular town, they are more probable to go that town even for medical reasons.

One way of understanding hospital among Lakhanpur people is regarding them as *chhota* (small) or *bada* (big). Initially, these lingoes sound like size but people use them in figurative terms to refer to the specialised services available there. The more the specialist services available are, the big the hospital is considered.

People go to different parts of India to consult such *Bada* hospitals. Notion of *Chhota* and *Bada* applies also into the seriousness of their health problems. People regard certain illness such as common cold, delivery pain at the beginning and fever as *Chhota* whereas certain protracted illnesses such as delivery pain, tuberculosis, cancer or uterine prolapsed are regarded as *Bada*. They think that in case of having *Bada* illness, they have to turn to *Bada* hospital/doctor. In this way, how people understand the sickness through their 'explanatory model' (Kleinman, 1980) also affects their destination for health care services.

There is no similarity in reasons about sending the patients to other clinics/hospitals, no matter whether it is in Nepal and/or in India. These doctors admit that all kinds of ailments cannot be diagnosed and treated at any institution or a place. For that reason, they have to be referred to other places for further diagnosis and treatment. Dr. Jha from Sitamadhi said:

Where in the world is the practice of referral not available?  
It is because no government can provide specialized services in every corner and hence obviously patients have to be referred to the higher level or specialized hospitals.

The argument of Dr. Jha shows that there is a thin line between the referral and *Tatar* services provided by the lower level facilities. Referral is done for genuine reason when the particular services are not available at the lower levels of hospitals and health centres. However, where do the health centres refer the patients is important to analyse. Will this be based only on the availability of services, reputation of the doctor/clinic, distance of the destination/referred health facility in case of urgency or will there be any other factors which act as incentives to the people who refer these patients?

Lakhanpur people think that they do not get adequate health care services from their local health facility. It is also apparent that these health facilities are not supposed to cure all the health problems that the locals may have. This makes local people feel that local health centres are inadequate and insufficient which pushes them to look for such services across the border (Dahal, 2019). One private medical practitioner told me :

Our local health facility is good enough in providing vaccine and vitamin A. Eighty percent of local people travel to neighboring towns in India for their health problems.)

A 67 year old woman told me why they like to go across the border for treatment. She said :

They only provide medicines at the government health facility only for common cold, cough and fever. For almost all ailments people travel to private clinics in India.

Overstating number and percentage to depict one's argument is plainly seen in the above quotes. To make their arguments sturdy and show weak position of local health facilities, these research participants have said that the government health facilities only provide services to very common ailments such as common cold. These statements also connote to the lack of knowledge and skills among the service providers and the belief that they cannot serve patients for the ailments beyond these common ones.

Cross border medical travel also provides Lakhanpur women opportunity to get rid of monotonous everyday life prevailing in their locality. Since they are socialized and are expected to become bona fide women (Dahal, 2018), they have rare opportunities to cross the boundaries set by the society. The micro level cultural institutions like family and marriage, the underpinnings of the social and cultural life of people from Nepal's Tarai, can contribute in shaping the typical kind of suppressive self and situation of women.

When there is a question of health care and well-being, these social restrictions become liberal for them to be able to step out.

### **Marketing of Indian clinics in Lakhanpur**

There is a Gregorian calendar hanging at the right side of Umesh Jha's clinic in Lakhanpur. This is the corner where visiting patients stand to inquire him about the medicines or tell him about history of their illness to buy some medicine. At the bottom of the calendar, there are some information about the gynecological and pediatric clinic in Bairginia. Along with mobile numbers of contact persons it also includes information about its recent shift into the owners' own building, only little further from the earlier site. It also says that this clinic is open twenty four hours for emergency service.

One day, when I was sitting in the counter of UmeshJha, two men came on a motorbike, they stopped the bike in front of his drug store and asked him about whether there were any doctors in the locality. Umesh told them that there were two doctors in Lakhanpur and 2/3 more doctors come on certain days of the week to particular clinics in the village. To make the purpose of their visit clear to Umesh, one of them then said,'actually we are from Sitamadhi and we run a pathology lab. We are here now for the promotion of a doctor's clinic'. He then took out the doctor's visiting card from his pocket handed it to Umesh and told him that the doctor is a very famous one.

I asked the visiting card and saw it. . It was in English. The visiting card itself suggested that this clinic was located at Hospital Road in Sitamadhi. It contained doctor's mobile number as well. It further provides information that the doctor did his MD from Allahabad but it is not clear whether it is simply the name of the university or the city. It further says that the doctor is a neonatal and child specialist and he had served as a Senior Resident in Delhi. Interestingly, the card also included the name of another doctor, probably the

popular one, whose clinic is nearby the clinic of this doctor. Later on, I asked Umesh about his perspective on these two visiting men. He told me that such people come to Lakhanpur from neighboring Indian border towns including Bairginiya, Sitamadhi and Darbhanga. Sometimes, these people also offer commission to the pharmacists who send patients to their clinic. He added that he also had got such proposals from these clinics. When I asked him whether the drug stores have specific forms or anything by which they refer patients to a particular clinic. He was not so much open, regarding the commission he might get from such referral, as he used to be with me while talking about other things. I thought he wanted to hide something from me.

I found it interesting how they approached Umesh initially and only later on told about their intention about promotion (advertisement) of a doctor. Moreover, they have also emphasized on the location of the clinic and the training and association of the doctor with Delhi. It was crucial to note that the card simply says that he was a senior resident in Delhi but keeps silence about the name of the hospital in Delhi where he worked. For me that was the interesting illustration of a hierarchical notion of health care service availability in different part of India. Simply the name Delhi was enough for the promotion of the clinic. Likewise, referring to the name of another doctor to promote one's own clinic also reflects some interesting dimension that the other doctor mentioned in the visiting card must have been popular in the locality and the one intending to promote himself also wants to link himself with the same social space. On the other hand, not being specific also provides the space to doubt about the reliability of the information this visiting card aims to communicate.

I have also seen some stickers stuck on the doors of refrigerators in Lakhanpur and at the district headquarters, especially in restaurants and tea stalls. In addition to the contact numbers, these stickers

have information about the location of the clinic, time when doctor/s is/are available in the clinic, and kinds of ailments treated in the clinic.

Indian clinics also broadcast their advertisements in the local FM radios. Such advertisements contain information about the name of the doctor, their experience, name of the clinic and its location and kinds of ailments are cured there. Moreover, these advertorials are broadcasted in local languages including Bhojpuri, Maithali and Bajjika. I have found that many people from Lakhanpur have traced the clinics in India based on these advertisements as well. In this way, Indian clinics and hospitals approach Lakhanpur people, in many ways to make them visit there. One common trait of these approaches is that these institutions have made their efforts to reach to the individual level. Amidst the ubiquity of commodification of health care services (Henderson & Petersen, 2002) and increasing brokering 'euphemized' **(Fernandez, 2008) as advice**, cross-border medical travel takes place in Lakhanpur area.

### **Concluding remarks**

The above discussion shows that the presence of border lies in the experience of people when they come across it. It also portrays that borders do not necessarily need to 'validate the differences' (Khosravi, 2010, p.1) in its two sides. There could be much commonality among the inhabitants of the both sides. People have experienced that the political border has not created boundary between the people of the two countries for their everyday interactions in different avenues of their social life. To understand people's lives in holistic manner, in the context of health seeking practices of women from southern part of Nepal, it is vital to understand their cross-border medical travel. It is not an exceptional phenomenon; rather it is embedded into a local social and cultural context.

Socially organized responses to disease, as Kleinman (1980, p.24) suggests, constitute a special cultural system and the health care system is a part of it and such practice manifests in Lakhanpur as well. Kleinman points out, 'in every culture, illness, the responses to it, individuals experiencing and treating it, and the social institutions relating to it are all systematically interconnected. The entirety of these interrelationships is the health care system' (1980, p.24). Kleinman in his writing has not dealt anything about the national border, however, while going through his analysis one can see that health care system lies in a culture within the national boundary. Departing from Kleinman, in view of the commonality and naturalization of cross border medical travel in this part of Nepal as my data has solidly supported, I would like to contend that health care system of a culture, both at the level of imagination and also to that of practice, may exist beyond the national political boundaries. On the other hand, wider prevalence of cross border medical travel to India shows Nepali state's weak capacity of its health care system which is not sufficient to cater to the health services of its people.

These clinics and hospitals have made every effort which make people believe that they are capable of providing services to the people (Schuurman, 2000), they have largely succeeded in creating such image for themselves. They have attempted to address the weakness and lacking of 'arbitrariness of bureaucratic arrangement' (Gupta, 2012) of the health care services, e.g. opening hours of the health facilities in Nepal. Through their visiting cards and calendars not only they have reached to Lakhanpur, but they have also make use of their 'social capital' of belongingness in a particular location of hospital road and/or proximity to another reputed doctor/clinic to 'generate economic capital' (Bourdieu, 2011) through the advertisement of their own clinic. Euphemized in the form of lack of specialized health care services at the locality, referral of patients

also contributes to make money to those who refer the patients to particular hospitals and clinics.

With the frequent presence of broker medical journey of the patients across the border to India is different from going there for other purposes. When they go for other purposes, they do not need any intermediaries to travel around, visit their relatives or to look for jobs. It could be because of esoteric nature of medical knowledge, which becomes a different domain and thus strange field even in the familiar places. Need and presence of broker makes their knowledge, experience and networks insufficient, eventually making them ready to pay for these middlemen, which sometimes they may not know as the brokering can come euphemized as altruistic act.

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## Domestic Labour Migration to the GCC Countries from Nepal and Kenya: The Bid to Secure 'risky' Employment

Salmata Braimah and Uddhab Pd. Pyakurel

### Abstract

*With the growing number of reports on exploitation of the rights of migrant workers in most regions of the world, the Arab Gulf states have received particular attention due to the regularity and intensity of the abuses. Despite this attention, massive number of migrants flood the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries in recent years, seeking a way out of poverty. Migrant workers from developing countries such as Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bangladesh, Kenya, Ethiopia, Ghana and Indonesia pay large fees to obtain labour-intensive jobs in this region. Domestic female workers seem to be the most affected of these abuses.*

*This paper sought to explore how all these restrictions and devastating stories of domestic migrant abuses do not deter women from going to the Gulf countries to work, focusing on Nepal and Kenya. The primary data used for this paper was obtained through an in-depth literature review of articles relevant to the research topic. Findings showed that more people will seek for jobs in other destinations regardless of the cost due to rising heights of poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, lack of skills, and the forces of globalization leading to a suggestion that recruitment policies are written by both sending and receiving countries to ensure an effective control of the situation.*

### Introduction.

Migration movements within and out of Europe during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries were indeed of great significance to the development and modernisation of those European countries. Some examples are migration from the Netherlands and France to Prussia and from

Europe to America, transforming them from agricultural to modern societies (Schneller, 2001). For so long a time, refugees were seen as a matter of international charity and not as a political and security problem. Since the end of the Cold War, powerful political and social fragmentations were unleashed, leading to a massive wave of both domestic and cross-border migration (Schneller, 2001).

A growing number of emigrants especially from the global South move towards destinations in Europe and North America, and other destinations such as the Middle East and the Gulf countries. This has become a popular trend. However, the vast majority of international mobilities and migrations are internal and within the global South (Cairo review, 2018). 'According to the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), (2015a), the choice of countries of destination by African migrants is related to factors such as geographical proximity, historical and cultural' factors (Atong, Mayah and Odigie, 2018).

Europe has become a region of immigration with the influx of immigrants reaching an exceptional level in recent years. The numbers of refugees have increased tremendously.

A larger percentage of migration movements have been within the developing world thereby endangering social and economic stability in receiving countries especially ones already struggling with underdevelopment, political instability and ethnic tensions.

Long-drawn-out wars, inequality, rapid population growth, ethnic conflicts, and increasing poverty in many less developed countries have unbridled waves of migration which might probably not end. It then becomes clear migration is intensely rooted in social, political and economic conditions (Schneller, 2001).

Today, migrant workers can be very much vulnerable groups trapped in the throes of a malicious problem, fashioned and sustained by poverty, dynamics of globalization, labour uprisings and

government inaction or corruption in both their home and host countries.

According to existing literature and media reports, migrant workers are exploited in most regions of the world (Auwal, 2010). There are reports explaining how human rights of migrants are violated worldwide. They are exploited, humiliated, and dehumanized in most countries of the world but the Arab Gulf states have received particular attention in the global landscape of migrant labour exploitation due to the regularity and intensity of the abuses (Auwal, 2010).

A massive number of migrants have flooded the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries in recent years. Jobs have resulted from the great wealth of oil and gas in this region thereby drawing in tens of thousands of new migrants seeking a way out of poverty each year. Migrant workers from developing countries such as Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bangladesh, Kenya, Ethiopia, Ghana and Indonesia etc. pay large fees to obtain labour-intensive jobs in this region (Auwal, 2010). Although many earn more than they would have earned in their native countries, many suffer shocking abuse in this region.

These migrant workers are often misled and exploited by intermediaries (middlemen), sponsors, and employers in both their country of origin and receiving countries. They end up losing not only the investments they make obtaining the jobs, but also their basic human dignity, health and, in some appalling cases, their lives. They are often deprived of wages, live in squalid conditions, are in forced work, denied freedom to move or change jobs, and imperilled to physical and sexual abuse (Auwal, 2010; Murray, 2013).

It is a moral imperative for governments of both the sending and receiving nations to end this problem. Strong policy recommendations to end to this problem are available and yet not being implemented principally due to a lack of social awareness

about the dilemma of migrant workers. Ending the mistreatment of migrant workers seems not to be at the top of the public agenda in either the sending or receiving countries but then, political realities in the region limits the ability of individuals and groups to collect and publish solid 'scientific' data on labor issues (Auwal, 2010; Malit and Youha, 2016).

Domestic workers in GCC countries especially women seem to be the group experiencing most of these abuses. Reports of these abuses have been the headlining news publications in recent times on various platforms like the Human Rights Watch, ILO and Cairo Review. Countries like Nepal, Pakistan, Bangladesh, India and the Philippines have implemented restrictions on labour migration to the Gulf States but they have either limited or opposite effects (Murray, 2013). People somehow manage to get to the Gulf countries at all cost, through agents and illegal means. Here, I wish to explore how all these restrictions and devastating stories of domestic migrant abuses does not deter women in going to the Gulf countries to work.

The primary data used for this paper was obtained through an in-depth literature review of articles relevant to this research paper. These articles were found in different search engines in relation to the GCC countries as well as the labour exporting countries; Nepal, Kenya using key words of the research topic.

### **Labour Migration to the GCC States**

The Gulf Cooperation Council consists of all Arab states of the Persian Gulf with the exception of Iraq, namely: Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates.

Over the last two to three decades, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) have been the top destinations followed by Kuwait and Qatar for migrants seeking employment, including

domestic work in the GCC states and in the whole region. 'In 2010, there were an estimated total of 8.4 million migrants in Saudi Arabia and 7.3 million in the UAE, while in 2017 the estimates stood at 12.2 million and 8.3 million for the two respective countries' (Atong, Mayah and Odigie, 2018).

Baldwin–Edwards (2011) accounted for at least 75 percent of the labour force in almost all the GCC countries being foreigners, reflecting the dominance of migrants in the total population and their workforce. This shows the intensity of migration to the GCC states and its implications for the labour force considering the majority of migrants there are for employment.

A large number of migrant workers, about 20-30% of the estimated 10 million are victimized (Auwal, 2010). These migrants are exploited by private sector agents and employers in both their home and host countries, under their unresponsive governments but much of their abuse occurs at home for domestic workers in the hands of their employers (Auwal, 2010). They are repeatedly cheated during recruitment, paid unfairly, housed in sordid conditions, forced to work, and sometimes subjected to physical or sexual abuse. Even amid those who report being content with their work conditions are denied some of their basic human and labor rights (Auwal, 2010; Bajracharya and Sijapati, 2012).

According to Auwal (2010), hundreds of labourers interviewed in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar seemed rather pleased with their treatment and compensation as they usually receive their contract-based salaries on time and in many cases allowed extra payments to supplement their monthly salaries by working overtime. In addition they also receive *zakaat* which is a mandatory charity and the *sadaqah*, the optional charity from pious and wealthy Gulf nationals, adding on to their incomes. Auwal (2010) with the help of interviews with diplomats and academics estimated 70-80% of

migrants in Gulf countries seem to accumulate a net benefit from their jobs despite numerous hardships from this.

### **Recruitment Deception**

Migrant workers serving in the Gulf are recruited through labour brokers operating in their home countries who charge potential workers a sizable fee in exchange for the opportunity to travel abroad and work for a higher wage than they can get in their home countries (Auwal, 2010; Pyakurel, 2018).

Auwal (2010) explains, the possibility of being able to send money back home to support family that justifies the sacrifice worthwhile for the migrants.

Based on research, there is substantial proof that labour brokers are misleading and are deceitful in their bid to enlist new labourers by promising higher wages and better working conditions than will actually be received and failing to inform them of limitations that will be placed on their ability to return home (Auwal's, 2010); Malit and Youha, 2016).

These brokers, according to Auwal (2010), are completely aware of the discrepancy between what they promise and the realities of the labour conditions abroad, and even act in a way that disgraces and humiliates workers in some cases. A broker he interviewed said he tells people of 'some inflated success stories' to sell visas to them. They then blame their unethical participation in the exploitation of migrant workers on poverty but Auwal (2010) believes the unethical behaviour of some others can be attributed to greed, not to poverty.

One major challenge is the absence of a contract especially for domestic workers where they are often not aware of the terms and conditions laid down by the employer. In cases where contracts

*Domestic Labour Migration to the GCC Countries from Nepal and Kenya: The Bid to Secure 'risky' Employment...* 75 exist, there are high chances that they are signed by the agents without their knowledge (Bajracharya and Sijapati, 2012).

Besides, only contracts written in Arabic are recognised during a disagreement. Most of the recruitment agencies often replace the original contracts with one consisting of different terms and conditions thereby making it impossible for domestic workers to fight for their rights as they are left with no base. Agents leave out so much detail that, the domestic workers are not even aware there exists a three-month probationary period that states their contracts can be terminated if their work is not satisfactory within that period. The workers also can do same if the work environment is not conducive (Bajracharya and Sijapati, 2012). Since these domestic workers do not know this, they are forced to work in that environment even after the probationary period (Bajracharya and Sijapati, 2012).

Most job recruitments, especially domestic workers, go through the *kalafa* system (Murray, 2013; Bajracharya and Sijapati, 2012).

### **The Kalafa System**

The *Kafala* system was set up by the GCC countries in the 1950s when slavery was abolished to provide a means of procuring foreign labour, requiring a migrant worker to be sponsored by a citizen or government agency (Murray, 2013).

The *kalafa* system, also known as the sponsorship system is based on the Bedouin principle of hospitality which sets certain obligations in the treatment and protection of foreign guests (Bajracharya and Sijapati, 2012). With this system, the host vouches for the foreigners' visit, implying that the sponsor is responsible for the safety and protection of the guests but the meaning has changed overtime with it being used to primarily provide the GCC countries central governments with the means to regulate labour flow into

their countries (Bajracharya and Sijapati, 2012; Murray, 2013). Sponsorship is the only means through which workers can obtain an entry visa and residence permit. The sponsor, therefore, assumes legal and financial responsibility for the migrant worker during a contract period, usually two years, and signs a document from the Ministry of Labour to that effect (Murray, 2013; Bajracharya and Sijapati, 2012).

During this period, the domestic worker's visa and legal status is tied to the sponsor, meaning the sponsor takes both economic and legal responsibility of the worker. The worker's recruitment fee, issuance of national identity card and medical examination are all the responsibility of the host. This thereby puts the host in complete control over the worker making him/her completely dependent on the host. The mobility of the worker is all in the hands of the host. The worker cannot transfer employment nor leave the country without the consent of the host. The exit visa is even obtained from the host. These domestic workers are therefore unable to exercise their rights and freedoms, thereby, making them the 'invisible working class' in these countries which in turn can lead them to vulnerable working conditions such as lower salary, physical, psychological, verbal and sexual abuse and long working hours. Such powerlessness makes it extremely difficult to regulate and scrutinise their working conditions (Bajracharya and Sijapati, 2012; Murray, 2013).

Unfortunately, recruitment agents barely inform their applicants about the conditions of work thereby making it more difficult for the labour migrants to adjust to the situation. They sell the idea of opportunity of easy ways of making and not the overall conditions of employment. Notably, Nepal has tried providing such education to would be migrants but many of them choose to skip it and

'purchase' the certificate of participation. Therefore this orientation training for would be migrants has not succeed much.

Recently on September 4, 2018, Qatar's emir signed a bill allowing foreign workers the right to leave the country excluding several key groups of workers, falling short of Qatar's reform pledges over the last year according to Human Rights Watch (HRW, 2018). This, according to HRW (2018), is as a result of the country coming under increased scrutiny of its treatment of foreign workers since winning the bid to host the 2022 Football World Cup and needing to employ thousands of migrant workers to build the infrastructure for the tournament.

Although the Law No. 13 of 2018 cancels requirements for most migrant workers covered under the country's labour law to seek authorisation or an exit visa from their employer to leave the country, it excludes migrants not under the labour law including those in the military, public sector, and domestic work and allows employers to request for the exclusion of some other workers thereby falling short of the public pledges Qatar made for labour reform to meet international human rights standards (HRW, 2018).

### **Effects of the Kalafa System on domestic workers**

The Kafala System is deemed as a system that helps governments oversee the movement of migrant workers within the GCC countries. However, they have failed to understand the system's implications on workers' mobility and the violation of their labour and migrant rights (Bajracharya and Sijapati, 2012). Domestic migrant workers do not fall under the labour protection policies of almost all the GCC states making it almost impossible to be covered. Reports on migrant workers being abused, mistreated or deprived of wages have become so rampant that they seldom draw attention. The cases that receive media coverage and attention from authorities

are mostly the gruesome and shocking ones (Bajracharya and Sijapati, 2012; Auwal, 2010).

The system requires an employee to work only for the sponsor and because of this so many, if not all, sponsors take away their migrant workers' passports and identification cards. So, it is unlikely that the migrants will leave the country but if they do, a stiff monetary penalty immediately awaits them. The worker is immediately expected to leave the country at their own expense instead of having their employers cover their return airfare at the end of their contract (Murray, 2013).

Murray (2013) states in his work, Onn Winckler's 'five distinct ways in which the GCC migration system differs 'quite radically' from other patterns of migration, which should be taken into account when considering possible reforms of the system'. These distinctions are; no citizenship available for workers, lack of employment stability, permanent settlement not sought by workers, migrant workers constitute majority of the workforce and lastly sweeping interest of GCC citizens in cheap foreign labour.

Unlike the Western world, it is almost impossible for migrant workers to belater joined by their families after a few years or evengain citizenship in the host country. These workers can also be deported from GCCcountries without prior notice despite having a defined contract period. An example given by Murray (2013) was where Palestinian and Jordanian workers in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia as well as Yemeni workers in Saudi Arabia were deported due to their countries' support of Iraq after the 1990-1991 Gulf Crisis. The kinship based system of GCCsocieties prevents outsiders from easily integrating into their society. Many migrants aim to make as much money as they can during their contract period and return to their home country. They live isolated lives either in labour camps or private households (Murray, 2013). Foreigners are a larger population of some GCC countries like Qatar, Kuwait and UAE.

Granting citizenship to these migrants will make the natives the minority, ending their identity as Arab-Islamic (Murray, 2013).

The importation of cheap foreign labour has created a very high standard of living for GCC citizens including lower-income citizens. Some citizens have also turned the sponsorship system into a money making business by sponsoring migrant workers. As at 1996, it was reported one could earn as much as \$1,360 just by providing visa (Murray, 2013).

### **The dilemma of domestic migrant workers**

Exploitation by recruitment agencies, undefined hours of work, non-payment of wages, no off-days, verbal, psychological and sexual abuse, mobility restriction and constant fear of deportation are few of the challenges of domestic workers. Due to these causes the chances of protests are slim and almost unlikely (Bajracharya and Sijapati, 2012; Auwal, 2010; Malit and Youha, 2016; Atong, Mayah and Odigie, 2018).

Despite the fact that the recruitment fee and airfare of the labour migrant is tobe paid by the employer under the kalafa system, recruiters seem to be extorting huge sums of money from would-be migrants. Although Nepal, for example, set a maximum amount payable to recruitment agents by the migrants, they are still charged higher than that amount(Bajracharya and Sijapati, 2012). They are made to believe that the amount covers airfare, insurance, labour permit fee, pre-departure orientation, airport taxes and contribution to the Foreign Employment Welfare Fund. The migrants receive little to no wage as a large portion goes to the agent as payment if they choose to pay later (Bajracharya and Sijapati, 2012)

The abuse begins on arrival to the receiving country. They lose their passports that very moment. With their employers having hold on their passports, mobility is immediately cut off. They are often not

permitted to contact family and kept in isolation from society and other domestic workers. This, they believe, limits the likelihood of these domestic workers from leaving before completion of their contract (Bajracharya and Sijapati, 2012). For example, Article 29 of the Constitution of the United Arab Emirates warrants all citizens freedom of movement and residence within the limits of law, but there exist some restrictions on mobility for both Emirati and foreign women. "The Gulf is pervaded by a patriarchal ethos and conservative religious social and cultural norms that underline the rights and privileges of men vis-à-vis women while limiting women's rights" (EUROPA, 2014). Laws are guided by the Islamic Sharia legitimising a largely recognised characterisation of women's status as not entitled to equal basic rights and having less participation in all social and political spheres (EUROPA, 2014). It, however, is not the same situation in all GCC countries although it is a general feature. Its application in Saudi Arabia is considerably the most intense, severe and absolute with its numerous restrictions on women's liberties and lack of rights and opportunities available to them. These restrictions apply to female citizens of the Gulf States.

The living conditions of domestic migrant workers are often described as slave-like, with severe restrictions on their personal freedoms and rights by human rights organisations. As to whether these conditions are observed as human right violations differs according to the level of social and political awareness of the employer (EUROPA, 2014).

With no clear job description, they are sometimes made not to work just in their employer's home, but loaned to other households as well as other multiple forms of work and almost always without extra pay. Overtime pay is non-existent considering they are not covered by the labour laws of most host countries (Bajracharya and Sijapati, 2012).

Besides not being provided extra pay or overtime, wages are mostly not paid on time or sometimes withheld for months. Other employers deduct recruitment costs from the very same paltry wage. Salary differs based on the nationality of the worker and the host country. The Domestic Workers Convention requires countries to set a minimum wage for domestic workers if a minimum wage exists for other workers but none of the GCC countries have heeded to it. Kuwait in 2010, for example, increased the minimum wage for workers in the private sector to \$210 per month but this provision excluded domestic workers. The abuse either tends to increase or wage deducted when employers feel they have been cheated by these recruitment agents (Bajracharya and Sijapati, 2012). From another perspective, Auwal (2010) also makes mention of a woman promised a 100 Kuwaiti Dinar (about \$350) monthly salary as well as free room and overtime pay which she hoped would be able to buy back the large portion of her family's land, which she sold to pay a labour broker for job and journey to Kuwait, in a few months. However, three months after arriving in Kuwait she had been offered no employment and was living with a help of a distant relative. The idea of being paid substantial amounts of money always seems to lead labour migrants into taking great risks for better living but does not always reward them in that way thereby leading to even worse situations.

Despite the existence of labour laws requiring equal pay for all sexes for similar work, women throughout the region earn less than men. Although for example, Article 13 of the Bahraini constitution provides equal rights and opportunities to all workers, a recent study shows that men earn more than women with the gender gap being greater in the private sector, which employs most migrant workers. With domestic workers being women in most of the cases because of preferences for them, their low wages compared to that of the male migrant workers is no surprise as the native women

themselves experience the wage gap (Murray, 2013).

Sexual abuse ranging from sexual advances, molestation, unwanted fondling, rape and offers for paid sex have been what domestic workers are subjected to with the absence of protection (Bajracharya and Sijapati, 2012). Some, reportedly, are forced to do sex work in GCC countries. The maids are mostly expected to provide sexual favours for their employers' guests aside household chores and are abused and harassed when they refuse (Bajracharya and Sijapati, 2012). Undocumented workers are the most susceptible to sexual and physical abuse and duress to accept to lowly living and working conditions as employers can threaten to report them to police. If caught, they may be penalised and returned to the kafeel or charged, detained and deported. It is also probable to be black-listed by the authorities making it difficult to go to another GCC country once blacklisted in one without confirmation (PNCC, 2011 as cited by ILO, 2012). Undocumented workers may resort to smugglers or traffickers to assist them to return home and apply again so as to outwit the legal barriers. (ILO 2012). Cases of rape are mostly not reported because these domestic workers practically do not know the law and have no idea where to report it. Even when they do, it is useless if there is no male witness or strong medical test report to prove the act (Bajracharya and Sijapati, 2012). None of the GCC countries offers specific protections against domestic violence thereby posing major barriers to the protection of women inside the home. Studies indicate that 30 percent of Bahraini women experience some sort of domestic abuse, but domestic violence is usually covered up and kept within the family' (Murray, 2013). Police are therefore unwilling to get tangled in family matters when women file complaints. Murray (2013) gave an example of a Saudi Arabian girl who sought protection from police after being sexually molested by her father but was told she needed her father to file the complaint for her.

"There is also a high chance of being prosecuted under Sharia law for engaging in a relationship outside of marriage. Further, in cases where a worker gives birth as a result of rape, the child is not recognised by the state in the GCC countries and faces a great challenge in getting the required legal clearances to bring the child back home to Nepal" (Bajracharya and Sijapati, 2012).

The power the Kafala system allows the sponsor to have many ways of controlling the migrant worker hence many times it has been equated to modern-day slavery as employer (kafeel) meets his or her labour needs in the environment of great control and unbridled power over the worker, creating an environment suitable for the violation of human rights and attrition of labour standards (ILO, 2012). Domestic workers seem to suffer at the hands of their employers also because they are neither covered by the labour laws nor protected by social security laws of GCC countries as they explicitly exclude domestic workers. Although some GCC countries and their neighbouring countries like Lebanon and Jordan, made efforts to bring domestic workers under the scope of their labour laws, they are yet to be effective. Bahrain in 2007 drafted a labour law including domestic workers but still has not been endorsed (Bajracharya and Sijapati, 2012; Auwal, 2010).

Slow judicial process, language barrier, high cost of legal and administrative processes and proscription on alternative employment while a case is pending in court on reporting an abuse discourages workers from taking their employers to court on account of an abuse. If attempted, the employers tend to falsely accuse their employees of theft which leads to deportation as it outweighs the domestic worker's complaint. If the worker is returned to the employer, it only means the worker has to face further abuse (Bajracharya and Sijapati, 2012).

If the migrant worker decides to leave the workplace without the employer's written consent they may be charged with 'absconding'.

Even if a worker leaves in response to abuse, it only makes their situation worse as a breach of contract is treated as criminal regardless of the reason. They remain at risk of being treated as a criminal rather than receiving appropriate victim support. . Once the employer files a case of any breach with the police, the worker faces a deportation risk and also makes the worker liable to pay back the costs borne by the sponsor in hiring the worker. The migrant worker is unable to leave the country given this would require the employer's consent and possession of their passport (ILO, 2012; Bajracharya and Sijapati, 2012).

Labour migrants, despite the situation are required to obtain their exit visas from their employers. If denied, they are left with the choice of either going back to work for their employer, getting imprisoned or reaching a settlement with the employer which is most likely at the expense of the worker (ILO, 2012; Bajracharya and Sijapati, 2012).

#### **Why more and more migrant workers move to GCC countries**

"International debt politics has encouraged this dependence on migrants' remittances, while at the same time creating the incentive for many women to emigrate in the first place. The International Monetary Fund asks the government of any country seeking financial assistance to slash its social services budget by keeping wages down, cutting health and education subsidies and reducing the number of government employees. With low wages and few opportunities afforded to family members at home, women often emigrate just to keep their families afloat financially" (Murray, 2013 page 463).

Pyakurel (2018) in his work cited stories of Nepali women who found illegal ways of migrating to the Gulf states for work despite the ban imposed by the Nepali government on female migration. They used all means necessary to get there even if they had to

travel with fake documents or sell their belongings to afford the trip. Hardship cuts across all the stories. The inability to make ends meet or to find jobs that gave them decent amount of money to take care of their families was one major reason that pushed them to try for foreign employment no matter what it took to get there. The inability of their governments to provide these basic wants has been a battle and seems to most likely be the main push factor. Does this mean no amount of restrictions can end this migration, especially by women seeking jobs as domestic workers?

Also stated by Pyakurel (2018) was the fact that the policies introduced by the policy makers in Nepal clearly displayed the lack of basic understanding of how the women actually saw the situation. The restrictions rather increased the number of women seeking jobs as domestic workers which turned out to be the most significant for Nepalese women. Agents gained an advantage by charging higher fees as they now have to go through difficult routes to get them to their destinations.

Nepal's mandatory pre-departure orientation set up under the Article 19(1a) of the Foreign Employment Act 2007 and Article 20(1) of the Foreign Employment Regulations 2008 are not attended by most of the would-be migrants as they easily get the certificate of participation by paying a fee without attendance (Bajracharya and Sijapati, 2012). The blame should not be put much on the would be migrants but also on the availability of orientation centres because 49 government certified pre-departure orientation training institutions are all located in the Kathmandu Valley. Therefore government also should take responsibility for this. Considering a higher number of would-be migrants are from outside Kathmandu, transportation to and from Kathmandu is too much of a cost so the would be migrants prefer to pay comparatively lower price for the certificates. However, on doing this they lose the benefits of the orientation.

Although some countries have a substantial amount of evidence indicating the abuse their citizens go through, they choose to be silent and are unwilling to implement bans or restrictions for fear of losing their remittances as the Gulf countries will turn to labour from other countries (Murray, 2013). An example given by Murray (2013) was Sri Lanka. This country has hesitated enforcing diplomatic pressure to protect the rights of their citizens for fear of the Gulf States turning to other countries for labour. Citizens therefore migrate to the Gulf despite the stories heard, hoping their stories will be different.

The reaction of Saudi Arabia to the ban from Indonesia after one of its own was beheaded also proves this fear true. Saudi Arabia did not accept the ban as their punishment. They in response, banned domestic workers from Indonesia from coming to work in their country, opening doors to other countries that were relatively cheaper such as Kenya, Morocco, Nepal, Vietnam, Eritrea and Ethiopia (Murray, 2013; Atong, Mayah and Odigie, 2018). These countries, according to Murray (2013), are less likely to require tough hiring conditions; signed contracts indicating minimum wage, off-days and others, thereby making them cheaper. According to HRW, 2017, as cited by Atong, Mayah and Odigie (2018) agents have turned to East Africa 'where protections are weaker and workers demand cheaper wages as Asians have increased protections and in some cases banned recruitment to the Gulf entirely'.

The Gulf has become the major destination for labour migrants not just from South Asia but Africa as well. According to Atong, Mayah and Odigie (2018), careful analysis of literatures show that African migration is driven by underdevelopment, poverty and violence. Lack of decent work, growing unemployment and low wages are push factors for most African countries.

This clearly shows how economic gain in terms of remittances are important to these migrant-sending countries as they jump to such

opportunities not considering the experiences of other migrant-sending countries. With the interest and dependence of the country and the government on remittance becoming very high the desire for better wages and employment opportunities for migrants in mind, I pick Kenya as the focus country because labour migration from Kenya to the GCC states has grown significantly in recent times and there have been increasing reports of abuses suffered by their nationals in the GCC countries. Kenya aired a story that caught our interest in migration to the Gulf. Nairobi Senator Mike Sonko's news on his social media accounts on Friday, July 28<sup>th</sup> saying Mary Kibwaba, a Kenyan woman who was attacked by her employers in Jordan, Middle East in May 2016 after being involved in a gas cylinder explosion, passed away. This is a famous news in Kenya. Sonko Rescue Team was instrumental in fetching her from the airport and rushing her to the hospital. She sustained 47% burns after the fire caught onto her clothes and lower body before spreading to the rest of her body. She regained consciousness when her employers kicked her awake while hurling insults at her. Mary Kibwaba's screams, according to Nairobi News, drew neighbours who then called the police. She was rushed to the hospital and detained for six weeks as her employers disregarded her requests for her family to be contacted to inform her plight.

Since this news was broadcasted, we began to follow and read news on domestic workers in the Gulf and their plights.

### **Labour migration from Kenya to GCC countries**

In recent years, some Gulf countries and employers have turned to Kenya as a fresh source of inexpensive labour as most Asian countries have imposed restrictions on sending workers to the region. The 'rising unemployment and instability at home, combined with the difficulty of gaining entry to Western countries and the GCC region's economic growth and proximity, have caught the interest of would-be migrants' (Malit and Youha, 2016).

The Kenyan government, as well, has progressively developed labour export policies to secure employment for its citizens (mostly for unskilled work) in the Gulf countries. Kenyan government has been facilitating central economic strategies enabling the government to tackle the Gulf countries' labour shortages. Yet still, the government has not formed comprehensive protection policy nor established bilateral labour arrangements and institutional/diplomatic capacity to protect its citizens from labour violations and exploitation (Malit and Youha, 2016 b)

Unethical treatment of Kenyan migrants in these countries by either agents or employers have been a constant challenge. 'Kenya has now been facing a dilemma : how to protect its diaspora while maintaining strong bilateral relationship with that country, and both t are crucial to its own economic interests'. It seems to have prioritized its economic interests over the migrant's welfare (Malit and Youha, 2016). The government seems to find it difficult to protect their citizens for the fear that trade and humanitarian aid might be cut by the GCC countries or an immigration limit will be placed on Kenyans (Malit and Youha, 2016 b).

In 2015, according the Central Bank of Kenya, remittances represented 3% of the gross domestic product thereby indicating the vital role labour migration plays in the socioeconomic development of Kenya but these migrants are often exposed to illegal recruitment practices. They are mostly lured with fake job offers to make them migrate to the Gulf countries (Malit and Youha, 2016).

In order to address the abuses faced by Kenyans, a ban was imposed in 2012 on labour migration to the GCC countries and overturned the next year as some citizens found illegal ways to migrate due to lack of economic opportunities while concerned observers believed it was lifted because recruitment agencies lobbied for it (Malit and Youha, 2016). In a bid to address the

issues with emigration, the Kenyan government introduced the Labour Institutions Act in 2007 to regulate cross-border recruitment by private employment agencies.

Kenya, in 2015, implemented a diaspora policy aimed at harnessing the potential of its nationals abroad to contribute to the country's economic development to facilitate remittance inflows (Malit and Youha, 2016). This policy makes clear the interest of the Kenyan government in remittances. With all proposed policies, none seem to provide a strategy to address the reported abuses from the GCC countries. The Solidarity with Women in Distress (SOLWODI) and Trace Kenya, national human-rights organizations, have accused the Kenyan government of prioritizing its economic benefits over the wellbeing of Kenyan nationals in the GCC states (Malit and Youha, 2016).

According to Malit and Youha (2016), 'Kenya lacks detailed strategies and capacity for implementation of its regulations. The lack of such labour laws, policies, and institutions paves the way for systematic labour abuses and creates an exploitative space for recruitment agencies, Human Rights Watch contends'. Recruiters according to the Human Rights Watch in 2017, are progressively turning to East Africa because the protections are weaker and less expensive as cheaper in terms wages demanded as protection for Asians has been increased and in some cases, banned recruitment to the Gulf completely (Atong, Mayah and Odigie, 2018).

With the government's growing interest in economic gains, they have also complied with the strong diplomatic strategies of the Gulf states. Malit and Youha (2016) throw light on the trade relationships these countries have established with the sub-Saharan African countries. They have described how the UAE government has established a visa and consular assistance centre in Nairobi to facilitate the entry of Kenyan workers to their country and the soft power disguised as humanitarian aid is given to not just Kenya but

other countries as well. Malit and Youha (2016) say,

“the UAE Ministry of International Cooperation and Development extended more than US \$7 million in humanitarian aid and development assistance to Kenya. Beyond government aid, organizations such as Dar Al Bern, which runs 80 charity programs in Kenya, as well as private-sector entities such as Etihad, the UAE national airline, are involved in building mosques, digging wells, handing out blankets and school supplies in underprivileged communities, and sponsoring orphans and Quranic teachers”

The UAE is the preferred destination for most Kenyans in the GCC region as it is perceived to provide higher wages, better work and living conditions. Kenya has no formal institution; labour office in UAE unlike the Asian countries like India and Indonesia for the protection of its nationals against abuse. Although it at a point established a hotline in UAE, it lacked the resources and staff to address complaints effectively (Malit and Youha, 2016).

A major challenge has been the lack of pre-departure orientation prior to migrants moving to the GCC states mostly making migrants unaware of what is expected of them in terms of their rights and responsibilities. Kenyan migrants in the UAE, for instance, ‘were found to be more vulnerable because they had limited legal and rights awareness due to lack of pre-departure information (IOM, 2011)’ (as cited by Atong, Mayah and Odigie, 2018).

Many complaints; contract substitution, illegal and unethical recruitment practices, illegal deductions of wages, sexual abuse, restricted labour market mobility, and withholding of passports, as well as trafficking and servitude have not been addressed thereby discouraging those aware of the labour-related services from using them in times of need (Malit and Youha, 2016). In 2015, for

example, a Kenyan domestic worker in Saudi Arabia was asked to choose between having sex with the boss or death (Atong, Mayah and Odigie, 2018).

Malit and Youha (2016), conclude their work saying,

‘Kenya has only recently institutionalized efforts to send migrant workers abroad to GCC countries and create a framework to protect them. In the absence of strong bilateral labour accords and government institutions to protect workers during the recruitment and deployment phases, however, Kenya has opened itself to the perception that it is prioritizing its economic interests and diplomatic relationships in the Gulf over the labour rights and well-being of its citizens abroad. Until it addresses this governance gap, the Kenyan government will have practical challenges in upholding its national migration policies and may be leaving Kenyan migrant workers vulnerable (Page 7)’.

Investigations by Kenyan authorities, sparked by increasing reports of abuse of Kenyans, in 2013 led to the arrest three Qatar-based Kenyan nationals from India and the United Kingdom operating an agency not following the right regulations. The government again in September 2014, revoked 930 licenses of recruitment agencies violating regulations in deploying Kenyans to the Middle East, predominantly the GCC countries but subsequently reopened (Malit and Youha, 2016).

A new administrative process whereby the government approves all proposed contracts before deployment by approved agencies was created but findings from local NGOs and other sources show that not much has been achieved in reducing the labour abuses and illegal deployments despite the restrictions (Malit and Youha, 2016).

With agents falsifying contracts to lure potential applicants to

accept employment offers not only increases the chances of them being abused but also negatively affects their wages. Notwithstanding the non-existence of labour cooperation, the Kenyan government aims to send higher number of citizens for foreign employment. Labour export policy of Kenya will continue to be a long-term feature of its foreign labour policy, as it proposes substantial economic opportunities, increase in remittances, and the reduction of the Kenya's unemployment problems (Malit and Youha, 2016 b). There continues to be discrepancies in the data of the Kenyan government and the GCC on the number of Kenyans migrating to the GCC due to the growth in illegal migration as a result of the increasing unofficial recruitment agencies implying a critical governance issue (Malit and Youha, 2016 b).

### **Conclusion**

Increasing levels of poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, lack of skills, and the forces of globalization means more and more people will seek for jobs in other destinations even if it costs them. Labour exploitation and inadequate public awareness of the issue seem to be the situation at hand.

With the ban and restrictions on labour migration to the GCC countries by some countries and the strong desire of would-be migrants to provide for their families, these migrants choose to go to the Gulf through an approved country illegally. This makes them highly vulnerable to more abuses which in turn makes it extremely difficult for them to go seek shelter at their home country's embassy.

Nepali and Kenyan recruitment agents seem to use the same tactics in getting more women on board. They charge these would-be labour migrants hefty amounts of money to transport them there then expect to be paid a certain amount after they arrive. Also, although the employers seem to be the ones covering the cost to

bring the workers into their countries, the agents cunningly make the workers' pay and also receive a commission on reaching there, then take money from the to-be employers as well. These domestic workers on reaching there are made to pay back the recruitment fees by their employers.

Although Nepal has a legal government agency for labour recruitment to these countries, unlike Kenya, agents seem to be flourishing because of the restrictions placed on women migrants to the Gulf. Illegal means of getting to the Gulf has become the norm. Some Kenyans have resorted to migrating to the Gulf using tourist visas due to the expense involved in acquiring a job. This illegal means makes it difficult for them to get the help needed in times of trouble which applies to every labour migrant using illegal means to get to their destination Gulf country for work.

Despite the existence of a trade agreement signed in 2011 between Kenya and the UAE, there has been no labour accord signed between these two governments. There exists no bilateral agreement or diplomatic discussions publicly reporting on labour protection for Kenyan labour migrants thereby opening itself to the perception that its economic interests and diplomatic relationship are of priority than the wellbeing and labour rights of their citizens working abroad.

Unlike Kenya, Nepal seems to have employed restrictions on female migrants by banning their movement to the Gulf States for domestic work. Although there is a ban, it cannot seem to control the movement of the women into these states. The illegal channels are flourishing which seems to be due to the lack of understanding the reasons behind this rebellion despite the ban.

As to whether restrictions or bans will help curb this issue is another puzzle to solve. Some Gulf countries like Kuwait and UAL have made efforts such as introducing a unified standard domestic workers'

contract in 2006 and 2007 respectively. Oman recently introduced a pilot contract for the employment of house maids to help tackle the issue with respect to the employment contracts. However, they are not implemented properly.

Many GCC citizens are in denial of this situation. They seem not to either believe or are in denial of the problems faced by these labour migrants. They argue that labour migrants would definitely stop migrating to their countries if they were indeed being treated harshly or being paid low wages as compared to labour migrants in the West. So long as the influx of labour migrants to the GCC states are on the increase, there seems to be no reason for GCC citizens or governments to take these reports seriously.

Based on our research and reading of news reports elsewhere, one question has repeatedly come to our mind which is, whether restrictions on women from going to GCC countries have any connection or impact on the abuse or there is something else? If the attempts to ban women's mobility is only due to abuses on women migrants from the host society, why similar or more abusive experience faced by male migrant workers has not been taken to consideration to limit man's mobility? Local norms and traditions stemming from the patriarchal system of GCC countries still exerts pressure on women, thereby, limiting their chances in education, employment and participation in the public sphere notwithstanding the benefits that women in the GCC have achieved. The cultural constraints placed on women must be removed. This can be done through education and public enlightenment that promotes the view that women are equal partners with men in society, beginning with the education of the parents which will in effect change socialization of the subsequent generation of children, initiating them into an open culture based on tolerance and understanding then change and modernization will come gradually from within society. Social and cultural patterns should be modified according to

a more tolerant interpretation of the values of society.

With all that being said, we believe, one way to curbing this is that GCC states together with the labour migrant sending countries can make policies on recruitment and labour rights of the workers especially domestic workers. They can also work together to make regulations about wages (minimum wage) and establish authorities that handle abuses (a safe place for reporting abuses). They should also jointly act to take the exit visa rights from employers so as to curb this pandemic and avoid loopholes. Writing up these policies should not be the end of it but their implementations should be ensured. Social dialogues must be initiated to create a platform where local populations as well can be engaged to help raise awareness about the issue of human rights abuse of migrant workers.

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## Climate Change Perception and Adaptation among Indigenous Farmers: A Study of Thamis of Dolkha

Binay Jung Thapa

### Abstract

*Recently Climate change has become one of the most prominent global issues. The impacts of climate change are now known to be irreversible due to more than a century of carbon dioxide emissions in the Earth's atmosphere. Climate change affects everyone on this planet but in particular the poor and marginalized communities. They generally are the indigenous communities who are highly dependent on natural resources to maintain their livelihoods. Because they live in a fragile landscape and are marginalized, they are more vulnerable to environmental degradation and climate change. With this concept, this research focuses on the indigenous Thami community of Nepal. Thamis are mostly reliant on subsistence farming for livelihood and survival. This study will mainly be concerned with the impacts of climate change on the agriculture done by the Thami community of Dolakha district.*

### INTRODUCTION

In the past century, rise in earth's surface temperature (global warming) is one of the major reasons for climate change. Statistically, 95% of the observed climatic changes are human induced and most of which are due to excessive greenhouse gases (GHG) emissions (Pachauri, Meyer, & Team, 2014). These emissions are mainly driven by population size, economic activity, lifestyle, energy use, land use patterns, technology and climate policy. The effect of these manifest in different global natural systems. It also very likely leads to increase in the magnitude and frequency of extreme weather events such as droughts, floods and

storms and has both direct and indirect effects on human lives and different economic sectors (IPCC, 2014). Likewise, United Nation's Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) distinguishes between climate changes attributable to human activities and natural climatic variability which changes naturally with passing time and changing climatic variables (UNFCCC, 2011).

Indigenous communities living in rural areas are among the most affected communities by climate change and are the first to bear the brunt of it. Climate change makes the lives of such vulnerable indigenous communities even more difficult by exacerbating their circumstances. This is usually because environmental policies are not implemented properly and scarcity of local level initiatives in these communities (The Asia Foundation, 2012). Hence, the indigenous groups especially in the developing countries such as Nepal remain more exposed and vulnerable to climate change.

An agrarian country to begin with, Nepal's climatic conditions are changing at an alarming rate. It has experienced an increase in average maximum temperature by 0.06°C per annum since the past four decades and is also ranked 4<sup>th</sup> on vulnerability index by Verisk Maplecroft in 2011 (Maplecroft, 2011). Despite having only 0.4 percent of the total global population and only emitting 0.025 percent of the total Green House Gases (GHGs) globally, Nepal is affected disproportionately by climate change (NAPA & MoPE, 2010). Consequently floods, landslides, intense rains, hailstorms, droughts, cold and heat waves and other climate related hazards are regular phenomenon in the country (MOAC, 2011). The strain of it all falls on the Nepalese farmers who are forced to alter traditional lifestyles, cultures and identities to unpredictable climatic changes. Thamis of Dolakha district are one of such community. In the recent past Thamis of Dolakha were refused identity by the government of Nepal as a distinct ethnicity

which led to further exclusion in the society and community. Primarily an agrarian community they are dramatically affected by the changing climatic conditions and are hardly adapting to these impacts.

### Materials and methods

Two hamlets, Topar and Lisapoto from Suspakshamawati were purposively selected as the study sites. Mixed methodology was used for the research. Primary data were collected through household surveys, in-depth interviews, key informant interviews, observations and focus group discussion. Books, journal articles and previous researches were consulted for secondary data.

### Results and discussion

Thamis from *Topar* and *Lisapoto* villages have an agriculture-based livelihood. The high dependencies of the respondents on agriculture in both the villages indicate influences of changes in climatic indicators in their livelihood (FAO, 2013). Also importantly impacts of global climate change is felt mostly by subsistence small holder farmers (Morton, 2007).

Farmers in *Topar* and *Lisapoto* follow both the traditional and modern agricultural practices. They cultivated their rain fed terraced land locally called "*Khet*" and "*Pakho bari*". Farmers produce mainly paddy, wheat, maize, millet as their major crops. Likewise, potato is a dominant vegetable grown in the village. Apart from that they grow tomatoes, chilli, cauliflower, cabbage, cucumber, kiwi fruit and guava. Mainly the vegetables are grown as cash crops.

Most of the respondents were small land holders and were found involved in subsistence farming. Only a few households have irrigation on their lands and the rest are fully dependent on rain-fed agriculture resulting in lower productivity. Productivity is also determined by the availability of chemical fertilizers and pesticides

in case of some farmers (GoN, 2007). They also had heard about and perceived climatic change in their daily lives. Availability of means of communication in the villages played a key role in getting acquainted with the changing climatic variables (Weber, 2010). Education level was a key determinant of their perceptions and ideas on climate change. Higher the level of education, higher awareness and understanding was found in the respondents.

### Climate change perceptions of the Thami community

#### ▪ Awareness of climate change

Climate change although an old phenomenon, is a new concept for the Thami community. They understand climate change as the change in temperature and short-term weather. They could not relate disasters to climate change. They related *jal bayu pariwartan* (climate change), to *mausam pariwartan* (weather change). Farmers' perceptions were mainly based on their indigenous knowledge. Their perceptions are also enhanced by awareness and non-formal trainings held in the villages. Thamis use their own local terminologies for local climatic and weather phenomenon. However, they fully do not understand that the alterations in the climatic conditions (*hawa pani*) are the causes of many environmental incidents such as erratic rain fall (*bemausami pani*) and droughts (*khaderi*) in the village (NHMRCC, 2015).

#### ▪ Perceived water scarcity and impacts on water

About 78 % of the respondents perceived that there is scarcity of rainfall. The rainfall scarcity was perceived by all the respondents in the months of March. In the months of April and May the respondents also experienced droughts. The rainfall that occurred in rest of the months was also perceived to be erratic in nature. The 16 % who replied

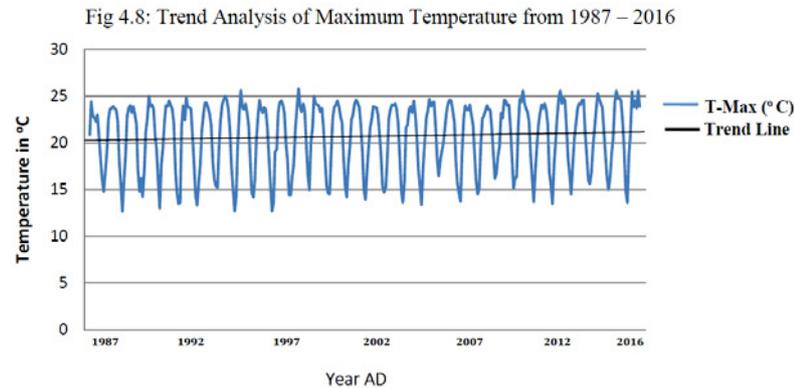
there was no scarcity were the ones who had year-round access to water for irrigation and drinking. The household females were found to be facing more problems such as having to travel farther from home to fetch water which could be the one of the reasons for incidences of harassments to women.

#### ▪ Changes in temperature (maximum and minimum temperature)

The respondents perceived increase in temperature (*garmi badeko*) which according to them has led to increase in production of new kinds of fruits and vegetables in the village. Figure 1 is the representation of maximum temperatures in Jiri from the year 1987 to 2016 as shown by the record in Department of Hydrology and Meteorology (DHM), Nepal. There were some missing data for couple of months mostly in the mid-90s but in totality the trend of maximum temperature seems to be increasing. The trend line in the middle of the figure is moving in the upward direction. Most respondents replied that temperature has increased during the last decade which coincides with the official scientific data. According to the scientists from NASA, even half a degree Celsius of temperature increase

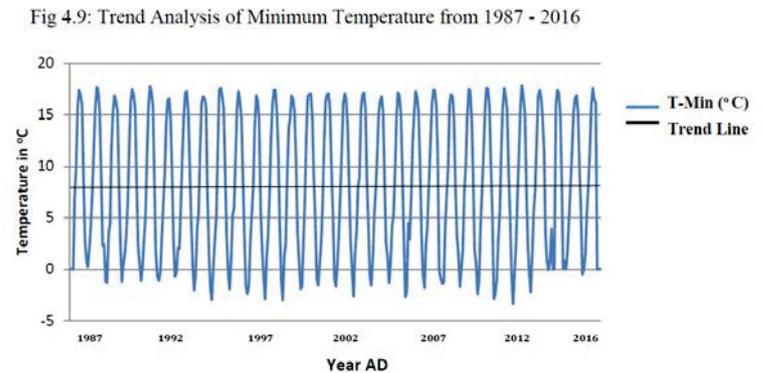
**Fig 1: Trend Analysis of Maximum Temperature from 1987 - 2016**

can be a big deal having major ecological and social implications.



Source: DHM, GON 2017

Majority of respondents also said that nowadays they experience warmer temperatures even in the colder months. They say, 'In winters, it is not as cold as before'. Figure 2 shows that the minimum temperature is on an increasing trend for the past decade. The minimum temperatures in the past decade have gone upward by almost a degree. This result coincides with the perceptions of most of the respondents in the study site. Due to such rise in temperature numerous extreme weather events have been observed by the respondents in the area. Effects such as reduced crop yield, erratic rainfall, increased pests and diseases, landslides and droughts all have been frequently observed in the study site.

**Fig 2: Trend Analysis of Minimum Temperature from 1987 - 2016**

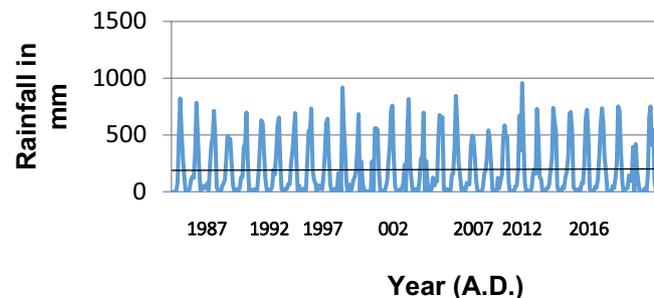
Source: DHM, GON 2017

#### ■ Erratic rainfall

Thami farmers believed that incidences of droughts and floods in the village were "God's play" and nothing new. However, there have been incidences of erratic rainfall in the region for sometime. According to their elders the rain clouds came in with the cold eastern winds (*purwa bata kalo badal aayo bhane pani parcha*) and the flowering of wheat or with the corn silk (*makai ko chamara*). The wind nowadays is unpredictable and sometimes the speed is very high. As per the calendar there should be regular incidences of rain happening at mid -*Ashar* (June) instead of *Jestha* (May). However, farmers experience heavy rainfall at the wrong time nowadays and mostly with hail storms. Figure 3 represents the monthly rainfall data from Jiri hydrological station from 1987 to 2016 which shows the changing characteristics of rainfall over time. The erratic rainfall also has been causing massive soil erosions and landslides in the villages. Some Thami farmers also perceive the decrease in rainfall by observing the local river named *Kuthali khola*. Despite rain showers, farmers have observed that the river has not

risen as it used to be before. Oozing water coming out of the field walls (*mul futnu*) was a common sight in the past which hasn't happened for generations. There occurred an incident of massive drought two years back in May giving no yields that year. Maize being their staple crop climate change has been raising concerns of food security for the villagers.

**Fig 3: Trend Analysis of Rainfall from 1987 -2016**



Source: DHM, GoN 2017

Likewise, rapid snow melts are seen in most winters in the region which is an unusual occurrence as per the respondents. Before, the arrival of winter was indicated by the snowfall in the nearby *Gompha* (monastery) hill. It also indicated the end of monsoon rain (*jhari*). Now, farmers rarely notice snow on that hill. Likewise, in the past wheat sowing time (*gahu charne bela*) was indicated by the flowering of *Paiyun* (*Prunus cerasoides*). Similarly, *Champ* (*Michalia species*) for maize sowing season and *Karangkurung* birds indicated the season for sowing cucumber and summer fruits. However, due to rapidly changing climate these symbols of indigenous knowledge have been disappearing. There were various such examples in the research sites where such knowledge seemed obsolete.

### Climate change impacts on agriculture

Thamis perceived that temperature in Dolakha region has increased but it has not done much harm to the crops and agriculture. According to 87 percent of Thami respondents, agriculture sector was most affected due to climate change. Likewise, 63 percent indicated the impact on water-systems in the village. And indeed, agriculture being a climate dependent sector is the most affected sector to climatic hazards (Malla, 2008). High dependency on agriculture for livelihood makes Thamis susceptible to climate change. This also has indirect implications such that it invites socio-economic problems such as poverty, food insecurity and out-migration from the villages.

Repetitive cases of crop failures due to hail storm and droughts are more likely nowadays. There also is not enough rain in Baisakh (April), Jestha (May), Ashar (June) and Shrawan (July) because of which agricultural production in Kartik (October), Mangsir (November) and Poush (December) are not satisfactory. In winter season there are mostly no crops grown. It gets very windy from Falgun (February) to Jestha (May). There is also rise in pests and insects in the fields due to rising temperatures. There have been problems with fertility of the soil as well. Fertile mud is very easy to plough and made ready for sowing. Whereas the mud which is not fertile (*amillomato*) is very difficult to plough and is like sand. It also has a red color. This also is due to high use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides used by the villagers to tackle low productivity with lower agricultural yields. Villagers also have experienced problems like discoloration of the crops and vegetables (*bali ra tarkari oilaune*). Due to use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides most of the local breed of vegetables such as local spinach (*local saag*), cucumber (*kakro*) and pumpkin (*farsi*) have been gradually replaced which has serious implications for small holder farmers such as Thamis. Rise of insects and diseases sometimes destroy the entire

crops and vegetables of the season. There also has been an increasing problem of mosquitoes and flies in the village. Agricultural production has increased for those who can afford chemical fertilizers and improved varieties of seeds. Access to irrigation facilities all year round also is a major factor determining higher productivity in the village. However, in case of subsistence farmers, their production has decreased. Some of the villagers have also started to farm new kinds of fruits and vegetables in the region by using modern ways of farming such as tunnel farming and drip irrigation. Although these new methods of farming have increased productivity but it also has led to loss of indigenous knowledge in these communities. Besides, droughts in their fields, Thami farmers observed and experienced increasing storms (*hawa huri*). Strong winds affected their local maize plants that grow taller and fall and damage production. Also maize plants are affected by foliar diseases due to rain showers.

## **ADAPTATION PERCEPTION AND PRACTICES**

### **Change in agricultural practices as adaptation:**

Thamis were found to be applying different adaptation practices for adapting to the impacts of climate change. Most of these practices were based on indigenous knowledge whereas some were done with support of different governmental and non-governmental programs. Due to seasonal calendar shifts because of climate change, Thamis had to change crop plantation timings and their indigenous knowledge seems to be ineffective in this case. The villagers were also found to be experimenting with hybrid and improved seeds from the local market for faster and larger quantity of production. They mostly use hybrid seeds for vegetables and for staple crops mostly in case of insufficient home stored seeds. But most Thami farmers were not aware of the quality of the seeds available in the market. Hybrid species need proper care and use of modern tools and techniques and manuring

for better growth. Some of these species even grow all year round even during so called 'off season'. Though Thamis had shifted to cultivating new seeds for greater yield, they often complained about loss of nutritional value and taste in their new production. The farmers had also experienced crop failures and pests in their fields. Thamis were given trainings by various organizations on modern agricultural practices which are beneficial and have created lucrative business opportunities of vegetable farming (ETC-N, 2017). They also used to do multi-culture cropping between maize and grazing grass. The field would act as a grazing ground for cattle post-harvest. However now this seems rarely possible as the grass does not grow any more so they stopped the practice all together. Here, the Thami community has used 'change in practice' as adaptation measure.

### **Adaptation to erratic rainfall:**

Topar and Lisapoto villages have taps at each of their households made with the support of the government and Red Cross Nepal. Thamis are trying to adapt to erratic rainfall is by conserving forest and planting perennial plants around the water springs with a belief that it will help conserve the water sources. But for most of the time they have to tolerate the manifestations of climate change mentioned above. For droughts, they had a system of water source management through taking turns or water pooling and using water from the streams in the drought seasons. This sometimes resulted in conflicts between the farmers as there is no working mechanism for measuring the volume of water used per household. They also use drought resistant crops provided by the district agricultural office in district headquarter Charikot. Some Thamis do not cultivate anything at this time of the year whereas some of them have developed rain fed irrigation channels. Here, Thamis used toleration and prevention as adaptation practices.

As far as hailstorm is concerned, some of the farmers tried to predict it by observing the changing weather phenomenon (thundering and lightning). There was nothing that the villagers could do to stop the effects of hail storm than to prevent the crops from getting affected which could be only done by early harvesting. This could be done only when the crops are almost ripe. Some farmers practiced prevention as adaptation whereas, some practiced toleration. Same was the case for less rain and drought. Also if there was more rain than required, they had a traditional draining system (*Bhal tarkaune aali makulo banayera*).

Likewise, drip irrigation and water pooling techniques practiced by Thamis were for efficient water use in the field. In case rainfall occurred later than in the usual time of the year, the crop is sowed a month later than scheduled. Here farmers changed their practice as adaptation. In the winter when temperature is lower there is the adaptation method of planting cold resistant crops (*jado sahane bali*) such as buckwheat, wheat, paddy, maize, cabbage. However, only paddy is more reliable in winters for producing grains (*dana lagne fasal*) others usually produce empty pods. Farmers also used plastic tunnels (*tudal kheti*) for farming tomatoes in winter. In this case they practiced prevention as adaptation measure.

#### **Adaptation to increasing insect pests**

Thamis sprinkled homemade pesticides/repellant on their plants which was made by adding tobacco in urine (human and cattle) and using water to dilute the mixture. This practice is helpful in chasing away the pests especially the red ants. Farmers also made use of *titepatee* (*artimisia vulgaris*), *timmur ko paat*, *kyatute*, *hattibara* in this mixture. These indigenous ways of keeping the pests away can be very useful in every step of the plant growth. Use of market pesticides affected plants, humans and animal health. However, farmers used chemical pesticide called *bevestine* by mixing it with the seeds before sowing, if the home made method

stopped working. In this case, Thamis practiced prevention as adaptation.

#### **Adaptation to other climate induced hazards:**

For soil erosions and landslide, Thamis used big stones to reinforce the terraced walls of the fields (*pakho bari*). Also, most Thamis applied their knowledge about elevation and other traditional farming techniques such as making barriers for guiding the water in their fields (*aat lagaune*) which has helped farmers manage and regulate water around fields.

Likewise, the villagers also adapted to increasing temperature by planting new varieties of crops and vegetables. The government conducted trainings and awareness programs in the villages on integrating traditional and modern ways of farming. They also provided seed bins and technical support (*pravidik rekh dekh*) to the villagers for local seed production. They were also supported with tractors, plastics for ponds, rainwater harvesting, and drip irrigation by I/NGOs.

Women seemed pro-active on the fields and in climate change adaptation than men. Knowledge sharing among farmers, relatives, and neighbors is another important factor for adaptation. With the rise in commercial farming, feeling of competitiveness among farmers had increased too. For bigger production the use of tunnel farming technique was used by the farmers. They also prefer hybrid seeds and urea fertilizer for higher quantity production. However with that there is also rise in pests and degrading soil quality. These products are not environment friendly and the villagers seemed to understand the downsides of using urea and hybrid seeds but that seemed better than having no food to eat. Also they were having difficulties in keeping up with the increasing market prices of seeds and fertilizers. In addition, these

modern interventions were somehow leading to loss of traditional knowledge as well.

▪ **Other adaptation measures:**

Purchasing food from the market is another adaptation measure done by the Thamis when there is not enough production in their fields to sustain for the entire year. Data from the household survey shows that only 6 percent respondents had an adequate amount of food grains for 12 months whereas the remaining respondents purchase food grains from the market. Most of these who do not have enough food grains for the whole year migrate to the cities and work as a labor for rest of the year. Thamis were also highly skilled handy men who buildhouses (*dakarmi*), carpenters(*sikarmi*), plumbers, masons, porters and so on. The Thamis living in *Alampu* regions (higher regions of Dolakha) were known to take turns in building each other's houses in the village. They use stones and wood to build strong houses. Here, the Thami community has used change in location and practice as adaptation measures.

The adaptation strategies combining indigenous knowledge and modern tools and techniques have helped Thamis in agriculture and income generation. Due to warmer temperatures, Thamis have been observing growth of new vegetables and fruits as well. This appeared to be lucrative for those who had better supply of irrigation in their fields. The rest were still facing the problems due to lesser productivity and lesser yields. Many villagers simply passively accepted their circumstance, just waiting for the impacts to worsen. However, there are a few people in the community who have emerged to be role models with their agricultural and adaptive practices. The Thami community have adapted to these changes mostly by means of toleration, prevention and changes in activities/location. They have been knowingly or unknowingly practicing climate change adaptation in agriculture minimizing its

effects to some extent. Most of the adaptation practices among the respondents were based on modern knowledge. To a large extent these interventions have positive effects on food security of farmers. However, they had not completely abandoned their traditional practices. By looking at the trend of agricultural practices in the villages, the Thamis seemed more inclined towards modern tools and techniques for faster and higher quantity production. However, there can be concerns about the farmers abandoning their traditional practices. Looking at the trends of climate change effects and hazards in the villages the sustainability of their adaptation practices seems questionable due to lack of proper awareness and access to information about adequate and sustainable adaptive measures. But despite these developments there is acceptance of introduced modern tools and technologies by the communities. The advantage of these practices lies in the integration of modern techniques with the already available local and traditional knowledge in agriculture which also helped in climate change adaptation.

## Conclusion

Indigenous communities are one of the most vulnerable and affected communities to climate change. They are among the first to face its direct consequences due to their dependence and close relationship with nature. However, Thamis seemed less concerned about these changes. Climate change is affecting agriculture severely in the research sites and also posing threats to food security. Likewise, due to increased temperatures some Thamis have been able to seize the opportunity, however some are concerned about change in traditional species and the availability of various plants and vegetables. Lack of awareness on these issues has made them more vulnerable to climate change. Their traditional ways of farming are also threatened due to climate change. With

low socio-economic conditions, it is difficult for them to set any long-term goals. They also do not possess any additional financial resources to adapt to climate change. Neither do they have enough opportunities necessary for prosperity. Climate change has both long and short term effects. Although short term adaptation practices are carried out in the villages it is the long-term effects that make them more vulnerable to increasing climatic hazards. The focus on modern technology and methods also seems to have negative effects on conservation and promotion of traditional knowledge which could be detrimental to these communities in climate change adaptation in the long run.

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## नेपालका मूलवासी दमाई जातिको लोकजीवन

डी. बी. नेपाली

### १.१ दमाई शब्दको उत्पत्ति

नेपाली बृहत् शब्दकोशले दमाईको अर्थ यसरी लगाएको छ-प्रायः लुगा सिउने र विवाहा, व्रतबन्ध, उत्सव, चाडपर्व आदिमा बाजा बजाउने पेशा भएको एक जाति, नगर्ची, दर्जी (पेज५९७-११) । ढोल शब्दलाई अनार्य शब्द मानिन्छ । पञ्चै बाजा समूहको एउटा प्रमुख बाजा दमाहालाई प्रयोग गर्ने, भिर्ने वा बजाउने दमाही जाति नै शब्द माधुर्य र उच्चारण सौकार्यको निम्ति दमाहीले दमाई रूप लिएको अडकल गरिएको छ । तिनीहरू पहिल्यैका अछुत रहेछन भनेर अडकल काट्न सकिएला । तर, उनीहरू अछुत हुनुपर्ने कारण चाँहि रहस्यमै हराउने देखिन्छ । हाम्रा परम्परवादी शास्त्रले अनुलोम र प्रतिलोम विवाह विवादाहित बन्न सकेको छैन । २००७ साल अघि सम्मको हाम्रो समाजले प्रतिलोम विवाहालाई गलत नै ठानेको छ । तथापि, ती सन्तानलाई अछुतमा गनिँदैनथे । दमाई बुझाउने अर्को शब्द ढोली छ । ढोली पश्चिम नेपालमा बढी प्रचलित छ । पूर्वमा भने फाट्टफुट्ट सुनिन्छ मात्र । घरमा ढोल हुने, भिर्ने वा बजाउनेलाई ढोली भनेको हो । तथ्यका आधारमा ढोली शब्द दमाई शब्द भन्दा जेठो मानिन्छ । ढोलीहरूपनि अछुत वर्गमै गनिएका छन् । यसबाट बाजा बजाउनेहरू अछुतमा गनिएको अथवा अछुतका एक वर्गले बाजा बजाउने काम लिएको दमाहा आउनु भन्दा अघि देखिकै चलन रहेछ भन्ने कुरा प्रमाणित हुन् आउँछ । ढोलीहरूले दमाहा लिएर दमाईभएको पनि हुनसक्छ ।

दमाई र ढोली सरहको अर्को शब्द नगरची/नगर्ची छ । नगरा भनेको दमाहा जस्तै गजाले हानेर बजाउने बाजा हो । तसर्थ, नगरचीको अर्थ हो नगरा बजाउने अर्थात् ढोली वा दमाई । यो सहि हो भने चार जात छत्तिस वर्ण भन्ने कुरा पृथ्वी नारायण शाहाको राजनीतिक घोषणा मात्रै हो । जसमा राम्रो समन्वयात्मक भावना भल्कन्छ (मधुपर्क, २०२७: ६४-६७) ।

हुड्के बाजा बजाई हुड्केली हाल्दा उनीहरू हुड्के हुन्छन् । दमाउँ, दमाहा, नगरा, भेरी र पञ्चै बाजा बजाउँदा उनीहरू दमाई हुन्छन् । ढोल बजाउँदा ढोली हुन्छन् । अधिपछि सिलाई पेशामा संलग्न भएकाहरू सूचिकर वा दर्जी भनिए । मङ्गलधुन बजाउँदा मङ्गले हुन्छन् । कुनै शुभ कार्य वा साइतको बेला सगुनी बन्दछन् । देवबाजा नगरा बजाउँदा नगर्ची हुन्छन् । सम्मानसूचक आदरार्थी शब्द प्रयोग गरिदा पनि दमाईहरूलाई नगर्ची नै भनिन्छ । वाद्यवादनका विभिन्न फाँट सम्हाल्दै आएकाले उनीहरूलाई सोही अनुसारको नामले बोलाइनु स्वाभाविकै थियो । सिलाईमा लागेका दमाईहरूलाई हाल दर्जी, टेलर, मास्टर, टेलरमास्टर भनिने पनि गरेको पाईन्छ । दर्जी शब्द मुसलमानवस्त्र निर्मातालाई भनिन्थ्यो । तर, अहिले समग्रमा यो शब्द दमाईसूचक दर्जी को रूपमा समेत प्रयोग गर्ने गरेको पाईन्छ । यथार्थमा ती सबै संज्ञाको एउटै नाम र जाति हो दमाई ।

यिनीहरूले नेपाली सङ्गीत सँस्कृतिलाई अनेक दुःख, कष्ट र यातना सहेर पनि परम्परादेखि अक्षुण्ण राखी सम्बर्द्धन र संरक्षण गर्दै आएका छन् । उत्पतिको गीतदेखि मृत्युको गीतसम्म र रौद्ररसदेखि शान्तरससम्म प्रदान गर्ने दमाई जातिको नेपाली सङ्गीत र सँस्कृतिमा अतुलनीय योगदान रहिआएको छ । बाजा बजाउने र सिलाईको काम गर्ने गरेकाले अरु मनोरञ्जनकारी जातिहरू भन्दा यिनीहरूको अवस्था अलि राम्रो देखिन्छ । तर, विकासक्रमलाई हेर्ने हो भने आज पनि यिनीहरू शताब्दिऔं अघिको जीवनयापन गर्न बाध्य छन् । दुल्लुको कोटीस्तम्भको शाके १२७९ को पृथ्वी मल्लको शिलाभिलेखमा ३६ कर माफ गरिएका जातहरूमध्ये हुड्के (दमाई) पनि रहेको पाइन्छ । तल्लोजातिका काम गरी खाने शिल्पीहरूलाई पृथ्वी मल्लले करमुक्त गरिदिएको कुरा यसबाट पुष्टि हुन्छ (दर्नाल, २०४५:१-१०) ।

### १ (क) अनादिकालीन मूलवासी दमाई जाति

सन्धुघाँटीसभ्यताको नष्टपछि अनार्य द्रविड शिल्पी समुदायले सुदूरपश्चिम र कर्णाली क्षेत्रमा मूलवासीको रूपमा अनादिकालीन शिल्पसभ्यताको विकास गरेका थिए । यस क्षेत्रमा खसहरू आइपुग्नु भन्दा अघि अविकसित अनादिवासीको रूपमा रहेको विभिन्न इतिहासकार, लेखक र सँस्कृतिविद्हरूले विभिन्न प्रसंगहरूमा उल्लेख गरेका छन् । उनीहरूले विकास गरेको शिल्पसभ्यता, शिल्पशास्त्र, प्रस्तर, संस्कार र वैभवपूर्ण गौरवशाली कला संस्कृति र राजकाजको बारेमा जनकलाल शर्माले आफ्नो पुस्तकमा स्पष्टरूपमा उल्लेख गरेका छन् । जसमा भनिएको छ-अनार्य द्रविड (शुद्र, उत्पीडित, शिल्पी) जातिले शिव, विष्णु, कुमार, हनुमान, गणेश (शीतला-अजिमा) आदि अनेक देवदेवी ल्यायो ।

वेदमा कृष्ण इन्द्र विरोधी देखिए पनि पछि उनी आर्यका लागि पूज्य भए । तुलसी, वरपिपल र बेलको पूजा गर्ने, देवताको सामुन्ने धुप हाल्ने, प्रकृतिको पूजा, चन्दन पुष्प देवीदेवतालाई चढाउने, धुप हाल्ने, घडी-घण्टा आदि बाजा बजाउने, नृत्य-सङ्गीत प्रस्तुत गर्ने लगायत संस्कार विधि अनार्य द्रविड, शुद्र, शिल्पीहरूले नै विकास गरेको हुन् । जो वर्तमानमा सीमान्तकृत शिल्पी समुदायका नामले परिचित छन् (शर्मा, २०३९ :४०, ४१) ।

पान, सुपारी, नरिवल, सिंदूर आदि जो हाम्रा विभिन्न दैनिक र धार्मिक जीवनमा व्यवहार गरिने चीजहरू छन् । यी सबै जीवनशैली र सांस्कृतिक सम्पदाहरू अनार्य द्रविड, शिल्पीहरूकै देन हो भन्ने भनाइ छ । यस्तै कतिपय विद्वानहरूले त नागपूजा, शिव, विष्णु तथा ब्रम्हाको पूजा समेत द्रविड, शिल्पीहरूद्वारा चलाएका संस्कार हुन् भनेका छन् (श्रेष्ठ, २०२८:६७) ।

डा.केशवमान शाक्यले कर्णाली क्षेत्रमा रहेका शिल्पी/दलित समुदाय खसहरू आइपुग्नु भन्दा पहिलेका अविकसित अनादिवासीको रूपमा रहेको "नेपालमा बुद्धधर्म र खस जाति" शीर्षकको कार्यपत्रमा उल्लेख गर्नु भएको छ (शाक्य, २०६७:५) । इ.पू.१५०० मा सिन्धुघाँटीमा द्रविड जातिको आफ्नो राज्य थियो । हिमालयको दक्षिणी काख नेपालमा अनार्य द्रविड, शिल्पी जातिको राजा र राज्यहरू रहेको जनकलाल शर्माले आफ्नो पुस्तकमा उल्लेख गरेको पाइन्छ ।

विभिन्न सत्य तथ्य प्रमाणहले पनि यो कुरालाई पुष्टि गरेको छ (विश्वकर्मा, २०५४:१२) ।

विशेषगरी सुदूरपश्चिम र कर्णाली प्रदेशमा खसआर्यको ठूलो समूहको प्रवेशपछि शिल्पी (दलित) समुदाय आफ्नो थातथलो, राजकाज, संस्कृति र अनादिकालीन कर्णाली शिल्पसभ्यताबाट विस्थापित भए । यी तथ्यहरूमा-अहिलेसम्म सुदूरपश्चिम र कर्णालीमा शिल्पी समुदायको जातीय नाममा दर्जनौ गढी, किल्ला कोटहरूको नामकरण हुनु, यस क्षेत्रमा ठूला र चर्चित देविदेवता शिल्पी समुदायकै पूर्खाहरूले प्राप्त गर्नु, अनादिकालीन कर्णाली शिल्पसभ्यता, कला र साँस्कृतिक सम्पदा ९६ प्रतिशत भन्दा बढी यिनै समुदायको रहनु, विभिन्न ठाँउमा शिल्पी समुदाय अहिले पनि भूमिपति (मट्या)को रूपमा रहनु, भाँड्ग्री विद्या र नाचगान कला-साँस्कृतिक कुमशाल्या (कथित तल्ला जात) जातिहरूको हो भन्ने तथ्य इतिहासविदहरूले इतिहासमा उल्लेख गर्नु, विभिन्न बहानामा थुप्रै ठाँउमा शिल्पी समुदायको आमनरसंहार गरिएको इतिहास पाइनु, क्षेत्रगत र ऐतिहासिक निरन्तरताको रूपमा अहिले पनि उनीहरूको देशैभरिमा कर्णालीमा पहिलो ठूलो जनसंख्या रहनु, ऐतिहासिक दस्तावेजहरू र स्थलगत अध्ययनका क्रममा स्थानीय बूढापाका र जानकारहरूका अनुसार शिल्पी समुदाय कर्णालीका अनादिकालीन मूलवासीको रूपमा रहेको प्रष्ट हुन्छ । यी तथ्य र वस्तुगत आधारहरूले लेखक, इतिहासकारहरूको लेखनमा सत्यता रहेको छ ।

एक चर्चित भनाइ छ- "कुनै जातिको अस्तित्व मेटाउनु छ भने उसको इतिहास र पहिचान मेटाइदिनु पर्छ ।" नेपालका आम शिल्पी समुदायहरू अस्तित्व विहिन हुनुको मुख्य कारण उनीहरूको पहिचान र इतिहास नै मेटाइएको छ । शासक पक्षधर इतिहासकारहरूको बेइमानी र इतिहासलाई उल्टोपाल्टो पार्नले इतिहास मेटाउन भन्ने ठूलो बल पुगेको छ ।

खस हिन्दू धर्मप्रति श्रद्धा राख्ने भए तापनि जब उनीहरूको प्रवेश उत्तरी (कुमाउँ गढवाल हुँदै सुदूरपश्चिम र कर्णाली) भेगमा हुन गयो । तब आफ्नो कट्टर हिन्दूत्वलाई छाडेर स्थानीय देवीदेवता र धार्मिक परम्परालाई पनि ग्रहण गर्दै आए । पश्चिमी पहाडी भेगमा पूजिँदै आएका मष्ट, भागेश्वर, कालसी, घटाल आदि स्थानीय देवदेवीलाई यहाँ शासन गर्ने खसले पनि आराधना गर्दै आए । यदि यस्तो नहुँदो हो त स्थानीयस्तरमा आफ्नो पकड बलियो बनाउन मुस्किलै हुन्थ्यो । तर, यो पनि हुनु सम्भव छ कि खसको आगमन सँग-सँगै यी देवीदेवताहरू हिन्दू धर्मको घेराभित्र समावेश हुन आए । अर्थात् प्रकृतिपूजक अनादिवासी अनार्य द्रविड, शिल्पी समुदायलाई हिन्दूकरण गरियो । जसरी किराँतेश्वर पशुपतिनाथलाई हिन्दूकरण गरे जस्तै प्रकृतिपूजक शिल्पी समुदायको देवीदेवता, धार्मिक संस्कार, चालचलन, रीतिविधि, संस्कृति र सभ्यताहरू खसआर्यकरण हुँदै गए । तसर्थ, मध्यपश्चिम तथा सुदूरपश्चिम क्षेत्रमा खसआर्य आउनुपूर्व शिल्पी (दमाई) समुदाय अहिन्दू र प्रकृतिपूजक थिए भन्ने कुरालाई यी तथ्यहरूले घाम जत्तिकै छर्लङ्ग पार्दछन् (शर्मा, २०५८:१४, १५) ।

डा.महेश्वर जोशीका अनुसार कर्णालीका डुम (र,कर्णाली प्रदेशका बिटालु बनाइएका, डुम अथवाअनार्य द्रविड, शिल्पीहरू) समुदाय हिमालयको यस भेगमा खसहरू भन्दा पहिले आएका हुन् (कर्णाली प्रदेश सरकार, २०७६: ४९) ।

यसरी विभिन्न तथ्य प्रमाणहरूले अनार्य द्रविड, शिल्पी समुदाय कर्णाली प्रदेशमा अनादिकालदेखि मूलवासीको रूपमा रहेको प्रमाणित हुन्छ । उनीहरूले नै त्यस क्षेत्रमा मानवीय संस्कार, साँस्कृतिक सभ्यताको शुरुवात गरेका थिए । तसर्थ, सीमान्तकृत अनार्य द्रविड, शिल्पी (दमाई) समुदाय कर्णाली प्रदेश र नेपालका अनादिकालीन मूलवासीको रूपमा रहेको प्रमाणित हुन्छ (विश्वकर्मा, नेपाली, २०७६: २४-२६) ।

## १.२ जनसंख्या :

सन् १९९१ सालको जनगणना अनुसार दमाई जातिको जनसंख्या ३,६७,९८९ (१.९९%), सन् २००१ (वि.सं.०५८) मा ३,९०,३०५ (१.७२%) र सन् २०११ (वि.सं.२०६८) मा ४,७२,८६२ (१.७८%) रहेको देखाउँछ । दमाई जातिको जनसंख्या वृद्धिदरलाई हेर्ने हो भने ०.०७ प्रतिशत रहेको यो तथ्यांकले औल्याएको छ (डिएन एफ को दश वर्षे रणनीतिक पत्र, सन् २०१३: ४१)

## दमाई जातिका थरहरू :

नेपालका अनादिकालीन मूलवासी दमाई जातिका थुप्रै थरहरू रहेको पाइन्छ । विशेष गरी उनीहरूको थर मिश्रित जातीय नश्लको रूपमा कायम भएको पाइन्छ । ती मध्ये केही निम्न बमोजिम रहेको छ ।

(क) नगरजातिको थर	दमाई जातिको दर
(१) दर्नाल	(१) दर्नाल
(२) दर्लामी	(२) दर्लामी
(ख) गुरुङ्ग जातिको थर	
(१) घले	(१) घले
(ग) कायस्थ जातिको थर	
(१) दास	(१) दास

(स्रोत : नेपालका जातीय संस्कार, भाग-२, १४३-१४४)

यसरी हेर्दा दमाई जातिका थरहरू अनार्य द्रविड, मंगोल/किराँत र खस नश्लको संयुक्त समिश्रणको रूपमा जातीय उत्पत्ति रहेको पाइन्छ । यसले गर्दा नृवंशको अध्येता र खोजकर्ताहरूको लागि समेत खोजको विषय बनेको छ ।

### १.३ बसोवास :

दमाई जातिको अनादिकालीन आदिथलो कर्णाली प्रदेश हो । यो पंक्तिकारको खोजबाट भर्खरै प्रकाशन भएको "शिल्पी पहिचान" पुस्तकका अनुसार कर्णाली र भेरिको नामकरण समेत दमाई जातिकै बाजाबाट रहेको पत्ता लागेको छ । सुदूरपश्चिमाञ्चल क्षेत्रमा पनि दमाई जातिको बाक्लो उपस्थिति रहेको छ ।

उनीहरूको घरको बनावट भने तल्लो तलामा प्रायः घरको बीच भागमा अगेनो हुन्छ । अगेनो (चुल्हो) को नजिकमा ओछ्यान लगाएर सुत्ने गर्दछन् । अगेनाको नजिकमा सुत्दा जाडो याममा न्यानो हुन्छ । माथिको तलामा अनाज (राखनधरन) राख्दछन् । माथिल्लो तलामा चढनका लागि काठ वा ढुङ्ग्रेवांसको अथवा ढुंगा माटोको लिस्नो राखिएको हुन्छ ।

### क) शारीरिक बनावट:

दमाई जाति पनि विभिन्न जातीय नश्लको रक्त मिश्रण र वैवाहिक सम्बन्धले गर्दा अनार्य द्रविड,मंगोल/किराँत र खस मूलको मिश्रित जातीय समूह हुन् । यिनीहरूको कद अनि वर्ण सबै जातिसंग मिल्दोजुल्दो हुन्छ ।

### ख) वस्त्र र आभूषण:

दमाई जातिका पुरुषहरूले लगाउने कपडा टोपी,लबेदा,सुरुवाल,कोट,इस्टकोट,कमिज सुरुवाल हुन् भने महिलाहरूले लगाउने पोशाकमा गुन्यु चोलो,पेटिकोट,पटुका आदि पर्छन् । गलामा हार, नाकमा भुम्के मुन्द्री र फूली,कानमा मालवाडी आदि गरगहना लगाउँछन् ।

### १.४ दमाई जातिको मौलिक चाडपर्व:

दमाई जातिले आफ्नै प्रमुख मौलिक चाडको रूपमा भसी,मष्ट र पितरलाई धुमधामसँग मनाउने गरेको पाइन्छ ।

### क) भसी

भसी चाड विशेष गरी दमाई जातिहरूले कार्तिक कृष्ण पक्ष औंसी(दिपावलीको लक्ष्मी पूजा, नेवारको समुदायको म्ह पूजा) का दिनको अधिल्लो दिन आफ्ना दाजुभाइ दिदी वहिनी एवं सम्पूर्ण परिवार जम्मा भै दिउँसो खसी, कुखुरा मारकाट गर्ने र विभिन्न परिकार बनाई खाना खाने गरी मनाउँछन् । बेलुका दियालोको राँको हातमा लिएर भसी जगाउन र एउटा काठको किलो जमिन मुनि गाडिन्छ । भसी जगाउन थाल्ने र दमाई पुरेतद्वारा अभिशेष गरी धामीको घरबाट लगेको आगोले बत्ति वालिन्छ । यसपछि गडोमा ढुंगादेखिदै जान्छ र गडो ठुलो हुँदै जान्छ । पछि जति रात बढ्दै जान्छ भसी जति जगायो, त्यति नै यो बढ्दै गएर करीब १०-१२ हात सम्म देखिन्छ । रात घट्दै गएपछि यो बुझ्नु पनि घट्दै जान्छ भन्ने जनविश्वास रहेको पाइन्छ । विहान दाउराको (कोठी) भारीमा सामा लगाउँछन् । गाउँको मुख्य पुजारीले सामा नउचालेसम्म अरुले उचाल्न सक्दैनन् र

पुजारीले उचाली सकेपछि मात्रै अरुले उचाल्न सक्छन् । अनि त्यसलाई गाउँमा घुमाएर नजिकको चौतारीमा सेलाउँछन् ।

यो दमाई जातिको प्रमुख महान चाड हो । यो चाडमा पौराणिक शिल्पी बलीराजाको जपतप, स्तूती, प्रशंसाका साथै विशेष आराधना गरिन्छ । यो चाड गाई तिहार औंशीको दिन सकिन्छ । यसलाई भसी भन्दछन् (श्री ५ को सरकार, २०४४: १५४-१५६) ।

### ख) मष्टो पूजा

दमाई जातिको प्रमुख चाड मष्टोपूजा पनि रहेको छ । यो चाड जेठको पूर्णिमाका दिन मनाइन्छ । यसमा धामीले देउता बसी आफ्नो विघ्नबाधा, दुःख आदिको विषयमा के हुन्छ ? कसो हुन्छ ? बकी अध्ययन गरी जवाफ दिने गर्दछन् । यस पूजामा रोटी,खीर,जाँड,रक्सीका साथै पूजाको सामग्री तयार गरिएको हुन्छ । यस पूजाको लागि पूजारी र धामी दमाई जातिकै पुरुष रहने गर्दछन् । यस पूजाको लागि हुड्के (दमाई) जातिको पुरानो थलो दैलेखको पुरानो खाडी गैया गा.वि.स.वडा नं.३ दबडामा एक घर छ । सो घरमा पूजा गरिन्छ (श्री ५ को सरकार,२०४४: १५४-१५६) ।

### ग) पितृमातृ (पितर) क्षमा पूजा

पितर पूजा दमाई जातिको पितृमातृ क्षमा पूजाको रूपमा रहेको बुझिन्छ । यो पूजा विशेष गरी वैशाखीन्वागी र मंसिरमा धान न्वागीका दिन मनाउँदछन् । आफ्नो आमा बाबु मरेको एक वर्ष पछि उनीहरूको संभनामा एक रुखको छहारीमा बसी पितृमातृ पूजा गर्दछन् । बाबुको पितृ पूजा भए कुखुराको भाले र आमाको मातृ पूजा भए पोथी कुखुरा काटी भोग चढाउँछन् । पितृ पूजामा रोटी, मासु, जाँड, रक्सी आदि चढाउँछन् । आफ्ना माता,पिता पितृसंग आफ्नो घरको अन्न पानीको सह राखी देउ, भण्डारमा बसी देउ, वस्तुभाउ, आफू र आफ्ना परिवारजनमा आपत् विपद् नपार, क्षमा गर, रक्षा गर भन्ने कामना साथै विन्ती, प्रार्थना गर्दछन् ।

जसलाई उनीहरू पितृमातृ क्षमा पूजा भन्ने गर्दछन् । पूजा विधिपूर्वक सकिएपछि प्रसाद घरका सबै परिवारले बाँडीचुडी खाने गर्दछन् (श्री ५ को सरकार,२०४४: १५६-१५७) ।

### १.५ कूल परम्परा र विश्वास:

प्रत्येक दमाई जातिले वर्षको एकपट आ-आफ्ना थर,गोत्रको कूलदेवता र वायुदेवताको रूपमा पुजा गर्ने गर्दछन् । हरेक वर्षको मंसिर पूर्णिमा,माघे संक्रान्ति तथा वैशाख पूर्णिमाको पञ्चमीका दिन देवाली गर्ने गर्दछन् । कूलपूजा गर्दा सहगोत्र वाहेक अरुलाई समावेश गराउँदैनन् । तर पाहुनाका रूपमा भने बोलाउने गर्दछन् । कतिले चाहिँ वर्षको दुईपटक वैशाख पूर्णिमा र माघे संक्रान्तिमा पनि देवाली पूजा गरेको पाइन्छ । यस्तो पूजामा आ-आफ्ना नातेदार,चेलीबेटीलाई पनि बोलाउने गर्दछन् । दमाई जातिको संस्कार र संस्कृतिमा संसारी पूजा गर्ने पनि चलन रहेको छ । जो भूमि पूजाकै अर्को रूप मानिन्छ ।

दमाईहरू भीमसेनको पनि पूजागर्ने गर्दछन् । जसलाई वीरताको प्रतिकको रूपमा पुज्दै आएका छन् । दमाई जाति पूजामा कुखुरा, वोका, राँगा, हाँस, परेवा र सुँगरको

बली चढाउँछन् । यिनीहरू अर्धसम्म धामीभाँत्री माथि पनि उत्तिकै विश्वास राख्दछन् । कुनै पनि रोग अस्पतालबाट निको हुन सकेन भने यिनीहरू धामीभाँत्रीको सहारा लिने गर्दछन् । यी जातिले पञ्चबली पनि दिने गर्दछन् । पञ्चबली दिँदा बाखा, राँगा, भेडा र कुखुराको भालेको बलि दिन्छन् ।

#### क) भाषा:

विशेषगरी "श्रुतिलोकवाङ्मय काव्यसम्पदा" नेपालका मूलवासी शिल्पी दमाई जातिसँग सम्बन्धित रहेको छ । दमाई जातिले हुड्के गाथा तथा भारत वा कर्खामा धार्मिक, ऐतिहासिक र वीरताको संदेश गाउँछे । वीरगाथामा आधारित भारत (कर्खा) को इतिहास प्रमाण खोज्दै जाँदा गाथा कथे र गाउने चलन नेपाली खसभाषाको थालनी भन्दा निकै पहिल्यैदेखि नै चल्दै आएको बुझिन्छ । शक्तिप्रतिको आस्था,राजाप्रतिको सम्मान, पितृगणप्रतिको भक्ति र विशेष योग्यताका स्थानीय व्यक्ति प्रतिको गौरव भारत (कर्खा)मा उनेर श्रोता र दर्शकगणको मनोरञ्जन गराउँदै आफ्नो सांस्कृतिक संरक्षण र जीविका समेत गर्ने परिपाटी दमाईमा धेरै अघिदेखि नै रहेको थाहा हुन्छ ।

समयको प्रवाहसँगै बिसिँदै गएका शासक, पितृगण र स्थानीय वीरहरूका चरित्र चित्रणमा आधारित भारत लोप भएका र नयाँ-नयाँ किसिमका व्यक्तिहरूका भारत कथिँदै गएका कुरा पनि अघि सार्न सकिन्छ । त्यसो भएर पनि देवताका रूपमा मान्यता पाई चर्चित रहेकाहरूको कथामा आधारित भारत तुलनात्मक हिसाबले अधिक दीर्घजीवी बनेका देखिन्छन् । तिनैका उदाहरणद्वारा विवेच्य गाथाको प्राचीनताबारे अड्कल र अनुमान लगाउन सकिन्छ (पन्त, २०६४:७६, विश्वकर्मा, नेपाली, २०७६:२९) ।

साभा नेपाली खस भाषाको उत्पति र विस्तारका क्रममा खस प्राकृतका सहकार्यमा रहेका अन्य प्राकृत भाषाहरू थिए । पैसची प्राकृत, चुलिका प्राकृत, भाखेली प्राकृत, दरदी प्राकृत, ब्राचडी प्राकृत, शौरसेनी प्राकृत तथा मागधी प्राकृत त्यसमा भाषा, जाति र लिपिका पारस्परिक समन्वयका प्रसङ्गमा सर्वाधिक सहयोग दरदी प्राकृत, कलौतिया लिपि र दमाई जातिको रहेको वास्तविकता अविस्मरणीय हुन सक्छ । त्यसपछि मात्र ब्राचडी प्राकृत लगायत अन्य प्राकृतको भूमिका हुन आउँछ । कलौतिया लिपिको प्रयोग गर्ने दरद र दमुहरू दरदी प्राकृतका वक्ता थिए । जुन भाषा र लिपिको अस्तित्व दमाई जातिमा अझ पनि रहेको पाइन्छ । यसरी दमाई जातिको आँनै मातृ भाषा रहेको तथ्य इतिहासकै गर्भमा ओभ्नेल पारिएको देखिन्छ (समानता, २०५१:५६) ।

#### १.६ दमाई जातिको संस्कार

दमाई जातिहरूले जन्म पश्चात् आँनै प्रकारले छैटी, न्वारन, छेवर, व्रतबन्ध र मृत्यु संस्कार मनाउने गर्दछन् ।

#### क) जन्म, छैटी, न्वारन :

दमाई जाति भित्र बच्चा नजन्माउने मानिस स्वर्ग जान पाउँदैनन् भन्ने अन्धविश्वास छ । त्यसैले बच्चा जन्माउनुलाई यिनीहरू स्वर्ग जाने भन्दाको पहिलो खुड्किलो ठान्दछन् । प्रायः नेपाली समाजमा छोरीलाई भन्दा छोरालाई महत्व दिएर जस्तै यिनीहरूमा पनि

छोरालाई नै प्राथमिकता दिने चलन छ । छोरा जन्मेको छैटी दिनमा छैटी गर्दछन् । छैटीको दिनमा बालकको सिरानीमा एकमाना चामल, फलफूल र कलश राखि दिन्छन् । रातभरी तोरीको तेलमा दियो बालिराख्दछन् । आफ्नो जातिको पेशा अनुसार सिलाईका सामग्री वा पञ्चैबाजा, नौमतीबाजा मध्ये उपलब्ध भएका केही बाजा राखिदिने चलन पनि रहेको पाइन्छ । छैटीको रातमा भावी (देवी) ले आएर बच्चाको निधारमा भाग्य लेखिदिन्छन् भन्ने विश्वास गर्दछन् । जन्मेका दिन देखि न्वारनका दिन सम्म सुत्केरीलाई शरीरमा कुनै तकलिफ नहोस् भनि विशेष हेरचाहका साथ छुट्टै राखिन्छ । विशेषगरी गाउँघरतिर सुत्केरीको शरीर चाँडे बाँधिन्छ भन्नेको लागि कोदोको तीनपाने रक्सी, जाँड, घिउ, मेथीमा भानेको, लोकल कुखुराको मासु, धुलो ओखती, पाखनवेतको धुलो खुवाउने गर्दछन् । दमाई जातिको बच्चा जन्मेको एघारौँ दिनमा न्वारन गर्ने चलन छ । न्वारनका दिनमा बच्चाको नामकरण गरिन्छ । यसै दिन देखि सुतक पनि सकिन्छ । न्वारन लगायत सबै शुभ अशुभ कार्यमा दमाईहरू ज्वाइँ अथवा भान्जाबाट सम्पन्न गराउँछन् । न्वारनमा दमाई जातिमा भोज गर्ने चलन छ । भोजमा परम्परागत रूपमा जाँड, रक्सी नभइ हुँदैन । न्वारनमा पुरेतले जुराडिएको नाम यिनीहरू गोप्य नै राख्छन् । त्यो नाम सबैलाई थाहा भएमा हानी हुन्छ भन्ने विश्वास यिनीहरूमा छ । बोलाउने नाम भने घरका जेष्ठ सदस्यले राखिदिन्छन् । त्यहि नामबाट उ समाजमा चिनिन्छ (पाण्डेय, ...: २९)

मध्यपश्चिमाञ्चलका दमाई जातिमा भने जन्म संस्कार अलि फरक रहेको पाइन्छ । बच्चा जन्मेको दिन दाजुभाई जम्मा भएर घमारी खेल्छन् । १५-२० जना भएर दायीं, बायाँ दमाहा, मुजुराको साथमा नाच्दै, गाउँदै, बजाउँदै घुमी-घुमी घमारी खेल्ने गर्दछन् । ६ दिनको दिन खसी काट्ने, रोटी, पुरी, फलफूल, जाँड, रक्सी आदि परिकार तयार गरी छैटी गर्ने गर्दछन् । प्रथम दिन घमारी वस्ने र हेर्ने अन्य सबैलाई खुशियालीमा खाउने काम गर्दछन् । यसै दिन बच्चाको छैटी हेर्ने र नाम राख्ने काम गर्दछन् । यस दिन पनि हर्षोल्लासपूर्वक घमारी खेल्छन् । विहान घरमा खसी काट्छन् र घमारी खेल्नेलाई एउटा छुट्टै खसी दिने परम्परा पनि छ । ११औँ दिनको दिन दिदी, बहिनीहरू माईतमा एउटा खसी लिएर आउँछन् । ११ औँ दिनको दिन बच्चालाई घर बाहिर ल्याई घाम भुल्किनु पूर्व तर्फ फर्काई भूमि र भगवानको पूजा अर्चना गर्ने गर्दछन् । बच्चाको बाजे, बजै (हजुरबा, हजुरआमा) भए उनीहरूले बच्चा तथा आमालाई टिका लगाई आशिर्वाद तथा दीर्घायुको कामना गर्दछन् । यसलाई उनीहरू आफ्नो भाषामा "दुवारो" भन्दछन् । बाजे बजै नभए बच्चाका आमा बाबुले नै टिका लगाई दिन्छन् । आमालाई बच्चाका आमालाई बच्चाका बाबु आमाले एउटा खसी दिन्छन् । गुन्युचोले लगायत कपडा दिन्छन् । यसका साथै आफ्नै जातको पुरेत बोलाई न्वारन गर्ने परम्परा पनि रही आएको छ । सुत्केरी ११ औँ दिनसम्म वार्ने चलन छ । सुत्केरीलाई सकेसम्म पोषिलो दाल, भात, तरकारी, मासु खान दिने र तोरीको तेल शरीरमा र बच्चालाई लगाउन दिने कार्य समाजका अन्य जातले गरिने जस्तै चलन छ । न्वारनको दिन देखि काठेभाटो लगाउन दिने गर्दछन् । बच्चा जन्मिएको खुशियालीमा खशी काट्ने, भोज गर्ने परम्परा भए पनि हिजोआज गरिबीको कारणले छोड्दै आएका छन् (श्री ५को सरकार, २०४४:१६१-१६२) ।

**ख) पुरेत:**

दमाई जातिमा आफ्नो पुरेतको विशेष महत्व रहेको पाइन्छ । जन्मेदेखि मृत्यूसम्मका संस्कार,संस्कृति र परम्परामा पुरेत नभई हुँदैन । जन्म,छैटी,न्वारन,पास्नी,छेवर,विहे,मृत्यु,श्राद्ध कार्यमा पुरेतको आवश्यकता रहन्छ । दमाई जातिहरू पुरेतको काम आफ्ना ज्वाइँ अथवा भान्जाबाट सम्पन्न गर्ने गराउँछन् ।

**ग) पास्नी(भातखुवाइ):**

यी जातिहरूमा अन्य विभिन्न संस्कार,संस्कृति मध्ये पास्नी गर्ने चलन पनि प्रमुख रूपमा रहेको पाइन्छ । यी जातिमा छोरा भए ६ महिना र छोरी भए ५ महिनामा पास्नी गर्ने चलन रहेको छ । भात खुवाउने शुभ साइत पुरेतले निकालदछन् । पास्नी गर्ने मिति निश्चित भएपछि आफ्ना सम्पूर्ण नर नाता,इष्टमित्र तथा प्रियजनहरूलाई बोलाइन्छ । सो समयमा बच्चाहरूलाई नयाँ लुगा,गरगहना लगाईदिनुका साथै उक्त दिन शुभ साइतको ठीक समय पारेर सबभन्दा पहिले घरका जेष्ठ सदस्यले असर्फी वा धातुको पैसाले खीर खुवाइ दिएपछि पालैपालो गरी बुवा, आमा, मावली, दाजुभाइ, आफन्त तथा अन्य पाहुनाहरूले खीर खुवाइन्छ । सो अवसरमा बच्चाहरूलाई सुस्वास्थ्य तथा दीर्घायुको आशिर्वादका साथै पैसा र कपडा उपहार समेत दिइन्छ । नवजात बच्चाहरूलाई नजिकको तीर्थस्थलमा लगी देवी देवताको दर्शन गराउने चलन पनि छ । अन्तिममा सबै पाहुनाहरूलाई भोज खुवाइ बिदावारी गर्ने चलन पनि रहेको छ(नेपालका जातीय संस्कार, भाग-२, २०७०:१४७) ।

**घ) छेवर (चुडाकर्म):**

व्रतबन्ध,उपनयन वा चुडाकर्म जेसुकै भनिए पनि दमाईहरू यसलाई छेवर (१०) भन्दछन् । बालकको उमेर ७-१० वर्ष पुग्यो भने छेवर गरिदिने चलन यो जातिमा पनि रहेको पाइन्छ । मामाको हातबाट कपाल खौरिन लगाई टोपी,लुगा लगाइदिने गर्दछन् । दिदी,बहिनी बोलाई उनीहरूबाट कपाल टिपाउने र दक्षिणा दिने गरिन्छ । छेवर नगरी विवह गर्नु हुँदैन भन्ने मान्यता रहिआएको पाइन्छ । पाहुनाहरूलाई यस दिन पनि आफ्नो गच्छे अनुसारसगुन ,खानपान र भोज खुवाउने काम गरिन्छ ।

**ङ) छोरीलाई गुन्युचोले**

दमाई जातिमा छोरीको पहिलो पटक रजश्वला हुनु अगाडि नै छोरीलाई गुन्युचोले दिने चलन रहेको छ । यसका लागि विजोडी अंक भएको वर्ष सबैभन्दा राम्रो मानिन्छ । यसका लागि ७,९,११,१३ वर्षको उमेरमा गुन्युचोले दिने गरिन्छ । सो अवसरमा पूजाआजा र आशिर्वाद दिइन्छ । साथै नयाँ लत्ताकपडा,मिटो मिठो फलफूल, दक्षिणा तथा गरगहना पनि दिइने गरिन्छ ।

**च) पहिलो रजश्वला**

दमाई जातिमा छोरीको पहिलो पटक रजश्वला हुँदा गुप्त रूपमा लुकाएर राख्ने चलन छ । बुवा तथा दाजुभाइको मुख हेर्नु हुन्न भन्ने परम्परा अनुसार २१ दिनसम्म घाम नपर्ने ठाउँमा लुकाएर राखिन्छ । २१ दिनको दिनमा नुहाइधुवाइ गरी चोखो वस्त्र धारण गरी सूर्यदेव तथा नवग्रहको पूजापाठ गरी मान्यजन तथा तुलाबडाको हातबाट टीका लगाइ मुख

हेर्ने चलन रहेको छ । सो दिन मिठो चोखो,फलफूल खान दिइन्छ । नयाँ लुगाकपडा,गरगहना तथा दक्षिणा पनि दिइन्छ ।

**छ) विवाह**

सृष्टिलाई निरन्तरता दिनको लागि मानव जीवनमा विवाह धेरै नै महत्वपूर्ण संस्था बनेको छ । यी जाति भित्र मागी विवाहा,प्रेम विवाह र जारी विवाह प्रचलनमा रहेको पाइन्छ । फाट्टफुट्ट अन्तरजातीय विवाह पनि चलन चल्तीमा रहको पाइन्छ । तर, जातीय भेदभावको कारणले गर्दा छोटो अवधिमाै विछोडमा परिणत हुने गरेको छ । मागी विवाह गर्दा केटाका तर्फबाट केटीका घरमा लमी पठाउने चलन छ । सोही लमीले नै केटीका घरमा गएर कुरा चलाउँछन् । केटीका तर्फबाट उक्त प्रस्ताव मञ्जूर वा स्वीकृत भयो भने केटी पक्षबाट केटाका घरमा जाने चलन छ । विवाहको प्रस्ताव दुवैतर्फ मञ्जूर भयो भने केटा पक्षले केटी पक्षकोमा चार,पाँच बोतल वा ७-१२ माना रक्सी र कुखुराको भालेपोथी टक्राउँछन् । यसलाई भुट्टको जुटाउने भनिन्छ । केटीको बुवाले रक्सीको (बोतल) ठेकी र कुखुराको भालेपोथी पूजा गरी सुगन स्वीकार गरी खाएपछि मात्र विवाह निश्चित हुने गर्छ । त्यसपछि दुवै पक्षको रोहवारमा विवाहको तिथि तय हुन्छ । यी जातीमा विवाह १८ देखि २० वर्षको उमेरमा गरिदिने चलन छ । आ'ने थर गोत्रमा विवाह गर्न मनाही छ । यी जातीमा पहिला फुपुचेलो,मामाचेली विवाह गर्ने संस्कार थियो । अहिले यो चलनलाई अन्त्य गरिएको छ(नेपालका जातीय संस्कार,भाग-२,२०७०:१४८) ।

**ज) मृत्यु:**

प्राकृतिक सन्तुलन र जीवको जीवनचक्र कायम राख्नको लागि जन्मपछि मृत्यु स्वाभाविक मानिन्छ । दमाई जातिमा लासको टाउको दक्षिणतिर पारी सिरानमा तिलको तेलमा बत्ती बाली हँसिया वा खुकुरी राख्ने चलन छ । यसको अर्थ आत्मा सीधै स्वर्ग जाओस् भड्किएर भूतप्रेत,पिशाच नवनोस् भन्ने विश्वास रहेको छ । लासलाई नदी दोभान वा जङ्गलतिर लांदा टाउको उत्तरतिर र खुट्टा दक्षिणतिर पारी लगिन्छ । बत्तिचाहिँ १०-१३ दिन सम्म बालिन्छ । कसैको अपभर्त,अकाल वा अस्वाभाविक मृत्यु भएमा मृतआत्मा वायुमा परिवर्तन हुने विश्वासले वायु उतार्ने चलन छ । वायु नउतारेसम्म वायुले दु:ख दिने,काम सफल नहुने हुँदा वायु उतार्ने पर्छ भन्ने विश्वास छ । वायु उतार्दा भ्रांन्त्रीहरू आगोको भुग्रीमा दयाङ्ग्री ठोकी आगोमाथि नाच्ने गर्दछन् । दमाई जातिमा मृतकलाई नदी किनारमा लगी दोभानमा जगाउने वा गाड्ने चलन छ । कसै,कसैले नजिकको जङ्गल वा भीरको फेदमा गाड्ने चलन पनि रहेको छ । लामो बाटो हुँदा घरका दिदीबहिनीहरूले फलफूल खाजा र जाँडरक्सी लगी मलामीलाई वीच बाटोसम्म पुगी खुवाउने गरिन्छ । दमाई जातिहरूमा १० देखि १३ दिन सम्म जुठो बार्ने चलन छ । मृतकको मुखमा जेठो छोराका साथै सबै छोरोले दागबत्ती दिने चलन छ ।

छोराहरू नभएको अवस्थामा श्रीमती वा छोरीले पनि दागबत्ती दिने चलन छ । अन्य जातीमा जस्तो छोरा नै हुनुपर्ने अनिवार्य दमाई जातिमा छैन । कतिपय ठाउँमा मान्छे मरेको दिन पाडो वा बाख्रो काटी जाँडरक्सी सहित भोजखुवाउने चलन छ । तर, यो पुरानो चलन हिजोआज हट्दै गएको छ ।

## १.७ दमाई(दर्जी) राजा

एघारौं शताब्दीभन्दा पनि निकै अघि अर्थात् खससाम्राज्यको आन्तरिक उपनिवेश उदय हुनुभन्दा अगाडि वर्तमान नेपालको अछाम जिल्लाको दर्नाकोट,सल्यान जिल्लाको दर्नाकोट लगायतका स्थानहरूमा राज्य केन्द्र बनाएर दमाई(दर्जी) राजाहरूले राजकाज र शासन गरेको तथ्य प्रमाणहरू पाइएको छ । दमाई(दर्जी) एक महत्वपूर्ण प्राचीन राजवंश भएको तथ्य प्रमाण डा. नवल वियोगीद्वारा लिखित "भारतकी आदिवासी नाग सभ्यता" नामक ग्रन्थको पृष्ठ ७२ मा उल्लेख गरिएको छ ।

## १.८ आदिम सञ्चारकर्मीको रूपमा दमाई जाति

आजको जस्तो सञ्चार सुविधा नभएको बेला देशका कुनाकाचा,गाँउघरका घरआँगन, दैलो-दैलोमा राष्ट्र र राष्ट्रियताको सन्देश सुनाउने गन्धर्वजाति नै थिए । सुख-दुखका खबरबाहक र परि आएमा राष्ट्रका लागि मरिमेटन तयार पार्न गन्धर्वले भूमिका खेल्दथे । राष्ट्र भक्ति र सुपुत्र वीरतालाई जगाई रणसंग्राममा जान उद्यत बनाउँथे । एक गाँउको भलाकुसारी अर्को गाँउसम्म पुऱ्याउँथे । टिस्टादेखि पश्चिमकिल्ला काँगडासम्म पनि देश र जनताको प्रतिनिधि भई यिनै गन्धर्व गाउँदा-गाउँदै पुग्थे । स्वदेश वा विदेश जहाँ पुगे पनि नेपाल र नेपालीको सुख-दुख,आँशु हाँसो,पीर व्यथाका भाव पोख्दै आफ्नो मातृभूमिको महिमापूर्ण गीत बिसँदैनेथे(दर्नाल, २०४५:१३) ।

त्यसैगरीकर्णालीका शिल्पी(दलित) समुदायको अनादिकालीन कर्णाली शिल्पसभ्यता(शिल्पशास्त्र) र संस्कृतिका विकासकर्ता मध्येका दमाई जातिको अर्को विशेष विशेषता पनि रहेको छ । गन्धर्व जस्तै त्यतिबेला आधिकारिक सुचनाबाहक दमाई नै थिए । जसलाई खूट हान्नु भनिन्छ । विशुद्ध लोक वाद्य-वादनमा समेत स्थानीय भौगोलिक बनोटको प्रभाव परेको देखिन्छ । यो कुरा यहाँका दमाई जातिमा परापूर्वकालदेखि चलिआएको खुट हान्ने परम्पराले बताउँछ । भौगोलिक दूरान्तर(स्पासियल भेरिएसन) को कारण टाढा-टाढाका मानिस बोलाउनु पर्दा वा वल्लो डाँडा, पल्लो डाँडाको मानिसलाई बोलाउनु पर्दा, परिस्थितिवश अर्पभट बोलाउँदा दमाहा बजाई विभिन्न कार्यको लागि सांकेतिक ध्वनि दिने गरिन्छ । संकेत दिने र बुझ्ने काम दमाईले नै गर्दछन् । तूला-तूला पहाड र खोलानालाले भरिएको कर्णाली अञ्चलमा वारि गाउँबाट पारि जान पऱ्यो भने दिनभरि पनि लाग्न सक्छ । यस्तो अप्ठ्यारो कामलाई सजिलो तुल्याउनको निम्ति दमाईहरूले दमाहा(नगरा,भेरि) ठोकेर वारिबाट पारिको मान्छेलाई बोलाउने सांकेतिक धुन बजाउने गर्दछन् । यसलाई नै खूट हान्ने भनिन्छ । वारिबाट पारि सुनिने गरी खूट हानेपछि पारिको दमाईले खूटको अर्थ खुट्याउँछ । र, दमाहाद्वारा नै खूट हानेर त्यसको जवाफ दिन्छ । यस प्रकार दमाईहरूले वारिबाट पारि र पारिबाटवारि सूचनाको आदानप्रदान गरेको देखिन्छ । आपत परेको बेलामा पारि गएको कुनै व्यक्तिलाई तुरुन्त बोलाउन परेमा यहि खूट हान्ने कलाले तूलो सहायता पुऱ्याउँछ । उदाहरणको लागि "बच्चा जन्मियो,भट्टै आऊ देउताको पूजा छ,चाँडै आओ तिमीलाई भेट्न मान्छेआएको छ,तुरुन्तै आऊ 'तिम्रो आफन्त बिरामी छन्,भेट्न आऊ "'आदि समाचारहरू खूट हानेर सजिलैसँग दमाईहरूलेठाँउमा पुऱ्याउँथे । दमाई जातिको यो सूचना प्रविधिको प्रयोग आज भन्दा परापूर्वकालमा बढी गरिन्थ्यो । आधुनिक सञ्चार प्रविधिको विकास पूर्व दमाई

जातिले आदिम सञ्चारकर्मीको भूमिका समेत पूरा गर्दै आएका थिए । त्यो बेलामा राष्ट्रको उच्च तहमा आसिन व्यक्तित्वहरूलाई सम्मान र सलामी पनि दमाईहरूले दमाहा बजाएर चढाउने गर्थे(रिमाल, २०२८:३५, ३६) ।

दमाईहरूसँग अर्को कला र सञ्चार क्षमता भनेको युद्ध किल्लामा नगरामा खूट हानेर विरोधी वा शत्रुपक्षको अवस्थालाई आफ्नो किल्लाका सैनिकलाईजानकारी गराउनु थियो । यसबाट पनि थाहा हुन्छ, उनीहरूको सञ्चार सीप र नगरा निशानीको शक्ति कति रहेछ भन्ने कुरा दमाई जातिसँग विशेष तान्त्रिक शक्ति रहेको समेत प्रमाणित भइसकेको छ । उनीहरू भाँड्ग्री परम्पराको समेत मूल हुन भन्ने तथ्य अनुसन्धानबाट पुष्टिभएको छ । लालापानी युद्ध किल्लामा पाँचदेखिआठ जना दमाई बानादार रहेको कुरा अनुमान गरिएको छ । उनीहरूले खुट हानेर (नगरामा विशेष प्रकारको कोड भाषामा बजाएर शत्रुको सम्पूर्ण जानकारी दिने सञ्चार प्रविधि) संकेत दिए पछि मात्रै गोर्खाली सेनाले अङ्ग्रेज सेनामाथि आक्रमण गर्ने गर्दथे । वरिष्ठ इतिहास संस्कृतिविद्दप्रा.डा.जगमान गुरुङका अनुसार किल्ला, गढी, कोतको प्रमुख पनि दमाईहरू नै हुने गर्दथे । कोत गढीको सुरक्षा अधिकारी पनि उनीहरू नै हुन्थे । कोतको प्रमुख भएकोले कोतवाल, कोटवाल हुँदै कटवाल भएको हो । जसले कोट, किल्ला, गढी आसपासमा बस्ने समुदायको लागि आधिकारिक सूचना यिनै कटवालले नै दिने गर्दथे । अहिले पनि नेपालका कतिपय ठाउँहरूमा कटवालप्रथा कायमै रहेको पाइन्छ । अर्थात् शिल्पी(दलित) समुदायहरू दमाई,कामी,सार्की,बादी,गन्धर्व, मुसहर, डोम, चमार आदि आदिम सञ्चारकर्मी र सञ्चार प्रविधिमा पोख्त थिए । इन्टरनेटको आविष्कार भएको तीन दशक मात्रै भएको छ । यी सूचनाका संवाहकहरूलाई राज्यले आज सम्म पनि उचित मान, सम्मान र कदर गर्न सकेको छैन । वर्तमान सूचना तथा सञ्चार प्रविधिको बाढीमा अनादिकालीन सञ्चारकर्मी जाति, समुदाय छाँयामा परेका छन् ।

## १.९ दमाई लोक नाच

मूलतः नेपालका दमाई जाति साँस्कृतिक सभ्यता र सम्पदाका मूलस्रोत हुन् । दमाई जातिले कर्णालीमा विशेष रूपमा र अन्य क्षेत्रमा नाच्ने दर्जनौं नाचहरू छन् । ती नाचहरूमध्ये प्रमुख रूपमा दमाई लोक नाच, दमाहा लोक नाच, हुड्के नाच, छलिया नाच, धमारी (खेल) नाच धुलोहो नाच ढोली नाच, दमाई नाच, चोपाउँदाको नाच, पाटा नाच, लाटो नाच पञ्चै बाजा सहितको झ्याउरे नाच, पञ्चै बाजा सहितको बेठी नाच आदि गरी लगभग एक दर्जन भन्दा बढी नाच प्रचलनमा रहेको पाईन्छ । यी लोक नाचहरूको अर्को नै बिशिष्ट महत्व रहेको छ । केही नाचको संक्षिप्त रूपमा तल चर्चा गरिने छ (भाइसाब, २०६६:६-१५) ।

## १.९(क) हुड्के नाचको परिचय

कुनैपनि जातिको जातीय परिचयमा नृत्य संस्कृतिको महत्वपूर्ण स्थान रहेको हुन्छ । जातीय परिचय नै उसको संस्कृतिले दिने गर्दछ । संस्कृति बिनाको कुनै पनि जाति नै हुँदैन । हरेक जातिको संस्कृति भिन्न नृत्य पनि रहेको हुन्छ । सम्बन्धित जातिका आस्था,निष्ठा र परम्परालाई संवहन गर्ने,यो नृत्य संस्कृति जातीय परिचय दिने मूल विषय हो । आफ्नो

जातीय भेषभूषा,गरगहनाहरू,चालचलनहरू,वाद्यहरू तथा जातीय पहिचान हुने विषयलाई पनि नृत्य मार्फत संरक्षण गरिएको हुन्छ । नृत्यमा तीन पक्ष वाद्य,गीत र अभिनय रहेको हुन्छ ।

विभिन्न वाद्यवादन (सङ्गीत) सँग नाचिने नृत्यलाई तालनृत्य भनिन्छ प्राचीन समयमा वीरहरूको वीरगाथाको वर्णन गरी नाचिने हुड्के नाच एक प्रसिद्ध ताल नृत्य हो । यो नाच सामाजिक,मनोरञ्जन तथा ऐतिहासिक प्रकारको रहेको छ । यो नाच बाह्र महिना नाचिन्छ । साथै,कुनै मेला,पर्व,विशेष अवसर,उत्सव वा नाट्यको आयोजनामा पनि नाच्ने गरिन्छ । स्थानीय जनबोलीमा यो नाचलाई हुड्के(दमाई)नाच वा हुड्केली पनि भन्ने गरिन्छ ।

हुड्केली गाथा लामो वा छोटो तुल्याउने कुरा हुड्केकै हातमा भर पर्दछ । यो नाचको नर्तक चतुरो,गीतमा निपूण,प्रखर वाकपट र अभिव्यक्तिमा बुद्धिमान/कूशलता प्राप्त गरेको हुन्छ । यो नाच शुरु गर्दा शुरुमा ईश्वर स्तूति वा मङ्गलगान गाइन्छ । मङ्गलगान सकिएपछि कुनै राजाको वंशावली वा कर्खाहरू गाएर नृत्याभिनय गरिन्छ ।

यसमा वीर र श्रृङ्गाररस रहेको हुन्छ । प्राचीन कालमा युद्धको समयमा सैनिकहरूको मनोबल बढाउन हुड्केली लोकनाचको प्रतियोगिता गराउने गरेको पनि पाइन्छ । हुड्केली नाचको कर्खाहरू (भारत) विभिन्न प्रकारका हुन्छन् । वंशावली/बसाई,सराई,राजाको प्रशस्ती वा जीवनी र वृत्तान्तमा आधारित भएमा सम्बन्धित वृत्तान्त वा गाथा पूर्ण रूपमा प्रस्तुत गरिन्छ । बालाराजा काशीरामको भारत,राजा संसारी वर्माको भारत,जितारी मल्लको भारत,जालन्धरी मल्लको भारत,थामी राजा लगागतको १२ औं शताब्दितिरका विभिन्न खस राजाहरूको वंशावलीको कर्खा केही प्रसिद्ध हुड्केली नाच हुन् । हुड्केली नाचको कर्खा गायनको समाप्तिमा आर्शिवाचन वा आर्शिवाद गायन गरी समापन गरिन्छ ।

विषय वस्तुका हिसावले सौर्य,सौभाग्य र स्तूतिपरक रहेको हुन्छ । यो नाचको प्रमुख विशेषतामा मौखिक परम्परा,कल्पनाको प्रबलता,उपकारी भावना,सामाजिक चेतनाको प्रधानता,हास्य व्यांग्यात्मकता,सरलता र सुगमता,स्थानीयता,प्रतीकात्मकता प्रमुख रहेका छन् । हुड्को पित्तल वा काठबाट बनेको डमरु जस्तै एक किसिमको बाजा हो । साथमा कुनै भारत वा भँडाग गीतहरू गाएर बाजाको ताल र लयमा अभिनय गर्ने एकालापमूलक ताण्डव नृत्यको पेलवी शैलीमा यो नाच नाचिन्छ । यस नाचलाई 'भारत' वा कर्खा पनि भनिन्छ ।

संस्कृत शब्दकोषमा भारत शब्दको थुप्रै अर्थहरूमध्ये अभिनेता पनि एक हो भन्ने दिइएको छ । दुवै शब्दको समन्वय अर्थ भारत हो । ई.पू. द्वितीय सहश्राब्दिमा महाभारत काव्यको रचना हुनुपूर्व जय,भारत हुँदा महाभारत निर्मित भएको वैज्ञानिक तर्क यस भारतसँग पनि मिल्न आउँछ । र,हुड्केली नाचको गीतमा युद्ध वर्णन गरिएका भारतहरू धेरै भेटिन्छन् । तसर्थ,महाभारतको निर्माण हुनुभन्दा अघिदेखि नै प्रचलनमा रहेको भारत (कर्खा) गायनको अवशेषको रूपमा हुड्केली नाचको अस्तित्व रहेको पाइन्छ ।

वीर र श्रृङ्गार रसका गीतहरू यसमा गाइन्छ । पाश्चात्य साहित्यमा प्रचलित एकल अभिनय (मोनोएक्टिङ) कर्खा हुड्के नाचमा पनि पाइन्छ । त्यसैले पूर्वीय साहित्यको रूपक र पाश्चात्य नाट्य साहित्यमा प्रचलित मोनोएक्टिङको संयोग बिन्दु जस्तो लाग्ने लोकनाच नै हुड्केनाच हो । यो नेपालको मौलिक कला संस्कृतिका सर्जक तथा जीवित इतिहास बोकेका दमाई जातिको विशेष मौलिक नाच हो ।

यो समुदायले नेपालको विभिन्न जातिको इतिहास व्याख्या गर्ने गरेको पाइन्छ । अहिलेसम्म दमाईहरूलाई जीवित सामाजिक तथा सांस्कृतिक इतिहासकारको रूपमा पनि लिइन्छ । नेपालको मध्यपश्चिमाञ्चल र सुदूर पश्चिमाञ्चल विकास क्षेत्र भौतिक विकासमा वञ्चित भए पनि सांस्कृतिकसम्पदामा र शिल्पसम्पत्तामा निकै सम्पन्न रहेको छ । अहिले पनि आधुनिकताको चपेटामा नपरेकोले नै यहाँको प्राचीन कला,संस्कृति र सङ्गीतमा हजारौं वर्षअघिका सम्पदा जीवित रहेको पाइन्छ ।

प्राचीन सङ्गीतका शैलीहरू लोक-कलाकारका कण्ठबाट प्रस्फुटित भइ लोकगाथा र वीरगाथाका रूपमा प्रकट भएको देख्न सकिन्छ । नेपालको यति प्राचीन सङ्गीत शैलीबारे धेरैलाई थाहा नहुन सक्छ । ती विकास क्षेत्रका विभिन्न जिल्लाहरूमा आज पनि अद्यावधि चल्दै आएको भारत (जसलाई हुड्केली वा भगाण भन्दछन्) लाई नै हुड्के वा हुड्केली नाच भनिन्छ ।

हुड्के गाथा विभिन्न प्रकारका हुन्छन्,त्यसमा धार्मिक गाथा,वीरगाथा र लोकगाथा प्रमुख छन् । ऋग्वेददेखि ब्राह्मणग्रन्थ,रामायण,महाभारत,पुराण,दुर्गा सप्तसती र बौद्धग्रन्थ पनि श्रुती र स्मृति बाट रचिएका गाथा नै हुन भन्ने कुरा शास्त्रको छ । तर,नेपालमा भने भारत प्रायः वीरगाथा र सामाजिक जीवनका लोक गाथाकै कथावस्तुमा रचिएका छन् । जातिगत आधारमा यसलाई हुड्के वा हुड्केली भन्न थालियो । जस्तो,बंगलादेशका बाउल जातिले गाउने शैलीको गीत भएकोले उनीहरूले गाउने गीतको शैलीलाई बाउल नै भन्न थालियो । छिमेकी देश भारतमा लोकगाथाहरू पढिनुभन्दा तिनलाई सजीव रूपमा गीत र अभिनय गरी प्रस्तुत गर्न कलाकार खप्पिस छन् । महाकाली पारीका कुमाउँ र गढवालमा पनि भारत निकै प्रसिद्ध छ ।

यस प्रकारका गाथालाई उनीहरू ब्यालड र भिन्ट्रेल भन्दछन् । भिन्ट्रेल भन्दा ब्यालड शब्दबाट भारत (हुड्केली) को अर्थ व्यक्त हुन्छ । भिन्ट्रेललाई सडकका गायक पनि भनिन्छ । ब्यालडमा चौँहि कथानक गीत हुन्छ । वीर पुरुषहरूको सम्बन्धमा प्रेमको विषय र तत्कालीन घटनालाई लिएर रचिएका रचनालाई गीत र नाचद्वारा उनीहरू कुनै एक ठाउँमा भेला भइ प्रस्तुत गर्छन् । मध्यपश्चिम र सुदूरपश्चिममा यहि नाच प्रस्तुत गरिन्छ । दुईको ( एक प्रकारका वाद्ययन्त्र) बजाएर हुड्के(दमाई) फनफन घुमेर नाच्दछ र लय मिसिएको कथात्मक गीत गाउन थाल्दछ । हुड्केमा दमाई जाति संलग्न भएका हुन्छन् । हुड्के(दमाई) बाहेक अरु जातिले यो गीत गाउँदैनन्,जान्दैनन् । हुड्केली गीत दमाई जातिको पेवा नै हो । यस गीतमा सम्मोहन गर्ने शक्ति वा मोहिनी विद्या आबऽ हुन्छ भन्ने कुरामा दमाई जाति विश्वास गर्दछन् ।

तर,हाल यो गीत सम्मोहनबाट अलग भइ लोक मनोरञ्जनको माध्यममा मात्र बनेको छ । आज भोली हुड्केलीमा वीरगाथाका साथमा यै विकृति-विसंगति विरुऽका आवाजहरूपनि सुनिने गरिएको छ । नाइके हुड्केले शुरुवात गरेपछि अरु हुड्केहरूले पनि स्वरमा स्वर र तालमा ताल मिलाएर गाउन,नाच्न थाल्छन् र हुड्को बजाउँदै नाच्न थाल्छन् । यस्तै क्रमले घण्टी-घण्टी हुड्केली नाचगान भइने रहन्छ । एउटै गाथालाई हुड्केले भट्याउँदै रात छर्लङ्गे पारिदिन पनि सक्छ भने एक छिन मात्रै मनोरञ्जन दिएर टुङ्ग्याउन पनि सक्छ ।

यसर्थ,हुड्केली गाथाको कुनै सीमा हुँदैन । विभिन्न प्रसिद्ध भारतहरूमा सकराम (संग्राम) कार्कीको भारत,रानी राउन (रावत) को भारत,उदाछपालको भारत,दुना ऐयरको भारत रानी मौलाको भारत,केलसिया कठायतको भारत,विणा पनेरुको भारत,छियामिया कठायतको भारत,कालु भण्डारीको भारत,धोगीसाल-विरीशालको भारत,सुजा-विजाको भारत,लाली साउँदको भारत,काशीरामको भारत,जैना कठायतको भारत,पुर्चैडीरन्याको भारत,नारसय नरधानीको भारत,कलवाधुनिको भारत र शोभा रावतको भारत आदि प्रचलित छन् । यी मध्ये प्रायःसबै हुड्केहरूलाई शुरुदेखि अन्त्य सम्म कण्ठस्थ आउने र उत्सुकताका साथ प्रस्तुत गर्ने भारत हो-वीर सकराम (संग्राम) कार्कीको भारत(दर्नाल, २०४५:१-७, श्रेष्ठ, २०४४: ६४-६५) ।

भडा प्रारम्भ गर्नुभन्दा पहिले जुन योर्को भडा हाल्नु पर्ने हो उसको वंशावली गीत गाइन्छ । जस्तै :सकराम (सगराम) कार्कीको गाथा (भऊ) गाउनु छ भने हुड्को बजाई अभिनयका साथ यस प्रकारको गीत गाइन्छ ।

कार्की सिजराज खनाती,कार्की विजराज खनाती

ढाडकाटै मूण जुभै,मूण कौट ढाड जुभै

हया गर्न भाबै मारगरि ल्यावै,मार गर्न भावै धा गरी ल्यावै

कार्कीको डाँग बाई,कौनी माण नाई

माच्या हातीको जुभार,महाराज ।

**हुड्को:** हुड्को मध्यपश्चिम र सुदूरपश्चिमाञ्चलको प्रमुख वाद्ययन्त्र हो । विभिन्न नाट्यशास्त्रमा हुड्काको वर्णन पाईन्छ । हुड्कोको प्रयोग प्रायः अधिकांश गीत नृत्य गीत,जाँगर र मुक्तकहरूमा गरिन्छ । यो काठको डमरु जस्तै अलि ठूलो आकारको दुबै पट्टि छालाले मोडिएको ठाडो र तेर्सो पारी बजाउन सकिने गरी फितामा बाँधिएको हुन्छ । हुड्को एकापट्टि मात्र बजाइन्छ । यो एकलै र अन्य बाजाहरूसित पनि बजाइन्छ । हुड्को प्रमुख बाध्ययन्त्रका नामबाट नै भडालाई (गाथा) कुनै स्थानमा हुड्केली पनि भन्ने गरिन्छ । भडा गाउँदा हुड्काका साथमा अन्य वाद्ययन्त्र पनि बजाइन्छ । हुड्का २ प्रकारका हुन्छन्- ठूलो हुड्को र साइत्या हुड्को । हुड्काका १० तोड (ताल/बोल) हुन्छन् । ती यस प्रकार छन् ।

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१०) भम्र पप्पा भम्पप(भाइसाव, २०६६:११) ।

## ९ (ख) दमाईनाच

यो नाच खासगरेर विवाह,ब्रतबन्ध,न्यारान,छैटी,शुभमंगलकार्य,जात्रापर्व,उत्सव आदि विशेष समयमा नाचिन्छ । यो समूहनाच हो । यो नाच दमाहाबाजाको तालमा घुमीघुमी नाच्ने गरिन्छ । यो नाचमा गीत भने गाईँदैन । नौ वटा नगरा बाजा र ३६ वटा पयाना(ताल) हुन्छन् । विभिन्न अवसर र कार्यक्रम अनुसार बाजाको तयारी र जोहो गरिन्छ । जस्तै- न्यारानको जग्गीबाजा,विवाहको बाजा बढाईपयानु आदि । दमाहाबाजाका ३६ पयानाका केही नामहरू यसप्रकार छन्-मुडुलो, फुलहरी, चौहत्तर, पाल्ती, बढाईपयानु, बाटाकोबटौरो, नौमती, गणेतो, चाखुण्याकर्को, घोडाखुरो, गाड्छाल्या, जुजाहा, बाघगुज्जो, ठूलोमहाराजी आदि ।

बाजाबजाउन शुरु गरेपछि ३६ पयाना नसकिएसम्म नाचिरहनुपर्छ । गोलो घेराबनाई निहुरिनु,अगाडीपछाडि सर्नु,थचक्क बस्नुउत्तु,दायाँबायाँ फर्कनु,एकैठौँउ भुम्भिनु,फाटिएर फराकिलो हुनु,एकअर्कोमा गजा जुधाउनु,दमाहा हातमा राखी उल्टापल्टा गर्दै विशेष पोशाकमा दमाईनाच रौनक तरिकाले नाचिन्छ । नाच्दा नर्तकहरूले एकैप्रकारको पोशाक भकुल्लो(मुजैमुजा परेको खुट्टासम्मै लत्रने जामा),सेतोपगरी,पगरीमाथि नौरङ्गी फुको(फेटा),काँधमा,वरिपरि दोरङ्गी साँफा(लर्कन),आधा रातोनिरो स्वीटर, कम्मरमा पनि रातोनीलो पटुका लगाउने गर्छन् । घाँटीमा रातासेता ध्वजाले छोपेका दमाहा भुण्ड्याएर गजाले बजाउँदै बढीमा २० देखि २२ जनाको समूहमा नाच्ने गर्दछन् । अभै विवाहको समयमा माइतीपक्ष र केटापक्षको बीच नचनीलाग्दा त्यो प्रतिष्ठाको विषयहुने भएकोले त्यो बेलाको नाच निकै प्रतिस्पर्धात्मक,उत्तेजक र मनोरञ्जनात्मक हुनेगर्दछ । यो नाच नाचिसकेपछि नाच हेर्न उपस्थित समाजका(माइती र केटापक्ष) प्रतिष्ठित तथा सम्मानित व्यक्ति,समुदायको सम्मानना नाम चिनेको भए नाम तोकेर नभए सम्बन्धित जातिको नाममा बढाइ गछन् र आशिका भन्दछन् । आशिका भट्टयाउने नाइकेले लय हालेर मिठो पाराले भन्दछ । सबैथरी जाति,जनजातिको एउटा आशिका यसलाई बाह्रआनाको भुको भनिन्छ ।

## बाह्रआनाको भुको(बाह्रथरीको आशिका)

खाँणजितो भुवानदाइनी महार्जा

सभा सुद्धो राजा

पिंगल सुद्धो भाट

विद्या सुद्धो वरामन

खेल सुद्धी पात्तिनी

भूमि सुद्धो क्षेत्री

बाजा सुद्धो ढोली

सो राजा नाम कुण्डली

बाह्रथरीको आशिका बोलाया

खाँणजितो भुवानदाइनी महार्जा

बाह्रथरी भन्नाले कर्णाली अञ्चल अन्तर्गतका १२ थपला (दरा) मा बसोबास गर्ने सबै जाति समुदायलाई जनाउँदछ ।

### १ (ग) हुड्केनाच

हुड्केनाच दमाई जातिको विशेष मौलिक नाच हो । यो नाच पौराणिक एवं ऐतिहासिक कथावस्तुमा आधारित हुनेभएकोले सबैभन्दा आकर्षक,भावुक र विशेषखालको र महत्वपूर्ण मानिन्छ । यसमा एकजना कुशल माउडे(नाइके) नर्तक ऐतिहासिक तथा पौराणिक पैकेला वीरपुरुषहरूको गाथागाउँदै बडो फूर्तिलोपाराले हातमा हुड्को बजाउँदै, फनफनी घुम्दै,हुड्केनाच नाच्ने गर्दछन् । यसरी नाच्दा गाइने गाथालाई "कर्खा वा भारत"भनिन्छ । भारतहरू लामालामा हुनेहुँदा यो नाच पनि लामो नै हुनेगर्दछ । एउटै पहिरन -(दमाइनाचकै) मा हुड्केले खुट्टामा खाँगर,चाँप,हातमा हुड्को समातेर ताउँताउँ,दड्दड, तड दडदड..... आवाजमा बजाउँदछ । गीतका गेडा उठाउँदा वा "कर्खा वा भारत" शुरु गर्दा हुड्को कानमा टाँसेर घुम्दै भट्ट्याउँछ । हुड्कोको गीत, रहनीलाई छोप्ने चारपाँच जना सहयोगी गायक पनि रहन्छन् । उनीहरू छेउमा उभिएर गीत छोप्ने गर्दछन् । यिनलाई स्वर भनिन्छ । हुड्केले भारत भन्नुभन्दा पहिले त्यहाँ उपस्थित दर्शक,श्रोता,माटो,देवीदेवता,थानीठाकुर,नदीनाला,हिमाल,राजामहाराजा आदि सबैको नाम लिँदै र इङ्गित गर्दै आराधना गीत गाइन्छ । हुड्केनाचको शुरुवातमा गाइने मंगल वा आराधनागीत यसप्रकार रहेको छ ।

### आरधनागीत-

पहिलो चरण

जदौ जदौ महाराज

पैला ढोगु सेवा भलो

दोस्रो ढोगु सेवा भलो

तेस्रो ढोगु सेवा भलो

चौथो ढोगु सेवा भलो

तो र माटी दाइनै भएइ

तो र देव दाइनै भएइ

मौला घोणी निका छन्के महाराज

घाणा मौरी निका छन्के महाराज

गोठ भैसी निका छन्के महाराज...आदि ।

### दोस्रो चरण

जाग हो..

ताल माछी लणकि गयो-जाग हो..

लेक डाँफे खुड्की गयो-जाग हो..

ठिया चाखुणी खुणकी गयो-जाग हो..

भेरी र चौभेरी बिउँभरी गयो-जाग हो..

गाँवका मुखिया जाग हो..

गाँवका ठालु जाग हो..

आजका ब्याउला जाग हो..

आजकी ब्याउली जाग हो.. आदि ।

### १(घ) श्रृङ्गारिकनाच

श्रृङ्गारिकनाच दमाई जातिको अर्को प्रमुख मौलिक नाच हो । यो नाचमा कुनै नीतिविधि र कथावस्तु हुँदैन । यो बिलकुलै रमाइलो,हाँसो उट्यौली,रोमाण्टिक पाराको नाच हो । यो नाच प्रति सबै उमेर समूहका मानिसहरू आकर्षित हुने गर्दछन् । त्यसैले यो नाच हेर्न तनबुढो भएपनि मनबुढो नभएका मान्छे र अर्धबैसे युवायुवती,बालबालिकाहरूको घुँइचो नै लाग्दछ । यसमा हुड्के नाचको जस्तो दक्ष नर्तक र गायक चयन गरिएको हुँदैन । जान्ने जोसुकैले,जसरी नाचे पनि हुन्छ । तर, नाच सिपालु भने हुनैपर्छ । यो नाच हाँस्यरसमा आधारित हुन्छ । संयोगान्त,वियोगान्त र दुखान्तमा आधारित गीत गाइन्छ ।

हाँस्यरस बाहेक संयोगवियोग,करुणारस,वीररसमा आधारित गीत पनि हुन्छन् । यस नाचमा एकजना हुड्को बादक र अरु दुईजना सहयोगी नर्तक पनि सँगै नाच्ने गर्दछन् । नाँच्चानाँच्चै दोहोरी गाउने पनि गरिन्छ । गीतबाटै सहभागीहरूलाई मानसम्मान गरी गीत गाँउदै हौस्याउने,रौस्याउने पनि गरिन्छ । नाचगानको निरन्तरता थप मनोरञ्जन प्रदान गर्न सहभागीहरूले स्वेच्छाले रूपैयाँ,पैसा समेत नर्तकहरूलाई उपलब्ध गराएर हौसला बढाइदिने गर्दछन् । दर्शक हौस्याउने रोमाञ्चित गीतहरू छयासमिस र अनियन्त्रित हुन्छन् । मायाप्रेम,घाँचपेच,सूचनामुलक,दुखी,वैरागी,सम्फना,मानसम्मान र आदरकदर भत्काउने मनोरञ्जनात्मक र भावुक सबै प्रकारका गीत गाइन्छन् । श्रृङ्गारिकनाचमा गाइने गीत यस प्रकार रहेको छ-

दशैका जुवाराकन राख्ना टपरीनाइ  
वनबास भैगएइ पनि हरिखपरिनाइ  
बाटैथि सिलङ्गाडाली नल्पराल खतेउन्था  
यइदरा कोइ पनि छैन दुखिमन् पतेउन्था  
बभाङ्गी राजाका भैसा सेतीका छाल्भरि  
दैको मेरो भेट भयोन ऐलेको साल्भरि

यस्ता गीतगाउँदा रहनीले बढी सौन्दर्य थपेको हुन्छ । रहनीको प्रयोग हुड्के र श्रृङ्गारिक नाचमा बढी गरिन्छ । नाच र गीत अनुसार रहनी फरक हुन्छन् । श्रृङ्गारिक नाचमा रहनीको प्रयोग गीतको अन्त्यमा हुने गर्दछ । कर्णाली अञ्चलमा रहनीलाई फुर्का(टुक्का): भन्ने गर्दछन् । रहनी(फुर्का)को एक नमूना यस प्रकार रहको छ-

हिरा लालीअ पौर्यान  
गोगन ढल्क्यो जोवन  
काट्यो काउली,वरै बाज्को बाउली  
हिउँद खान्या सिमीलाई,फोटो खिची लान्छु तिमीलाई  
है...अ...धुँगुरा बज्या छमछम  
...बाँसै कलिलै,ढल्क्यो जोवन  
नानु भाउ नान्दानु,पसल थापी पान्खानु  
रोइरोइ फाट्यो जीवन,धोइधोइ फाट्यो जाली रूमाल  
ऐ.अ...साली मेरा  
बबै खोलो बगायो,भेरीपुल चाइनाले लगायो  
के दिउँ हजुर सम्भना,जनकपुर चुरोट कारखाना  
ठिन्क्या डाली,क्या छ मनको भन्प साली  
हाँगो राम्रो केलाको छुट्टिन्या गैजान्या बेलाको  
है मायालु नानै...आदि ।

छैटपैठ,मेलोपर्व,विवाह,ब्रतवन्ध र विशेष जात्रामेला,चाडपर्व खुशियाली जस्ता सामाजिक उत्सवहरूमा दमाईजातिको उपस्थिति बिना एकदमै खल्लो र अपुरो जस्तै हुने गर्दछ । नेपाली श्रुतिलोकवाङ्मय काव्यसम्पदाका आधारशिला,लोकसँस्कृतिका मूलस्रोत, धरोहर दमाईजाति र उनीहरूको मौलिक जातीय लोकनाचलाई मनोरञ्जनको साधनको रूपमा मात्रै नलिएर सामाजिक,साँस्कृतिक,साहित्यिक,अमूर्त साँस्कृतिक सम्पदाको रूपमा अभै विस्तृत रूपमा खोजअनुसन्धान,संरक्षण र अभिलेखिकरण गर्नुपर्ने देखिन्छ (बम,२०६७:७५-७९) ।

### १(ड) छलिया नाच

दमाई जातिको हुड्के पछिको छलिया महत्वपूर्ण नाच हो । शाब्दिक रूपमा छलिया नाच (छल+या=छलिया) बाट शब्द निर्माण वा नामकरण भएको पाइन्छ । प्राचीन कालका श्रुतिकार-स्मृतिकारहरूले ढाँट,छल वा षड्यन्त्र गरेर विवाह गर्ने चलन/चल्ती वा पद्धतिको बारेमा चर्चा गरेका छन् । प्राचीन कालमा कन्यालाई बलपूर्वक जर्वजस्ती अपहरण गरेर

विवाह गर्ने चलन थियो । सो अवस्थामा बेहुला पक्षले विशेष खुशियाली मनाउन छलिया नृत्य गर्ने गरिन्थ्यो ।

यस प्रकारको नृत्य आयोजना गर्दा दमाँ (दमाहा),ढोल,तुरही,मसक बीन,भुयाली,सहनई,र नरसिङ्ग जस्ता बाजाहरू बजाइन्छन् । छलो खेल्ने नर्तक विविध हाउभाउसहित नृत्य गर्दछ । सम्पूर्ण शरीर, हात-खुट्टा, शीर, आँखा, भृकुटी, मुखमुद्राका विविध प्रयोगद्वारा भय, स्मय, खुशी, रीस, आश्चर्य, आनन्द आदि मनोभाव अभिव्यक्त गर्दै नृत्य प्रस्तुत गरिन्छ । छलिया नाच नाच्ने नर्तकले जामा,सुरुवाल,पगरी पहिरेको हुन्छ र हातमा ढाल,तरबार,खुट्टामा धुँधुरा पहिरेको हुन्छ ।

छलिया नाच नाँच्दा गाइने गीतलाई 'ठोक' भनिन्छ । गीतको एक नमूना यस प्रकार छ ।

ब्रह्मदेव है कुइँयो उड्यो,हरिया रङ्गको  
आज मुइ एकलो भयो,साथीका सङ्गको - २  
लुकसहर मोती धुँडरू नबजा छुमा छुम - २

छयौटो: लोक गाथाको एउटा अंश हो । दमाई जातिका नर्तकहरूले गाथा (भडा) गाउने क्रममा गाइने लोकगाथाको एउटा अंश हो । छयौटो गाउँदा प्रायः हुड्के बाजा बजाउने रपार्श्व गायकहरूले गीत गाउने परम्परा रहेको छ(भाइसाव, २०६६:११, १२, ५७-५७) ।

### १(च) गाथा गायनमा खप्पिस दमाई जाति

दमाई(हुड्के)जातिको जातीय परिचयको रूपमा रहेको सिलाई,नाच गानका साथै मानव जीवनका विभिन्न पक्षका गाथा गायनको रूपमा पनि चिनारी बनाएका छन् । विभिन्न जाति,भाषा धर्म,लोक संस्कृति र परम्पराले सम्पन्न नेपालको पश्चिम क्षेत्रको लोकजीवनमा चैत,कर्खा,भारतजस्ता परम्परादेखि चलि आएका लोक गाथाहरूको विशिष्ट स्थान छ । सामाजिक जीवन र अनुभवका प्रतिविम्बका रूपमा सृजित यहाँको लोकसाहित्य अलिखित छन् ।

तर,अजर-अमर र अटल रचनाहरूका अधिकांश विधा धार्मिक परम्परा बोकेका,वेद ऋग्वेद र पुराणहरूका स्वरलहरीबाट निस्केका लोकलहरी हुन् । श्रुति लोक परम्पराबाट आएका यी लोकगाथाहरू अलिखित भएर पनि लोक कण्ठमा प्रतिध्वनित र जीवित छन् । जसलाई आजसम्म पनि दमाई(हुड्के)जातिले जीवित इतिहासको रूपमा बचाउँदै आएका छन् । यसको संरक्षण र वेवास्ताका कारणले लोपोन्मुख अवस्थामा पुगेका छन् ।

लोक साहित्यका विभिन्न विधाहरूमध्ये लोक जीवन र लोकविश्वासको सजीव चित्रण गर्न सक्षम यी लोकगाथाहरू काव्यात्मक गीति गुणले सम्पन्न लोक साहित्यका लोकवाङ्मय काव्यसम्पदा र लोकनाट्य हुन् । मध्यपश्चिम र सुदूरपश्चिम नेपालको लोकजीवनका विविध पक्षहरू र विभिन्न अवसरहरूमा घर,मन्दिर र सामाजिक स्थलहरूमा गाइने विविध प्रकारका गाथाहरू जस्तै देवगाथा (फाग),चरित्रगाथा (चैत),प्रेमगाथा (रतेडा),चरण गाथा (भडा/सवाई) आदि ।

मानव जीवनको अतीतलाई वर्णन गर्ने, मानवपरम्पराको बयान गर्ने अलिखित रूपमा श्रुति लोक परम्परामा हस्तान्तरित लोकनाट्य र लोककाव्यलाई दमाई जातिले बचाउँदै आएका छन् । लोकगाथाहरूमा देवी देउतालाई प्रसन्न गर्न तथा सामाजिक मर्यादालाई बचाइराख्न घर वा मन्दिरमा गाइने जागरगाथा र फागहरू देवगाथा हुन् । चरित्र गाथामा समाजलाई सुमार्ग देखाउने लोक कल्याणकारी महापुरुष तथा अलौकिक महापुरुषको चरित्र वर्णन गरिन्छ । प्रेम गाथामा युवायुवती बीच प्रेमप्रसङ्गका गाथा गाइन्छन्, जस्तै सरुममेरु प्रेमगाथा (रतेडा गीत) । दमाई, हुङ्के (आवजी) जातिद्वारा गाइने भडा, बर्मी र भाँडरुद्वारा गाइने सवाई गीत आदि चरण गाथा हुन् । विभिन्न गाथाको छोटकरी चर्चा तल गरिएको छ (भाइसाब, २०६६:१६-४५) ।

#### ❖ देवगाथा (जागर/फाग)

कुनै खास विशेष पुण्य कार्यका अवसरमा देवी-देवताका मन्दिरमा अथवा यज्ञ, हवनस्थलमा देवी-देवतालाई जागृत गराउन देवताहरूको स्तुति प्रशंसाले भरिएका शान्त रसप्रधान जागरगाथा अथवा देवताहरूको महिमा गान भएका फाग (गाथा) वा मन्दिरमा गाइने करुणा रसप्रधान प्रबन्ध भोडागाथा यसमा पर्दछन् । यस प्रकारका देवगाथाहरूमा जागर (जागृत गान) र बैसुन्नरको फाग प्रसिद्ध छन् । यी देवगाथाहरू पौराणिक कालदेखि चलि आएका परम्परागत गाथा हुन् ।

#### ❖ चरण गाथा (भडा/सवाई)

मानव जीवनका संस्कृतिसँग गाँसिएका विभिन्न बिहे, व्रतबन्ध, क्षौर, पास्नीजस्ता शुभ अवसरमा दमाई (हुङ्के, आवजी) जातिले गाइने भट्ट/योद्धा र पाइकहरूका वीरताको वर्णन भएका वीर रसप्रधान भडा तथा भाट अथवा रैभाटहरूद्वारा गाइने सवाई आदि चरणगाथा हुन् ।

#### ❖ चरित्रगाथा चैत

सामाजिक लोकजीवनमा सदाचार, शिष्टाचार र मर्यादालाई कायम राख्न असल आचरण निर्माण गर्ने उद्देश्यले वेद, पुराण, महाभारत जस्ता धर्मशास्त्रको आधार लिएर समाजलाई पथप्रदर्शन गर्ने कूलीन युगपुरुषहरूको गाथालाई लोकभाषा, लोकलय र लोकशैलीमा ढालेर आफ्नो मौलिकपन भल्कने गरी निर्माण गरिएका गाथा नै चरित्रगाथा हुन् । चरित्र गाथाहरू कुनै खास जात्रा अथवा उत्सव पर्वका अवसरमा ढुस्को, धुमारी, चाली र टाडो गरी विभिन्न ताल र लयहरूमा गाउने गरिन्छन् । प्राचीन कालदेखि गाँदै आएका यी चरित्र गाथाहरूको विकासक्रममा नयाँ र लघु चरित्रगाथाहरू पनि कथिएको पाइन्छ ।

#### ❖ प्रेम गाथा

प्रेम र जीवन सृष्टि चक्रको अनिवार्य तत्व हो । यसर्थ, युवायुवती बीचमा हुने प्रेम सामान्य रूपमा नै लिनु पर्छ । यसै विषयलाई मायाको रूपमा कथेर दमाईहरूले गाउने/सुनाउने गर्दछन् । जवान पुरुष र महिला बीच प्रेमप्रसाँ भएका परम्परादेखि नै गायन हुँदै आएका प्रेम गाथाहरू प्रायः खेडा (रात्री गीत) का रूपमा गाउने गरिन्छ । पश्चिम नेपालमा खरू-

समेरुको प्रसीढ प्रेम गाथाको रूपमा दमाई जातिहरूले गाउने/सुनाउने गरेको पाइन्छ (भाइसाब, २०६६:१५, १६) ।

#### १.१० भडा गायनमा सिपालु दमाई जाति

विभिन्न योद्धा, वीर पुरुषहरूको गाथा गायनमा खप्पिस भए जस्तै दमाईहरू भडा सुनाउन र गाउनमा पनि अग्रपंक्तिमा नै रहेका छन् । उनीहरूले मौलिक इतिहासको रूपमा कण्ठस्थ विभिन्न पर्व, अवसर, उत्सव तथा चाडवाडका साथै स्थानीय संस्कार र संस्कृतिमा प्रस्तुत गर्ने गर्दछन् । श्रुति र स्मृति परम्परामा हस्तान्तरित यो विद्या संरक्षण र निरन्तरताको अभावमा लोपोन्मुख अवस्थामा पुगेको छ । यूवापुस्ताको यस प्रति वेवास्ता र बूढापाकाको मृत्यु सँगै दमाई जातिले बचाउँदै आएका जीवित श्रुति परम्पराको मौलिक लोकवाङ्मय काव्य सम्पदाको रूपमा रहेको भडा गायन विद्या मासिँदै गई रहेको छ ।

#### १०.१ भडाको परिचय

भडा शब्द संस्कृतको भट व्युत्पन्न भएको हो । जसको शाब्दिक अर्थ वीर योद्धा हुन्छ । 'भड' मा आ प्रत्यय लागेर भडा शब्द बनेको छ । यसर्थ, भडाको अर्थ वीर योद्धाहरूको गाथा हुन आउँछ । समय र स्थान अनुसार भडा गायक फरक हुन सक्छन् । तर, दमाई (आवजी)हरू नै यसका प्रमुख गायक हुन् । भट्ट, मल्ल, पाइक, योद्धाहरूका गाथा नै भडा हुन् । भडालाई गढवालमा पँवाडा, कुमाउँमा भदौ र मध्यपश्चिम र सुदूरपश्चिममा भडा भन्ने चलन छ । वर्तमान समयमा सुदूरपश्चिम नेपालमा छँटी, व्रतबन्ध, क्षौर, पास्नी र विवाहा जस्ता शुभ अवसरहरूमा दमाई (आवजी, ढोली, हुङ्के) जातिका नर्तकहरूद्वारा भडा गायन र प्रदर्शन हुँदै आएको छ ।

भडा गायन/प्रदर्शन कार्य निकै खर्चिलो हुने भएकोले समाजमा जो कसैले आफ्ना शुभ संस्कार तथा उत्सवहरूमा भडागायनको व्यवस्था गर्ने सक्दैनन । समाजमा प्रतिष्ठित र ठूलाबडा मानिने परिवारले मात्रै भारत/भडा गाउने व्यवस्था मिलाउँछन् । विभिन्न उत्सव र पर्वहरूमा भारत/भडा गाउन लगाउँदा समाजमा प्रतिष्ठा बढेको ठान्दछन् अर्थात् प्रतिष्ठा बढाउनको लागि पनि भडाको उपयोग गर्ने गरिन्छ ।

भडा गायनका अवसरमा सबैमा हर्षोल्लास छाएको हुन्छ, मेलमिलाप र खुशीले वातावरण आनन्दमय बनेको हुन्छ । भडा गायन कुनै विशेष खुशियालीका अवसरमा विशेष रौनकताका साथ आवश्यक विधि विधान सहित गरिन्छ । जतासुकै गायन गर्न सकिने अन्य सरल गायनहरू भन्दा यो निकै पृथक पनि रहेको पाइन्छ । सम्भवतः दिउँसो फूर्सदको अभावले होला, बेलुका खाना खाएपछि मात्र भडा हाल्ने चलन छ ।

राती ग्याँस वा लालटिनको उज्यालोमा अथवा जुनेली रातमा जूनको उज्यालोमा भडा हालिन्छ । वृहत् वीर गाथा भएका भडाको गायन रातभर नै चल्दछ । र, बिहान उज्यालो हुने बेलामा भडा गायन सकिँदा (शुभप्रभात) भोलौलो गाएर मात्र कार्यक्रम समापन गर्ने परम्परा रहेको छ । देवीदेवताको मन्दिरमा भने भडा गाँइदैन । सायद मन्दिरमा व्यक्तिको महिमा गर्न

उपर्युक्त नभएकोले होला । अधिकांश भडाहरूमा शौर्य र पराक्रम प्रदर्शन, संरक्षक राजालाई सहायता गर्नु, अन्याय विरुद्धको संघर्ष, मल्लहरूलाई परास्त गर्नु, सुन्दरी कन्यासित बिहे गर्नु जस्ता प्रवृत्तिहरू पाइन्छन् भने केही भडाहरूमा ईर्ष्यालु प्रवृत्ति भएका, धन, मान र इज्जतका भोका सामन्तहरूद्वारा षड्यन्त्र गरेर योऽहहरूलाई मार्न लगाउने, मनोरञ्जनका लागि योऽहहरूलाई जुधाउने, अरुको प्रगति हेर्न नसक्ने र मारकाटमा रमाउने प्रवृत्तिहरू पनि भेटिन्छन् ।

भडामा सबै गाथाहरूमा समान प्रवृत्ति यसप्रकार छन् : स्त्रीहरूले चुनौती दिनु, अनिष्टको पूर्वाभ्यास, शक्तिको भरमा असम्भवलाई सम्भव बनाउनु, सुतेकालाई जगाउने विशिष्ट पद्दति, शत्रु पक्षकालाई छलपूर्वक मार्नु, दिव्य पुरुषको जन्म, प्रतिशोध, प्रेमिकासित जोगीको रूप धारण गरेर भेट गर्नु, चराद्वारा सन्देश पठाउनु, शरणमा परेकालाई संरक्षण दिनु आदि । प्रारम्भमा युद्धभूमिमा योऽहहरूको उत्साह बढाउनु तथा सैनिक र नागरिकहरूलाई उत्साहित गर्न र प्रशस्तिका रूपमा गाउँदै आइएका यी भडाहरू समय क्रमसँगै लोक मनोरञ्जनका लागि गाइने र अतीतको स्मृति गराउने भएका छन् ।

भडाहरू गद्यपद्यत्मक हुन्छन् । यी अभिनय प्रधान हुन्छन् । भडा गायन हुँदा मूल अंश गद्यात्मक रहन्छ, गायन प्रसङ्गवश आउने गर्दछ । एउटै व्यक्ति नर्तकद्वारा विशेष पोशाक लगाई एकल प्रस्तुति स्वरूप अत्यन्त अतल्लो गदैँ अभिनयका माध्यमबाट कथोपकथनको सञ्चालन गरिन्छ । भडामा इतिहास र लोककल्पनाको अपूर्व समिश्रण भेटिन्छ । भडा गायनको उद्देश्य खुशियाली वा मनोरञ्जन नै हो ।

अभिनयका विविध प्रकारहरू संग्रहित आँगन वा खुला मञ्चमा श्रोता/दर्शकहरू माफ अभिनय गरेर प्रदर्शन गरिने यी वीर गाथा वा भडाहरू लोक नाट्य वा नाट्य गाथाका ऐतिहासिक जीवन्त नमूना हुन् । केही भडाको चर्चा छोटकरीमा तल प्रस्तुत गरिएको छ ।

### १०.२ सदेउवालाको भडा

चन्द्र वंशका रानादेउ, भानादेउ र उदयदेउ तीन भाइमध्ये रानादेउ बैतडी सदरमुकाम नजिक बसेका, उदय देउ बैतडी जिल्लाको स्वराज गर्खामा बसेका र भानादेउ त्यहाँदेखि पूर्व सुर्खेत तिर गई बसेको कुरा वंशावलीबाट पुष्टि हुन्छ । भानादेउको छोराको नाम सदेउवाला ( बालक) थियो । चन्द्र वंशावली अनुसार १५ औँ शताब्दिमा यो भडाचैतको रचना भएको मानिन्छ ।

सदेउवाला गाई वस्तु चराउन जाँदा (१२ वर्ष) गोठालाहरूले बहिनी नभएको भाइ (निरोवालो) भनी गिज्याउँदा उसले आमासँग मेरी कुनै बहिनी छैन ? भनी सोध्छ । आमाले सदेउवालो जन्मनु अघि नै १२ वर्ष अघि उसकी दिदी गोरी धनाको बिहे कालीनाग सित भएको कुरा बताइन् । त्यसपछि सदेउवाला दिदी भेट्न काली नागको घर जान्छ । अचानक भेट हुँदा पश्चिम पछि दुबै जना दिदी र भाइ दुबै अङ्गालो हालेर रुन लागे । भागा नन्दले उनीहरू ढोगभेट नै नगरी यसरी अँगालोमा किन बाँधिए भनेर अर्कै मान्छे भएको शर्मा गरिन् । र, आफ्नो पति काली नागलाई कुरा लगाइन् ।

दिदीलाई बोलाएर घरतिर फर्कदा काली नाग र सदेउवालाको युट्ट हुन्छ । सदेउवालाको काली नागलाई मार्दछ । कालीनाग मरेपछि 'म किन बाँचूँ भनेर गोरीधाना समुद्रमा हामफालिन्छु । यसरी दुबै घर रिता भएकाले 'भलो गरे भागा नन्द दुबै घर रिता' भन्ने उखान यस घटनाबाट बन्दछ । चैत्र महिनाको यो घटना भएकोले सुदूरपश्चिम क्षेत्रमा चैत्र महिनामा भाइले बहिनी भेट्न जाने प्रचलन त्यो बेलादेखि हालसम्म कायम छ । यो भडालाई दमाई जातिले स्थिरानो अर्थात् ऋतु गीतको रूपमा पनि गाउने गर्दछन् ।

### १०.३ छुरा खातीको भडा

डोटीका राजा पहाडी शाहीका पालाको घटना विशेष (वि.सं. १७७०-१७२३) । यो डोटीका राजा पहाडी शाहीका शासन कालका बफाङका योऽ (पाइक) छुरा खातीको पराक्रमको बारेमा वर्णन भएको गाथा विशेष हो ।

### १०.४ देउवा पैकेलाको भडा

यो भडा डोटीका राजा हरि शाही । वि.सं. १६४८- १६५३) का पालाको १७ औँ शताब्दीको घटना वर्णन गरिएको वीरगाथा हो । राजा हरि शाहीले दशैँका बखत ढोग्नुपर्ने सिंहासनमा आफ्नो कुकुरलाई राखेर योऽहहरूलाई ढोग्न लगाई अपमान गरेका । र, देउवा पैकेला (योऽ) ले त्यो कुकुरलाई काटेर दरवारमा हल्लीखल्ली मच्चाएको कुरा यो भडा गाथामा वर्णन भएको छ ।

### १०.५ रानी मौलाको भडा

यो भडालाई केही विद्वानहरूले नागी मल्लको समयमा रचना भएको मान्दछन् । कुनै २ गायकले रानी मौलाको छोराका रूपमा नागी मल्ललाई मानेका छन् । नागी मल्लले केही प्रमुख देवालयहरूमा घण्टा चढाएका, यज्ञ गरेका र धेरै देवीदेवताहरूको शक्ति परिक्षण गरी देवालय नै नष्ट गरेको कुरा भागेश्वरको चैतलगायत त्यस कालखण्डमा रचना भएका थुप्रै देवगाथा र चरित्रगाथामा वर्णन भएको पाइन्छ । तर, नागी मल्लको समयका बारेमा वीर गाथा/भडामा कतै उल्लेख पाइँदैन ।

ऐतिहासिक तथ्य र वंशावलीहरूका आधारमा रानी मौला डोटी राजवंशमा पर्ने ३५ औँ राजा विरिमदेव (ब्रह्मदेव) की पत्नी भएकाले भडाको रचना पछि भएको भए रानी मौलाको भडाको विषयवस्तु र घटना डोटीका ३५ औँ राजा विरिमदेव र कुमाउँका सालादेउ/वालादेउका पालाको भएको मान्नुपर्ने आधारहरू भारत प्रमुख घटना हो । रानी मौलाको भडाको रचनाकाल डोटीको राजवंशावली अनुसार १४ औँ शताब्दीलाई मानिएको छ ।

### १०.६ काला भणारीको भडा

यस भडामा रम्या मौताले बिहे गरेकी कन्या मनकोइलालाई योऽ काला भणारीले हरेर लगेपछि रम्या मौताले काला भणारीलाई घुँयात्रो हानी मरेको र मनकोइलालाई लिएर गएको कारुणिक र दुखान्त गाथा वर्णित यो भडामा रहेको छ (भाइसाव, २०६६: ४०-४५) ।

### १.११ दमाई जातिको मौलिक पञ्चै बाजा

नेपाली सङ्गीत आकाशमा पञ्चैबाजा प्राचीनकालदेखि नै बज्दै आएको छ । मङ्गलवाद्यका रूपमा यसलाई विशेष गरी दमाईहरूले बजाउँदै आएका छन् । जातिसूचकको रूपमा यसलाई मङ्गले वा दमैबाजा पनि भन्ने गरिएको पाइन्छ । बिगतमा नेपाली संस्कृतिको रूपमा पञ्चैबाजा बजाउँदा जातीयरूपमा दमाईहरूलाई होच्याउने र विभेद गर्ने गरिन्थ्यो । पछिल्लो कालमा यो बाजाले व्यवसायिक रूपमा फड्को मार्न थाले पछि भने सबै जातिको आँखा परेको पाइन्छ । पञ्चैबाजाका वादकहरूलाई सगुणी पनि भनिएको छ ।

सगुणीलाई देखेमा साइत पर्ने परम्पराले पनि सो कुरालाई पुष्टि गर्छन् । परम्परागत रूपमा प्राचीन समयदेखि बज्दै आएको पञ्चैबाजामा पाँच प्रकारका बाजा रहन्छन् - सहनै, ढोलकी, दमाहा, झ्याली र ट्याम्को । पञ्चैबाजामा सहनै मुख्य स्वरबाजा हो । यसले विभिन्न राग (धुन) बजाउने गर्छ । ढोलकी मुख्य ताल बाजा हो । यसले ताल दिने र ताल मार्ने काम गर्छ । पञ्चैबाजामा दमाहा र ट्याम्को सहायक तालबाजा हुन् ।

यिनले तालको निरन्तरतालाई कायम गर्छन् । झ्याली (भूर्मा) काँस्य (काँस) तालबाजा हो । यसले पनि सहायक तालबाजाका रूपमा ताललाई सघाएको हुन्छ । सङ्गीतशास्त्रीय वर्गीकरण अनुसार स्वरबाजा सहनै सुषिर बाद्य हो । यसलाई औला चाली फुकेर बजाइन्छ । ढोलकी, दमाहा र ट्याम्को छालाले मोहोरिएको (मोहोर्नु) आनद्धबाद्य हुन्, जसलाई गजाले ठोकेर बजाइन्छ ।

झ्याली चाँहि धनवाद्य अन्तर्गत राखिएको छ । पञ्चैबाजा नेपाली परम्परागत मौलिक सङ्गीतको विशिष्ट बाजा हो । हरेक संस्कार, संस्कृति, चाडपर्व, उत्सव, अवसर र शुभकार्यमा पञ्चैबाजा आवश्यक मानिएको छ । अर्को अर्थमा यो बाजालाई पदार्थको रचना भएको पञ्चतत्वको प्रतीकको रूपमा पनि मानिएको पाइन्छ । जसमा- १. सहनै: पञ्चैबाजा भित्रको सहनै, नरसिंगा र कर्णललाई आकाश तत्वसँग राख्न सकिन्छ २. ढोलकी: पञ्चैबाजा भित्रको ढोलकीलाई वायु तत्वसँग राख्न सकिन्छ ३. भूर्मा (झ्याली): पञ्चैबाजा भित्रको भूर्मालाई लाई वायु तत्वसँग राख्न सकिन्छ ४. दमाहा: पञ्चैबाजा भित्रको दमाहालाई पानी वा जल तत्वसँग राख्न सकिन्छ ५. ट्याम्को: ट्याम्कोलाई पृथ्वी वा भूमि तत्वसँग रहन्छन् । विश्व पाँचवटा मूल र सारभूत तत्वहरूबाट बनेको छ । जसलाई पञ्चमहाभूत पनि भनिन्छ । जसमा-१. आकाश (अन्तरिक्ष) २. वायु ३. अग्नि ४. जल ५. पृथ्वी वा भूमि पर्छन् । माटोबाट बनेका ढोलकी, दमाहा र ट्याम्को अनि काठबाट बनेको सहनै र पञ्च धातुबाट निर्मित झ्याली ( भूर्मा, झ्यान्टा) ले ती कुरालाई थप प्रष्ट पार्दछन् । विशेष गरी नेपाली समाजको सबै सांस्कृतिक, धार्मिक क्रियाकलापमा पञ्चैबाजालाई अनिवार्य जरूरी मानिएको छ । पञ्चैबाजामा मङ्गलधुन (आरती), बढाई (सलामी) देखि लिएर स्तूती, बेला राग र लोकसङ्गीतमा लोकप्रिय, झ्याउरे ख्याली, चुङ्का, असारे, उठस्वामी आदि धुन बज्ने गर्छन् ।

पञ्चै बाजामा बेहुली मान्ने धुन मौलिक धुनको रूपमा रहेको पाइन्छ । यसैगरी भोटेसेलोको धुन बजाउँदा देवता चढ्ने डरले यो धुन त्यति बजाउने नगरिनुले पनि यसको प्रभाव र महत्त्वलाई सहजै आंकलन गर्न सकिन्छ । पञ्चैबाजा समूहको अलि ठूलो रूप 'नौमतीबाजा' हो । यसमा थप सहनै र दमाहा एक-एक ओटा रहन्छन् । नरसिङ्गा र कर्णाल दुई सुषिरबाद्य (फुकेर बजाइने) पनि सम्मिलित गराइन्छ । विशेष गरी नौमतीबाजा नौवटा मात्र

रहने गरे पनि कतै-कतै १३ वटा सम्म वा त्यो भन्दा बढी संख्यामा पनि बाजा बजाइएको पाइन्छ ।

मुख्यतया: पञ्चैबाजाचाँहि नेपालको सबै क्षेत्रमा बज्दै आएका छन् । अहिले नेपाली संस्कृतिको रूपमा यो बाजाले देश बाहिर समेत प्राथमिकता पाउँदै आएको पाइन्छ । स्वदेश र विदेशमा समेत पञ्चैबाजा नेपाली संस्कृतिको स्पन्दनको रूपमा रहन सफल भएको छ । पछिल्लो समयमा यो बाजातिर हस्तक्षेप र अतिक्रमणको चपेटामा पर्न थालेको छ । संरक्षणका विभिन्न आवरण र बान्कीमा 'हिजो विभेदमा अरु समुदाय यो बाजा छुँदा जातै जाने डरले बाइस हात पर हुन्थे तर, अहिले व्यवसायिक हुँदै गए पछि सबै यहि धन्दामा लाग्न थालेका छन् । लाग्नु नराम्रो होइन । तर, पुरानो स्वरूपलाई नै बिगार्नु र दमाई जातिलाई नै विस्थापित गर्नु उचित हो जस्तो लाग्दैन (दर्नाल, २०६४:२१६-२२०) ।

### १.१२ पञ्चैबाजाको विस्तारित रूप नौमतीबाजा

पञ्चैबाजाको विस्तारित रूप नै नौमतीबाजा हो । पञ्चैबाजा पञ्चतत्व र पञ्चधातुको प्रतीक हो । अर्को सन्दर्भमा यो पाञ्चायन देवताको अंश पनि हो । पाञ्चायनमा - शिव, गणेश, देवी, सूर्य र विष्णु रहन्छन् भने विष्णु पाञ्चायनमा विष्णु, गणेश, देवी, सूर्य र शिव रहन्छन् । शिव पाञ्चायनको शैव उपासनाको प्रतिनिधित्व गर्दछ भने विष्णु पाञ्चायनले वैष्णव उपासनाको प्रतिनिधित्व गर्दछ । पञ्चतत्वमा पृथ्वी, जल, तेज, वायु र आकाश तत्व रहन्छ भने पञ्चलौहमा सुन, चाँदी, तामा, रङ्ग र सिसा रहन्छ । दुबैले पञ्चैबाजामा आ-आफ्नो अंश अर्न्तनिहित रहेका छन् । दुबै प्रकृतिका प्रतीक पनि हुन् ।

यसरी पाँच देवता, पाँच तत्व र पाँच धातु मिलेर पञ्चबाद्य (पञ्चैबाजा) को स्वरूप लिएको हुनुपर्छ । हुन त वैदिककाल अघि देखि नै पञ्चमुखवाद्यम् को प्रचलन रहेको देखिन्छ ।

पञ्चैबाजाका पाँचवटा बाजा वैदिककालअघि देखि नै बज्दै आएका छन् । मङ्गल र शुभको प्रतीक पञ्चैबाजामा पाँचवटा बाजा रहन्छन् । जसमा-सहनै, ढोलकी, भूर्मा ( झ्याली), दमाहा र ट्याम्को रहन्छन् । प्राचीनकालदेखि नै सगुनी (सगुणी) जातका रूपमा चिनिने दमाई जातिको पञ्चैबाजा र नौमतीबाजा, मन्दिरदेखि प्रत्येक शुभकार्यमा बढ्दै आएको छ । यी दुबै बाद्यसमूहले धार्मिक कार्यदेखि साङ्गीतिक र सांस्कृतिक क्षेत्रमा ठूलो योगदान दिँदै आएका छन् ।

दूर-दराजका गाउँ घरदेखि रेडियो, टेलिभिजन र ठूलो रङ्गमञ्चमा समेत प्रवेश पाएका यी दुबै बाद्य समूह नेपाली सङ्गीतको अभिन्न अङ्ग बनेको छन् । तर, यसको उचित प्रशिक्षणको व्यवस्थाको अभावले आधुनिकता तर्फ फड्को मार्न सकेको छैन । कुनै किसिमको शैक्षिक र व्यावहारिक तालिम र शिक्षा समेत व्यवस्था हुन सकेको छैन । विदेशमा त कुरै छोडौं, स्वदेशमा समेत यी दुई बाजाको उचित प्रशिक्षणको व्यवस्था छैन ।

### विदेशी अध्येताको नजरमा दमाई जाति

पञ्चैबाजा र नौमतीबाजा बादक दमाई जातिबारे सर्वप्रथम प्रकाश पार्ने श्रेय फ्रेन्च सङ्गीतशास्त्री मेरिय हेल्फरलाई जान्छ । उनले यो जातिबारे गहिरो अध्ययन गरेकी छन् ।

सन् - १९६९ मा पेरिसबाट उनले दमाई जातिबारे एक लेख फ्रेन्च भाषामा प्रकाशित गरेकी थिइन् । त्यसैगरी जर्मन सङ्गीतशास्त्री फेलिक्स होर्बगरले सन्-१९७५ मा जर्मन भाषामा नेपालको सङ्गीतबारे एउटा पुस्तक प्रकाशित गरेका थिए । उक्त पुस्तकमा धेरै अध्याय दमाई जातिको पञ्चैबाजा र नौमतीबाजामा रहेको थियो । पछिल्लो खोज-अनुसन्धानका क्रममा सन् १९९० मा बेलायती सङ्गीतशास्त्री डा.क्यारोल टिङ्गीले दमाई सङ्गीतबारे गहन अध्ययन गरी प्रज्ञा प्रतिष्ठान र बेलायतको एसओएस (क्वड्रन्ट) विश्वविद्यालयबाट सन् १९९४ मा अर्को पुस्तक प्रकाशन गरेकी थिइन् । अंग्रेजी भाषामा लेखिएका यी दुई ग्रन्थले पञ्चैबाजा र नौमतीबाजा बारे र तिनका वादकहरूको सामाजिक, राजनीतिक र आर्थिक र सँगीत सँस्कृतिको अवस्था बारे राम्ररी चित्रण गरेकी छन् । डा. क्यारोलले विश्वसङ्गीतमा पञ्चैबाजा र नौमतीबाजालाई परिचित गराउने क्रममा ती ग्रन्थ प्रकाशमा ल्याएकी थिइन् ।

### समावेशी बाजा निर्माता

पञ्चैबाजा र नौमती बाजाको निर्माणमा कामी, सार्की, वादी र तमोटहरूको विशेष योगदान रहेको हुन्छ । तिनले फलाम, पितल र तामाको बाजाको स्वरूप तयार गरिदिएपछि सार्की र वादीहरूले छाला मढिदिने काम पूरा गरिदिन्छन् । यस सन्दर्भमा ढोलकी बजाउन चुनारा र छाला मढ्ने कुलु (वादी) को योगदानलाई पनि बिर्सन सकिँदैन ।

### दमाई जातिको लोप भैसकेका केही बाजा

दमाई जातिले प्राचीन समय देखि मन्दिरमा मात्र बजाउँदै आएका कतिपय बाजाको परिचय लोप भैसकेको छ । यी बाजाहरूमा बानो, बिजुलीबाना, रास, ढोपवाना, मार्फा, शिखरबाना र काहल आदि बाजा मन्दिरमा मात्रै बजाउने गरिन्छ । बढ्दो आधुनिक व्याण्ड बाजाको प्रभाव, मौलिक बाजा प्रतिको बेवास्ताले बाजा र वादकको नै लोप हुने खतरा देखिन्छ ।

### छाँयामा दमाई जातिका प्रतिभा

पञ्चैबाजा र नौमतीबाजाका पर्याय बनेका दमाई जातिको केहि कला प्रतिभाहरू हाल राष्ट्रिय स्तरमा मात्र सीमित नरही अन्तराष्ट्रिय स्तरमा समेत चर्चामा रहेका छन् । तर, पञ्चैबाजा र नौमतीबाजाले अपेक्षाकृत रूपमा फड्को मार्न नसक्नु चिन्ताको विषय बनेको छ । नेपालको भूगोल र जातिमा विविधता भए जस्तै पञ्चैबाजा र नौमतीबाजामा पनि पूर्व देखि पश्चिम सम्मका भिन्नता र फरक विशेषता पाइएको छ । यसको विस्तृत अध्ययन अनुसन्धान हुन सकेको छैन । दमाईहरू समृद्ध बाद्य समूह भए पनि विभेद र अपमानका कारणले उनीहरूमा बिस्तारै कला,संस्कृति र सङ्गीतप्रति माया र स्नेह घट्दै गएको छ ।

नेपाली सङ्गीतकलाको सन्दर्भमा पञ्चैबाजा र नौमती बाजा को सन्दर्भमा राजा पृथ्वी नारायण शाहद्वारा नगर्चीको पदवीले नगरा वादकलाई राष्ट्रिय सङ्गीतमा सम्मान दिइए पनि आज सम्म पञ्चैबाजा र नौमती बाजाको संस्थागत विकास, संरक्षण र सम्बर्द्धन हुन सकेको छैन । परिणाम स्वरूप यस बाजाका पूँजीको रूपमा रहेका पूर्खा बादकहरू लोप हुँदै गएका छन् । उनीहरूसँगै पुराना नेपाली मौलिक राग (धुन), ताल, गाथा, सीप बिलाउँदै छन् । दमाई जाति र पञ्चैबाजा-नौमतीबाजा एक-अर्काको अस्तित्वको पुरक भएकोले यी दुबै बाद्य र वादकको संरक्षण गर्नु पर्ने देखिन्छ । यस क्षेत्रका पेशेवर कलाकारको सन्दर्भमा हामि यी जातिलाई सम्फन्ची, जो नेपाली समाजमा दमाई, गाइने वादी र चमारका नामले परिचित छन् ।

यी जन्मजात कलाकारले आफ्नो मौलिक संस्कृति र पेशागत रूपमा आज पनि आफ्नो कला पेशा कायमै राखे पनि उचित रूपमा उनीहरूको कलाकारिताको विकास र आधुनिकतामा ढाल्न पाएका छैनन् । विश्वका विभिन्न देशमा पेशेवर कलाकार जातिलाई राज्यले नै माथि ल्याउन पहल गरेको छ । भारतमा समेत विभिन्न पेशेवर कलाकारहरूले आ-आफ्ना क्षेत्रमा अघि बढ्ने अवसर पाउँदै आएका छन् । त्यहाँ, राजस्थानको 'मगणियार' जातिलाई उदाहरणका रूपमा लिन सकिन्छ । केन्द्र सरकारले उनीहरूलाई लोकगायक र लोकवादकका रूपमा विश्वसङ्गीतमा परिचित गराउने प्रयास गरिएको छ । उनीहरूको सङ्गीतकलाको संरक्षण र सम्बर्द्धन गर्नुका साथै कलाकारिताको स्तर र विकासका लागि तालिम र प्रशिक्षणको समेत व्यवस्था गरेको छ । नेपालको सन्दर्भमा यसलाई उदाहरणको रूपमा लिन सकिन्छ । नेपाली सङ्गीत विधामा लोकसङ्गीत, परम्परागत सङ्गीत, शास्त्रीय सङ्गीत र आधुनिक सङ्गीतमा धेरै कलाकारहरूले लामो साधना गरेका छन् । यस्ता सङ्गीत साधकहरू अधिकांश जातीय विभेदबाटै अपहेलित गरिएको पाईन्छ (दर्नाल,२०६४) ।

### १.१३ मिफारी(मुखिया)बाठो दमाई

राणाकालको मध्यतिर आईपुग्दा गाइने जातिको मात्र मिफारी दिने कार्यमा परिवर्तन गरिएको पाइन्छ । वि.सं. १९६३ मार्ग १९ गते रोज ३ मा प्रधानमन्त्री चन्द्रशमशेर तथा कमान्डर इन्चिफ भीमशमशेरको नामबाट नगरची बाठो दमाईलाई मिफारी(गाँउको एक प्रकारको मुखिया,तालुकदार भन्दा दोस्रो तहको तिरो उठाउने) दिइएको एउटा रूक्का जारी गरिएको थियो । यस बखत भने उनलाई दमाई जातिको मात्र नभएर गाइने र भाँड(बादी) जातिको पनि मिफारी दिइएको थियो । यसका अतिरिक्त उनलाई मुलुकभरिका तिन जातिको

मिभारी दिइएको थियो । निज बाठो दमाईलाई दमाई,गाइने र भाँड जातिको मिभारी दिइएको भए पनि आफ्नो जात अर्थात् दमाई बाहेक अन्य जातिको न्याय सम्पादन एवं सुविधा लिन पाउने अख्तियारी भने दिइएको थिएन ।

यस रूक्काबाट नै दमाई जातिलाई नयाँ शब्दावली नगर्ची प्रयोग गरिएको थियो । संभवतः नगर्चीको हैसियतमा काठमाडौं उपत्यकाका तिन शहरका चौरासी नगरा मिभारको तैनाथीमा दिइएको थियो । अब उनले ती सबै नगराको जिम्मा लिएर साँभ तथा बिहान दैनिक दुई समय नगरा जाँचबुझ गरी चलाउनु पर्ने थियो । बाठो दमाईलाई मुलुकभरि अर्थात् महाकालीदेखि पूर्व मेचीदेखि पश्चिम,राजधानी काठमाडौं,पहाड एवं मधेशका लागि मिभार नियुक्त गरिएको थियो । सोही हैसियतमा उनलाई दमाई जातिको...रकम, दस्तुराद मोहरु चन्द्रायन् लिने, जाँड,कुखुरा,माना चामल तथा मेजमानी...खाने अख्तियारी दिइएको थियो ।

यो हैसियतमा उनलाई केही दायित्व पनि दिइएको थियो । सो अनुसार उनलाई 'आफ्नो जातको...चाष चकुई मर्यो अपुताली जात भातको थीति तैले गर्नु आफ्ना जातका चन्द्रायन् पटरी चलाई दैदस्तुर ली...' भनी अख्तियारी पनि दिइएको थियो । यस अनुसार उनलाई आफ्नो जातसँग सम्बद्ध विभिन्न न्यायिक अधिकार पनि दिइएको थियो । यस रूक्काले ती मिभारलाई सरकारी उर्दा बमोजिम बाजा बजाउने तथा लुगा सिलाउने कार्यको थप अभिभारा पनि दिएको थियो(नगर्ची बाठो दमाईलाई भर मुलुकका दमाई,गाइने र भाँड जातिको मिभारी दिइएको सम्बन्धमा १९६३ साल मार्ग १९ गते रोज ३ को रूक्का) ।

यस रूक्काले दमाई मिभारलाई पहिले भन्दा बढी अधिकार दिएको देखिन्छ । पहिलो त मिभारलाई आफ्नो जातका अतिरिक्त अन्य दुई जात गाइने र भाँडको मिभारी दिइएको थियो । दोस्रोमा उनलाई तिन जातिको मुलुकभरिका मिभारी दिइएको थियो भने तेस्रोमा उनलाई न्यायिक अख्तियारीका अतिरिक्त काठमाडौंका तिन शहरमा रहेका चौरासी नगराको तैनाथी एवं सरकारी कपडा सिलाउने र बाजा बजाउने दायित्व पनि दिइएको थियो । यसरी देशभरि व्यापक मात्रामा दिइएको अख्तियारीबाट स्वाभाविकै रूपमा दमाई जातिलाई समाज एवं स्थानीय प्रशासनमा आफ्नै हैसियत, इज्जत, मान, प्रतिष्ठा कायम राख्नमा ठुलो मद्दत पुग्न गयो । प्रधानमन्त्री चन्द्र शमशेरले उक्त रूक्का जारी गरेको चौध वर्षपछि उनै बाठो दमाईका नाममा एउटा लालमोहर जारी गरेका थिए । १९६३ सालमा जारी गरिएको रूक्कामा उनलाई मिभार नियुक्त गरी नेपालभरिबाट दैदस्तुर लिने अख्तियारी दिइएको भए पनि पाल्पा,गुल्मी,अर्घा र खाँची यी चार जिल्लाको मिभारी पाल्पा गौडाका नाइकेले खाई आएको देखिएको तथा सरकारले पनि कतिपय क्षेत्रबाट ठेक्का दिएर विभिन्न रकम असुल तहसिल गरेको देखिएको थियो ।

त्यसैले पहिले बाठो दमाईलाई मिभार बापत मुलुकभरिबाट विभिन्न रकम असुल गर्ने अख्तियारी दिइए पनि अब भने निज मिभारलाई पाल्पा लगायत उक्त चार जिल्ला एवं सरकारले ठेक्काबाट असुल गराउँदै आएको क्षेत्र बाहेक कास्की तथा लम्जुङ समेत मुलुकभरिका दमाई जातिको मिभारी दिइएको थियो (नगर्ची बाठो दमाईलाई मुलुकभरिका दमाई जातिको मिभारी दिइएको सम्बन्धमा १९७७ साल आश्विन १३ गते रोज

३ मा जारी गरिएको लालमोहर) । यस लालमोहरबाट मिभारका सम्बन्धमा केही नयाँ सन्दर्भ उठेको पाइन्छ । पहिलो त यसमा बाठो दमाईलाई आफ्नो जातिभन्दा अन्य अर्थात् १९६३ सालमा दिइएको गाइने र भाँड जातिको मिभारी दिइएको थिएन ।

दोस्रो पहिले उनलाई मुलुकभरिका दमाईको सामाजिक एवं न्यायिक व्यवस्था सञ्चालनको अख्तियारी दिइएको भए पनि यसपटक पाल्पा लगायत चार जिल्ला एवं सरकारले ठेक्कामा दिएका कतिपय क्षेत्रलाई छाडेर उनलाई सो अख्तियारी दिइएको थियो । अन्तिम अर्थात् तेस्रोमा पाल्पा लगायत चार जिल्लाका लागि छुट्टै दमाई मिभार नियुक्त गरिएकोले सरकारले अवस्था अनुसार सम्बद्ध जातिमा मिभार अर्थात् नाइके/प्रमुख नियुक्त गर्दथ्यो भन्ने स्पष्ट हुन्छ । यसै सन्दर्भमा सरकारले कुनै बखत मुलुकभरिका दमाई जातिमा एक जनालाई मात्र मिभार नियुक्त गर्ने तथा कुनै अवस्थामा विभिन्न क्षेत्रमा भिन्नान्ति व्यक्तिलाई निश्चित क्षेत्र तोकेर नै मिभार बनाउने गरेको पाइन्छ ।

इतिहासका विभिन्न काल खण्डमा नेपालको सामाजिक संरचना अनुसार सुदूरपश्चिम एवं पश्चिम नेपालमा रहेका दमाई,गाइने,भाँड,कामी लयागत अनार्य सिमान्तकृत शिल्पी जातिहरूलाई तल्लो दर्जामा राखिएको थियो । समाजमा कथित उपल्लो जाति भनिएकाहरूको सेवा सुविधा तथा राज्य सञ्चालनका लागि त्यस्ता जातिको आवश्यकता पर्ने भएकोले जतिसुकै तल्लो भने पनि उनीहरूको त्यत्तिकै महत्व थियो । त्यसका अतिरिक्त सम्बद्ध जातिमा परम्परादेखि विद्यमान विभिन्न साँस्कृतिक,धार्मिक,सामाजिक एवं न्यायिक विधि व्यवहार सञ्चालनको लागि सोही जातिलाई राज्यले विभिन्न नाममा अख्तियारी दिँदै आएको पाइन्छ ।

यसै सन्दर्भमा खास गरी दमाई, गाइने, भाँड, माझी जस्ता जातिलाई सरकारी काममा लगाउन एवं सो जातिको न्यायिक परम्परा कायम राख्नका लागि एक जनालाई मिभार(मुखिया) बनाउने गरिन्थ्यो । यस प्रसंगमा उल्लेख्य कुरा के छ भने एक जना दमाई जातिका मानिसलाई दमाईका अतिरिक्त गाइने र भाँड जातिको पनि मिभार नियुक्त गरिएको देखिनाले दमाईलाई किन गाइने र भाँडको मिभार बनाइएको हो भन्ने जिज्ञासा रहेको छ । समग्रमा जातीय दृष्टिबाट तहगत विभेद गरी समाजमा तल्लो दर्जामा राखिएका दमाई लगायत जातिको मौलिक परम्परा,साँस्कृतिक,धर्म एवं न्याय सम्पादनमा सोही जातिलाई संलग्न गरिनु सकारात्मक पक्ष देखिन्छ । यसबाट सम्बद्ध जातिको इतिहास,एवं परम्परा नष्ट हुनबाट बच्न जान्थ्यो । साथै मिभार जस्ता जातीय प्रमुखले राज्य व्यवस्थाको स्थानीय प्रशासन सञ्चालनमा उल्लेख्य योगदान दिएर आफ्नो जातिको अस्तित्वलाई बचाउन सक्ने स्थिति बनेको देखिन्छ ।

यो प्रसंगले वर्तमान गणतन्त्रको संघीयता भन्दा राणातन्त्रको मिभारी र स्वशासन सयौं गुणा प्रगतिशिल रहेको देखाउँछ । त्यति मात्रै होइन,वर्तमान समयमा अस्तित्व र पहिचान गुमाईरहेका उत्पीडित शिल्पी समुदायले मिभारीबाट राज्य प्रशासनमा महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका खेलेको पाइन्छ । यसबाट भन्न करै लाग्छ, पहिलाका प्रशासकहरू साँच्चिकै प्रशासककै रूपमा चुनिन्थे,छानिन्थे । तर, अहिलेका प्रशासकहरू बढाबढ, किनबेचमा,

खरिदबिक्रीमा वस्तुको रूपमा प्रस्तुत हुन विवश छन् । वर्तमान राज्यव्यवस्थाले आफ्नै देशको गौरवशाली प्रशासकीय नमूनाको अनुसरण किन नगर्ने?(पन्त,२०७०:३७०-३७२) ।

#### निष्कर्ष:

नेपालका सबै जातिहरूमा सबैभन्दा बढी नाच-गान, गीत, सङ्गीत, सीप कला कौशलका साथै मौलिक कला सँस्कृतिको पर्याय पञ्चै बाजा, नौमती बाजाका साथ रमाउने र गाउनेमा दमाई जाति अग्रपंक्तिमा रहेका छन् । उनीहरूको जन्मदेखि मृत्युसम्मबाजाका विभिन्न राग-धुनका साथै नाच गान पनि गर्ने गरिन्थ्यो । मनु देखि राणा शासन सम्मको चरम सामाजिक बहिष्करण, विभेद बन्देजका साथै मृत्यु दण्ड सम्मको सजायले दमाईहरूको मौलिक संस्कार, सँस्कृति इतिहासमा बिलाएर सदाका लागि अन्त्य भए । यो जातिले इतिहासको कुनै कालखण्डमा राजा र राज्य सञ्चालन समेत गरेको पाइन्छ ।

अनादिकालीन शिल्पसभ्यताको विकास, बाजाको आविष्कार, कर्णाली र भेरिको नामकरण समेत यिनै जातिको देन थियो । नेपालको मौलिक सँस्कृति र साँस्कृतिक सम्पदाका मूलश्रोत दमाई जाति नै हुन् । जसबाट उनीहरूको आदिपना र मौलिकतालाई फल्काउँछ । अपमान र हस्तछेपबाट बचेखुचेका उनीहरूका सँस्कृति २१ औं शताब्दीमा पनि जातीय भेदभावका कारण फल्ल-फूल र फस्टाउन नपाई मुर्झाइरहेका छन् । दमाई जातिको मौलिक नाच, चाडपर्व, संस्कार र सँस्कृति एउटा असल माली विनाको फूलको विरूवा जस्तो कचल्टिएको अवस्था रहेको छ ।

यस्तो विषम परिस्थितिमा दमाई जातिले विभिन्न मौलिक संस्कार र सँस्कृतिलाई आजसम्मनिरन्तरता दिँदै बचाईरहेका छन् । जीवन निर्वाहको लागि लुगा सिलाउने मूलपेशा अपनाएको यो जाति तन्त्रमन्त्र र धामीभाँकी विद्यामा पनि ज्यादै सिपालु हुन्छन् । दमाई जातिको कला र साँस्कृतिक प्रस्तुतिमा उनीहरूको आफ्नै विशेष प्रकारको पोशाक लगाएर नाचगान गर्ने गर्दछन् । नेपाल राष्ट्रको जीवन्त मौलिक साँस्कृतिक सम्पदाका धरोहर दमाई जातिलाई राज्यले उचित संरक्षण र विकास गर्न सकेको छैन ।

नेपालका अनादिकालीन मूलवासी दमाई जाति खुला विश्वविद्यालय जस्तै हुन् । संसारले पढ्न सक्छ, बुझ्न सक्छ, अध्ययन गर्न सक्छ, लाभ लिन सक्छ । तर, यी समुदाय र सँस्कृतिलाई नै बचाउन सकिएन भने गर्न चाहेर पनि केही गर्न सकिँदैन । समय छँदै सम्बन्धित सबैपक्षले गम्भीर भएर सोचन जरूरी छ ।

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विश्वकर्मा,चक्रमान (२०५४), दलितहरू अस्तित्वको खोजीमा, दीप तारा अफसेट प्रेस, काठमाडौं ।

शर्मा,डिल्लीराज (२०५८),पश्चिम नेपालको मूर्ति तथा वास्तुकला, नेपाल राजकीयप्रज्ञा-प्रतिष्ठान, काठमाडौं ।

सामाजिक विकास मन्त्रालय कर्णाली (२०७६), प्रदेशका जाति, भाषा र साँस्कृतिक अवस्था,एक अध्ययन, प्रदेश सरकार, सामाजिक विकास मन्त्रालय,कर्णाली प्रदेश,वीरेन्द्रनगर,सुर्खेत ।

विश्वकर्मा, दानबहादुर, नेपाली,डीबी, २०७६:शिल्पी पहिचान,ललितपुर,शिल्पी विशेष प्रदेश समिति,प्रचारप्रसार तथा प्रकाशन विभाग ।

डिएन एफ को दश वर्षे रणनीतिक पत्र सन् २०१३, काठमाडौं ।

नेपालमा जातीय संस्कार, भाग-२, (२०७०),नेपाल प्रज्ञा-प्रतिष्ठान, कमलादी,काठमाडौं ।

पिछडिएको केही जाति तथा जनजातिको सामाजिक तथा आर्थिक अवस्थाको अध्ययन(२०४४),श्री ५ को सरकार,श्रम तथा सामाजिक कल्याण मन्त्रालय, सिंहदरबार,काठमाडौं ।

पन्त, जयराज(२०६४), डोटेली भो पर्वका गीत र गाथाहरू,वाङ्मय प्रकाशन तथा अनुसन्धान केन्द्र प्रा.लि. कमलपोखरी ।

समानता, (२०५१, वर्ष-१, अंक-१),नेपाल उत्पीडित दलित जातीय मुक्ति समाजको मुखपत्र,काठमाडौं ।

पाण्डेय, मधुसुदन,....नेपालका दलितहरू, काठमाडौं ।

कर्णाली लोकसँस्कृति खण्ड-५ (२०२८), साभ्ना प्रकाशन,काठमाडौं ।

भाइसाब,वासुदेव (२०६६), डोटी प्रदेशको लोकवाङ्मय कोश,साभ्ना प्रकाशन, पुलचोक ।

श्रेष्ठ, तेजप्रकाश (२०४४), अछामी लोकसाहित्य, रत्न पुस्तक भण्डार, भोटाहिटी ।

बम,मोतीराज (२०६७),कर्णालीको लोकजीवन,सेन्चुरी प्रिन्टिङ एण्ड पब्लिसिङ् नेपाल प्रा.लिं,बागबजार ।

दर्नाल, रामशरण (२०६४),नेपाली बाजा, रत्न पुस्तक भण्डार,काठमाडौं ।

पन्त,जयराज(२०७१), नेपाली लोकवार्ता, भाग-१,भृकुटी एकेडेमी पब्लिकेसन, प्रदर्शनीमार्ग,काठमाडौं ।

## Book Review

*Education in Post Welfare Society* by Sally Tomlinson, Open University Press: Maidenhead, 2005. pp. 267

The book 'Education in the Post-welfare Society' by Sally Tomlinson who is an Emeritus Professor at Goldsmiths London University and an honorary person in the Education Department, University of Oxford. She has spent her academic career researching, writing and teaching about race and ethnicity, and the politics of education, especially 'special' education.

In the book, the author presents a critical review of the education policy that prevailed in the UK from 1945 to 2000. This review comprises of critics on chronologies of education acts, major legislations and published reports related to education policy of UK over the past fifty years. In doing so, Tomlinson elucidates the relationship of these policies with the economy and social structure that includes the class, race, and gender. This book is comprehensive in terms of informational arguments offered through an in-depth review of different works of literature done in regards to the relevance of educational policy and practice in the UK. Further, the author offers a holistic view of the impact of educational policy which has been changing over the years. The book provides instrumental information for researchers, educational professionals and politicians interested in understanding the relationship between education policy and society.

The book revolves around the key theme of persistence and reinforcement of class structure and advantage to certain section through English education policy. It also underscores the controversies that occurred over the last fifty years concerning social justice and development of educational policies. Tomlinson argues that as the UK moved from welfare state to post-welfare

state, competitive markets and private enterprise started to play a dominant role in the education sector. As a consequence, decentralized education system became centralized, controlling the funding, teaching and curriculum. Furthermore, education became a competitive enterprise and a commodity. The author argues that such transformation of educational system is a potential threat to a democratic society where the actual needs of the society and the individual are not compatible. In support of this argument the author is able to chalk out a link between ideological position and policies and offers a counterattack by explaining the reality of education being used as a medium for the government to control the economy. She states that education should become -a force for humanizing, liberalizing and democratizing society.

### Relevance to Nepal

The information and facts presented in Tomlinson's book with regards to the educational policy reflect much of Nepal's own education policy and system too. The author informs that in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Britain had realized the need for education for everyone rather than only the elites and the wealthy people. It is a well-known fact that education in Nepal became open to the general public only after 1951. Before that, only the royal family and the ruling classes had access to education. The rulers feared that, if poor and lower caste people would get free education, they would be critical and dissatisfied. They felt that the people should, therefore, be kept ignorant (Dangal, 2019).

Tomlinson states that the Governments around the world, who were turning their welfare states into post-welfare societies, converted education into a commodity. This increased the privatization and marketization of education. In the case of Britain, this free market capitalization and privatization of education had become a global market force which potentially reduced the power of national government to control their economic resource.

This scenario is relevant in the context of Nepal too. The first education development plan which was launched in the country in 1956 as part of its first five-year development plan states, “the central purpose of the program is to raise production, employment, standards of living and general wellbeing throughout the country, thus opening out to the people opportunities for a richer and more satisfying life” (Government of Nepal [GON], 1956). The first education plan of the country implemented in 1956 also noted, “there can be little improvement in our economic conditions without the help of technology and education” (ibid). While this can be looked-up as welfare Nepal, policies recently favor the market.

The education policy and laws in Nepal like in the UK underscore too much on the need to reform education structure in order to prepare human resources for the global market. Too much emphasis on economy is reflected in the School Sector Development Plan (SSDP)<sup>6</sup> of Nepal, developed in order to meet the Nepal’s vision to graduate from the status of a Least Developed Country (LDC) by the year 2022 and to reach the status of the middle-income country’s level by 2030 (MOE, 2016). Such graduation would be less meaningful if education does not cater to the needs of the society in general and individuals in particular. It is crucial to note that the purpose of education transcends the boundary of an economy and penetrates deeper into social and family life too. This is what our education policy and structure have failed to address.

The centralized curriculum and education structure, like in the UK, justifies how the need felt by the country has even affected and convinced the academicians through the means of textbooks and

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<sup>6</sup> Plan for the seven-year period of mid-July 2016 to mid-July 2023 (BS 2073–2080),

assessment system, which demanded pupil to serve the main economic objective of the country as a skilled labor force. Development of a centralized education system was the main objective of Nepal’s plan too, which was done for the sake of developing national integration (Pandey, K. C., & Wood, 1956 as cited in Parajuli, 2014). The other objective of the plan was to connect education and development. The emphasis on the “technical and vocation education for all” in the 15<sup>th</sup> long term plan of Nepal is an evidence to the aforementioned statement (NPC, 2075). One of the critical weaknesses of both UK and Nepal’s education policy is that it has been adopting an absolute approach without considering the differences in demographic composition, contexts and differing needs of education. The plans are centralized and structured as it has adopted the policy of one design, one curriculum, one set of textbooks, one management system, one practice of student assessment etc. In the context of Nepal, there is some hope for decentralization of the education system in the upcoming years through the federal states.

Furthermore, the subject centered curriculum, examination techniques, rote learning which were prevalent in the UK is reflective in Nepalese society too. This raises the question of the true purpose and meaning of educational attainment. Being educated just for the sake of getting a job and good pay has started to prevail.

I agree that a characteristic of post-welfare society is the de-personalization of people as human beings into consumers, human resources and human capital. Governments of varying political persuasions around the world rediscovered human capital theory. By the 1990s governments were firmly committed to the belief that only greater investment in human capital would enable the country to compete in the new global economy through improvement in economic growth and productivity.

The human capital theory that Tomlinson mentions in her book has influenced Nepal's education reformation too. The core understanding that the increase in educational opportunities thereby increases women and men's participation in the educational process and with the acquisition of some skills and knowledge through their schooling will contribute to development, still persists (Parajuli, 2014).

The growth of the business to create wealth and employment had started to influence education policy in the UK. Education has been claimed as the fundamental right of citizens but the reality of the day in most of the countries including Nepal is that citizens themselves have to pay for the education under the democratic setting. The Constitution of Nepal (2015) guarantees the fundamental right to its citizen. On the other hand, there is increase in number of the private schools in the country since 1998, due to the prevailing school liberalization policy (Carney & Bista, 2009). The burden of increasing fee structure has contributed to reproducing the class structure through the difference in types of schools existing in our country as people from the lower rung of the economic ladder won't have access to 'quality' education. This has created a stratified workforce, which was evident in the UK too. The policy allowing private schools to operate and determine their own fee structure has forbidden the right being enjoyed by all the class and division in the society.

By the 1990s, in the UK there was an important section of the middle class, educated in private or good state schools and 'good' universities, dominating the communications, information and propaganda industries, and the political arena. This section of the middle class were easily able to resist egalitarian and social democratic school organization. Private education continued to be important for those who could afford to buy competitive advantage

for their children; the upper classes and old middle classes effortlessly reproduced most of their children into good social and economic positions, and new and aspirant groups were eager to grasp the advantages of both excellent resources and old boy networks, with the additional legitimacy of meritocracy. The middle class and aspirant groups continued to move away from schools attended by the poor and disadvantaged. Tomlinson mentions an account of Margaret Thatcher who led an attack on a common education with an open assertion in 1957 that the aspirant middle classes had less access to a more privileged education. This situation is present in the context of Nepal too where people don't have a choice to forego private schools as there is a rise in the demand of "standard education", the notion to which private schools are often linked with. Moreover, the caste and the class-based discrimination ingrained deeply in the mindset of Nepali citizens have forbidden rich and middle-class people to send their children to poorly equipped schools (especially public schools). In addition, a research conducted by Thapa (2013) clearly demonstrates the strong positive relation between income and private school attainment in Nepal.

Tomlinson's portrayal of challenges for poor people and thereby poorly equipped schools presents a gloomy side of educational reform which failed to address the situational context of the social division in the society on the basis of income level. In the later 1990s, Politicians in the UK competed to demonstrate their zero tolerance of school underperformance, and the media coverage of failing schools was negative and derisory. Two-thirds of schools labeled as 'failing' were schools attended by the children of the poor, of minority ethnic origin and children with special educational needs, not wanted in other schools. Market forces were helping to create underperforming schools. During the 1990s governments superficially supported the political message that 'poverty is no

excuse' for schools in deprived areas obtaining low examination results, to create a blame and shame culture.

Education policy was largely based on a social democratic consensus that governments should regulate and add adequate resource on education to help achieve redistributive justice, and provide equal opportunity. The development of comprehensive education from the 1960s appeared to signal an end to education as a vehicle for the perpetuation of social class divisions and raised the hope that the talents of the whole population could be put to new social and economic use.

The ultimate aim of education in the UK was considered as the means for social justice which offers inclusiveness. However, the author states that disparity continued to exist as people from middle class always chose to send their children to better-equipped schools and away from people from lower strata. The poor people therefore are pushed towards schools with comparatively inadequate facilities and infrastructure. The education policy in Nepal too has set provision for equal inclusive and equitable in terms of access, participation and learning outcomes, with a special focus on reducing disparities among and between groups having the lowest levels of access, participation and learning outcomes. The policy also aims to reduce disparities suffered by children from disadvantaged groups, children with disabilities and children from remote areas. However, different level of educational attainment among different ethnic groups (Janajatis) and castes, and the gender-based disparities in access to and participation in education remains within the groups (MOE,2016).

In UK selection and segregation of children in different schools and different curricula came in the forefront. The new rule in Nepal which segregates students into the different high school faculty as per the score based assessment (KC,2016) reflects the same system that existed in the UK. Moreover, the idea that occupation status

determined by meritocracy became a myth in the UK and different jobs started having different pay which reflected the class structure in the country. Likewise, a country like Nepal which is besieged in unequal access to educational attainment it is obvious that even the talented poor kids will never be able to participate in the economic force and earn in the manner an educated person from good income family would. Tomlinson is correct when she states that "market principle education has introduced a complex system of selection".

### **Critical Review: Positive Aspect of the Education Policy**

Though Tomlinson is intensively critical about the educational policy in the UK, she does not fail to acknowledge the role of the reformation that took place in the UK. She claims that such reformations have possibilities to widen opportunity and raise aspiration among younger ones in the UK, leading to girls' and women's success. Minority groups were able to overcome exclusion through lifelong learning and importance that was attached to qualifications and credentials.

Likewise, the educational policies in Nepal also emphasize equity and inclusion. Policy measures and programs have aimed to enhance equity and inclusion of deprived and marginalized groups in education such as women, the poor and groups like Dalits and other castes, religion and languagebased social groups (MOE, 2009). The deprived and marginalized groups today are much aware of their rights and are also empowered in many ways (Central Bureau of Statistics [CBS], 2006 ). Moreover, being able to read and write has brought positive changes in the life of many adults, more so in the case of women (UNDP, 2004). Literate women's status has been enhanced and so has her identity in her family and community (Robinson-Pant, 2000).

Through exploratory research based on intensive researches, Tomlinson has presented facts and changes occurring in the educational policy in the UK, as the country was transitioning to post-welfare society. The critical review presented by Tomlinson provides educational reformers and policy-makers with new ideas and strategies to guide the conventional educational system into a meaningful journey for both the economic growth and societal transformation. The clash of the existing notion of education being the fundamental right with the growing marketization and privatization has led to creating further division and inequality in the society which requires urgent attention. The review presented by Tomlinson can always guide the modern education policy and system towards finding a more resilient and purposeful teaching and learning process, in the face of the constantly changing global market world. Overall the book is resourceful and informational to understand the policy transition and its implication in the society.

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Nepal Centre for Contemporary Studies (NCCS) set up in 1995 as a non-partisan, non-profit making and non-governmental organization undertakes studies/research on subjects and issues of national and transnational nature and dimensions. The emerging socio-economic and political trends and opportunities to be generated by new developments come within the scope of NCCS. The pluralistic nature of Nepali society and polity demands greater understanding and cooperation among political forces and others engaged in dealing with the issues of democratic consolidation. The Center gives priority to local development and other areas of national concerns. Policy analyses, in-depth studies of national and regional issues and development, and their likely impacts on Nepal and other regions, especially south Asia, are some of the principal agendas of the Center. One of its objectives is to assist the young social scientists to enhance their research capabilities.

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South Asian Dialogues on Ecological Democracy, Nepal (SADED-Nepal), a non-profit/non-governmental organisation registered at District Administrative Office, Kathmandu on January 10, 2011, has been born out of work wider collaborative and creative involvement by many individuals and organizations forming a network or web of efforts, which does not have one epicentre. SADED-Nepal encompasses democratic control of natural resources and looks upon it as integral to the deepening and expansion of democracy and to the survival of humankind. The concept of 'Ecological Democracy' is central to the work undertaken in the SADED (India) framework. All the dimensions of life, also of democracy within them, are inter-linked and so focusing on any one leads to the others. Since the ecological crisis is a special one for our times, and yet is inadequately recognized, SADED-Nepal envisages strengthening the idea of comprehensive democracy through 'Ecological Democracy'. The notion of Ecological Democracy incorporates a democratic relationship between human beings and nature as well as an equitable distribution of nature's resources among human being within a nation and between nations.

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