TRIBAL ETHNOGRAPHY OF NEPAL

VOLUME I

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BOOK FAITH INDIA
Dedicated to all those deprived and loving people inhabiting those nooks and crannies of Nepal, who will never be able to read this book on account of their illiteracy.
PREFACE

After extensive travelling through villages in the rural areas of Nepal, we could not help but be impressed at the people coexisting with the harsh environment minus all the facilities required for a human being's basic existence and yet accepting the reality of their miserable status. In our travels, we were fortunate to perceive the changing of the ethnic mosaic towards a more artificialised pattern and in the process annihilating the simple cultures that are precariously balanced. This book is the outcome of the conviction we mutually felt in making it our personal campaign to somehow record whatever we could slavage from the deteriorating tribal landscape and thus preserve in writing some portion of our diverse cultures, with the objective of creating an awareness of the true position of our country's various tribes, among those who are interested to learn but do not have the material at hand. From the lap of the Himalaya to the hot, humid, tropical terai plains, tribes have lived and died oblivious of the existence of one another or aware but wary of each other. On account of Nepal's geographical location, and the tundra to equator type of climate that exists, the tribal variety is phenomenal, however, what is more interesting is the fact that this region has been the entrepot where ancient tribes have merged into recently migrated ones to form new tribes, and where the old austroloid types have been transformed into mixed tribes which bear features and characteristics which range from the totally dark-skinned to the fair types, bearing the flat flared nose, the hooked Semitic nose and the long aquiline noses of the caucosoid aryans.

Nepal lies in the region where the variety of languages, dialects and kura are found in great profusion. While some tribes have upto ten different kura among their sub-tribes, other tribes have lost their kura and so use Nepali as a language of communication. Tibeto-Burman, Sino-Tibeto-Burman, Munda, Mon-Khmer, Austric and such language groups are found here indicating this region as either a melting pot area where tribes were and are still in the process of metamorphosis or the seat of various cultures and civilisations which have so badly overlapped that today it is very difficult for the researcher to excavate and study the various stratas. In this book, we have made an attempt at being simply and strictly ethnographic, however, we wish to clarify a few terms that have been used in the text for a better understanding of the tribes of Nepal. The word tribe (Jat) used in the text is inaccurate from the sociological perspective, however, due to lack of a more appropriate term to denote a group of people, possessing a common language and culture, but due to migration, are not confined to particular geographical region and do not regard...
themselves as a politically autonomous group, tribe is the word which we have found to be most suitable. Similarly, the word sub-tribe (Upa-Jat) is used within the text and indicates that a sub-group exists within the tribe and basically similar, but differing in some particular aspects. Sept (Thar) is a word used in the text to indicate a category within a tribe (which does not possess sub-tribes). Septs follow patrilineal descent in most tribes though some cases exist where matrilineal descent septs are also prevalent. Sub-septs (Upa-Thars) means the sub-group which exists within a sept and is existent in tribes which are extensively stratified. Totemism is also seen to be prevalent in the tribes studied and this is equated to the gotr. Those of the same sub-tribe but of different septs and possessing similar gotr are not permitted to inter-marry, as it is considered incest and thus taboo.

Whatever we have written in this book is what we have personally collected through observation and interviews, and therefore all the matter here is firsthand as perceived and collected by us. The main objective of this book is to help those laymen who do not have any social, anthropological and cultural exposure, to be able to pick up this book and read and enjoy the tribal diversity of Nepal, along with the benefit of being able to discover the various cultural, social, ritual and such aspects of their tribe that they had never realised existed. In this way every person will be in a position to learn about his or her own roots and also about the other neighbouring tribes and the similarities and differences that exist among themselves. We hope that this book also helps the beginners of cultural studies to gain a little by reading through these pages and receiving a rudimentary education which can be used as a base from which real research in the fields of sociology, anthropology, ethnography and such can be conducted. We also wish to thank all those people who live in those far-flung places who will never be able to read this book due to their illiteracy, for it was their unfailing cooperation and love which helped us to prepare these two volumes since we started almost eight years ago. Currently, we are working on the next two volumes. Finally we feel that this book is not yet complete and there are places where improvements can be made in the future and this is definitely not our last word in ethnography. We hope that the readers enjoy this book and receive an insight into the tribes of Nepal as they are, neither romanticised nor glorified.

Dr. Rajesh Gautam
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ATH PAHARIYA RAI

The habitat of these Ath Pahariya Rai is the eastern districts of Dhankuta lying in the Kosi zone. The four major settlements of these people are: Chuliwan, Dhankuta Bazar, Ningale and Bhirgaun VDCs. Though some scholars have categorised these Ath Pahariya Rai in the Dus Kirant level, others have not done so, however, to reduce complications they have been classified and placed within the Rai tribe. These people call themselves Rai, but the other local Rai folks call them Athpre which is an abbreviated form of Ath Pahariya.

Settlement

Generally Rai settlements are located within the altitudes of 3500' to 6500'. The villages range from the ones consisting of 15 - 20 houses to those having 40 - 50 houses, with populations of 100 - 300 people. These villages are approximately 15 - 20 minutes walking distance apart, and the houses are not clustered but spread out over large areas so that in some places it takes 8 - 10 minutes to walk from one house to another. The houses themselves are made of stone, very confined types and possessing one or two holes for windows called ankhi jhyal (6 square inches approximately). These Athpre build their roofs using the universal thatch or khar as is the case in most village communities. They are unknown to the wonders of corrugated iron sheets for roofing. Though they say that the outer walls of the houses must not be painted (meaning giving a coating of dung, mud and water mixture) with white clay or kmero, red clay or mud is not tabu. But in houses of Bhirgaun, it is seen that the kmero is used and is not tabu. Such contradictions exist indicating conflict of cultural assimilation. The Athpre houses are mostly two storied and occasionally single storied. Generally, the houses are made in a proportion.al and balanced way and the roofs are placed triangularly. These house can be split into three sections - the outer sikuwa also called mokha or verandah, the part inside the door which is sanghar or threshold and the part inside the sanghar called the pang bhitra which is the actual living room, where the typical three-stoned (triangularly placed) hearth synonymous to
Rai folks, is located. It is believed that the Rai ancestors inhabit this hearth and so this place is considered to be their holy of holies. Should any outsider enter and touch these stones, then the Rai believe that a calamity will occur and effect the members of that particular house. Thus is seen that non-Rai people are not permitted, under any sort of circumstances to enter this place and the mere thought of touching the sacred stones is taboo.

**Historical Background**

The history of these people is vague. They claim to be the original inhabitants of Dhankuta region. The influx of other tribes, especially the Newar, occurred after the eastern regions were conquered by the Gorkhali Army, however, it is estimated that Tamang, Ksetri and Brahmin people migrated to this area prior to 1770 AD, as some scholars deduce.

Ath Pahariya does not seem to be an authentic Rai word and according to the prevalent stories, it is said that King Prithivi Narayan Shah had given these people the responsibility of guarding the Nissan than and on fulfilling this responsibility properly, they were awarded the title of Ath Pahariya. They claim to be one among the ten Limbu or *hami dus Limbu madhya ek haun*, but the genealogy of the Limbu tribe does not state the names of all the Limbu in detail. According to historian, Late Iman Singh Chemjong, the Naga Sardar Chongden Hang was defeated by King Khewa Limbu and chased out of his kingdom Hathirkha (currently a village panchayat in Dhankuta district). Chongden Hang is then said to have fled to Assam (in eastern India) and his descendants are the Ath Pahariya Rai. A noted historian states that the Ath Pahariya are a kin of the Limbu people.

Six Ath Pahariya Rai septs are considered aborigines of this region as they are in possession of *kipat* lands since antiquity, as stated by them. They claim that they have no *gotra* and are Khamboongba (Kham namoya, oongba - splitting or opening) meaning self created or *bhui phutuwa* meaning emerging from the earth.

The people of these six aboriginal septs of Ath Pahariya Rai claim Dhankuta as their point of origin and to corroborate this they
Ath Pahariya Rai

indicate the caves in the nearby hills where they were supposed to have dwelt millenia ago. The other three thars Chhilinge, Charingme and Kimdang are said to have migrated to this areas at a later date and were gradually assimilated by the larger Pahariya population. A story also exists, where two brothers went two separate ways. One took the hilly track and was assimilated by the Ath Pahariya tribe while the other brother took the lowland route and became the ancestor of today's Dhimal tribe of the eastern terai. This story is existent in both the Ath Pahariya and Dhimal communities.

The Charingme are said to have emerged from the Charing Rai living in Charing village on the other side of the Arun river and who came across to be assimilated by the Ath Pahariya tribe. In fact, even today, Charing village exists and is located across the Arun river and there live the Charing Rai. These Rai do not permit marriage with Charingme Ath Pahariya Rai as they are agnatically related and thus indicates the fact regarding the migration and final assimilation, as mentioned. Another story states that a man (not an untouchable of low caste) was brought from Bijapur and made king or Subba and given the Chhiling sept. It is seen that Leng Subba was given the sept first and then the kipat. Limbu have septs like Chongden and Patre and it is observed that by giving their daughters to Rai of these septs, these were slowly assimilated by the Ath Pahariya Rai. Due to the existence of an Ath Pahariya custom of bringing into their tribe, people from other tribes (other than Tamangs, Gharti, Bhoti, Majis) after purifying them, it can be clearly seen that this Ath Pahariya tribe is in reality a mixture of many tribes. Finally, it is stated that these Ath Pahariya are not a regionally pure aboriginal tribe but in fact a product of assimilation of various tribes all along till today.

Physical Characteristics

In the light of the matter regarding their origins and the resultant information of their assimilation, it cannot be said that these people have a unique characteristic of their own, however, when one looks at them, it is seen that they resemble their neighbours the Rai and Limbu. They are short and sturdy possess yellowish to brown skins minimum facial and body hairs small, slanted eyes,
flat noses due to low nose bridges and depressed nasal roots, rounded cheeks with slightly high malar bones. Thus they can be classified as of mongoloid stock.

**Septs (Thars)**

When looking at their social structure, these people can be split into two sections, namely the Dhankutali Ath Pahariya Rai and the Khalsali Ath Pahariya Rai, because the language and culture of the former is quite different from the latter.

The Dhankutali Ath Pahariya Rai have 12 septs and previously (in the past) each sept lived in its own *kipat* area, but today it is not practical and the septs are found to be living in a haphazard pattern, in various town and villages, in that region.

Ordinarily, when they say *hamro yo nau ghagri* it means the main 9 septs of the Rai. Among these septs there are some sub-septs too. Outsiders are assimilated into the Ath Pahariya tribe and given sub-septs like Thakuri, Kotval, Bhote in accordance with their previous tribal names. In the Kumdangma sept, it is seen that marriage between *had* or agnates has resulted in the emergence of 2 sub-septs: Saapla and Babul. Since one sept consists of people of one lineage (agnates), marriage of couples having the same septs is considered a breach of social norms and incestuous in nature.

**Language**

Within their own community, these Ath Pahariya speak their own language of Tibeto-Burman category known as Ath Pahariya *kura*, however, they possess no written script of their own, but claim the Limbu script *Srijunga*, to be theirs. Though Nepali is their alternate language, all of them understand and speak it. Words for social rituals and rites, cultural items and agricultural implements, do not exist in their language and are known to them by their Nepali names.

**Life Cycle Rites**
Ath Pahariya Rai perform *pangsamyang* (worship of a female deity) to ensure the proper delivery of a child. If this *pangsamyang* cannot be done prior to the child's birth, it is performed immediately after.

**Navran**: The *navran* occurs 4 days after birth for boys and three days after for girls. The prevalent custom is for the child's parents to name it, as they desire. On this *navran*, not outsiders, but the midwife or *sudeni* (she must be of the Ath Pahariya tribe) is invited and feasted with meat, rice and such foods. On this day the house is purified from birth pollution by sprinkling *gaunth* (cow urine). If the child is the eldest son, then once in the month of Kartik, a grand celebration occurs to indicate the importance of this birth.

**Pasni**: The initial rice feeding ceremony called *Chama-Chepmana* is performed five months after birth for girls and six months after for boys. Here they are fed with solid rice for the first time as is the case in other Hinduised communities.

**Chhaewar**: When the male child reaches the age of 3 years, his *mama* or maternal uncle is invited over and is requested to clip the boy's hair using a pair of scissors (not razors or blades). The child puts a cap on his mama's head as thanks for the haircut.

**Marriage Practices**

The meaning of marriage among these people is not just a sexual liaison, but a union of two individuals and the recognition of the progeny, they procreate, by the society they live in. Thus, if any male takes a woman home and they live together, unless the girl's father is not ritually appeased, and unless the girl is not separated from her *pitree kul* (ancestral lineage), the marriage is not recognised, religiously and socially.

There are basically three types of marriages *Magi biwaha* or arranged types *Chori biwaha* or elopements and *Jari biwaha* or marrying someone else's wife.

*Magi biwaha* consists of two parties agreeing upon the union
followed by the rituals of the actual marriage and finally the taking home of the bride by the groom.

Chori biwaha consists of the girl being coaxed by the boy and taken to his home directly. After a few days, she is sent to her parents house and after the completion of rituals at her parents, she is once more brought to the groom's house, as an officially declared wife.

Jari biwaha consists of a person talking a married woman into leaving her husband and marrying him instead. Unless and until the former spouse is not ritually appeased, the marriage is void.

In magi and chori marriages, the first rite called rit bujhaune (completing or fulfilling all rituals) is necessary where 2 bottles of raksi are offered alongwith 2 fowls to the girl's mama (maternal uncle). After the mama accepts one thigh of the fowl (cooked), or sends it through an authorised person to the girl's parents, then only do the boy's folks go to the girl's father for rit bujhaune. The rituals are chamal-sungur-dhami rit, subba rit, ama rit, pitree rit raksi, jad and where money must be presented. In chori marriages, besides the above stated rituals, there are others which are done as a sort of compensatory payment for making off with the girl. These rituals are sungur bujhaune rit (presenting the pig), chhana phorne rit (breaking the roof), and bhitta phorne rit (breaking the walls) which have to be completed.

Once the rit bujhaune is over, the groom has to go to the girl's house along with his procession, the janti. When all the rituals are over, the groom has to serve the girl's parents for the next three years and residing with her in her parents house to complete the final rit. Thus uxorilocal residence pattern is seen here as the male lives with his wife in her house. Once this period is over, then the girl or the bride is separated from her pitree kul (ancestral lineage), and then taken to the home of her husband. From then on, the couple is given social recognition and allowed to live together finally as man and wife. But today, such social and cultural norms have greatly changed and become flexible.

In Jari biwaha no rit bujhaune is essential, only the compensatory
jari dand or fine of Rs. 60 to Rs. 1000 has to be paid. Sept endogamy is considered incestuous as earlier stated and an interval of at least 7 generations must exist for mama, phupu, cheli to intermarry. Thus it is seen that while they maintain a fair degree of tribal endogamy, they are strict when it is a question of septs where sept exogamy is the rule.

Death Rites

Death is split into two aspects by these people, namely: untimely death or accidental and ordinary or normal death where there are no wounds inflicted.

Those who die by falling off cliffs, drowning in water, from sores or wounds, are all classified under the heading of untimely deaths. It is believed that such corpses must always be buried and never cremated. Also, the last rites or anthyasti karma has to be completed on that very day of burial. Such persons that have died accidental or untimely deaths are never included in the pitree- (ancestral lineage) of the Ath Pahariya Rai. If an untimely death occurs within the precincts of a house, then this house has to be abandoned, otherwise, this person's sodha or soul will trouble the householders. This is a rather strong belief existent among these people even today.

Full death rituals are performed for those who die natural deaths. These corpses are either buried or cremated depending on the situation and decision of the religo-social committee. To inform the villagers of this death, a gun is fired into the air in odd sequences. Purification of death pollution is done on a convenient day but never after Kartik purnima. The kriyaputri has to go to Vara ksetra at Chatara in Sunsari district, on the auspicious occasion of Vara ksetra purnima or Kartik purnima and bathe there. It is only after this that the whole household is considered actually and ritually purified. Uptill this time, the kriyaputri has to wear an old single piece of cloth wrapped on his body and observe the pollution as is the traditional custom, in the Hinduised Rai communities.

When one's mother dies, the kriyaputri (the son of the deceased
woman) has to not only abstain from drinking milk, but must not eat on any leaf which has a sort of milk sap. The death of one's father makes the *kriyaputri* abstain from consuming curds.

**Religion**

Every Ath Pahariya Rai sept has its own deity, and not only this, but even some sub-septs have their own deities too. Ancestral gods worshipped by these people are Jimi and Gaiyu, however, the deity Marga has taken up the highest place as it is seen to be worshipped by most Ath Pahariya folks. Besides these three, there are Hangmangba, Mahahangma Rani, Pungmeerihang, Ukpusamyang, Thungdangka, Panchtharaeni, Budaeli, Pangsamyang, Manglaenna and Pangdangba, who have played important roles in the lives of these people.

Pangdangba is a deity who has to be worshipped by all the Rai people, because this is a deity of their *pitree smhu* or paternal/agnatic lineage. Therefore, Pangdangba is worshipped as the *kul devta* of the Rai. On looking at the pantheon of deities worshipped by these Rai folks it can be seen that while some are indigenous to these people, others are distinctly borrowed from other tribes and the rest are brought in as *daijo* or dowry by the females. Household deities of these people are: Pangdangba, Pangsamyang, Achaen, Manglaenna, Hangsittla, Pungnaerihang, Ukpusamyang, though it is not compulsory that all these deities must be kept within their houses. But Pangdangba must be present in every *mul ghar* (ancestral house) of these Rai people. It is believed that these deities worshipped within the house are very short tempered and fearsome, and so the main or head of the household must, at intervals propitiate these deities with sacrifices of fowls, pigs, kids (goat), pigeons and sometimes flowers too.

Marga, Jimi, Gaiya, Hangmangcha, Teenkilla, Panchtaharaeni, Sansari, Jabudaeni are all village deities. It is believed that among these deities, Teenkilla is the one with the short temper while the others are gentle and pleased when offered puja. But Teenkilla is so dangerous that should anyone say anything about him, even accidentally, the concerned person is hit with cataracts in his or her eyes, or begins to vomit blood. This they ardently believe even
today. Marga is worshipped as the chief of all the deities in the Ath Pahariya Rai pantheon. Marga is actually called Marga Hang showing respect and honour due to him. Though there are many tales about the creation of Marga, he is believed to be the younger brother of Baraha. When he was travelling around looking for a place to settle, he reached Dhankuta and decided to remain there, so he placed char dam at the feet of Malim Jimi (ancestral gods of the Rai) and taking permission, erected char killa (4 forts) and thus lived there. Marga is appealed to when people have to be purified, ask for pardon, vows or promises to be made in times of illness and such. The persons involved in offering prayers to please the various deities are seen to be the priests of the Rai community, namely magkata, yeba, chamba, tingnamsing, janpa, etc. The easiest way of appeasing a deity is to offer a blood sacrifice of an animal. The priest's function is to be available at all times to perform puja at the shrines of these deities. Every sept has its own priest. The status of priesthood is a hereditary affair among these Ath Pahariya Rai, and thus after the death of a priest his eldest son automatically becomes the successor, whether he likes it or not and even if he is an invalid. If there are no direct sons then the charge shifts to the nearest male relative of the same sept and lineage (agnatic).

Sometimes, the deities enter the bodies of the devotees and express their identities. Mostly it is the kul devta who speaks through the devotees. Thus, the troubles and sickness prevalent in their families are caused by none but their own family deities or kul and village deities or gram. The religion of the Ath Pahariya Rai is based on dr or fear, therefore, any problems such as famines, drought, household trouble, domestic animal deaths, women being barren, deaths of family members, etc. are alleged to be the result of the deities being angry. On account of such beliefs, they fear their deities and perform puja on schedule.

Festivals

There are two categories of festivals among the Ath Pahariya, i.e. family and village. These festivals celebrated within the family are Maghe Sankranti and Srawane Sankaranti in the same way as other Hindus do. Dasain and Tihar are not celebrated as there is no
custom existent, as observed. During the period of these festivals, they eat one good meal and state that they have celebrated. The main festivals that these people celebrate are: Baisakae Chad, Bhadaure Chad and Kartikae Chad (also called Mangsirae Chad).

The Baisakae Chad is celebrated for 7 days at a stretch and dhulae puja is the main ritual after which the pitree puja is done, where the household concerned must slaughter a pig, which is a compulsory regulation. On the last day of the puja, the young boys and girls accumulate at a place (in Dhankuta Bazar, it is the tundikhel which is a flat field) where the young Rai boys shoot arrows with their bows at the necklaces of the girls. If the arrows hit their marks then the owners of the necklaces must give the marksman a treat. It is customary for the girls to provide the boys with food and drinks.

Bhadaurae Chad is called Chanungi or (nawagi chad) and on this festival the new crops which have been recently harvested are offered on the than or shrines of their gods through a priest, who acts as the mediator. The offerings include ghaiya, pangdur, kodo, mkai and fruits. This festival lasts for a period of five days. Here also pitree puja is a must.

Kartik Chad is the greatest festival of the Ath Pahariya Rai. It lasts for a period of 15 days. During this period, devotional songs of various deities are sung praising them, in all Ath Pahariya Rai homes. The houses themselves are festooned with flowers, oil lamps are lit in great numbers and dance and song can be heard in every house. Here too, pitree puja is done as is compulsory.

Society and Social norms

The Ath Pahariya Rai families are split into two kinds, namely: the joint family and the nuclear family. Large extended families are very rare among these people. While a nuclear family will contain 2 to 7 members, the joint family has 5 to 20 members. The ordinary family normally has 5 to 6 members. Rai are a patrilineal society and the household head is the oldest member who exercises full authority. The property rights, however, belong to the sons. During deaths and pitree karma, it is compulsory for the sons to be
present. The girls or daughters of these Rai people, are also given importance in their society.

There are three types of kin seen among the Ath Pahariya Rai. Firstly are the traditional agnates, followed by the affines and lastly the relationship created between two persons with neighbours and friends as witnesses. An example of this third kind of relationship is the meet or meetaeri saino.

The kin and relatives are called by special names. Ordinarily, relationships are traced back for six generations and is called saino kaelaunu. In the agnatic relationship of the person concerned (besides his or her other relatives) elder brothers are amlu while the younger brothers are anjo or anja. In the first generation of the person's descent, all matrilateral kin are called agongba and females are agongma. Two generations higher up, the paternal and maternal kin are all lumped in as aduba (for males) and aduma (for females). In the lower three generations of the person, most relationship names seem to be the same. To assess the relationship, they ask - kahmiga saino paklaega? meaning, 'on what side is your relationship to me?' or some say - khaena lambale which means 'which way have you come from?'

**Dress Ornaments**

It is extremely easy to distinguish Ath Pahariya women from their tongue clothes and behaviour. Women wear white homespun maekhli (a sort of loose gown which starts at the throat and ends at the knees), on the lower torso they wear either a homespun or bazar purchased teen tokae sari worn like a lungi (cloth strip almost two cubits broad and three cubits long with the ends stitched together). A takhombi is also used and this is a shawl-like cloth used to cover the upper torso from the outside or over the maekhli. This takhombi is very nicely embroidered by the Raini (Rai women).

The Ath Pahariya men wear the usual daura-surwal, shirts-surwal, with a waistcoat which is called an osccoat due to the phonological difficulty in pronunciation. Patuka is also wrapped around their waists and they wear turbans on their heads also. The cloth used
for the *patuka* (a long length of cloth wound around the waist as a belt and also to buttress the waist when carrying heavy loads up and down the hill tracks) and turban are mostly homespun. 

Ornaments worn by women mostly include things like: *chikima* (East India Company *mohar* necklace), *rangchi* (East India Company *rupiya* necklace), *kansi* or earrings, *karna ful* or earrings, *chura* and *kanchau* or bangles. Ornaments are mostly made of silver and sometimes gold is used also. Men are not observed to be wearing any sort of ornaments, except for the common ring on the fingers.

**Economic Status**

It can be observed that the economic backbone of these Ath Pahariya Rai has been agriculture since ancient times, however, today it is also seen that agriculture has become a means through which they barely survive. Due to the *kipat* system, every family has a certain amount of land holdings, but when inquiring about how much land a family possesses, the matter of when the sept split and the number of families existent then, and as the families multiplied, how the land shrunk till every family today possess land but only in name, is the truth that emerges. Since the *tiro* or tax of the *kipat* was not levied in proportion to the size of the land, but according to the house registration, it proved to be a cause for much dissatisfaction among these people. The *kipat* lands are classed into the *besi khet* (lands in the river valleys and flat) and *pakho khet* (lands on the hillsides). The former being on the lowlands receives ample water or is easily irrigatable and hence good for wet rice culture to flourish, but the latter or *pakho khet* is on hillsides where irrigation is not that easy and some places are just dry, terraces have to be cut and retaining walls have to be constructed to prevent landslides and such measures are necessary to help the Ath Pahariya to grow some food to survive.

Whether they have little or a lot of land, Ath Pahariya Rai are basically agriculturists. Most of them cultivate their lands and sustain themselves with the produce, while others cultivate lands on contracts or leases. These leased lands belong to Rai folks and are located on very rough terrain, therefore leased and these folks
in turn cultivate others lands on lease. Since most of the Ath Pahariya Rai lands with are within the kipat are situated on hilly terrain, very minimal lands are observed to be in good paddy cultivating areas. In consequence, Rai who possess lands in the wet rice culture areas where the areas are lowlying and water is in plentiful can also be found among these people though in an absolute minimum. On festivals, or pujas of deities, pitree puja, deaths, marriage and such occasions, dhan or paddy is a compulsory item, and thus it is seen that paddy is of great importance and significance among the Rai. However, the main crops that they grow are millet and maize, the former being used to distill the homemade brew called raksi while the latter is consumed. Thus, it can be stated that these cereals form the staple diet of these people. Besides these, juneli, phapar (buckwheat), wheat, pulses, beans, etc. are found growing on their lands. These are divided into barkhe bali (monsoon crop) and hiunde bali (winter crop) and they are planted in rotation, though not in a methodical and set pattern as is the case of modern agricultural practices. In those villages where there is availability of ample manure, crops are planted and harvested twice a year. However, there are places where crops are grown once a year and sometimes none at all.

In their kitchen gardens and sometimes in their other fields, various vegetables like bitter gourds, ghiraula, jhingaeni, radish, pumpkins, green sag, squash are seen growing profusely. Cash crops include tomatoes, potatoes, sweet potatoes, and tobacco. To make their land cultivable, it must be thoroughly ploughed at least twice, manured once prior to ploughing and once after ploughing. Next comes the plaining of the land followed by ploughing for the third time and along the furrows made by the plough, seeds are dropped. In the case of rice the seedlings are transplanted onto the water logged muddy soil.

Livestock rearing and breeding is another occupation that supplements the income or produce from agricultural works. Livestock means basically pigs and fowls which are important animals in the Rai communities. Their importance is that they are required during festivals and also for all ancestral rituals and propitiation of deities. Hence, it is not uncommon to observe 2 to 5
pigs and 4 - 500 fowls in an Ath Pahariya Rai household. Cattle and goats are primarily reared for their dung which is essential for manuring fields. Rai people rearing buffaloes, ducks, horses, etc. is a sight that is never seen. Therefore, on account of such animals like pigs, hens, etc. being related to deities, gods or ancestors, compels the Rai people to rear these livestock in a compulsory kind of way.

Another source of income among these people is from the practice of working as hired labourers. The fact is that whatever they grow is insufficient as it feeds them for a mere 3 to 4 months, so they have no option but to work as hired porters on daily wages. Carrying stones, manure, loads changing, repairing roofs of rich people of that area are some of the works they do as hired labourers for daily wages. They do a lot of portering on the Dharan Dhankuta route, carrying cement, lime, corrugated sheets for roofing, government equipments for projects further up, and other materials. It is an ordinary job for them to carry a rich man or a woman in an ulinkat (open sedan-like chair) on the Dharan Dhankuta route, though this practice has been greatly reduced due to the road that exists today. Ath Pahariya Rai people above the age of ten and both male and female are seen to be working as porters and thus carrying loads during the day while using the earned wages to eat their meals has become a way of life for these people and that too a hand to mouth existence in the literal sense.

The last way in which they are earning their living is through business, however, no Ath Pahariya Rai has been seen to have opened a permanent sort of shop, which is seen to expand as time passes. In the suburbs of Dhankuta bazar, many Rai women have opened small shanty restaurants catering to the needs of the common people who are ready to spend money on the usual intoxicants like jad, raksi all the year round. But for a majority of these Raini this is just a temporary occupation. Besides this liquor and food catering they have a hat or local bazar every Wednesday where these Rai women are seen with produce or various kinds from their fields and the inevitable jad and raksi. The things sold at this weekly fair are vegetables, pulses, green chillies, eggs, chickens and this helps them to earn some money. Tobacco vending is considered a monopoly of the Rai males only.
These small scale business transactions are seen to just help in fulfilling the necessities of their daily lives, since they are seen to buy salt, kerosene oil, matches, soap, etc. out of the money they receive from their sales at the local weekly bazar or hat.
BHAND

The districts of Darchula, Baitadi and Dadeldhura lying in the Mahakali Zone, located at the western most tip of the kingdom and adjacent to Almora in the state of Uttar Pradesh in India, are inhabited by a people called the Bhand who take pride in calling themselves Rana Bhand.

Settlement

These Bhand live in those remote places which are located along river banks. A majority of these Bhand folks have no houses of their own and those who do, have huts which are of the small thatched types as has been observed. Most of these people do not possess lands for cultivation and the few that do have no more than three ropani per head. They cultivate others lands on a hire or lease basis and could be called tenant farmers. Besides having skill in cultivation, they do not know any other skills which could help them increase their income. They are also unaware of the modern ways in which they can improve their crops quality. Thus, this production is of a very low and minimal level for their sustainence.

Historical Background

There is a temple known as Uday Dev Mandir in Patan even today, where the masane or the kul deity of the Bhand stands guard at the entrance. This temple houses the tutelary deity of Raja Uday Dev Singh. On looking at this temple and the settlement of the Bhand in that area, it can be seen that the migration and settlement of these Rana Bhand occurred at the time of that temple’s erection. The ruins of the fort and the tundikhel (ground) of Uday Dev Singh, the Uday Dev Temple and the fire on Sipchankot are evidences of the Bhand settlement in those ancient times. It is assumed by some scholars, that these Rana Bhand were refugees from the Musalman invasion of the Indian plains, and they took shelter in the folds of the Nepalses hills, where they were confident no Musalman would follow. Thus it is stated, that such a refugee couple was given shelter by Raja Uday Dev and then conferred on them the title of Rana Bhand at a later date. Today, the Rana Bhand claim to be descendants of this initial couple. Due to lack of concrete proof, scholars have not taken this legendary story seriously.
Today, these Rana Bhand are engaged in the moulding and firing of earthenware pots and are misidentified as Kumal, solely on account of their profession.

From Patan these Rana Bhand are seen to have spread to places as far as Baitadi, Darchula and Dadeldhura to search for better job opportunities so that they could keep away from the clutches of hunger, disease and death due to poverty. Once more it can be clearly seen that these Bhand are slowly migrating towards the fertile terai areas where a hardworker can sustain himself in a much easier way than in the harsh hills. The Bhand population is estimated to be in a minority and hence less in numbers indicating their gradual assimilation into other larger tribes or a proper census count is unavailable due to negligence and ignorance.

The Bhand couple who are alleged to have been the initial ancestors of today's Bhand, are believed to have fled Kumaon city from the Musalman to protect their Hindu faith and settled down at a place called Patan in Baitadi district along with their Raja Udaya Dev Singh, as recounted by the Bhand of those regions. Later on Uday Dev Singh settled his subjects in this new area and then erected a statue of Siddhanath.

**Physical Characteristics**

These people resemble the people of the North-Western regions of Nepal and possess the strong Indo-European type of strain in their features and behaviour. The Bhand are very similar to these Khas.

**Language**

The Rana Bhand have their own language which is of the Indo-Aryan type and uses the same devnagari script. During various cultural programmes, they sing songs in their own language and their sisters are made to dance even today. While begging on the roads or fishing in rivers, they are forever singing these Indianised songs. During these begging trips, the Bhand make their sisters dance while they collect donations from the spectators in cash or kind. During the month of Srawan, that is from the first till the last day, they follow a strange cultural tradition where they make their sisters sing while they clamber onto their backs and walk around uttering profanities. This is called Bhand Bhailo which is done even today. On this occasion, they rub white clayey mud on their
foreheads and don masks made up of the horns and teeth of dead buffaloes. Then they walk around the town or village speaking anything that comes in their minds and freely without any inhibitions. Some scholars have assumed that on account of their behaviour at this period in Srawan, they are labelled as Bhand. And it is possible that it is because of these Bhand speaking anything good or bad, at any moment and situation, regardless of the social restrictions, the word Bhand Bhailo has come into popular usage. A sample of the Rana Bhand words in comparison with Nepali and English are listed as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rana Bhand</th>
<th>Nepali</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Suvar</td>
<td>bhat</td>
<td>rice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gesalu</td>
<td>dal</td>
<td>lentils</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ldo</td>
<td>gai</td>
<td>cow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jhekva or fowl</td>
<td>kukhura</td>
<td>chicken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nmruva</td>
<td>kukur</td>
<td>dog</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kh</td>
<td>chora</td>
<td>house</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sutku</td>
<td>chori</td>
<td>son</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cutli</td>
<td>chillum</td>
<td>daughter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sulpa (for smoking pot)</td>
<td>hukka</td>
<td>chillum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chillum bubble</td>
<td>daurafire</td>
<td>wood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ky a da chcu</td>
<td>kata jane ho</td>
<td>Where to?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kha it</td>
<td>khana knanu bhyo</td>
<td>Have you</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Dress and Ornaments**

As a direct result of their poverty, Bhand folks are normally found wearing clothes of the handed-down kinds through charity, therefore it cannot be said that they possess a particular type of dress mode. The clothes worn by their males are seen to consist mainly of daura-suruwal, Oscoat, shirt, pant, topi and slippers too, however, a majority of their males wear the langauti and kachhad.

The women wear the sari or phariya, phyaura, choli, blouse, etc. Ornaments worn by these females consist of silver bangles, phuli and bulaki on their nostrils, and some hang brass rings on their ear-
lobes. *Pote* or glass bead necklaces are worn by most, while some who are better off wear the *muga* necklaces. Necklaces made up of a string of old East India coins are also used to adorn themselves.

**Life Cycle Rites**

**Birth:** When a child, whether a son or a daughter, is born in a Rana Bhand family, the kin and neighbourhood friends present as much money as they can afford just to have a glimpse of the child and this is known as *mukh herne*, which is a tradition existent among these people and also others in the country.

*Navran* or the naming of the child occurs on the 9th day after birth, if a daughter and the 11th day, should it be a son. Those who are financially well off invite their kin, neighbours and friends who are given a feast of rice, lentils and mutton along with alcoholic beverages. The sisters, nieces or nephews of the family are the priests who perform this *navran*. An astrologer is consulted at his house and a suitable name is selected after calculating with the help of the day, date, time and the child is named. Necessary items for this ritual are: barley, sesame, *aksata*, vermillion or *sindur* and *abir* or *kesri*. Then the household is purified with *gaunth* or the urine of a cow believed to be scared by Hindus and also to have the power of disinfecting any sort of physical and spiritual pollution. Now the child is tied with a thread around its wrists and ankles.

When all these rituals are over, the guests are fed with the usual fare consisting of lentils, rice, curries, meat and the ever present *jad* and *raksi*. This is stated as being the compulsory custom in Bhand society.

**Pasni:** A Rana Bhand boy will have his initial *pasni* or solid food eating ceremony when 6 months of age while a girl will have hers at the age of five months. However, if a family cannot afford the expenses that will be incurred in such ceremonies, then there is no hard and fast rule which says that it must be done. The child is fed with a silver coin and presented with clothes if they can afford. The maternal kin are required to present a *bata* or bowl as is the custom. This *pasni* is concluded with a feast where *dal, bhat, tarkari* of mutton, alcoholic beverages purchased from the bazar are offered to those guests, kin and neighbours present as is the custom.
Chhaewar: This is the hair shaving ceremony for the boys when they reach the age of 3, 5, 7 etc. years. The bahini jawai or chhori jawai, meaning sister's husband or daughter's husband respectively, shave the boy's hair. This is followed by cooking of sale roti and puri. Those who are able to afford, slaughter goats and chickens. The local band is in full swing. Jad and raksi flow freely and everyone is gay and happy during this chhaewar. The boy is taken to the temple where the deities are enshrined, and there he is actually shaved and then afterwards shown around the village as is their custom. Once this is over it is now understood that the boy has become a man and should his parents die at any time now, he is fully eligible to perform their death rites.

Marriage Practices: There existed a custom of progeny exchange in marriages or paying bride-prices in the beginning and called sato ra potro, among these Bhand. Today this custom is a thing of the past, and should a man desire to get his son married off, he has to go to the girl's house and meet her father personally and then ask for the girl's hand for his son. The practice is for the boy's father to address the girl's father saying that if he is agreed to the match, then they can be samdhi-samdhi meaning affinal relations. Should the girl's father be of the same mind and inclined to grant his daughter's hand, then he answers in the affirmative. He promises to give away his daughter whose (name he says) to the man's son and also says the name of the groom-to-be, and thus confirms the match. Now the girl's father again states that he was of the mind to perform this marriage but since his financial position is weak, he asks the boy's father to 'lend' him Rs. 2000 - Rs. 3000 so that the desired marriage could be performed. This is the way in which a sort of advance payment for the marriage expenses to be incurred is asked for, as is the custom. This money which is taken as a 'loan' is not to be reimbursed to the boy's father, as is a very prevalent custom. At this time or moment, a goat is presented to the girl's side and according to the custom, their saino or relationship is changed. This goat offered is called Bhat bakhro, according to their custom.

The bride is presented with 8 to 10 pathi rice grains, 2 pathi wheat, 1/2 mana beaten rice and 2 mana sakhar or molasses, 2 mana lentils, a pair of clothes and some ornaments - full set if possible. Neighbours, friends and kin folks are invited for participating in the janti, and the members are given food to eat at the groom's house prior to departure towards the bride's house. The Damai are
the only ones who are given food as well as jad and raksi. Before
the janti starts to move, the householders of the groom propitiate
their tutelary and ancestral deities namely masane and pisach
respectively. This is done within the house in the place of worship,
where they are housed. While the ancestral deity is the kul, the
tutelary deity is called ista. A brahmin priest performs puja or
worship to the deities Malikarjun and Ltinath. It is after these are
concluded that the janti commences moving.

These Rana Bhand are seen to marry among Badi, Das and Hudke
people. The custom of the bride's father performing kanyadaan is
prevalent today. When the groom performs varni, or at the time of
dulhan phadkaune or whenever the marriage occurs within the
year, the bride's parents must be presented a goat each of these
times. This presentation of a goat is a sort of a compensatory
repayment of the previous loans taken from the guests and
acquaintance of the maiti, and now after it has been repaid, a grand
feast is organised.

The kanyadaan occurs after the bride's father washes the feet of
both the groom and the bride and then after this he puts his
daughter's hand in that of the groom telling him that now she is his
and he is fully responsible for her. In this way he hands over the
responsibility of his daughter to his jawai or son-in-law and
completes the rituals involved according to their custom and
traditional methods. The goat for the feast has to be provided by
the groom's party, for it is not at all compulsory for the bride's
people to give the janti a feast. After the bridal couple return to the
groom's house, his sisters give them sagun to eat and drink. This is
the custom existent among many tribes.

The next day, a sort of dance festival is held in the compound of
the groom's house, where a variety of dances can be seen. On this
day a feast called Ram Sita bhoj bhter is organised and given to the
guests and kin who are invited. This ends the marriage's first phase.

After this, when the couple goes to the girl's house for the first time
after the marriage, koseli or gift must be taken along and the items
that make up this koseli are sale roti, puri, raksi and such foods
and beverages. These are presented to the girl's parents. All these
items amount to about a full doko and sometimes even two or three
dokos. The person who carries this doko is no other than the boy's
father who is also the samdhi of the girl's father. When this trio
Arrive in this way it is considered auspicious and so the girl's parents anoint them with tika and then only take them into the house where there is a small feast held in their honour. The following day, the girl's parents load the doko with as much daijo or food items as was brought from the boy's house in a reciprocal gesture, then anoint their daughter and son-in-law and also their samdhi with the usual tikka and then they are sent off.

Since these Rana Bhand are considered to be in the level of untouchables they marry among the tribes called the Badi and Das which are also designated to the same lower level in the Hindu caste hierarchical structure.

They also believe that the Hudke are the thimma or cross-breeds of the Damai who are also untouchables and so marriages between the Bhand and Hudke are seen to occur in the region of Darchula district, located within the Mahakali Zone. But the prevalence of the Rana Bhand females being married into other tribes is seen to be non-existent and completely tabu as has been observed. Since these Rana Bhand feel inferior to other tribes on account of their low caste status in the society within which they exist, they have the problem of being unable to break the tabu and commence intertribal marriages with other neighbouring tribes, regardless of the set caste hierarchy, as other tribes are doing today, even if at a slow and gradual pace.

Death Rites

On the death of a Rana Bhand, the person who is normally the son of the deceased undergoes the death pollution austerities as is prevalent among the Hinduised tribes, except that they eat yams and tubers with the usual rice which they cook themselves as in the tradition. After the thirteen days of pollution are over, the kriyaputri and the house are purified. There is a practise where the foods the deceased preferred and the clothes he wore have to be donated to someone needy, and this is done on the thirteenth day after the death or on the day of purification. Only food items, clothes and money are given away in charity or as donations, and these are used to purify the kriyaputri and the house. Here, gaunth, barley, sesame, vermillion and aksata are used in the case of adult deaths but for minors, this pollution ban is lifted after three days and the house is purified. Abstainence from milk, milk products oils and salts is a must for the kriyaputri during this period of death.
pollution. The other householders must also adhere to this restriction for the stipulated period. After all this is over, they practise the ritual of offering the pind exactly similar to what the Hindus do, after 6 months first, then after a year.

Religion and Festivals

Being Hindus, these people worship the deities of the Hindu pantheon as is expected. They accept the existence of bhut-pret or spirits and firmly believe in their evil influences on their lives. They also worship and propitiate their kul devtas or ancestral deities which are known by the dreadful names of Pisach and Masane. They also perform a curious type of worship called Bir Puja where a goat (uncastrated) called a boka, is sacrificed to the deity. Dasai, Tihar, Maghe Sankranti and Srawan Sankranti are also celebrated by these people. Rana Bhand women celebrate the festival of Teej by fasting the whole day and praying to the awesome goddess Gairadevi.

*Kul devta puja* as earlier mentioned, is performed in order to propitiate the dreadful Pisach and Masane. These two deities were retained as the lackeys of the deity called Siddhanath which is housed in the temple built by King Uday Dev, because in those days, there were a lot of problems and obstacles encountered at this shrine, and the custom of offering blood sacrifice to Pisach and Masane from Navratri till Vijaya Dashmi during the time of the Dasai festival when they and other tribes in Nepal, worship and pay their respects to their tutelary deity, Siddhanath, who came into existence then, so they state.

*Puja* is performed by a brahmin priest with full rites and rituals of Hinduism, he appeals to the Pisach and Masane to help in protecting the tutelary deity of Uday Dev even today. In the month of Jestha, worship to Masane and Pisach is performed so that they are able to obtain a good crop, and protection of the village community from all sorts of problems.

Economic status

Due to the landlessness of these Rana Bhand, they maintain themselves by working for their richer neighbours, or by fishing and begging. While some these people work as hired labourers, others cultivate lands obtained on lease. Some, however, possess a
purely refugee status and survive by doing menial works for their neighbours, begging for their food, and by netting fish. This sort of work provides them insufficient income for survival and most of these people are living in conditions almost beyond belief, in the areas of Darchula. But it is different in the Baitadi region where they are able to build their huts and plant some vegetables. In spite of this advantage they have over the Bhand of Darchula, they are still under compulsion to work for their daily bread and are able to eat two square meals a day, which is the edge they have over their brothers from Darchula. In the region of Dadeldhura, the Bhand are able to cultivate crops on the lands they possess while they also mould chillum or clay pipes for smoking tobacco or marijuana, and sell this to earn a small amount of money which helps them.

Economically, these Bhand are a tribe who are at the bottom of the poverty pit, and their tribal rites and rituals are the main causes for them to increase their spending when it comes to feasts, it is seen that they are spending more on these activities today than a decade ago. It has also been observed that on navran, chhaewar, marriages, deaths and such occasions, they have to invite their neighbours kin and acquaintances for a feast where a lot of money is spent. This is what seems to cause them to slide economically into the earlier mentioned pit.

As mentioned earlier, they all do not possess lands and the few that do, do not have enough for cultivation of crops which will last them a year. We can say that the little lands they possess are in fact negligible when looked at on an overall basis, thus it is correct to say that the Bhand are a tribe which is landless and thus homeless. The Bhand live in the hilly areas of their place of habitation and very little can be grown on the megre and rocky lands they possess, because the soil is yet to become cultivable and is now still in the gravel stage of breakdown. Paddy, ghaiya, maize, wheat and millet are the crops they plant, and although they toil endlessly throughout the year, whatever they produce barely feeds them for a month. They are unknown about matters like developed seeds, fertilisers, insecticides pesticides and such techniques. Today the little lands they did possess in the past have been slowly and cunningly taken over by crafty and scheming local tyrants, for whom the susceptible Rana Bhand work, ploughing the very lands which once belonged to them or their ancestors.

Bhand also rear livestock like other tribals do. Animals like cows,
buffaloes, goats and fowls are the creatures found around in a Bhand settlement. They do not rear these animals with a view to sell them but instead they state that these animals and their produce, like milk, eggs, etc. are for home consumption. Thus they are not economically aware of the good income obtainable from rearing livestock for commercial purposes. They say that they would rather use these in ceremonies and rituals and feasts rather than sell them to generate income, indicating that they have a certain degree of pride in them. Also, the fact that milk and their other forms are sold in the markets with good sales and profits as these are always in demand in any part of the globe, however, no one wants the milk from the cattle of the Rana Bhand because they are considered to be of a low status in the socio-religious ladder. This is the cause why the Bhand have not begun to exploit this potential income source. In short, it is observed that livestock rearing is not profitable for these people for they are more interested in using these for their own purposes than supplying the demands of the market and earning some money which would boost their income.

They are always on the edge of poverty on account of their limited and low incomes. Their main income source is seen to be the manufacturing of clay items like the hukka or hubble-bubble, chillum or pipe for smoking tobacco or marijuana, gagro or mud pots for carrying water, chulo or a mobile mud stove, madal - a percussion instrument which they sell. Fishing is another source (irregular) of income, followed by ploughing the fields of the landed gentry in the area and doing menial works too. The daily wages, whether in cash or in kind are extremely low which gives them no respite and opportunity to raise themselves out and above that terrible cesspool of poverty.

Social Status

The Rana Bhand are looked down upon since they are of a low caste in the country or region of their settlement, by the Hindu hierarchy. Since the rural areas of Nepal are still steeped in the ancient Hindu beliefs and fanaticism, the quagmire of casteism, superstition and untouchability is still a strong and almost physical force which drives the people of these regions even in this age of computers. Due to the low literacy rate, poverty and ignorance, the feeling of a higher and a lower caste is still prevalent and firmly adhered to in these Bhand areas of habitation.
Fooding Habits

Similar to the other tribes living in those regions, the Bhand also eat the common diet or staple food which is dhendo or mush made up of millet or maize flour. Besides these, they also consume rice, lentils, fish, meat, and the usual jad and raksi which have become somewhat of a trade mark with the tribes of Nepal whether in the hills or the terai. Should these Bhand have noting to eat, they do not hesitate to beg and the food obtained in such ways is cooked into a kind of broth which they drink like soup.

In the months of Chaitra and Baisakh, they drink the broth prepared from the green plant called sisno or stinging nettles. When it becomes a question of their survival, they go into the forests and dig up roots, tubers and such underground stems and roots for food. Among these are those called gittha and bhyakur. These are eaten after being boiled. Thus, it is clear that these people are living in extremely miserable conditions and the food they eat is a cause for the high infant mortality rate due to insufficient nutritional quota in the food for the growing child. Nothing seems to be happening for these people and they seem to be decreasing in population, possibly heading towards the door of extinction within the next few decades.
Baram

Settlement

The hills of central Nepal, in the region of Gorkha, Dhading and Tanahun districts are sporadically populated by a tribe of people known as the Baram. The inhabit the areas of Aru Cheprak, Choprak, Taku Kot, Ghyampesal, Pandrung, Kutujung Simle and Simle Kutujung in the district of Gorkha, Maidev, Khalte Phyaksi, Nalang in adjacent Dhading and also neighboring Tanahun districts. They are said to be spread much further but the exact areas cannot be mentioned due to lack of specific data.

The house or dhuri count is listed in an approximated form which is open to amendment:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place (Villages)</th>
<th>District</th>
<th>dhuri (houses)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maidev</td>
<td>Dhading</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nalang</td>
<td>Dhading</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khalte Phyaksi</td>
<td>Dhading</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narja and Kablas</td>
<td>Dhading</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aru Cheprak</td>
<td>Gorkha</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taku kot</td>
<td>Gorkha</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deurali</td>
<td>Gorkha</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pandrung</td>
<td>Gorkha</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kutujung Simle</td>
<td>Gorkha</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simle Kutujung</td>
<td>Gorkha</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The houses count in Tanahun and other places is not known due to factors such as scattered settlements, heavy assimilation into other tribes and the fact that they do not want to be labelled as a low caste doles (palanquin bearers) and thus use surnames other than Baram consequentialy losing their identities.

Historical Background

These Baram claim to be descendants of the Sunwars of eastern Nepal. The story of the five brothers (in the Jirel legend) Surels, Sunwars, Jirels, Rais and Limbus ancestors is joined to the Baram
origins as they claim that among these five, Sunwars were their ancestors and did migrate to the west at a later date, which they cannot verify though, and it is thus a matter of assumption. It is said that in ancient times, they looked after the lands and cattle of the kings in Gorkha and Dhading regions (and possibly Tanahun) and they had to pay tributes which consisted of fruits such as mangoes and litchis which grew then and even now in abundance in regions of their settlement. At a later date (unknown) they state that they were given kipat and thus were liberated from being mere caretakers. This kipat they retain even today, so they claim.

Physical characteristics

In the process of describing a Baram, the task becomes rather difficult since there are two varieties. One is the mongoloid type with the typical epicanthic fold on the eye lids, low and depressed nasal roots leading to flat noses slightly flared at the tips, thick lips (though not negroid) and wheat brown complexions, while the other variety is fair-skinned, wide eyed, possessing high nose bridges, thin or medium lips and all the other traits possessed by the Indo-Aryan type.

Their bodies are of medium stature and the males are sturdy and muscular due to the manual labour they do and the women are also strong as they also work side by side with their men folks. As mentioned earlier, their complexions range from the very fair to the wheatish brown, but no dark-skinned ones were observed. Due to their close physical contact with the other tribes living in these areas of their habitation, the Baram have been influenced in their language, eating habits, work patterns and such aspects. When looking at the Baram, one can discern that they are the descendants of a cross breeding process started a long time ago.

Language

Baram have their own kura or language which is quite different from that of other surrounding tribes and it is called Bal kura. This language is spoken by the Baram of the various places in Gorkha and Dhading districts but regarding Tanahun, nothing is known.
A few words and sentences are listed for an idea for research scholars:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Nepali</th>
<th>Bal kura</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Water</td>
<td>pani</td>
<td>ahwa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fire</td>
<td>aago</td>
<td>mui</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You</td>
<td>timi</td>
<td>nga</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

English sentences: 

*Where are you going?*  
*Ku ni yalo?*  
*Come here.*  
*Edai ra edai*  

*Bal kura* sentences:

From the above samples we can see that this language is derived from the Tibeto-Burman family, and *Bal* means child while *kura* means language, thus the language spoken from childhood. This is how they interpret this.

**Tribe**

The Baram do not seem to have septs or *thars*, however, they possess *gotr* such as: Kausalya, Nansing, Rana and these are held under the Baram banner, so they say. Marriage within the same *gotr* is sacrilege and expresses the prevalence of *gotr* exogamy, while tribally they are endogamous. However, there seem to have been cases where mixed marriages (with other tribes) have occurred and do occur but on a definitely low scale. Some Baram claim descent from the Sunwars, especially Bhakti Sunwar popularly known as Ekkalavva of Mahabharat fame. This is further strengthened by them using the *thar*, *gotr* and *parwa* of the Sunwar tribe, though only the Baram of Aru Cheprak VDC are currently initiating this campaign.

**Family**

The extended family system is not found among these Baram. They build their separate houses prior to or after their marriages and rear their own children in their nuclear families. However, they do not go off elsewhere but construct their dwellings in the vicinity of the *mul ghar* (main ancestral home).
Thus, after some generations, there is a sort of clustered village all around the vicinity of the *mul ghar*. Like most tribal societies, the husband is the household head and the housewife is responsible for all the household and other related chores. But one of the most important functions of the housewife is to give birth and rear the children.

As long as the father is alive, the sons (though living separately in their own houses nearby) acknowledge him as their leader and mentor.

After his death and in the situation where a sister has to be married, all the brothers get together (at the *mul ghar* or at the dwelling of the eldest brother) and discuss the matter. They say that the sister's marriage or any such sort of matter is the joint responsibility of all the brothers.

**Life Cycle Rites**

**Birth**

On the birth of a child, the new mother and child are kept on the *mul ochhayan* or main bed which is situated near the hearth. She is not allowed to touch the hearth for a period of 11 days, that is the duration of birth pollution observed by the entire household. On the 11th day after the birth, the persons of another *gotr* are invited and it is they who perform the purification rites by sprinkling *gaunth* (like the Hindus) on the mother and child, householders and the interior and exterior of the house. They say that the *kutumba* or relatives of the same *gotr* are not permitted to perform this purification, but the reason was not clarified.

The naming ceremony or the *navran* as the Hindus call this rite is not done as in other Hinduism influenced tribes for these Baram do not consult horoscopes and such, but just name the child according to the day of its birth. A child born on a Sunday or Aitabar will be called Aita, and one born on Tuesday or Manglabar will be Mangal. The children are named in commemoration of some incidents or happenings too. A small feast is given to the few close
kin, in the evening and the usual *jad* and *raksi* are drunk to wash down the food and meal served.

The dried up navel of the child falls off after a period and this is taken and buried at the edge of the hearth to ensure that this child always comes home in time for his or her meals, so they believe. If this is not done then the navel is made into a *butti* or amulet (talisman) which is hung around the child's neck for good health.

**Rice Feeding (Bhat Khuaune)** is performed 6 months after the birth of the child if a boy and 5 months after if a girl. It is the same as that of other tribes. The rituals are almost similar. The child is initially bathed and then readied. The maternal uncle or *mama* feeds him or her with rice using a silver rupee coin (East India Company coin). He presents his niece or nephew with a new set of clothes. After this, the other kin and neighbours do likewise. They also make presents of clothes and cash.

**Hair Shaving (Chhaewar)** is performed during odd years and only for boys. It can be done when the child is either 2, 5, 7, etc. years old. Here too, the maternal uncle plays a vital role. This ritual of hair cutting or *chhaewar* is done in a rather unusual way. The boy is first taken to the goth or cowshed, where the calf's halter is put around the child's head and then the *mama* or maternal uncle cuts his locks completely, leaving not even the top knot or *tupi*, if the boy is less than five. However, should the boy be more than five years old, then the *tupi* is left intact. This is followed by the inevitable feast in the evening.

During this feast, things like *sale roti* (doughnut-like bread), buff meat, mutton, *jad*, *raksi*, etc. are offered to those present on this happy occasion. A somewhat parallel ceremony for girls is the *gunew cholo dine*, where girls at the age of 11 to 13 are given *gunews* (sari-like clothes), *cholos* (blouses), etc., but no special ceremony is held. This is to mark their entrance into womanhood as it is at approximately this age that their menstrual cycle commences.

**Marriages Practices**

There are various types of marriages among the Baram. These
consist of Magi biwaha (arranged), Chori biwaha (elopements) and Jari biwaha (marrying someone else's wife although the husband is alive). Bhauju Devar biwaha are not observed, though these are said to have existed in the past. Matrilateral and patrilateral cross-cousin marriages are also prevalent among these people. They have a saying:

"Mamako chhori khoji, Phupuko chhori roji"

The first line means that they have the right to search and marry their matrilateral cross-cousin or maternal uncle's daughter. The second line means that they have the choice of marrying their patrilateral cross-cousin or paternal aunt's daughter. In this it can be seen that the Baram, are unique and exhibit pure tribal endogamy.

Magi biwaha consists of two major rituals namely: Kura chhine and Theki-Bheti garne.

Kura chhine means when the deal is made. Here, the people from the boy's or groom's side go to the girl's or bride's house and talk with her parents about the marriage. When the answer is in an affirmative, then the next step for Theki-Bheti garne or finalizing the deal and being in total mutual agreement, is done. Things such as dai ek theki (one wooden container of curds), ek pung raksi (one wooden container of wine), sale roti (doughnut-like bread) normally one doko (woven basket) full, a bundle of sugarcane or green leafy vegetables like rayo ko sag is extremely essential for this ritual, seasonal fruits like bananas, etc., a rooster and a rupee coin, are necessary to be taken when going for the Theki-Bheti garne ritual. When these are accepted, the immediately consumable commodities are shared and eaten or drunk and then the lagan (time and date of the marriage) is discussed and decided then and there. Then comes the second step of the marriage that is janti or marriage procession going to the bride's house to bring her to the groom's house. The janti move on the decided date towards the bride's house. Here it is to be noted that the groom's or his family's financial position determines the inclusion or exclusion of the local band consisting of Damai musicians.
Once the *janti* reaches the bride's house, a *bhoj* or feast is laid out for them after which (at the time set) the ritual of *goda dhune* or washing of the bride's feet (sometimes also of the groom) is done. Here, all the agnates wash the bride's feet and drink (touch to mouth) the water. When this is over, the last rite of *sindur halne* (putting of vermillion on the bride's hair parting by the groom) is completed. This rite must not be observed by any of the bride's kin as it is considered taboo for them, therefore, there is a barrier erected and made up of a shawl wrapped around the bride and a long cloth is stretched from the bride's forehead to the groom's end. From this end, the groom walks slowly pouring *sindur* along the cloth and ends his pouring when he reddens the bride's exposed hair parting or *siudo*. If a band is present it strikes up at this moment with vehement blowing of the *narsingha* which are curved horn-like trumpets. The people present begin to dance and *raksi* again flows freely.

The following morning after some rest, the *janti* prepare to move towards the groom's house taking the bride with them. She either walks along with the groom or is carried in a palanquin called the *ulinkat* which is carried by one person in front and one at the rear. Once the groom's house is reached, a feast is immediately given to them as some sort of a victory celebration. When the feasting is over, the ritual of *dulahan bhitraune* (taking the bride into the house) is performed.

On the lintel or threshold of the main entrance or doorway called *mul dhoka*, oil lamps or *diyo* and *kalas* are placed. A thread is stretched horizontally across the door posts and paddy grains are spread in a line from the interior of the house till the *pindi* or veranda. The bride must walk on the paddy grains while stepping into the house and thus she must break the threads stretched across the doorway with her legs and cross the threshold. The groom follows the bride into the house and once inside, they are given *sagun* or offerings of welcome like milk or curds to consume. In this way, a Baram *Magi biwaha* is concluded.

*Chori Biwaha* is a much simpler affair and occurs when a couple desire to marry, but do not want the fuss and expenses of *Magi*
biwaha. Thus, they arrange to meet at a jatra or fair, local bazaar or hat, in the jungles while on forages for firewood fuel, or at a rodhi. Once they meet, they quietly elope and go straight to the boy's house, as the parents of the boy are pre-informed in majority cases, where the couple are made to stand outside the main doorway and in the light of the burning oil lamps or diyo (since the couple enter the boy's house only after dark), a rooster is sacrificed on the threshold and then the couple are ushered into the house. Once this rite is performed, the boy has full social and legal right to the girl who is now considered his lawful wife.

Inside the house, bride and groom are seated and tika is placed on their foreheads by the groom's parents initially, then followed by the kin, neighbours and others present. After this the groom performs the ritual of sindur halne which concludes the marriage.

The next ritual for this couple is that of rit-bhat trine. This means that the groom has to pay a compensation to the bride's parents for their troubles taken in rearing their daughter who has now become his wife. There is no stipulated time for this ritual, but according to the traditional Baram codes, this must be paid. The things demanded as payment of this fine are: 12 dharnis of raksi (approximately 30 litres of alcohol), 240 pieces of sale roti or 12 bisa (a measure) clothes for the mother and father of the bride and other items, but never money. These foods (which are demanded quantity wise) are termed as ghalek.

Jari biwaha is also prevalent among the Baram and the custom is similar to other hill tribes. When a person or male steals through seduction, another male's legal spouse, then this is termed Jari biwaha. The offender must pay a certain compensation to the woman's initial husband and this is called Jari tirne. In reality, the compensatory payment is the reimbursement of expenses incurred during the woman's marriage to the first male. If ornaments have been given to the woman, then these have to be returned to the first husband. The ancient traditional fine levied was 99 paisa, but today this figure has shot up to a comfortable Rs. 1500.

Death Rites
On the death of a Baram, he or she is either cremated, buried or given a water burial, but cremation is the most prevalent practice. A person is not permitted to die within the precincts of a house, so, prior to breathing their last the persons are taken outside the dwellings and laid out on the earth by kin folks. When death claims the person, they cover the corpse with a saffron and white cloth, tie it to a bamboo frame and carry it to the river's edge where it is given a farewell. In cremations, the corpse is placed on a funeral pyre and the ritual of *daagbatti dine* is performed. Here a coin is placed on the mouth of the deceased and then a burning coal is put on top of this coin. Some Baram put pieces of gold instead of a simple coin as has been observed and this is done to show off their affluence, they say. Then the pyre is lit by the closest kin of the deceased, normally his eldest son.

Burials are also observed but quite infrequent from these cremations. In burials also, the *daagbatti dine* ritual is performed but the difference is that the corpse is buried. Another kind of burial is water burial. This is done, as stated by them, on account of wood being wet during the monsoons and hence the difficulty of burning the corpse. So they perform all the rituals of farewell and push the corpse into the rivers which are in spate during the rainy season. This sort of burial is called *Bhel lai dine* meaning giving to the floods.

Death pollution is observed for a period of 3 to 13 days. If a *purnima* (full moon) or an *aunsi* (dark moon) occurs in between these day of pollution, then they are not included in the period, instead purification is done before these days occur and when over, the observance of death pollution is resumed till the total days are completed. Thus the one who is in the *kuro* has to be purified prior to the *purnima* or *aunsi* and then has to go into *kuro* to complete the stipulated period of 3 or 13 days.

*Barkhi barne* meaning wearing of white to mourn the death, is also observed for 45 days to even a year according to the person's ability, both financially and physically.

**Religion and Festivals**
Tribal Ethnography of Nepal

The Baram are Hindus, but it is seen that the more ancient animistic worship pattern and rituals are more dominant in their worship even today. The most important worship or *puja* they perform is to their *pitree* which means the souls of their long dead ancestors i.e. those beyond their grandfather and grandmothers.

They do not offer sacrifices of blood to these *pitree* at the *Chandi than* (altar where *shakti* is worshipped) instead they perform these *pujas* at home since it is a family affair and performed once a year. The Astami evening (during the festival of Bada Dasai) the *pitree puja* is done. *Sale roti, raksi, cooked sag* and fish are divided into parts for each of the ancestors to be worshipped and these are offered at their household altars. *Asala* fish is burnt in a fire and the smoke is offered to their *pitree* also. On Baisakh Purnima, *Chandi puja* is performed at the local *Chandi than*. Cooked foods, *raksi, sale roti*, etc. are offered here to the dead brothers, sons, fathers (back till three generations only). This is also a family affair and done within the household premises. The Ban ko devta is also worshipped and a *jhankri* (shaman) performs the *puja* which is also done within the family circle though it is consecrated and concluded in the forest where this deity is assumed to dwell. Only members of the family are allowed to participate. The *Bhume puja* is done at the *Bhume than* and occurs a day prior to the *Chandi puja*. Here, fowls, foods, newly harvested grains, etc. are offered. This is a sort of thanksgiving worship and involves the whole community. The *jhankri* plays a rather important role within the Baram community as can be discerned from his role of presiding priest in most of the rites and rituals.
Songs and Dances

Since the Baram live in places where the Gurungs and Magars are dominant, they have assimilated many of the local features into their tribal culture. For instance, going to the *rodhi* is rather popular among these people and so are dances like *paundure*, *phusrunge*, etc. They go to the *rodhi ghar*, sit around, sing duets and mix up with each other (i.e. boys and girls) both orally and physically, though it cannot be definitely stated as to the extent of this physical interaction.

Boys and girls dancing to Gurung and Magar dances is common and comes quite naturally to these Baram, however, they do not seem to have dances unique to their own community. These folks follow certain rules such as the beating of the *madal* only after the Srawan Sankranti till Baisakh Pumima, after which they stop till the next Srawan Sankranti. This is because they are extremely busy during this period due to the fact that they are agriculturists, and one can imagine what the months of Baisakh, Jesth, Asadh and Srawan mean to them. The *madal* player who can beat the *madal* well and knows the songs completely, verse by verse, is highly respected and called *guruba* or master. There are very few such *guruba* these days).

Dress and Ornaments

These Baram are dressed and ornamented like the neighboring Gurungs and Magar tribes who live in the vicinity and whose cultures have permeated them. Also, their social beliefs and customs are similar to the other hill tribes.

Occupation

Baram are agriculturists as mentioned earlier and work from dawn till dusk throughout the year to grow food that will feed them and their families. On the side, they keep some chickens, cattle, goats, etc., but just for personal consumption or offering during *pujas* and not on large scales. Other occupations that they have adopted are as hired manual labourers, soldiers, carpenters, stone masons and such. Thus we can catch a glimpse of their shaky economic-
structure and the meagre quantity of real money that passes through their hands. Most of these people keep livestock to a degree just for the dung which they use as manure in their fields. The other by-products of cattle raising are butter, clarified butter, curds, whey and milk which they keep for domestic consumption.

In the past, these Baram were employed to carry dolas or palinquins during local marriages and were therefore considered of low caste, however, today they have organized and formed a tribal union, which has boycotted the carrying of dolas by any Baram and have also elevated themselves to the level of pani chalne jat (tribe with whom water can be used freely meaning not of low caste). Initially these Baram used to join up in the British or Indian Armies under the surnames of Thapas or Gurungs, however, today they join up as Baram signifying their desire for preserving their fading identity.

**Education**

Though a few schools are scattered around the Baram inhabited areas, the school going habit is yet to make a strong impact on the Baram mentality and pave the road for a better future for these people. The physical development of these regions and the political representation of the Baram is totally absent. From this, their economic condition can be deduced.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that the Baram identity as a separate and unique tribe is gradually beginning to emerge and may soon create a massive impact on the present state of the country's cultural and social condition.
Among the many backward and low social status tribes, there are some which are still in the minority such as the Bhujel. These people inhabit the low-lying areas of Tanahun district in the Gandaki zone, in a majority, though they are seen to be spread out almost around the whole length and breadth of the kingdom. Places within the Tanahun area are Bandipur Gaikhur, Devghat, Deorali, Vaidi, Ghasikuva, Kota, Anbu Khaireni and Gimkesari VDCs. These are the places where they are concentrated.

The Bhujel live in colonies of 13 - 15 families clustered together into a small village, away from those of other tribes, though it is seen that they sometimes live near some isolated Gurung and Magar houses. They state that if they fall on hard times besides their immediate family none of their Bhujel or other neighbours help out even if they are living in very close proximity. But it is also seen that since there is a majority of Gurung, Magar and even Brahmin villages in these regions of Bhujel habitation, the custom of chu achut meaning untouchability practised in the Hindu society, is not prevalent strictly and thus these Bhujel go to houses of Gurungs and Brahmins to eat and drink, this is reciprocated by the Gurungs, Brahmins and Magars.

Origins

Though most Bhujels are unable to elaborate on matters regarding their origins, migrations and such, some old timers state that in order to clarify or delve into these aspects one has to check out their physical structures or make up, behaviour patterns, language and the legends that exist, but based on oral word of mouth versions which have continued through the generations till today. These oral genealogies are surely distorted and highly exaggerated after all those years of retelling.

The Bhujel are also called Pare Gharti which means that since ancient times they were actually a slave tribe, and treated no better than mongrels. They were bought and sold like cattle in those bygone days, and it was only after 1951 AD, when Rana Prime Minister Chandra Shamsher declared that slavery in the kingdom of Nepal was abolished, that these Gharti gained their freedom. They said that they had gained par meaning freedom. This par was
changed to pare and then attached to the Bhujel as a prefix, which indicated their now liberated identity.

Another aspect of these Pare Gharti derivation is that once they cleared difficult terrain on slopes of mountains and hills and then settled in remote areas in these hills or pahd, so they came to be known as Pahd Gharti or Pare Gharti. But if this angle is looked at carefully it can be seen that even today, these Bhujel can be found to be clearing hill slopes and extending their lands, making it suitable for cultivation.

Another story exists where the origin of these Bhujels is stated.

"Nijikhola Bhuji kot, drsyabasi vrpagam andjeri khols, pani pandhera bhnsa bhai aeko vilisya sakha mnsa khasvarsai."

The above words are unknown even to the Bhujel folks and thus lacks interpretation, however, after studying these words, they say that the inhabitants of the Bhuji kot area near Nijikhola were known as Bhujel, after they migrated from this region to other areas. But on account of unavailability of actual evidence scholars have not been able to reach a conclusion about the origin of the Bhujel, but have only made assumptions. Therefore, as long as there is no real proof available stating the true nature of these Bhujel, the interpretation of the Bhujel migration from Bhujikot and their consequential naming has to be given preference among the other assumed or suggested angles of the Bhujel identity.

Physical Characteristics

Physically, the Bhujel resemble the Magar tribes among whose midst they live. Complexions are from wheat-brown to dark swarthy skin pigmentation, eyes oblique and epicanthic folds discernable, malar bones quite prominent giving them the high-check bone look, small noses with depressed nasal roots, though some do have high nose bridges also. They are not too tall and not very bulky in size. Their population estimate cannot be made as accurate data are not available, however, some among them state that they are approximately about 5000 heads, which could mean anything and nothing.
Language

Though Bhujel can speak fluent Nepali, among themselves and within their own community, they make use of their own language which is similar to some degree with the Tamu kui or Gurung language, and the Magar kura or Magar language. This is because of the parallel influence of the Gurungs and Magar on these Bhujel who are kind of sandwiched in between two language groups and their crossfire of languages. Thus the result is that they call their language Bhujel Bhasa. A sample of Bhujel with the Nepali and English equivalents (approx) is listed below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bhujel</th>
<th>Nepali</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>an</td>
<td>bhat</td>
<td>cooked rice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>che</td>
<td>noon</td>
<td>salt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sati</td>
<td>tel</td>
<td>oil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ksa</td>
<td>chamal</td>
<td>ricegrains (uncooked)</td>
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<tr>
<td>yam</td>
<td>dhan</td>
<td>paddy</td>
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<td>kodo</td>
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<td>jum</td>
<td>khurpa</td>
<td>curved cutting knife</td>
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<td>cyas</td>
<td>choya</td>
<td>bamboo strips</td>
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<td>sila ko luga</td>
<td>stitched cloth</td>
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<td>mouse</td>
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<tr>
<td>ra</td>
<td>nanglo</td>
<td>winnowing fan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Septs (*Thar*)

Among the Bhujel, there are 14 known septs or *thar* which are listed below:
Tribal Ethnography of Nepal

5. Prsyali 10. Golkolamya

Life Cycle Rites

Navran

This is performed on the 11th day after the child's birth and in conformity with the Hindu schedule and custom. On the 3rd day, an old Bhujel woman who is the local version of the midwife, severes the umbilical cord from the placenta. It is taboo to touch the woman who has just delivered prior to the navran. On the 11th day after birth, the girls of the household clean the house (floor) with a paste made up of dung, mud and water, and then they purify it with a sprinkling of gaunth or the urine of a cow. After this is completed these girls tie turmeric coloured raw flax threads to the wrists, ankles and neck of the newborn. The navran or naming occurs on this day and according to the financial capacity of the parents a feast is given for all kin, neighbours and guests. Chicken is the meat that is used on this occasion along with rice, other curries and the inevitable jad and raksi, to commemorate this happy occasion. They do not seem to celebrate the pasni or solid food feeding ceremony as other tribes do.

Bratabandah

This ceremony is also called chhaewar and is done on odd years like 5, 7, 9, etc. years. Here the mama who is the maternal uncle must be present as it is compulsory that it is he who has to present the child with silver bangles, daura, topi etc. which are items that have to be offered on this occasion. The tradition is for the mama to complete cutting his nephew's hair and then enjoy a feast with the kin and guests. This is the last activity after which the bratabandah ends.

Marriage practices

Magi biwaha and bhagi biwaha are the two forms of marriages practised by these Bhujel. Marriage are not only limited within their sept meaning existence of sept exogamy, but they also try to
marry other septs within their own tribe indicating tribal endogamy. But as is the case of other tribes all over the kingdom, this is a practice which is slowly fading, for there are many cases where Bhujel women have married males of other tribes and Bhujel males have married females from other tribes. Thus the original Bhujel identity - if it can be so called - has been slowly assimilated into the Nepalese identity gradually.

Magi Biwaha: or arranged marriages are also existent among these people. They boy's folks while going to ask for the girl's hand in marriage have to carry sale roti, raksi and pickles along with them. Should these items be accepted, then it is considered that the proposal has been accepted, but should the gifts be left untouched then this is taken as a sign of rejection and accordingly they withdraw their suit and selves from there. After everything is set and if the girl elopes with someone else, or if the boy marries another girl, then there is no problem. But these cases are not too frequent. Once the marriage is settled, on the date and time which have been fixed, the ritual of sindur halne or pouring of the sindur - vermilion - along the hair parting of the girl is performed by the boy and this makes them husband and wife. Now the bride is given a farewell and is presented with a live goat, if her parents are affluent and can afford this expensive present, otherwise in the normal cases five or ten rupees are placed in her hand and her feet are touched as a final gesture of farewell. The custom of presenting ornaments in these marriages were non-existent among these Bhujel in the past, however, today this has slowly begun to be occur at places where the Bhujel who are involved are quite rich and can afford this extravagance.

Bhagi viwaha: or marriage by elopement are the most popular and therefore the most prevalent of Bhujel marriage practices. Here the couple's feelings once synchronised can make this union extremely easy. After the girl has been 'stolen', the dhog-bhet is performed, where the boy's folks have to fulfil whatever is the demand of the girl's people. This is a compulsory ritual they state. The items they have to carry to the girl's house on this occasion are uncooked rice or chamal and raw meat which have to be cooked and fed to the girl's folks along with the roti and raksi. It is only after this feast is over, that the dhog-bhet, meaning bowing down to elders on introduction as affines is opened or phukinchha. Prior to this ritual, should the relatives meet each other and even if they are affines they will not greet or acknowledge each other in any way. It is only
after the *dhog-bhet phuke pachi* that they interact.

Polygyny is prevalent among the Bhujel, but child marriages are unheard of. *Jari* marriages are quite popular and the *jari kht* or payment of compensation for making off with someone else's wife, is within the range of Rs. 1000 to Rs. 2000. This fee or fine has to be paid to the person whose wife has been 'stolen' or actually seduced.

**Death Rites**

On the death of a Bhujel, they perform all the rituals according to their religious tradition and purify themselves as is customary. While burials are done by a majority of these people, there are a few who created the corpses. Bhujel elders state that though burials are done not because the religious regulations say so, but on account of the fact that they inhabit the hilly and rocky terrain where they do not live near rivers so the burial is preferred, but today it has become a sort of custom, though it was initially done out of necessity due to location.

A Bhujel death is followed by the accumulation of the agnates and neighbours. After some preliminary gestures and rites as in the Hindu deaths, the corpse is wrapped in the usual white and saffron cloth or shroud and tied rather tightly on to a wooden board with bamboo strips or *choya*. Then the bier is lifted up and at one end the son of the deceased has to place his shoulder, but if there is no such son, then the other male cousins are substituted. From here, the bier is taken to the cemetery or cremation grounds, depending upon the location of that village or house. If it is a cemetery the grave is dug and the corpse is buried with all the Hindu rites. When the burial is completed, the son's or cousin's hair is shaved and *kriya basne* is commenced from that time. This *kriya basne* means observance of death pollution.

In the case of cremations, the corpse is placed on a pyre and the farewell lamp or *daag batti* is lit on its mouth on a coin after which the pyre is fired. This is also followed by the ritual of shaving the hair on the head by the concerned son or cousin and commencement of the *kriya basne*.

For the next twelve days, the *kriya putri* or person who is in *kriya* has to eat a single meal a day and that too on a banana leaf cooked
by the jawai or bhanja. This is performed either at the edge of a river or on a chaur or flat place. During this period of morning the kriyaputri has to abstain from consuming salts, oils and alcoholic beverages. The kriyaputri must not touch anyone or any animal during this period and vice versa.

On the thirteenth day, the females of the deceased's house, clean the floors and compound with the purifying mixture of dung, mud and water, then sprinkle the gaunth, or cow's urine considered a purifying liquid in Hindu rites and rituals. On this day, it is the custom for the kriyaputri to receive meat cooked with salt and also raksi from his chele beti or household females. Now the kriyaputri is fed by his sisters and cousins and thus the period of death pollution is brought to an end.

Bhujels do not have the custom of wearing the white clothes which signify the mourning that the wearer is undergoing. On the last day of the death pollution period, the kriyaputri, according to their financial abilities, call the villagers and given them a feast of jad, raksi, meat and food. They do not perform the six monthly and the annual sraddha, which is the commemoration of the death anniversary.

Thus it is seen, that from birth till death, the Bhujel people do not need the involvement of any sort of priest, as is the opposite in the case of most other tribes where the priest, be he a shaman, bahun or pandit, must be present to preside over. In every ceremony, occasion or ritual, these Bhujel must use their jawai or son-in-law, bhanja or nephew on the maternal side, and chori or cheli beti meaning the females of the household or sisters. These are their main socio-religious functionaries for all occasions. Every rite and ritual requires the use of alcoholic beverages as offerings to their gods, and this is a factor which has caused them to exist on a low economic level due to spending much more than necessary for the production of these liquors which they state is a must in their religious and social lives.

**Dress and Ornaments**

It is actually difficult to say that this tribe in this area wears this type of dress, especially in the context of Nepal, because of the topography of the areas in question and also because of the fact that the assimilation of tribes has proceeded to an irrevocably high
percentage till today. Thus, the Bhujel also may be said to dress up as their neighbours the Magars and Gurungs do, which means they wear langauti, kachad, bhoto, kmiy, topi for those males in rural areas while the ones living close to the influences of the towns wear the common pant, shirt, shoes or slippers, topi, daura-surwal and such. The women are seen to be dressed in gunew which is a short sari-like skirt and black in colour, patuka or waist girdle, cholo or blouse and pchyaura or a sort of shawl. They are extremely dirty and unhygienic. They wear clothes which are mostly threadbare, dirty and torn. Walking barefoot makes the soles of their feet cracked and the hair on the heads of the females are knotted and emit pungent odours. Children are mostly and most of the time naked. It is not easy to state whether these people and the rags that cover them remain so dirty on account of their poverty or the lack of easily available water facilities. Bhujel women are seen as uninterested in the vain art of self adornment as most women are the world over. This could be either due to their poverty or again because they are just not interested, it is hard to even assume. But now a days, some women are seen to have commenced wearing the phuli, dhungri and bulaki like their neighbours the Magars and Gurungs.

**Fooding Habits**

Like the various other hill tribes, these Bhujel consume dhendo or mush made from maize or millet flour. Besides this staple mush, they also eat trul meaning tubers, gittha-bhyakur, also some sort of tubers, sisno or stinging nettles and the alcoholic beverages jad and raksi, which are consumed in very large quantities by these people, regardless of occasion or festivals. Smoking is also very much common among them and they are patrons of cigarettes supplied by the indigenous factories. They prepare bidi made out of kan ko pat a kind of leaf - which is dried and crushed and then wrapped in the leaves of the ktus tree - oak leaves.

**Family and Settlement**

Bhujel live in large joint family structures, where there are 11 or 12 members at a time. The father is considered the patriarch and most honoured by the whole family. Within the household, the women have most of the say in matters, but outside it is the area of the males. It is observed that the males and females both work side by side and possess a sort of equal ranking in the Bhujel society. Thus
in the matter of participating in festivals, the females are equally enthusiastic as the males, and so it is seen that they drink jad and raksi and smoke and sit together with males during these festivals. There are no inhibitions and restrictions are also relaxed but not completely abandoned. Looking at these activities, it is observed that there is no classification or differentiation between Bhujel males and females and the society as a whole seems to be highly liberalised and the women emancipated.

The settlement areas of these Bhujel, as earlier stated, are the rocky crags where there is not a chance for finding any sort of flat surface. Houses are thatched with straw and the walls are made up of sticks erected vertically on which mud is plastered. This sort of dab-wattle walls are the common types built by these people in their area of habitation, thus indicating the temporariness of their existence. The windows are small holes in these adobe walls. Most Bhujel houses are doorless and they live in impoverished huts constructed out of sticks, stones and branches of trees and bushes.

On looking at the Bhujel houses, they may be described as being worse than the cowsheds of ordinary village folks. They sleep on a gundri or straw mat, laid out on the floor and use no coverings as they possess none. In their joint families, it is seen that they have no extra rooms partitioned, thus they are seen to sleep in one large common area, in a very primitive and animal-like fashion. Some do possess bedding of a sort. In a single Bhujel settlement, there are about 10 to 20 houses or families.

Economic Status

It is absolutely true when one says that the Bhujel are a backward tribe and they are making ends meet with great difficulty. It is seen that for their own survival, every family possesses 5 to 10 ropani of land on hill slopes and these are known as pakha bari or fields on the slopes. Every ropani is supposed to yield 10 pathi of crop annually, thus the total land they own or sow, produces enough to maintain them for approximately three months. After this the remaining nine months of the year is hell for them. During this period they go into the jungles and dig up roots and tubers, collect wild fruits, and use the produce of the forests to sustain themselves. However, as the forests have become scrubland, the foraging is not a reality and an impossibility today, therefore, they may be seen to hire their muscle as porters or loaders of trucks and
so being able to earn some money which will purchase the supplementary food supplies for their survival.

Besides the little agriculture they do, weaving *doko, dalo, nanglo* and such items out of the strips of a midget bamboo species called *ningalo* is also another source of income for them. Majority of these Bhujel are experts in the art of weaving these kinds of things. Some Bhujel are landless and so work as *hli*, meaning one who works the *hlo-plough* for some well to do neighbour and thus maintain his family from what he receives in cash or kind. Bhujel are seen to be in the position where others are ever ready to exploit them on account of their weak economic condition and susceptibility. There are cases where one worked as a *hli* for 4 years to pay off a debt of Rs. 1400.00, and another worked as a *hli* for two years and received a young male buffalo calf as payment for services rendered.
Bote

Among the minorities of Nepal, the Bote are also one and in dire need of protection lest their cultural identities be crushed by the bulldozing of the other so-called 'civilised elements'. On account of their low population and because they are in a minority, they always live in groups with a view to protecting themselves against any unnecessary outside influence, so much so that even a mere two to four families band together to form a Bote settlement. Living close to rivers, these people construct houses called bukura, out of river stones and thatch. Because of their extreme poverty, they are not found to be properly settled and lack the ordinary facilities like cowsheds, storage rooms, living rooms and overall cleanliness is almost absent. Many have sectionised their bukura into two parts where they occupy one part and keep their cattle in the other.

Settlement

The areas of the Bote habitation are Syangja, Gulmi, Palpa, Nawal Parasi, Chitwan, Sarlahi, Gorkha, Lamjung and Tanahun. It is mostly on the banks of the rivers that these people live and go through their daily activities. Few are found on the slightly hilly areas and in transition from the fisherman, a purely hunting profession, to a noveau agriculturist. The Bote inhabiting the areas of Inner Madesh live in huts and with a few rags that make up their bedding. The clothes the males wear are loincloths, while the women use small scanty rags to cover their pelvis and upper mammary areas. The utensils they use are the usual round-bottomed pots called kasaudi made of aluminium, iron deuri or sort of frying pan also called a matakerahi, ghainto or water containers made of mud and some other utensils to distill raksi the local alcoholic beverage. In some areas jute is processed and thread extracted for weaving fishing nets, while bamboo strips are used to weave the doko, dalo, and nanglo. The dhiki and jhyato or mortar-pestle used with the feet and the hands respectively are also seen around a Bote settlement.
Physical Characteristics

When one looks at a Bote, it will seem obvious that this person is surely of some Negroid-Dravidian type of sub-racial stock. However, the matter is more complicated than just that and it is extremely difficult to say that these Bote people are exactly of this particular racial stock. They resemble the Tharu, Dhimal, Satar and such type of dark-skinned tribal people. Their physiques are wiry and statures tall, with the dark pigmented skin and the large hands and feet like the simian ancestors of prehistoric man. Their heads are elongated and the brow ridges are quite prominent with medium nose bridge and the small fine cut nose, flattish cheek bones though the malar bones are slightly elevated and the mouths are large with thin lips and finely chiselled teeth. Their eyes are not too small and do not possess the epicanthic fold, though there are some cases seen where the mixed marriages have led to such facial features. Hair on the facial region is scanty and also on their bodies. Their eyes are brown to black in colour, while their hair is black, straight or wavy.

Language

The Bote are said to speak an Indo-European language and this indicates that they are quite related to the people from the south than those living in these areas. Therefore scholars have assumed that these people have migrated to the present day habitats through the centuries because of the changing scene of the river valleys and thus compelling them to migrate further inland. It is seen that Bote of one area speak a slightly different language than the Bote of another area. A sample of the two such Bote languages with the approximate English equivalents is given below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Darpuk</th>
<th>RegionChirlung</th>
<th>Region Dailatung</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>mai ji thun</td>
<td>mai gee thun</td>
<td></td>
<td>I go</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhan</td>
<td>Bhaunhiey</td>
<td></td>
<td>eyebrow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lenen baisthath</td>
<td>Ineni bisthatt</td>
<td></td>
<td>they sit.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

General Bote language words | English

50
aagi  
manus  
aankh  
mai  

fire  
man  
eye  
I  

Note: From the above sample one can get an idea of the type of sounds they make while communicating.

Septs (Thars)

The Bote tribe also have their separate septs, but while something about the septs is known, sub-septs are not known to exist. Thus below are listed some septs:

Mushar Bote, Kusar Bote, Pipal Bote, Phakkha Bote, Sunduwa Bote, Thar Bote, Marumi Bote, Kachhare Bote, Chautarae Bote, Gaurau Bote, Handi Phore Bote, Mukhiya Tharae Bote.

Like most of the other tribe septs, these Bote also have septs which show some activities they perform or places they live in. Many people separate the Bote into those who live away from the land and those who live in close proximity to water. But today there are seen to be Bote communities turned into first or second generation agriculturists and there are others who have become hired labourers and still others who are fishermen and nothing else.

Dress and ornaments

On account of their extremely poor economic condition, the Bote people wear clothes of the very ordinary and low quality types. While the menfolks wear kora ko topi (cap made out of a cloth called kora), bhoto or vest-like garment, waistcoat, kachhad (wrap round loin-cloth), langauti (the small stretched-across-the-genitals-and-pulled-to-the-back loincloth), over which they wrap a dhoro (thin piece of cloth that flimsily covers the langauti).

The women dress in the cholo or blouse, mostly black gunew (to cover the lower torso like a phariya or sari), ghaleks like the Gurung women wear across from one shoulder to the waist, and tie
dhoro on their backs. Ornaments worn consist of muga necklaces, phuli on their noses and also jhumkae bulaki, bala on their hands or wrists, and pote mala (glass beads necklaces) on their necks. They plait their hair with the dori (tassled threads for braiding hair) and wear mujetro (shawl-like cloth) too. The male children wear knee length bhoto, half pants, shirts and the female children wear ghagar which are like frocks.

Foods

Since the Bote are matwali jat (tribe who drink alcohol) they consume jad, raksi and huge quantities of meat and fish. The Bote women also consume alcohol along with their husbands and in almost equal proportions. Although they get intoxicated and quarrel and fight, among themselves, after some days these small incidents, under alcoholic influence, are forgotten and they live in harmony once more. The staple food of these people are millet bread and dhendo (mush), maize and maize flour, rice, siltung (broth), gundruk (dehydrated green vegetables broth). During festivals, they prepare jhilungi, batuk, biranta, chhkhana, sale roti, jad and raksi with meat and fish dishes. Milk and milk products like curds are not preferred by the Bote people and accordingly they are not keen on rearing livestock like cows, buffaloes and such. They go to the Brahmin and Ksetri houses and ask for whey to drink. They also eat chickens and buff (both male and female), tender buffaloes or pado and the usual goats.

Life Cycle Rites

Births: On the sixth day after the birth of a child in the Bote community, a whole night vigil is kept singing the jhamrae (a sort of duet song sung even among the Kumal people). Those participants of this jhamrae and vigil are furnished with jad and raksi to keep their morale high and also their voices. Today this custom is slowly dying out among the Bote people. The reason for the maintenance of this vigil is because it is believed that bhabi or Fate comes to write out the child's future destiny on this night. This is also called chhaiti and the celebration of which depends upon the wish of the concerned person (father) and should he invite the villagers, then only do they congregate at his home to celebrate.
otherwise this chhaiti is not observed at all.

Navran

According to the social traditions of these Bote people, they observe the birth pollution for 11 days ordinarily, however, according to the necessity, gaunth (cow urine) can be sprinkled and purification done on odd days like 3,5,7,9. The navran is done on the 11th day after the jawai chela or bhanja bhanji are invited.

Initially the newly delivered mother is cleaned and bathed. Barley, sesame, kus grass and a copper coin are put into a cup of gaunth and then sprinkled by the jawai chela and the new mother is given some to drink or touch to her lips symbolically. Within the house, in the bhandar, the deity Bhimsen is propitiated with a blood sacrifice of a fowl and worshipped with aksata-pati (rice grains and leaves of tita pati). A thread is coloured yellow with turmeric and is tied to the new born child's wrist, ankles and waist. Now the name is proposed on the basis of the day of birth or the child's complexion.

For instance the name of a child born on Sunday or Aitabar is called Aita and if fair Gorae or Kale if dark. Once the name is decided it is announced to everyone. Today these Bote consult Brahmin priests and make horoscopes for their children. Thus the Bote children now have very Hinduised names like Santabir, Muhanilal, etc.. Once the naming is over, the child is faced towards the sun after being taken out of the house. Lastly the child's mother is given chicken and rice to eat.

Pasni

Once the child reaches the age of 6 months for sons and 5 months for daughters, after deciding the day for the initial rice feeding or pasni, with the priest and consulting the astrological charts, the time is fixed. The child is given a pair of copper bangles to wear on its wrists and new clothes as is the custom for both boys and girls. It has been observed that on the navran, some feed the child with food eaten by others called jutho or they just touch some polluted food to the child's mouth. On this day the child is first given tika by
Tribal Ethnography of Nepal

a virgin girl.

Since these Bote are not the thread wearing tribe they do not perform the *chuda karma* nor the *bratabandh*. They however, do have the custom of cutting the child's hair and piercing their nostrils and earlobes (if girls) and only earlobes for boys. When females menstruate, some Bote observe pollution while most do not. Though this pollution was not observed previously, today due to the influences of the neighbouring Hinduised tribes like the Brahmin and Ksetri, these Bote have also commenced the observation of menstrual pollution.

Marriage Practices

According to their traditions they have to permit their children to observe matrilateral cross-cousin marriages which is the preferred type and carried out in ordinary circumstances without anyone asking. Should the boy or the girl not prefer the union then only will the marriage occur with someone else. But patrilateral cross-cousin marriage or *phupu cheli mama chela* is tabu and considered incestuous. The younger brother has to accept his elder brother's widow as is the custom should the elder brother expire. This is *bhauju-devar* marriage and not considered stigmatising, however, a *jethajyu* or elder brother is not allowed to marry his *buhari* or younger brother's wife should the brother expire. Tribal exogamy is also permitted and so marriages between the Bote people and tribes like the Tharu, Darai and Danuwar are customarily prevalent. In such inter-tribal marriages, the son is looked upon as a father and the daughter as a mother. The Bote do not prefer hypergamy, where a Bote woman marries a higher caste person of the Thakuri, Ksetri or Brahmin tribes, but marriage to Magars, Gurungs and such tribes are tolerated.

The two types of marriages prevalent among these people are love marriages and arranged marriages. Though it is unnecessary for the parents of the couple to be in agreement in the case of love marriages, it is essential that the prospective bride and groom be willing to this union in the case of arranged marriages. After a love marriage occurs, the couple must request the girl's parents to accept this union, otherwise the rituals of *sagun* offerings and *dhog bhet*
phukaunae are not done meaning the sasu-sasura (in-laws) do not wish to acknowledge the jawai (son-in-law) and vice versa. In such circumstances the daughter and her husband are not permitted to go to the girl's house at all. After the birth of a son, the ban is automatically lifted. Besides these types of marriages, jari marriages are also observed. If one commits jari (taking away someone else's wife) within the tribe then this person is not dropped to a lower level in the tribal hierarchy. The first jari marriage extracts a jari khat or fine of Rs. 60.00, the second jari khat will be half the first amount, meaning should the same woman elope again with another man and then for the third time the jari khat becomes nil if this same woman goes off for the third time with another male. This occurs in Bote society.

**Love marriages:** These marriages consist of two steps, namely dulahi bhitraunae (taking the bride into the house) and dhog bhet phukaunae (opening the way for joining relationships between the two families using food and drinks as offerings and bowing to the elders). Firstly the couple must be in love with each other, after which the boy intimidates the girl to elope with him while she is on a fodder foraging trip or at the jhamrae. The boy takes the girl to his house where many of his relatives and neighbours are present and the threshold is decorated with flowers and a kalas of water is also kept standing. The groom puts white or red coloured tika of rice-grain on the bride's forehead and jhamrae is sung on this occasion along with eating of chicken and drinking alcoholic beverages. The bride pays her respects to all those elders present according to their social seniority or status.

After a few days or a few months someone is sent over to the girl's house to request the girl's parents to accept this union and until the acceptance is not confirmed, the sagun offering and the dhog bhet at the bride's house remain pending. When the girl's folks send the message of their acceptance then the boy's people have to go there and inquire about the type of sagun to bring and the number of janti they can afford to feed and entertain. Thus, on the decided date and with the demanded sagun, the janti go to the girl's house, and the rest of the marriage is done as in a regular arranged marriage.
There are three stages in these sort of marriages namely: *mangni* or asking for the hand of the girl, the rituals of the actual marriage and the *dulan pharkauna* or returning of the bride. *Mangni* means the proposing of a marriage match by the relatives of the prospective groom or his parents themselves with the girl's parents at their home. These marriages are more difficult to perform than the previous type on account of the rituals like *keti mangna* (asking for the girl's hand) and *barauni chhinna* (finalising the marriage).

Initially the boy's relatives or parents (father only) go to the girl's house with a *perungo* (small flat woven bamboo basket) of *sale roti*, *jad*, *raksi*, fowl, fish, meat, *bidi*, cigarettes and such items as *sagun*. If these are accepted it indicates the willingness of the girl's father to the marriage, but the *sagun* is mostly returned and this signifies the non-acceptance. The custom is for the boy's relatives or father to go repeatedly thrice until the final trip yields fruit when the girl's father is also advised by his relatives and neighbours to accept this proposal and sanction the marriage. If the girl's father is interested then he requests the boy's father to return after 10 to 15 days leaving enough time for making a decision. On the stipulated day the boy's father has to again go with the *sagun* and then the girl's father gives his decision. If the *sagun* is accepted then the marriage date is decided and the *sagun* is consumed by the girl's father who cannot go back on his words now.

**Actual marriage rituals:**

Once the marriage is determined the girl's father, in the presence of the whole community invites the boy's father to come with a fixed number of *janti*, *sagun* of fish, meat, fowls, alcohol, *batuk*, pulses, rice-grains and such items which have to be brought according to the stipulation of the girl's family. Thus these items are readied at the boy's house and taken over to the girl's place a day before or along with the *janti* going there. On the day of the *janti* going to the bride's house, the son-in-laws, neighbours, daughters and brothers all converge at the groom's house and they have a grand feast and drink the liquors provided prior to the *janti* movement. The groom now goes into the house and performs worship to the
oil lamp, water vessel or kalas, and to Bhimsen, then his mother makes him suck her breast. This act is followed by the payment of some money by the groom to his mother which is said to symbolise the payment of the price of the mother's milk with which she had suckled him in his infancy. This ritual is called dudh ko bhara tirne.

All the items demanded are taken by the janti or sent before hand to the bride's house. Then the groom is carried a couple of steps forward by his elder sister's husband or bhenajyu on his back. Then the janti begin to move towards the bride's house with the necessary amount of cacophony made by the songs and the sounds of the musical instruments and the percussion drums. The participants sing the jhamrae and dance in joy. Once the janti move off the remaining women at the groom's house eat food and drink liquors and sing the jhamrae and dance in merriment. This is what they call the ratauli and it is done throughout the night till the arrival of the groom. The songs and dances and other gestures in this ratauli vary from tribe to tribe and are sexual in nature.

Once the janti reaches the bride's house, it is sprinkled with aksata which is the way the welcome is done and very much similar to the confetti used in marriages in western countries. The bride's father walks round the groom from the right hand side, pouring a continuous stream of water from the ankhora (vessel with a spout) and then after going round thrice he anoints the groom with tika. The items brought by the janti are all accounted for and taken into the natal house by the girl's maiti. After this the janti are provided with liquors and food as sagun. Then the marriage rituals commence and continue throughout the night till daybreak.

The janti cluster in the compound (where a fire is lit during the winter season) to dance and sing the jhamrae, while on one side the marriage rituals are in progress. First the diyo-kalas puja is done where the diyo or oil lamp and the water vessel or kalas are worshipped by the couple and then this ritual is concluded. The next ritual is the goda dhunae or washing of the feet of the bride and groom by the relatives of the. This is done according to the seniority basis and takes an long time to finish as there are many in line. Here the couple place their feet on the edge of a bowl like
vessel and water is poured on their feet and part of that water which trickles off the feet is put into the mouth of the one who is washing. This is followed by the one who performs the ritual washing, presenting the couple *tika*.

The ritual which actually makes this couple one is the *sindur halnae* where the groom pours vermilion or *sindur* on the hair parting of the bride. Now the groom has to lift and throw the bride into the air followed by the presentation of new clothes and ornaments to the bride by the groom. This ritual occurs almost at the break of dawn and the *janti* are still drinking and making merry with their *jhamrae*, and eating *sale roti* and *batuk*. There is the custom of the *maiti* giving the bride presents called *daijo* or dowry and these can be small or large items or money. This occurs after the *sindur halnae* is over but some present the *daijo* after the *goda dhunae* ritual also.

The next morning the bride is given a tearful farewell and along with her *daijo* she is sent with her husband and the *janti* to her real house or *ghar*. When they reach the groom's house there also the *janti* is sprinkled with *aksata* and welcomed with *sagun* consisting of alcoholic beverages. While the *janti* participants dance the *jhamrae* in the compound, the groom and bride are obstructed by the groom's sisters with a red cloth stretched across the doorway. This barrier has to be lifted by presenting them with some money by the groom. Then the couple are taken into the house and the *sasu* (bride's mother-in-law) performs worship to the *diyo* and *kalas* and then puts *tika* on the forehead of the bride and then presenting her some money as a token gesture. This ritual is called *mukh daekhaunae* or showing of the face, because the anointing with *tikka* requires the bride to raise her head which gives the *sasu* a chance to have a good close up look and appraise her *buhari* or daughter-in-law. Now there is a large feast held for all the *janti* at the groom's house and this is called *janti khuaunae* or feasting the *janti*. This ends the marriage.

The custom of the groom going to his *sasurali* (in-laws' place) after a period of three days after the marriage and with his wife is called *dulhan phadkaune* (returning of the bride). This is also called *dhalae pailo metnae sasurali janae* meaning erasing the one way
tracks by going to the in-laws, or establishing a two way relationship of going and coming from the commencement of the marriage. During this trip, among the fowls taken there by the groom's party earlier during the marriage a hen and a rooster are slaughtered simultaneously and covered with a doko or thunche (doko like basket but the weaving is closed). After the twitching is over the covering is removed and the sight is observed. If the fowls have died together it is considered that the couple will live for the same age, but should the hen die earlier then the wife will die prior to the husband or if the rooster dies first then the husband will die prior to the wife. This is a standing belief among the Bote folks. This sort of practice for forecasting the future of the couple is called chinna herne by these people.

Child marriages among these people are non-existent. Marriages usually occur after the girls and boys reach the age of 18 or 19 years. There is a custom among these people that should someone's wife elope, and should she want to come back to her initial husband again, then she is accepted without any fuss. Since the practice of eloping with another, should the woman not be able to adjust with her husband, is existent among these people, a Bote male is always found to possess one wife at a time. Thus these are called pseudo-monogamy marriages. Polyandry is unheard of among the Bote people.

Death Rites

When a Bote dies, there are three rituals that have to be performed: argh or death rites and rituals, the khnn or burial and the asa unch vidhi or pollution rituals.

Argh is the ritual performed for the deceased among the Bote people. It is possible that this word used by the Bote emerged from the Sanskrit as some scholars state, where argh is defined as a ritual offering. An image is constructed to represent the deceased and with due respect this effigy is offered barley, sesame, kus grass mixed with water by the kin and near relatives and this pitree (ancestor) worship is the first phoase of the argh. This ritual can always be done when the kin of the deceased feel that they are financially capable at a later date. In such cases only the burial or
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khnn is done while the other rituals are done at the later decided date. Thus the pollution purification is also done at this late extended date and till then the one who is observing this pollution must not eat at anyone else's house. Some old Bote people state that while the argh is being done if the death of a minor kin occurs within a period of ten days, then this person's argh can be overlapped onto the argh that is in progress. If a minor's argh is in progress and a mature relative dies within 13 days the argh is continued for a longer period and the minor's argh which is almost over will continue until the day the mature person's argh ends.

But should the ten day limit be crossed and the death occurs then these cannot be overlapped and a fresh argh must be performed for the later deceased one. Tradition states that if an unmarried Bote individual dies, argh is unnecessary and according to the age, death pollution is observed for a period of 5, 7 or 9 days after which thado kirya is performed.

The argh of the Gurungs and these Bote people are similar in many ways where the sword dances, dancing on circular objects, constructing an effigy of the deceased, offering worship and later on taking this image and all the paraphenalia to immerse in the nearby river. The differences exist depending on their habitats and thus the Bote do not use the dhyangro (ritual drum) which the Gurungs use it in a compulsory manner. There are also minor differences in the worship or construction of the effigy and the immersion rituals after the completion of the argh. Among the many rituals among these Bote people, argh is also one which is considered very important. People of other tribes are permitted to observe this argh, however, it is tabu to participate in the singing and dancing of entering the hut where the effigy of the deceased in housed. From the day of death till the 13th. day or day of purification all the rituals fall within the argh.

Khnn or burial is done by the Bote people. People collect at the house of the deceased and the deceased's son throws away his cap and has his hair shaved not even leaving the top knot. A bier of green bamboo is constructed and on it the corpse is placed and carried by two persons, to the edge of the river. Here the deceased is denuded and the clothes are thrown into the river. Then the
corpse lying on its back is placed in a pre dug grave and a coin is placed on its mouth, with a piece of camphor on it. Offerings of rice grains and pulses are also placed around the mouth. Now the camphor is lit and this is called the daag batti. This is followed by the covering of the corpse with sand and stones and the grave is marked by a pennant or dhava of pure clean cloth, a handle of a digging implement called a kodalo is stuck on it, a garland of flowers, a vessel for drinking water and a leafy branch of a tree is stuck on the grave so that the deceased can get some shade, is the belief among them. Cremations are also observed among the Bote people, but to a lesser extent, however, the steady progress of Hinduisation is making them prefer cremation to the burials. The funeral goers and the son of the deceased or the kriyaputri all bathe in the nearby river or stream, and the kriyaputri is given a loincloth and a kandani (thread tied on the waist).

Before they return, the kriyaputri must offer a handful of water containing barley and sesame seeds in the name of the deceased. Half way back, the kriyaputri places a handful of rice-grains and some coins on the path and this is called burkhi rakhnae. The other funeral goers make long lines across the path with their sickles and digging implements and then holding some incense sticks in their hands, they put thorns on this path over which stones are placed and then they step over and move homewards. The reason for construction of this barrier is to deter kal or death from returning to the village, is their belief.

On returning the kriyaputri is separated and placed in the section which had been cordoned off on the pindi or verandah. The bamboo woven mats or mandro are used as the screens and the mattress for this person is straw and a rough woollen blanket or a bed-sheet is used to cover his body. This is the way he is to live for the next 12 days. He is not permitted to converse in dialogue with people and if he talks in a monologue, it is only with his own Bote people.

Pollution rituals commence from the second day of the death, and go on till the 11th. day when the kriyaputri must go to the river or stream and bathe and then get purified. The daily routine of the kriyaputri is to go to the river or stream in the morning and bathe
firstly, followed by the cooking of his single daily meal comprised of saltless and oilless rice, along with radish, ginger and sour things which they are allowed to consume. Till the 11th. day the consumption of millet, onions, garlic, fish and meat are banned. From dawn till dusk the kriyaputri must remain at the river bank and return only in the evening. On the 4th, day bunches of green raw bananas are buried for ripening as is the custom. While carrying these green bananas in doko or soli for burying, they sing the argh songs simultaneously covering the buried bananas with asura leaves. It is compulsory to have ripe bananas to offer the image of the deceased on the 12th. day. Agnates are also required to observe this pollution for the 12 days. The sad argh songs are never sung any other time besides the period of the death pollution. Should these songs be sung or the words even uttered outside this period then some evil may befall the community is their belief and they can never be instigated to quote a line of the argh songs at other times. These songs are mournful and melancholic and sung by both males and females. There are different songs and tunes for the various rituals of the argh. The basic theme of these songs is to express the deceased's sadness and the appeal for liberation into the hereafter.

On the 11th. day kin, kindred, neighbours and friends all converge at the house of the deceased with donations of rice grains, ginger, etc. This help is called ghot (meaning gift) and those people who bring these items are the ghotari. The customary help is a pathi of rice-grains and a bundle of firewood. The 11th day is the nimtini or inviting, the 12th. day is the badka kaj or great activity and the 13th. day is the selauni or resting or immersion. On the 11th. day, the local neighbours and kin come to the house where the rituals are to be held and those who come from afar are looked after by these people, thus minimising the deceased family's troubles and burden. Towards the evening a clearing in the nearby fields is the venue of the rituals, since this place is preselected and set up. Two tall bamboo poles are stuck quite far apart and a slant roofed structure with only one side of the roof is made using the branches of trees and shrubs.

On the 12th. day the people who are present bathe in the river or stream nearby and then begin constructing the effigy of the
ceased, and after this, ritual worship is commenced. A one cubit long sugar-cane stem is cut into four equal pieces and planted into the earth at a predecided spot. Should the deceased be a male the structure is covered with a white cloth and a flowery or reddish flowery cloth if a female, and shaped like a heap of grains. A mud pot full of *jad* is placed under the sugar-cane and image and this whole structure is called the *javan*. Rice flour is shaped like hands and legs and head and human figures along with other foodstuff are placed within the *javan*. This is covered with a cloth and bunches of flowers. If the deceased is a male then a figure of a dugout canoe is placed near the effigy and if a female then the household articles like the *supo* or winnowing fan are placed. The bananas buried on the fourth day are ripe by now and are dugout olt be placed at the side of the effigy. Now the effigy resembles a person in a seated posture with a shawl covering the body.

The Bote priest is called a *bahun* but is actually the *jawai-chela* (son-in-law), or *bhanja bhanji* (nephew or niece). The effigy is placed inside the structure with the slanted roof and more sugar-cane stems are again used to build a stockade-like structure to the left and right of the image. The tips of these sugar-cane stems are decorated with bananas and fruits stuck on them, while a *torana* is wound round the erect stems. The main oil lamp is placed at the centre of the area in front of the image and there are other oil lamps which illuminate the area. For a deceased woman there are bangles, tassles, *pote* necklaces and the like, hung on these sugar-cane stems. Foodstuff like fish, meat, fruits, liquors are offered to the image. Even a hubble-bubble or a cigarette is lit and placed there should the deceased have been a smoker. Thus the *puja* is offered and rice flour, *sale roti*, bananas, liquors, fish, meat, cooked rice, curries, etc. are offered, then there is a buffalo readied and after whistling thrice the animal is beheaded and the head and limbs are offered to the image, while the body is taken and cooked and distributed to the *ghotari* and funeral goers and all present there Then they start the *argh* songs and dances till they go into a trance in front of the effigy.

Towards the evening of this 12th. day there is the *pani kinnae* ritual where water is bought from the river and offered to the *javan* or effigy as libations and which is said to be a traditional ritual.
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While going to buy water, the kriyaputri is accompanied by the funeral goers who are present on this occasion and the procession is fully armed with spears, knives, digging implements, sticks, swords, javi, kemero, sisno, seulo, angar and walk along singing the mournful wail of the argh. All of them reach the river and bathe at which point, it is believed that the kriyaputri is possessed by the soul of the deceased and he is enlightened about all the deceased's personal desires, transactions, and also knowledge in the tantric arts. Those present begin to get agitated and some of them begin to act like monkeys, jackals and dogs, and stripping their clothes, they rub the kemero or ashes, angar or coal on their bodies and while one enacts riding a horse which is a pole or a stick on which is tied a pati leaf branch and some straw on the top and sisno (stinging nettles) and some leafy branches of some other plants at the bottom indicating the tail end. The head part is further covered with a red cloth.

Now the kriyaputri and another person of that group go to the edge of the river and after offering kauda and kus grass they fill some water in their respective containers. This is the actual pani kinnae ritual. By this time the group members are highly intoxicated with the liquor they have been slowly consuming and while the strong man among them performs the horse riding act, another acts as though leading the horse. These persons are followed by the procession back towards the house. The argh song is continuously sung as they move and the actors and weapon bearing procession perform their acts. This mimicking and jumping of the actors continues till the javan hut. Once they are back they stand around the effigy and sing the argh song dancing and brandishing their weapons. The horseman runs about hitting the spectators with the sisno tail, and all the while the one who is supposed to hold the reins runs after the berserk horseman. Capitalising on the confusion, while the monkey mime runs off with the pot of jad while the dog mime chased and kills him and then returns with the pot. Now the jackal mime seizes his chance and runs off with the head and legs of the buffalo offered at the javan. The dog chases the jackal and returns with the head of the buffalo. Suddenly the horseman runs towards the javan and prostrates himself in front of it. This is the signal for the kriyaputri to come forwards towards the javan and say that he and his
fellowmen went and bought the water and offered it in the name of the deceased (whether mother/father the name is said) and he offers libation to the javan. The kin according to lineage seniority do this same in turns. When all have finished the priest sprinkles this water over the gathering, thus purifying them. Some also use the gaunth (cow urine) for this purification. Now the kriyaputri is allowed to touch anyone, which action was till then tabu for him on account of his polluted status. Everyone is given a sip of the raksi as prasad. The kriyaputri is allowed to consume ordinary food and liquor. The whole night there is singing of the argh and dancing in circles. This night various stories are enacted by the monkey, dog, jackal and horseman and this is called mukundo khel or a masque.

On the morning of the 13th. day everyone bathes in the morning and argh songs commence with the dancers moving in circles. This goes on till midday when a sacrifice is made and this consists of a papaya or a bottle-gourd or a banana which is kept for this moment by the females of the household, and have to be bought off them for a reasonable price. This sacrifice is called a pado (meaning a young buffalo). The priest requests the sale of the pado and this bargaining is done in songs. As the priest who is the jawai chela (son-in-law) wants to purchase the item for cheap, the daughters of the deceased do not want to sell for a low price and the song goes on in a duet or dohori form. Finally the item is stuck with four sticks functioning as legs and covered with a cloth on which money is thrown as a whim according to the duet's twists and turns. If the song continues with no signs of the deal to be struck the kriyaputri is asked by the jawai chela and the reply is that the kriyaputri does not know anything but that the javan must be immersed soon and does not matter at what cost. This finally breaks the deadlock and the purchase is ritually completed, after which it is sacrificed and offered to the javan.

After this the selaunae is performed with a virgin carrying the javan on her head after it is wrapped in a cloth and placed in a supo. She is accompanied by the weapon bearing procession to the river bank. The argh song is in full swing now also and once they reach the river bank, the virgin goes into the water and till it covers her shoulders and then lets the javan slide into the water. The cloth covering the javan is retained by the priest or jawai chela. After a
bath the kriyaputri lights an oil lamp on a leaf plate and lets it float away in the river, and the gathering throw stones and extinguish it. Now the priest sprinkles barley and sesame seeds mixed with water and purifies everyone gathered there. The kriyaputri anoints the nephews, nieces, brother-in-law and present them money. He is then helped to change his clothes by the brother-in-law or jawai chela. The salejo now sung to forget the feeling of sadness expressed by the argh songs. The priest selects a narrow path and laying the javan wrapping cloth, he places all the vessels and weapons on it so as to block the path, and only lets one pass when money is paid.

When the party returns home donations are made to the jawai chela, virgins and females, along with the one who slaughters the pado and the singers and dancers as well. The death rites are completed in this sort of way. Some continue the pollution observation for the next 45 days also, nowadays.

**Traditional beliefs**

Bote are firm believers of shamanism, devta, demons and such unexplainable forces. They perform puja to these supernatural powers to appease them and keep out of their way. Thus the role of the shaman or dhami is seen to be one of extreme importance among them. The shaman is believed to be a hereditary position and thus a boy must take up where his shaman father left off. They are of the belief that the shaman have spirits and demons who are made to perform various tasks. They are believed to have been helped by such spirits to become rich and also the Bote shaman is the only one who can walk alone along the river banks for no spirit can harm him. A strange belief they possess is that while fishing in the night, they must put iron weights as ballast so that the spirits cannot harm them or their catch. The Bote shaman is considered very powerful even by other tribes and they are called upon to perform healing works too. The Bote believe that their shamans can predict the time of their own deaths.

**Religion**

Bote are considered Hindus because they are believers of the
sacred cow and its urine (gaunth). They also seem to understand the concept of charity and the merit to gain which helps one into heaven. They celebrate Hindu festivals and because of their habit of consuming liquors, it has effected their rituals a great deal. Festival time is alcohol consumption time and they become very carefree then. Teej, Dasai, Tihar, Maghe Sankranti, Chandi purnima, Chait Dasai, Kulian puja and Kali puja are some of their major festivals.

Pitree Puja:

On the Maghe Sankranti every year the Bote have the muthi utaunae custom for the pitree puja. Early in the morning on this day, the son of the deceased person bathes in a nearby river and then lights an oil lamp and using flowers and aksata he performs worship to the lamp. Then he offers a little of everything like rice-grains, roti, pulses, batuk, ginger, oranges, bananas and such foods in the name of the deceased who is his pitree or ancestor. This is the pitree puja of the Bote.

Kulain Puja

This kulain puja is done twice a year. Once on Maha Nawami and once on Chait Dasai. On the day of the puja the room where they keep their deities and some food stocks is cleaned with the coating of dung and water mixture. Then rice flour is used to draw ritual lines or a mandap on the floor. The items for the puja are placed there like the oil lamp, and the ancestral kul devtas are invoked and puja is offered to them. Offerings of bread and fruits and liquors are placed there along with a blood sacrifice of a fowl. Though they state that initially a large animal was used, today due to their economic condition, they have begun using fowls. This is all there is to the Bote Kulain Puja. Some even perform the Khand Puja on this very day where a fowl is offered as sacrifice to the Khand Devi. On the day of Maha Nawami, all their weapons and tools are collected and placed at a special spot and collectively worshipped. This is followed by the sacrificing of a bottle gourd made like a pado, with 4 sticks imbedded in it as legs. This is the custom.

Chandi Puja
On the night of the full moon in Baisakh the Chandi puja is celebrated and for them it is a great festival. They worship the Chandi Devi and thus this puja is called Chandi also the full moon is also called Chandi purnima, after the deity. This festival or puja is either done on a community wide scale or sometimes individually as people do make vows which they have to fulfil in this manner. They bathe on this day in the morning and later in the day a pado is sacrificed.

On the day of the puja, the whole community bathe at the rivers and then carrying banners and oil lamps and flowers they proceed towards the Chandi than to the rhythmic beat of the madals. The items of worship must include a fish as well. There are five priests of their community who are shaved and sit only wearing loincloths. They start with the worship of the diyo and kalas and then the sun and the earth are offered flowers and bowed to. Then they bow in all four directions of the compass and offer flowers once more. Now they do a strange thing like crouching and then vaulting over the pado to be sacrificed. Then aksata and flowers are offered to the deity and the pado is slaughtered and the blood offered to the Chandi Devi. The rhythmic beat of the madal commences and the main priest commences dancing followed by the other priests. One after the other they lift their right and then their left legs and in timing they clap their hands under their lifted legs and behind their backs. In this rhythmic dance they circle the Chandi than thrice. Now the male and female pigeons, kids and fowls are sacrificed. After the community puja is over then only the individuals with vows or bhakals will slaughter their animals. The meat and food of the community puja is split into shares and distributed along with the red and white aksata. The head and legs of the pado are left at the shrine for a period of three days and then they are taken away by the priests. After the blood of the Chandi than is washed away, then only do the brahmins perform their rituals.

Jhamrae songs and the beat of the madal can be heard for 24 hours around the Chandi than. Since this puja is done after a lot of preparations it is seen that the atmosphere permeating the village and villagers is one of great happiness, joy and ecstasy. Married daughters are at home and the parents are happy. The reason why
these Bote folks perform the *Chandi puja* is because they say it helps to alleviate all the problems encountered in family life. Chandi Devi is worshipped on Fagu Purnima also and it is during this *puja* that they hold an archery competition, where the target is a label made out of a *Bhakilo* tree, and the one who hits it first is rewarded. Only the experienced archers of the Bote community participate in this competition.

**Kalika Puja**

On the night of the Kalratri, this *puja* is performed within the house, and also on Chait Dasai. The image of Kalika is only found in old Bote houses and all of them accumulate there and worship this deity on a communitywide basis. They believe that Kalika will protect them in the event of any misfortune or problems that come their way.

Two Bote are selected as the priests for this *puja* on account of their psychic abilities so that they are able to appeal to Kalika and ask her to protect them and two other Bote are made *madal* beaters. When all the items of worship are collected the priests dance all the while invoking the deities from all over the country, especially the west and then once they arrive the six directions are locked. This is called *disa badru*. These six directions are the four points of the compass and the earth and sky.

The priests dance to the rhythm of the *madal* and mimicking roosters. This is very interesting to observe and there is no shortage of spectators. This sort of activity continues till midnight and the whole village is present, chanting and invoking *Kalika* to protect them and offering *aksata* and *roti*. It is customary to offer a young goat or a fowl as blood sacrifice while the fruits and meat are distributed as *prasad*.

**Dance and Songs**

The Bote people are in the habit of gathering at places where they sing and dance to celebrate festivals, anniversaries and during their leisure. Since they are alcohol consumers, they are especially interested in programmes where honour and entertainment are
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found.

This gathering and singing and dancing is called jhamrae basne. Practically everyone in this crowd is slightly high on alcohol and both males and females are permitted to participate without any restrictions. Dohori or duet songs are a feature of this jhamrae and this sort of clash occurs between young girls and boys. During community agricultural activities this jhamrae is sung while the work is in progress and duets are also sung at this time, adding some romance and casualness to the work, thus breaking the monotony, so they say.

Social Customs

The Bote tribal society is also seen to be stratified to a certain extent. Tunah or tuhani are the second person plural nouns used to address people one has to respect. While a Bote shows his respect to another who is a higher sept than himself, he has to use pne and it is equivalent to aaphu or hajur in Nepali and sir in English. Prevelant social gestures of respect are split into two namely: when a gesture is reciprocated among equals, and when a gesture by a low status person is not physically reciprocated by a person of a higher status, but considered accepted. In Bote society, the son has to bow down to his parents, elders like sisters, their husbands and also to paternal aunts and uncles, touching their feet with his head. In the same way a buhari or daughter/sister-in-law, has to bow low to her sasu or mother-in-law. A married woman will only perform the namastae to her parents and elders.

A son or brother-in-law paying respects to his parent-in-laws and wife's elder brother or jethan or a nephew paying his respects to his maternal uncle or mama, will show respect by first attracting their attention by saying mit seva karthi and then when the attention is drawn, the one who addresses holds his right wrist with his left hand or elbow and fingers of the right hand are raised to the forehead and then the head is bent slightly forward. The fathers of a couple also greet each other in the way a jawai or son/brother in-law and a bhanja or nephew greets his elders. The sasu or mother-in-law raises both hands to her neck or breast and bends forward slightly while greeting her jawai who reciprocates in the same way.
When a *buhari* pays her respects to her *sasura* (father-in-law) and *jethajyu* (elder brother-in-law) she puts her shawl over her head, clutches the edges and bends her head till it touches the earth. Today the *namastae* is catching up.
BYASI

The people who inhabit the northern region of Darchula District are called Byasi and they are a tribe found nowhere else in the kingdom. Matters regarding their origins and migrations in the distant past are vague and is a good field for future research. The population of these Byasi people is not definitely stated in census reports and this makes them mythical, but they are real as can be seen from their cultural traditions to which they still adhere to, even today.

Life Cycle Rites

Navrans

There exists a custom of holding a navran and observing birth pollution for seven days among these Byasi. During these seven days, the new mother is not touched, however, she is allowed to eat whatever is available with no restrictions. On the eighth day after the birth of the child, a navran is held and the name is also decided on the same day.

Although the custom of pasni is non-existent among these people, they do hold a sort of feast called bucchi bokne bhoj after a period of 2 to 3 months.

Hair Shaving (Bratabandah)

In Byasi society, Badani Puja of the eldest son is declared and the ritual shaving of hair or bratabandh is done on that day. Kin, guests and villagers are all invited on this day. They are feasted with the flesh of pathas (goat kids) numbering five. Since the puja has to be performed with great fanfare, the time is set according to their convenience and that of the preparations. The bratabandh of their other sons must be done between the age range of 5 and 7 years as in the custom. Though, in these cases such fanfare is not exhibited as in the bratabandh of the eldest son.
Marriages

Marriage customs of these Byasi are quite unique, however, many aspects are similar to the other tribes inhabiting the hills of the kingdom as in the case of elopements.

In Byasi society, after the couple get familiar with each other, the male takes the female to his house and keeps her there for a week. During this period, the girl's parents keep quiet even though they know that the girl is living with a male. Finally, the male's folks inform the female's folks of the situation, officially. The revelation is the beginning of the various rituals among which the first is maita manaune. Here the couple have to go to the female's house, where there is a great feast consisting of foods such as meat, bread and chyakti (home distilled alcohol) to drink. The bread cooked on this occasion has horn like protrusions on both edges. This sort of shape is given because the Byasi do not cook food with regular, circular or roundish shapes on happy occasions. They believe that circular, regular shaped foods are cooked only when death occurs and they adhere to their traditions tenaciously.

The main purpose of this feast is to observe the custom of the bride eating food touched to the lips of the groom or half eaten food (jutho). Thus, a kansa ko dhakka (plate) is filled with food which the groom eats and some of it is given to the bride who is made to eat it in public. This is considered to be the main ritual of marriage by these Byasi. At this auspicious moment, the damma and jhyamki (certain musical instruments like drums and cymbals respectively) have to be beaten and blown vigorously.

On this happy occasion, curd is filled into a thelangas a sagun (food eaten prior to or after and auspicious occasion) distributed to all present including the bride. It is compulsory that this sagun be consumed. After the feasting is over, a certain pre-decided spot is used for dancing and singing, and another place is set aside for the musicians. The presence of the bride and groom at this gathering is compulsory and this is called mehafil by the Byasi.

Among the Byasi, there exists a special dance which is performed only on the occasion of marriages and this is called Jhukke Nach
During the performance of this dance, it is customary that money is presented to dancers. This sort of custom is prevalent among other hill tribes of the kingdom. The money collected is used by the Byasi to implement various development works within their villages.

After the night of feasting and dancing is over, the next day the bride is taken away by the groom to his own house. At this time the bride is also accompanied by her kin. Her father, paternal and maternal uncles, etc. are customarily compelled to accompany this group, since it is at this last stage of the marriage that the bride's and groom's kindered and kin meet and come to an agreement. Then the bride presents dhog (bowing) to all her kin and kindered, whether old or young, big or small. After this the bride's kin present her gifts or money, patuka, utensils of various kinds, etc. as per their financial ability and economic statuses. This is the last traditional custom which indicates the end of the marriage.

Death Rites

Deceased are cremated among the Byasi, though this cremation is in itself a rather strange custom. On the death of a person, he or she is dressed in his or her best clothes and placed on a khat (bier) and carried to the cremation grounds. The funeral procession consists of both males and females as is opposed to the Hindu custom where males are only allowed. When the funeral reaches the destination, they erect a sort of room complete with a door through which the corpse is taken. After it is placed within the structure, the whole thing is set on fire. Thus they make a rather strange funeral pyre. Prior to firing this pyre, they place a piece of gold (small) on the corpse's mouth and carpets and chutukas (woven cloth mats) are thrown into the fire as is customary. After the cremation, they leave the ashes and burnt bones at the cremation grounds and return home. The next day, some funeral goers go to the site of cremation and check the ashes and left over bones for signs. The Byasis believe that signs of goats and birds can be found in the ashes. If such signs are seen, it is believed that the deceased has attained heaven or a level as indicated by the animal signs on the earth.
After the death of a person on a specific date and time a dhudung is performed in the name of the deceased. This dhudung is similar in function to the sraddha done by the Hindus. In this dhudung, one must offer a feast, as per his or her economic status to the villagers.

The dhudung is performed elaborately by the Byasi. A yak is decorated with carpets and flowers and the deceased's astu (cranium bone) is placed on some mud and then on the yak. The carpets and flowers must be of colours preferred by the deceased is a belief among the Byasi. After all this is ready, the yak is kept in the particular house (that of the deceased) for three days to the accompaniment of the local band. During these three days, the yak's hooves and mouth are washed daily as is the tradition. On the last day, the yak is released. The astu, carpets, the deceased's clothes and such are all taken to the jungle and buried. After all this is completed then only is the death ritual considered concluded.

Religion and Festivals

On observing the activities of the Byasi community, it can be clearly stated that they are Hindus. Although they live in the northern areas of Darchula, and in close proximity to the Tibetan culture, they do not seem to have been influenced in their ways of worshipping their Hindu deities. Accordingly, they detest being called Bhotes nor do they ever call themselves as such.

Their main festival is Dhaula celebrated in the month of Falgun. On the occasion of this festival, they beg for 'bhailo' as do the Hindus in Tihar.

The other festivals they celebrate are Maghe Sankranti, Ghyu Tihar, Bisu Tihar (in Baisakh). Other festivals are Badarne Puja Mritu Puja and Kul Devta Puja. They also perform worship to their own kul devtas (ancestral deities). They worship Mahadev in the temple of Byas Rishi (Hermit Byas). In reality, the gods and goddesses they worship are all of the Hindu pantheon. They also worship a pisach (spirit) known as Simedung.
Tribal Ethnography of Nepal

BADI

Among the many tribes of Nepal, the Badi are a distinct minority tribe categorised as low castes and scattered in the various regions of Mid and Far Western Nepal.

Historical Background

The Badi are believed to have been the royal courtesans in the durbar of the Vaisali Lichchhavi rulers and later on migrated with their masters into the area of present day Mid and Far Western Nepal. On looking at the activities of the present day Badi females, and the ancient Nagar Bodhu of Vaisali, they seem to be very similar and suggest that the Badi are in reality descendants of those ancient Nagar Bodhu who were dancers, entertainers, courtesans and prostitutes in those ancient times. Also the names of the two are slightly different and when looking at these etymologically it is seen that: Bo dhu and Ba di have similar sounding syllables where Bo changed into Ba and dhu into di.

Another angle in this Badi picture is the tribe called the Bondi who were in reality an ancient tribe, that gradually through the passage of time changed their name to Badi. These Bondi are alleged to have inhabited ancient Vaisali and their activities in that region were also akin to the Badi today, thus making it possible for them to be the ancestors of the Badi. Etymologically, Bon di and Ba di have similar root sounds and when Bon and Ba are analysed it is seen that the nasal inflexion in the former Bon is slowly removed to produce the plain B. Di is similar for both the tribes and so maybe they are one and the same except for a time displacement.

Another angle of the Badi identity is that they are migrants of the 15th century A.D. wave when many migrated into the Nepalese terai with fear of the Muslim invasion from the north-west. At this time the Badi ancestors seem to have migrated with the Brahmin and Rajput fugitives from the areas of Rajasthan or Rajputana as it was known in those days. Being entertainers and courtesans by profession, they did not have any difficulty in being taken along by the princes and nobles who were fleeing and being
accepted by the princes and nobles in the areas of Mid and Far Western Nepal. Some state that the Badi migrated from western India when they were caught between the crossfire of politics, intrigues and treacheries that were the outcome of ambitious feudal warlords and petty princes during that period in Indian history - the Middle Ages.

It can be assumed that after they migrated into the Nepalese territory they were immediately accommodated and patronised by the rich and affluent people of that region, who were ever in need for entertainment to pass their time while their serfs toiled the skin off their backs. This situation was favourable for the soft Badi folks who were seeking such opportunities where they could continue their profession and not have to do manual labour. Thus, there arose no necessity for them to have a proclivity towards other occupations such as farming, livestock rearing and breeding, etc. In those days, prior to the unification, such affluent people and feudal lords and princes were spread all around Western Nepal and in great profusion too. Thus, these Badi seem to have remained within the confines of their major occupation which was and is entertainment alias prostitution, coupled with some singing and dancing, finding no shortage of clients then and even now.

**Settlement Area**

After the process of migrating from the areas located in India, the Badi entered Nepalese territory and since then have remained semi-nomadic till date. In the distant past, these Badi seem to have travelled with their masters into the hills of Western Nepal and inhabited the area of Sallyan, however, on account of various social and geographical factors, they were compelled to remigrate. Population pressures and the problems they encountered to implement their occupation as a source of income in an agricultural community led them to move eastward and southwards through Dang, Kailali, Bardia, Banke, Doti, Rukum, Rolpa. These migrations were seasonal because they followed the jatra and festivals where people concentrated in large numbers and good for them to find a large clientele for their trade. In the course of these migrations through the years, they gradually settled along roadsides, bazaars, towns and cities where they catered to the needs
of the masses. Wherever they went, they made their makeshift shelters and shantytown communities, always apart from the villages or settlements of the other tribes, indicating either their superiority or their feeling of being different from the mainstream of Nepalese. Even today these people migrate to and fro in a sort of pseudo-migration since this is very much related to the jatra that occur in various places where they do business.

Physical characteristics

As every tribe has its own special physical features, the Badi also do exhibit certain features, however, it is sad to state that in reality the Badi cannot be stated to possess a particular sort of physiognomy since they are an admixture of the various tribes that inhabit the region of Far and Mid western Nepal. In spite of this handicap we can place them in a sort of in-between category where they have fair, wheat brown to dark skin pigmentation, medium body and facial hairs, straight and wavy hairs, light brown to black eye colour, lateral to medial epicanthic fold of eyes, the nasal root is medium to high, the nose is narrow to broad, malar bones are prominent in some Badi groups and they are generally of average Nepalese height 5' to 5.3'. They are not sturdy and do not have stocky physiques since they have no record of having done any real hard manual labour to harden their muscles in the past centuries.

Overall, we cannot classify the Badi in any of the three major races since they are a tribe who possess a varied range of physical traits resulting from the sexual liaisons with varied tribes and purity of lineage is not seen to be emphasised or cared about. Thus they are actually a tribe who are now identified on the basis of their occupation and not on their tribal roots or lineages.

Septs or (Thar)

Badi claim to have no thar but they do say they possess gotr which sound like these: Thakuri, Gogi Lohar, Sunar, Ksetri, Dami, Sarki. It is assumed by some scholars that these Badi gotr are not real and very recent. They are a dancing people, entertaining a host of people from all walks of life and of all tribes and castes. As they came into contact with the various clients, they seem to have
accumulated the names of these people and later on used these to separate themselves as the other tribes did as they had observed, thus giving rise of their gotr. Another matter to note is the fact that the illegal progeny that they had during many centuries of their promiscuity were assimilated into the tribe and these later on acquired the name of the supposed father. Slowly this became the so called gotr.

The Badi practice gotr exogamy meaning they do not marry into same gotr, but they try and marry within the Badi community alone, thus indicating tribal endogamy. But this is also slowly falling apart and there are many cases where the Badi boys do marry externally and the women marry late in life or never at all. Gaine call these Badi the descendants of Gandharva Rishi, but the Badi have no comment about this aspect of their identity.

Language

The language spoken by the Badi migrants from Vaisali was a type of Hindi, however, this slowly fell to disuse and was instead replaced by Khas Kura as has been observed and as is a natural process for migrant communities who inhabit an area in a minority. Though these Badi use the Khas Kura or Nepali language which is Indo-Aryan in classification, traces of the ancient Hindi can be discerned when they communicate. The reasons for these folks being influenced by Hindi even today can be stated as follows.

Firstly, since they were settled in India initially, remnants of Hindi remain imbedded in their language so they utter a few unerazed scattered words even now. Secondly, they travel annually to various Indian towns and cities that lie just across the border from the places which they inhabit and thus they are exposed to the Hindi language for a certain duration of their lives, thus causing its sandwiched usage. Lastly, most of their songs and dances are Hindi-movie oriented indicating their exposure to Hindi.

The above three ways of assimilation and retention of Hindi is a process that has been going on for a long time and so has become so badly cluttered up that now the Badi do indeed speak a language of their own which is neither Hindi nor Nepalese.
Besides the above three reasons, it is seen that the languages of the local tribes, among whom the Badi live for long or short periods, does influence them and it is clear in the case where Magar Kura is spoken by the Badi living with the Magars and Tharu is spoken by those living with the Tharu.

It is extremely difficult for these Badi to remain unexposed to the languages of the areas they live in or migrate to, since they have to interact with the people there as their profession demands and so the Badi around Kanchanpur region are seen to have assimilated the local Tharu and Doteli languages into their own, while those living around Rukum, Jajarkot have been pressed by the Magar Kura of that area. However, in spite of the influences of these local languages, the Badi use Nepali as their common or national language and mother tongue as well, while using the devanagari as the written script.

The Badi speak a dual language, i.e. one in which they place an m in the middle of a Nepali word thus changing the pronunciation, and the other which is of their own type and quite different from Nepalese and seemingly not at all Indo-Aryan in character. A few examples of the two types of Badi words spoken are listed:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I Badi Words</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>II Badi m inserted</th>
<th>Nepali</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>raberu</td>
<td>salt</td>
<td>damanth</td>
<td>danth</td>
<td>tooth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>khinachine</td>
<td>dance</td>
<td>grmagri</td>
<td>gagri</td>
<td>water pot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gamigine</td>
<td>song</td>
<td>jumuta</td>
<td>janta</td>
<td>people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aigine</td>
<td>come here</td>
<td>ghmdi</td>
<td>ghadi</td>
<td>watch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chaimari ahu</td>
<td>naughty</td>
<td>bhamesi</td>
<td>bhaisi</td>
<td>buffalo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chidi</td>
<td>good boy</td>
<td>jumu</td>
<td>jau</td>
<td>go</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tuwigo</td>
<td>(a) man died</td>
<td>rwayuki sumaini</td>
<td>swasni</td>
<td>wife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chulka</td>
<td>son</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>abhago</td>
<td>come</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>khudri</td>
<td>old lady</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chulki</td>
<td>mustard</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Family and Society**
In comparison to other tribes, the Badi family is quite different and from any other tribe in the kingdom. On looking closely at a Badi family, it is observed that there are a few remarkable features that mark them as a unique group. Firstly, they are extremely straightforward and frank (as is quite natural). Secondly, they do not possess any vestiges of discipline. Thirdly, they use extremely vulgar language with ease and comfort.

These people talk very openly about matters pertaining to sex within their family and friends. Regardless of whether there are brothers, sisters, children, daughter-in-laws present in the group, the Badi does not hesitate to use words of pungent dirtiness in a single breadth. It is estimated that this sort of behaviour is due to their poverty and the circumstances within which they have been living for the period since their migration into Nepal. Discipline is practically non-existent in the Badi family where it is almost impossible to differentiate between the progeny and progenitors. Thus they live their lives as individuals possessing different types of characters.

It is observed that while the parents are engaged in discussing sexual activities, their children also participate and use vulgar words freely. Usage of vulgar words is a common feature among the Badi folks and thus they have been labelled as decadent by other tribes. This is one of the reasons why they are called bhand jati (meaning decadent tribe) by other neighbouring tribes.

Life Cycle Rites

Navran

It is customary that a Badi child be named on the 11th day after its birth. This is called navran. Though some rich Badi folks provide the time of the child's birth to a Brahmin priest and make him preside over the navran, these cases are negligible in proportion to the bulk of the Badi population who do no such ritual. They perform a simple ceremony where the child is anointed with tika and a name is given by an elder. The ritual of pasni or initial rice feeding at the 6 or 5 months age is not observed among these people.
Mudn

It is customary as in a majority of the tribes of Nepal to shave the child's hair when it reaches an age of 4 or 5 years. Here the top knot is retained and the rest of the hair is shaved off. This is called mudn by the Badi while the other tribes call it chhaewar. The child's mama or maternal uncle performs this shaving after which he blesses the nephew and makes presents of a new set of clothes, money and other items as befitting their financial status.

Ntthi Lgaune

This is a sort of puberty ceremonial ritual and commences when a Badi girl commences her maiden menstrual cycle or menarche. She is confined in a secluded and darkened room for a period of seven days during which time, she is not permitted to look upon the sun and on any male. After this period is over, the girl emerges and is given a large ntthni or nosering to wear along with a vaidhre on her ears. After this, any male on seeing this girl will understand that she has attained puberty, significant of her entry into womanhood. This whole process is called Ntthi Lgaune by the Badi people. It seems to be a traditional aspect borrowed from the southern areas of their present habitation or a direct legacy from their days in the Vaisali durbars.

Marriage Practices

Similar to the marriage practices of other tribes in the kingdom, the Badi also have their own system of marriages. When a family requires its son married off then it has to approach the parents of the prospective bride and make presents of bahara rupiya (12 rupees) called char or thegi and proportionate quantities of jad, raksi and a live pig which is the standing tradition.

According to the situation, the Badi are gradually increasing the char tradition. Since this char is based on the skills of a girl and also her beauty alongwith the decision of the Badi society. If the prospective bride is an expert dancer and singer, then the prospective groom's father has to pay a large char amounting to
almost Rs. 2000.00 and also equal proportions of jad, *raksi* and pigs.

When the groom brings the bride to his home, he invites his kinfolks and neighbours. At the time of the *sindur halne*, the groom has to give the bride as much money as he can afford, after which the bride is fed with some food (touched to the mouth of the groom or *jutho*) consisting of sesame and rice grains. Again the groom has to present the bride as much money as he can afford. Then the *dhog bhet phukaine* ritual occurs which includes *dulahi ko mukh herne* (admiring or appraising the bride's face) where the parent-in-laws and also the sister and brother-in-laws have to make presents or *bhet* of money when they glance on the bride's face. The amount of money depends upon the economic condition of the kin folks.

The custom of *chorera* or *phkaera* (abduction or elopements) marriages is also prevalent among the Badi communities. When a girl is abducted or seduced and taken away by a Badi boy, then the first process is the pacification of the girl's parents. Once this custom is concluded, then the *char* or *thegi* has to be paid by the boy's folks since it is a compulsory feature of any sort of Badi marriage.

Since dancing skills and beauty are important pre-requisites for Badi girls to be married, it is seen that should a girl be a drab looker, or unskilled in dancing or singing, then she is married off at an early age of 15-16 as is their custom. However, a beautiful and skilled girl is married off at a rather late age.

The ritual of *Kanyadaan* (gifting of the virgin) which is a totally Hindu ceremony is seen to be gradually fading away in Badi society and no marriages are seen to be presided over by brahmin priests. In spite of the *Mulki Ain's* ban on the practice of *jari* and its payment, they still practice this and in fact this *jari* payment is considered an important part of their social regulations.

**Divorce**

Divorces are prevalent among the Badi as in other tribes all over
the world. In the case of a married woman who does not want to remain anymore with her husband, she has to pay her husband double the *char* he had paid while marrying her. Thus, if the *char* was Rs. 2000/- then the woman will have to repay Rs. 4000/- and double of the *jad, raksi* and pigs paid. It is only after this that the divorce is considered complete. This is valid for arranged and elopement marriages.

Besides these double re-payments, there are other ways for expressing desire for divorce by both men and women. A custom exists where a hair is tied on a stick which is broken signifying the desire of a husband wanting to leave his wife. What is done is that the husband ties a hair of his head on a stick and presenting it to his wife tells her from that moment, they are divorced and he breaks the stick. Another custom is that of tossing a stone into the air. Here a man puts spit on one side of a flat type of stone and then tosses it into the air, like flipping a coin. Should the side with the spit on it land face-up, the husband can claim divorce, but if the dry side should land face-up then the divorce is not granted.

**Death Rites**

Though many rituals of death among the Badi are similar to other tribes following Hinduism, there are, however, some differences seen. A corpse is wrapped in a white shroud, placed on green bamboo poles made into a sort of stretcher and carried off to the burials grounds, as they do not cremate their deceased. There are some well off Badi who perform the ritual of cremation though this number is negligible in comparison to the whole Badi community or tribe. The *malami* or funeral goers accompany the corpse and after the burial is over, they perform the usual ceremonies like the observation of death pollution for the stipulated 13 days and then the *kriya* or purification is done to liberate the soul and the living family members. The performance of the *kriya* depends upon the age of the deceased. If the deceased is a minor then the *Kaj-kriya* is done within 3 to 7 days after death, while it is fully 13 days for a mature adult. Death pollution is observed by the *kriyaputri* and the householders for the said period. The *kriyaputri* eats one meal a day in the evening as is their traditional ritual.
On the 7th day, rice (cooked) is offered in the name of the deceased. A clean and sacred spot is selected at a place in close proximity to the grave of the deceased and the cooked rice is offered there along with the blood of a pig which is slaughtered there as is their traditional ritual. They do this because they are of the belief that should a pig's blood be offered, at this spot on the 7th day, after the death, then only will the soul of the deceased or pitree find a way into the hereafter. The agnates or males of the deceased's family shave the hairs on their heads only retaining the top-knots as is customary. On the 13th day, after the purification of the personnel and premises is over, the malami are fed with jad, raksi and pork as is their traditional custom, so they state.

Religion and Festivals

Prior to their migration from Vaisali in present day Bihar in India, the Badi were Buddhists as stated by certain scholars and sources, but after entry into Nepal, they mixed with a variety of tribes and lost their original religion, slowly assimilating the dominant Hinduism of the region. Thus it is seen that they underwent a gradual process of religio-social inculturation. Today they are Hindus though they exhibit tolerance towards all other religions of the area they inhabit, though they are very biased towards Islam and show their open hatred for Muslim.

Badi worship Surya the Sun god, Agni the god of Fire, Vayu the god of Winds, and Varun the god of Forgiveness. They offer worship at various Hindu temples and shrines to the many gods and goddesses, but their feeling towards the mother goddess Bhagawati is one of great devotion and reverence. Thus, on Bada Dasai, they offer her blood sacrifices of bulls, khsi castrated goats, roosters and such animals. It is strange to state that though they use the pig for certain rituals, they never offer a pig as blood sacrifice in any of their puja to deities, however, they do consume it and offer it to their deceased elder on the 7th day after death. They also use it as a means for transactions during marriages as stated earlier. Among the many Hindu festivals like Teej, Ekadasi, Janma Astami, etc. they fast and pray to their gods and goddesses as has been seen. It is also observed that those who desire, fast
every Monday and Tuesday showing their devotion to their gods.

The Badi celebrate many festivals among which Bada Dasai and Maghe Sankranti are of great religious significance. They celebrate Bada Dasai with great rejoicing and happiness. They are so enthusiastic that should they be in a state of financial depression, they do not hesitate to borrow money and use it to organise a feast for their neighbours, kinfolks and guests. During this period, they open up and air their feelings of happiness, anger and frustrations, and try to reconstruct a new relationship and forge ahead towards a better year till the next Bada Dasai. Sworn enemies sit together to eat and drink and discuss where they went wrong during the last year and then settle their differences so that they are able to work cooperatively in the coming year. This is a unique feature of the Badi Dasai and during this festival, the Badi move around their own settlements, performing dances in the names of various deities (goddesses) at the various houses of their neighbours and exhibiting many kinds of dances and songs to celebrate the greatest of all Hindu festivals. The rich and affluent people are pleased and donate large sums of money to reward the Badi 'carollers'. They sing songs like Mahalaxmi, Jai Devi Bhairavi, Gorakhnath and such which are full of feeling and exude devotion of the people towards the universal mother and other deities.

On Maghe Sankaranti prior to consuming alcoholic beverages and food, they bathe and then perform puja to their gods and goddesses. This is followed by celebrations, feasting and the inevitable songs and dances, for which they are famous, to commemorate the occasion. On the festival, they invite their kinfols and neighbours for a grand feast which rounds off the Maghe Sankaranti festival for the year.

**Occupation**

To maintain themselves, the Badi have taken up a variety of occupations, among which the major ones that are seen to create an impact on their lives and the society existent in their vicinity are: dancing and singing along with prostitution. The other occupations include: weaving fishing nets and fishing, fashioning madal,
Badi

*Badi* tabula, (percussion or skin instruments), making earthenware *chillum* s for smoking tobacco, begging at houses and fields, and agriculture.

Dancing and singing are considered a facet of our regional culture, but for the Badi it is a tradition involving social prestige and a major income source. According to their belief, it is said that in the ancient times, they were employed as entertainers in the heavenly court of Lord Indra. However, they were exiled to the earth when Lord Indra found out about their sexual activities within the precincts of heaven.

They were cursed to live on the earth as entertainers of humans and so they are such even today, they claim. As earlier mentioned, since antiquity these Badi were dancers and singers in the *durbars* or courts of affluent patrons and feudal lords, and consequentially deviated into the field of sexual entertainment, which is done by the Badi of today also. Dancing is considered the principal features of the Badi identity. Some evidence, though shaky, point to the fact that they functioned in the capacities of court dancers, singers and entertainers even in the Mugal courts of the later period. Similar to these Badi are a tribe called Gauriya in India, who are taken around some regions and their dances exhibited to earn money for their living. These sort of professional entertaining tribes in existence even today indicate that the art of entertainment was and still is much sought after in the area of the Indo-Gangetic Plains.

The Badi consider dancing a profession at which they train to excell. But the questions regarding how this all began and developed into the fine arts of music and dancing, what was the source of encouragement which influenced this development, or how and when did the shyness in human nature dissipate from the Badi mind, are worth delving into. Since shyness is totally absent among these Badi folks, the females are able to perform their dances freely and with a great amount of precision emanating from skill developed through rigorous training from an early age.

The performance of these people clearly indicates the influence Hindi movies have had and in contrast, there is an almost total
absence of Nepaliness in any of their dances. While Badi girls are extremely dexterous and skilled in dancing, the boys and men seem to possess an equal amount of expertise in beating out exotic rhythms on percussion instruments like the madal, tabala and also playing the piano-like portable keyboard instrument called the harmonium.

Whenever the girls go to perform, they are accompanied by their parents and other male relatives for security reasons and musical backing as well. From the above information it is discernable that dancing and singing is in fact a major source of income for these Badi. The dances and songs are made more attractive by the use of instruments like the chanp, paijun, khaichadi, along with the regular madal, tabala and harmonium.

The money earned from these dance programmes is used to purchase the daily necessities of life, and it can be said that these dances are actually put on or artificial pieces with the sole target of earning money and lacking the art which should reflect the Badi dancing identity of ancient Vaisali.

On occasions such as anniversaries, marriages, feasts, puja and festivals like Dasai, Tihar, Sankranti and such, these Badi follow an age old tradition where they congregate in the compound of a rich person or at the house where they have been invited. It is here that they perform their dances and then demand their fees on completion in lieu of the entertainment provided. In this way they earn a living, but exhibiting only hollow actions without the essence which seems to be lost in the many centuries of exploitation they have suffered, making them conscious of the rhythmic motions of the dances in toto and the money they expect to earn. It is just another job to do. This sort of carolling has slowly developed and become a dominant part in their culture.

There are still some rich families in the terai areas who consider it compulsory to have Badi women brought in to dance and entertain during any important festivals or occasions. This is assumed by some scholars to be characteristic of status and wealth display in these areas and among such families.
Badi are of the belief that dancing was granted a traditional social recognition as a fine art (and an income source) since ancient times so they consider it as their main source of income even today, because they are not capable and uninclined to take up other occupations. But the Badi dancers of today do not come in level with those ancient Nagar Bodhu of Vaisali.

**Prostitution**

The next major income source of these Badi (women) is prostitution, the world's oldest profession and synonymous to the Badi tribe. Here it is observed that dancing and prostitution are supplements of each other and thus dancing gives way to prostitution in most occasions and programmes which involve the Badi females. After being expelled from the heavenly court of Lord Indra, they inhabited some areas on the earth and continued their occupation of entertaining people for a price with dances and songs. This slowly degenerated into the discreet (at first) business of the flesh. If this story of the Badi expulsion and the curse of being doomed to dance and prostitute could be proved with concrete evidence, it would seem that these two professions have very ancient roots.

These Badi are spotted in the history of India when the Lichchhavi of Vaisali show that they had courtesans in their durbar. From here the Badi are seen to be the exclusively monopolised prostitutes of the rich, affluent and powerful people, in India and Nepal, at a later date. Prostitution and prostitutes were actually not new in the society of those ancient times and the training of the bis kanya (girl who is given small doses of deadly snake venom through the years till after approximately 10 years, when she reaches the age of 16 years, she becomes a poisonous human) who is used to kill enemies by biting them.

These prostitutes were also believed to have been used as spies and undercover agents by the kings and princes that were always feuding with each other and some did seem to have the finest spy network in those days it is said. But as time passed, these women passed on from such interesting personalities into the roles of private mistresses and finally the common street person as we
know them today. It is seen that at a stage in their development, the dancing Badi began to supply sexual entertainment in a more liberal and supplementary way that the art of dancing, which was the main Badi feature, fell into the decadent from it is in today. So dancing and prostitution, which were separate arts initially, now became incorporated into one with more emphasis on the flesh than on the dance.

While investigating the prostitution angle and its entry into Badi culture, it seems to be a fairly new introduction. On account of these Badi entertainers being used by the rich and affluent feudal lords, landowners, powerful administrators, prostitution was actually brought into the scene by these very people and at a much later date. Such people were and even today are found in the areas of western Nepal where these Badi move around. Even after their migration from the plains of India into Nepal, they were never inclined towards other occupations since they were given easy access to money by these feudal tyrants who could afford to pay and employ these easy going and carefree Badi for entertainment purposes.

Some sources also state that during the years of the unification, soldiers from Nepal (Kathmandu Valley) were sent to western Nepal to fight and seize strategic points. During this period and after, these troops still remained in these areas and used the Badi females to satiate their sexual lust. It is from this time that prostitution was embraced as a profession by the Badi women openly.

It is also seen that during the times of the feudal lords and landowner classes, prostitution had become firmly entrenched and its usage was prolific. Similar to these Badi are the Devaki known as chauravi pater, inhabiting the regions of Doti and Dadeldhura, and they also prostitute themselves, as observed. It is said that these Devaki were initiated into prostitution by the local feudal lords (tyrants) in collaboration with the Brahmin priests of the Saileshvari Devi temple. But today this profession has dwindled in this area among these people and only a negligible few practise it.

During the period of powerful feudal lords in Nepal, these Badi
Badi girls were retained as employees or *bharaute*. They were given their quota of food, quarters to live in, a monthly salary and such facilities. But when the period of 'employment' was over, they were released to go anywhere or do what they wanted. This sort of bonding is prevalent among some pocket societies in the kingdom even today.

*Pater* or *paturiya* are names of the Badi girls who prostitute their bodies, though in their society they are considered virgins, since sexual trafficking is not thought of as an offence and thus prostitution is an open matter similar to any commercial business like a grocery store or a restaurant, so they say. On account this sort of outlook, politeness and decency are absent among these Badi prostitutes, instead they exhibit an emancipated openness and crudeness in manners and speech.

A Badi family where there are many daughters is considered rich, and the parents and brothers are more interested on their welfare because of their (girls) money making abilities. Deflowering a virgin Badi girl costs approximately Rs. 1500 as they stated. One reality is that even when Badi girls are unwilling to go into prostitution, they are forcibly pushed in by their parents. From the tender age of 12 or 13 years till the time their future is not decided, they are made to prostitute themselves and provided some financial help to the family. Marriages of young Badi teenaged girls is an extremely rare and almost phenomenal case, with a negligible percentage. If a girl remains aloof from prostitution, due to various reasons, then she has a chance to marry at the correct age and set up house properly, but this seldom happens.

The side effects of Badi prostitution weighs heavily on the boys. The main role in the marriage of a Badi girl is played by the parents and brothers. When a Badi woman stops working the streets, she relies on her daughters or brothers' daughters for her upkeep, but some Badi women co-operate with their brothers in their other activities so as to gain support and maintenance. Because of the fact that the Badi girls enter prostitution at an early age, it is observed that majority of them are victims of venereal diseases. The deadly effects of these diseases is the short life span of these Badi women and transmittance to the participant male. As
is the case all around the world, prostitution is constructed on the foundations of beauty, youth, talent and attractiveness and it is seen that a Badi prostitute with such qualities supports not only her immediate family but also her whole clan in the area she inhabits.

According to the seasons, these Badi travel to the various Indian towns across the border, or to local bazars and shanty towns within Nepal. They settle temporarily near village settlements, small towns, crossroad settlements, fairgrounds, etc, and ply their trade. During such periods, the ones left at their permanent settlements earn their living by doing works other than prostitution, as these are mostly old folks and children.

According to the Badi people, they state that though prostitution is a traditional occupation, its increased usage and frequency commenced only after the middle ages. Then, as earlier stated, with the encouragement and patronisation by affluent and powerful people of those times, these Badi stuck to their traditional occupation, not earning much from the other professions. This resulted in them not knowing anything about the other professions making them dependant only on their occupation of dancing, singing and prostitution. Thus decadence started in their dancing and singing activities, and these eroded with more emphasis on prostitution. In recent times, however, some of these Badi people express their shame in being Badi and their shameful occupation which has relegated their social status to one even below that of the sweepers.

**Weaving Fishing Nets and Fishing**

Badi activities are interesting and fill an observer with curiosity. Among their other occupations is fishing and weaving these nets, which is considered a traditional skill which they seem to have inherited from a long time ago in the past. They claim that during their migration from India, and along the rivers, into Western Nepal, they used to live off the river (i.e. fishing) and thus became adept in this occupation. This could be supported by the fact that they settle in small slums on the river banks. Fishing is done using nets, hooks, *tip, dhadiya*, and such general methods that are prevalent in Nepal. It is said that these Badi are more adept in
fishing than other tribes, resulting in them having a lesser financial burden to carry, because they are more successful and earn money by selling their catch. They weave a variety of fishing nets out of assorted fibres, selling some and using others personally. A fishing net can grant them an income of Rs. 400/- approximately.

Fashioning percussion instruments

Due to the fact that Nepal is a country which contains diverse and varied cultures, our region is full of a variety of entertainment styles. The traditional occupation of the Badi is also a form of entertainment which pleases others and provides a good income source, making them experts in this field. To perform good songs and dances, good musical instruments like the madal, tabala, khaichadi, etc. are essential. The percussion instruments are prepared by the Badi themselves out of wood such as the khamari and keetuki, using dried goat skins and kint.

While some instruments are made for personal use, others are made to be sold so as to provide an income for use in family welfare. They are also experts in fashioning chillum which are made of ordinary mud but very artistic to behold. In the area of Western Nepal, most people use the chillum made by the Badi for smoking kongkad or tobacco. Though these chillum are sold, they are also given away to villagers as gifts. Thus it is seen that manufacturing percussion instruments and chillum are traditional skills of the Badi.

Begging in fields or at houses: (Khalomuthi Chaharne)

As has already been mentioned, the Badi being psatronised by the rich and living on their donations', have become lazy and do not desire to work as other people do. Since, they have been fulfilling their basic necessities without doing any sort of manual labour, and have taken up a profession where physical labour is unnecessary, they have lost much of their vigour and skills. In this way, they have become extremely dependant on others like performing for certain families at special occasions for which they are paid, or selling their self made percussion instruments, or selling their catch of fish, or repairing the instruments, or providing entertainment
Tribal Ethnography of Nepal

during social, cultural and religious occasions.

This very much dependant Badi tribe are also beggars in the literal sense of the word. When the villagers harvest their crops during the winter or the monsoons, the Badi go around begging for a part of the harvest. At this time, the Badi go to the houses of the villagers or to their fields where the harvesting is in progress and beg for foodgrains. This is called *Khalomuthi Chaharne*. This could also be called a source of income in kind among the 'non-productive' Badi people.

**Agricultural practices**

Agriculture and livestock breeding are not traditional occupations of the Badi and today a negligible few are involved in these practices. On account of their lack of interest, skill and thinking, these Badi are still landless. In spite of being provided quotas by the *Purnabas* (Resettlement Agencies), it is learnt that these folks show no interest is even occupying these lands, so the question of utilising it does not arise. The current statistics indicate, that a few Badi villages spread around the region of Kailali, Bardiya and Dang have taken up agriculture and livestock breeding as an occupation, however, they are socially ostracised from their own as well as the local society, since in the name of livestock breeding, they only rear pigs whose flesh they consume. They have yet to commence breeding other domestic animals like cows, buffaloes, goats, etc.

Due to the fact that the Badi do not have the capability, tendency and interest towards trade or industry, their economic status is very low and a matter of much concern. The *paturiya* set up stalls at cross-roads, bazaars, small towns and cater food, alcoholic beverages as well as their bodies when necessary. They are totally uninterested and abhor manual labour, being more oriented towards home skills and activities that patch up their daily requirements of food. Currently, Badi youths are taking up professions such as carpenters, stone masons, porters, etc. and earning their livelihood with a different profession than pimping, for a change. Due to almost complete lack of education, the matter of being employed in an office is definitely a current impossibility.
Dress and Ornaments

In former days, Badi menfolk wore dhoti, kamij, gandhi topi, and patuka, while the women wore phariya, choli and patuka (which measured 12 cubits).

The ornaments that the women wore consisted of markhuo, dhungri, sirbandiclip, lrkae mundri, golden chhape on forearms, aunthi, and some old women wore chyapte.

Today the Badi do not dress as described, instead they wear the type of clothes available in the markets. While the men wear pants, shirts, slippers, waistcoats, and coats, the women wear sari, blouse, petticoats, brassieres. The ornaments now consist of kanpasa, top, tilhari, sikri, rings, watches and phuli. The most popular ornament is the earring. The more experienced and bold Badi girls do not hesitate to wear pants and shirts like the city-girls.

On looking at these Badi, their dress-up and superficial turnout may attest to the fact that they have achieved a certain degree of affluence, however, this is just icing on the top, for actually they are still underdeveloped and on the lowest point of the poverty graph. Their attire changes with the times, but their social and economic statuses are still the same as they were a couple of centuries ago. This external glamour is a facade which hides the rotten interior which must be medicated before the whole is infected.

Fooding Habits

The food eaten by these people is quite plain and typically Nepalese, with the usual dal, bhat, trakari and achar. They also eat roti and consume meat also, along with a lot of alcoholic beverages such as the millet beer called jad and distilled millet called raksi. Among the meats, they eat chickens, buffaloes, goats, pigs and even the dead carcasses of goats and buffaloes.

On occasions like Dasai, they pool in money with which they purchase buffaloes and then slaughter them at home, hanging the
flesh within their dwellings. These people mostly prepare jad at home while they purchase the raksi from outside and bring home to consume. They do not hesitate to drink intoxicating liquors during any time of the day or night. Young Badi children and old folks consume these intoxicating liquors in the same way and quantity as the young folks. They do not use much spice while cooking their foods and hygiene is not much cared for also. They use food stuff available in the same ways as do other tribes.
BANKARIYA

Settlement and Population

Similar to the primitive and underdeveloped Chepangs, are a tribe of people who inhabit the district of Makwanpur. They populate Handi Khola Gaon Panchayat and live east of Chaura Besi, west of Sul Khola and north of the Churia Hills. This area is their habitat and they are known as Bankariya. Due to the fact that these folks spend their lives in the forests and depend on the forests, they have been called nomadic, wild people, but to point them out as such would be quite untrue.

Their population has been estimated to be approximately 300 to 400 heads. Instead of settling down at a single place, they move at the whims of weather and seasons and thus live very temporarily settled lives. These Bankariya have not been found in any area other than Makwanpur, as has been known till date.

Dress and Language

Their mode of dress is relative to the seasons and similar to that of the Chepang in many ways. They also wear khakunes similar to those worn by the Rautes. Even their language (dialect) is similar to that of the Chepang tribe. These Bankariya feel proud to mention that they are the descendants of Lav or Losari and Kus or Kusari. Even today, these people believe that being the descendants of Lav and Kus, they must remain in the jungles as did their ancestors to keep their customs and culture alive. Thus, they worship the Ban Devta as their tutelary deity, worshipping it time and again. These Bankariya do not depend upon persons of other tribes, nor do they go to work as hired labourers in anyone's house or fields.

Life Cycle Rites

Births

The Bankariya celebrate the birth of a son with great happiness,
and then if a daughter is born they do not worry for they believe that her marriage has already been ordained by the gods. Thus they do not feel that daughters are *naso* or burdens, and are reared up to be given in marriage to some Bankariya male.

**Marriages**

Among the Bankariyas, matrilateral cross-cousin marriages are prevalent, meaning the maternal uncle (*mama*) allows his daughter to marry her paternal aunt's (*phupu*) son. Prior to the marriage, the boy and girl must be in mutual agreement, as this is an extremely important factor for the marriage to actually occur. This is followed by the boy's folks providing whatever the girl's mother demands. This is called the *naso rakhe ko kharcha* or expenses incurred while rearing the *naso* (the daughter is called a *naso* or burden in most tribes in the kingdom). After this is paid, the priest and *Mizar* are summoned and the marriage is completed. Bankariya do not perform expensive marriages on account of their poor economic conditions, and so it is obvious that they cannot afford to do so even if desired.

**Jari**

*Jari* is prevalent in many tribes throughout the kingdom, and this means the marrying of a woman who is already married to someone else. The second husband is the *jar* of the first who is the *sadhu*. The second *jar* has to pay a compensation which is called the *jari cull* and the process is called *jari tirne*. This sort of custom is also very much prevalent among the Bankariya community. Here the culprit (one who marries another's wife) is seized and tied to a *sal* tree for a certain period of time. During this period, the woman has to feed her first husband with meat and *raksi* (home distilled alcohol) according to their traditions. Only after this custom is fulfilled, then the second male or *jar* receives the authority to take the female as his legal wife. No one objects in this sort of matter.

**Festivals**

Bankariya celebrate the festival of Nawagi as something very
special, and Dasai and Tihar are celebrated only ordinarily which is contrary to the way in which other tribes celebrate these two great Hindu festivals. Their tutelary deity the Ban Devta is offered worship and offerings frequently.

Food

Since these people live in the jungles, it is not surprising that the food they eat are also products of the jungles such as, wild mushrooms, bhyakur, gittha, wild roots and tubers. They consume available wild animals and fish.

Death

People who die are buried as is customary among these people. Their personal effects are buried along with them in some part of the jungle and any ceremony or rituals are absent.

Occupation and Business

The Bankariya are observed to be uninterested in farming, whether knowingly or unknowingly is uncertain, but nowadays, they have begun to adopt farming as a means of livelihood. Gradually, they have also begun to come into social contact with various other neighbouring tribes.

These folks sell the produce of the jungles such as wild oranges, bananas, kusum, ningalo ko tama, kurilo, mushrooms, tubers and roots, in the local bazaars. From the plants of the jungle, they weave damlo (halters), namlo (thumplines), doko (baskets), kokro (cradles), choya ko kuccho (brooms of bamboo strips), amliso ko kuccho (brooms of amliso tips), pichas, tukkis, gud ko gundris (mats of gud), bas or ningalo ko mandro (woven mats of bamboo or ningalo), ghum (head covering for rain), nanglo (winnowing fan), chakati (woven round seating mats), pat ko dori (jute ropes), etc. which are also sold in the markets.

These Bankariya have a fairly extensive knowledge of the medicinal herbs available in the jungles. They know which herb is meant for which illness and accordingly, they have been observed
to use these herbs when someone in their community falls sick. The results are also astounding, it may be remarked. In the markets, they sell sabgand, kusilo, haledo, sinkauli, tejpath, harchure, bhajan, lahar, safademisri, haro baro, aflabade, etc. Among these herbs, the Bankariya say that safademisri is a very important herb and is becoming scarce day by day. Raksiis also distilled by these people from these herbs.
CHEPANG

Between the Bagmati River in the east and the Sapt Gandaki River in the west lie the districts of Gorkha, Dhading, Chitwan and Makwanpur north and north-west of the Mahabharat range i.e. 27 degree 50' east latitude and 85 degree north longitude. This region is the habitat of the tribe known as the Chepangs since ancient times, and currently as Praja, by royal decree. The altitude of this region, mentioned above is approximately 4000' - 6500' above sea level; estimated rainfall is at 45'' per annum and the general climate is cool and pleasant in the summer, while being chilly and cold in winter. The monsoons cause almost continuous rain and mist is almost perpetual during this season. On account of the wanton destruction of forests and the increasing population pressure of these people, their lands have been slowly eroded by the winds, rain and landslides, thus greatly endangering their habitat and consequentially their unique culture.

Population

Using their mother tongue as a measuring stick, the Chepangs have been estimated at 15,261 heads according to the 1952/54 census taken on the basis of the Chepang bhasa speaking Chepang people. The book Mechi Dekhi Mahakali estimates the population to be around 16,000 heads, while a German research scholar estimated them at 24,947 in 1973. In between 2032 and 2033 B.S., CEDA, Kritipur had stated: Dhading district - 11,000 heads; Gorkha district - 2000 heads; Chitwan district 6000 heads Makwanpur district - 6000 heads. Total count of 25,000 heads. Out of this population, 50% seems to be concentrated in Chitwan and Makwanpur districts as estimated from the above figures. The total Chepang population in relation to the whole kingdom is estimated at 0.2%.

Historical Background

Regarding the history of these Chepangs, no concrete evidence has been found till date, therefore it is difficult to say whether a version is the truth. To write about these Chepangs, we are compelled to use the help of oral legends and myths. Though these oral versions maybe exaggerated and unreliable, however, in view of the lack of evidence, these versions can also be and must be
given a place, even if temporarily, till new and proper evidence is found. The Chepangs claim to be the indigenous tribe of the regions they inhabit. They consider themselves to be the descendants of Lord Rama's son Lav. This is 'proved' by a legend which is as follows:

Lord Rama's wife, Sita, lived in the jungle after she was sent away by her husband. At this time, she was pregnant and soon delivered a baby boy at the hermitage of the sage Valmiki, who had given her shelter. The child was named Lav. One day, so the legend goes, while she was bathing on the banks of the present day Narayani river, she happened to see a female monkey playing with her offspring. This sight caused Sita to feel the need to play with her son Lav, so she went back to the hermitage and without informing the sage Valmiki, took Lav with her to the riverside. When Valmiki passed by the cradle, he saw that Lav was missing and panicked thinking what Sita would feel if she discovered her child was missing, for he felt that the monkeys had taken Lav. Thus, Valmiki hurriedly took some kus grass and placed it in the cradle. Then he uttered some mantras and there, in place of the kus was a beautiful replica of Lav.

Later on, when Sita returned to the hermitage she was very much perplexed to see a twin of her son Lav and Valmiki was also puzzled to see a baby in Sita's arms. However, this mystery was soon solved and the new baby was named Kus after the grass from which he had been created. The descendants of Lav became the Chepang, while the descendants of Kus became the Kusunda. This is the story recounted by a Chepang aged about 70 years, from Majbung village, Makwanpur district.

The Chepangs call Lav - Lohori and Kus as Kusari. The Kusundas are considered enemies by the Chepangs and vice versa, so it is said. They believe that if a Kusunda suddenly confronts a Chepang in the forest, they use their bows and arrows to kill the Chepangs. When asked the reason for this enmity, the Chepang elders state that Lava or Lohari, the ancestor of the Chepangs wanted to become an agriculturist and cultivate the lands, while Kus or Kusari, the ancestor of the Kusundas wished to remain in the jungles, hunting, digging up tubers to eat and living a nomadic existence. When Kusarinsisted that Lohari also join him, Lohari refused to comply as a result, Kusari stole Lohari's ploughshare. On being chased, Kusari ran off into the jungle. It is said, that from
that fateful day, these two tribes have become the sworn enemies they are today. It is a well known fact that the Kirantis lived in the Nepal Valley, prior to the advent of the Lichchhavis, and their descriptions can be seen at many places in the Hindu sacred texts and other books. The historians state that before the influx for the Brahmins, and Ksetris the hilly areas were inhabited by the Kiranti tribe which seem to have consisted of people like the Rajis, Rautes, Chepangs, Kusundas, and such. The Chepangs state they migrated from a place called Sunathali in the eastern district of Dolakha, a very long time ago. During this migration, the Chepangs claim to have had four kings: Poni Raja, Gil Raja, Rini Raja and Raji Raja. They are believed to have held court at the Raji Raja's durbar since he was the chief among these four rajas. But as time passed, the Malla Raja of Patan defeated these four rajas and annexed their domains. But even though these Chepangs had no kings after this, the lands they possessed were handed down from generation to generation as a kipat.

A renowned foreign scholar has written that the Rajis of Kumaon are very much similar to the Chepangs of Nepal. When we look at the Chepangs of today, we perceive them as shy, ignorant and adherents of the ancient traditions of tantricism, though certain cultural features have been borrowed from the Aryans, and they are proud to be known as the lineal descendants of Aryans. The Chepangs who follow Hinduism worship Lord Rama, Bhairavi, Manakamana and Dakhin Kali. While some Chepang are fully mongoloid in appearance, some possess feature which are different and unique. Whatever be the truth, couldn't it be possible that the Chepang tribe inhabiting the central Mahabharat Hills were called Chepangs (instead of Rajis) according to their activities after their migration? Or the similarity of the Chepangs and the Rajis of Kumaon could be a basis for their common ancestral root? These questions remain as questions, since it cannot be clearly proved that these Chepangs truly migrated from west to east or vice versa, however, it is a matter for research which could unravel the true origins of these people.

No matter what the truth is, it must be acknowledged that these people were once and to some extent are a nomadic tribe as their customs, rites and rituals bear testimony as living proofs. The current region of the Chepangs habitation (Dhading, Gorkha, Chitwan and Makwanpur), were in medieval times under the Kings of Gorkha. But in terms of economic benefits, this area was
worthless and hence remained untouched by the above mentioned kings. Therefore, the Chepangs remained isolated and so till today, they have maintained a separate and unique tribal identity of their own.

From medieval times till about one and a quarter centuries ago, the condition of these people was very poor. Besides hunting, they knew almost nothing about agriculture and were savages in the real sense of the word. An Englishman wrote that these Chepangs and Kusundas knew not how to plough the land or weave cloth. They paid no taxes, as they acknowledged no sovereign. They lived on whatever tubers they could collect from the jungles, during their daily hunting forays. They considered the king as the master of the populated areas only. They carried bows and arrows, possessing no modern weapons at all. They moved around in search of game and lived in huts made of branches and leaves. They migrated according to their whims and necessity and the vagaries of nature. In other words they could be thought as or called people who lived close to nature (primitives).

To delve into the settlement and way of life of these Chepangs, prior to the one and quarter century ago, mentioned above, it is seen that in the Nepal-Tibet war of 1868 - 69 AD. these Chepangs had also participated and received the benefit of their kipat lands being changed into raikar lands, according to a Nepalese scholar. The Chepangs learnt agriculture at a later date through the association with other neighboring tribes, and can be estimated to have started 8 to 10 decades ago. Also it can be seen that agriculture was learnt later since the Chepang bhasa or language does not include any word related to agriculture. But today, these very same Chepangs are agriculturists and breed livestock for meat, cash and sale of milk products.

Physical Characteristics

The facial features of these Chepangs is composed of flat faces, short and flat noses with low or depressed nasal roots, eyes possessing the typical mongoloid folds, high cheek bones, straight black hair, short and stocky, averaging a height of five and a half feet. They are slightly darker than most mongolian tribes and are extremely susceptible and frank.
Language

Chepangs speak their own language which is categorized in the Tibeto-Burman group. Though they speak their own bhāsa or language among themselves, for other practical reasons, they use the national lingua franca. Though their voices sound rather childish, or totae in Nepali, it is a pleasant experience to hear them speak.

A comparative chart with English and Nepali is listed below to provide an idea:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chepang</th>
<th>Nepali</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ama</td>
<td>Ama</td>
<td>mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahae</td>
<td>Ago</td>
<td>fire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhai</td>
<td>Masu</td>
<td>meat</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ba</td>
<td>Ba</td>
<td>father</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tee</td>
<td>Pani</td>
<td>water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tyan</td>
<td>Tarkari</td>
<td>curry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poo</td>
<td>Dai</td>
<td>Brother (elder)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thap</td>
<td>Chulamud</td>
<td>stove</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dabīya</td>
<td>Khukuri</td>
<td>Khukuri (Nepalese knife)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kma</td>
<td>Bhatju</td>
<td>Elder brother's wife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aam</td>
<td>Bhat</td>
<td>rice (cooked)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sing</td>
<td>Rukh</td>
<td>tree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chhae</td>
<td>Noon</td>
<td>Salt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wa</td>
<td>Kukhura</td>
<td>Chicken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suee</td>
<td>Khurpa</td>
<td>curved cutting implement</td>
</tr>
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A line extracted from a Chepang folk-song is given below:

"Maya pai nalo kungsang bhauko laulau"

Meaning: What love do you have for a bad husband. This is a sample of the Chepang Bhasa from Shakti Khor and Majbang VDCs.

Chepang - the word and its meaning

The people who claim to be Syodang (a tribe that lives on the peaks of large rocks or mountains) with Che (dog) and Pang
(arrow) as their tribal totem are today, still in the semi-primitive stage of hunter gatherers as stated by a scholar. However, it may be also stated that from our study, information from the Chepangs themselves refutes this claim and it is not Che but Kui which means dog and Pang does not indicate arrow.

When these people are asked why they are called Chepangs, the village elders state that it is possibly due to the fact that as Brahmins or Bahuns are called Kataas, Ksetris known as Thimahas, Newars as Kodaes, so also these Chepangs were named. Some other elders state that Chepang means fish which remain stuck to slippery rocks in small streams. From the above versions, it may be observed that the name Chepang was coined by other external tribes since they sustained themselves by living on those fish chepae gaeda found sticking to the slippery rocks in those mountain streams. Thus these people were named according to their physical activities in their areas of habitation. But today, these people do not desire to be called Chepangs since the Late King Mahendra Bir Bikram Shah, father of the current monarch, made a proclamation that these Chepangs were to be known as Prajas in lieu of Chepangs. From then on they have been called Prajas. However, since these people are commonly and from the research point of view, known as Chepangs, it is found essential to use their older name of Chepang instead of the authorized Prajas.

Septs (Thars)

Chepangs living east of Pukanthali are called Prajas and those in the west are called Kachharae. These eastern Prajas have sub-septs or upa-thars too. Some are Bhara, Proso, Jharangae, Darae, Jungrong, Jhyuamtangae, Rongbangae, Podhewaengae, Bangrangae, Rupakotae, Naikae, etc. Among these upa-thars are the Rana Chepangs also, as stated by the Pandey or chief of Majbangvillage.

Regarding the matter of the Soon Prajas or Kachharaes having no upa-thars, as stated by some scholars and experts, we are not in agreement, because during investigations, it has been found that sub-septs or upa-thars are very much existent among the Kachharaes or Soon Prajas. Some of the upa-thars are Nulsiri, Ghusarangi, Barsiringi, Birangmai, Rarlingamai, Timirmai, Kaudali, Boltha, etc.
Though we have to accept the fact that Chepangs do have sub-septs or *upa-thars*, the actual complication begins when we try to segregate who is what Chepang and of which *upa-thar* he or she belongs, because they are extremely unwilling to say who is what Chepang even among themselves.

Regarding this matter an old man of 70 years was asked, and he, as an explanation said that it was rude to point out such a thing so the Chepangs do not mention to which group they belong freely. When this elder was questioned as to whether there was any other underlying reason, he expressed the social and tantric beliefs that if one was pointed out as a this Chepang or a that Chepang, then the person pointed out would feel segregated and an object of communal bias, so he would use tantric and other occult forces at his disposal to strike the person who pointed him out. Thus, they are not willing to point out anyone to say that person is such and such.

On looking at other tribes, there also we found that they did not like the idea of being pointed out as this or that *jat* or tribe. Therefore, because of the above factors and prohibitions, though these people are split into various *thars* and *upa-thars*, they refuse to indicate the sept or sub-sept of others.

**Family**

It can be seen that even today, these Chepangs maintain and live in a composite unilineal family or joint family pattern. From the grandfather to the grand children (three generations, sometimes four also) live together, simultaneously in the same house. In event of many sons, or a son having many wives, then this male lives separately with his wives and their combined progenies. In spite of this sort of case, it can be said that among the brothers, there exists no tension, misunderstanding, and such social complications at all.

Though their families seem to be of the patriarchal type in relation to their physical activities, the household's mother has an important social role to play. Even the daughter-in-law have important roles to play in matters of internal family works. It can also be seen that the women folks are much more skilful and adept at various practical works.
Life Cycle Rites

Births

On the birth of a child, the mother is considered polluted and the household members have to observe birth pollution for a period of 8 days. On the ninth day, *soon pani* (water in which a piece of gold is dipped) is sprinkled all over the house, on the newborn baby and the mother who is then allowed to move around and talk freely with all the family members, which she was not permitted to do during the 8 days of birth pollution. On this ninth day, the child is also given a name or his *navran* is done. This name is given after consultations with a *patro* (book of astrological calculations and symbols) by a knowledgeable person, who extracts a word and from this the child is named. 22 days from the day of birth, the new mother is completely purified using the *soon pani* after which she is allowed to participate in any social, religious or other community gatherings and occasions.

Pasni

This is the ceremony where the child, be it a son or a daughter, is fed with rice (solid food) 6 months after birth. This is called *bhat khouwai* and the first grains of rice are fed by the child's maternal uncle, as is the custom. However, in some Chepang communities the maternal uncle is not the only person to feed the child initially (as is compulsory in most other tribal societies in the kingdom).

Chhaewar

This means the cutting of the boy's hair and occurs between the age of 5 to 6 years among these Chepangs. The boy's parent (father) must invite the maternal uncle to come and cut the boy's hair. The maternal uncle cuts the boy's hair and then presents his nephew with a new set of clothes and food. In lieu of this, it is customary that this nephew, when going for *tika* to his uncle's place in Dasain, has to take some gifts for his maternal uncle. The items to be taken as gifts are 1 *pathi* 12 *manas* of *raksi*, cooked meat, bananas, vegetables, beaten rice, etc. At the age of 5 or 6 years, both males and females have to pierce their earlobes as is the custom, and it is the traditional belief that should the ears remain unpierced, none should drink water offered by this person.
Marriages Practices

Marriage among the Chepangs is an extremely extravagant affair and also more complicated than other hill tribes in the kingdom. Be it prior to the marriage, or during the marriage, or after the marriage, unless and until the dastoor bujhaunae remains incomplete, the groom has to present whatever the bride's father demands. Since marriage means all the works related to marriage, this ritual is explained in the following three parts: Pre-marriage practices, the Marriage and Post-marriage practices.

Pre-marriage practices

Chepangs marry when they reach the age of 16 years approximately. If a boy expresses his desire to marry, his father leaves his house on a Tuesday to look for a bride for his son. He goes to a girl's house and requests her parents to give their daughter's hand to his son. If the girl's parents agree, then they ask the girl also. If she consents, then her father makes some demands of clothes and food-stuffs, which have to be readied by the boy's parents and delivered within the pre-set time. When these items are accepted, then the kura chhinnae is considered completed. This means that the talks for the marriage are positively concluded. At this point the patro is consulted by the learned person, and a date (auspicious) is fixed, on which the groom's janti must go to the girl's house with a fixed number of people (which number has been set by the girl's parents). Marriages occur in the months of Marga and Magh, but some also use the month of Falgun as well. These marriages are set in the above stated months because at this time the Chepangs seem to have money in hand.

The Marriage

The pre-set number of people go as the janti to the bride's house, but should the number exceed the stipulated number, then extra expenses have to be paid by the groom. Alongwith this janti, a female kin of the groom is taken as a friend for the bride. This kin can be the groom's phupu(father's sister), didi (elder sister) or bahini (younger sister), however, if none of these kin exist, then another female relative is taken from the groom's village, to fill in this position as in customary. The woman is called the lokandi, and her function is to carry items like: a chauthi of oil, tassle for braiding the bride's hair, pote (small glass beads necklace), clothes,
ornaments, vermillion (*sindur*) etc. for the bride. In *Chepang bhasa*, a bride is called a *khan*.

If the groom's procession or *janti* is preceded by a band of local musicians, then the bride's relatives and kinfolks come out to welcome this *janti*, however, if no musicians are used by the janti, then as per their custom, no welcome is shown. Musical instruments used are: 2 *sehenais*, 2 *narasinghas*, *karnal*, *dholak*, *jhyali*, *tyamka*, 2 *damas*, etc. On reaching the bride's house, food is immediately offered to the *janti* members. In the evening, the items taken by the groom's party are presented to the bride's folks in the presence of the bride's parents, brothers (both elder and younger) and her maternal kinfolks. Then the remaining part of the evening is kept aside for the *lokandi* to beautify and decorate the bride, and for the *sindur halne* ritual. Those grooms who are fairly rich present the bride with gold ornaments such as: *phuli*, *bulaki*, large disc-like earnings called *soon* and a silver *jantr* (square locket hung in front on the breast). Those grooms who cannot afford such items, present silver ornaments to fulfill the custom. The clothes presented consist of *cholos*, *saries*, *ghaleks*, *patukas*, *mujetros* etc. The following day, the *janti* along with the bridal couple, are given a good feast after which they set off for the groom's house. When this *janti* reaches the groom's house, a grand feast is given and this grandness depends largely on the groom's financial status. All the groom's kin neighbours and friends are invited for this feast and sometimes, even the whole village is offered food and drink.

**Post-marriage practices**

After this part of the marriage is over, there are three customary rituals that have to be fulfilled so as to really complete the marriage. The first ritual is the *dulhan phadkaunae* meaning return of the bride (to her parents house). This occurs immediately after the marriage. Within a pre-set time and within a month, the groom has to go with 1 pig, 1 goat (female), 1 rooster, 2 *pungs* (bamboo or wooden containers) of *raksi*, as demanded by his in-laws, to their house with his wife. Prior to this, the belief is that the bride should not spend a single night at her parents house. The second ritual is the *teen tika*, meaning the placing of *tika* thrice. This occurs after the *dulhan phadkaunae* is over and done with. This ritual takes three years to complete as the couple have to go for the Dasai *tika* for three years continuously to the bride's house. On the
first Dasai, they have to take presents of: 1 doko (bambo basket which can contain about 50 kilos of potatoes) of bananas, 2 bhudkos (5-10 litre jerricans) of raksi, 2 pathis (approximately 4 kilos) of rice grains, 1 pig, 1 bundle banana leaves, 1 bundle of thin sticks. If these items cannot be taken by the groom, then he has to go for tika on another date set by his father-in-law. Thus, according to the ritual of marriage, only after the third Dasai, teen tika is completed. After this last tika, the third and last post marriage ritual follows.

The final post-marriage ritual is the dastoor bhjhaunae meaning, submission of required or demanded items to conclude the rituals. This is also dependant on the date and time set by the father-in-law of the groom. The items to be submitted for this ritual by the groom are: 20-22 rupees, 3 pigs, 7 ghadas (large earthenware pots with about 60 litres capacity) of jad, 7 ghaitos (smaller earthenware pots about 10 litres capacity) of raksi, 1 doko of large bananas, 1 soli of rotis (oil fried like doughnuts), 1 rooster, etc. It is only after all these are submitted to the bride's father that the groom receives tika from his in-laws, along with daksina (donation) as is the custom, but which was previously not done. Now the couple are considered truly married.

Other Marriage Practices

Besides the already mentioned marriage, there are others like the marriage of widows, bhauju devar (brother-in-law and sister-in-law) marriages, polygyny (man marrying more than one wife), chori (eloping) marriages, sali (one's wife's younger sister) marriages (monogamously and polygynously) matrilateral cross-cousin marriages, and jari marriages. Widows are married without say show and the liaison is accepted by the Chepang society as common and natural. This not very frequent though. However, the case where a person marries or keeps his deceased elder brother's wife (bhauju) is slowly going out of style and this particular widow is allowed to choose her second husband than being just kept by the her devar. In this sort of case the bhauju is rightfully the devar's wife after the death of her first husband, but the changing times have given this widow a choice more wider than in the past, when she had to live with her devar whether she liked it or not. On the death of one's wife, he has the right to marry his sali, but this practice is also gradually vanishing from disuse as the Chepangs are becoming more civilized, but of course this does
exist in some pocket areas of backward and undeveloped Chepangs. The matrilateral cross-cousin marriages are also very much prevalent among these people but the patrilateral cross-cousin marriage is considered tabu, thus not practiced. There is no standing custom of marriage with one's own lineage, since this is considered to collide with the had (bone), which means agnatic lineage.

Though there are cases where Chepang females have married with non-Chepang males, no cases of Chepang males marrying non-Chepang females have been observed till date. Chepang females married to Tamangs produce offspring of a mixed blood who are called Angraba in Tamang bhasa. If a Brahmin man marries a Chepang female, the offspring is called a Ksetri, while if a Gurung or a Tamang man marries a Chepang woman, then the offspring will be a Gurung-Chepang and a Tamang-Chepang respectively, as is the prevalent custom of recognition among these Chepangs. But, if a Chepang man marries a Gurung or Tamang woman, then the offspring is called a Chepang and nothing else.

**Jari** marriage means when a person seduces another man's wife and marries her inspite of her already married status. When a Chepang does this to another Chepang's wife, then the second husband has to pay a jari (or compensatory fee) of Rs. 1000.00. If this woman again leaves her second husband and goes off with the third, then this third husband has to pay a jari of half the initial amount the second husband i.e. Rs. 500.00. If this woman again goes off with the fourth man then the jari is half of what was paid the second time i.e. Rs. 250.00. However, should this occur for the fourth time, then the fourth husband has to pay no fine at all. Should a man make off with another's wife, he is ostracised by the Chepang society he lives in, not on the basis of communality but on the grounds of promiscuity and bad moral character. This is rather strange for such a underdeveloped and backward society.

**Death Rites**

The death rites of the Chepangs are different and rather interesting than the other tribes of the kingdom. Those who are financially well off, place a piece of gold on the mouth of the corpse. The clothes and ornaments of the deceased are not retained but left on the corpse. This is said to be done out of love for the dead, but some who are greedy do strip the corpse. Prior to carrying the
corpse to the place of burial, it is tied to a bamboo pole and then carried off to the selected spot which is normally a high place or a peak of a hill or a crag where it will be buried.

If the deceased is a woman burki (is scattered 4 times and should it be a man, then 5 times. It is customary to buy a shroud, and if one can afford, then the corpse is given a new set of clothes. The burial pit is dug to the size of the corpse and in a east-west direction. Before placing the body, straw is placed on the bottom of the pit after which the corpse is laid on its back on this straw with the head towards the west and the feet pointing east. Then the personal effects of the deceased are laid by the side. These include: plate, bowl, and _khurpa_ or _hasiya_ (curved cutting knives). Now wooden planks are placed over the corpse and over these planks, straw is laid out and then covered with mud. On the top of the grave an earthenware pot containing _sama_, millet, maize and such cereals is placed and its mouth broken.

The _humaiy-binaiy_ rites are done by the _pandey_ or _mahapandey_ (priests). If it is a woman who has died, then 4 days after the death, these priests beat their _dhyangros_ and perform rituals to pass the soul of the deceased into heaven. If it is a man then this ritual is done after 5 days. According to the belief of these Chepangs, heaven is located eastwards. The _kriya_ is done on the fifth day after death (or the fourth in the case of a woman's death) and the person observing the pollution has to abstain from consuming salt and oil for that period. The purification is done on the fifth day.

**Role of Dhamis and Jhankris in Chepang Society**

It is a fact that in any tribal community in the world, where modernisation has not much influenced these people, their ancient traditions are matters of extreme importance to them and occupy a vital place in their various activities, both physical and mental. In other words, this community adheres to occult beliefs, which is the main reason why these backward Chepangs still believe in _dhamis_ and _jankaris_, whether it be to cure sickness or to usher the soul of the dead into heaven.

In cases of sickness, the _pandey_ or _mahapandey_ is informed and as he beats his _dhyangro_ he expells the evil spirits which have caused the illness, so it is believed. When death occurs, these same persons beat their _dhyangros_ and make a path for the deceased's
soul to go into the upper realms. At this time, the pandey or mahapandey, whoever is presiding goes into a trance and during this period, the soul of the deceased is supposed to speak through the medium of this shaman. The soul of the dead person laments and wails, but is coaxed by those elders present to go into heaven. Besides this, another belief exists where it is said that these pandeys are capable of retarding hail storms, making rain and performing such supernatural feats.

The Kulain puja, which is the most important puja of these people is not performable if these shamans of pandeys are not there to act as bridges between the ancestral spirits and the householders who hold this puja. Thus it can be said that these pandeys are looked upon as a shakti (power) pita (father) or powerful father in the Chepang community, and it is considered, among these Chepangs, that it is their foremost duty to listen to his every word. When a pandey was questioned about what an ordinary person had to do to become a pandey, he replied that one could not become a pandey just like that, but that he had to be instructed by gods in his dreams. Only then can this person become a pandey and then a mahapandey.

The pandeys or mahapandeys perform all religious activities in the Chepang society. Prior to performing any religious works, there are certain requirements which are necessary and preparations have to be made as follows:

The pandey or mahapandey wears a white turban, hangs a rudraksha and bells necklace around his neck. A dhyangro is held in one hand and the curved stick to beat this dhyangro in the other. Seated on a mandro (women bamboo mat) or a gundri (woven straw mat) the pandey or mahapandey chants his mantras and supporting the dhyangro on his knee, slowly and with an interesting rhythm. Soon the beat of the dhyangro becomes rhythmic and the tempo increases as the pandey or mahapandey begins to tremble, jingling the bells on the necklace and rattling the rudraksha beads. This is strange and exotic to watch, as it has a hypnotic effect on the spectators in the pregnant silence of the surroundings. The dhyangro that is used is made up of a ring of wood on which a skin (of an animal) is stretched on one side, while the other side is left open. There are holes in the wood where various objects are hung. These objects are: small stars, moons, suns, swords, khukuris, axes and such numbering 36 altogether, as
decorative pieces. These objects also function as cymbals to the shaking of the dyangro when the pandey convulses spasmodically at first, then rhythmically.

Religion and Festivals

From a religious standpoint, the Chepangs may be said to be adherents of a particular form of worship. Rangdinka, Rugka, Mahalaxmi, Pandayani, Panta pujas are fervently performed and those deities are devoutly worshipped. They believe a lot in tantra-mantra. They do not observe bratas or fastings and religious gatherings. They worship the bow and arrow calling themselves the descendants of Lord Rama. Certain religious activities of theirs show them to be Hindus. The celebrate Maha Sankranti, Srawane Sankaranti, Dasain, etc. with much fervor. They also do their own types of pujas in their own unique ways. The most important among these are the Kulain and Bhumae pujas.

Kulain Puja:

This puja is performed by the Chepangs as an important worship of dead ancestors with both religious and festive feelings, and done in the months of Poush and Magh. The main reason for doing these pujas at this time of the year is purely financial. This means that this puja involves a large financial expenditure. According to an old pandey, it is estimated that the expenses amounts to approximately Rs. 1500.00 to Rs. 2000.00. According to their custom, this puja is performed once every year, for three years continuously, and in the same house. The whole village converges at this spot during this puja. The next three years, the puja is done in another villager's house and so on. This puja commences at night (about 8 pm.) after the sun sets. During this puja, the necessary items must not be taken out of the house. Once the requisites of this puja are placed in front of the deity, these items must not be touched by anyone. Required items are: 12-13 pathis of rice grains (paddy), 4-10 large earthenware jars of jad, 5 pigs, 1 goat, 7 fowls, 4 pathis sama, 1 basket of maize, 5 river crabs, 3 bundles of phalaedo leaves, 1 basket of maize flour, bark of the jamuna tree, 2 ankhoras (kalas like vessels for drinking water from) of water, etc. In the corner of the room where the puja is being performed, all the above mentioned items are kept while the mahapandey sits in another corner of the same room and begins to beat his dhyangro. Here the direction to be seated in is not
particular. They say that this *Kulain puja* is performed to protect all the villagers from evil spirits rampant in the air, to keep away diseases and to ensure the souls of the deceased ancestors to be reborn as human in their next lives.

The real *puja* does not start until *mahapandey* performs the *deota basi* (sit and tremble when the gods possess his body) through which he expels the evil within the house and village as a whole. This puja goes on throughout the night while the *dhyangro* keeps on beating its rhythmic *tatu* and the next day the puja is over. Now the *mahapandey*’s share of the gifts, which has already been set aside, is reached to his house by the people of the household where the puja is performed. The reason for this reaching of the *mahapandey*’s share is because he is not allowed to touch these items. The remaining items of foodstuffs are now eaten at the site of the *puja* by all present, since it is the custom, as already mentioned, that these items must not be taken out of the house under any circumstances whatsoever. The share of the *mahapandey* that has been reached to his house consists of stuff that has been set aside prior to the consecration in the corner of the room.

**Bhumae Puja**

This puja is called *Dhaniya puja* also and is performed on the 5th day of the full moon in the month of Marga. This *puja* is performed once every three years. *Rangdinka, Rugka, Mahalaxmi, Panta, Pandayani*, and others, are deities worshipped during this *Bhumae puja*. According to these Chepangs, their oldest deity is Rangdinka.

The animals necessary for sacrificing in these *pujas* are either a male or a female kid (goat), or a rooster and a hen. It is essential to keep a 24 hour (one day and one night) vigil at a place which they call *dinayana* in their *bhasa*. One such *dinayana* exists in the Salikhor VDC, ward number 3, south of Majbang village, as stated by the *mahapandey* of Majbang, while he pointed out a *cheuri* tree in the Salikhor area. On the occasion of *Bhumae puja*, Chepangs and Tamangs congregate at this *dinayana* from near and far away places like Gamaedung, Charkilla, Chotang, Gamaetar, Deodesh, Kalyanchaur, Deojur, Naebetar, Shaktikhor, Kasbang and others. These people remain there dancing and singing the whole night till the next morning. On the day after the night vigil, at about 10
am., the devi and devta are worshipped and this ends the whole puja, and thus the vigil or jaga. At the dinayana, it is essential for a pandey or mahapandey to light oil-lamps and burn incense on full moon and dark moon days of every month.

Along with this puja, the Nawagi puja is also performed in the month of Bhadra as in the custom. Here, newly harvested grains and other products are offered to their dead ancestors according to the custom, but since the place where this puja is done is not as important as the dinayana, thus the place is not given much importance as is natural. The dhyangro, damfu, khaichadi are some instruments used by the Chepangs during their festivals and pujas.

Dress and Ornaments

Comparing these people to the various tribes of the kingdom, they can be said to be almost without a tribal costume since they were quite nomadic and semi-civilized about two decades ago. However, now they are conscious of their status and need for seasonal clothing in contrast to their previous way of living by rubbing ash all over their bodies and sleeping near their fires to ward off the cold, wearing the scanty loincloths. Nowadays, they have accepted clothing such as kachhads or cloth pieces wrapped around their waists to screen their private parts and almost all the knees and thighs as a noble gesture to current social requirement; vest-like clothes called bhotos shirts and such attire among their males. The females wear what females of other surrounding tribes wear and are almost indistinguishable from their neighbors. The lower (private areas) are covered with a wrapper like cloth called a gunew or sari which has become a trademark of the Nepalese woman in the world; cholo or a full sleeved blouse patuka or a waist band made up of a rather long cloth piece which they tie around their waists so that they may be able to do heavy work and carry loads; ghalek or a cloth piece tied across from one shoulder to the opposite waist and acts as a sort of bag where they put various items they need, such as tobacco, cigarettes, matches, popcorn, etc. Even widow women dress up like the others and no social stipulation for dress seems to exist among these Chepangs, regarding widows. Some women have begun to wear the woolen sweaters available in the wayside shops on the village paths. School going children wear their school uniforms consisting of the dark blue pants or skirts and the light blues shirts or blouses, which are provided by the Praja Bikash Samiti (organization for the
development of these Prajas or Chepangs). However, in contrast the children who remain at home with their mothers walk around totally naked. Ornaments women wear are brass, slate, bronze or silver bangles silver jantars (amulets), large earrings mostly made of brass phuli or bulaki made of gold or brass on their nostrils. The men are sometimes found to wear brass or silver rings and watches too. At a glance, these Chepangs resemble the other tribes like the Tamangs, who also live in that area.

Chepang women wear bangles made of glass and plastic also, alongwith the sindur in their hair partings to show their martial statuses, pote mala are also worn round their necks and some of the more advanced ones are seen with lipstick and other facial make-up, in a bid towards emancipation, presumably. In spite of all this, and in comparison to the other tribes inhabiting the kingdom, these Chepangs are very much backward in most aspects.

Financial or Economic Status

The main source of the Chepangs' income is farming (in recent times), livestock breeding (also in recent times) and as hired laborers in various areas outside that of their own. Prior to the above stated occupations, these people seemed to be living the nomadic hunter-gatherer existence like the Rautes do even today and the Kusundas did till the last decade.

Agriculture

Though these people are new in the field of agriculture, they have, by now, made it their mainstay in terms of income generation. They have been doing slash and burn cultivation, by clearing rough lands, on steep hillsides and planting grains. When the soil became poor at one place they moved to another and repeated the same process. This is called jhum and was a prevalent form of shifting agriculture from the Hindu-kush Himalayas in the west till the area of southern China in the east where exists the wet rice culture. But now, this jhum pattern or cycle is impractical and impossible because of the growing land shortage. In this situation, these Chepangs plant crops such as millet, maize, paddy, barley, wheat, buckwheat, mustard, soya bean, sama, etc. according to the type of land available. Vegetables such as ghiraula, chichinda, karaela, cucumber, pumpkin and leafy vegetables (sag), mula or radish, etc.
are planted. Although their methods of agriculture are not well developed, the general agricultural trend is not much different from that of the other tribes in their vicinity. Millet cultivation is done in an extremely different way and worth mentioning here. After the tender plants or seedlings are ready for transplanting, the land is ploughed and these seedlings are scattered all over the field by throwing. Thus the millet grows on a where-is-as-is-way. It is seen that this method has its drawbacks, as the millet production is not as satisfactory as it should be. In spite of this, these Chepangs are avid cultivators, but due to lack of agricultural inputs and bad soil, they face the problem of being unable to fulfill one of the basic necessities i.e. enough food for all.

Livestock Rearing

The habitat of the Chepangs lies in the Mahabharat Hills, which are extremely good climatically for livestock breeding and rearing, however, these people do not possess enough knowledge in this field and have not been able to exploit this position of their's. Animals reared consist mainly of goats, cows, bulls, pigs, but in some areas, buffaloes are also seen to be reared and bred. On account of the inability to implement modern techniques and the unavailability of fodder for the cattle, they have commenced selling their livestock should they receive a reasonable price. Therefore, even if the future of livestock breeding is promising for these people, currently they have not been able to benefit from this occupation.

Fruit Farming

This is another way in which these people earn some money. The main fruits cultivated by them are lemons (many varieties), oranges, bhokotae, guavas, bananas, cheuri. Fruit farming is a good income source of the region in which these Chepangs live, and fruits are considered as cash crops. Though they plant fruit trees, it takes almost 50 to 60 years for a cheuri tree to mature and produce fruits (as they state) and thus it seems that it is not a profitable product, as the time factor is rather long. Also, the produce in relation to the input is very low and naturally not at all profitable.

The bananas of this region are extremely delicious and available in abundance. Bananas are used to barter (exchange) for rice in the
output capacity.

Other Occupations

It is difficult to support their families due to the low output and thus low income from the above stated occupations, therefore the Chepangs go out and do other works like fishing, hunting, weaving bamboo baskets, ropes, ghums (bamboo woven roof-like shade used as umbrella) and sell these at the nearest markets. They also work as peons in governmental and non-governmental organizations; laborers hired by construction contractors hlis (ploughmen) and cowherds for those rich land owners in their region and near their villages. They are always in the act of trying to solve their perennial problem of food, which they eat on leaves or leaf plates called tapari (in Nepali).

Though these people eat at least two square meals a day for half a year from the effort of their labors, the other half year they exist on the products of the jungles and remain suspended on the edge of starvation. The jungle's bounties that they are compelled to consume include things like: gittha, bhyakur, mushrooms, stinging nettles and such. This occurs due to the fact that these Chepangs eat for the first half year and are even easy going and casual at this time, never thinking of their dreary future, the other half year. When all food stocks are finished, then they eat whatever they can lay their hands on. This was the Chepang way of life and still is, as has been observed. Even though they are now aware of the necessity of storing emergency rations, they ignore all practical reasoning in favor of what they feel is cultural preservation. Thus, on one side we see their disastrous financial situation, while on the other their extravagance when they have their stomachs full. This cultural and traditional thought pattern of theirs has caused them to stagnate and thus remain integrated, as Chepangs.
In this zone of inward and outward migrations since ancient times, there are tribes which are stated to be aboriginal to this region and side by side, there are other migrant tribes who have entered this region freely on account of the open border to the south, east and west of the kingdom. Such mass tribal migrations occurred even as recently as 150 to 200 years ago. The positive attitude and encouragement of the administration then led to these migrant groups being settled in various parts of the kingdom, and who are currently a part of the Nepalese tribal mosaic. Among such migrant tribes, the Chidimar is also one.

These Chidimar were a nomadic tribe coming and going out of Nepalese territory from the vast plains of India, time and again in the past, since they were the least bothered with political borders, because they were ignorant and thus it was no concern of theirs. But today, a group of these people can be seen to have settled in a permanent sort of way in the village of Belaspur, which lies within ward No. 16 of Nepalgunj Municipality in Banke district, Bheri Zone. They are stated to be a nomadic group of Avdhi speaking people who are professional fowlers, according to scholars.

Historical background

The Chidimar are a migrant people from the Indian town of Baraich and its surrounding villages, because of the proximity of this place to Nepalgunj. The migration of these Chidimar people can be explained as follows. Prior to the war with the British in India (1814 - 1816 A.D.) and even after this, the regions of Banke, Bardiya, Kanchanpur, Kailali and their environs were thick jungles. With the aim of hunting and catching birds, these Chidimar used to go into these jungles often. After the Nepal-British War, these areas were under the British for some time and during this period they were banned from entry into these forests. In 1914 Bikram Smavat (1857 A.D.) the above mentioned areas were returned to Nepal as a sort of gift for the Prime Minister then, Jung Bahadur, as a token of thanks for the help he had provided to the British in rounding up the rebels who had taken shelter in
Nepalese territory during the Sepoy Mutiny of the same period. After this the Chidimar again began to re-enter these jungles, and this area began to be called Nya Muluk meaning new region in Nepali. In 1917 B.S. (1860 A.D.), Jung Bahadur, through the village Subba or chief Padmanab of Banke initiated the construction of a bazaar there and it was called ek laini bazaar or single line bazaar. This bazaar is still in existence even today. Since Padmanab had constructed 365 government bungalows 11 in a single line, it was known as ek laini bazaar. Today most of these bungalows are in dilapidated conditions.

After completing the construction of these bungalows, Padmanab had to provide these bungalows with inhabitants and thus increase the population of that area, so he requested and received a lal mohar from Jung Bahadur, and with this he was eligible to grant lands and houses to anyone who desired to settle there and pursue any sort of occupation or even business for that matter. This lucrative offer caused many of the businessmen from the Indian plains, mainly from Baraich, Gondaand Rupadiya, to migrate to this Nya Muluk.

There were mainly two reasons for this mass migration into the Nya Muluk. Firstly, it was the opportunity to expand existing businesses or establish new ones, and secondly, it was the greed for the lands made available. Thus, today it is seen that this area is full of businessmen mostly of Indian origin and the Musalman people. The announcement of the free distribution of lands in the Nya Muluk caused this influx, and included among these migrants were the tribe, known for their expertise in snaring fowls in the jungles of that region, the Chidimar. Thus, Padmanab settled these fowlers here and did so with the aim of using them to hunt along with the avid hunter Jung Bahadur, who used to love eating fowls. Consequentially, these Chidimar people were granted some lands but they were only tenants, under the condition that they bring in birds to the office of the Subba everyday, or whenever they caught some. This order gradually became a routine and then a custom which continued till the time of the last Rana, Mohan Shumsher, as stated by Musaini Chidimar of Belaspur, who is 108 years old.
In the Indian regions, these Chidimar are considered as untouchables, but here in the area under Nepal, they are treated as equals and definitely not as untouchables. Water offered by a Chidimar is consumed by any Nepali. The Chidimar who live on the Indian side of the border associate themselves to the Bhaeliya Thakur tribe, but the Bhaeliya themselves do not consider the Chidimar people to be equal in status to them. Some scholars have written that the Bhaeliya and Chidimar are two different people, because while the former are hunters the latter are fowlers.

The Chidimar of Nepal or Nepalgunj to be precise, state that they are Thakurs but not expressing what sort of Thakur, and there are some Chidimar folks who claim descent from the Kaystha. Regarding this, they have a story which tells of a Kaystha who had two sons. While one took to the occupation of his forefathers by holding a pen, the other took hold of a weapon instead and occupied himself with hunting. They say that the Chidimar are the descendants of the hunter Kaystha brother.

On looking at such legends and stories, it is discernable that as long as the Chidimar remained in India, they were Thakurs or Baheliya or Kaystha with whom they were inclined to associate themselves, but on entry into the Nepalese region, they reverted to their original Chidimar identity as is clearly evident, since even in India they are called Chidimar, but they do not seem to like this name. In Nepal though, since they suffered no social ostracism or any stigmatisation, and they were not associated with untouchability as in India, they felt it unnecessary to maintain their unfound claim to be similar if not the same to the Baheliya Thakurs, and commenced using Chidimar.

Physical Characteristics

The Chidimar resemble the Indo-Aryan type of people who inhabit the Nepalese terai and similar regions in the areas of Uttar Pradesh in India.

Septs (Thars)

In the Chidimar inhabited village of Belspur in Banke district, it is
seen that there are five exogamous patrilineal septs, where marriages between any two septs is allowed. These septs are Shri Bhtan Godsahi, Gaudaliya, Hduva and Knaujiya. Sept endogamy or marriage within the same sept is considered tabu and a breach of the social code.

Language

The language spoken by the Chidimar people is one which is common among those areas they inhabit, like Nepalgunj and the surroundings. The main source of their language is Avdhi and it is noted that those Chidimar in the Indian areas speak the same language as those in and around Nepalgunj. Today, they are able to speak Nepali fluently, with a slightly Hindi accent as most people of the Nepalese terai do.

Houses

Belaspur village contains about 200 houses. These dwellings are made of mud plastered on a frame of split bamboo, grass and straw. This is coated with a layer of cowdung mixed with water on the inside and outside. The roofs are thatched with khar. The main door of the house does not have to face any particular direction as in the case of many tribes in Nepal and windows are found only in houses belonging to economically stabilised Chidimar people. Thus, the house is dark in the interior due to lack of window holes.

In summer, the houses are not occupied as such by the people due to the intense heat and they normally sleep outside. The house contains their meagre belongings. The external walls of the houses are decorated with various illustrations and flowery motifs which are created on the day after Bhai Tika, which falls in the period of the Tihar festival of the Hindus. These wall paintings are remnants or indicators that show folk art at its rural best in that area.

In a corner of their houses, they place their tutelary deity which consists of a mound of earth. While they construct this mound, the deity who is thought about at that time, will become the tutelary deity of that house, meaning that one can choose his family's
tutelary from among a group who are eligible to become so, like Narsingh, Durga, Siva, Laxmi and others.

**Family**

The Chidimar family is patriarchal in nature and consequentially the father of the house has an important status. Whether within or without the house, any ritual or work must be decided by the father or respected household elder and then only implemented. It is observed, that most Chidimar families are of the extended kind, since the grandparents, parents, paternal uncles and their wives, and the offsprings of these people all live in the same house, thinking this to be absolutely normal. They do not seem to be inclined to split into the more practical and modern nuclear family system.

**Dress and Ornaments**

It cannot be said that the Chidimar people wear particular type of dress or that a particular dress is synonymous to the Chidimar identity. The climate and their economic status are two factors that determine the Chidimar people's dress. Since they are not on the affluent level of society, they are found to wear hand downs and thus causing more confusion about what they actually wear. While the Chidimar women in India wear the typical lehngga or a sort of ankle-length skirt and a kurta which is a shirt-like dress up to the knee or thigh, the Nepalese Chidimar women wear the dhoti, blouse or choli in the typical terai style like the other inhabitants settled there do. The males of India and Nepal wear the common dhoti, kachhad, shirt, vest and such as befits the terai climate.

Chidimar are too poor to use gold ornaments and so the practice of wearing golden ornaments is not prevalent among them. Instead, they wear aluminium or iron bangles, brass kalli or ankle-rings and also chadh. Another way of adorning themselves is the practice of godna or tattooing, done by both males and females. If a woman does not have any tattoo on her body, then her parents-in-laws refrain from eating anything offered by her. Tattooing is an adornment which makes a woman pure and thus what she offers others to eat is also considered pure is what these folks believe.
The patterns used in tatooing differ between men and women. While the women tatoo designs like peacocks, birds etc., the men tatoo their own names, images of deities etc.,

**Life Cycle Rites**

**Birth**

There is the traditional custom of calling in a Chamarni or a Domni when a Chidimar woman is about to deliver. These women are called *sudeni* or (rural midwives), and the fees to be paid depend on whether the child is a male where they receive Rs. 25 and Rs. 20 if a female. Besides this cash payment, they are given foodgrains, and on the day of the *navran*, they are eligible for receiving a set of new clothes. In return, the *sudeni* have to massage the woman, who has delivered, with oil for a period of 12 days, from the day after birth till the day before the *navran* or naming ceremony.

**Chhaiti**

On the sixth day after birth, *chhaiti* is performed regardless of the newborn child's sex. This is a day of celebration for them and kin and neighbours are invited for a feast. During the twelve days prior to the *navran* and after birth, the child is not taken out of the room or corner where it is confined with the mother. This is a traditional custom among a majority of the Nepalese tribes and is called *kuna rakhne* meaning keeping in a corner or confining.

**Navran**

On the twelfth day after the birth of the child, both the child and mother are brought out of confinement or *kuna*, bathed and returned to the same place or room. While the mother and child are re-entering the room, the woman's *devar* (husband's younger brother) or a related *devar* obstructs them with an iron implement or tool or weapon. He has to be paid Rs. 10-20 or as much as the woman can afford and then only does he let her pass. If the *devar* or related *devar* are not available, then this is done by the *nand jawai* or the women's husband's sister's husband. If the *devars* are
many then the youngest one is selected for this job.

The child is named after considering the circumstances at the time of the birth. The child’s *phupu* (father’s sister) or *didi* (elder sister) are the ones who give the child its name. While the Chamarni or Domni were incharge of the mother and child in the days preceding the *navran*, after the *navran* is over a Nauni or barber’s wife is employed in performing this work. For the next six days, the Nauni cooks food made of *sutho, maida, sakhar* cooked in oil and feeds the mother. For the first 12 days, the mother is considered polluted with the birth and so no one drinks water offered or touched by her, even the low caste people. To de-pollute, or *pani chlaunu*, the mother is taken to a nearby well, tank, stream or river, where puja is performed and a *lota* of water is offered. This is followed by a respected member of that society drinking this water offered to him by the mother. After this ritual, she is considered to have become purified and is brought into the mainstream of their society with no restrictions or bans on her activities. Once more she is one of the women in the tribe.

**Anna Prasan** (*Bhat Khulai*)

When a Chidimar child reaches the age of 4 or 6 months, a ritual called *anna prasan* is held for the child be it a male or a female. This is actually the time when the child is introduced to solid food for the first time in its life, thus making this into a special occasion which they have ritualised. Feasting does not accompany this ritual among the Chidimar, as the opposite case exists with other tribes. They say that their society has never emphasised the need for celebration of this occasion for it is a consequential step after the birth of a child. They state that, in the ritual of *anna prasan*, rites including feeding of *haluva* cooked in *ghyu* to the child. Whether a boy or a girl, the *anna prasan* ceremony is identical.

**Mudn** (*Chhaewar*)

The *mudn* or *chhaewar* or shaving of the boy’s first growth of hair is done by these people when the child reaches the age of 5 or 6 years. A small *mandapis* constructed in the compound of the house. This *mandap* is made with lines drawn into a specific design
on the earth using rice flour. The child is then placed on this mandap. The nau or barber shaves off the boy's hair which falls into the hands of the phupu or didi, who have cupped their hands like bowls. The hair collected by the phupu or didi is bought off her by the boy's parents after they pay her some money. Then this shaved hair is mixed with some rice flour and thrown into a nearby pond or a river. A musical procession accompanies the person who has the hair to be thrown and while returning also they play music and show joy. The child has to be clothed with clothes presented by the phupu. On this day, the relatives are called and a feast is given to all present.

Marriage Practices

In Chidimar society, to initiate a marriage the talks have to be commenced from the side of the male suitor. Relatives need only go for the initial talks. If proven to be positive, then items like fish, sweets and such which have been taken along are presented to the girl's parents. After this the girl's father offers these people sagun consisting of raksi and thus the initial talks end. Should the talks go sour on the other hand, then these items are not presented but brought back and the boy's party sit around in any open place where they consume the food and drinks. Should the talks go well then the next step is to consult a brahmin and set the marriage date. This is followed by the boy's relatives visiting the girl's house with 21/2 psri of fish and an equal amount of sweets and also the inevitable raksi. This is called lagan badhnae (tying of the nuptial knot prior to the actual act). Once this is over, the boy's folks along with those of the girl's get together for a grand feast, and the expenses have to be borne by the girl's folks. When everything is over and the boy's folks have to return, they are sent off with a lot of foodstuff and presents.

This ritual is followed by pau pujna janae rite, which can be performed by any of the two sides due to the expenses involved in it. If the girl's folks are not that well off, then the girl is taken to the boy's house where this ritual is performed. At this time, however, the girl's folks must also contribute as much items as they can afford. These items consist mostly of utensils. Once this rite is concluded, the girl is left behind and her folks return home. This
Chidimar

girl remains at the residence of the boy for the next three days and on the fourth day she returns to her parent's house or maiti. Should the girl's folks be well off, then they perform this rite and the boy's janti go to the girl's house. If the boy's folks are not as well off as the girl's, then her folks invites him over for the pau pujna janae rite at her house. The boy must go with presents consisting of some ornaments. When the rite is completed, the boy is left at the girl's house and his people who have accompanied him return to their houses. Like the girl's case, as earlier mentioned, the boy remains at the girl's house for three days and it is only on the fourth day that he returns to his home, but leaving the bride in her own house.

Pau pujna janae rite is done in a very simple way among the Chidimar. Their own kind of pandit comes and performs worship to their tutelary deity. The couple are placed at the mandap made out of rice flour lines on the ground, as earlier stated. Then the parents, brothers and their wives, paternal uncles and their wives, paternal aunts and their husbands all offer worship to the feet of the couple and bow down to the feet literally, and then they make presents in cash or kind according to their financial ability.

The ritual that follows is the gaunae which is done within the period of one to seven years, after the date of marriage. Prior to the gauna, the wife is left at her parents' house and not brought into the groom's house. It is only after that gauna that the real physical martial union of the couple commences. This gauna mainly depends upon the age of the girl, and is done quickly should the girl be mature, but late (within the seven year period as stated earlier in the text) if she is of tender age or immature. This maturity is related to the physical development of the girl and the boy too. For this gauna ritual, the boy, his father, paternal uncle and all those other relatives distant and near have to attend once they are invited. These invitees have to carry presents of 2 1/2 psri fish, the same quantity of sweets and some essential clothes for the girl or the bride. These presents carried by seven maidens with lucky destinies (meaning lucky maidens) or saubhagyawati mahilaharu, are placed on a man's head and he has to walk without stopping and also without looking back till he reaches the front of the compound in the girl's house. Here, these items are taken off the man's head by the 7 saubhagyawati mahilaharu and placed on the
middle of the compound in a sort of display for those villagers and neighbours who have come to see what has been presented. After this exhibition, these things are taken into the house.

The groom's group remains at the bride's house for the next three days only returning with the bride on the 4th day. When the bride leaves her home or maiti, she is not permitted, according to the custom, to wear anything that is given to her by her maiti or people of the home. She has to wear the clothes and ornaments presented to her by her husband. On the day the bride is brought home, she is not allowed to do any sort of work as is the custom also. However, the next day she has to cook and feed her husband's family, to show her culinary talents as a housewife.

Child marriages are prevalent among these Chidimar people even today, and their concepts and beliefs regarding this sort of marriage is not clear nor comprehensible to them, but they do perform these ceremonies. Widow marriages are also prevalent, however, the usual custom of many tribes where the devar marries the bhauju or levirate marriages, are unheard among the Chidimar society and considered tabu. These widows are eligible to marry any male besides those in her deceased husband's household and in her own family of birth. The widow is taken by the man who wants to marry her, to his house, where he performs a rite where he shuts his eyes and just by feeling her hands, places bangles (gold) on them. This is the only ritual of marriage among the Chidimar when widows marry, and are socially acceptable.

Jari marriages are also prevalent and the old timers say that the social rule states - should a married women and another person mutually like each other, and the woman is willing to leave her husband for this man and the man is also willing to accept her socially as his wife, then this man is eligible to 'steal' the woman, but, he must pay jari. This jari is a sort of compensation in cash mostly where the new husband must pay some money, as the social rule states, to the first husband of his 'stolen' wife and thus neutralise the situation. In the days of the Rana regime, the jari amount was decided by the court and thus had to be paid accordingly, but today, since the courts are not connected to this sort of social activity, the Chidimar have their own procedures.
The main or important people of the village along with their chief or Caudhari get together and fix an amount alongwith a paper which clarifies this matter and after the necessary formalities of signing with thumb impressions, the woman is handed over to the second husband. She is now socially and legally the wife of the second husband and unconnected with the first. Parallel cousin marriages meaning among the progeny of sisters, are also prevalent among these people, but marriage among agnates is taboo and an interval of three generations have to lapse for this union to be socially recognised.

Death Rites

On the death of a person, both burial and cremation can be ways of dispensing with the corpse, but it is basically the rich Chidimar folks who cremate while the majority who are poor perform burials, which are actually cheaper. Initially, a corpse is bathed and its nails are clipped and then dressed a vukuva after which some other new clothes are placed on it and then covered with a white shroud and taken to the place of cremation or burial. If the deceased is a woman, then the corpse is adorned with bangles and sindur (if survived by the husband).

During burials, the corpse is placed in the grave and covered leaving the head and feet uncovered. On the side of the head the nails of the deceased are placed in an earthenware pot which contains milk and all this is covered. A torch or ranko is lighted and whirled 7 times around the corpse by the karta or one who observes the death pollution fully by abstaining, after which the torch is thrown at the feet of the corpse and then it is covered up with earth. After the whole body is covered, the karta pours a lota of water over the grave, then he takes a handful of black sesame or kalo til and a handful of rice grains or chamal. Keeping these in his hands which are cupped, he holds them over the grave and the nau pours water over this with his two cupped hands also. Then the mixture is released over the grave.

After this is done with, the nau takes some kus grass, touches it to the grave and then imbeds it near a pond, lake or water sources like
wells or tanks (as in the terai areas). At this place or water source the funeral goers have to bathe and so does the karta. After this, they return home and the karta squats in a corner of the compound and then only the funeral goers also do likewise, since it is their belief that actions of the karta must followed, so when he sits then only do the others and similarly when he stands so do the others. Thus to complete this sort of custom the karta sits down and then stands after a moment or so, releasing the funeral goers who go to their respective homes. The karta has to cook and eat his meals separately, not touching anyone nor being touched.

Three days later the householder go to the place of burial, sprinkle barley seeds and milk and then dig up the pot which contained the clipped nails of the deceased immersed in the milk. This has to be extracted by someone from the household of the deceased. Next, they prepare pind and like the Brahmins, perform puja wrapping the pot with a yellow cloth. This pot is taken to a holy place or spot considered scared or a pilgrimage site and then it is immersed there in the waters of the rivers nearby.

Ten days after the death, the karta has to have his nails clipped and his hair shaved at some open space outside the house. Relatives (only males) also shave their heads and then return home. The females of the household prepare rice and other foods which the deceased was fond of eating while alive, and these are placed on a banana leaf which is carried by all those present to a place outside the village and thrown away. This is the signal that the household and householders have been purified, but still on the thirteenth day, unless a grand feast is not organised for all the funeral goers and villager, the household and its members are not considered cleansed from death pollution. This is the standing religio-social belief among these Chidimar people, even now.

The death of an unmarried person in the Chidimar society does not merit any sort of rites or rituals. It is considered a bad omen and they do not like this to happen.

Religion and Festivals

Chidimar people are Hindus, so they state. They celebrate the
Hindu festivals such as Ramnavami, Fagu Purnima, Dasai, Tihar, Chait Dasai etc. Holi or Fagu Purnima and Maghe Sankranti are celebrated with a great deal of enthusiasm. While the former is called Faguva the latter is Khichdi. During these celebrations, meat and raksi are consumed in large quantities. Meat like chicken, pork, mutton are eaten and raksi is drunk by both males and females. In Tihar, they decorate their houses on the day of Laxmi Puja. These decorations consist of flowery motifs, horses or elephants painted on the walls of their huts with red and white mud paints. Bhai Tikka is also an important festival for them and the sisters feed their brothers with beaten rice and sugary mudki and the brothers reciprocate with gifts of as much money as they can afford. The festivals of Muharam and Tajiya of the Musalman people living in their vicinity have made a great impact on the Chidimar people. Thus they are seen, not surprisingly, to be also celebrating these two Musalman festivals with devotion and zeal. Similarly, the tradition of worshipping holy men or peer (in Musalman language or Urdu) is also existent among these folks.

Traditions, Beliefs and Social Organisation

It is considered beyond their dignity to go to someone else's house and wash dishes. This is taboo among the Chidimar. Their feeling of being a member of a tribe which is supposed to have descended from the Thakurs or landed and prestigious gentry of the plains, is that factor which causes them to starve rather than to do any sort of menial works. The Thakur being of a socially high status, cannot and must not do anything that will undermine their claim to high status. Inspite of this binding or rule, if anyone among them is foolish enough to break this 'law' then he or she is hauled into the village council of elders where punishment or a fine is meted out. However, this 'law' is not strictly adhered to nor implemented accordingly due to their economic instability.

If the case arises where a male or female of their community, intent on performing some crime, enters another's house and is caught, then the village council of elders sets up a 'court' where the accused is presented and the judgement is passed where it is stated that the guilty party has to compensate with a fine of a certain amount of money. But by only paying the stipulated sum of money, the
culprit will not be freed. To regain entry into his or her social circle, a feast has to be provided for the relatives and councillors who have decided the case. On this feast the councillors utilise the fine (money) paid by the accused, in the purchase of alcoholic beverages which they consume joyfully. This tradition, the Chidimar state, has existed for as long as they can remember and regarding its origins, none of them can offer even a small comment.

If Chidimar commits a crime and the government sentences this person for a stipulated period, after time is over and this person returns to the village, the village council will again hold a trial and pass judgement and a sentence of their own kind on the concerned person who has to accept this and also comply with it. Unless this is not done, the person will remain ostracised from his social circle and which will cause misery.

If a society-related crime is committed by any Chidimar, then a sipahi (or soldier) appointed by the council (or society) is sent to call the accused. Should the accused not agree to accompany the sipahi, the kotval is sent and ordered to bring him or her by force, if need be. The kotval brings the accused and ties him or her to a tree. If the accused does not confess then he or she is beaten until the truth emerges. This is followed by an assessment of what has been said and sentence is passed accordingly. The Chidimar court does not separate the sexes and passes sentences similar for both male and female offenders should the crime be of the same nature or if they are accessories to the crime. Using abusive language under the influence of alcohol or otherwise, stealing and such misdemeanors are also considered crimes to be judged and sentences passed, among these Chidimar folks.

The Chidimar court consists of a judge or Caudhari, upa Caudhari, Kotval, Sipahi, Devan, etc. and to hold these posts, elections are held and seats contested. During such elections, all the villagers gather at one place and the Caudhari and Upa Caudhari are elected after proper evaluation of their activities and abilities to function as required by the community. For the other posts the persons who are thought to be capable of handling responsibilities of the posts, are
chosen but only with the approval and agreement of a majority of the villagers in much the same way as the Caudhari is. The term of the Caudhari is for a three year duration and the moves he makes during this period are critically watched and evaluated. Should he be found proficient in his duties and efficient in handling his responsibilities, then he is given or presented with a pheta or turban, jointly by the villagers. When he is presented this pheta, it signifies that he has been permansed for the post till his death. This day of pheta presentation is pre-decided by the villagers. The pheta is called a sapha by the Chidimar. After all this is over, the Caudhari provides the villagers with a feast to reciprocate his gratitude in his permanent appointment and the honour it has brought him. Similarly, the other posts are also made permanent on that day. The sapha is worn by the Caudhari only on occasions when he has to judge a case or decide a community project where group co-operation is necessary and funding also at times.

It is believed by these people, that on Nag Panchimi, if only the four fingers of the hand are used to make a circle around the house using cowdung or mud, then the dwelling is made safe from the intrusion of snakes. Consequentially, this ritual is performed by all Chidimar families on the said day of Nag Panchimi. Similarly, there is another belief that on Fagu Purnima or Holi, as it is popularly known, they believe that if they remove a bug from within their houses and smear it with holi or the colours, then their house will remain bug-free for the whole year. This is similar to the New Year resolution belief in Western countries.

Hunting Techniques/Methods

Almost 40% of the Chidimar of Belaspur VDC, in Ward No. 16, of Nepalgunj Municipality are still following the ways of their ancestors - hunting. Initially, these Chidimar people reared hawks or baj, which were trained to hunt birds, however, this sort of hunting is obsolete and today hawks are not found. The reason, stated by the old timers, for rearing these hawks in those days was to hunt a bird called the moti chra (literally pearl bird) which used to fly high in the sky. This moti chra used to eat the moti kira (literally pearl insect) which lived in the sea, and the hawk was the only bird which could fly high up and catch this special
bird. Once a *moti chra* was brought to ground by these hawks, it would be cut up and from its belly would be extracted the *moti* or pearl which they used to take to sell in British India of those days. But today, since there are no Britishers in India and because the job of training these hawks is an extremely tedious and difficult one, the Chidimar state that they have abandoned this method of hunting totally. They did not state whether they still knew the ways in which they train hawks.

Though these Chidimar claim to be hunters, they do not use the normal hunting implements like bows, arrows, spears or even matchlocks. Their aim is to try and catch the birds alive and hence have evolved appropriate techniques. There are three ways in which they hunt.

**The First Method**

In this method, they use a large net manned by five to ten people who wait for the birds in a field where the crop is ripe. The net or *jal*, as it is locally called, is used to cover the outer part of the field or jungle while the other end is lifted and readied. The three sides opposite the net are surrounded and the others involved in this hunt, create a lot of noise to chase or frighten the birds towards the vertically upraised part of the net into which they fly and then this *jal* is closed or dropped and the birds are trapped, alive. This sort of hunting technique is also seen to be used by the Tharu folks.

**The Second Method**

Here a small sized net is involved. It is kept in an upright diamond shaped position with six wooden sticks, each 1 1/2 cubits in length. At the bottom of these sticks are attached small one span (hand) sticks which are tied with cords and pegged into the ground. Behind the net, a 20 cubit long rope is attached to it at one end and the other end is held by a man. All round the area within the net, grains are spread as bait. Now the net is ready and a few persons chase the birds towards the net. As the birds are within the area of the net, the man standing behind holding the rope pulls or jerks it and causes the six sticks to collapse, thus ensnaring the birds. This is a method used by the not so agile or physically slower old folks, mostly. They
also call it the old-man's hunting style, and youths avoid this technique as much as possible, but use it if they are hunting with a few friends.

The Third Method

This is the most unique hunting technique that is executed by the Chidimar and also mentioned by the various recorders of old British India, where these Chidimar did reside in those earlier days. The use 10 to 20 pieces of 5-6 feet long sticks of the narkt or bamboo-like plant together with a glue-like paste laha or (lasa). The first stick has one of its end covered with laha or lasa and then the second stick is fitted onto the bottom of the first, since narkt is hollow, and fits like the frames of trekking tents. Gradually the stick is made longer and longer, passing it skilfully through the branches of the tree until it reaches the height of the quarry perched on the branch. Now the stick is touched to the bird which gets stuck to the lasa or laha. Gradually the stick's height is decreased as it was increased and finally the bird, though protesting, is in the basket of the Chidimar hunter, a bit sticky but alive.

This sort of technique is applied while hunting in places like bamboo groves, among tall trees, forests, etc. while some hunters make grooves for the narkt, to fit in properly and securely for telescoping to heights, other make screw-like attachments which lock in, thus making the join rigid and strong. The glue or laha or lasa., is prepared by the Chidimar themselves from the sap of the Vr, Pipal and Dumri trees during the months of Aswin. They cook this sap in mustard oil and the end product is the extremely adhesive laha or lasa. Among the birds they hunt are the titro or partridges, vhai or quails, dhukur, suga or parrot, etc. While most are sold in the nearby town of Nepalgunj, some are consumed by the Chidimar themselves.

On festivals and certain auspicious occasions, the nilkantha bird is caught and taken around to Hindu houses to obtain sagun or presents in the form of donations. On marriages and bratabandh, such birds are shown around to obtain money and sagun. After the sagun is received, they release this nilkantha bird. Once a bird is shown around many houses, either it is freed by the one who shows
it around or the person who has donated the most money is given the opportunity to release this bird. This tradition is borrowed from neighbouring India because in Nepalese society, this bird is considered inauspicious and not honoured the Chidimar.

Economic Status

The Chidimar are a socially and economically backward tribe, much exploited by the local landed gentry. The proceeds of their sales of hunted birds do not balance the needs of their families as it is natural and they are forced to work as hired labourers to supplement their income. Only a few Chidimar households possess their own lands. These people state that the main reason for leaving their native place in India and migrating into Nepal was the hope of acquiring land, which was scarce at that time in their own region in India, on account of the ever increasing population. Since, at that time, a few Chidimar families had obtained lands in Nepal, the others migrated with high hopes, so they state. However, this did not seem to work out and today the proportion of the landed Chidimar is in a minority to that of the landless ones, who have to work as tenants on others fields. Currently, it has been observed that some Chidimar households have taken up the occupation of cattle rearing and selling the milk in nearby Nepalgunj town, while some work as peons in some government offices in that area. Though a majority of these Chidimar people are illiterate, they have started to send their children to schools. A primary school has been set up at Belaspur village for the upliftment through education of these Chidimar.

In spite of the influences exerted by the nearby town of Nepalgunj, and that of the other surrounding tribes who are more developed in comparison, these Chidimar, are still unable to escape from their stagnation which is largely due to their superstition and other primitive beliefs to which they hang on even today. This results in their being financially backward and they can only get out of this mess but still retain their cultural traditions, with the aid of the concerned agencies which are the only organisations capable of helping in the upliftment of the Chidimar both socially and economically.
The Danwar is a tribe which is be found in the districts of Mahottari and Sinduli in the Janakpur Zone, Makwanpur district in the Narayani Zone, Udaipur district in the Sagarmatha Zone and the districts of Nuwakot and Dhading in the Bagmati zone. In a place called Dukhu Chhap in Lalitpur district, in the Bagmati Zone, there can be found a few Danwars who are known as Dukhu Chhap Danwars. This is the only village that contains Danwars, within the whole Kathmandu valley. The location of this Dukhu Chhap village is at the bottom of Dhusle Danda slightly above and north of Katuwal Daha on the banks of the Bagmati river.

It is said that, since these people lived among the Duns of the rivers, they were called Dunwars (people living among the Duns) and this was slowly corrupted into Danwars ultimately which seems likely.

**Historical Background**

In the 14th. century, King Bhupal Singh, the sixth generation of the Karnataki dynasty established by Nanayadev, ruled over the kingdom of Simraongadh. Initially he was the vassal of Nepalaeuwar, but later gained independence under the guidance of his chief minister (kul mantri) Chandeswar Thakur. This was followed by the invasion of the Muslim king Gyas-ud-din Tuglaq, which came in full swing and could not be resisted by Bhupal Singh, so he had to flee with his wealth and some subjects northwards along the banks of the Bagmati river.

Once more, the King Bhupal Singh built another kingdom and again existed as a vassal of Nepalaeuwar. This time he had his kingdom at the confluence of the Marin river and the Bagmati river. Once again the kul mantri Chandeswar Thakur instigated the king to remove Chandeswar and selected another minister for the vacant post. Chandeswar was very sad and went to the source of the Marin river and lived as a hermit. The new minister soon murdered the king, and fled with all the wealth. The Queen, along with her son Hari Deva went to meet Chandeswar and he promised the queen that he would put Hari Deva on the throne. He crossed the fort of Sinduli Gadi and attacked the kingdom of Dolakha. After conquering this kingdom, he placed Hari Deva on the throne.
and established the border till as far as Banepa as is clearly stated in history. The legend prevalent among the Danwars is also similar to historical incidents. According to them, King Bhupal Singh had a beautiful daughter. The king of Nepal asked for the hand of this princess for his son, however, King Bhupal Singh did not comply with this request, on the contrary, he married her off to a Ksetriya youth. The marriage was celebrated with great pomp and King Bhupal Singh washed his daughter's feet and threw the water into a nearby river which was named Godhuwa (Goadhune-washing of feet) river.

To verify this, available archaeological evidence indicates the capital being 4 kos east at Chanauti Danda is stated in history and also in the story among the Danwars, which clarifies the matter. In the ruins found there, the carved stone lions and the length of the bricks being 8" to 12" and the breadth being 5" to 10", and thickness 2", while the tiles being 12" long, 6" wide and 1 1/2" to 1" thick all stand as evidence. Another triangular brick has a length of 16", and width and height of 4". The durbar, bathroom, tundikhel all retain their foundations. These ruins are also called the durbar of the Danwar kings, by the locals.

The Danwars believe that the king of that capital is their Thakur ancestor. The tantric powers shown by these Danwar kings during the wars with the king of Nepal is illustrated in the section - Social Beliefs. If asked the name of the Thakur king, they express their ignorance, but they state that if Thakurs were considered descendants of gods and goddesses, who were called Thakurs and Thakuranis respectively, therefore their king was also a descendant of gods and so called Thakur. Thus, the relatives and vassals of the Karnataki kings were later identified as Danwars.

Social Beliefs

Customs such as not allowing dung to accumulate in the cowsheds and carrying it immediately to the fields, cattle not to be shifted, leather collars not used on yokes of oxen while ploughing, if 10 to 12 deaths occur within the village in a year or if 4 to 5 persons die in a single household, then either the whole village is shifted or the house concerned is changed or shifted to another site and this is still done even today among these Danwars. According to the changing times, if some necessary amendments have to be made within the social injunctions then a tribal council of elders has to
meet to decide the matter. These people are of a rather peaceful and honest nature, thus they do not prefer to go to city law courts to sort out cases. If any disturbances occur within the tribe, then the tribal council tries the case and justice is dispensed accordingly. The chief of this tribal council is known as Bhanjan.

Elopements of married Danwar women with other men seldom occurs, however, if this occurs, the tribal council together with the help of the Bhanjan bring the woman to her kul (the woman's household ancestors) and forgive her. This is not a traditional custom. In 1970, in the month of Falgun (Feb-March), a big group of Danwars gathered at Kamala Khonch, where they discussed and established this custom. Accordingly, this has become prevalent among most of the Danwars.

Like in the other tribes in the kingdom, in the case of a person's death, and if he is survived by a younger, unmarried brother, then the widow has the choice of remarrying this younger brother or remaining a widow.

Mixed marriages are not at all tolerated by these Danwars. It can be found that since the daughter is also entitled to a part of the partiarch's (her father's) property, it is compulsory that she be given land and money on her marriage, as is the custom and her birthright. However, if she marries exogamously (outside the tribe), then her inheritance is cut and she is also ostracised from the Danwar community. Thus it can be seen that these Danwars believe in endogamous marital liaisons.

Septs (Thars)

According to some old timers, they claim that there were initially 16 septs and later on, after a lot of assimilation into themselves, or internal assimilation, there now exist only three, namely the Rajan, Tharu and Rai. The Rajan Danwar are considered the highest on the Danwar thar heirarchy, so much so that some even wear the sacred thread or janai, like do the brahrmins. They use Brahmin priests to perform rituals from birth till death. They do not eat anything cooked by people of other tribes, except Brahmins. They abstain from consumption of strong liquors like jad and raksi. They belong to the Kashyap gotr and have a variety of sub-septs among which Rajbansi is one.
The Tharu Danwars are second on the hierarchy rung, and although there is a religious ban on liquors they do consume this but do not carry anything used in feasts (like foods etc.) into their *mul ghar* (main patriarchal houses). They eat the flesh of goats and fowls, but never pigs or buffaloes. The household head takes the responsibility of performing worship to their *Kul Devta* (ancestral deity or long dead ancestors considered deities), and this person must abstain from consumption of any sort of meat or liquors. Their rituals are performed by people of their own tribe.

The Rai Danwars are the third and last or lowest in the Danwar *thar* hierarchy. Their society is very similar to that of the Kiranti but their population is very much less in comparison to the other two categories of Danwar. These Rai Danwars eat and drink anything consumable. All their rituals are performed by people of their own tribe. The higher category Danwar say that these Rai Danwars are those who worked as servants in the *durbar* of the ancient Danwar kings.

Among the Danwar of Makwanpur can be found the septs of Dhoni and Chheku. It has been observed that marriages between the Rajan, Tharu, Rai, Dhoni and Chheku Danwars are prohibited and they do not eat cooked foods or water from each other's hands. Thus it is seen that they observe tribal endogamy and sept exogamy in marriage practices.

In Udaipur district, the following Danwar, septs are found: Kchariya, Rajan, Khusniya, Jldhariya and within these septs are the sub-septs of Kunwor, Adhikari, Rai, Dhami, Chaudhri, Kanchla, Nampuchre and Phnet, found spread around the areas of Danwar settlement. Some other sub-septs found in Makwanpur area are: Sipali Rai, Danda gaun Rat, Bhimtar Rai, Pipaltar Rai, Jar Tar Rai, Pagltar Rai, Rampur Rai, Amtar Rai, Dumchaur Rai, Jhinganpur Rai, Mndal Rai, Kham Rai, Jagi Rai, Rajput Rai and Bhanigaun Rai.

**House Patterns**

Danwar families possess not one, but 4 dwellings. One is the permanent house where they dwell, a separate thatched house for the kitchen, a shed for the livestock and a barn-like house to store their food-granary. Should a family be unable to construct a structure for storage of their foodgrains, the kitchen is used as a
Danwar kitchen-cum-store. While the main house where they live is well partitioned, the other structures are just roofed and open. For those who are unable to construct a separate kitchen, and storage hut, they adjust with a single dwelling and livestock shed. They make the kitchen within the house and construct large jar-like vessels called deri out of mud, straw and cow-dung in the compound for storing the grains. For shielding this deri from the sun and rain a shade or osar is made. Some houses contain niches in the walls for keeping items like clothing but wooden cupboards are also seen in Danwar dwellings. Pens for goats and chicken coops, along with sheds for cattle are discerned in the vicinity of the houses. The bull is considered important among their livestock as it is essential for the arduous task of ploughing fields prior to planting crops. Therefore, the bulls are well fed and cared for. Planting or sowing crops is carried out with the combined efforts of the neighbours and is a community activity. The tradition of *prma* is observed by these Danwar as is the case in most agricultural communities along the length and breadth of the country.

Language

Like most tribes of Nepal, the Danwar have their own language, but due to its infrequent usage it is slowly fading away and being replaced by Nepali, which is spoken by a majority of the Danwar people. It is spoken at home and in the streets, but Danwar language is spoken by the few old timers within their village circle only. It is said that they had their own script but it has been lost through disuse and other unknown factors. These Danwar have some difficulty in speaking Nepali correctly, especially with the pronunciation of words having the th and t sounds and it is this feature which is the distinguishing point of the Danwar language.

Some words and sentences spoken by the Danwar in their own language and the Nepali and English equivalents are listed:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Danwar</th>
<th>Nepali</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>chur</td>
<td>chamal</td>
<td>uncooked rice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>merchen</td>
<td>khursani</td>
<td>chilli</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hrdi</td>
<td>aduva</td>
<td>ginger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>alu</td>
<td>alu</td>
<td>potato</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kodar</td>
<td>kodali</td>
<td>digging implement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>topri</td>
<td>topi</td>
<td>cap</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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It is observed that the Sindhuli Danwar speak a mixture of Pahariya and Madesiya, the Nuwakot and Dhading Danwar speak Nepali and those located at Dukku Chap speak Newari. Those residing in the terai belt speak mostly the Madesiya type of language. Thus it is estimated that the Danwar speak languages that are prevalent in the areas they inhabit and the amount which has been assimilated from the other surrounding tribes seems to have out balanced their original language weightage.

Physical characteristics

Danwar people are dark in colour and their bodies are sturdy, medium sized and on the wiry side, but basically they resemble the mongoloid hill tribes in facial structure and even in other characteristics.

Dress & Ornaments

A great difference can be seen between the dress mode of the ancient and modern Danwar people. Their traditional or primitive mode of dress was the males wearing only a single strip of cloth called a langauti or loincloth, which covered their genitals, from childhood to old age. They also wear a kachhad which is wrapped around their private parts. Women wear single piece cloth strips wound around their bodies covering their private areas.
Today, these Danwars have come into contact with civilisation and have adopted the modern dresses, so we see that the males wear bhoto, kachhad, slippers, Nepali topi while the youths wear the usual shirt, pant, slippers or shoes, Nepali topi and the occasional sunglasses too. Women wear phariya, choli, and ornaments like the chepte lurka like the Limbu women, along with the other types of golden earrings, and the old silver coins necklaces, and the glass beaded necklaces called pote, mundri, earrings, phuli nosering, and kalli anklets are also worn by the women.

Fooding habits

Danwar folks eat foods that they have been consuming since ancient times and according to their traditions. This is so on account of their agrarianess, it is assumed. They eat what they grow and supplement it with fish from the nearby rivers. Therefore, according to their ability to produce food and cash crops on their lands, they grow paddy, wheat, maize, pulses, vegetables and from these bounties of nature they prepare the usual dal, bhat, tarkari, roti and such dishes. But it is a fact that they are still backward in the field of cooking as their foods are not yet palatable to common people of other tribes and towns, as they claim the food to be good if heavily punched with hot chillies.

Those raising and breeding livestock utilise the milk and meat produce for their own personal consumption, and those who sell these are a negligible minority. Livestock are also used for sacrificial purposes and that is about all they can think of regarding the uses of these animals.

Almost a decade or two ago, their staple diet consisted of roti, dhendo or mush, fish and vegetables and today it is seen that they still eat the same food, though the cooking procedures are being gradually refined. During their meals, jad and fish are two compulsory items that must be present and should fish be absent, but the meal tasty, still they express dissatisfaction at the tastelessness of the meal. Tender bamboo shoots or tama are also considered a delicacy, equivalent to the status of fish, in their diet.
Life Cycle Rites

Birth

Like other tribes, the Danwar celebrate the birth of a child with rejoicing and their traditional rites and rituals are performed to welcome the child into the world. The umbilical cord is severed by the child's father or the mother herself.

The day after birth, a barber is brought in to cut whatever amount of hair the child possesses and also its nails. The new born baby's mother also has her nails clipped and according to their tradition, she is massaged with oil. On this day, some Danwar perform another ritual where a sivri is burnt to ensure the child's protection against the onslaught of evil spirits. This sivri is actually an appendage on the fruit (spherical) of a bhlayo or bhlayo ko phul ko tudi. The newly delivered mother is given chicken to eat as was and is the tradition among them. Birth pollution is observed for a period of 5 days and on the sixth day the purification and navran is done. According to places and inculturation, the time differs from 9 to 12 days.

The newborn's wrists and ankles are tied with thread and also round the waist. These threads are called kandni. These are placed on the child along with the nails and hair cut, so that the god who sanctioned the birth (even if accidentally), will not be able to take away the child when the mistake is discovered, because with these kandni and hair, nails cut the god will not be able to recognise the baby. They claim that this is an ancient practice on which they firmly believe.

Navran

On the day of the purification (after 5,9 or 12 days), they go to the river banks with great joy and after worshipping their deities, they sacrifice an animal to thank the gods and goddesses for the child's birth. Then they return home and invite kin, relatives and the whole village for a feast where food and drink is lavishly consumed resulting in songs and dances.

The Danwar who perform the navran on the 12th day have a different ritual. On the 11th day, after the birth, everyone bathes, then the child is anointed with tika and given dakshina and then
named by the eldest member of the household. On this day, it is customary to give a feast to 12 virgin girls and boys, and that night a mustard oil lamp is kept burning near the newborn baby's head for protection. Counting of the days is actually, the day of birth added to the next 11 days i.e. from the day the sviri is burnt, 11 days are counted.

A some places, a jhankri gives the child's mother a butti or talisman for the coming 5 years, after which period, she has to offer worship with a blood sacrifice and offerings of varieties of bread, sweets, etc.. On the day of the navran, the woman receives the butti mentioned, and the child and jhankri are presented with clothes and a pujais performed outside the house in a flat area or field in the evening. The main items of the pujas are ktus, kpur and amliso..

**Pasni**

This occasion is celebrated with a lot of feasting and enthusiasm. When the child reaches the age of 5 months (daughters) and 6 months (sons), it is initiated into the world of solid foods as is the case among most tribes in the kingdom. But among the Danwar, the mama is not found to be of extreme importance in this pasni ceremony as opposed to the importance of the mama in other tribes. New clothes are presented to the child and gifts of money are made by relatives who come and anoint the child with tika.

**Chhaewar**

When the child grows up, chhaewar is performed. This means the shaving of the initial growth of hair. This takes place from the age of 3 to 7 years. The maternal folks and especially the mama or mother's brother, are incharge of this ritual and done in the same way as other tribes, like the tying of halter on neck and taking to the cowshed, followed by the mama clipping the locks which are caught in a tapari and thrown into the nearby river or buried in some remote place with full rituals.

The Danwar not only invite their kin and neighbours, but the whole village as well to a feast of beaten rice, liquors and meat. The invitation formality is presenting a piece of betel-nut to the invitee as is the traditional custom. The household which receives this betel-nut invitation can go to the child's house for feasting at
anytime within the next three years i.e. from the date of receipt of the betel-nut. And should a family arrive at an odd time, it is the duty of the child's parents to provide the guests a satisfactory feast, although it is a single family. Because of this, when a child is born, the parents not only have to spend a lot of money, but must also be big-hearted as well.

**Marriage Practices**

Danwar people practice tribal endogamy, as can be observed when they search for a match for their children, from other Danwar communities no matter how far away they are. Not only this, but should the boy or girl be hesitant or dissatisfied with the proposed partner, they cannot be forced into wedlock.

If a Danwar boy, takes a liking for a Danwar girl proposed by his folks, then the process of *magnajane* starts. It is customary to offer gifts consisting of three *mrcha*, 3 *pathi* rice grains and 4 *mana jad* in a *ghla* to the girl's father by the boy's father. According to the custom, if the girl's folks are in agreement with the proposal, they accept these gifts and decline from accepting, should the proposal be considered unacceptable in their opinion. When the *kura chhinne* is over, then discussions regarding the date and *lagan* (exact time of tying the nuptial knot) go on until finally fixed. On the day set for the marriage the *vriyat* or *janti* go to the bride's house, complete the matrimonial rites and rituals, then place the bride in a *doli* or palinquin and then return home singing, dancing and backed by a local musical band.

When proposing to the girl's parents, the day of *tika* on the festival of Bada Dasai is considered the most auspicious day. People of the same *gotr* or worshippers of similar *kul devta* are not permitted to marry as this is considered to be tabu. This is called the *varn* and 10 generations on the side of the *had* (male lineage) and 7 generations on the side of the *mama* (female lineage), this means that touching the *had* or agnatic lineage is banned for 10 generations, while it is banned for 7 generations on the *masu* or affines lineage.

When everything is agreed upon and settled, the matchmaker or *lami* in Nepali and *varmi* in the Danwar language, is invited to be made the butt of jokes and has to dance as well as eat a feast offered him for his efforts. There exists a custom (also found in
other tribes) where the groom’s mother demands payment of her *dudholi* or compensatory fee for suckling the groom with her breast milk during his nursing period in infancy and *chat* or marriage expenses from her son, the groom. Another custom is to send a *mdali* or person who beautifies and adorns the bride, to the bride’s house, and another such custom is that on the 7th., 3rd. and 1st. days prior to the marriage, a mustard *bukuva* is rubbed on the couple and a day prior to the departure of the groom’s procession or *janti*, *sagun* called *chiska* is fed to the groom by the daughters of the household or in other words the groom’s sisters.

On the day of the marriage, the bride has a white turban tied to her head and according to the custom, she wears a *doslla* and *mohn mala* of silver. Some customs like lighting burning torches or *rako* and payment of fees to *mdali* are also existent. The whole village is invited for a marriage and this is seen to happen, because they are bound by social obligations. Buffaloes, goats, chickens are slaughtered to feed the guests and not only Danwar, but other tribes are also invited for the great feast.

Certain customs of these people are different from most tribes. After the bride is taken into the groom’s house, her feet are washed by all the members of the family, except her husband and his parents, with due respect and honour. But should the groom have no one at home, i.e. if he is an orphan or such, then he himself has to perform this task, also with respect and honour due to the bride, as custom dictates. The bride is taken into the groom’s house only on a Monday, a Wednesday or a Friday, and the superstition surrounding this is the belief that the other week days are inauspicious. So if a bride is taken in on these tabu days, then the life of the couple will be sorrowful and marred by tragedy. Today, due to the strong influence of modern developments and changing social beliefs, the Danwar youths have commenced going to courts and performing civil marriages when faced with family opposition.

The size of the *janti* is limited by law, but in reality this is not practised and when the folks from the bride’s village also attend, the gathering becomes exceptionally inflated. Thus, this large crowd has to be fed and sheltered for seven days and then a grand feast or *bhter* has to be offered by the bride’s folks no matter how much debts are incurred. This was a compulsory tradition and is still so, even today. When the *janti* or *vriyat* return with the bride, the relatives and guests from the bride’s side all join the *janti* and
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proceed towards the groom's house, where the groom's folks also have to do the same for this gathering as did the bride's folks previously, but only for a period of three days. Such traditions are some of the main causes for the Danwar people to possess terribly weak economic statuses even today.

Currently, some realistic Danwar people have reduced the period of 7 days feasting to 5 days and the 3 days period to 2 days. This has occurred due to their realisation of the massive repercussions of extravagance in their marriages. This is a positive step towards social reformation and hopeful upliftment of the Danwar economy. Since the unfeasibility of changing a social concept in a moment is there, the gradual step by step procedure is more practical and of an extremely important nature, so these Danwar state.

A custom of the groom's folks paying as much money as they can afford and purchasing the bride, is still prevalent among these people. This traditional practice has today, reached such a stage, where it is considered compulsory and does not cause any distress within the Danwar community. However, in the old days when the bride purchasing power was an affordable sum of 4 to 6 annas, this amount has today skyrocketed to an unaffordable and fantastic (for them) sum of Rs 4 to 5 thousands, according to the girl's skills and beauty. No cases of child or widow marriages have been observed among these Danwar, though it is possible that isolated instances do exist, of which we are unaware or else these are hushed up.

Death Rites

When a Danwar individual expires, the rituals are performed in two manners which are similar in some aspects while differing in others. They generally bury children while cremating adults. Prior to taking the corpse to the river banks, it is covered with a white shroud and placed on a bed (of raw green bamboo) called a parngi, and lashed on with stripes of bamboo or choya. At this stage, there is a ritual of covering the corpse with a fishing net as soon as death overtakes the person. This ritual is symbolic of the Danwar tribe's ancient profession of fishing and a local legend also tells of them receiving their name because of their fishing occupation. Some Danwar communities follow the death rites and rituals exactly as the Brahmins do, such as the observation of 13 days death pollution, after which a Brahmin priest is brought in to purify
the householders and the area with gaunth. They shave their heads leaving no top knot, abstain from consumption of salt, oils, fish, meat, pulses (masi), garlic, onions, etc. They start the observance of pollution from the day after the death and continue till the next 13 days. On the 9th day, after death, the whole family goes to the river, bathes and returns home to eat beaten rice and curds. On the 13th day, after death, all the brothers (sons of the deceased) go to the river bank where they have their heads shaved again, then they offer pind in the name of the deceased (father or mother). Then they return to perform jutho phukaune meaning lifting the ban on edible items. In this way they complete the death rites and rituals within the 13 days and seem to have no further custom such as the annual sraddha, which is an important Hindu ritual.

In some Danwar communities, prior to the corpse being taken to the river banks, a ritual is performed where a broom or kucho and a mud pot or hadi are placed on a winnowing fan or nanglo and then the broom is brushed in the ullo or opposite way. After this the whole assembly of items is taken and dumped in a nearby gully or depression. Then the corpse is carried off towards the river which they call sagar or sea. Prior to cremation, another new cloth is used to cover the corpse so that the tip of this cloth extends from the corpse and goes along the river banks to touch the water edge. Then the four corners of the corpse are anointed with ghyu and oil. The funeral pyre is 5 to 9 tiered and the corpse is placed on this structure and then made to eat hirn which is the water run off gold, curds, etc. fed to a dying or a dead man. After this, the daagbatti is lit on the corpse's mouth where a coin is placed with a little camphor. From this fire the four corners of the pyre is lit, by the son of the deceased.

After this, the malami or funeral goers return and are offered incense while the non-Danwar are purified with gaunth. While children abstain from eating salt for a day, the adults of the family have to observe abstainance for the full period of 13 days.
Religion & Festivals

Being Hindus, the Danwar folks carry out all their religious activities on a Hinduistic base. They have great respect for their kul devta. While performing worship to their deities, they sacrifice goats (both castrated and uncastrated) and emphasize in the consumption of liquors like jad and raksi. But there are some of their traditions and cultures which have been carried over and preserved from generation to generation and on which they have great belief and Sorathi, Maruni, Thulo Ekadasi and Dvitiya are festivals of special significance for them. The first two festivals are celebrated with songs, dances and general happiness by the whole family i.e. parents and children. On Thulo Ekadasi, these Danwar women fast and eat one meal a day for three days as is the custom. They spend quite a lot of money on these festivals and it is on account of such unwarranted expenditures that these people live near the poverty line.

Danwars are Hindus and they worship the moon, sun, Bhimsen and other such devtas and devis. Dhaniya, Maghe Sankranti, Fagu Purnima, Chait Dasai, Tihar, Srawane Sankranti, Jamare Aunsi, Chandi Purnima are their main festivals.

The ways in which they perform their rituals is indicative of the tantric influence. One of such festivals is Nawagi where the gods have to be specially propitiated. On this festivals, the god Sobharswani is propitiated with fire offerings, which means a sacrificial fire is lit and there are burnt offerings of foodgrains or edibles, flesh of animals and such. This is called a hom meaning offerings to the gods burnt in a sacred fire. When they perform such puja or hom, they worship the moon or Chandra, the sun or Surya in the east, and Bheri, Kamali river gods in the west. They also worship Kunta Devi. The Sinduli Danwar worship the Chanda Devi established at a place called Byasi Damar with great religious fervor. It is believed that this temple was established by minister Chandeswar after he became a rishi or hermit and tantrik meaning one adept in the use of tantra and possessing psychic powers.

The Danwar also worship at the temple of Chandeswar at Banepa. This temple is said to have been built by King Hari Singh in memory of his father-like minister Chandeswar Thakur and this is strongly believed by the Danwar people.
At Rampur Byasi in Sinduli, on the eve of Baisakh Purnima, a large fair is organized and a large gathering of Danwar can be seen here. Legend says that when the Thakur king was beheaded and his head was being taken to Kantipur, he (the Thakur King) used his tantrik powers to make his head return and join his inert body, but while the head was returning, the cock crowed the hour of dawn thus the head was unable to complete the journey. At the spot where the head fell, it turned to stone and it is at this spot that the temple mentioned stands today. Near this temple is another one called Thakurani Mandir or Temple of the Queen.

Since it is believed that women must not view the Thakur, they are not allowed and thus do not go there to offer worship. Only puja is performed there and the sacrifices are offered outside the temple to another representative image placed there. On the Baisakh Purnima, the fair draws large crowds of people among whom the Danwar seem to be in a majority and also a good number of shamans or dhami and jhartkri are present.

On the festival of Bada Dasai, the day of Dasami is reserved for Kul devta, Bhimsen and Durga pujas accompanied by merriment. Similarly in Tihar, the day of aunsi is for friends (only girls or women participate) to get together and play the customary bhailo which is some sort of carolling. On the day of Bhai Tika, sisters perform puja and anoint their brothers with tika and feed them with delicacies as is the custom.

Other festivals are Maghe Sankranti and Srawane Sankranti, Fagu Purnimia or Holi, etc. While feasting, they eat one meal a day composed of curds and beaten rice. On dvitiya brta they go and bathe in the river early in the morning and return home quickly to eat. It is believed good to try and maintain silence while one goes to bathe on this morning. On Maghe Sankranti, sesame balls or til ko laddu, beaten rice and alcoholic beverages are consumed to the rhythm of the songs and dances that are performed in the mood of the festival. On Fagu Purnimia or Holi, they sprinkle and splatter each other with a variety of colours as is done by other tribes in the country and in India. Sorathi and Maruni are also celebrated in a big way with songs and dances.

Prior to commencing a festival, they have a tradition of throwing a flaming torch or ranko and abstaining from doing any work in their fields. Similarly, prior to commencing cultivation, there is a
festival called *htelo gadne*. This is done to ensure protection of the fields and crops by erecting a small pole of a *bhlayo* plant, in the middle of the field and worshipping it. This is done in the month of Bhadra. The tabus that are existent in this connection are: women must not observe these rituals, the *dhiki* must not be operated, nothing that is normally cooked in a mud pot or *hadi* is to be cooked, and the tilling of fields or the digging or cultivating implements are not used on this day.

When the harvest is brought in, then prior to consumption of these food grains, the deities have to be propitiated in thanksgiving by offering them the new crops. Nawagi is eaten and the females of the family are also invited for dancing, singing and general entertainment. Danwar people are ardent believers in *dhami*, *jhankri* and *tantrik* rites and rituals. It is said by the common Danwar that they consider these shamans to be extremely powerful as they are *tantrik* masters.

### Songs & Dances

The Danwar are a people who love singing and dancing. On festivals, and other happy occasions, they beat their drums or *madal* and dance with gay abandon. Among the Sinduli Danwar, only the males participate in these sessions while the females are just silent participants or spectators. In the case of the Makwanpur Danwar, both males and females participate. For such occasions of dancing, the women wear frock-like clothes which whirl when they turn and lend the dances an exotic flavour.

### The Status of women in Danwar society

The Danwar are a patriarchal tribe. For maintaining the household and outside works, to keep track of the expenses and income, is the responsibility of the male household elder. The person who keeps the accounts of the family is called the *gharmuli*. It is natural that in such an under developed society as that of the Danwar, the women occupy a rather low position on the status ladder, however, they do an almost equal amount of work as the males. Caring for the children at home, looking after livestock and birds (pigeons, chickens), maintaining the kitchen and other such works are done by the women as is the social tradition among the Danwar. In the event of a single household being unable to do works like planting crops or harvesting, they ask the other community members for
help on a labour exchange basis or prma, and both males and females come to help out. This prma is to be repaid by giving labour when needed to those who have helped. Women and youths go to the local bazaars to purchase commodities, only if permitted by the gharmuli.

During leisure, the Danwar women busy themselves with weaving fishing nets, gundri, mandro, dhkiyo and other bamboo made items. Things necessary for personal domestic use are made by these women themselves, and the surplus items are sold at the bazaars, if any exist nearby. Danwar women are skilled in such types of activities, and this shows that even if they are apatriarchal tribe, the women do play a vital role in their society even today.

Occupation

The main occupation of these Danwar is agriculture, though supplementary occupations do exist such as weaving of cloth and various other items as mentioned earlier. They also supplement their diet with fish which they perhaps never sell. Sometimes, these people just live on fish alone for a few days and sometimes weeks. Very few of these people are employed in government or private organizations and agencies. Landless or those possessing extremely poor plots of land, work others lands on a lease or addya basis under certain terms and conditions which always makes the owner of the land richer and the people who toil poorer. If by chance, which is seldom, they do grow some surplus food, they sell this in the market.

The Danwar people generally have lands near river banks for the convenience of irrigation and also for clear access to fish. There are a negligible few who grow enough to feed themselves throughout the year. The majority of the poorer Danwar adopt other means to supplement their shortage of food. The disadvantage of lands near rivers is that the crops can be and are frequently washed away by the rivers, when in spate, during the monsoons or when these rivers change their course and surge through the fields of some unlucky Danwar. This sort of happening is what they live with today and gives these people a hard time and much frustration.

Many Danwar families have become refugees due to the whims of nature such as floods and landslides, thus they eke out a living by
fishing, weaving bamboo items and cloth, working as hired labourers in the fields of the rich landowners in the area. Stable Danwar people breed livestock also. These animals consist of cows, bulls, buffaloes, goats, ducks, fowls, pigeons, etc. which are looked after by the children and the women. These animals are used for domestic purposes and very few families exist who have sold a few of their livestock, meaning that they consider these animals their wealth and prestige.

Danwar of Dukhu Chap fell trees which they split and sell as fuel wood and also catch fish in the nearby Bagmati river. These they sell in the bazars of Patan in Lalitpur district south of Kathmandu city.
A majority of the tribe called the Darai inhabit the Chitwan district in the Narayani Zone and the Tanahun district in the Gandaki Zone. It is extremely difficult to set a definite figure of the Darai population, however, as in the case of other indigenous ethnic groups, it can be assumed that the population is increasing proportionally. It is suspected that the word Darai originated from Dard which is a tribe mentioned in the Mahabharata, Manu Smriti and Haribangsha Purnana. According to the story prevalent among the Darai community, it is said that initially these people had a kingdom in Darbhanga, now located in Bihar state, India. It was the migration (for what reason is unclear) from Darbhanga which caused the spread of these people to the Chitwan and other hilly areas. However, to support this story, there has not been found, till today, any corroborative evidence. During the Baise Rajya period, the various kingdoms in the Karnali region were divided into various daras for administrative convenience and it is from these daras that the word Darai is alleged to have emerged. Although it is difficult to state clearly the origins of these Darais, however, from a historical perspective, it can be found that the Darai name is mentioned in the lal mohar granted by King Prithivi to Siddhi Bhagawantnath. The Darais are known by many names: Darbai, Darhi, Daree, Daroe, Daraie, however, today they are recognised by the name of Darai.

Houses

When visiting a Darai village one feels as though it is a Tharu village. Their houses are long single-storied structures, with thatchad roofs and walled with khadai placed together and compartmentalised into two parts. The walls are plastered with a mixture of mud, cowdung and saw-dust both inside and outside. There are doors and verandah to these houses, but windows are absent. For the purpose of air inlet, small holes can be seen, thus the inside of the house is generally dark. The centre, within the house, is occupied by a hearth which functions as a heater as well as the family cooking range.

Language

Although the Darais are of mongolian stock, they do not speak the Tibeto-Burman language as do other tribes of mongolian stock. In
fact, they speak a dialect of the Indo-Aryan language and this dialect is a mixture of Nepali, Hindi, Maithali, Bhojpuri, etc. due to the influences of the mentioned languages in the Darai areas of habitation prior to their migration and after. It can be assumed to have occurred for a long period of time, these Darais, though of mongolian origin, now speak an Indo-Aryan dialect as do the Tharus of the terai.

Physical Characteristics

On looking at these Darais, it can be clearly seen that they are of mongoloid stock. They have short statures, depressed nasal roots at the end of which they have stumpy noses, oblique eyes due to the interaction with mongoloid people. In spite of all these factors they are dark skinned and many anthropologists have assumed that this dark complexion or skin pigmentation is a phenotypic characteristic rather than a genotypic one. On account of their stay in the hot regions of the Nepalese terai and further south they have slowly attained this skin pigmentation and also due to frequent cross-breeding.

SepTs(Thars)

As in the case of other tribes in the kingdom, these Darais are also one that possesses septs or thars. The thars of these folks are determined by their occupations and there does not exist any such custom as whether one is of a higher or lower thar. Thus it is found that all Daris are of one level regardless of their thars. This is different with other tribes within the kingdom. These people consider themselves of equal status to the neighbouring Tharus and Kumals.

Some Darai septs or thars are listed:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Koklasahi</th>
<th>Rajbanshi</th>
<th>Suryabanshi</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Khulchapur</td>
<td>Banpale</td>
<td>Buda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Champhaful</td>
<td>Khajuwar</td>
<td>Satanpure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handikale</td>
<td>Narbangshi</td>
<td>Rana</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is not clear how these thars originated. Even though the Darai tribe has a very old family line, similar thars are prohibited to inter-marry thus indicating that they follow thar exogamy.
Family

Like in most societies, the oldest man in the household is considered the head of that household. The Darai household is not just a single family (nuclear), but consists of many small nuclear families consolidated into one and thus has up to 20 or more members under the same roof. Thus extended families are a common feature of the Darai society. In these extended family systems, the role of the oldest man in the household is of immense importance. Since this old man is a representative or leader, and because he functions as the medium for any borrowing or lending works, he is known as the *mukhiya* or male chief. Similarly, the oldest woman in the household who directs the domestic departments is called the *mukhiyani* or female chief (a domestic counterpart of the *mukhiya*).

All family members work according to the orders and directions of the *mukhiya* and *mukhiyani*. But today, the trend of separating from the *mukh* (or main house) and therefore the household, and establishing small nuclear family units nearby or somewhere else, has become very much prevalent. This has resulted in the slow deterioration of the traditional extended family system that is a unique feature among these Darais.

Life Cycle Rites

Births

Among these people, their rites begin with the initial *namakaran sanskar* or naming ceremony when a child is born and has to be named. This ceremony is held 11 days after a male child's birth and 9 days after if the child is a female. If there is sickness or some urgent works to be implemented then the time period is reduced to 5 days after which this naming ceremony or *navran* is held. The woman who has delivered is considered polluted until the remaining piece of the umbilical cord on the child's naval doesn't dry and fall off. When this occurs, then the woman is made to touch some *gaunth* (cow urine) to her lips, after which she is considered purified and thus free from birth pollution. The custom of performing this *navran* is rather interesting among these Darais.

For performing this auspicious ceremony, the Darais do not find it necessary to consult the astrologer or the child's horoscope, instead they use data like the day of the birth, the time, *tithi* and month to determine the child's name. For instance, one born on Aitabar
(Sunday) is named Aiteone born on Manglabar (Tuesday) is Mangalram, one born on Budabar (Wednesday) is Buddiram, one born on Sukrabar (Friday) is Sukhram, one born on Sanibar (Saturday) is Sanisare, one born on Purnima (Full moon) is Purne, one born in the Rath (night) is Rathiya, one born on Chaitra (last month of lunar calendar) is Chaitae, one born on Sarwan (4th month of lunar calendar) is Srawane, one born in Falgun (11th month of the lunar calendar) is Faga, etc.

More such traditional names that can be found prevalent among these people are: Bikuwa, Tikku, Lakhum, among the males and Janauti, Buddani, Dukhini, Sukhiya among the females. It is a belief among them that if the child is given a pseudonym or low caste name then the child is immunised from accidents and death. These names are Kami, Sarki etc.

**Pasni**

This is also called *anna prasan* or *bhat khuwai* which means simply initial rice feeding ceremony where the infant is fed with his or her first solid food. For a son this *pasni* is performed when he is 6 months old and for a daughter it is done at 5 months. The auspicious days are considered to be Monday, Wednesday and Friday. Prior to this ceremony, the child is not allowed to wear any sort of new clothes, and it is only on this ceremony and then after that the child is bought new clothes. On this happy occasion, the kin, kindred and relatives are invited for a feast and to attend this ceremony too. They arrive with presents (mostly cash) for the child. It is done in much the same way as the other tribes do i.e. feeding the child with a piece of silver initially by the *mama* or maternal uncle then by these others present, and presenting a new set of clothes. Till this time the child is fed with only breast milk (of the mother) or animal milk (cow or buffalo). After the *pasni* is over the child is deemed fit to be allowed to eat normal solid food.

The Darais do not seem to have the custom of *chhaewar* or hair-cutting ceremony at the age of 3,5,7, etc., as is prevalent among other tribes in the kingdom.

**Marriage Practices**

The ceremony of marriage is rather important and extremely meaningful in almost all human societies throughout the world, be it highly civilised or primitive in form. It is not only to legalise the sexual relationship between a couple, but also to indicate the
responsibility this couple bears towards each other and towards their kin, kindred and the society they live in. Marriage creates a new situation and thus new relationships. This is what the institution of marriage signifies and that is how these simple Darais feel about it. Among these Darais, marriage can occur in more than one way. The various and prevalent forms of marriages among these people are of five types, namely: *Magi biwaha*, *Bhagi biwaha*, *Chori biwaha*, *Jari biwaha*, *Ghar-Jawai biwaha*.

**Magi Biwaha** or arranged marriage is the most popular and prevalent kind of marriage form among these Darais. This marriage is completed with the sanction of the guardians of both the boy and girl and the ceremony is performed with full rites and rituals. A third person acts as the mediator or *kaliya*, and completes the marriage talks. In this sort of marriage situation, the boy's parents or guardians go to see the girl initially and then this gesture is reciprocated by the girl's parents or guardians. After the *kaliya* has arranged the marriage details, the girl's parents, brothers and such kin are invited to the boy's house for a feast. This is *ketako ghar dekhaune*. This is followed by the *kaliya* going to the boy's house and fixing a date for the marriage. On this set date, a *janti* or marriage procession, winds its way to the girl's house carrying gifts of one castrated goat, one pig, *jad*, *raksi*, rice, pulses, etc. On this occasion, the girl's parents present utensils and *daan dakshina* (money and other things with blessings) as befitting their financial ability, to the newly married couple. The customs of *goda dhune* or washing of the bride's feet (and sometimes that of the groom too), *tika talo* or blessing with *tika* and *sindur halne* or putting vermilion powder in the bride's hair parting by the groom, are prevalent and are vestiges of the dominant Hindu religion in Darai areas of habitation.

This *Magi biwaha* has another facet among the Darais. What is observed to be quite prevalent among these people is that, with the promise of the daughter's hand, the girl's father keeps the prospective groom or son-in-law in his house for a period of three years and keeps him busy with works such as ploughing the fields, caring for the crops, rearing the cattle and tending to the livestock. After the stipulated period is over, the daughter is given in marriage to the boy. There have been occurrence of the promised girl eloping with someone else other than the concerned boy, who is compensated with another daughter (the promised girl's sister), but should the man have no daughters to compensate the boy, then the three years work wages are paid and the boy is consoled.
Bhagi Biwaha or marriage by eloping is quite prevalent among these Darais. During trips to festivals, fairs, fields, forages for fodder or fuel wood in forests, adolescent boys and girls met and fall in love. When this occurs, then the couple elope on the quiet. But even after this, the girl's parents have the right to recall their daughter and marry her off to the same boy or someone else. But if the girl is married off to someone other than the boy with whom the girl has run off, then the consequences are extremely bad for the society as a whole, so mostly the lovers are married. Thus it can be seen that the custom of Bhagi Biwaha or the girls' marrying their lovers is very much in vogue among the Darais.

Chori Biwaha or marriage by abduction is also prevalent though not frequent among the Darai community today. Here the boy who likes a certain girl forcibly abducts her and takes her to his house. After the process called bhitraune, an invitation for a feast is sent to the parents and brothers of the girl. The invitees can either attend the feast or absent themselves. If they are absent then a certain amount of money is sent to the girl's house by the boy's parents. This is what a Chori Biwaha is in the Darai society.

Jari Biwaha or marriage to another man's legal wife is also seen to occur now and then. This happens when the male concerned seduces or is seduced by the wife of another male. Thus when these two decide to live together as husband and wife, then the male has to pay compensation to the first husband. This compensation consists of a certain amount of money paid to the former husband who is his jar and vice versa. This call for the payment of the fine is called jari kur and the payment is the jari dund. The jari kur is in the range of two to three hundred rupees. This is a Jari Biwaha.

If the case is about agnatic kin involvement then the couple are ostracised from the whole Darai society and even expelled to some other place. This agnatic kinship here means the kin within the same kul. If it is discovered that a Darai is having extra martial relationship with a woman of low caste like Kami, Sarki or Damai, then also ostracism occurs.

It has been seen that exogamous marriage relationships are becoming quite frequent among these Darais. If a Darai marries a women from another tribe, or of another ethnic group, then this Darai's relatives, neighbours and kin attend the feast, offered on this occasion, and after the eating is over, then the woman is
brought into their community by a process or ritual called jat ma
lyaune (bringing into the tribe) or maryaune.

The custom of marrying the elder brother's widow or levirate marriage, is also prevalent among these Darais as among the Tharus, Kumals and Chepangs. If the widow elopes with or marries another man other than her levirate, then the levirate has the right to claim jari kur from the woman's husband (current). Nowadays, this custom is slowly dying out due to diminished usage.

Ghar-Jawai Biwaha or marriage of couple where the male stays with the female in her house (uxorilocal residence pattern). The boy who is to become a ghar-jawai must promise to care for his parents-in-laws prior to the marriage and thus becomes the heir of his wife's parents' wealth and property. In case this ghar-jawai is unable to please his in-laws and spouse, he can be ejected from the house and his wife is eligible to remarry another person who will be the next ghar-jawai.

Religion and Festivals

Though Darais profess their adherence to Hinduism, they are ignorant about Hindu doctrines and the scriptures as a whole, performing their religious activities mostly on a somewhat primitive base. But on observation, it can be seen that they worship Hindu deities such as Mahadev, Vishnu, Parvati, Bhawani in their own way, thus it may be right to say that they are Hindus. This is due to the extended period of living in proximity with the Hindu society that these Darais have been influenced and have accepted the Hindu religion as part of their religious culture.

Ritual worship of the devis and devtas of the Hindu pantheon, by these people, is based on the folk traditions and there is the need of a brahmin priest to direct all the ceremonies. Their priests are the jawai (son-in-laws) and bhanja (nephews). They worship their gram devtas and devis with much zeal and fervor. Among these deities are those such as: Bramthani, Kuwarwati, Barahi, Bhutundevi, Bhunyur, Shaniswari, Asarai, Leruhapate, etc. At the edge of the village and at the bottom of a tree, they make a shrine by placing a stone to symbolise the deity. It is seen that the main function of this puja to the village deity is for the security of the village, to counteract the effects of diseases or to act as a prophylactic against terrorising by evil spirits like bhut -pret and to help the crops in the field to grow. These deities are worshipped in
the presence of the guraun or the family head with blood sacrifices of thuma or sheep) boka or uncastrated goat, pathi or female goat kid, pigeons, ducks, fowls, etc. The guraun is the name for a jhankri or shaman among the Darais, Tharus and Kumals. The guraun's function is to perform jharphuk (blowing of mantras to reduce suffering caused by action of evil spirits, etc.) and devta mansaune (to place a certain deity in its allotted niche after any religious ceremony).

If someone in a Darai household falls sick, the other family members make a promise to any one of the village deities that when the sick person recovers, then they will offer blood sacrifices of fowls, ducks, pigeons and such as a sort of thanksgiving. This is performed on the night of the dark moon or aunsi. The Leruhapate puja is offered in the month of Magh (mid January to mid February). Saniswari puja is done during Jestha-Asadh (July). The custom of doing halsaro so that the crops do not get diseased, exists among the Darais too. In the month of Bhadra (mid August to mid September) a young unmarried boy sprinkles aksata (unbroken grains of rice which have been blown on with mantras) on the fields and then the halsaro is done. This halsaro is called hareri among the Darais.

On aunsi, the Darais do not work in their fields, and they abstain from venturing into the forest for cattle fodder or wood fuel. This is called varan meaning abstinence. If they enter their fields on this day, they believe that their crops get spoilt and should they go to the forests, the animals may attack them. They also believe that on this day of abstinence, the dhiki (foot powered mechanical pounder for husking paddy) and jhyato (hand rotated grinding mill-stones) are not to be touched, however, they do go to the market for procurement of foodstuffs and fish in the rivers. Darais worship their ancestors in the form of kul devtas also called gundeos by them and also gunpitar. The custom or tradition of kul devta worship is found among other tribes also. In ancient times, the Astadeopal was worshipped for the security of the village. Today, in the Kamlari region of western Nepal, the Masto devta that is worshipped by most people is considered to be the modern form of Astadeopal. It is also found that in central and eastern Nepal, the Masto devta is worshipped communitywise and as a kul devta. However, it may be seen that certain Darais worship their own kul devtas and not the Astadeopal.

In the areas of the Chitwan, the Tharus, Kumals and Darais pray to
the god called Vikram Baba should someone desire to be liberated from her barren status. Vikram Baba's place of worship is in Kasara Durbar within the Chitwan National Park area. A promise or bhakal is made to offer a sacrifice of a goat should the devotee receive the blessing of a child and initially a pair of pigeons are released as a token. If the child is born, then the vow is fulfilled with a sacrifice of a goat as promised.

The Darais celebrate Hindu festivals too. When the year begins, they too start their calander of events commencing with Srawane Snakranti which is celebrated with feasting like in other tribal communities. This is followed by the Jamathi or Krishna Astami (birth of Lord Krishna). Then Darai women fast eating only fruits. On Haritalika or Teej, the custom is to invite the females and give them a feast on the day preceding Teej. On Teej, the women bathe in the rivers, fast throughout the day and towards the evening, they paint the walls of their houses with pictures of Lord Siva and his consort Parvati, whom they worship with dance and songs filled with elation. On this occasion, it is customary to make a child cut a cucumber and fasten it to the back of a woman who is barren, and desires a child. This they do with the belief that Lord Siva will bless this unfortunate with a child.

Another important festival of the Darais is Amausya which is actually pitree aunsi or Bhadra Krishna Amausaya. On this day, in the morning, they place rice and curries on banana leaves and establish their pitree who is offered these gifts. They offer jad, raksi and dhoop (incense) to their pitree. In the evening, songs and dances liven up the atmosphere. In Dasai, these people plant jamaro on Autiya and on Astami and on Nawami they slaughter castrated and uncastrated goats, pigs, hens, ducks and eat the flesh later on with jad, raksi and such home brewed liquors. On the next day, on Dasami, they wear tika and in this way they enjoy the greatest Hindu festival - Bada Dasai.

Tihar is also celebrated by these Darais and here too pitree puja is performed. On the aunsi (dark moon) nearing Laxmi Puja, and on a Wednesday, a pitar is set up in the house of the deceased. On this occasion, puja is performed for the old and new pitar. They call their pitree, gunpitar. Worship is performed for the purification of livestock on Tihar also. On Bhai Tika, tika is accepted by the brothers from their sisters. On Maghe Sankranti, there is an extremely large gathering at various confluences of rivers like at Deo ghat in the Narayani Zone, near Narayan Ghat in the
Chitwan district. The Darais go to these places to offer worship and simultaneously enjoy themselves in the fair that is part and parcel of this festival. The Darai youths, both males and females, go for the explicit purpose of gathering to sing, dance and spend the whole night there, in each others company. The ones who desire to earn merit bathe at the ghat.

Fagu Purnima is also considered a rather important festival by some Darai communities. This is also called Holi. On this occasion, they play with colours, smearing each other, dancing, eating, drinking and generally enjoying themselves. The dates of payment of borrowed money or goods is on this day and most square off their debts. On this day those Darais who live as hired labourers with the sahus (land-lords or businessmen) pay up their debts and shift their services into another area and with a different sahu. But if the amount is not fully paid then they promise to remain another year to pay off the debt. This is followed by Chait Dasain on Chaitra where there is much feasting and dancing as in other festivals. This festival marks the half way point from the last Dasai and till the coming one.

**Death Rites**

Regardless of the marriage relationships that exist between a Darai couple, after marriage these people do their best using all sorts of methods and means to move their lives forward. The ultimate ritual in every human being's life is death the inevitable. Thus this act is given solemnity and a sense of farewell in almost every human society all around the world. This death, is a natural phenomenon and the rites and rituals are performed in various ways among the various tribes. Thus, these people also have their own way of performing the *rites de passage*

The Darais are of the belief that sudden and untimely death is a phenomenon which is controlled by an invisible force, but the death that occurs in old age occurs since the person had completed his or her life span on this earth and had done all he or she had to do, so he or she must go away. Sickness is the signal for the guraun or shaman to pay a visit, since diseases are thought to be caused by evil spirits, witches and the like and the guraun performs jharphuk If the diseased person desires to be properly cured, then a bhakal is made for the person's quick recovery. If the person does not get well then the promise is fulfilled, but if the result is still negative then the doctor is called in, as medicines have begun to be
used more frequently today.

When a person dies, then the corpse is taken to the river bank, placed on a chita (funeral pyre) and the son places the daag batti (camphor placed on a coin and burnt after being placed on the lips). When the daha sanskar or funeral rite is over, the sons have to shave their heads wear white clothes from head to feet and remain in kuro for the next 14 days, after which the kriya is done. On the day of the kriya, the funeral goers, relatives, friends and neighbours are invited and offered a feast. During the kuro observance the sons wear white which is called barkhi barne and they do not eat anything touched by others, however, there is no restriction for the consumption of fish or meat at home.

On a Wednesday approaching Tihar, they establish a pitar and then remove their barkhi after performing puja to the pitar. Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays are used to immerse the pitar in water indicating the conclusion of the ritual. Friends and relatives are invited on a Sunday. A good feast accompanied by songs and dances are performed on this occasion. These people present put tika on the sons who had performed barkhi barne and present them with flowers, thus ending the barkhi. After this the sons are permitted to wear gaudy or coloured clothes. Though traditions and ancestors are being gradually ignored and also forgotten, the Darais who call their ancestors gunpitar worship them yearly.

Food

The main foods of the Darais are: bhat (rice), roti (unleavened bread), sag (green vegetables - leafy), sabji (vegetables), dal (pulses), machha (fish), and masu (meat). Khuwa,(cream), ghyu,(clarified butter), dahi (curds) and mai (whey) are rarely if ever used by these people. Jad and raksi are prepared in their houses. In the process of making jad, much foodgrains are fermented and thus misused, however, they believe that their pujas are incomplete without these liquors. Darais like to drink liquors and feel it a sort of luxury.
Dress and Ornaments

According to their traditions, the Darai women wear a kind of blouse with a knee length sari. The menfolk wear caps, vests, dhotis. Poor Darai men wear a cloth of jute with tassles and wear only a loincloth as has been observed. Both males and females tattoo themselves all over their bodies with blue ink-like juices and look like walking drawing boards. Though clothes and ornaments are discarded after death, these wonderful tattoos remain and so keep them attractive and beautiful as they enter the nether world, is a running belief among these people. Women wear bangles, glass bead necklaces or pote mala, and tika on their foreheads. Affluent Darai women wear gold ornaments on their necks, wrists, arms, noses, ears etc.

Darai children and youths attending schools are being gradually and greatly influenced by the western garbs. Girls are beginning to wear nylon and velvet saris, petticoats, lungis, blouses, slippers and their male counterparts wear shirts, pants, shoes, socks, wristwatches and also use bicycles to travel around both as a mode of transport as well as a status symbol. But although their luxurious desires are on the rise, their incomes have not been able to rise proportionally. The desires of the youths and girls are only helping to bend their parents with the burden of recurring debts.

Economic Status

The main occupation of the Darais is agriculture. Landless farmers till the land of others and thus feed their families and themselves. Their other source of income is livestock rearing and breeding. These animals include the cows, bulls (for ploughing), goats and pigs. Very few Darais rear buffaloes and why is not clear. They have the habit of fishing which cannot be considered as a means of livelihood or income. When looked at in this respect, the Darais seem to be economically weak and extremely shaky. To maintain their families, they work as hired labourers (as earlier stated) on daily wages or hang around as haruwas-charuwa, doing any odd jobs required of them by rich folks. The haruwa-charuwa status is equivalent to that of slaves.
DHIMAL

At the eastern end of our kingdom, within the two districts of Morang and Jhapa in the Mechi Zone, live the ancient tribe known by the name of Dhimal. Their area of habitation is specifically the region from the two banks of the Lohandra river situated in Morang in the west, to the banks of the Mechi river in Jhapa in the east. The northern boundary of their habitat is from Babiya Birta to Govindapur and extends south till Mallakh. Within this area, the Dhimals occupy 13 VDCs in Jhapa district and 14 VDCs in Morang district. Although these Dhimals do not seem to inhabit other parts of the kingdom, it is stated that they are also found at Malbari, Padojot, Baudkkhast, Chenjaghari, Jokhujot villages in the Siliguri and Jalpaiguri areas of West Bengal and Assam states, India.

Settlement and Houses

Dhimal villages are composed of 15 to 20 houses, thinly scattered. Every village is in reality made up of one large family that has gradually and through the years increased and branched out into nuclear families under a main 'household head'. They make their houses single storied structures with high verandahs and keep them very clean. They derive their village names from the village image. For instance, in relation to the number of houses names like Do Dhera, Teen Dhera, Baraha Dhera; if there is a large gully or drain in the vicinity, the name will be Nalabadi; in the case of a nearby mango grove it will become Ambadi and so on. Storehouses, pigstys, cowsheds, dog kennels, etc. are all constructed some distance away from the main house or living quarters.

Historical background

There are many legends which point to the supposed origins of the Dhimal people. Four have been listed as follows:

Legend 1

The ancestors of the present day Dhimals had accompanied the Dhaule King to attack the other kingdoms in the plains. (The Dhaule King was a hill man and so obviously the Dhimals who
accompanied him dwelt in the hills within his hill kingdom). Many campaigns were won and when they were on the point of returning to their home in the hills, they were attacked from the rear by the soldiers of the plains. Thus many of these Dhimal soldiers were slaughtered, however, some hid themselves and escaped with their lives. These are said to be the forefathers of the Dhimals.

Legend 2

There were two brothers who had gone on a pilgrimage to Kasi. (It is not mentioned who they were or from where they had gone on this alleged pilgrimage). On the way back from the pilgrimage, the elder brother walked in front, while the younger walked behind. The elder brother was worried that his younger brother would get lost, so he kept on looking behind frequently. Inspite of so much attention, the younger one did lose his way. Thus, he stopped and remained where he was, going no further. The Dhimals are said to be his descendants. The legend continues that the elder brother's descendants are the Limbus.

Legend 3

Two Limbu brothers had gone down to the plains from their highland village. On their way back, the elder brother got down to cutting the banana trees and other forest growth to make a path for them to proceed, but the younger brother lost his way and reached the plains. It is said that the Dhimals are this younger Limbu's descendants.

Legend 4

Dhimals claim to be originally from Kasi. The legend states that when Rishi Parsuram found his plough in the river, he was angry and on investigating, found it to be the work of the Dhimals. When these Dhimals found out that the sage knew of their mischief, they fled to their present place of habitation to escape the sage's wrath. This is the reason why they are of the Kasi gotr. The above four legends do indicate that these Dhimals migrated, to the region they currently inhabit, from the south.

Septs (Thars)

Rajbansi call them Dhimal, the Meche call them Haikos, and the
other hill tribes call them Madisae Limbus. Thus, these Dhimals (Dhimals is used instead of Haikos or Madisae Limbus since majority of Nepalese call them so, and they are registered as such by H.M.G. Dept. of Statistics and Census) have septs or thars such as Dauge, Ding, Taliya, Hardiya, Nooniy, Lamewong, Wonglaitee, Tegre, Tharu, Rasum, Later, Kauor, Jago, etc. All Dhimals have one and the same gotr, namely Kasi, as they claim.

Physical characteristic

Regarding their physical make up, they are amazingly similar to the Tharu tribe Many research scholars have likened their physical appearance to that of the Limbu hill tribe. It has been observed that the characteristics of their skin pigmentation is a dark brown, hair is thick, coarse, black and straight, minimal body hairs, thin, almost scanty eyebrows and eyelashes, eyelids with the characteristic mongoloid folds, short, low nasal roots ending in flared nostrils and large holes, medium or slightly thick lips, long thin ears, rounded chin, fat laden cheeks giving the high cheek boned look, high forehead, sturdy, tight body, and slightly taller than the Rais and Limbus.

Language

The Dhimal language may be categorised in the Tibeto-Burman family. Though the language of the Dhimals has been studied by various linguistic experts, no definite data has been made available to the public till date, thus it is extremely difficult to elaborate on this matter. But it can be said, from observation, that they speak a language with a mixture of Kiranti and Magar word structures and phonetic intonations slowly being mixed with Indo-Aryan tongues of the south.

Dhimal - Origin of the word

Why are these people known as Dhimals? Is it the Rajbansi and Meche who have christened them so? This is a possibility as it is said that since these people settled on river banks, they were called Dhimals, because in the Meche dialect, dee means water or river. Accordingly, in Assam, there are many words prefixed with dee, such as Deehong, Deegaru, Deemal, which are supposed to have gradually evolved to Dhimal. An ancient city of Deemapur (present day Dimapur) is situated in the kachhar area of Assam. It is
possible these inhabitants of ancient Deemapur were Dhimals. According to the Dhimals themselves, the meaning of dhi is near the river and malo means missing (to be lost), so from these two words the product became Dhimalo which was later corrupted into what we know as Dhimal. Whatever is said about the origin of the word Dhimal, it can be clearly seen that it is full of assumptions and needs clarification through a proper, indepth study of the Dhimal tribe.

**Life Cycle Rites**

**Births**

The Dhimals look at births, marriages and deaths as the three most important events in the cycle of life. After the birth of a child, both mother and offspring are bathed.

**Navran**

The naming of navran of the child takes place when the severed umbilical cord dries up and falls off. The name is given to the child on this day and it is selected after analyzing the events and time when the child was born. The Dhimals do not observe any ceremonies or rituals of pasni (initial rice feeding) which occurs 5 to 6 months after the child’s birth, as is the case with other Hindu influenced tribes in the kingdom.

**Marriage Practices**

When Dhimals reach the age of 14 or 15 years, their parents make the necessary arrangements to comply to the biological and social necessities of their progeny. Marriages among these people are of four types namely: Magi Biwaha or arranged marriages, Chori Biwaha or elopements, Latarne Biwaha or forcible marriages and marriage to a betel nut or Supari Biwaha. Another form of marriage called Jari Biwaha is also prevalent.

**Magi Biwaha**

In such arranged marriages, or Magi Biwaha, both the families concerned complete all the traditional rites of dudhauli, panchauli, loomauni.prior to the wedding.
Chori Biwaha

Such marriages through elopement or Chori Biwaha occur when, although both families concerned are in mutual agreement, the financial status of the male requires the female to elope so as to reduce the expenses, however, when the male becomes financially well off later on, then the ten rites are completed and feast or bhoj bhatiya is given to the villagers, as though it is a regular arranged marriage. The fulfilling of the ten rites custom can be executed even after 4 or 5 years or after the birth of 2 or 3 children. This is a very popular practice among these Dhimals, and also among some other tribes in the Kingdom.

Latarne Biwaha

In such marriages by force or Latarne Biwaha, the female is forcibly abducted while alone on a trip to the weekly bazaar or hat, or at local fairs, or while in the jungle foraging for cattle fodder or cutting firewood for fuel. Sometimes, in these kinds of cases, the prior consent of the female will have already been granted, however, literally forcible marriages are also not infrequent. A few days after such an elopement, if this union is given sanction by the concerned families, then according to the tradition of the ten rites, the marriage is performed. However, in the case of disagreement, the girl is returned to her parents house and nothing happens.

Supari Biwaha

The betel nut marriage or Supari Biwaha, is a strange kind, where the male tries to induce the female he likes to eat a betel nut by coaxing, tricking or forcing her. Success means marriage with the concerned female. The males carry cigarettes and betel nuts with them and go to houses of the females they like where they attempt to make them eat the betel nut by fair means or foul, i.e. by coaxing, tricking, forcing. Regarding this custom, a council of Dhimal elders, in 1952 A.D. banned this practice of betel nut marriages, thus this form of marriage is no longer found. Today the Dhimals mention that this exotic form of marriage is more or less extinct as it is no longer practised.
Jari Biwaha

Like among other tribes in the kingdom, Jari Biwaha or marriage of a male with someone else's wife, is very much prevalent among the Dhimals too. When and if a person seduces and makes off with someone else's wife, then this person has to pay a penalty or compensatory fine which is called Nari-Jari and the amount fixed by the council of elders ranges from Rs. 800 to Rs. 1000, as has been found prevalent.

Death Rites

When a Dhimal expires, the corpse is either cremated or buried. In the case of burials, homebrewed liquors (raksi and jad), rice (cooked), chicken (cooked or raw), etc. are buried along with the corpse. Purification of death pollution is carried out after a period of 2 or 3 days and this ritual is known as kampayi.

Religion and Festivals

Although these Dhimals, being caught between the flux of religious pressures express themselves as Hindus their original religious traditions have always dominated their lives till today. The Dhimal social structure worships two categories of gods, namely those of home and those of the forest. The chief gods and goddesses of the home are Masan and Kali, respectively. The than or shrine of these deities are constructed in the inner sanctum of their houses, on elevated plinths where none can defile them. Among the village deities are Ragharum, Deragelai, Maharaj, Gharam, Thakur, Didaberad, Dhaniberang, Detwarang, Buda, Thakur, Tastepuri, Khol Thakur, etc. The priest who performs the rites and rituals in the worship of these deities is the dhami. Besides these gods and goddesses, every village has a gram devta (village deity) which is housed at the Maharaj Than (shrine of the Maharaj) which is built separately and kept to one side from the other gods and goddesses of their pantheon. Among the festivals celebrated by these people, the main one is Asadhepuja, which they call Sirijat and along with this are the festivals of Nau Bangi and Parwa.
The festival of Asadhepuja is celebrated from the month of Jestha till the end of Asadh, in practically every Dhimal village. This is a village festival and so donations are collected from all the houses in the village and the festival celebrated. On the actual day of Asadhepuja, the custom is to eat and drink, and to offer the same to others too. Meat, jad and raksi are consumed in excessively large quantities. On this day, the villagers usually invite people from outside the village to participate in the festivities. Everyone participates in the songs, dances, sports and comedy that goes on. The organisation of such a community-wide festival is the responsibility of the majhi.

Nau Bangi is also a community festival and is celebrated after the harvesting of the new grains. This a festival which is celebrated with much enthusiasm and here also the majhi plays the key role. Parwa is a festive occasion that is limited within the Dhimal family structure, where they worship their pitree (ancestors) and other tutelary deities. On this day, the Dhimals clean their farming implements and other tools of their profession, bathe their livestock and themselves as well.

Though other religious festivals such as Dasai, Tihar, Maghe Sankranti, Srawane Sankranti, etc. are not observed by these people, they have begun to perform Satyanarayan Puja, Mahabharat plays and use Brahmin priests on account of the overall Hindu influence that is gradually permeating their tribal fabric. In the Dhimal community, the dhami (priest or shaman) is the most prominent and essential figure in all religious matters, while the majhi is considered extremely important in the social structure of the tribe as a whole. The status of the majhi is inherited or attained through genealogical succession and not be election. The main function of the majhi is to assess situations and met out justice in circumstances such as fights, thefts, elopements, divorce and such disturbances within the tribal community.

**Dress and Ornaments**

It is said, by the Dhimals themselves, that in the past when they were hunters prior to becoming the agriculturists they are today, they walked around almost in the state of nature and no different from the animals they hunted. Later on they adopted the dharis or
loincloths, likhou (indigenous vest-like upper garments called bhoto in Nepali), and tapri or cap for the males. But today, they dress up like any other plainsman in shirt, pants, dhotis wrapped like skirts and kachhads or loincloths.

The women wear homespun strips of cloth wrapped around from above their breasts till their knees and still do not wear brassieres. The cloth they wrap is patterned in various tribal designs, whose real significance has been lost in the mists of time. This dress is called a bauna and according to the woven patterns are named: Ithartgi, Patloee, Chamottee, Dabona, etc. They also wear the kochane bona that is available in the bazaar. This is also called the petani. Currently, some of the younger and bolder Dhimal girls have adopted the sari, however, most Dhimal women prefer and like to wear the petani. This costume is approximately 5 to 6 feet long with a breadth of 4 to 4 1/2 feet and black in colour, woven at home.

Dhimal women are extremely interested in hair care. One will never find a Dhimal woman with loose hair. Hair knotted in a bun at the top of the head is called khopa and is classified into purkhopa, tatotangkhopa, bindakhopa, sastarkopa, pellangkhopa, nokakhopa, nurkhopa, etc. Among the various types of top-knots, the nurkhopa is the most popular. They do not wear tika but chokka (tatoo) their hands, legs and chests. This tattooing is considered not only a method of beautification, but also a legacy to be taken along into the other world when death overtakes them. Dhimal women wear various kinds of sliver ornaments on their ears (kanaila) nose (nkaila) hair, arms, wrists (path) and ankles. Gold ornaments are extremely rare.

Economic Status

These Dhimals are extremely dependant on agriculture. Prior to this, as earlier mentioned, they were nomadic hunters and remained at a single place for a maximum of 4 or 5 years. They farmed land at a later date in the typical jhum style (shifting cultivation), however due to the unavailability of hunting areas and the shortage of lands for implementing the jhum, they were forced to settle permanently and till a fixed area of land, as their population also began to increase. Thus we find the Dhimals of today, a properly
settled community, farming the meagre lands they possess and making a hand to mouth existence as in the case with most of the nomadic tribes of the kingdom who have been forced to settle and adapt to a different life style.

Practically every Dhimal has a fairly large or small plot of land, but the number of moderately rich Dhimal is rather low, as observed. The main crop that these tribals cultivate is paddy and so it is apparent that their staple diet is rice or bhat. Besides paddy, they cultivate a cash crop—jute. They also state that it has barely been 15 years since they have begun to cultivate mustard and sesame.

Dhimals are very found of eating meat, so they breed pigs, goats, wild boars, chickens, etc. Since they do not emphasise on drinking milk, they breed cattle like cows, bulls, buffaloes only for the dung which they need as manure and maybe the bulls are used for ploughing purposes too.

Business

Businesswise, these Dhimals are very backward. They are limited to doing the business of small wayside tea shops. There are a negligible number of rice mills owned by Dhimals and some have even bought old second hand vehicles (jeeps) which they hire out. Every Dhimal woman has a loom in her house. These looms are indigenously manufactured and are called tanbeon. The cloth woven on these looms are exclusively used by the Dhimal womenfolk. Every Dhimal woman is adept at weaving on these looms. On contract, these Dhimal women weave kharki (a certain type of cloth worn by the Tharu women folk) and the famous petarni (which are also worn by the Rajbansi and Satar women folk).
DOLPALI BHOTE

The Bhotes living in the region of Dolpa must be acknowledged as the indigenous inhabitants of this area. It is found that these people are called Dolpali Bhotes by those people living further down in the lower areas. The habitat of these Dolpali Bhotes lies between the altitudes 3660 metres to 4720 metres. Most of the northern areas and to some extent, the central areas, are inhabited by these people. The VDCs in the Dolpa District where these Bhotes live are: Reme, Saldang, Bejer, Thinje, Charka Bhot and Chhau. The area that these villages cover is known as Dolpa.

Houses

Due to the villages, of these Dolpali Bhotes, being located at rather high altitudes, it is extremely cold in winter with additional sub-zero winds blowing continually. This is the main reason why they build their own indigenous types of houses, which are double storied and since constructed of flat stones (like wooden planks), it resembles a fortress. There are no windows and the roofs are flat covered with mud. The height of the ceilings are low and the ground floor houses cattle and other livestock.

Historical background

Due to the unavailability and vagueness of data, it is almost impossible to state the how, when and where of these Dolpali Bhotes and even they are at a loss regarding this matter. A French anthropologist, has estimated that the ancestors of these Dolpali Bhotes had earlier migrated from western Tibet. In search of better pastures, they seem to have reached Dolpa and this is reflected by the similarity in dress up and language between these people and the western Tibetans as concluded. But according to these Dolpali Bhotes, they say that after this region was located by Padma Sambhava, he brought them there.

Septs (Thars)

Although no casteism exists among these people as in the Hindu tribes, these Dolpali Bhotes are categorised into four thars namely, Seeme, Chogme, Gara and Baera. The indigenous or native
inhabitants are said to be the Seeme the later emigrees are the Chogme the Gara are those who work metals (iron) and regarding farm ers and Baeras, no data has been available till date. Seeme and Chogme thars are eligible to become lamas(monks), but the Gara and Baera are not. Besides these four main thars, there are other thars as stated by some scholars. These thars are: Hewa, Syure, Lama Yandung, Bura, Dhara, Thani, Ani, Pura, Nupri, Roka Lama, etc.

For thar identification, every single sign was decided in the distant past. On deciding which signs to choose, they picked their favorite animals. Thus they say that their thars originated from such symbolism. (This indicates the existence of totemism) The Hewa thar has the sign of the sheep or sheep totem, the Syure thar has the goat totem and the Lama Yangdung use the horse totem. They never eat the flesh of their totem animals.

Physical Characteristics

On looking at their physical structures, these Dolpali Bhotes are representatives of the mongolian stock. They possess flat noses on account of depressed nasal roots, almond (mongoloid) eyes, complexion similar to the Lobas of Mustang and the Mugals of Mugu. Facial hairs are absolutely minimal, and the females grow long, straight, black hairs like the males do.

Dress up and ornaments

Due to the extremely cold climate in the region of their settlement, these people wear very thick and warm clothes to ward off the biting cold. Their clothes are very similar to the Lobas of Mustang. The women use clothes of dark colours such as red and blue and wear very expensive and costly ornaments. Ordinarily, they wear a shirt over which a bokkhu is draped till the knees and they wear a surwal (similar to a long-john) underneath. They wear coloured belts, woven at home, at their waists and look quite attractive. They crop their hair at the forehead while they plait the hair at the rear of the head. Married females wear metal clips to cover their hair. Their main ornaments are bangles and necklaces. They wear bangle-like sartowa (finger rings) as is the custom. The males wear shirts inside with bokkhus over these. Woolen slacks and dochas (boots) are customarily worn, on their lower torso and feet respectively. Clothes of sheepskin are also worn.
Life Cycle Rites

Births

Among these people, the Lama names the child, 4 days after birth. Nothing much is known about the rituals necessary in births and also about other rituals prior to marriage.

Marriage Practices

Their marriage patterns do not reflect outdated features and there are three types of marriages, namely according to one's own wish, in obedience to one's parents' wishes and elopements.

Arranged Marriages

In the case of marriages which are according to the wishes of the parents or arranged marriages, some ghyu (clarified butter), a pot of jad (millet beer) have to be carried to the male's house where the whole night is spent in feasting and dancing. The next morning, the ghyu and jad are carried to the female's house and then the bride is brought to the groom's house. In this way, while returning with the bride, according to their financial ability, they either use a horse or walk back. The custom is to feed the groom's party with bhyakura (a bird). This is known as horche. The other custom relevant among these Dolpali Bides is that they should go with presents of chayuri, chhe, butil, bhalak, sartowa, red, black, kado, kanbha, somba, etc. clothes, ornaments, shoes for the bride, etc.

The ancient custom of polyandry or a group of men (brothers generally) marrying a single female is still very much prevalent among these people and so is the other follow-up custom of a brother inheriting his deceased elder brother's wife.

If an unmarried woman is impregnated, then the person responsible has to bear the maternity expenses along with payment to the lama who is responsible for purifying the whole village from this person's black deed. In such a situation, the person or culprit can compensate by paying in kind, instead of cash, such things as: barley, uwa. The amount paid in cash or the food grains paid in lieu, are used by the villagers to make jad and raksi (distilled spirits) which they consume.
In the case of someone's wife eloping with another man, then this second husband has to pay a fine or *jari*. The custom of easily breaking the relationship between a married couple is also a very common feature among these Dolpali Bhotes.

During the marriage of a couple, the flesh of the bride's and groom's totem animals are not eaten. They do not marry within their own *thars* and exhibit *thar* exogamy but *jat* endogamy, where they prefer their folks to marry within their own Bhote community.

Matrilateral cross-cousin marriages are existent among them and called *mama chela* - *phupu chele* martial unions. This sort of union is prevalent and preferred by these folks.

**Death**

On the death of a person, these people consult the *lama* prior to doing anything to the corpse, because their belief is that the corpse has to be either buried, cremated or dismembered and fed to the vultures and this decision the lama has to make. Thus, the deceased's death rites are not completed within a single period. Initially, the message of a person's death is dispatched to the *gompa*, from where the *lama* is brought. He arrives and sits at the head side of the corpse, commencing the recitation of *mantras*. After a certain time of mantra recitation, the *lama* gives his decision regarding what is to be done to the corpse. How the *lama* arrives at this decision is not known when asked of the locals and also other locally resident tribes. However, they say that the deceased's nature, character and deeds he performed in his lifetime are assessed by the *lama* and the decision arrived at. Anyone who dies after the fields are sown is never cremated, because they have a religious belief that if the corpse is cremated then there will be no rains and so the harvest will not be good. However, during the winter months, corpses are cremated.

Burials are done in various ways. When a person dies the corpse is stripped naked and buried face down or lying on its back, as the *lama* decides. For three days, the *lama* reads the sacred texts for the deceased, however, if the deceased was rich then this reading ritual is performed for 47 days or even for a more longer period. This performance by the *lama* earns him money.
Economic Status

The main backbone of their economic structure is the breeding of yaks. Another economic earning source is business. They trade *jaun* (barley) for salt with the neighbouring Tibetans. The ration of exchange (barter) being one part of barley to two parts of salt (1:2). Later on, they exchange one part of salt to two parts of foodgrains. They sell such things as woven blankets, yak tails, Tibetan mastiff puppies and horses. During the winter, they visit other lower altitude villages and remain there doing works such as making and weaving wool into various items. They keep their yaks inside their houses and they state that they are even willing to exchange their fields for these creatures (yaks).

Religion and Festivals

These Dolpali Bhotes are Buddhists as can be seen from the preceding pages. If one carefully analyses their *gompas*, it can be clearly seen that at one time, in the past, Sakyapa and Kargyupa sects were traditionally dominant in this area. However, these traditions have vanished and the Nyingmapa sect is dominant currently. This can be discerned on looking at their worshipping patterns, meditation patterns, iconography and a majority of images being that of the Nyingmapa sect founder, Padma Sambhava.

Bon followers or Bonpos are also found in this region. The Bon religion is said to be a far more ancient religion that Buddism. How Bonpoism reached here is still unclear due to lack of data, but the adherents of Buddism in this region respect Bonpoism and its followers.

The *lama* is given a place of great importance among the Dolpali Bhote society. Not only do these lamas handle the religious works and celebrations of the community, but they also act as faith-healers in times of sickness. Without the direction of the *lama*, these people neither perform any big ceremonies, nor go on journeys and in fact do not decide on anything at all. Festivals are celebrated with great fanfare and intensity by these Dolpali Bhotes. Their new year is called Lhosar and it is their most important festival. During this festival, they drink *raksi*, *chang* (millet beer), eat meat and enjoy themselves thoroughly to the highest degree. For a few days, the village boys and girls go to the *gompa* and spend their time singing and dancing there.
Every month, these folks offer prayers at the gompas, where they worship regularly. All the villagers cooperate in alternately donating foodgrains, *tsampa* and *nauni*. In this way, they send offerings once a year, to the big *gompa* in that region. If possible, they even travel to that *gompa* and sing and dance there.
Tribal Ethnography of Nepal

DOM

Amidst the many tribes inhabiting the terai, the Dom is one. In the Indian sub-continent, where these Dom are spread they are called the natives of that region, however those living in the area within Nepal cannot be definately called natives or immigrants since nothing is known of their migration history and there is no evidence of their being natives. Regarding this matter, one scholar has stated that these Dom are even more ancient than the Dravidians and his reason for finding these people in Nepalese territory is because of the fact that they were forcibly removed and thus had no alternative but to migrate from the southern Indian peninsula. This forcible migration was due to the Dravidian aggression, so the scholar says. Therefore, according to the above statement, it can be stated that their settlement within the Nepalese area must be considered as quite ancient.

Physical characteristics

These Dom are short in stature, dark skinned, have long and loosely kept hair mostly unplaited, and the most peculiar feature is their strange glass-like eyes.

Historical background

Doom, Domra and sometimes Chandal are some of the names attached to these Dom, but their true origin is still a matter of differing opinions. Some scholars claim them to be descendants of those ancient people possessing very dark skin pigmentation and much more older than the Dravidians. After the invasion of the Dravidians these people seem to have escaped into the northern hills and forests, while some sheltered in the Kumaon where they were made permanent slaves. These slave Dom are supposed to have lived lives worse than animals and were sold from one master to another to live as chattels for their whole lives. Since ancient times, the settlement of these Dom is alleged to be towards the north of Gogra. It is near Rohini in the east and touches the area of Bhar, where the many ruins of ancient forts are evidence of their identity. The names of their founders have remained till today in
places such as Dom diha or Dom gad to prove this point. Situated in Rohini, Ramgad and Sahan kot, are some Dom forts, it is claimed. A scholar has put forward the idea that Domgad was actually Prabalgad which belonged to the slowly deteriorating Rajputs. There is also a suggestion that a person Domar or Donewar from the Dom family could have been the founder of these forts. It is also possible that they became locally powerful and joined the Rajputs as their slaves. The governor of Ramlawad, Ali Bux Dom stated that such people were enrolled as musicians, from which position, they rose up to higher levels. Though these Dom are not mentioned in Nepalese history, as those people inhabiting the terai or the border areas between India and Nepal in particular, if further research is carried out, then it should provide a chance of presenting them in a new light.

For many centuries, these Dom lived as slaves and untouchables in Hindu society, and so they have lost many of their traditional customs and cultures and are seen to have undergone a drastic metamorphosis. The terai Dom are still considered untouchables and accordingly are found to do all the dirty, lowly works like cremating corpses, even today.

Origins and Septs

There are many septs or thars among the large Dom tribe. This community inhabits various areas of Bengal, Uttar Pradesh in India and other areas in Nepal. It is difficult to explicitly state the numbers of thars among the Dom, however, most Dom recall a story about their origin. The story begins with Mahadev and Parvati (Siva and his consort) inviting all tribes to a grand feast. An ancestor of the Dom, Suput Bhagat reached late and since he was very hungry, he began to eat the leftovers. Due to this behaviour, he and his descendants were destined to eat leftovers. Thus, it is said that when Dom in India or Nepal go a begging, and when he is asked what jat or caste he belongs to his answer will be jutho khai - meaning eaters of leftovers.

In India, there are Anukuriya Dom, Bisdeliya Dom, Wajiniya Dom and Madhiya Dom. In Nepal, Maidhiha Dom live in the Narayani Zone within Parsa district near Birganj at Gahaba and also in
Pokhara where there are *thars* like Chimiyia, Ledwar, Wirjiya, Bhakraith, Pokhriya, Johnjha, Lukdiher, etc.

Though it is extremely difficult, at present, to make a detailed analyse of aspects such as occupations, marriages, *thar* exogamy or endogamy, economic status, etc., it is possible to provide a brief glance at the Dom inhabiting Pokhara and Birgunj.

In Bara district in the Narayani Zone, a festival called Gadi Mai Mela which is famous in the terai is held. Devotees flock to this shrine from various places and even from across the border. At the place of worship, initially a huge buffalo (bull) is sacrificed to the ancient Dom king of Beneras (Varanasi) and then only the Gadi Mai worship commences. This is the tradition. On inquiry with the local Dom and others, they tell a story which explains the reason.

There was a *chumin* (*sarkini* - low caste woman of cobbler status in the Hindu caste heirarchy) who was the priestess of Gadi Mai and there was a Dom who was a thief. Before one of his robberies, this Dom bowed before Gadi Mai, vowing that if his venture was successful, then he would give the goddess half the loot, whatever it was. It is said that this thief was extremely successful but he forgot his vow to Gadi Mai and went off by another route. The curse of Gadi Mai fell upon him and this thief Dom was struck blind and died instantly too. The next day, the people saw the corpse and after some discussion, they buried him at the place where they had found his body. After this incident, one night Gadi Mai appeared in the *chumin*‘s dream and told her, so the story goes, that she was to perform *puja* at the place where the Dom was buried first by sacrificing a buffalo (bull) there and then only was she (Gadi Mai) to be worshipped. At this time the Dom king of Varanasi arrived there and performed this sacrifice at the grave of the Dom thief and then propitiated Gadi Mai. Since, then, this tradition has been continued till today.

**Life Cycle Rites**

**Births**

Once a child is born, the newly delivered mother is kept in a
separate room and she remains inside for 6 days. A chumin, who acts as the local version of the midwife and also a Dom, look after the needs of both the baby and the mother. Chhaiti is performed on the sixth day, where the Dom father invites his younger and elder sisters and they clean the place with dung and water mixture where the child and mother had been confined. After this, the sisters demand money, ornaments, clothes and such items which the brother gives if he can afford all otherwise the ornaments are not given. This is a custom which many terai tribes adhere to.

Gahaba is performed on the seventh day after the child's birth. A piglet is worshipped and then slaughtered and eaten by the household members. The naming ceremony of the child is also done on this day and the name given is customarily and traditionally one out of the many deities.

Marriage Practices

Among these people, marriages occur only among people of the same sept or kuri or thar. Thus we can say that they practise kuri endogamy. The girl's agnatic ancestors, 4 generations removed and her mother and maternal grandmother must be different in lineage from those of the boy's, then only is the match authorised by the community, society and elders. Marriage within one family line is tabu and they have to wait for 3 to 5 generations to lapse before striking any marriage relationships.

The old Dom are the one who initiate marriage talks. Here the procedure is the opposite, where the girl's folks go to see the boy initially and it is only later that the boy's folks go to see the girl. It is at this time that the tilak or dowry is discussed and fixed. The marriage is a Hinduistic affair, where the janti go to the bride's house with much music and fanfare. The groom is either carried on his mama or maternal uncle's shoulders or in a palki or palinquin. On reaching the bride's house, the groom remains on his mama's shoulders or in the palki while parchhawan is performed. Parchhawan means that only the female relatives of the bride come out of the house singing songs and sprinkle the groom within the palki or on his mama's shoulders with rice grains and smear his face with curds. Up to this time the musicians are still playing
enthusiastically and the janti stand around observing this ritual with approval. Parchhawan is performed even after the groom is carried a short distance away from his house. Therefore, this ritual can be done twice in one marriage.

After about half an hour this enjoyable ritual of Parchhawan is over and then the janti are settled for the night's stay, food is served, followed by the usual songs and dances where the youths in the janti exhibit their macho image by singing and dancing in a bid to show off. The night is passed in this way and the next day they leave for the boy's house taking the bride with them.

The next day or three days after the janti's return to the boy's house, the bride is carried back to her parents' house accompanied by the groom and other janti members. The customs of parchhawan and tilak are no different from the other terai tribes.

Child marriage is also very prevalent among these Dom. In contravention to the laws of the kingdom, the Dom of Birganj area still practice this inhuman ritual of child marriage.

Marriage among Dom automatically occurs when a woman becomes pregnant. Child marriages are performed by quite wealthy and self-sufficient Dom. However, due to the miserable condition of these people, cases of polygyny are almost non-existent. A widow must and tries to marry her devar (husband's younger brother) but if no such person exists then she may marry someone else she chooses. Window marriages consist of sindur daan (vermillion put on hair parting), and kapda daan (giving of new clothes) as is customary.

Ornaments

Ornaments worn by Dom women are the pachhuwa on their hands, silver paunchi on their feet, silver godai on their ears, golden phul on their nostrils or they put rings, golden nathiya or nose rings. Males are not seen to wear ornaments except for the occasional ring of silver or base metal on their fingers.
Death Rites

When a child within the age range of 6 to 11 years dies, he or she is buried, while a married woman or man is cremated as is the custom. The kriya is done on the twelfth day. Guests, relatives and friends of their own tribe are invited and all present together purify the kriya putri (one who is in kuro and observer of the death pollution). After the purification ritual, all of them along with the kriya putri sit together and eat pork with raksi which concludes the kriya or ceremony which ends the death pollution being observed since the time of death. Relatives and friends of their own tribe abstain from eating salt, meat and fish for the 12 day period. The clothes of the deceased is claimed by the Dom (one of their kind who is responsible for the cremation of the corpse). Whoever lights the fire, claims fire-price.

Religious Rites & Rituals

Though the Dom fall within the Hindu heirarchy, they are categorised among the untouchables or pani na chalne jat (water or anything cooked in water or with water is not eaten or drunk by other jats if offered by these people). The Dom residing in various parts of the terai follow different religious rites and rituals. For instance, the Dom in the Birganj area worship Mahapuralkhun Biwa Saheb, Sansari Mai, Fulwar Mai and Ghodai Mai, and those living further west or east worship the same deities and no differences are observed between them, but their types are different from the Birganj Dom.

The various septs or thars of Dom worship different deities, like Chimiya Dom worship the Kasturi Masan while the Sadhu Dom worship Kali Devi. The kul devta of the Dom of Gahaba in Birgunj is Kasturi Masan and puja is performed wearing a yellow coloured dhoti by them. Dom must never be touched by any Hindus, so this taboo is the direct deterrent to detailed investigative research and lack of more detailed information regarding their rites and rituals.

In villages in the terai, there is a custom of calling the Dom to remove carcasses of dead animals like cows, bulls, etc. These dead animals are taken away and their flesh eaten by Dom. The
Bansphor and Chhaparhiya Dom are the only two clans who do not eat the leftovers of others food. At this point it is to be observed that when it comes to eating the leftovers of a dhobi (washerman), far from eating it, no Dom can be coaxed or forced even to touch the stuff as they are not permitted to do so by certain traditional rules of their community which has labelled this as taboo. Sweets, liquors and such food items touched by dhobis are not touched by the Dom, hence the question of consumption does not arise at all. The reasons for this fuss are firstly, these dhobis wash clothes even of a woman who has just delivered a child, and secondly, they narrate a rather interesting story which indicates the second cause.

One day, so the story goes, Suput Bhagat, an ancestor of the Dom, was returning from a far away place, so he was very hungry and tired too. When he spotted a dhobi coming along with his ass, burdened with soiled linen for washing, Suput requested him for some food and drink. The dhobi was furious at him request and denied him any of the requested items. Suput was equally infuriated at the refusal since he was extremely tired and hungry. Consequentially, he assaulted the dhobi, killed his ass, cooked it and consumed its flesh at that very spot, thus satiating his hunger. After this, Suput felt guilty thinking about his violent act and since it had happened on account of the dhobi’s behaviour, from then on, far from eating, the Dom do not even touch the food of dhobis. This story told by the Dom adds that they are not permitted to touch asses too.

Some Dom septs have their own social organisation called panchyat (committee) in their villages and this panchyats supervise and sanction rites and rituals, births and deaths, marriages and many other social activities within the perimeter of its responsibility and authority. A Dom who is respected by all is singled out to be the Mukhiya or chief and is called sardar, pradhan, manyajan, etc.

Economic Status

Dom consider weaving bamboo baskets and sikuls (maize cob sheaths dried and woven into bedsized mats) as their traditional occupation. Though an estimated 50% of the total Dom population is currently engaged in agriculture, their economic condition has
not yet put in an improvement. Among these Dom farmers, a large group still practices the 'jhum' or shifting cultivation and are thus still landless labourers. Bajniya Dom mainly occupy themselves with playing instruments like hudka, sarangi, pauti, sindha during marriages and festivals for which they receive fees with which they maintain themselves. The Birganj Dom earn good money during the Dasai and Tihar festivals and in marriages too.

The Bansphor Dom are so called because their occupation is weaving items like baskets, mats, hats, brooms, ropes from spliced bamboo. Supplying local demand for such items is the sole responsibility and monopoly of these Dom, since these items are very handy, cheap and useful. Besides the above items, they also weave dalo or baskets, dhaki or legged baskets, toys, dolls and other household containers, using the locally available materials such as bamboo, khar (stiff tall grass used for thatch) etc. Weaving of these items is done by both males and females.

From the above activities, it can be observed that these Dom make maximum use of local resources to keep themselves busy and their traditional skills alive, simultaneously serving their section of society, However, this occupation has not aided in changing their life-style, but on the contrary they have further stagnated and decelerated to the edge of poverty for many generations, and may remain so if positive action for their development is not implemented soon. For instance, in the Birgunj area, Dom are contributing directly to society by working as sweepers in the municipality, however, it is sad to see these socially ostracised humans, having been compelled to abandon their traditional occupations and work as garbage collecters just for the sake of satiating their hunger.
DURRA

In the southern region of the district of Lamjung, which falls within the Gandaki Zone in western Nepal, live a people who are known as the Durra. The places where they are settled are: Thuloswanra, Turlung Kot, Bhorletari, Chisankhu, Neta, Tandrung, Kunchha and Amdanda. It is said that initially, these people were inhabiting the area called Durra Danda which is the Chandreswor VDC. Besides the above mentioned places, these Durras also populate the settlements and villages of Sisaghat, Ramche, Kyamin, Dharmapani, Ramthumki and Tanahun Sur, all of these places lie within the Tanahun district also in the Gandaki Zone and adjacent to Lamjung district. In recent times, however, these Durras have sporadically migrated to areas like Pokhara and Bhairahawa in the Lumbini Zone, in small and almost insignificant numbers, but important nonetheless since this indicates a migratory proclivity evolving among them.

The Durras of Lamjung are a minority population in comparison with the local Gurungs and during a study carried out in 1983-84 A.D., their total population count in the said area was estimated at 3000 heads, while in sum total it was a mere 4,500 heads which composed the whole Durra tribe on a national census basis. The largest concentration of Durras is in the village of Thuloswanra which lies in the Sindure VDC, Lamjung district.

House

Durra houses are thatched with khar (long bladed grass endemic to Nepal and used for roofing) and the walls are made of stones quarried locally. These stones are joined by a mud paste. The use of slates for roofing is non-existent among these people. Ordinarily, the dimensions are 15 to 20 haath (meaning length from tip of extended fingers to elbow or cubit) in length and the width is about 9 to 11 haath with either circular or square designs of old. In the circular houses, the doors are small and also the windows which may number 1 or 2. On account of this, it is rather dark within. The 4 cornered or square houses are slightly more modern. chulo (mud built cooking devices fixed on the floor of a
kitchen with holes for the fuel input and the heat output) are not used by the Durra, instead, they use open hearths called *agenos* in the centre of which they place a three-legged iron rest for utensils called an *odaan*. They cook their food on this.

**Physical Characteristics**

Physically, the Durras resemble their mongoloid neighbours (the Gurungs and Magars) and possess all the traits of the mongoloids. Flat noses due to depressed nasal roots, slanted mongolian eyes, high cheeked bones, stocky physiques, short and sturdy statures, healthy and robust, straight black and thick hair, wheat-brown complexions. These people are almost impossible to separate from the other tribes who live in the area of their habitation.

**Historical Background**

It is almost impossible to state clearly the Durra ethnic identity or their migration to their present area of settlement, however there exist numerous legends and stories among the Durra community even today, regarding their possible origins and identity.

Some Durras claim that they were originally Dulals and when they reached Duran Kot in the Parbat district, their Dulal identity metamorphosed into Durra. It is not known from where exactly they migrated to Duran Kot. Some Durras forward their claims that they are the descendants of those who worked in the *durbar* of the Rajput kings of Rajputana (India). During the Muslim invasion of these Rajput strongholds, the ancestors of these Durras seem to have fled with their Rajput queens into the hills and settled in present day Lamjung. These Durras of today claim to be the descendants from the offsprings of unions between those Rajput women and their man servants (the Durra ancestors). One scholar states that their (Durra) ethinical nature is not yet cleared satisfactorily, but there are hints that they may have originated from Gurung and Magar intermarriages and their offsprings. According to the Durras, the word Durra, seems to mean: those people who lived in Dullu and had long hands. Later on, when they migrated to Duran Kot, their name was shortened to Durra. Some scholars, expert in this field, have stated that since these Durras
had run away from the Rajput durbars, this word was later shortened to Dur and finally assumed the present day form Durra, in the course of time.

Sept (Thar)

When the various levels in the tribal heirarchy are analysed, the procedure is from jat (tribe) to thar (sept) to upa-thar (sub-sept) categorisation. There are 4 thars among the Durra: Punghi, Dhingal, Pache, Kyausa. upa-thars are Dorde and Kharbare, but these are ordinarily lumped into the Dhingal sept. Thus these clan names are not found easily. To explain this above fact, the Durras have a legend:

One day, while a Dhingal was out for a stroll, he heard a different and totally new sound which he followed to its source. When he reached the river near a Kharbari, he saw an infant which seemed to have been abandoned, so he carried the child home. Later on, when the lad grew up, he was given the clan name Kharbari. Now, because a Dhingal had brought up this boy, all the Dhingals became brothers of the Kharbare and ultimately, with the passage of time, these Kharbare were assimilated into the Dhingal sept.

It is also said that the Dhingals and Paches are brothers, on one side while the Punghis and Kyausas are brothers on the other. On account of this, Dhingals and Paches never intermarry and it is the same among the Punghis and Kyausas. Thus it is seen that the Durras are divided into two branches, namely Dhingals and Paches in one section and the Punghis and Kyausas in the others. In spite of their exogamous nature in the sept levels as shown, as a tribe, they practice tribal endogamy - where a Dhingal or a Pache can marry a Punghi or Kyausa and vice versa.

Family

Durras exhibit forms of both the extended and nuclear family patterns, however, as in most tribes in the kingdom, the extended family is seen to be the preferred pattern among a majority of these Durras. The oldest male member is the undisputed family head and all decisions must be sanctioned by him prior to implementation or
execution. When a brother or son wants to separate and build a family of his own, then a meeting is held among the father and brothers and the property is shared equally among the sons by the father. This provides the person a basis on which to survive and build a better personal economy. Due to their close-knit society and practice of *jat* endogamy, these Durras seem to be heading towards tribal annihilation through excessive in-breeding. If this doesn't happen then they will be inevitably assimilated into the tribal structure of the other tribes who live in their surroundings and are in a majority.

**Life Cycle Rites**

**Births**

In Durra communities, on the birth of a child, it is customary to determine the child's zodiac and provide a suitable name, after 3 days and according to the domestic and financial situation of the household. However, the *chinnu* or horoscope is calculated and put on paper only 4 or 5 years later.

**Navran**

On the 11th day after the birth, the child is taken out of the house (till this day the child is kept indoors) and shown to the Sun God or Surya Narayan, and then only a *navran* or naming ceremony is performed. The child's ears are also pierced on this day. After massaging the child with oil, it is laid out in the sun and the determined zodiac sign of the child is declared. This ceremony is done on the 7th or 9th day after birth by some Durras.

**Pasni**

As do members of other tribes, the Durras also perform the ritual of *pasni* or *bhat khwai*, which means feeding of solids to the infant. This ceremony is held after half a year from the day of birth for the male children and 5 months after birth for female children. In the case of circumstances beyond their control (social), the ritual is not able to be performed at the stipulated time, then it is done after 8 months for sons and 7 months for daughters. On the
auspicious day, new and tasty dishes are cooked in the family kitchen for the infant. The foods prepared include *khir* or sweet rice, *mas ko dal* (blackgram) fine quality rice, chicken and bird meat, fish, milk, curds, *ghyu* (clarified butter), fruits, and such items. The child is made to sit on a blanket, facing the east and is then fed the above mentioned foods. Those Durras who are well off, use a golden coin as a spoon, while the common folk use a silver rupee for this.

The child is given a complete set of new clothes to wear on this day. According to the belief in Durra society, the best item with which to feed the infant is not gold or silver, but either the beak of a Bhadrai bird or its leg. This ensures the infant to grow up and have a fine trouble free life, since the belief is that this gives the child a lot of knowledge.

**Putpute**

This is performed when the child is 2 or 3 years old. Thus *putpute* is the corrupted form of *pulpule* (pampering is the nearest word). This is celebrated only for the eldest sons of Durra households. Another name for this *putpute* is *data jharne*. On this occasion, maternal kinfolks and neighbours go to this house where there is much singing and dancing and the child is heaped with blessings. The ceremony is concluded with a grand feast for all those present and the usual *jad*, *raksi*, rice, meat, etc. are served. The actual purpose of this ceremony is quite vague and can be assumed to be a borrowed feature from the neighbouring Gurungs, since this is also practised by them too. It this is true, then it could mean that the child is reared in a loving atmosphere so much so as to spoil him-pampering.

**Chhaewar**

This ceremony called *chhaewar* is performed when the child reaches the age of 3, 5, 7 etc. odd years and the main role is that of the maternal uncle. The ritual of cutting the locks (hair) and affixing a new cap on the boy's head can be done only by the maternal uncle and no one else. This is true among almost all tribes in the kingdom. After the hair is clipped, the maternal uncle
presents 1 or 2 rupees (in coins) and then places the new cap on the boy's head. In lieu of this, the uncle is honoured with sale roti (doughnut-like bread) and raksi (intoxicant or alcohol which is distilled from wheat, millet) for consuming at his nephew's place.

It is customary to fasten a halter on the boy's neck, lead him to the cowshed, tie him to the stake, place grass or straw in the feed-bin, then cut his hair. The explanation provided by the Durras, for this strange custom, is that it is a symbolic representation of the boy's animal status, in that he is innocent and ignorant of the world. But it can be observed that in reality, this could mean something else other than the explanation given.

Marriages Practices

It is customary to get young Durra boys married off when they reach the age of 17 or 18 years, and for the girls the age is 14 or 15 years. Even today, the practice of asking the willingness of the prospective couple prior to the actual marriage is non-existent among these folks. The Durra parents and families are solely responsible for getting their children married off. Thus, the youths are matched by their respective family heads and then joined together in marital union, no questions are asked from the either the boy or the girl. A simple arranged marriage.

The initial stage in the marriage of Durras is to go and ask for the hand of the girl. This is known as kaliya, where 2 persons, of different thars, go to the girl's house to ask for her hand. This a compulsory stipulation in Durra societal behaviour. No presents are necessary, for the girl, at this stage, but after the conclusion of the talks of marriage, saipata has to be sent. This means that, on a proper and auspicious date, set by the relatives of the boy and of the same thar as he, these kinfolks have to go to the girl's house taking with them items such as a pung of raksi (alcohol in a bamboo container called a pung), a theki of curds (theki is a wooden container carved out of the wood of the Dar tree), Jhapre roti in a perungo (bambo woven flat container with holes to see what it contains, somewhat like a flat ladies purse), a rooster, a rupee and 4 paise (old coins).
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On this day, the girl's house is given a new coat of mud, both within and without. Her maternal kin and cross-cousins are all present too. The morning is started with puja offered to the deities. An oil lamp is lit, pure water, banana leaves, some stalks of *dubo* (short green grass), *pipal* leaves, mango leaves are all placed alongside the oil lamp.

When the boy's party arrive, the rooster they bring along with the hen provided by the girl's household are placed side by side and simulataneously slaughtered. The livers of these two fowls are extracted immediately and the priest or person presiding over this ceremony forecasts the future lives of this couple-to-be by assessing these livers.

The next part is rather interesting, as it is a sort of social announcement which is made by the girl's father, who taking some money in his hand says: "From today, I (his name) have broken by daughter's (daughter's name) leg. 1, 2, 3 and have given her to (name of boy's father) Durra's son (boy's name). This is called *bol chadnu* by the Durras and indicates the handing over of a female to a male in what is socially called marriage.

The rupee and 4 paise brought along with the *saipata* are retained by the girl's mother and the other edibles are consumed by all present. It is only after this that the permanence of marriage is acknowledged and on a convenient date, actual ceremonial marriage is performed. Among the Durras, there are two types of marriages, namely: *Bajaune biwaha* and *Nabajaune biwaha*.

**Bajaune Biwaha**

Marriage with musical accompaniment is called *Bajaune biwaha*. On an auspicious day, the marriage is set and everything is prepared accordingly. The bridegroom is helped with his turban, garland, *tika*, while the mother gives him milk to drink. A kind of fried bread (*sale roti*), *raksi*, and *jad* are also given to the bridegroom to eat and drink as *sagun*. Prior to the groom's departure towards the girl's house to bring her, all the villagers present him with garlands, turbans, and see him off. The two *kaliyas* are also decked out in turbans and *tikaby* the groom's
parents. The janti or groom's party are blessed with tika and told to return with the bride. Though in bygone days the groom rode in a dola (palanquin-like device carried in front and at the back by one person each but open at the top), but today this practice has vanished and the groom walks along with the janti. The responsibilities of looking after the janti, transmitting messages to and from the houses of the bride and groom, and general arrangements are all heaped on the two kaliyas.

The custom of assaulting the janti with banana-stem-bombs, coloured powder-bombs and such projectiles (harmless), by the bride's folks, before the janti reaches the bride's house is a prevalent and very popular practice among these Durras. After surviving this initial assault, the coloured and smiling janti arrive at the bride's house and are welcomed warmly by the bride's kin folks there. While the janti wait for sometime, the bride's father changes his dhoti (loose garment worn like a long skirt wrapped around the hips and a piece pulled under the legs and stuck into the waist band at the rear, above the bottom), hangs 5 rotis, a pung of raksi, on a sugarcane stem which is held by his nephew who precedes him and the father follows with a decorated karuwa, tied with strips of cloth or dhvjas (cloth banners), pipal and mango leaves, hiunkauri, etc. The nephew and bride's father move out, and keeping the bridegroom to their right, they walk around him thrice while continually pouring a stream of water from the karuwa. Then the father-in-law washes his jawai’s (son-in-law's) feet and places some curds and rice grains at the feet and performs puja, at the feet. Then the jawai (the groom) is momentarily and literally carried by his father-in-law.

The next part is for the janti including the groom to be provided a place to rest. All this time, the kaliyas have been busy and active in arranging everything including the timing of the rituals and other ceremonies since time is the most important factor in such marriages. The wedding feast is then offered to all present. At this time, commensurating with their economic ability, the groom's parents, after the wedding feast is over, distribute the following through the two kaliyas to all their kin and acquaintances.
For the bride's house - As much roti and raksi as able.

To the Mukhiya (headman) - 5 rotis and 2 manas of raksi
To the Rodhi Ama - 5 rotis and 2 manas of raksi
To the bride's eldest paternal uncle - 15 rotis and 2-4 mana of raksi
To the bride's youngest paternal uncle - 15 rotis and 2-4 mana of raksi
To the bride's mother - 30 rotis and 1 ghaito (earthenware pot) of bhati jad (rice beer)
To the bride - 30 rotis

* Rodhi Ama means the woman who is in-charge of the Rodhi Ghar where the youngsters (both male and female) go for entertainment such as singing and dancing, etc. in the evening after completion of their chores and stay on till late in the night.

At night, the ritual of dulahi ko goda dhune (washing of the bride's feet) or kanya jal khane (drinking of the virgin's water) is performed. In this ritual, the bride's maternal and paternal kin (parents, brothers, sisters, cousins, musi amas maternal kinfolks, buda mawali and other relatives) all accumulate and one after the other wash the bride's feet and put some of the water into their mouths. This is followed by the ritual of kanya daan (literally meaning donation or giving away of the virgin). Immediately after this, the bride is hidden (taken inside where no outsiders can see her) and the clothes brought by the groom are used or worn to prepare for the next ritual. After she is ready, she is taken outside and the final ritual of sindur halne (placing of vermilion powder on the bride's siudo or hair parting) is done in the presence of the janti, but no kinfolks of the bride should see this ritual. When the ritual is over, then it is said that the marriage ceremony is concluded and the couple have become husband and wife.

This ritual occurs towards the break of dawn and so the remaining time is whiled away in singing and dancing till the rays of the
rising sun streaks the sky. Now the janti prepare to move towards the groom's house with their prize - the bride. The bride's friends, and relatives make merry and perform comical dances prior to the departure of the bride alongwith the janti. The regular Maruni dance is danced in pardoy much to the amusement of all present, and the bride's kinfolks and friends make jokes that butt the janti. The janti is hit with intestine of goats filled with coloured water, the groom is given hukka filled with chillis instead of tobacco and he is made to smoke this resulting in much coughing and waves of laughter. None of the janti are spared from these practical jokes. Taparis or leaf plates are filled with frogs, fish, bark of trees, and such things, and given to the people of the janti to consume amidst hilarious laughter. At this stage, it is the custom for the groom to give the bride's friends 10 to 20 rupees and this is still prevalent today.

After this the colour-bespattered and joke-riddled janti return from the battle with their prize to the groom's house. There is no question of feeling bad about the way in which the bride's folks have made them butts of every conceivable joke, and all this is taken in a sporting and good humoured way.

The ritual that has to be performed at the groom's place is called dukini bhetini. Here, the bride is introduced to the kin and honoured relatives of the groom. this results in the dhog-bhet (kow-towing-by kneeling down and touching the feet of those persons with hands and foreheads simultaneously). The custom of payment of dudh ko bhar (compensatory payment of breast milk fed by mother when suckling infant child) by the groom to his mother is a prevalent custom and the amount payable lies within the range of Rs. 3/- and above, as much as one can afford. The groom's cousins' mothers, his mother's elder sisters, and his mother's younger sisters are all paid Rs. 1/- as is customary. In this way, grandmothers of his maternal kin and other old maternal kin are paid Rs. 1/- each and offered dhog-bhet.

The phupu (maternal aunts), didi (elder sisters) of the bride are paid Rs. 5/- each and thus phupu chad and didi chad are celebrated. At this time, the phupu presents a bottle of raksi. It is also customary to present Rs. 10/- or more to the kakababus (paternal
uncles) while the bhanseri (one who cooks the food during the marriage for the feast) receives Rs. 5/-.

While the janti begin to enter the bride's house, the bride's bhauju (sister-in-law or wife of elder brother) thinking the groom to be her brother covers him with a blanket and until the groom doesn't pay a fine of Rs. 5/- or more according to his financial capability, he is not released. This is called kambal chad or blanket ritual or festival.

The Rodhi Ama also welcomes the janti by feeding it with raksi and rotis. These items and pickles are brought from the bride's house actually. The janti pay a customary fee of Rs. 1/- or more perhead. This amount is collected and placed in the bride's hands. The bride's folks or maiti (paternal kin) can either feed the janti in the morning and bid them farewell or they can be sent off just like that without any food, but the newly wed bride and groom must be fed and then only sent off. Prior to the bride's departure and exit from her maiti (paternal home), a pathi (approximately 4 kgs.) of rice is placed on the door and a piece of wood tied with a thread or pyuri (a piece of twisted cotton for lighting oil lamps) is stuck on the rice heap. It is only after this that the bride is allowed to leave. Before she goes with the janti to the groom's house, the bride is presented with various items such as household goods, utensils and other necessary things. The couple and janti are blessed with the farewell tika and given a tearful sendoff.

As stated earlier, the dola is used in some places while not utilised at all in others. Like in other communities, even among these Durra, the custom of obstructing the path of the dola is still existent and very much seen today.

Though the janti go off happily with the bride, the two kaliyas remain at the bride's house and to ensure that no one has any problems, they take the residue of the jad, leftover bones and burnt out coals from the fire and throw these into a bush of stinging nettles. Thus custom is called pahole phalne, and unless this is not conducted and completed, the villaters do not go to work or they do not work at all. This pahole phalne is the sole responsibility of the kaliyas who represent the kutumba (agnates). It is after this that the bride's folks present the 2 kaliyas with a pathi of dhan (paddy-unhusked), a mana of rice, a head of a goat, roti, raksi and money alongwith a burning oil lamp (diyo). Finally, these two kaliyas are
given turbans and decorated with tika, and then sent off with all honour.

When the janti reach the groom's house, his sisters have already cleaned the compound with a coating of a mud and cowdung mixture thus purifying the area. The newly wed couple is kept in this compound while one sister carries an oil lamp, the others carry a karuwa of water and all of them go around the couple, slowly pouring out the water from the karuwa. Then one sister tries to take the bride into the house while the others bar the door and do not let the bride enter. A ritual is performed at the doorstep so as not to let any evil spirits trouble the newly wed couple. Paddy is strewn in front of the door and the couple have to walk on the paddy while entering. An oil lamp is kept burning on the side and a fowl is slaughtered on the threshold while the carcass is thrown out onto the compound. Should the fowl land on its left side, the bride is considered victorious, but if it lands on its right side then it is the groom who is thought victorious. If the fowl lands squarely on its chest, neither falling to the right or left, then it is said to incidate that the bride and groom are equal.

The bride and groom are then taken into the house, an oil lamp is burnt and tika is placed on their foreheads, beginning with the oldest agnate, then the parents of the groom, followed by relatives, friends and neighbours. All these people bless the couple for a good and lasting marriage, while plastering their foreheads with tika. While this tika talo (placing of the tika or pasting of the tika) is going on inside the house, the marriage feast commences outside. Those villagers and Damai (professional musicians and of low, untouchable caste) who have been dancing, singing and playing instruments are made to rest and are fed with rotis, raksi, jad and are then sent off. As was the case in the bride's house, here also the two kaliyas have to be properly fed and given the customary fees and sent off with honours. Relatives and kin who come to the marriage with roti, raksi, castrated goats or khsis, have to be reciprocated with presents of money, gunews (sari-like dress), karmus or pachhauras (shawl like clothes) and such items as is the custom. A leg of a buffalo is sent as a gift to the bride's parents and maternal relatives. In this way, this sort of marriage is concluded among the Durras.
On the evening of the following day after the entry of the bride into the groom's house, the couple go to the bride's house taking along a khsi or castrated goat, rotis and raksi. This ritual is called Duran phadkaune. The bride has with her a single friend till this time and after staying at her parents' house for a single night, she returns to her husgand's house where she remains for 5 nights and once more returns to her parents' house alongwith her husband as is the custom for this ritual. This is called the ritual of the panchratri meaning five nights.

Nabajaune Biwaha

Marriage with no musical accompaniment is called Nabajaune biwaha. In this sort of marriage, the boy's parents arrange the match with the girl's parents. Here, the whole matter is known to the boy. Even if the girl expresses or indicates her unwillingness, she is sent forcibly with the boy to some other place. After a few days, they return to the boy's house and then commence living together. This is a sort of ceremoniless marriage, where it is an open secret but not talked about by the society. This is followed by the tika talo ritual as in the bajaune type of marriage, with the ceremony or ritual being started by the oldest agnate of the boy's side and then followed by the boy's parents and relatives. No fanfare or show by the use of musical instruments is seen here and thus its name nabajaune biwaha.

Other than the above mentioned, there is a custom among the Dumas, where the girl is forcibly pushed inside the boy's house by his friends. In such cases, the parents of both sides do not know or have no inkling of the incident. Such types of marriages are found to occur within the Durra society though not too frequently. When a couple are in love and the girl elopes with the boy, the family members of the boy and girl begin to search for them. After some days the couple emerges and then it is taken to the boy's house. This is a popular type of marriage practice among the Durra society. Thus, it is found correct to call all these above mentioned types of marriages as nabajaune biwaha.

Durra marriages are seen to be conducted and concluded in the variety of ways outlined above. Though cases of polygamy exist
among these people, on a whole it is very much disliked and not practised by these Durras.

Regarding the cases of widow marriages, it is seen that this is quite permissable, however, the practice of marrying one's bhauju (elder brother's wife) when she becomes a widow is considered a sin and taboo among the Durras.

Parpachuke

The custom of separating, should a couple not get along with each other, is a common phenomenon throughout the world, and is also prevalent among the Durras. This is known as parpachuke or divorce. In the case of a man wanting to divorce his spouse, he will say - "La, gunew laga" - (here, wear this gunew), and if a woman desires to separate from her husband, then she will say - 'La, kachhad' - (here, take this kachhad - loincloth). This is done amidst the council of elders and is the standard ritual for divorce among the Durras. An amount of up to Rs. 350.00 is also payable in the Durra society. It is customary to separate Rs. 50 to Rs. 60 as bhalaadmi expenses from this total amount. The bhalaadmi expenses means the expenses for the elders of the council or village committee. At this point, it should be worth mentioning that exogamous or inter jat (tribe) marriages are infrequent and almost rare among the Durra who are wholly an endogamous tribe, as observed.

Jari biwaha

This sort of marriage called Jari biwaha where one person seduces and makes off with another's wife is very much prevalent in Durra society, and any differences that occur are settled by the panch bhalaadmi (village council of elders). They set the Jari dastur (jari fine - i.e. compensatory fee for marrying someone else's wife) at Rs. 150/-.

Accordingly, any quarrels emanating for stealing someone else's wife is easily settled in Durra society. In lieu of the settlement of such cases, by the panch bhalaadmi, a certain amount is set aside for them. This amount is either misused by them in drinking jad or
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raksi, or it is properly utilised by donating for religious activities or to a local social organisation.

Death Rites

As in the Gurung society, the Durras also use the lama or ghyabring to perform the last rites and cannot do or do not do anything without their presence or permission. The lama or ghyabring have to be brought over from the Gurung community. It was observed that among the Durras of the Thuloswanra area, two had been indoctrinated as lamas and one is currently presiding over the necessary rituals in the Durra community.

Should death strike a house, the neighbours immediately call the maternal kin or other relatives. The arrangements are made by the joint efforts of the maternal kin, daughters, villagers and neighbours. Either a lama or a ghyabring is summoned. If a ghyabring is to come, then he begins to play on his drums or dhyangro and other items used for the ritual. The daughters of the house go to meet and bring him at midway, where they offer him raksi and other foods and they bring him home. This is called tahosi garne.

When the ghyabring arrives, the process of keeping the chyu is undertaken. Paddy, millet, rice and such are placed in a dalo (woven basket). Now the ghyabring begins to chant, invoking the gods and goddesses, living in the mountains, valleys, hills and crags. He also tells the people of the house to slaughter a goat for performing worship on his dhyangro (drum with skin wrapped or stretched on one side) and the other paraphernalia of worship. Placing the goat on the threshold of the door, its head is severed from its body and the blood that spurts out is smeared on the instruments of worship. It is only after this that the dhyangro is hammered. The prevalent custom is to put some jad and raksi in a theki or a small container and imbed it into the sacrificial goat's heart. This is followed by the commencement of reading the Ved. Some ghyabring remain normal while others are possessed by their personal deities.

The maternal kin together with the daughter show the deceased the
food being given or offered. They also show a mirror and cover the corpse with a *katro* or shroud. The custom among the Durras is that a married woman who has expired is given a shroud by her paternal kin or her husband and an unmarried woman by her maternal kin. The corpse is taken out into the compound and laid out on a new *gundri* (woven straw mat). After the corpse is removed from the house the *ghyabring* throws a *baan* (which resembles a magic spear). Using a sword, shield and *khukuri*, he strikes at a banana stem or on wood and then he erupts into a frenzied dance. This *ghyabring* wears a costume composed of black, white and yellow colours and it very much resembles a maxi. While the daughter offers *toshi* or foods composed of fruits, foodstuffs and money to the soul of the deceased, the *ghyabring* also offers water. After this, he either kicks or stones the corpse. This is said to be done to ensure that the soul does not cause any trouble to those living. However, a *lama* will know-tow or do *dhog* to a corpse which indicates the ritual differences between the *ghyabring* and *lama*. The *ghyabring* makes the maternal kin and son drink the water offered to the god. One *mana* of rice is cooked a *pind*, then it is made into 4 balls which are thrown in the 4 directions. The other son shoots the arrows in the 4 directions. The *pind* is then thrown to appease the evil spirits that exist and only after this is done, can the soul of the deceased be given a proper path, is the belief of these Durras.

The *pancharatna* water is sprinkled by the *ghyabring* or priest to purify those present. The son, *gotriya* (of the same *gotr*) brother and other friends take some money and *pancharatna* water which they wave circularly above the *swa* (corpse) and offer *sraddhanjali*. The daughters rub oil on the edges of wood on which the *swa* is placed and this is called *kra-sya garne*. This wood on which the *swa* is placed is called *Chhi kut he*. The dead soul is offered many things like as though it were living. Prior to lifting the corpse, the priests ring their bells, blow their conchs, clash their cymbals and beat their drums, dancing simultaneously. The items such as money, cigarettes, etc. offered at the head of the corpse is taken by the son-in-law and the offerings on the corpse is taken by the priest.

The path for the deceased's soul is cleared by the *ghyabring* who
has a sword and shield in his hands. The eldest brother shoots arrows as he moves towards the cemetery or cremation grounds. He is followed by the priest and then by the daughters who scatter money (coins), lawa (dry fried paddy grains) and flowers, as they walk along. The funeral procession follows at the rear. If a lama presides, he precedes the corpse while a ghyabring follows the corpse.

When the corpse reaches the cemetery, the priest meditates with some rice grains and then he scatters them. It is only after this ritual that the priest orders the digging of the grave. Cremation and burials are equally prevalent among the Durras. Now here also, 4 balls of rice are thrown in the 4 directions, a chicken is released and the priest reads the Ved in short. A small piece of ktus (a kind of wood) is split into many pieces and this is called dharmakat. All the funeral goers pick up a piece of this wood and throw it into the grave. The daughters visit the panderos (water springs) and purify themselves after performing kra-sya. The plate on which oil is carried is right for the daughter who does the kra-sya, but is not to be used for giving food to the maternal kin.

In Durra society, the corpse's head and feet are shown to the maternal kin, meaning they are the ones who must give the final daag batti (fire on the corpse's mouth prior to burial or cremation). After this ritual they also must go to the panderos to purify themselves.

After the corpse is buried or cremated, the funeral goers shout "la-la-la, hamro sato aiji' (This means let our souls come back in a literal translation) and then they return home. With the hope that no one gets sick or suffers shock or anything like that, thorns are kept on the path. The son or sons shave the hair on their heads, face and such areas where such growth is feasible, wear a white cloth on their heads and commence the vigil called kuro basne. When all return, they ghyabring prepares kaindu out of dhendo (maize or millet mush) and then scatters them. This ritual is called thon shyo phalne. Gaunth or cow urine is blown with mantras and put into an old basket or dalo. Honey and milk of goats are also blown with mantras and placed in the dalo. The dabilo (flat spoon used to stir and serve rice) is also thrown into this dalo. Males step on this dalo
with their right feet while women use their left foot to do the same. This is done since it is believed that this nullifies the bad and unlucky days and helps to provide a good, peaceful environment in the family. The gaunth is touched to the lips by the sons, daughters and brothers of the deceased. The daughters cook one mana of rice each and along with one fowl, they eat this food. However, the one in kuro is not permitted this luxury.

The next day, some rice and an oil lamp are laid out with the oil lamp placed on the rice heap. This is offered to the ghyabring along with the sacrificed goat. A lama doesn't allow slaughter, however, he is given an amount of money equivalent to the price of a goat, as an offering.

The normal number of days for observation of death pollution is 13 days, but some of them do this for just three days or sometimes till 60 days. On the thirteenth day, the villagers and maternal kin accumulate, and the pollution is purified. The person in kuro is given a new cap by the maternal kin and women are given one new gunew each as is customary. The daughters are given the task of collecting rice, ghyu and making roti. They bring raksi and jad and provide a feast for all present. From this day onwards, salt, meat and such foods are once more eaten in that household.

This is the way in which a death is handled, within the frame of full rites and rituals among these Durras. Similar to the Gurungs, these Durras also have the system of erecting stupas over graves and the personal effects of the deceased are placed in these stupas.

Arghun

In the category of last rites, the arghun also called pai is also classified. Though this is prevalent among the Gurungs, its existence in Durra society is also found and in a popular way too. There are two types of arghun namely, Pacchi Garne Arghun and Alo Arghun.

Pachhi garne Arghun

This is the post death rite (arghun) done (garne) at a later date.
(pachhi). This arghun is in reality a sort of ancestral worship and is performed either on the 13th day after death, or 45 days after. Due to its late implementation, it is known as the pachhi garne arghun as mentioned earlier. In the performance of arghun after the 13th, or 45th day it is not necessary to avoid any sort of complications in the matters of zodiac or horoscopes, since these days are considered auspicious in themselves. This sort of pachhi garne arghun in the Durra society is called alo arghun in the society of the Gurungs. The astu (cranial bones of the deceased) is brought and then various preparations are made so as to complete this ritual within 2 to 3 days. Prior to the arghun, rice is pounded into flour to make rotis, fuelwood is stocked, leaves are collected to make leaf plates called taparis. The lama or ghyabring is invited to perform this arghun which commences only in the evening.

The compound is covered with new gundris (straw mats) and blankets for the people accumulated there so that they can be seated (crosslegged). Sisters, maternal kin and neighbours are gathered and a long bamboo pole is erected on the top of which is tied a bundle of white cloth, rotis, lawa, fruits, etc., if the ghyabring is the presiding priest at the yagyashala (place of worship) which is of a particular type, but if the lama presides then the pattern is different, though in both, oil lamps and incense are burnt. The lama's yagyashala is squarish i.e Buddha thangka (pictures) are hung on the 4 sides, on the ground is a place made for him to sit and to keep his prayer paraphernalia (holy books—postaks, -dhyattgros, and the status of his deities). In the case of the ghyabring, he sits in a corner of the compound and with all his paraphernalia for prayers, commences the puja.

The arghun is started and later on in the night, kul puja (worship to ancestors) is performed. An image called pla is also made during this arghun, and this image symbolises the deceased and is dressed accordingly, whether male or female, and the soul that is wandering around in the ether is summoned and put into this pla. Then the priest reads from the scriptures and shows the deceased's soul the path to heaven. Towards the end of the arghun ritual, the children of the deceased and neighbours burn oil lamps for him or her. Finally, the ritual of breaking the door of Yama (god of death) with baans (arrows) and sending off the soul to heaven concludes
the *arghun*. This is followed by the lifting of the *tika* ban and all the family wear *tika* once more, and mix up freely with the people of their community who were distant due to the observation of pollution (death) till the *arghun*’s completion. Neighbours, friends and relatives visit the living members of the deceased’s family and bless them.

**Alo Arghun**

The ritual which is performed immediately after the burial or cremation, of the deceased is called *Alo Arghun*. Here, the sons are not required to shave their heads and facial hairs. A long bamboo *lingo* and some white cloth is carried to the site of the cremation or burial. The *lingo* requires to be stiff and almost 14-15 feet long and is called *aan le*. A knotted while cloth is hung from the tip of this *aan le* and all those present in the funeral play drums and accompany the priest back to the house where the death has occurred alongwith the *aan le*.

Once home, the *aan le* is held erect and all the people present have to walk and dance around this pole. Then this *lingo* is rolled over to the side where the *yagya* is and left there only to be raised when the *sato* is summoned. The evening heralds the commencement of the *arghun*. Everyone, including the sons and daughters of the deceased eat regular food. While calling the *sato* girls or daughters from the maternal side bring foods like curds, *rotis* and *raksi* and place these in *taparis* and *dunas* (large and small leaf plates respectively). When the curd is disturbed with droplets, then it is believed that the *sato* has arrived and it is at this time that the *aan le* is erected. There the daughters hang bananas, *rotis*, *raksi* and such foods on the *aan le*. A trident is also affixed to this pole and the knotted cloth on it is unknotted.

There is a dance called *dhukuro nach* within the schedule of this *arghun*, where the son-in-laws construct this *dhukuro* which looks like a *thumse* (tightly woven wicker basket used for carrying goods). If there are five *sime* (dead souls) one *dhukuro* is made, and four are stuffed within it. While stuffing these, the *jethajayu’s* (husband's elder brother) and *buhari’s* (younger brother's wife) *dhukuros* must be made separately. *Arghun* can be done in a group
The *dhukuro* of those who have died in far off places, or in accidents such as fire, water, or fallen off cliffs, are made individually. All cannot and must not be assimilated into a single *dhukuro* as it is against the custom, since these people have died violent deaths. It is only after the priest outlines certain conditions that these *dhukuro* are all mixed together. This is so because of the belief that if such conditions are not met with, then the souls of the deceased cannot enter heaven. Lamas perform *hom* (fire offerings) and burn 78 oil lamps.

Prior to the fixing of the *aan le*, the priest must read the scared texts simultaneously dancing around the *yagyashala* (place where the *arghun* is performed). The next step is for the priest to point an arrow all around and then strike a banana stem enacting the killing of a demon. Then the destruction of the *yagyashala* is commenced and the *aan le* is hacked into 3 pieces at night.

The next day (second day), the *arghun* is concluded and then the deceased's son's hair is shaved, while the daughters bathe and together with their brother or brothers, neighbours and relatives put *gaunth* (cow urine) to their lips and thus purify themselves. *Aimeen* is performed on the third day, and here *tika* is 'opened' or allowed to be used once again. For an *arghun*, except for *chilaune* and *bilaune* plants, 9 other plants are required. The children of the deceased are purified by their maternal kin, friends and neighbours, who put *tika* on their foreheads. The system in the Durra community is for each family to donate a *mana* or a *pathi* of rice and Rs. 2/- or more in cash and kind. This is known by them as *kojen utthaune* (borrowing or loan).

It is customary to provide donations and alms for the *ghyabring*, *lama* or *pachyu*. Paddy, rice, money and a burning oil lamp are placed on a large *nanglo* (circular winowingg fan) and then offered to these priests with full honours and respect. Neighbouring villagers accumulate to participate as observers and spectators in these *arghun* and there is a custom of *neg dine* which means an invitational feast for which the invitees will reciprocate at a later date. This *Neg* is a feast and celebrated on account of the proper departure of the soul, a kind of farewell party.
Whichever village is in good contact with the village in which this *arghun* occurs, that village's people come to dance and sing the whole night at the *arghun*. These people are offered in exchange exactly what they had earlier offered in their village's *arghun*. For instance, a leg of a buffalo will be reciprocated with the same, or a goat with a goat. This is as per their tradition. Maternal kin are given as much meat as is measured with the tail of a buffalo and consists of the rear part. Due to feasting with meat, *rotis* and *raksi*, it is but natural that these *Arghun* are extremely expensive affairs.

This *Alo Arghun*, once performed, nullifies the necessity of observing the 13 days death pollution. This *arghun* is performed so that the deceased goes into heaven without troubling the household and community with problems such as sickness and diseases. This is a strong belief existent among these Durra.

**Religion**

Though these Durras profess themselves as true Hindus, like their Gurung neighbours, they follow an amalgam of Hinduism and Buddhism, as has been observed.

They worship Hindu deities like Narayan, Siva, Kali, Laxmi and perform Swasthani puja too. The Turlung kot temple is the venue of the annual Dasai worship which is celebrated with great pomp and the priests at this shrine are the Durras themselves. On the other side, it can be seen that on deaths, *pitree pujas* and such, it is a compulsory custom that the presiding priest is a *lama* or a *ghyabring*. Their belief is that the dead soul will not be able to attain heaven in the absence of a *lama* or a *ghyabring*. Also, during sickness or any such calamites, the presence of *jhankris* is a must and is the first thing they resort to, prior to hospitals. They worship their gods and deities only after purifying themselves bodily and making *bhakals* (vows) that they will offer sacrifices of such and such animals should so and so be cured or such and such wish be fulfilled. They sacrifice lambs and kids and the meat is divided among themselves. On the day of the sacrifice, they purify their homes using mud and cowdung mixture with which they plaster the mud floor and walls both inside and outside.
Pitree Puja

The Durras fervently worship their *pitree* (ancestors) as their tutelary deities. This *pitree puja* (worship) is done annually, biannually or ever 12 years, and is performed only in the months of Chaitra (mid-March to mid-April) and Kartik (mid-October to mid-November) and the sons have to remain pure. Though the practice was to sacrifice a sheep, however, now a days, this custom has become extinct as per their version.

*Phailung puja* is also done where a fowl is offered. This *puja* lasts for a duration of a day and a night and is presided over by a *lama* or a *ghyabring*.

In this *puja*, two cylindrical bamboo containers are made out of which one is set aside for wealth and the other for *kul*. In the container for wealth, silver coins, foodgrains and sheep liver (this is not used nowadays) are cooked and placed within. The container for the *kul* is kept on the post of the *dhuri* or main ridge pole (horizontal post on the top which holds the roof's framework) by the *jawai* (son-in-law) and he is fed with *rotis* as is the custom. This is called *toshi barne*.

Festivals

Besides the other *pujas*, the Durras also celebrate Srawane Sankranti, Janai Purnima, Teej, Tihar, Thulo Ekadasi, Maghe Sankranti, Shivaratri, Chait Dasai, Baisakh Purnima and such festivals. Poush 15 is also celebrated as *khoya khane chad* (festival where *khoya* is eaten by them). On this day, the boys and girls gather and carry the essential foodstuffs to a nearby and open spot where all these are cooked and then the girls feed the boys. After this, the boys feed the girls and is similar to a picnic but with a rustic setting. Then the boys collect money from among themselves and given the accumulated amount to the girls. The whole day is spent in dancing, singing and merry making. Towards the evening, the boys go to their close female kin and have *khaja* (light foods or snacks). Even old folks are present at this moment.

On Tihar, *bhailo* (carolling) is customary and the foodgrains and
money collected are all used to organise a grand feast during the months of Marga and Poush. The village boys invite the girls to this feast and the girls arrive carrying 1 or 2 bottles of raksi. Together, they consume the foods and drinks and stay awake the whole night dancing, singing and merry making. This is called the feast of khoi khane.

In Durra villages, there are many families where there are no able bodied males to help out in the chores and in times of necessity, so at times of need, the neighbouring Durras go and help out. Thus, they make a work group and this is called prma toli, which is paid a certain fee for the work done. This amount is collected and twice a year i.e. once in the monsoon and once in the winter seasons, they organise a feast which is called re se yan kahane. Here also the merry making, dancing and singing are carried out to round-off the occasion. In this way it is observed that they have proclivities towards community works, co-operation in social activities, merry making, and such social activities. This indicates their feelings of unity are inherent and thus must be accepted as a factor which will usher them towards a better tomorrow.

Fagu Purnima is also celebrated with songs, dances and merry making. Chait Dasai is also celebrated grandly by all Durra families as nuclear units and on a communitywide basis. On this day, they play a sport called chhelo phyakne (putting the shot or shotput) and the winner is decorated with flowers (phul laune) and paper money and then smeared with vermillion. He is then taken around in a victory procession.

Baisakh Purnima is an extremely important day for all Durras since this day has a special significance among these people. The Ghantu is performed on this day. The Ghantu (a dance performed by the Gurungs and Magars and possibly borrowed by the Durras) consists of two types: Barahamase and Sati. This is done in the same way as the Gurungs do their Ghantu. The jhankris play roles of immense significance among the Durras of Lamjung.

**Dress and ornaments**

The Durras cannot be distinguished distinctly from their attire or
ornamentation, since they wear clothes and ornaments similar to those worn by their neighbours the Gurungs and Magars.

Food

The Durras eat food that people of other tribes consume and do not consider this to be of extreme importance. Food consumed by these folks are mainly millet or maize flour mush called dhendo, pulses, rice, meat, fish, butter, clarified butter, milk and such. Jad and raksi are also consumed in large quantities because they distill or chum these in their homes.

Economic status

The main basis for existence for these Durras is farming. They grow paddy, maize, wheat, millet and such crops, but due to their proclivities towards entertainment and consumption of liquors, their expenses are large causing them suffering at times. During the months of Baisakh and Jesth, these people can be seen going around other villages in search of foodgrains, since they have already finished their stocks through excesses.

They rear cattle, sheep, goats, fowls, etc. and keep watchdogs as well. The tradition of joining the army as lahures, is prevalent to a large degree among the Durras and this is a way of boosting their economy. They also try to get their daughters married off to lahures in the British Army especially. Thus we can see clearly that becoming lahures is one way though which these folks are intent upon elevating their much realised economic stagnancy.
Gaine

GAINE

Settlement

The Gaine people are settled in the areas of Dailekh, Jajarkot and Surkhet in the Bheri Zones, Sallyan and Pyuthan in the Rapti Zone, Gulmi in the Lumbini Zone, Baglung in the Dhaulagiri Zone, Devpatan, Kirtipur, Patan, Bhaktapur within the Kathmandu Valley in the Bagmati Zone, Syangja, Kaski, Lamjung, Gorkha and Tanahun in Gandaki Zone, Banepa in Kavre district, Bagmati Zone, Okhaldhunga in Sagarmatha Zone and Chitwan in Narayani Zone. But their largest concentration lies within the Gandaki Zone. The total population of these Gaine is estimated to be 3000-4000 heads throughout the kingdom and only about 4400 houses approximately.

Houses

Their houses are roofed with khar and shywla (branches of trees with leaves, all dried and put over the roof’s frame). Most of these houses are found to be windowless and doorless, with a hearth on the ground floor and the sleeping area all around this hearth. This hearth or ageno is the source of heat for cooking as well as warmth. The upper floor is used as a storage for their foodgrains and the ascent is made via a notched wooden log called a lishnu.

Physical characteristics

Gaine are seen to possess dark skin pigmentation, medium heights, scrawny bodies and facial features range from the typical Brahmin, Ksetri to the other lower castes types, as it is observed that they have been merging with these castes and the changing.

Language

Till date, no evidence has been found regarding a particular language being spoken by these Gaine people, and Nepali is what they use inside their society or family and also in communicating with other people. Other than this and besides the local language of the area they inhabit, they know no other language except Nepali.
Family

They still adhere to the joint family system and the result is that a family may consist of three persons basically or there maybe 10 to 12 members as has observed. Their's is a patriarchal society and can be discerned from the custom of the eldest son being ascribed to become the household head after the death of the father. There seems to be no difference between the men and women in this society, meaning they are somewhat seen as equals, as has been observed.

Historical background

Regarding their origins, the Gaine have their own ideas and beliefs. According to their version, Brahmaji the Creator (one of the Hindu Trinity), created 4 rishi or hermits, 4 varnas or colours and 26 tribes. Among these 4 rishis there was one Gandharva who was less cunning than his colleagues, and it is because of this susceptible nature of his that the other three rishi wanted to remove him from their group so they conspired. They gave him a leg of a cow and told him to go beg for alms uttering the word awariha. Not understanding the plot, this simple minded Gandharva Rishi did as he was told, however, on returning with the alms, he was told that he had defiled himself because he had used the leg of a cow and so from then on he was to continue his life as a beggar. Thus it is believed that Gandharva is the progenitor of the Gaine and since he was defiled the Gaine are born as a low caste today, and simultaneously, the stringed instrument called the arwajo, which they use to provide music while they sing and beg, also originated. This arwajo is supposed to symbolise the cow's leg.

Another version states that while preparations were being made for the division of labour between the 4 rishis, Gandharva was engrossed in observing the dance of the apsaras (heavenly dancers of extreme beauty and grace mentioned in Hindu mythological scriptures), so he was given the task of singing or providing music. Therefore, it is believed that the Gaine earn their living by singing songs.

Sept (Thar)

Within the social organisation of these Gaine, the septs or thar are of extreme importance. Among the septs are Adhikari, Budathoki,
Kayastha or Kaitae, Kalo Gopal, Nayak, Kalakoshik, Kala Paudale, Thakuri, Smudri, Sursaman, Baist, Biswakarma, etc. Besides these septs, there are others like Baikar thar which is sub-divided into Brahmar Baikar, Jogi Baikar, Lamli Baikar, Samudra Baikar and Turki Naikar sub-septs.

There are also other thars which have been mentioned by scholars and these are: Bhat Musal, Parbate, Bogote, Hookchingrana, Kalichan, Maheshwor, Megnath, Neyabhaikar, Sahi, Seta Parbate, Bishnu and such. Sometimes the Gaine people talk about their thar or septs by saying gotr, but they actually mean to say thar or sept.

Life Cycle Rites

Navran

In Gaine society, navran is performed on the 9th day after the birth of the child regardless of its sex. The purification from birth pollution is also done on the same day. Gaunth (cow urine), jau (barley), til (black sesame) and soon pani (water touched to gold) are the items used in this purification ritual. The child is named on this very day. This purification is considered complete only if a jawai (son-in-law) or a nephew (matrilineal) is present for this.

On the occasion of this navran, they invite their kin, kindred and neighbours to a feast of jad, raksi, fish, rice, pulses and other foods. They spend an amount of Rs. 700 to Rs. 1000 on such occasions.

Pasni

They perform pasni of sons when they attain the age of 6 months and if daughters at the age of three months. On this occasion also, they invite their guests, kin, kindred, neighbours and celebrate like on navran. After this feasting is over, they all get up and dance together. This is called pingul and actually they dance and appeal to the gods offering prayers for the child's wellbeing, peace and ask for god's blessings to be showered on this child. They also praise their ancestors. The songs also bless the child saying that he or she should uphold the religion and prestige of ancestors and should take care of parents properly in their old age. The songs sung during pingul are full of such feelings.
Chhaewar

The Gaine believe that *chhaewar* or *bratabandh* should be performed on odd years and so when the male child reaches the age of 7 or 9 or 11 years, the *chhaewar* is done. In this count, the child must not cross the age of 19 or 21 and this is a standing belief among the Gaine. On the occasion of *chhaewar*, every single villager is invited without failure. A feast is also given here as in the previous cases of the *navran* and *i.pasni*. The difference between the *chhaewar* feast and celebration from the *navran* and *pasni* is that the expense is much higher, however, the Gaine are of the belief that it must be done, and they do not hesitate to extract loans which are used for carrying out these ceremonies with much exaggerated pomp and fanfare.

Marriage Practices

Among these people, the marriages are initially initiated by the matchmaker or *lami* who is also called *karobari* by the Gaine folks. The *lami* from the boy's side is authorised to ask for the hand of the girl for the prospective groom. The *karobari* takes 5-6 bottles of *raksi* and then commences the dialogue with the girl's folks. The talks begin with words like *picha padna aiyoun* (literally meaning we have come running after you) spoken by the *karobari*, who states his intentions, depositing the *raksi* he has carried for this purpose, in front of the girl's parents. If the girl's guardian is in the mood to accept, the *raksi* is poured out for everyone present and they drink together. But if the parents do not want to permanise this suggested match, then the *raksi* is not accepted and the *karobari* and those who have accompanied him return with the *raksi*.

After the acceptance of the *raksi* and the confirmation, the *karobari* and people representing the prospective groom again visit the girl's guardian's or parents' house, for setting the date of the actual wedding. At this time they carry gifts of 4-5 bottles of *raksi* and a rooster along with them. This is called *bhudko jhundyauna*, and on this day, the marriage date is finalised along with other related matters.

Prior to the departure of the *janti*, the girl's folks must send 100 to 125 pieces of homemade bread or *sale roti*, the same quantity of sweets, 22 *pathi* of *jad*, 2 fowls and one *ghaito* (a globular
earthenware pot) of raksi for the feast at the boy's house. Similarly, while going for the janti, the boy's folks must take 30 to 40 pathi of chamal or uncooked rice grains, according to the number of people expected to be present, 1 rango (male buffalo), gagro (brass or copper water vessels) full of jad and 4 bottles of raksi for the maiti bhatare or janti bhatare.

While the janti moves towards the bride's house, the Gaine have to play on their traditional instruments like the madal, sarangi, arwajo, mujuro, etc.. The groom is carried in a palinquin locally called ulinkat and which the Gaine call a kholi. When the groom reaches the bride's house, the first thing that the bride's folks do is called varni. In this varni, items needed are a rooster, fish, dadora, kalas and their traditional instruments have to be played. It is only after this, that the groom is allowed to enter the bride's house.

The next ceremony is that of washing the feet or goda dhune, which is done by all the bride's brothers and other kin who are required to perform this ritual according to their tradition. Those who have to perform goda dhune have to abstain from eating anything till this ritual is not concluded. The janti that has accompanied the groom is given a single meal by the bride's kin.

On the occasion of this marriage ceremony, various happy and sweet song are sung and also at the jagge or sacred fire around which the marriage rites are performed. These songs are sung to wish the couple a fruitful and happy marriage and their relationship to remain always intact, and the destiny of groom and bride be always good and prosperous. After all the rites and rituals are over, the kholi previously used by groom is now occupied by the bride and she is carried to her husband's home. The groom either walks back or rides in another kholi. The day after the bride is taken into the groom's household, the bride and groom have to go for a ritual called dulhan phadkaune taking along with them two fowls, 2 pathi of jad and two bottles of raksi. Now the marriage is concluded. In Gaine marriages, it is said that a jagge must be made at the bride's house, but unnecessary at the groom's.

The Gaine prefer to marry their matrilateral cross-cousins or progeny of their mother's family, while it is considered taboo to marry with patrilateral cross-cousins or with the progeny of their father's kin. Thus it can be said that while the former marriage called mama cheli phupu chela is permitted and much preferred, the
latter called *phupu cheli mama chela* is taboo. If a Gaine marries a Sarki's or Kami's wife, or if a Gaine's wife elopes with a Sarki or Kami, there is no system of *jari tirne* or payment of the *jari kur* or compensatory fine, in such a situation. However, if the offender is a Gaine then this rule comes into effect and the *jari tirne* ritual has to be fulfilled. At such times it is functional. If a Gaine should marry a *Podeni* or a caste which is considered even lower than the Gaine, then he too becomes a Pode.

A song that is very common and necessary to be sung in every Gaine household during marriages is the *jyamlapta*. When the *janti* is returning with the bride, they sing the *khyali*.

**Death Rites**

On the death of a person in the Gaine community, there are two systems of getting rid of the corpse namely: burials and cremations. Burials are either done on the banks of rivers or at selected places if the rivers are too far off. The death pollution (contrary to other tribes) is observed by the daughter of the deceased for a period of 10 days. She stays in *kuro* during this period and at a place away from the *mulghar* or main house by erecting a separate makeshift hut for shelter. The brothers of the deceased have to undergo *jutho barne* where they are not permitted to eat salts, oils for the stipulated period of 10 days. After the one in *kuro* is purified, she purifies the household. Then for the next one year, food items where salts or oil have been used cannot be consumed. For this one year, the family of the deceased must not hold any *puja* or perform any sort of religious rite or rituals. A year after the date of the death and at a certain time, they perform *sraddha* in memory of the deceased and invite their kin, neighbours and guests for a great feast in honour and memory of the dead. In this way, the observance of pollution in food items is also ended from this day onwards.

**Religion and festivals**

Gaine are Hindu, so they worship gods of the Hindu pantheon like Mahadev, Bishnu, Bhagawati, etc. They also have a tutelary deity or *kul devta* whom they worship as their chief god. Vayu is also worshipped, seemingly a remnant of the pre-Hindu cults.

Their festivals are Kalratri on the Sundays of Kartik and Chaitra
month. They celebrate the main Hindu festivals also. Any religious rites and rituals are performed under the aegis of either jawai or son-in-law or bhenajyu or elder sister's husband or bhanji bhanja meaning niece or nephew. The dhami and jhankri also play a vital role in the society of these Gaine folks.

**Dress & Ornaments**

Since a majority of the menfolks in Gaine society beg and wear clothes of the hand-down quality, it cannot be stated that their mode of dress is of a particular type. Accordingly, it can be said that they wear shirts, pants, daura-surwal, waistcoats, Nepali topi, etc. as has been observed. The women folks wear the common gunew, pachaura, cholo, patuka and other clothes as worn by women of the neighbouring tribes. Ornaments such as bulaki, phuli, dhungri, madbari, and tilhari are worn by them.

**Economic Status**

Looking at these Gaine, it can be seen that their condition is of an extremely low quality. They do not possess any lands therefore they are compelled to work to earn a living by following their traditional profession which is singing and begging from village to village. This is the main profession of a majority of the Gaine in Nepal even today or maybe all the more these days. This occupation is a group wise affair in certain regions and the proceeds are split equally among the participants.

They do not or are not seen to rear any sort of domestic animals, to the extent that not even a fowl can be seen around their houses. Even if some Gaine people do possess small plots of land for planting vegetables, they are not keen on doing any scale or agriculture, and the little grain that they have is used for distilling raksi.

Besides their singing profession, they also do a lot of fishing, work as manual labourers, and such works where skill in of no importance. Fishing is done in groups and the sales are divided equally among themselves. Traditional concepts, extravagance in social ceremonies inlaid with unnecessary expenses, sumptuous feasts although money must be borrowed and social decadence is not lacking among these poor people and the above stated factors are those points which have contributed to their current miserable
Tribal Ethnography of Nepal

economic condition.

Social Beliefs

Being fond of and having a natural proclivity towards *jad*, and *raksi* consumption, the people of the places or houses where the Gaine wander to beg, offer intoxicants to these singers or Gandharvas, who really have a great affinity for these beverages. These Gaine and their families possess a sort of natural talent for being able to sing ballads based on historic, religious or social happenings and presenting these in rhythm thus attracting listeners who may be willing to part with a few coins, in appreciation.

The talent of singing and impromptu composition is what must be appreciated. It could be one of the reasons why they are liked by most people and since they entertain, they are accepted as a *saguni jat*. If a Gaine has a daughter who is hypergamosously married, meaning if his daughter is married by a boy of a higher caste, then a ritual of *jat jhiknae* is performed. Since this ceremony is an expensive affair, it is slowly vanishing on account of the practice becoming less frequently used and reduction in its importance.
GANGAI

The Gangai inhabit the areas of Saranmati VDC and the other neighbouring VDCs of Dangibari, and further east, Dhuabar and Dhyajan in Jhapa district which lies in the easternmost corner of the country. These people are also spread out in the States of West Bengal and Bihar in neighbouring India. According to historical records, it can be seen that these people had migrated from the Bengal region into the Nepalese terai almost three hundred years ago. They are concentrated in the southern areas of Jhapa in places like Kumarkhod, Tandhanduba and Saranmati. Their actual population cannot be estimated accurately but is said to be within the range of 10 to 15 thousand head.

Physical characteristics

The Gangai are very similar to the Rajbansi or Koche in terms of skin colour, physical body structure, facial make up and mode of articulation. They are a tribe which is said to posses mongoloid blood and their short stubby fingers and toes, and leotricus hair prove their descent.

Septs (Thars)

Gangai are split into basically two categories : Babu and Besram on the basis of those who consume both pork and chicken and those who do not respectively. While the Babu Gangai consume both pork and chicken, the Besram Gangai do not. Among these people there are seven septs or thars but in Nepal there are only four thars found namely : Pal, Sharma, Mandal and Kumhar.

The Gangai who are non-meat eaters or the Besran Gangai, do not permit their women to marry into the Babu Gangai group, however, the latter allow their women to marry with the former group, on condition that the Babu woman who is now a Besram woman must abstain from the practice of meat consumption as she used to do while with her parents.

Language

The Gangai possess their own language and it is categorised under the terai group, but it cannot be clearly stated that the Gangai
language belongs to a particular family. Though their language does not possess a script, it can be written in the *Devnagari* and it is observed that the Bengali language has influenced the Gangai language to a great extent. The Gangai are seen to be striving hard towards preservation of their language, and they exhibit aggravation when told that their language resembles Bengali and Rajbansi. Some samples of Gangai words with their Nepali and English equivalents (almost similar meanings) are listed below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gangai</th>
<th>Nepali</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chhae</td>
<td>chha</td>
<td>is</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nichhae</td>
<td>chhaina</td>
<td>is not (isn't)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Habae</td>
<td>Hunchha</td>
<td>alright / O.K.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ni habae</td>
<td>Hundaina</td>
<td>No (not possible)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nijam</td>
<td>Jaanna</td>
<td>will not go</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jami</td>
<td>Janchhu</td>
<td>will go</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Here it is to be noted that the language the Gangai speak has been categorised as a branch of the Rajbansi language by H.M. Government of Nepal.

**Family**

The extended and nuclear family systems are both parallelly practised among the Gangai people. Bearing in mind factors such as personal security and topography, Gangai communities are concentrated in the form of densely populated and therefore congested villages with a view of the convenience in being able to aid each other due to proximity of settlement. Their society is a male dominated one and exhibits patriarchal trends as is common among most tribes throughout the world, but when compared to the Brahmin, Ksetri and Newar communities, there is seen to be more freedom and equality in behaviour among them. Work is also shared equally by these people and even in their household chores this equality exists.

**Dress and Ornaments**

The Gangai people dress up, in much the same way as the other inhabitants of the plains of Jhapa district, but still they possess their special dress peculiarity. While the males wear the *dhoti* to cover their bodies below the waist, the *bhoeto* or a vest-like garment is worn to cover the upper torso. The women wear *paetani* (like the
Dhimal women who weave these costumes) and their hairs are knotted into buns or khopa at the nape of the neck. This mode of dress and hair immediately tells the onlooker that this is a Gangai woman.

Facial make up is an old tradition among these people, while they wear ornaments like gold earrings called soon, gothemala and panch chariya or necklaces, paju or anklets, baju or armlets, chandrahar and khitigun or forehead ornaments, kharu or bangles, finger rings and such, mostly made of silver. Today they are found to be using modern decorative ornaments. The rings on the fingers and the kharau or wooden sandals are the trademark of the Gangai males.

Life Cycle rites

Birth

Immediately after the birth of the child, the activities like the nalo katnae (serving of the umbilical cord), and bathing and massaging the child with oil are carried out. On the day of benda karma, the bathing and massaging is also performed.

Navran

Similar to the Buddhists and Hindus, the Gangai also ritualise their ceremonies regarding the creation of life and related matters. On the 7th. to 8th. day, after the child is born, they perform benda hadiyano which is commonly called navran or the naming. The child's grandmother announces whose child it is by uttering the father's name, after which the barber cuts the child's locks and then the child's name is declared. According to their wish, the child is named after a day of the week, a month, a tree, a shrub or any other name. For instance, those born on a Sunday are Aitae because Sunday in Nepali is Aitabar, or one born in the month of Asadh is known as Asarae. Females are named Aita Devi or Asarae Rani.

Pasni

The bhat khuwai meaning rice feeding is done six months after the child's birth and whether it is a male or a female both are given equal importance among these people as opposed to the treatment meted out by other tribes like Newars for instance. After the bhat
khuwai an uncastrated goat or khsi and Narsingha (Lion-man manifestation of Vishnu) are worshipped together. The worship of the deity is to ensure that the child (especially son) is made powerful and his feeling of self-importance develops, thus making him brave, courageous and fearless as they commonly believe.

Since this is an expensive puja, only the quite affluent folks among the Gangai community taken the responsibility of performing this. Whether sons or daughters the ritual of piercing the ear lobes is also performed and it is a tradition that should a child’s ear lobes remain unpierced, then the chances of marriage are nil. Thus these children have their ear lobes pierced at a very young age and on an auspicious occasion. This is followed by hanging a golden earring or mundri on the earlobes.

The ritual of chhaewar or mudn (hair cutting ceremony) does not seem to exist among these people, as observed.

Marriage practices

Marriages among these Gangai occur, they state, so as to satisfy the social, cultural and biological aspects of human nature. Marriages are considered to be activities of extreme importance both socially and physically, and the reason given is that the man and his spouse are satiated and relaxed. Thus marriages occur in various ways and the methods are of much variety. There are the Magi biwaha or arranged, Chori biwaha or the elopements, Jabardasth biwaha or marriage by force, Jari biwaha meaning a person steals someone else's wife, etc. to mention a few. Among these the Magi biwaha is considered the best and therefore it is the most popular marriage form among the Gangai folks.

Magi Biwaha

Here initially the boy and girl appraise each other and if they seem to like what they see, then some Gangai men get together and form a sort or marriage committee and discuss the potential marriage. Should it be found out that either the girl or the boy has had pre-marital sexual relationships, then the culprit is punished and the match cancelled. It is only when there is no impurity in the couple that the preparations for the marriage are commenced. Thus it is observed that prior to marriage the couple are required to remain in clean condition otherwise they bear the danger of being socially
boycotted, which means that the villagers will not allow any of their folks to mix or marry these unclean and sexually polluted males or females. This indicates the high sense of morality existent among the Gangai.

Once the marriage is to occur the boy's father visits the girl's house with 5 -7 -9 -11 friends in his party, i.e. once the boy has expressed his desire to marry the girl. This ritual of going to see what the girl looks and behaves like is called subh dekhawa. The party is properly fed and given a warm send off, with auspicious edibles like curds, pickles, beaten rice placed in earthenware pots which are wrapped in straw for the girl's parents as gifts. If these gifts are accepted by the girl's parents then the boy's party express their willingness for this bond and then the day for the marriage is set. Dargubha is decided on consulting the astrological chart. In case the gifts are not accepted the marriage is nipped at the bud.

After the marriage has been definitely finalised, the boy's father buy's 5-10 and sometimes even 20 seers (one seer is equivalent to almost half a kilogramme) of betel nuts for offering as a sign of respect, ornaments for the daughter-in-law or buhari, clothes and other items that have been decided on and the quantity depending on basis of their mutual understanding. On this day, the boy's folks have the sando khanae ceremony where betel nuts are distributed to neighbours and they are given a feast consisting of meat, fish, sweets, supplied in vast quantities, while food packages are dispatched to the houses of those neighbours who are absent, and with the message for them to definitely attend the marriage. It is customary for the boy to demand a watch, a radio, clothes, gold, etc., however, it must be understood that the boy's father also presents the girl as much as he can afford, it is said that this demanding of items and the giving in Gangai marriages shows that it is a way of realising marriage expenses and when everything demanded cannot be given, the marriage still occurs to show that this is just a formality to comply with the prevailing customs. Another custom is that the couple must kiss each other, however, this is also a traditional aspect to complete the marriage and is done as a token only. For instance, although Rs.125/- is required to be paid, a nominal Rs.5/- is enough to honour the tradition. This offering of money has to be given by placing it in a dola(palanquin) and whatever amount is initially placed within is what is accepted ultimately. If any amount is added later on then this is not accepted, and some do consider this as an offence.
Thus on the stipulated day, the boy with his party go to the girl's house in whatever means of transport he can muster up depending upon his financial position, thus it could be a car, a bus, a bullock-cart, etc. Before the marriage procession, also called a janti, leaves for the bride's house, the well adorned groom is taken to the village Durga temple and made to circumambulate around it five times and then he is carried off to the bride's house, accompanied by music and drums. On these marriages, most of the devtas and devis are prayed to for peace, prosperity and security. Though the band used is mostly the local traditional one, the richer ones are bringing in 'brass bands' from the neighbouring towns.

A place is set aside where there is a sort of yagya constructed and the groom is made to sit near there wearing the traditional sora hath (16 cubits) long turban. Both the bride's and groom's sisters anoint him with vermilion tika and wash his feet with water, while the sala or the bride's younger brother places the silver ring on the groom's finger and bows down at his bhenajyu's (brother-in-law's) feet. Now the groom is brought to the actual yagya where he is seated and after this the bride is brought out to be placed beside him. According to the traditional methods, the presiding priest must be a Maithli Brahmin. The bride's father presents a brass ghda (vessel) and a box to the groom, while the bride is also presented with money as daksina (gift-donation), gold ornaments, gant mala, panch churiya, paijup, baju, chandarahar, sitigun, etc. Similarly, the groom's father also presents the groom and the bride with the same sort of items that the bride's father presented.

Kisa pasa, meaning a sort of gambling game is played between the bride and groom and the kaudas or shells are 16 totally. The next step is for the groom to present or offer the bride a paan (betel leaf with spices wrapped in between) to chew and the bride reciprocates with curds and bananas. Then the groom is kept outside while the bride is taken into the house. At this point the bride hits the groom thrice with her patuka (cloth wrapped around the waist functioning as a sort of griddle). There is a screen placed between the groom who is outside and the bride who is inside the house. The groom places some sindur (vermilion) on a cane or katrata and after placing tika on the bride's forehead he pours the sindur on her hair parting or siudo. The small finger of the left hand is used to put sindur just once only. This is followed by the start of gifts presentation by all those who are present and have witnessed the
ceremony. It is only now that the groom is taken into the house and given curds and beaten rice to eat. All the bride's family members are also present during this ritual eating where all have to eat from a single large plate. Next, the couple are taken out together.

Now the groom and his father are teased by the other young boys present and even scolded and made the butt of their crude jokes. This is the tradition and is rather interesting and highly amusing to witness. After all the rituals are completed, the groom returns to his house with his wife the very next day.

**Ath bas**

After the bride is brought home by the groom, the custom of taking and bringing the bride within a duration of 8 days is called *ath bas*. When her folks come to take the bride to her parents' house it is *anirtha* and when the groom's folk go to bring the bride back it is *ath bas*. The bringing and taking is done with intervals of 24 hours, and both sides have to spend a lot of money. It is seen today that the Gangai are trying to do away with this custom or at least trying to make some amendments and innovations in its structure. It can be estimated from evidence available, that during the past when child marriages were prevalent, this was a very common custom. After *ath bas* which means that the bride must change her *bas* (or place where one lives or sleeps) eight times within the 8 days stipulated. Once this is over, then the bride remains one month with her parents or *maiti*, to nullify the effects of Bhadra which is called *Bhadra katnae* and this finally ends the traditional ritual of *ath bas*.

Though the customs and rituals of marriage among these Gangai look similar to that of the Brahmins and Ksetri, the rituals of *ath bas*, *Kisa Pasa*, *Bhadra katnae* and such reflect their own unique traditions. Since the Brahmin priests are required for presiding over marriages, their customs tally to an extent and because all their strange rites and rituals are not carried out, they can be said to possess a similarity in their customs with the general standard of the country's population.
Jari biwaha

These marriages are quite prevalent among these Gangai people where the wife of a person elopes with another person who could be a married man or a bachelor. Widow marriages are also seen to occur and the popular elopements where young couples run off as they are aware of their parents not sanctioning their love affair and ultimate union.

Jabardasth biwaha

Such a coercive marriage is slowly losing ground due to its crude and primitive nature. Marriage problems are solved by the Mukhiya or headman of the village. Should a mixed marriage occur, regardless of the outsider's (male or female) jat or tribe, he or she is considered incompatible to the Gangai tribe and therefore always an outsider, however, today, this strictness is not adhered to, though socially this marriage is not accepted according to their laid out social norms.

To make marriages lively and joyous, the Gangai people sing and dance throughout the night. They also sing folk songs and make merry but in comparison to the other neighbouring tribes like the Dhimals, Satars, and other tribes like the Magars and Gurungs, the Gangai cannot come to their level or standard in the field of music and entertainment.

Death Rites

The Gangai people accept the universal fact that when one is born then he or she must one day die as man is a mere mortal. They either cremate or bury the corpse, but according to some old timers, they say that except for a child less than 72 months old (6 years), all those who exceed this age must be cremated as is the tradition that they have followed since as far as they can remember. However, in the case of a woman who dies after childbirth and before being purified from birth pollution, then she must be buried according to their custom. In spite of the death rites and rituals being done in their own way, they have to use a brahmin or a Maithli Brahmin and so the rites are done in the Hindu way. If someone should die in a Gangai village, the villagers or neighbours are called and they together remove the corpse after covering it with a white shroud and laying it on a bamboo bed or muchu la.
Before the corpse is placed on this muchu la, a hole is dug in the compound and a pira or wooden seat of less than 6" height used for sitting crosslegged for eating food in the Nepalese kitchen is placed inside. The feet of the corpse is then placed on the pira while the body is touched on the banana leaves placed there. Then the corpse is bathed with pina, the residue of the mustard seeds crushed to get oil, which is soaked in water. This is followed by the corpse being laid on the muchu la and a tika of chandan or sandal wood paste, is placed on its forehead. Next a leaf of the tulsi plant together with a piece of gold or silver is placed in the corpse’s mouth and the shroud is draped over it and tied at three points. Bowing and offering of money to the corpse by relatives is the next step and then saying Hari Bole (meaning say Hari) they carry the corpse to its final resting place, the cremation ghats.

An earthenware pot is also carried along with the corpse and this pot is smashed on the way. While taking the corpse the head is turned towards the house while the feet must point outwards towards the ghats. The corpse is placed on the funeral pyre which is 4 to 7 tiered according to the size of the body. Here at the ghats also the offering of money to the dead body is done, after which the funeral goers offer a piece of wood to the pyre. Then the closest kin who could be the son, the wife or others, lights the daag batti which consists of a piece of camphor which is placed on a coin and then it is placed on the corpse’s mouth.

The camphor is lighted and this is called the daag batti which is a sort of bidding farewell to the corpse finally, prior to the flames consuming the body. Females are also present in Gangai funerals. The funeral pyre is lit and after the body has been consumed by the flames, the small piece that remains is buried which clearly indicates that the custom of burials was prevalent among them in the bygone days. The traditional custom of water burial of the astu, which is a cranial bone of the deceased, according to Vedic tradition is also existent.

During the funeral devotional songs are sung as the funeral proceeds towards the ghats and after all is over, they return singing the praises of the Hindu gods. These songs are called kirtan. The funeral goers bathe and then only return home. Those who are required to observe death pollution must wrap a piece of kakan in a white cloth and take it home amidst kirtan and wearing a garland. The kriya is a custom that exists among the Gangai too but only the
eldest son can perform this activity, while the others need only abstain from the consumption of oils, salts. Death pollution ends after a period of 12 days as in Hinduism influenced communities. During this period the kriyaputri eats only one meal a day and at home only. This meal is purely vegetarian. He has to cook the food himself and the leftovers have to be thrown into the river. This going and coming of the kriyaputri to and from the river must be accompanied by kirtan and musicians en masse.

On the 10th day, dus karya or ten works must be done and ten rice balls or pind must be offered in the name of the deceased. On the 12th day, the kriyaputri offers prayers to the deceased pitree (ancestor) so that he or she attains heaven. The white clothes are worn only while observing kriya, and after the 12th day, this can be discarded and normal clothes can be used. The wearing of the white dress for a year as observed by many tribes and called barkhi barne is not compulsory for the Gangai.

The custom of eating katto (meaning the Brahmin priest eats a small piece of the corpse's body flesh which is actually called katto) is prevalent among the more affluent Gangai and this Brahmin is called Kanda Bahun. He has to eat a statue made out of the deceased's brains, mixed with rice grains and churned in unpasteurised milk.

Dances & Songs

Gangai people derive their entertainment through the activities they organise such as festival, dance and song competitions, dramas and other such activities. They perform oral dramas in their own language and the roles of the females are substituted by the males. Jatra are different matters where the boys and girls dance together in a very intimate manners. Though these Gangai have borrowed cultures, festivals and such features, there are many aspects in which they differ from their other neighbours.

Musical instruments such as Tasi, Thon, Thonia, Basi, Sahaena (sannai), Mirdang, Dilki, Duki, Tabala, Shaerainja, harmonium, Dodra, Kartal, Murli, are used by the Gangai folks. The dances they perform are Rajdhari, Sastodi, Rachali, Kirtaniya, Kali bilas, Jatrabatoe, Chasila Basila, Madhumala and others.

Rajdhari is a bir dance where the dancers wear masks symbolising
people of the Ramayan and accordingly dance or enact the story through gestures. Though it is very expensive to stage this dance, it is firmly believed that anyone who stages this dance will have his or her wish fulfilled. Because of this, the Gangai people make vows and then go about preparing for the occasion even borrowing money to make this dance a reality.

Sastodi is a dance performed solely for entertainment and has a very light content.

Pachali is a drama which depicts the sorrowful situations, loves, catastrophes, etc. which have occurred within that society. Family vendettas and feuds are also assimilated and enacted here so as to provide real background and depth to the dance-drama. The Pachali plays actually are a reflection of their society as whole and its movements.

The Kirtaniya is a dance which is performed to please a dead spirit or an annoyed devta or devi. The dances are performed to the singing of kirtan or devotional songs to the various deities of their pantheon. Kali bilas is a group dance which is performed by these Gangai, and where the participants include both boys and girls and the number ranges from 25 to 80 heads.

Jatrabatoe is the dance that is danced only during jatra or festivals. In this dance, both males and females dance together.

Madhu mala is a dance which traces the life of Madhubala Rani(queen) and this dance is the most popular re-enactment among the Gangai people. Besides these above stated dances and dramas, they also perform Chasila Basila and Guru bhoj.

Religion and Festivals

Gangai people are Hindus, however, they are inclined more towards the physical than the spiritual. Though they say they believe in heaven, and earth and the various elements, their idea of attainment of moksha (liberation) is nil. Accordingly, the activities like performing the dances and songs, the festivals they celebrate or the religion they follow, are being done for the purpose of going to heaven and existing in peace.

The reason why they celebrate festivals are mainly to maintain the
peace in the community, to prevent epidemics from attacking them, and for the whole year to pass peacefully and in happiness. Though all the festivals are similar to the Hindu ones, they are not celebrated in the same manner. Some festivals they celebrate:

**Amati (Bhumihar)**

This is celebrated to propitiate the earth goddess or Bhumi Devta and blood sacrifices of birds, ducks, chickens and such are offered. Bhumiruj is celebrated on the 8th. Asadh annually. On this day, not only the Gangai, but most of the agricultural communities do not enter their fields to plough. This practice is said to be followed because they believe that on this day the earth has its menstruation or *bhumi rujswala*.

Boys and girls fashion images of god and worship it, then they place it by the roadside. It is here that they sit and ask for donations to passers - by but they never apply pressure on anyone. In the evening these folks return home leaving these idols besides the roads. Actually it may be seen that this is a day of enjoyment and break in the monotonous life of these Gangai.

**Asari - Pasari**

This festival is celebrated on an auspicious day in the month of Asadh, however, since an auspicious is compulsorily required for this festival, sometimes it may fall within the month of Srawan also. In the latter case, the first week must not be crossed meaning that it has to be celebrated within the first week of Srawan and the time should not exceed.

It is believed by the Gangai folks, that after the celebration of this festival, the whole year is passed peacefully. The main priest or presider of this festival must be a Gangai of the Rajbansi sept or *thar*. Fruits, and unpasteurised milk in an earthenware pot are used to offer while worshipping. This *puja* is performed at each *than* or altar of the *gram deos* or village deities. During this *puja* the whole village is enveloped by an atmosphere of peace and tranquility.

Gram Sewa puja is done to propitiate the 33 crores gods and goddesses of the Hindu pantheon on one hand and on the other, it is performed with the ardent belief that peace reigns during the whole year in that village. The venue of this worship is the *gram*
than or village altar. The deities worshipped at this altar are mainly Gaja kali, Mata Kali and Gram Maharaj.

To worship Gram Maharaj, the Gangai get hold of a very experienced priest, who with the aid of mantras, places the images of a pig, a tiger and an elephant (all drawn on a piece of paper or made of clay) within the gram than. This puja involves the spending of four to five thousand rupees. This puja is performed at a later part of the same year in which the vow is made. Nine bokas (uncastrated goats) have to be sacrificed and all relatives and villagers (regardless of caste) have to be invited and given a grand feast on this day.

Gaja Kali and Mata Kali are worshipped in the form of husband and wife. The priest is called mali. The offerings consist of nine pairs of pigeons, bananas, khir (sweet rice), curds, beaten rice, etc., vermillion, aksata (unbroken ricegrains blessed with mantras), 4 to 5 metres of white cloth which is cut into many pieces so that all who participate in this worship may receive this as a token.

On this day, puja is also offered to Jug Kali, Thakuri, Pagilthan, Sanyasthan, and Thakurani. On such occasions, the Gangai play musical instruments, dance around and make merry the whole day.

The Hindu festival of Rishi Panchami is also celebrated in the same way by the Gangai. They perform Jup Hom on this day, while offering a raw coconut and wearing a red or yellow thread. Once this puja is performed, it has to be continued for the next 14 years and when the 14th. puja is over, they wear silver bangles or bracelets thus concluding the cycle. This puja is performed with the belief that it is good for the children of that family. The yellow and red threads are worn for the next 14 days after the puja, and the wearer must remain a vegetarian for this fortnight performing daily puja and after the stipulated 14 days is over, the thread can be discarded. The method of tying this thread is:- one thread the first year, two threads the second year, and so on until 14 threads are tied on the 14th. and final year.

Every year, on the Pahilo Baisakh or Nepali New Year's Day, the Gangai celebrate with a festival called Salsobhari. Since this is the day for worshipping the Gram Devta, it is celebrated in an exceptionally grand way. Only fruits and vegetarian foods are offered as prasad, while blood sacrifices are totally absent.
Tribal Ethnography of Nepal

Jituwa Parwa

This is a festival where puja is performed to worship one's guru or teacher. On this day, the guru who has made the person vow to do good and truthful works, is honoured by being bowed to or performing dhog and drinking the water which trickles off his feet or Guru ko goda ko pani khane. He is also paid due respects to and presented with various items in the form of daan daksina or donations. In the Hindu community, this is known popularly as Guru Puja.

Dol Jatra

This is another festival which is unique among the Gangai, and it is celebrated on Fagu Purnima. It can be clearly seen that this festival is celebrated to stimulate sexuality as can be observed from the construction of the linga (phallus) and yoni (vagina). They believe that by celebrating this festival, the arousal of the God of sensuality or Kama Deva, is achieved and thus they are blessed with his vigour in their future sexual ventures. It lasts for a duration of two days and the nights are also included.

On the last day of the month of Chaitra, these people play at splashing water and mud on each other's person(similar to the Hindu festival of Holi). Every house is visited on this day and members of that household are splashed with a mud and water mixture commonly called hee-lo meaning muck, in Nepali. This festival of muck splashing is called Besuta.

There exists a tradition among these people that if a couple do not have progeny, than they make a vow to Lord Siva. The priest of the day is called Deondha, who selects one or two individuals from among those who have vowed and makes them lie face down on the ground, while imbedding iron hooks in their backs and twisting them, but nothing seems to hurt these individuals, for in spite of such torture, they neither experience the heat of the fire nor the excruciating pain that is normally felt when something like an iron hook is imbedded into flesh. They believe ardently that this is all possible with the great help of mantras.

Besides such festivals and religious rituals, they also observe other Hindu festivals like Dasai, Tihar, however, they abstain from tika like their other Hindu brothers. While cows are given due respect
and worshipped and the cowherds are honoured, Laxmi Puja is also celebrated. Ekadasi, _Khola ma puja garne_ or performing _puja_ near the stream, Satyanarayan Puja, _Naya anna khanae_ or consumption of new harvest crops (Thanks giving), _dalo ko puja garne_ or performing _puja_ to the winnowing fan, and such are some of the _pujas_ they customarily celebrate even today.

**Economic Status**

Like most other tribes living in the _terai_, the Gangai are also basically agriculturists, however, they are also involved in ordinary businesses. They rear livestock for manure and sell the byproduct milk, and also use the oxen for ploughing purposes. They have made an attempt at trying to work the land and the animals at hand to sustain themselves.

On account of their communities being decent as a whole, their personal dealings are also of similar nature. They have a belief that should someone unlawfully grab others property or create problems for others, then this sort of person cannot attain heaven after death. With this kind of attitude it is seen that these Gangai are susceptible and decent folks.
GURUNGS

Within the kingdom of Nepal and among the various tribes that dot its terrain, there is a certain tribe of stocky mongoloids called the Gurungs. They populate the areas of Kaski, Lamjung, Tanahun and Gorkha in the Gandaki Zone, however, they are also found in Syangja, Parbat and other outlying districts in western Nepal. Though their main area of settlement is the Gandak Basi, between the Trisuli Gandak and the Kali Gandak they are nowadays found across the length and breadth of the kingdom. Specifically though, Gurungs are inhabitants of the Annapurna, Lamjung and Hiunchuli mountains foothills.

Population

According to the 1971 census, the total Gurung population was shown to be concentrated within the 10 districts of Lamjung, Syangja, Kaski, GorkhaTanahun, Parbat, Manang, Mustang, Dhading and Chitwan. It numbered 14,59,974. In the present period, however, this population count is not practical as the increase is estimated to be great. The areas of Chitwan, Rupandehi, Sankhuwasabha, Ilam, Taplejung and to a great degree Kathmandu, have all been 'invaded' by the Gurungs in the form of modernised lahures (soldiers of the Indian and British armie). Not only this but the fact is that these Gurungs are also seen to be present in other districts throughout the kingdom though in minority groups.

Historical background

The origins of the Gurungs consists of a legend which is as follows:

A king of the Suryaor solar dynasty and of the Bharadvaja gothrhad two sons. He loved the younger Nochan in preference over the eldest Lochan. Thus breaking the rule of succession, he crowned the younger. This act caused Lochan to leave the palace and move towards the Himalayas so as to lead a life as an ascetic. His wife Kali and his priest (the son of Mukunda Acharya) Badi Acharya of Garga gotr accompanied him. The priest had his wife Kasi with him also. They were accompanied by a slave Kesai Singh of Khowase and his wife Phali. While this group were on their way towards the Himalayas, they
were compelled under inevitable circumstances, to take shelter along with two prostitutes for a night in a single shelter. When the priest and king were fast asleep, the two prostitutes broke their janaies (sacred threads), poured wine on their lips and then fled. When they awoke they were ashamed as they thought that they had had sexual relationships with the prostitutes under the influence of alcohol, which they tasted in their mouths. So they removed themselves from among the higher caste and began to live in the mountains in a hollowed out cave.

As time passed they freed the slave and altered his name to Ker Singh Thapa, and they also ate the food prepared by him. While Lochan's wife Kali bore three sons - Ghale Mahan Gurung, Ghodane Mahan Gurung Lama Mahan Gurung and a daughter Laxmi the priest's wife Kasi gave birth to two sons - Lamechane Mahan Gurung (the elder) and Plone Lamechane Gurung (the younger) and three daughters - Kumari, Nari and Mali. As time went by these children intermarried i.e. the priest's children married the king's children. The king's sons were the first Ghale, Ghodane and Lama while the priest's son was the first Lamechane. They were Mahan because they were able to meditate. These were the originators of the Charjat. and Ker Singh Thapa's wife Phali gave birth to 10 daughters and 16 sons, who were the progenitors of the Solahjat. The sixteen sons were named:- Pajgyu Thapa, Nor Thapa, Kepcae Thapa, Timce Thapa, Procae Thapa, Yoca Thapa, Khulal Thapa, Kromcae Thapa, Gabri Thapa, Kokae Thapa, Kucae Thapa, Namcae Thapa, Lenae Thapa, Rupcae Thapa. Here it said that the brothers and sisters intermarried and so grew the Solahjat.

Tribe & Septs

Gurungs are basically divided into two categories:- the highlanders and the lowlanders. These Highland Gurungs are known as the Lama Gurungs and retain the primitive pastoral way of life on the high altitude pastures. They adhere more to the Tibetan religious beliefs and culture too. The Lowland Gurungs are more Hinduistic and have begun to participate in various pursuits like agriculture and business. The geo-political situation causes the horizontal division of the Gurungs into those living in the western districts of Kaski, Syangja and Parbat and who are called western Gurungs, while those inhabiting Manang, Tanahun and Lamjung districts are called the Central Gurungs and those in Gorkha and Dhading districts are called Eastern Gurungs. These three types of Gurungs
have minor cultural differences between themselves, but the linguistic difference are quite distinct. The social organisation of these people has a quite distinct build up consisting of 2 parallel sub-tribes the charjat and solahjat as mentioned earlier. The charjat consists of 4 clans - while the solahjat consists of 16 clans. They practice tribal endogamy and certain patrilineal clans within both sub-tribes are exogamous. Clans are broken up into local lineage groups.

The charjat people consider themselves superior in the Gurung tribal structure and consist of the four clans possessing their own heirarchial order. The highest being the Ghale, then the Ghodane, followed by the Lama and lastly the Lamicichane, according to the Nepali speaking people of those areas. But the Western Gurungs call them Ghale, Kon, Lama and Plon or Lem or Pai and the Central Gurungs call them Kle, Kon, Lama, Lem or Khhro.

The Ghale, or Kle are traditionally a clan of chieftains by birth. The term kle emerges from Khle (an old Gurung word) which means something equivalent to master or king. This word Khle is used mostly in a religious context and refers to the lord. These Ghales are concentrated in the districts of Lamjung and Gorkha. Some scholars have stated that Kha-means fair and le means face, thus meaning the Ghales to be fair people which could be quite accurate as they are found to be fair of face.

The Ghodane or Kon are not as renowned as the other charjat clans. A scholar has stated a hypothesis that is worth thinking about. Here he links mgon meaning lord and go-gnas meaning an official post and go-pa meaning village head. Thus he goes on to assume that these Kons were administrators for the Ghale kings, because even today many village chieftains are of the Ghodane or Kon clan. It has also been observed that this clan is rather numerous in comparison to the other three within the charjat.

The Lamas or Lam are said to be and seem to be named after the Tibetan bla-ma (superior one) or a priest. According to the prevalent legend among these lamas, the story goes on to say that when the other Charjat Gurungs migrated from the north, they were followed by the Buddhist lamas later on. These lamas settled among the Gurungs in northern Lamjung. As time passed, these lamas were recognised as the hereditary ritualists serving the charjat Gurungs. Here it worth noticing that contribution to the
legend of the origins, the *lamas* coming after the others from the north is a glaring and thought provoking point which indicates the migration of the Gurungs to be form across the Himalayas and not from the southern Hinduised society as the legend of the origin states. This should be looked at in a more detailed manner.

Even today, these *lama* priests are trained by Tibetan Buddhists both in Tibet and Nepal, like at Nar in Manang. Though these *lamas* claim their rights and statuses, there are very few *lama* clansmen who still follow the traditional Buddhist monastic education and have let the encroaching Hindustic beliefs erode their ancient religious beliefs. However, in the northern regions which lie in close proximity with the Himalayas and therefore Tibetan Buddhism or Lamaism is the key to everything among the pastoral Tibetan-like Gurungs.

The Lamichane or Lem or Kkho, are fourth on the tribal hierarchy, but nowadays they have ascended to the level of village chieftains. They also work parallally as *jimawals* (revenue officers) and the positions they have achieved have become hereditary thus passing on from father to son and generation to generation till today.

The *solahjat* Gurung are considered a step below their *charjat* brothers. The name of *solahjat* though indicates 16 clans, is misleading and actually there are more than 16 clans within this clan structure. There doesn't seem to exist any systematic hierarchal order among these *solahjat* Gurungs, though the majority of the clans and their economic statuses can be a reason for their high or low position in the village. Some other *solahjat* clans are - Kromche, Nasi, Ngor, Pajyu, Phle, Thorche, Tu, Yoj, and such.

**Language**

The language spoken by the Gurungs is called *Gurung Kura* or *Tamu Kui* in Gurung language. This is spoken by approximately 2,00,000 people in the districts of Lamjung, Syangja, Kaski, Tanahun, Parbat, Manang and Gorkha in the Gandaki Zone, Mustang in the Dhaulagiri Zone Dhading in the Bagmati Zone and Chitwan in the Narayani Zone. Gurungs who have settled to the east and west of the kingdom are unable to speak their language due to the pressure exerted on them by other tribes of that area who
are in a majority coupled with the usage of *Khas Kura* (Nepali language) throughout the kingdom.

It has been proved that *Tamu Kui* is a Tibeto-Burman dialect by some linguists, because the phonetics contained in *Tamu Kui* are very much similar to those in the Tibeto-Burman languages. For instance - cloth means *kwan* in Tibetan and *qou* in Gurung. Eight (8) means *bre* in Tibetan while it is *pre* in Gurung. These indicate that when the hard and soft consonants are exchanged, the soft Tibetan consonant has developed into soft aspirates and further into hard sounds.

Gurungs posses their tribe's own songs and literature in *Tamu Kui*, however, only in the oral versions as no written scripts exist. The *lamas* read their sacred scriptures written in i.pali (Tibetan script) so it is a assumed that the *Tamu Kui* script is also of a *Pali* type, but yet to be found. Among the Himalayan groups, the Gurung language (or dialect) can be categorised among the pure dialects alongwith the *Newari, Magarkura, Tamang, Sunwar, Rong* and *Toto* (which is extinct today).

At this point, it should be noted that the Ghale language (or dialect) is radically more different from the true Gurung than either Tamang, Thakali or Managae. Though Ghales do speak *Tamu Kui*, those Ghales who inhabit the northern areas of Gorkha district speak the distinct *Ghale kura* and explicitly state that they are Ghales and not Gurungs, indicating the tribal difference between themselves and the Gurungs.

**Physical Characteristics**

Though culturally based classifications are much different from biologically based ones, due to the changing environmental factor, food supply and culture, changes have occurred, though of phenotypic rather than genotypic nature. The Gurung tribe has also undergone this change and as mongoloids, they possess a distinct characteristic of their own on a genotypic level.

The facial features of these people consists of a totally mongoloid nature, though the nasal root is not too depressed as of pure mongoloids, fleshy wings not too wide and not too flared nostrils. The brow ridges are not that pronounced; the jaws are rounded; malar bones projecting both frontally and to either side. The
overall face is round and short. Externally, the mongoloid features of the eye fold and upper eyelid are distinct, followed by slanted integumental lip, straight black hair short or medium build, sturdy and muscular bodies.

The complexions of these Gurungs ranges from the dark brown to wheatish-brown and very fair (almost pink), especially those living in the hills or lekhs. While the Highland Gurungs are more Tibetan, the lowlanders are more Aryan.

Family

The Gurungs actually live in joint families and also nuclear families, however the latter type has gained much popularity in recent times. *Jat* or tribal endogamy; and *thar* or sept exogamy are practised and these *thars* are further divided into local lineages (or descent groups). Intermarriage with other tribes are not encouraged and even looked down upon, thus the Gurungs have somewhat remained integrated as a tribe. This is nowadays being punctured with new ideas of mixed marriages and their benefits through the medium of education, national development and the import of the lahure culture. Basically, the Gurung family is a close knit nuclear one till today, and exhibits the traits of the Gurungs as a group.

Life Cycle Rites

Births

Gurungs consult astrologers when a child is born and three days after the birth, a naming ceremony is held. On the sixth day the *Chhaiti* is held and this is done only for the eldest male progeny. It is to be noted that a married daughter is not permitted to deliver at her parents house, since the afterbirth (placenta) falling within the premises is considered an ill omen. If such a situation occurs then the afterbirth is buried behind the house in consultation with the Brahmin priest or astrologer.

Navran

Nine days after birth, pollution is observed for a male and 7 days after for a female child, and it is only after these days are over that the new mother is purified. The purifying liquid used is called *gaunth* which is basically the urine of a cow. This is sprinkled on
the woman's body and on this day the navran is held. This purification brings the woman back into the social circle and simultaneously welcomes the newborn baby whose name is announced on this navran. In the case of a male child, his earlobes are pierced and if a female, then her earlobes and nostrils are pierced. This is then followed by a grand feast consisting of various types of foods and liquors (home brewed and imported).

Pasni

The pasni is also called the bhat khuwai and this ceremony marks the beginning of the boy's understanding of the world i.e. his perception becomes more acute and he commences eating solid foods after this. This pasni occurs 5 months after birth for female children and 6 months after males. The astrologer is consulted prior to this ceremony, so as to set up an auspicious time and date. On the stipulated date all sorts of foods are prepared and possibly some meat must be included, preferably the bhadrai chari (a species of lark). A feast for kin, kindred, neighbours, and guests is also readied. The ceremony is initiated by a young unmarried girl and an odd number is uttered by the priest presiding over the ceremony. Everybody present puts a tika on the child's forehead, feeds him or her with a little of the foods laid out and makes a present of some money or clothes (mostly money is presented). It is only after this bhat khuwai that children are permitted to wear shoes and new dresses.

Pulpule or putpute

This ceremony is held for the male children at the age of 2 years and is called pulpule or putpute according to the different people in differently located Gurung communities. The main theme of this ceremony is to offer worship to their tutelary deities. The boy is blessed and given presents. There is much singing and dancing and the inevitable feast of foods and liquors concludes the ceremony. This ceremony is held only for the eldest male child and is said to mean that the child is reared in a very loving and obviously pampered environment.
Chhaewar

At the age of five or six, a Gurung boy has to go through a ritual called chhaewar meaning the initial hair cutting. The clipping of the boy's locks must be done by his maternal uncle or if none exists another man is made his mother's brother and this, i.e. pseudo-maternal uncle; does this or a person is deputed by the astrologer. The boy's hair is first made into five knots by his uncle. One knot each above the two temples, one each above and behind the two ears, and a fifth on the top of the head (the topknot). A pair of scissors is tied with a golden chain, thread or touched with a piece of gold, a cowdung-oil-lamp is lighted (diyo) and then the maternal uncle clips off the four knots except the topknot. Then a barber or someone else shaves off the hair leaving the topknot intact. This topknot is called a tupi. When all this is over, the child is washed and bathed and then the maternal uncle makes a present of a complete set of new clothes (white in colour), a pair of ear-rings (preferably golden), but this depends upon the economic strength and status of the maternal uncle.

After this the guests and all those present such as kin, kindred, neighbours and all others put tika on the boy's forehead and make gifts of money or clothes. The ceremony is concluded with prayers said by a lama or a Brahmin priest. Then this is concluded by the usual grand feast where everyone dances, sings, eats, drinks and makes merry. After this chhaewar is over the boy is eligible to participate in all religious and social activities of his tribe.

Marriage Practices

Among these Gurungs, marriages are prescriptive and are basically jat endogamous but there is existence of hypergamous unions too. Inter-sept marriages are prohibited and they are expected to marry within their tribe. As is the case of many other tribes within the kingdom, these people also prefer the mama cheli phupu chela matrilateral cross-cousin marriages and this is so among the charjat and solahjat. A fine is levied on anyone who is unwilling to marry his matrilateral cross-cousin in some Gurung villages. Though patrilateral cross-cousin marriages are rare globally, this sort of pattern is found to exist among the Gurungs even today. They say that due to tribal laws, which rule hypergamy as taboo, this is not prevalent however, as mentioned earlier, this is untrue, as there is an allowance for hypergamous unions where a lower
status solahjat woman is married by a higher status charjat man. It is just that the society look the other way, and pretend not to notice. Polygyny is absent among these Gurungs though a few isolated cases exist where, due to the sterility of the first wife, another woman is married for functioning as a channel to deliver a male heir who will be able to continue the lineage. This sort of additional load is taken only if the person (husband) is economically sound. Polyandry is unheard of among these folks and levirate marriages too, however, sororate marriages are existent with a view to continue the previous material relationship. In some Gurung communities, sororal polygyny is also observed, though rare. Thus it is seen that the main pattern of marriage among these people is monogamy. Within this also there are two basic pattern: principal and subsidiary which are recognised socially for conjugal union. While jat endogamy and thar exogamy is adhered to by the principal marriage pattern the subsidiary marriage pattern doesn't follow this rule since it is done only in case principal marriages are annulled. Principal marriages are categorised into: magi biwaha (arranged) and chori biwaha (elopements).

Arranged marriages or magi biwaha are the most common ones and performed on grand scales with complete rituals. When the boy reaches the age of 16 years or above, the father begins to look around or inquire for a suitable partner for his son. An astrologer is consulted for determining the lho (year) which is essential for the marriage to occur. This lho is the Tibetan calendar which has a twelve year cycle.

The next procedure is to send a message to the chosen girl's parents and patrilineal kin. The persons who take this message are called ngebar (in Tamu Kui). When and if the girl's folks agree, the chinnas (horoscopes) of both the prospective bride and groom are compared to see if there exists some compatibility. Should incompatibility be observed, then the matter is immediately dropped, however, if the horoscopes are in harmony, then the ngebars are sent to the bride-to-be's house with gifts consisting of a bottle of liquor and oil-fried bread (sale roti). This rite is Jannar Yab or betrothal.

Once these gifts are accepted and the marriage is agreed upon, the date and time (most commonly set in winter) is fixed by the astrologer. On the set date, the groom's janti move to the
accompaniment of a musical band towards the bride's house. They carry gifts of home-brewed liquors, oil-fried bread (sale roti) and such. On arriving at the bride's house, the janti are welcomed and given a feast or bhoj. The groom gives some money to the bride which is known as saipata. In the evening, the bride's father and his lineage brothers perform the ritual called goda dhune or washing of feet in Nepali and phale khrub in Tamu Kui.

Every patrilineal kin does this and then after the washing puts tika on the bride's forehead showering blessings simultaneously. Money and gifts are now given as a sort of dowry. The compound is gay with the music of the musicians who play their instruments, beat their drums, blow their pipes and slam their cymbals rather loudly to announce the conclusion of the ceremony. At this point, young folks fire ancient muskets and muzzle loaders into the air to spread the news of the marriage's conclusion. They all gather together to joke, sing, dance, eat, drink and make merry till the wee hours of the morning.

The next day, the janti return to the groom's house with the bride, rather triumphantly. The bride is mostly escorted by some of her friends. On reaching the groom's house, a ritual of slaughtering a fowl on the threshold of the main door, is performed. The reason for this is not too clear but some say that it is to act as an obstruction for any evil spirits who want to enter the house along with the new bride. When this is over, the bride is rushed into the house and the main door is locked or barred from the inside, by the groom's sister who will open the door only if the bride gives her some money as per the tradition that is prevalent.

Inside the house, a lighted oil lamp is set on a brass plate which contains a mana of rice. This whole thing is placed on top of a pathi of dhan (unhusked rice or paddy) and the whole thing is put on a nanglo (circular winnowing fan). On the two side of the main door are placed two gagros (copper or brass water containers) filled with water to the brim to indicate a good omen.

When the bride crosses the threshold, and into the house, the nanglo laid out is picked up by a virgin girl (and whose parents are alive) with both her hands and she slowly walks backwards to the place set aside for the couple as the bride and groom advance into, the room. Then the couple are seated here and tika is put on their foreheads by the groom's kin and more blessings are showered on
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them. On the third day after the bride has been brought home, the newly wedded couple have to go to the girl's house with gifts. This is called dulhan phadkaune. It is only after this ritual that the marriage is considered over and done with.

Elopements or chori biwahas are quite rare among the Gurungs (though today such cases are on the increase) though these are granted social sanction. The boy who runs off with a girl, is not under a social obligation to take prior permission from his parents or kin, and can bypass all the various rites and rituals of an arranged or formal marriage. When this elopement occurs, the girl is kept at a separate place other than the boy's parents' house. Normally at a relative's or a friend's house. Then a message is sent to the girl's parents informing them of the fact and requesting them to accept this union and to cancel any prior arrangements of marriage made for the girl elsewhere. If the girl's parents agree then a small ceremony is held and the marriage is legally and socially recognised. Some scholars state that the influence of the cities has made these sort of marriages more frequent and popular.

Love marriages or prem biwaha This kind of marriage is very much preferred in Gurung societies. The Gurung boys and girls possess a great deal of freedom in the choosing of partners. Marriages are never forced among the Gurungs.

Basically, subsidiary marriages occur when principal marriages fail due to certain factors. There are two sorts of subsidiary marriages, namely substitution of principal marriages and cohabitation of a Gurung male with a woman belonging to another tribe. This cohabitation type of subsidiary marriage completely violates the community rule of tribal endogamy and sept exogamy. Subsidiary marriages occur when the principal marriage consists of a barren wife and the husband desires to marry another for continuing his lineage, or when the couple divorce each other on grounds of incompatibility. Marriage through cohabitation with a woman of another tribe is in reality a mixed or inter-tribal marriage and breaks the tabu of the Gurung society as earlier stated. This sort of subsidiary marriage is rare in Gurung society.

Divorce is also an institution among the Gurungs and it is quite prevalent. If a woman is not desirous to remain with her husband, then she can obtain a divorce which is considered very much legal among the Gurung society. The divorce procedures are not
complex as in other tribal societies. Divorcees and widows are able to remarry very easily and according to their wishes. Social interference is completely absent regarding the choice of partners.

Death

Among Gurungs in general, rituals pertaining to deaths are considered to be of great significance and extremely essential. The instance of death is looked on as a rather symbolic incident, by these people, since it involves the kinsmen of the deceased and meaning the matters of reassessing and restructuring of positions and roles of the involved individuals and the bonds that exist between the corporate groups.

A funeral among these Gurungs is split into two parts the initial mortuary rites or nu-sibari and a concluding memorial ceremony called arghun or pai.

Nu-sibari

Immediately after a death occurs, the sons and brothers (immediate kin) of the deceased assemble and raise a white banner called ala on the roof of the house, so as to help guide the spirit and also to alert the village about the death that has occurred in that particular household. The cloth for the ala or Death Banner is provided by deceased's patrilineal brothers.

When a woman dies, her funerary rites are performed by her husband and a widow's is done by her son. An unmarried female has her funerary rites done by her father. When a man dies, the beginning of the rituals is initiated by the sons of the deceased removing their caps, while the woman (his wife) breaks her bangles (glass ones) and unplaits her hair followed by the daughters. This is seen to resemble the ritual of the Hindus, though it cannot be stated whether this is an original or borrowed feature.

Affines of almost every category play one role or another of some importance. The maternal uncles provide the shroud called asyo kou for a man or unmarried woman, but for married women, it is the duty of their brothers.

After a person dies, and prior to the setting in of rigor mortis, the corpse is forced into a seated posture and placed within a wooden
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box or in a large copper vessel (especially done by rich people). All the villagers ask their elders to tie threads on their wrists on hearing of the death and this is called repuchewa. The son-in-laws are completely responsible for binding the corpse in the shroud, placing in the box, transporting to the burning grounds or cemetery and preparing the pyre or grave as is required.

Initial rites are done first within the house then in the compound where the corpse is kept. In the house, the ghaybring commences the ghe tu which means performing worship. The tauko phadkaune is done which means the head of the deceased is turned in which ever direction the main door lies and from where the corpse is to be taken out. A counterclockwise dance is done by the lama who lifts his feet over the corpse as a ritual gesture known as onab while simultaneously expelling evil spirits who may attack the currently deceased person's soul. This is followed by bathing of the lama's feet by the female mourners of the house and the organisers of the whole funeral or hmome (consisting of son-in-laws and neighbours) as they are known, pay the lama his fees. In case a lama is unavailable, the jhankris or ghyabrings are used.

The next step is called kay kyan where the blood of a goat is offered for the deceased so that a passage can be bought for him or her into heaven, as is the running belief among these people. The meat of the slaughtered goat is later on cooked and given the funeral goers to eat. A certain flower called chyuta, which is considered compulsory must be found and brought (if not the flower then its leaf will also suffice) by the hmome, who have to arrange everything in the funeral as earlier stated. There is another ritual called karmu krigi which has to be done before starting the funeral procession. Here karmu means shawl and krigi means turban. Thus this ritual involves the kin, kindred, relatives and neighbours have to offer their last gifts and pay their respects to the deceased. A karmu is presented if the deceased is a female and a krigi if the deceased is a male. The parents offer aansyu kwe consisting of food grains, money or cloth. They believe that if these are not offered then the deceased will be unable to go to heaven. These offerings to the deceased are all collected and shared among the organisers of the funeral rites, the hmome.

This is followed by the ritual called krasa where the daughters of the deceased have to touch the feet of the deities with some water and then using a leaf or flower of chyuta, they have to sprinkle this
on their bodies and drink it. This is when a lama is used. But a 
ghyabring requires that the daughters touch his feet and not that of 
the deities, then sprinkle the water and drink it as done in the case 
of the lama. At this moment of the funeral rituals, the daughters are 
given a brass plate and small bowl each. The maiti are prohibited 
from ever eating from these utensils and it is only after the 
completion of the arghun that the daughters take these home (to 
husband’s home).

It is predecided where the corpse is to be taken and mode of 
disposal. Mi thowa or cremation, kyu thowa or water burial and 
sathowa or earth burial are the three forms prevalent. The funeral 
starts to move after this and is preceded by a man carrying some 
barley grains (which he scatters at intervals) and a khukuri or a 
sharp edged weapon. He is followed by the immediate female kin 
of the deceased who carry a white cloth banner mounted on small 
bamboo sticks. They are in turn followed by the pall bearers who 
carry the corpse (in its box) on bamboo poles and then the 
ghyabring or lama and the rest of the funeral procession follow. A 
majority of the family, relatives and villagers constitute the 
procession.

If it has been decided that the corpse is to be buried, then there is a 
ritual called chhatewa, where the ground chosen for the grave is 
tested by first sprinkling some rice grains on it and then leaving a 
fowl. Where the fowl goes and scratches the ground and eats the 
grains, there the grave is dug. This is performed when a ghyabring 
is presiding over the funerary rituals. Prior to burial, a small piece 
of gold, muga or silver is placed on the deceased’s mouth and also 
some foods, raksi (alcohol) and such. After this the corpse is 
covered with mud.

In case of cremations, a copper coin or gold piece is placed on the 
mouth of the corpse and on this metal is placed a lump of camphor 
which is lit by the son of the deceased (or by kin or siblings 
according to the social status of the deceased). This rite is called 
daagbatti dine (giving a farewell to the body).

There is a custom of erecting an ala (bamboo pole on which is 
attached a white cloth banner) over the grave or cremation site. The 
custom of erecting manes over these sites also exist among the 
Gurungs similar to that of the Tamangs and Bhotes.
Water burials are also done in like manner except that the corpse is pushed into the water and it is washed away. This sort of burial also exists among some other tribes that live close to the Gurungs and they call this bhel lai dine (giving to the floods) indicative of the time of such burials which is in the monsoons when the rivers are swollen and thus can easily carry away a corpse.

The cremation of the corpses by the Gurungs is done in a very different way. They erect a stone platform consisting of three holes at the bottom and on top of which the corpse is placed. The fire is burnt at the bottom and it rises through the three holes to burn the corpse to cinders. This is done so that it is easy to collect the astu (cranium bone) which will be needed later on for the arghun rites.

The actual cremation, earth burial or water burial are followed by the hair shaving rite and those who have to undergo this are the sons, patrilineage brothers and sons whose fathers are dead. The hair, beard eyebrows are shaved off completely and not even the top knot is left. Some who observe Hinduistic rites even shave their armpits, limbs and pubic hairs, but this is slowly become obsolete. When the funeral goers return enmasse, they have to step over a fire laced with incense and placed right in the middle of the road. This is done to protect them against evil spirits that could possibly have followed them home from the cemetery or cremation grounds. After this, the death pollution is observed for the next three days, though close relatives observe this for the next thirteen days while the sons of the deceased observe this for the next six months. They abstain from eating meat oils and salts and drinking alcohol. Purification is performed on the third day with gaunth and thus freeing the immediate family from pollution. If a son feels like continuing this mourning till the final arghun, then he wears white and abstains from salts, oils, meats and liquors for the next six months i.e. till the completion of the arghun.

There are certain conditions that the person observing the mourning must comply with. These are - abstain for sex, not attend weddings, not wearing flowers or tika. This is applicable to both males and females. Should this period be for a year, then some relaxations and concessions are made.
Arghun or Pai

A year after the death, a ceremony called paye or pai or arghun is performed. This is to conclude the death rites. Since the expenses incurred are extremely high, this rite is performed in a communitywide way, but if the individual can afford it, then it is done individually too. This arghun can be done on the third day after death, one year after or even three years later. The days, months or years on which this ceremony is done must be odd numbered. In this connection it is worth mentioning that today the Gurungs prefer to complete this ceremony immediately after the death that is three days after death so as to be practical, and also because the belief among the Gurungs is that unless this ceremony is not concluded the soul of the deceased will come to trouble the living and accordingly they have to go and offer foods at the grave regularly, but once this arghun is concluded then this matter is clear and everyone is free to continue normal work without the thought of the deceased's soul wandering in limbo coming to the mind.

An astrologer is used to determine the date time of the arghun and this is called paidi and the person who determines the auspicious time is given the title karki choka. Since the tradition is that as soon as the auspicious time is stated the concerned persons have to commence observing pollution, therefore, they announce the time only a week prior to the arghun. After this there is the jhospa where the kin, kindred, friends, neighbours, villagers, are called and discussions regarding the arrangements of food, drinks, money and such takes place. This illustrates the Gurung society's integrated structure.

Now, according to the directions of the karki choka or astrologer, fuelwood, leaf plates (taparis, dunas), food for the feast, construction of hut where the rituals will be held and overall expenses are all done by the agnatic kin of the deceased or if financially weak then borne by the whole community. If an individual is the financial base (if he can afford the expenses) then the rites and rituals are performed inside the house, but if it is a joint or community affair then it is done in a wicker hut set out in the fields.

The jad (home brewed rice or millet beer) is prepared by a pure woman. She draws paddy from the bhakari (granary) holding her
left hand down and her right hand up. It is then husked with her left foot and the beer prepared with her left hand. This done because the left hand is devoted to the tutelary deity, so it is believed.

The actual arghun commences in the evening and lasts for the next 3 days. Formerly it used to go on for 7 to 13 days. The months Kartik or Marga are normally selected for this ritual ceremony. The lamas perform the arghuns, while the ghyabrings and jhankris act as helpers.

The arghun is composed of three stages, one for each day. The arghun is commenced with a ritual called maphutiwa where a green bamboo is split and signals the start of the ceremony. The full details are as follows: On the first day, the patrilineal and matrilineal kin gather in the compound of the house where a long 10 to 12 foot bamboo is split lengthwise after being worshipped by the lama. These pieces are wrapped in a shroud to symbolise arghun. This is lha. Should the priest be a lama then this lha is raised at the yagyashala, but hoisted on the roof if the presiding priest is a ghyabring. After this the ghyabring begins to beat on his drum or dhyangro and recite mantras or prayers which indicates the commencement of the arghun in earnest. At this stage a goat is slaughtered and offered to pacify the evil spirits and simultaneously the tutelary deities are paid obeisance.

The second day of the arghun marks the second stage as earlier stated. A pla (effigy of the deceased) is constructed by the son-in-laws and maternal uncles. While making this pla, certain wood and leaves are used, for they indicate the various physical parts of the body. This pla is covered with a shroud and now it represents the deceased and it also has a small piece of the deceased's physical body part that has been retrieved from the burial or cremation, called astu which is placed within the pla.

Both the male and female deceased have their plas made and clothed in a variety of clothes and ornaments too. Foods are prepared for the pla and kin offer gifts which are later obtained by the brother-in-laws. The real death is enacted when the kin cry at the foot of the pla and mantras are read by the lamas or ghyabrings. While this goes on, the other folks who have collected, dance and sing, clashing cymbals and beating drums all through the night. This dance is called the jhyaure seba and anyone who wants to, can participate.
The third day of the arghun marks the final stage. The *pla* is readied for the final journey to *lanas* or the land of their ancestors with prayers being recited by the *lamas* or *ghyabrings*. At this time a song called *serga seba* is sung and a dance is performed by the affines (of the same generation) of the deceased, who turn clockwise and anticlockwise in accordance to the song's rhythm.

A small extract of the *serga seba* is as follows:

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Kya ayoshyana kya thodu!
nhe ayoshyana nhe thodu!
ea chhedu, thu aghlodu!
Khe ku man ku di kyo!
chh yalne apa rimurche (lama rinpoche)!
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*If you cannot find your way, open it (with this weapon)!*
*If you cannot rest, open rest (take it)!*
*Do not trouble yourself!*
*Do not swallow a friend (take none of us with you)!
Go and join the 9 grandfathers and 9 grandmothers!*
*O, Incarnate Father (mother) !" -- literal translation.*

The devils are chased away with the use of weapons like the *khukuri* by agnates and affines alike. A sheep is sacrificed and the omen is looked for on its liver. Now the *pla* is removed and it is carried towards the jungle followed by the pollution observers, others of the village, *lama* and *jhankris* and *ghyabrings*.

On reaching the jungle's edge the final ritual of informing the dead that he should now go to the land of his ancestors and not remain among the living. *Mantras* are recited here also. The *pla* is broken into pieces and the parts are thrown helter skelter into the jungle. The purification ritual is performed at the *pai* hut and thus the *arghun* is concluded. In this way the death pollution is removed from those agnates and affines. A feast is offered to all and merry making with songs and dances commences marking the *arghun's* conclusion.
Religion

Mahayana Buddhism is followed by the Gurungs today although in ancient times they practised the animistic and shamanistic form of religion similar to the pre-Buddhist Bon religion of the Himalayan regions. The northern areas of the kingdom are populated with people of mongoloid stock who are mostly followers of Tibetan Buddhism, also called Lamaism and so these Gurungs can also be included within this category, though currently Hindu Gurungs; have also emerged due to their contact with the Hindu lowlanders.

In spite of the profound effect of Lamaism, certain Hindu aspects have also been assimilated by the Gurungs, and thus they cannot be said to be purely Buddhists or Hindus for that matter. This is clearly observed in their various rituals and festivals, where Hinduism, Buddhism and animism are incorporated to produce a uniquely different recipe.

Gurungs worship many devas, devis, pitrees and kuls. Hindu deities; are also included in their pantheon. The lamas (Buddhists) and ghyabrings (animists) are used for religious rites and rituals indicate the proclivity towards the former and tenacious retention of the latter religious beliefs. This is basically indicative of the fact that the Gurung people follow a mixed religion consisting of Buddhism, Hinduism and animism.

Festivals

Like other Himalayan tribes of mongoloid stock, the Gurungs celebrate a good many festivals through the completion of a lunar (calendar) year. Festivals they celebrate are Teej, Dasai (Chait and Bada), Tihar, Maghe Sankranti, Sri Panchami, and other Hindu festivals which make observers feel that Gurungs are wholly Hindus, however, this is just indicative of the dominance of Hinduism. In reality, many indigenous Gurung festivals have been made facades for Hindu festivals, to further the Hinduistic process or sanskritisation.

Some original festivals of the Gurungs are Pushe pandra (15th. of Poush or the end of December or beginning of January) which is also called lhosar and is celebrated with great fanfare and pomp. This is the Gurungs New Year and the new lho (year) begins on this day. Although the time of the year is slightly different the new
year is similar to that celebrated by the Tibetans and Sherpas living within the kingdom as has been observed. Sri Panchami or Saraswati puja as celebrated by the Hindus on the first or second week of February is also the starting date of the unique dance called the ghantu, which is only prevalent among the Gurungs and Magars of the kingdom. The ghantu ends on Baisakh Purnima or Chandi Purnima which falls around the end of April or beginning of May. Dashahara (in May) is a festival celebrated with much favour among these people. On this day, plants are transplanted and the mother earth is worshipped in a ritual called Bhume puja. This is stated to be done so as to ensure a good harvest. Jatras (fairs) big or small are focal points where Gurungs of all ages and sizes and of both sexes congregate. These mostly occur in the night and continue till the morning the next day. The whole night the males and females huddle in groups scattered everywhere in the vicinity. They sing songs which are mostly of love and in duets which are called jwari. In this way they pass the night freely interacting under the cloak of darkness. These jatras are social occasions for the youth of both sexes to interact freely and sometimes select life partners. Liquor (homebrewed) is consumed in great abundance and physical contact is at its peak, but they do know where to draw the line though some undesired cases do occur where they do go all the way.

Dances

Two dances are synonymous to the Gurungs, these are the sorathi and ghantu.

Sorathi is a typical Gurung dance which is the re-enactment of an ancient legend about a king who had 7 wives and no children. When the youngest queen bears a daughter at long last, the other queens are jealous and hatch a conspiracy to murder the child which is then taken and thrown into the river. But as luck would have it, the infant is saved by a fisherman who rears the child as his own. In the end the plot is revealed and the mother and daughter are reunited, while the offenders are punished, a fairy tale ending. This drama is re-enacted in dance form and occurs in the period between Dasai and Tihar.

Ghantu is a unique dance synonymous to the Gurungs and Magars of the Gandaki Zone. Basically this ghantu nach is performed in a trance. The song leads the dancers and it is in khaskura (Nepali).
The dancers are required to be virgin (literally) girls and these girls are called the ghantu. They must abstain from eating garlic and drinking liquors for the stipulated period.

There are many explanations of this ghantu nach and it is not easy to agree directly with any such version, however, while one source claims this to be the story of a legendary king Raja Paramasru and his queen Yamphawati of Gorkha, another source claims the central theme to be reminiscent of the Ramayana. Regardless of the above sources, it can be seen that the ghantu nach has many purposes such as pleasing the virgin goddess, so as to receive rain for a good crop; to teach girls how to be good wives and later on mothers; dramatisation of grain planting; girls are to cook and feed guests to exhibit their culinary talents and such practical aspects in society. Whatever may have been the real function of this ghantu nach, at present it has been observed that it is the re-enactment of a legendary story where a king and his queens are featured.

The ghantu nach is a rhythmic and slow moving dance. The motions are clockwise and counterclockwise; twirling at intervals and sitting at the end of a verse. It is danced in a trance and only virgin girls are allowed to participate (as earlier stated). The ghantus are decked out in loose ankle-length skirts made by pleating nylon saris with flowery designs cholos or blouses cover the upper body; necklaces of glass beads spaced out with gold rings or glass beaded necklaces with square amulets dangling in the centres; flower garlands crossed from each shoulder to the opposite hip. Their faces are made up with rouge, powder and their cheeks and chins are dotted with stars and squares. The hair is set loose and consists of a single central braid or fully loose. The single braid starts from the apex of the head and is entwined with flowers. There is a headband which is said to retain their trance and only when it is taken off do they fall out of their stupor. This headband called a birpt is decorated with lawa (roasted rice grains) rings forming some sort of a crown.

The story of the ghantu nach dance-drama is composed of 40 equal verses out of which the first to the eighth verse consists of songs about the legendary king and his queen, various events that occurred in their lives, the death of the king and the self immolation (sati - burning of the wife's body along with her dead husband) of the queen and the subsequent resurrection of the queen. This is the most important part of the ghantu. It is said that...
if the ghantu cannot be resurrected after she swoons when the part about the self immolation is sung, then she is liable to really die. At this point, a short incident is worth mentioning to illustrate the matter further:

"In the village of Teen Piple, in Lamjung district and east of but near Besi Sahar, such a ghantu nach was organised but when the time came for ressurrection of the ghantu arrive a slip was made in the song's sequence and so the girl died. She was taken and buried in a nearby cemetery.

That very same evening, a person from another village was passing through that way and on noticing the fresh mound of earth sat nearby and rested for a while, wondering who had died. By coincidence, he began to hum the part of the ghantu song where the ghantu has to be resurrected and in the correct sequence. He suddenly saw the mound of earth tremble. He was surprised at first and then guessed the situation, so he kept on with the song simultaneously digging the grave and when he reached the final verse of the song, the supposed dead girl pushed the remaining earth upwards and came out rather surprised herself. Her dress and all clearly showed that she was a .i.ghantu;. After this the man took the girl to her village."

This is the story told by a man from Teen Piple.

Now the remaining 32 verses depict a hunting expedition and a teree pasha (gambling - game) scene finally culminating in presenting a part of the hunt's kill to the village chief. The 'king' of the ghantu goes around with a cloth held out for donations from the spectators and with this they hold a large feast at a later date (a few days after) and it is considered compulsory for the donors to attend.

Ghantus are of two kinds: the sati ghantu and the baramase ghantu. Sati ghantu depicts the legendary king and his queens and their life story as mentioned earlier. It is believed to have originated on the death of the king on the battle field of Parbat Lhosar (western Nepal) and the queen(s) immolated themselves on the banks of the
Marsyangdi river. This commences at Sri Panchami and ends on Baisakh purnima and cannot be performed at any other time.

*Baramase ghantu* begins on the full moon in Jestha (mid May to mid June) and can be held on other occasions as well, as its name implies. *Bara* meaning twelve and *mas* meaning months.

Whatever the suppositions, it may be clearly observed that the songs of the *ghantu* are intoned in such a way that a hypnotic effect is induced on the *ghantus* and then they are made to not only feel, but to be the characters of the legend whom they are portraying. At the death sequence the 'queens' can be seen to weep real tears as though it is really happening to them.

The functions that the *ghantu* performs are many. Firstly it is to offer worship to ancestors and virgin deities; then to congregate and meet one another; relax and entertain each other through other types of songs called *chutka* and dances which go on around the periphery of the main *ghantu* site; business minded folks are intent on running their small stalls that cater to the solid and liquid palates of the people milling around. On the whole, the ghantu assumes the form of a fair and a centre for entertainment in the rural areas where it is performed. Where people work for 7 days a week and have no source of entertainment, this *ghantu* fittingly breaks this monotony.

When the *ghantu nach* is concluded at the site of the dance, the performers and all go to the nearby *than* or shrine, which is mostly dedicated to the mother goddess Chandi and all the regalia are offered to the deity alongwith a sacrifice of an animal, normally a fowl. This is called *ghantu dhurne*. Now the *ghantu* ends and everyone waits till the next Baisakh Purnima.

**Rodhi**

Among the Gurungs there exists a social institution known nationally as *rodhi* and unique among this tribe in particular. *Rodhi* has been defined in various ways by scholars. A club for boys and girls within a certain age range or a place where girls and boys gather to sit around together and sing to each other or a nightly social gathering or a semipermanent dormitory where young boys and girls congregate to sing talk and joke. These views actually only just touch a single aspect of *rodhi* and thus presents
this institution in a rather weightless light.

In real life, however, *rodhi* actually signifies not a house or a place, but the presence of people at a particular place who are gathered to interact with each other and socialise through the medium of songs, dances, talks and discussions. This is an essential requirement in the regions where *rodhi* is prevalent because the monotony of the day is punctuated by a period of relaxation, through the medium of songs and oral intercourse.

Some authorities state that *rodhi* is a corrupted form of the word *rodhin* meaning wool or *rho* and house or *dhin*. This place is supposed to have been initially a centre where males and females gathered in the evenings to learn the finer arts of knitting, weaving, etc, and also to come into close social contact with each other. The most appropriate and nearest interpretation for the *rodhi* in its present form would be that it is a socially accepted custom for both male and female youth to gather at a place and then sing, drink and come into mental and physical (not sexually) contact and get to know what life is actually all about. *Rodhi* cannot be stigmatised as communal coitus centres as a majority of people are tended to label it. It is a sort of get-to-know-your-friends gathering that is sometimes scheduled and sometimes impromptu. Although this was exclusively a Gurung affair, today other tribes have also joined in, which is the main cause of the *rodhi* now being labelled as centres for orgies and this would not be far from the truth.

*Rodhi* as organised and functional institution Gurungs have actually institutionalised *rodhi* with admittance of unlimited members, especially in the districts of Gorkha, Lamjung and Kaski in the Gandaki Zone. Attendance eligibility of both boys and girls is after they reach 8 or 9 years. Though girls are permitted to attend *rodhi* only till the age of 21 or till their marriages, boys are allowed to attend from the age of 8 or 9 years till as long as they desire. *Chiva aba* and *chiva ama* (*rodhi* father and mother respectively) are the co-ordinators of *rodhi* in a Gurung community. Though there is no compulsion, regular attendance in these *rodhi* is customary. The *chiva aba* and *ama* teach the *rodhi* goers the fine arts of storytelling, riddle solving, and the ways in which fairs, festivals and religious ceremonies should be attended and carried out. Discipline is considered a pre-requisite within the *rodhi ghar* (*rodhi* house or place where the *rodhi* is held).
The *rodhi* fulfils the need for understanding and assessing the nature of friends, both male and female, and encourages mutual understanding and the feeling of co-operation among the community members. What can be observed is the co-ordination of all facets of the community, synchronised into a working whole.

It is through co-operation that various community projects are carried out and this co-operation is reciprocal in nature, especially for agricultural activities. A *nogyar* is found to exist among these Gurungs. This is a temporary group which is organised seasonally for the implementation of works such as tilling, sowing, weeding and harvesting. In this, the *rodhi* makes an appearance. The girls of the *rodhi* invite the boys in groups of 20 or more to become members of the *nogyar* for helping out in the above mentioned tasks. There is fun and reciprocity involved here and not to forget social interaction, a side-effect, but important all the same.

The *nogyar* do the required works in a mood of fun, laughter and jokes and genuine co-operation, while the lunch or *khaja* is supplied by the host at midday, though all the participants contribute to this midday snack. The social function that *nogyars* play is to integrate community members through the *rodhi* organisation, thus its importance can be realised.

Basically, *rodhi* functions as an institution that regulates the various activities such as social, economic, religious, educational and entertainment in the community. But on account of the heavy dose of Hindustic culture, *rodhi* is gradually dwindling and on the road to extinction in the immediate future.

Whatever be the situation, it is seen and must be acknowledged that since *rodhi* is a crucial part of the Gurung culture, and helps to retain one facet of the Gurung identity, measures should be taken promptly to preserve this institution and save it from complete annihilation. *Rodhi* must be revitalised, it is felt, since it is the essence of a co-existence, which is a desperate necessity in this age and circumstance.
Dress & ornaments

Regarding the dress up of Gurungs, it is necessary to state that due to the influence of the many lahures even in remote Gurung villages, the attire is observed to be mainly westernised, however, there are pockets of Gurung villages, where they still dress up as they did many centuries ago. The indigenous dress up of these people will be mentioned here. The males wear strips of cloth almost a cubit in breadth and 4-5 cubits long wrapped around their hips to cover the loins, in a skirt-like fashion and some sort of a vest on the upper torso, called a bhoto. Their heads are almost always covered with the popular Nepali topi (cap) made of velvet mostly. At the junction between the upper and lower torso, they tie a patuka which is a rather long piece of cloth and wrapped around the waist, or they fasten an old army webbing belt instead. This is also useful for supporting the stomach muscles while carrying heavy loads. They cover themselves with a bokkhu (sheep wool blanket which serves as a raincoat, warmer and blanket) when facing wet or cold weather. The modern youths and men wear ordinary clothes such as pants, shirts or T-shirts, shorts, slippers, keds or track shoes. The Lekhali Gurungs (hillmen) are tougher and quite different from the lower hill Gurungs, however they dress up similarly.

Female wear phariyas, cholos, patukas, mujetros and a special bag-like cloth hung across from one shoulder to the opposite waist making a bag for carrying things. This is called a ghalek and some even wear two crossing at the centre of the chest. It is used for storing foods and snacks like roasted maize, fried barley, meat, chillis, etc and also for carrying things home like wild vegetables and cigarettes.

Nowadays, the dress sense has changed due to the influence of the lahures and so the women are seen to wear lungis, choubandi cholos of velvet, barkis of checkered dark-green wool and the inevitable patukas of course. Slippers are also being used. One fixture that is seen is the cross-stitched jholas (bags) made out of cloth and synonymous with the Gurungs.

The ornaments worn by the females are similar to other communities and consists of earrings which are large and weighty which stretch the earlobes; noserings called phulis on the nostrils, nau gedis; tilharis and square amulets hung on a string of glass
beads called *pote* necklaces. Golden bangles are seen less frequently.

The females of the *lekhs* (hills) wear the same sort of ornaments though their necklaces are different in that they wear these made of old silver coins linked together or small cylindrical silver pieces all in a row like shell casings. The earrings are sometimes made of silver and smaller in size. This sort of earrings are also popular among the men folks though slowly going out of style. Ankles are adorned with silver *kallis* also. As in the case of other tribes, these Gurungs exhibit their ornaments as symbols of their economic status and as decorative adornments. The crescent moon is also sometimes cast in gold and made into clips and which is also common among other tribes.

**Economic status**

According to observations, it can be stated that i.Gurungs; in a majority are well-off (as per Nepali standards) and some are even affluent.

Economically, Gurungs are moneyed due to their status as *lahures* (soldiers in the Indian and British armies) since the money earned is extra income and can be utilised for purposes other than food, which is grown in their own fields. The possession of such extra cash is a factor that aids these Gurungs to migrate into transit towns like Pokhara, Butwal, Bhairahawa, Narayan Ghat and buy lands, make houses and run shops. In comparison with other people they do seem and are well off. This prompts other Gurungs to migrate from their rural surroundings and thus the stagnancy of villages are seen distinctly.

If these Gurungs do not migrate but remain in their villages, then they use the cash to make gold ornaments which indicate their high economic status in their home villages. Crops grown in villages are enough for the consumption of the families and they produce no surplus since there are no close markets where they can easily sell their goods. Besides this they do not possess the extra manpower to till the lands. They live on the policy of plant enough for self consumption.

Nowadays, it is rather difficult to find poor Gurungs and also harder to find youths in the villages of the Gurungs due to the
lahure drain. Once lahures return to their villages, they migrate to nearby towns from their ancestral villages. The money is banked or used to open shops from where a good steady income flows in which automatically boosts their economic statuses.

No longer can we find the rustic Gurungs in towns and poverty is an image of a long dead past for these people, however, this picture is not so good in rural areas.

Generally it has been seen that Gurungs possess shops, houses which they rent out, buses which ply the long and short distance routes, trucks which carry goods all over the kingdom, cold stores from Bhairahawa to Narayan Ghat, and they have based themselves either in Kathmandu or in these transit towns. So at a glance the economic status of the Gurungs is high and their future bright.

Social Beliefs and Customs

As among other tribes, the Gurungs also have various social beliefs and tabus, customs and traditions. One such taboo is that of pork eating. It is considered a great sin if a Gurung consumes pork. Cases have been observed where the concerned person is attacked by convulsions and spasms, sometimes frighteningly violent and brutal. Not much can be said about why these people abstain from eating pork, however it is sufficient to know that they do not so much as touch this meat.

It is customary for Gurungs to believe in their lamas and ghyabrings who are consulted for sickness, auspicious ceremonies or such matters. The belief in the after life and metempsychosis is prevalent among these people, so they cremate the personal effects of the deceased along with the corpse. They offer food for the deceased to eat in the hereafter and such customs indicate their belief in transmigration of soul. Gurungs do not marry outside their tribe and it is customary for a boy to marry his matrilateral cross cousin. One customary ritual is that of determining the lho of a couple. This is a system of numerology used by the Tibetan and if one's lho is known then his age and other related data can be easily calculated. This usage of the lho by the Gurungs is not strange in that it does indicate the Tibetan side of the culture.
Ramechhap and Sindhuli districts in the Janakpur zone are the places where the Hayu tribe can be found. They are mostly concentrated in Murajore VDC - 25 houses - in Ramechhap district and Walting village at the eastern side of Kavre Palanchok district.

Hayu claim that their ancestors were immigrants from a place known by them as Lanka Palanka, which they claim is located (rather vaguely) on the southern area of their current area of habitation. In spite of their inability to pinpoint their supposed place of origin, they say that Lanka is in very closely proximity to Planka. But on what basis they claim such things is not clear and open to dispute.

 Origins

According to the oral legends of the Hayu, it is said that in bygone times, their founding forefathers consisted of five brothers. In search of a good location for settlement, these seem to have wandered towards the hills of Nepal. As they kept on moving, the youngest brother gradually lagged behind and was finally left by his brothers. It is through this last brother that the Hayu of today have originated, so it is said. From among these five brothers the Surels, Sunwars, Rais, Limbus and Hayu emerged as separate tribes and possessing their own tribal identities, but similar in many ways, as the legends state. While the Surels originated from the eldest brother the Sunwars are supposed to have come from the second brother and then from the third brother came the Rai and the Limbus from the fourth and of course the Hayu from the youngest as mentioned already. It is necessary to state here that though the Surels, Sunwars and Hayu quote this sort of legend commonly to indicate their ancestry, the Rai and Limbu beg to differ drastically if not vehemently.

 The Legend

While in search for a place to settle, the five brothers wandered and during this wandering, the youngest brother gradually lagged and was slowly left behind by his other brothers. This youngest brother was the one who had been carrying a drum which they had carried along in the journey (as the Hayu version states) from their place of
origin. The youngest brother was justified in carrying this drum because of the fact that it was his favourite instrument, however it was also because of the weight of this drum which deterred his progress and finally caused him to be left all alone. It is said that when he crossed the Sun Kosi river and arrived at present day Murajore, a sound emanated from the drum on its own. This was taken as an omen by the youngest brother and thought that he was being told to remain where he had arrived. In this way he settled there. It is clear that this legendary story does indicated the fact that the Hayu are amigrant tribe which settled there in Murajore at a later date. The villagers had a special place built to house the drum which they honour as an instrument carried there by their progenitor.

How Hayu

The Hayu state that the name Hayu was fixed onto the youngest brother when the other brothers, finding him lagging behind, began to call on - Bha Ha AH EE Bhaahae - with long drawn syllables at the end of the word. Thus it is said that the ha - ee was converted into a stable form Haie which slowly changed into the Hayu. The Hayu of Ramechhap and Kavre Palanchok agree on this.

Physical Characteristics

Hayu are a people of medium height, possessing the mongoloid flat noses on account of the depressed nasal roots, the epicanthic eyefold is clearly discernable, small foreheads, scanty eyebrows, eyelashes and minimum facial hair. The hair on their heads is black almost dark and their skin pigmentation is dark.

Septs (Thars)

Once the process of settling in at Murajore area began, the Hayu gradually began to evolve into septs and sub-septs as is the case in the establishment of other too. Today they have septs and sub-septs as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sept</th>
<th>Sub-sept</th>
<th>Sept</th>
<th>Sub-sept</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Balam:</td>
<td>Pcharime</td>
<td>Dofum:</td>
<td>Biditara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suah</td>
<td></td>
<td>Taltso</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jakkumma:</td>
<td>Isore, Rotasine</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the village of Parilap, located within the Ramechhap district, the existence of septs like Jafam, Pakkuko, Sinno, Balungu and Kamalescho have been mentioned by some scholars, however, this seems to be quite controversial according to what the Hayu and reliable sources state.

Some sources have stated that the current head count of these people around the Ramechhap region is approximately 284 males and 246 females, but migratory trends have set in and these Hayu are slowly moving outwards. There is also another factor that is playing on the Hayu identity and population simultaneously. This factor is the assimilation which occurs when a tribe is physically and economically weak. The Hayu are either lying about their tribal identity and assimilation or are in reality undergoing inculturation and thus losing their identities (for which they seem not to care as it seems to be a way out of ruralism and poverty).

Language

Although the Hayu speak the Nepali language common throughout the kingdom, they actually have their own language or bhasa, but because of its disuse, it has been observed, rather sadly, that this Hayu bhasa has almost vanished. Even though the Hayu children speak this bhasa, as they grow up they are influenced by Nepali and understand the practical advantages of Nepali, thus abandoning their own bhasa which is only used in a limited area. It is observed that even in their homes and while communicating with their neighbours, they use Nepali, instead of Hayu, today. It is astonishing to note that the Hayu village near Murajore has lost the use of the Hayu bhasa very quickly, for a person in the said village, who was capable of speaking Hayu bhasa fluently 15 years ago cannot utter a single word today. This phenomenon is explained by the Hayu people within whom this change has occurred. They state that this village was situated in the vicinity of other trial groups who looked down upon Hayu bhasa and its users with scorn and malice. This was reason enough to make the Hayu feel stigmatised every time someone pointed out this matter.

Consequently, this language fell to disuse and is now at the point of final extinction. The neighbours of the Hayu called their language bad and much inferior to Nepali because it is said that these other tribes hated the Hayu people. Why was this so is a matter not stated by them, but could be assumed to have been the
feeling they felt when caught between the crossfire of Hayu without understanding it.

_Hayu bhasa_ has been said to be an off-shoot of the Kiranti language groups, further categorised under a small sub-heading in the Tibeto-Burman section. Some scholars have classified Hayu in the Mundic group which is a division of Austrio-Asiatic language, while some have put it under the grand title of Sino-Tibetan under which comes the Tibeto-Burman group and Hayu is placed in the section of Eastern pronominalised dialects (along with _Rai bhasa_, _Limbu bhasa_, _Yakkha bhasa_, _Dhimal bhasa_, _Khambu bhasa_).

While looking at Kiranti and Hayu it can be seen that a definite dissimilarity occurs between these two languages. The main difference is the fact that they (Hayu) practise a difficult and rigid rules of verb usage. As opposed to other tribal languages, the _Hayu bhasa_ has a unique characteristic in that it contains verbs with not only singular and plural forms, but also a form which can be used for two persons only.

A sample of this verb usage is shown here in comparative form with other verbs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hayu</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Buk mee</td>
<td>(he/she) gets up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buk chha</td>
<td>(those two) get up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buk moma</td>
<td>(they) get up</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Hayu, when verbs are used, instead of saying us, they use you and I, he and I, signifying two meanings.

Other Hayu words with their Nepali and English equivalents:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hayu</th>
<th>Nepali</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>misco</td>
<td>aimai</td>
<td>woman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kem</td>
<td>ghar</td>
<td>house</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vingco</td>
<td>ramro</td>
<td>good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mavingco</td>
<td>naramro</td>
<td>bad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>khto</td>
<td>thulo</td>
<td>large/big</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yangta</td>
<td>syanu</td>
<td>small</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dongmi (lak cem)</td>
<td>ahyo</td>
<td>came</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vukca</td>
<td>raksi</td>
<td>distilled alcohol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>soyo</td>
<td>jad</td>
<td>beer or rice or millet</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tribal Ethnography of Nepal

Life cycle rites

Navran

On the first day after the birth, the Hayu perform the navran. The delivered woman has to strictly adhere to the observance of birth pollution after which she is purified. On this day, the woman bathes at the local pandero or water source which would be either an underground stream or a tap, then she returns to the house. She is not permitted to enter the house directly, instead she has to wait outside till the baby is bathed in lukewarm water and then together they enter after performing puja at the main door. All the female kin are gathered here and they purify the house with titepati and gaunth, and thus purifying the baby simultaneously.

The household head lays a banana leaf on the threshold of the main door and sacrificing a rooster there, he performs the worship. During this puja, he makes the signs of shooting a bow and arrow at the baby's ears, nose, eyes, head and body, however he does not let go of the arrow nor does he touch the baby with it. This is done with the firm belief that when the child grows up, he will be fearless, strong and a good marksman. This ritual of the bow and arrow is only done in the case of the children being male. During this ritual the man performing the worship chants:

\[ \text{Sikari yema poche,} \\
\text{manne gunne poche,} \\
\text{jun buluang poche} \]

and this roughly means:

"let this son be a hunter, 
let him be respected by all, 
let him be brave."

If the navran is that of a female child, the rituals are performed in the same way as that of a boy, but the difference is the sacrificing of a hen, instead of a rooster, at the threshold and the absence of

\[ tuce \quad \text{kha nu} \quad \text{eat} \]
\[ tuppi \quad \text{balnu} \quad \text{light (a lamp)} \]
\[ vurnu (nukun) \quad \text{bholi} \quad \text{tomorrow} \]
\[ dong (tiri) \quad \text{ahj} \quad \text{today} \]
the bow and arrow ritual.

When all the rituals are finished and done with, according to their tradition, an old or the eldest member of the household, like the grandmother or the grandfather or some older than that, gives the child a name. There is no auspicious and astrologically calculated moment for this naming among the Hayu, the name of the child is balanced with the day and week he or she was born on. To cite some instances, a boy was called Buddae as he stated that he was born on a Buddhabar or Wednesday, or a girl was called Mangali because she was born on a Mangalbar or Tuesday. The Hayu elders state that in the old days, the parents or grandparents or elders of the child in question would receive the name of the child in their dreams and these were the names given. But today, it is not so and so the method of using the days of the week or names of the months is found commonly applied and very practical.

A daughter has her earlobes pierced on the day of the navran, but no goldsmiths or experts are brought in, instead the mother of the child performs this minor operation herself with an ordinary needle and thread. This also done by other women folk of the household. After the earlobe is pierced and the thread tied, turmeric and oil is mixed into a paste and rubbed in on this sore.

A set of clothes is the present given to the child on this day, but these are not new clothes, instead they are made from the mother's old discarded clothes. This is done it is said because the custom states that a new born baby should not be given new clothes to wear till the completion of five or six months and the time of their solid food eating ceremony called pasni.

Children are not found to be given ornaments to wear. On this day of the navran, the children are given a kandani (threaded talisman tied around the waist) to wear, as it is supposed to protect them from the evil forces. In the past, the thread used for this kandani was made indigenously out of plant fibres, but today it is bought from the bazars. The colour of this thread must be blue and wound around 7 to 9 times. Similar types of threads are also tied to the child's wrists and ankles. The thread tied at the ankles are called Laehae Pashchang.

The officiating priests are usually the sisters of the newborn and also the sisters (both elder and younger) of the child's mother. The above stated sort of navran and the rituals mentioned are becoming
hard to observe or in other words rare and could possibly become extinct within the next decade, since the Hayu are willingly and unwillingly being assimilated into the other stronger and more numerous tribes in that region.

**Pasni**

According to their tradition, the Hayu perform the rituals of *pasni* or initiation of solid food consumption, when the female child is five months old and the male child is six months. The child is fed rice with a silver coin, which is a compulsory item and the feeding cannot occur should this silver coin be absent. New clothes are presented to the child as well. The custom is to feed the child five mouthfuls or five times and then cleanse the mouth with water. The *cheli beti* or household females who have been invited (if they are married) are offered *daksina* or gifts and donations, according to the financial ability of the host (their brother), and are fed with meat and liquors which are considered compulsory for this ritual of *pasni*. In this way this is concluded and of course the usual dancing and singing does occur later in the evening and goes on till late in the night.

**Chhaewar**

This ritual of *chhaewar* is similar to the *bratabandh* of the Brahmin and Ksetri, however, there are many features in the chhaewar that indicate Hayu identity and originality. This ceremony is done when the boys reach the age of 3, 5 or 7 years.

As is the custom in many of the Himalayan tribes the *mama* or maternal uncle plays the key role in this *chhaewar* ritual. The *mama* takes his *bhanja* or nephew (son of his sister) to the cowshed and there puts a *damlo* or halter around the boy's neck and then using a pair of scissors, he cuts the boy's hair. This hair is collected in a *tapari* or leaf plate and taken and placed under an *amala* tree. The custom is for the mama to present his *bhanja* with new clothes consisting of a *topi*, a *chaubandi daura*, fruits, money as *daksina* (as much as he can afford) and blessings. When the child dons the clothes presented by his *mama*, the boy is again blessed to live for a lakh years, as is the prevalent custom of blessing on such occasions. This *chhaewar* is celebrated in a rather big and grand way indicating its importance among the life cycle rites. The ceremony is concluded with the usual feasting among the guests.
kin and neighbours and the traditional fare eaten are the omnipresent 
jad and raksi along with meat and rice and other food stuff.

Marriage Practices

Hayu children are married off after they reach marriageable age,
but never when aged twenty(20) as this number is considered tabu.
When a boy's father wants to check whether his son is eligible for
marriage, he gives the boy a task to perform. Should the son be
unwilling, the father begins to shout at the boy, who retaliates with
threats. Now the father shows his anger at this back talk and tries to
beat his son into submission. Soon the two are involved in a very
real wrestling match. Should the son succeed in flooring his father,
then it is considered that he has grown up and is eligible for being
married off. Now the father goes in search for a wife for his son,
and no hard feelings exist between progeny and progenitor because
the father clarifies his actions to his son. If the case arises where
the son does as the father orders and does not oppose him then the
father knows that his son is not yet prepared for assuming the
burden of creating his own unclear family. Thus it is seen that a
Hayu boy can only get married after he has been tested by his
father as mentioned earlier, and which is the traditional method of
determining the male's maturity.

Initiation of marriage talks occurs now. Some Hayu elders from the
boy's side go to the girl's house to ask for her hand. Before this, 4
mana of rice is fermented and made into a beer or bhati. jad at the
girl's and boy's houses. Should the beer in both houses be sweet
when first tasted, then it is considered a good omen and therefore a
lasting marriage. But if the beer is sour or bitter at the boy's house
then it is an omen which states that he will not have a nice, pretty
and well behaved wife, and if this occurs in the girl's house, then
the omen says that the girl will not have a handsome and decent
husband, or that she will have a miserable life.

This is their oracle in which they have a firm belief and obey
without question. It is a fact that the Hayu do not have any tradition
of making horoscopes as other Hinduised tribes do, on account of
their non-hindu beliefs like the one previously mentioned.
Since the decision maker is actually the jad or beer, should it be
sweet, they carry it, without once setting it on the earth as is the
custom, as sagun and then confidentially go to ask for the girl's
hand. While handing over this jad or sagun, to the girl's parents or brothers the representative of the boy's family immediately states his business. Initially, one pung of this jad is held upright by someone, and then they go to the girl's house and say that they have come there on seeing a lovely flower. They further ask or request for the golden threshold to be opened and also the palace of beauty. When all this is said, they present the pung of jad, which is accepted by the girl's parents or her brother. Since all have been pre-informed about the time and date when this proposal will be made, all the girl's householders are ready. This pung of jad is later on consumed by the girl's folks.

In this way, when the day and date of marriage is to be fixed, some jad or raksi or curds is carried to the girl's house by the same person who carried the initial pung of jad. There he sits with the girl's folks and decides the date and time of the lagan according to the calculation they make (not astrological calculations). Then assuring the girl's parents that the janti will arrive on the fixed date, the man returns home to inform the boy's household.

After the lagan is fixed and should the girl die due to natural causes before the actual marriage, the custom is for the husband-to-be to perform her rites de passage, as though she were his lawfully wedded wife. But should the girl elope with someone else, then the boy's folks demand sati ki kati which means either they pay sixty rupees or be ready to be hacked with a sword or khukuri etc. This means that the folks tell the girl's folks to either pay a sort of fine to compensate the loss of face otherwise the boy's folks are ready to kill the other man. In the past, it is said that Rs. 8-12 was fined for such an act, and the custom was called jari linae.

On the day of the lagan, the janti go to the girl's house, carrying a large ghyampo or earthenware pot for storing water or fermented grains which are used to make jad, which contains one pathi of jad, rooster, a theki of curds, a mana of rice for tika, a perengoor (loosely woven bamboo basket with holes) of fish, and also char dam theki which consists of one theki of curds and Rs. 2. The janti is welcomed by the girl's folks with sprinkling of aksata and flowers. At this moment the groom is carried piggy-back fashion by his brothers. The doli or palanquin is not used during marriages by these Hayu, as such a custom is non-existent in their society. The bride and groom are made to walk instead of being carried in a doli, as do the other tribes. The reason for not doing so
Hayu

is because of their belief that musical instruments and palanquins are bad omens and if used, then they portent ill luck for the couple.

But today, such age old traditions are gradually being discarded by the younger Hayu folks, sept and tribal are the forms of marriages prevalent among the Hayu with the famous matrilateral and patrilateral cross-cousin marriage patterns in existence even today. However, this is also slowly being chipped away and exogamous relationships are also occurring sporadically.

Death rites

Burials are customary among the Hayu. According to their tradition, the corpse is placed in a seated posture, the legs bent with the knees touching the chest, but some Hayu cut the corpse into pieces and tie them up like bundle of firewood. After this dismemberment of the corpse, the deceased's son or close kin carries this corpse out of the house and place it at the edge of a bari or cultivated terrace also called a field, directly facing the main door of the house. A mana of rice, char paisa and a tumma or container made out of a tried up bottlegourd and filled with water are placed near the corpse. A few people go towards the cemetery and dig grave into which the corpse is placed in the same seated posture by some Hayu, while others unite the dismembered corpse and place it piece by piece into the grave. The size of the hole dug out is approximately 1 1/2 to 2 meters deep. The daily necessities of life such as rice, water, money and so on are also placed alongside the corpse to accompany him or her into the hereafter. The grave is sealed with stones and then covered with earth. While some Hayu place leafy branches to mark the grave, others tie a white piece of cloth on to a bhkyamlo stick and erect this over the grave.

The funeral goers consisting of an odd number, bathe after the burial. When they return, incense is burnt and a barrier of thorns composed of byre or raspberry branches, is placed across the path to the village so as to deter the spirit of the deceased from returning. This thorn barrier has to be jumped over by the returning malami or funeral goers.

On the next day a pig is slaughtered and on the third day, the deceased's daughter or if such a kin does not exist, then a very close female relative (agnates are preferred) related to the deceased
as a daughter is fed with the first piece of pork and then only do the other kin and all those present partake of the pork along with other foods. This occurs when the deceased is a female. In the case of the deceased being a male, the son-in-law (if such an affine does not exist) or a person related as such, is gifted with a new set of clothes. In the case of a female deceased, the gifts go to the daughter or a related female who substitutes.

The duration of death pollution observation is only for three days. All through this period, a dhyangro (long handled drum, with skins stretched on both ends) is beaten. In this way the death pollution is ritually purified and the sraddha shanti (ritual which occurs after a year of the death) is concluded on Maghe Sankranti which falls on the 1st. day of the month of Magh (mid January).

The daughters or son-in-laws or the pseudo daughters or son-in-laws who substitute in the absence of real one, are presented with home made gifts when the present themselves for the ceremony. After this is over, the family members of the deceased's household must reach these folks (the daughters or son-in-laws or pseudo daughters or son-in-laws) to their residence as is the tradition. For a year, the family members must not take anything tastily cooked or anything pure or anything newly harvested (like grains) into the house, before these are not offered in part in the name of the deceased on his or her grave.

Religion

Hayu are Hindu worshipping the gods of the Hindu pantheon. To please these deities, they offer incense, oil lamps and such when they perform puja. They believe in spirits and demons too, and when sickness occurs, they associate this to the anger or dissatisfaction of the gods and goddesses. Thus they offer blood sacrifices of animals to propitiate the heavenly wrath. This belief is existent and the custom seen, even today. During times of extreme stress or difficulties, these Hayu make vows called bhakal to certain deities, meaning they promise that should they pass through this rough period, they would at a later date, make sacrifices to these deities as promised.

These Hayu celebrate Hindu festivals like Dasai, Tihar, Teej, Maghe Sankranti, Srawane Sankranti, Satyanarayan puja, etc. with great enthusiasm. When diseases like measles, smallpox, chicken
pox hit their community, they pray and offer sacrifices to Sitla Mai. For the protection and security of their livestock, they propitiate the Ban Devi. They also firmly believe in jhar-phuk or tantric cures performed by their shamans.

**Festivals and Dances**

The greatest festival is the *Devi ko sewa jatra*. This festival is celebrated annually in the month of Falgun, for a period of 5 days, at the shrine where the drum is housed. There is great fanfare, singing and dancing to mark this occasion. On the 6th day of the festival, the actual worship of the *Devi* (female shakti) is performed and the whole village gathers there to pay their respects to the *Devi*. Until the next day, there are other programmes organised, and in the evening, singing and dancing commences where young boys and girls take part, but at intervals, even adults are seen to participate.

In this sort of dance, everyone holds onto the shoulders of the persons in front and the dancers rotate in a circular pattern to the rhythm of the drum and song. The rhythm is provided by two drums or dhols, a pair of cymbals, and some singers singing a tune or song in unison if not in harmony. This dance is performed as a sort of worship to the *Devi* thus there is a lot of devotion in it. It goes on till late into the night with many variations in the songs and rhythms.

On the last Thursday and Friday, this dance is taken out of the house where the drum is kept and shown around the village, stopping at every house to perform, sometimes within the house and sometimes in the compound. After the dance is over, the instruments are kept at a pure place where no one can defile them, and then the dancers, singers, instrument players and spectators are provided with jad by the household where the performance occurred (very much similar to the *deusi* party in the Hindu Tihar). This jad is considered to be the *devi ko prasad* or gift. The main singers of this programme are the old timers of the village. They are seen to be capable of delivering the verses of the songs rather accurately and are also knowledgable about the rituals of the *Devi* worship. In these songs or ballads, the history of the Hayu people, the causes pertaining to their community's transformation and the story of the drum and their origins can be glimpsed of, if closely listened to and understood.
The Devi worshipped on this festival is believed to have accompanied the ancestors of the Hayu from Lanka Palanka. This Devi is placed on the leaves of a kabro along with bells and tridents in a shrine at the village centre. Since it is the tradition that this Devi abhors blood sacrifices, the villagers hid their weapons even within their own houses. Also, it is seen that the villagers neither wear shoes nor carry walking sticks, due to this tabu, they state, though they are also not too sure. Tuesday is revered as the day of the Devi and on this day, they Hayu offer milk to her. She is the mother goddess of the Hayu people.

Kul Puja

This puja is performed on Chait Dasai and Saptmi of Bada Dasai or biannually. While some do this puja on the thresholds of their houses others perform this outside in their compounds. Wherever they do it, the area where the puja is to be done has to be cleaned properly and covered with a coating of mud, and water mixture. On this occasion, a pindalo (yam or colocosia) or a tender, untorn banana leaf is placed at the site of the puja. It is then sprinkled with a mixture of barley, sesame and water, thus purifying the place of worship. Items placed here are: a mixture of sindur and aksata in 4 heaps, a heap of rice grains in which a clove is imbedded, a copper coin, a bamboo dhun and amrisa broom and a bamboo basket. The 4 heaps of grains are known as charo deva charo devani, sohara kling sohara klounni.

On the left hand side of these 4 heaps is the share of the Sikari, which consists of a couple of hen's eggs smeared with sindur, and placed upright on the string of a bow. Then, the sindur, eggs, aksata, totola ko ful or flowers are mixed and then used to perform worship to the devi. Then a rooster that crows is brought and an oil lamp, incense and aksata are placed on its head. It reacts immediately, but if it does not then some water is sprinkled on it to bring it to normal. Once this is done the neck is bent back and it is sawed off but from under the loop and not the reverse way, which is the normal procedure in slaughtering chickens. The blood is sprinkled on the devi-devini followed by the offering of incense, which consists of sal tree resin or those made by twisting cotton-rice paper or butter put into the fire. It is believed that on this day, the Devi's power is on the bow, so the priest or someone else is made to shoot an arrow using the bow. At a distance of 10 cubits or
10 meters, a sal log is made the target and the archer shoots at it. As long as the arrow doesn't hit the mark, the archer must keep on shooting. Once the target is hit, alcoholic beverages are offered as libations and the items used in the worship have to be taken away and laid to rest or selaune at a clean spot.

**Kul Puja** is performed at the mul ghar or main house of the particular family. This kul puja goes on for a period of about one month in the mul ghar also called the ancestral home. When the Kul Puja is on the Hayu never speak to members of other tribes and do not allow them to enter the compound. This is the traditional tabu they have to adhere to in order to have a successful Kul Puja which they consider to be of immense importance.

**Sikari Puja**

The traditional way of performing Sikari puja by the Hayu people is to firstly clean a place which is situated near or under a tree. The mixture of water and cowdung is used for this cleaning, after which a stone (any) is set to symbolise the deity and using aksata, sindur, totoLa flowers, incense is offered to the deity and thus worshipped. A real bow and arrow are place horizontally at the than of the deity and a fully white rooster is sacrificed and the blood is sprinkled over the hunting weapons. The meat of the rooster is cooked and eaten by all those present during the puja period and it is taboo to take even a small piece of this meat back home. Also, the meat is never offered to anyone who is nearby by inviting him. During this puja, only meat and jad are consumed indicating that these are in reality a primitive version of prasad. Once the ritual eating is over, the shooting of arrows at a target is performed (like in the Kul devta puja), and unless the target is not struck, no one is permitted to leave that area. Once that mark is struck by an arrow, the bow is taken and hung over the main doorway of the house, which household members performed this puja, thus concluding it.

On Srawane Sankranti, when crops like maize, paddy, mustard, etc. are harvested, they celebrate this occasion with much joy. Dasai and Tihar are also celebrated. For these rituals, priests are not required since these people have elders who are well versed in the ancient traditions, customs, methodology and lore, and they are thus eligible for presiding over these rites.
Tribal Ethnography of Nepal

Fooding Habits

The staple food of the Hayu people are wheat and maize flour mush which is also called dhendo or khole. The alternative diet consists of allo and sisno mush. They also eat bread made of wheat called roti. Rice, pulses, curries and meat are eaten by these people only on very special occasions and festivals. Alcoholic beverages are the main liquid foods of these people, it can be said, since they consume these liquors as if eating a meal, meaning in large quantities. On births, deaths, marriages and such occasions, those Hayu who are able to afford, slaughter a pig and provide the community with a grand feast, but the less rich folks use chicken and mutton for their feasts. Liquors are almost compulsorily and excessively consumed during such feasts.

Dress Up

Hayu males wear the regular indigenous vests called bhoto which cover their upper torso, and the kachhad or wrap around loincloth which is worn like a towel wrapped around the waist and covering the area below the waist till the knees. The urge to wear a topi is great among the male Hayu folks. They do not have a particular dress which can be said is very Hayu and those they wear are what the other tribes also wear in that region, making it difficult to say that this is a Hayu dress or this isn't.

Women wear clothes worn by the people of that region and they cannot be distinguished from any other woman of another tribe living in that region. The upper part of a woman's body is covered with the regular cholo or blouse which is full sleeved and actually known as chaubandi cholo. The lower regions of the bodies are covered in a wrapper-like cloth called a gunew which is somewhat like a sari. Ornaments have not been observed on the Hayu females, though some could possibly have started wearing these due to the influences of the other tribes in their vicinity.

Economic Status

The cornerstone of the Hayu economy is agriculture. During the slack season, they weave baskets, thumplines or namlo, and such bamboo items which they carry to the local market or hats and sell. For their personal use, they weave namja bags out of allo, pooah and cotton threads.
Hayu

They love to make bamboo catapults for fishing and hunting purposes. The topography, climate and influences of the other tribes living side by side within them in that region, are factors that naturally effect the economy and culture of these Hayu, as has been the case with many other tribes in the kingdom.

Lack of proper agricultural lands limited forest resources, landslides and increase in the overall population of the people in the region of their settlement are factors that have created massive problem for these people. To be relieved from such a situation, the Hayu have begun to migrate along with their families, to areas where the prospects are seemingly better. The implications of this sort of mass migration by a minority tribe is a clear indication of the movement towards extinction.

Initially, these Hayu were considered as a slave people like the Gharti, however, the Muluki Ain of Nepal in the year 1953 A.D. listed them as a people who were permitted to conduct business, but not eligible for recruitment in the Army. Later on, the New Muluki Ain of Nepal in 1962 A.D. removed the above stated clause and since then Hayu have been granted a status where they are eligible for receiving justice and equality in society.
In the district of Surkhet, in Birendra VDC, Ward Nos. 1, 4, 6, 11, 12, live a tribe of people called Hudke. Though they claim to be Damai, they are not observed to be engaged in the Damai profession of stitching clothes for a living, instead they earn their living by playing an instrument called a Hudko and dancing to the rhythm of the emanating music after which they beg around for donations among the onlookers.

Origins

In ancient times, in the village known as Jumla today, there lived a few Damai families who were unable to do any sort of agricultural works and also stitching clothes. This posed a problem for their survival, and so an old Damai discussed this matter with his wife and decided to evolve a new method of work through which he would be able to earn a living. Thus, the old Damai called himself Madhu Hudke and played on an instrument called Hudko, while he made his wife dance and called her Jhuma Patrini. So, from the time this old Damai took up this profession with a change in his name, he declared that no Damai should eat or drink anything given by him. From that day onwards, the other Damai of that area stopped eating anything touched by or belonging to Madhu Hudke and thus this custom became a sort of tabu and is so even today. From that day, this Madhu Hudke became a nomadic musician and stopped living with other Damai people and even began to identify himself as a separate tribe from the Damai. Today's Hudke are said to be the descendants of this Madhu Hudke, and the other Damai consider it polluting to eat anything offered by a Hudke even today.

Settlement

Hudke are settled within the district of Surkhet in the Birendranagar Municipality within Ward No.: 1 - Bango Simal, Ward No. 4 - Khorke Khola, Ward No. 6 - Kuine Pani, Ward No. - 11 and 12 and other wards also. Among the above mentioned wards, Ward Nos. 4, 6 and 1 are thickly populated with Hudke folks.
The houses of these Hudke within the Birendranagar Municipality are extremely miserable to look at on account of their ramshackled appearances. *Dui pakhe khar* is used to roof their dwellings and the walls are made up of planks which are covered with a layer of mud. They look and are so fragile that the heavy rains flatten them and if not so then the water seeps in. These houses are 9 - 10 cubits long and 4 - 5 cubits broad. Within this small enclosure the whole family performs the activities of eating, sleeping and living in general. Their lifestyle (if this can be termed so) is of extremely degrading and low standard as can be clearly observed.

The thatch they use for roofing their huts is obtained by scavenging the left overs and cast offs from the construction of other houses. There are some Hudke who go into the nearby jungles to cut fresh thatch for roofing. The utensils they use are of an extremely inferior quality. While some Hudke live in clusters in a show of unity, there are others who prefer to live separately and single too. Hudke huts are crude and made randomly, without any sort of planning meaning they possess no shape nor linearity as is common among huts of others tribes.

While some Hudke state that they have been in Surkhet since 1979-80 AD, others claim that they are the indigenous inhabitants of Surkhet. The lands on which these people live belong to the government indicating that they are landless. Hudke have built their huts around areas like Godam and Khorke Khola which fall within the perimeter of government lands, and some have taken the trouble of clearing areas in the jungles around Bango Simal where they are seen to have erected their dwellings.

**Physical Characteristics**

On looking at these Hudke they resemble Damai and are not too sturdy, with dark skin pigmentation and quite short in stature. They exhibit facial features of a mixture of mongoloids and australoids.

**Language**

These Hudke people do not have a language that can be identified as their own and hence they speak the Nepali lingua franca as do many other tribes in the kingdom. Since these Hudke live in the area of Mid western Nepal, they are a inclined to speak the Nepali spoken by the people of that area.
The Hudke classify themselves into two categories Jate Hudke and Bhate Hudke. The Jate Hudke consider themselves to be of a higher category but is worth knowing that the Damai do not intermarry among these people nor is there any social interaction. If a Hudke female is married by a male of another tribe, then this male is also considered as low as a Hudke by the Damai, thus the food or water offered by this person will not be accepted by the Damai. Should a Damai marry a Hudke, then the Damai also falls to the level of the Hudke. These Jate Hudke earn their living by playing the Hudko and singing and dancing, after which they collect money from the spectators.

Bhate Hudke are those among whom are assimilated some Damai too. These people play the Hudko and also stitch clothes to earn their living. Though these Bhate Hudke play the Hudko, dance, sing and obstruct pedestrians begging for money, they are not considered as low a status as the Jate Hudke, by the Damai and intermarriage does occur among the Bhate Hudke and Damai. It is explained that the Bhate Hudke have learnt to play the Hudko by living in extremely close proximity to the Jate Hudke, however their original profession was similar to the Damai and so they are considered equals. How far is this true is yet to be delved into due to lack of actual evidence, save for the word of mouth accounts.

Dress & Ornaments

While playing the Hudko, the musicians wear long, white skirt-like clothes, with a large white turban having one tip hanging almost a cubit behind their head. From one shoulder (right or left) to the opposite waist they have a long red sash-like cloth hanging and knotted at the waist. Within these clothes they wear their regular clothes. They wear Kap on their feet and then they play the Hudko.

Besides these clothes, at other times the males wear the usual daura, suruwal, kamij, oscoat, pant, bho\text{to}, kachhad, etc. While some wear lungi, others wear hand-downs throughout their lives. The women wear cholo, phariya, petticoat, to clad their bodies while for ornamentation they wear bulakhi, dhungri, nthiya, madhvari, cunnimata, pote, and ribbons on their hair along with doro or threads for plaiting their hairs with tassels. The women try and make use of a many of the above mentioned items as they can
afford. While these Hudke walked around bare feet, today most males are found to wear shoes.

**Life Cycle Rites**

**Births**

When a boy is born among these people, the child's paternal uncles and aunts collect at the house and perform *ghmari* which is some sort of a dance where there are 15 to 20 participants. A *dama* and *mujuri* are placed on their right and left sides respectively and they keep on turning or rotating. This is called dancing the *ghmari*. Those dancers are feasted with *roti*, *puri*, *curry* and such foods and so are the spectators. A goat is sacrificed on this day in thanks to the deities and this is the main course of the feast of birth.

On the sixth day after birth, the *chhaiti* is performed where again another goat is sacrificed and this is again fed to the people who have gathered. On this sixth day, the rituals of the *chhaiti* are completed and *ghmari* is also danced on this day. While it is mentioned that on this morning a goat is slaughtered as an offering to the gods and afterwards it is the feast's main course, another custom exists where the *ghmari* dancers must be presented with another live goat.

**Navran**

On the eleventh day, the new born is taken out of the precincts of the house and shown to the gods like the sun god or *Surya* and the *Bhumi* or earth god. Then the child along with the mother are anointed with *tika* by the child's father or grand father. This ritual of anointing is called *duvaro*. Should the grand parents not exist then the child's father does the anointing.

Next is the offering as present of a whole live goat to the mother by her son and daughter-in-law or *buhari*. The maternal uncles of the child tie a white turban on the head of the father, while they present *gunew*, *clilo*, etc. to the child's mother their sister. Besides these rituals, they invite the priest or *bahun* (they have their own *bahun* and do not use the brahmin priests that other upper caste tribes employ) and perform the naming ceremony or *navran* in the true Hindu way, which seems to be gaining precedence over their older religio-cultural practices. Birth pollution is observed for 11 days
after birth as is customary all around the kingdom.

Other practices such as feeding the nursing mother with chicken broth, hot curries, rice, high calorie foods, massaging the woman while exposing in the sun and using the pure mustard oil are some of the customs which are carried out as those tribes do all over the kingdom, with slight variations according to the area of habitation. It is only after the navran is over that the child is allowed to wear its first stitched clothes which is called kathe-bhoto. Though it is mentioned that a goat is slaughtered to celebrate this birth, today, due to their plunging economy and increasing poverty, they have abandoned this practice.

**Pasni**

After a son is born, there is a ceremony called *pasni* which means feeding of the child's first solid food. It is done six months after the birth, while for a girl it is done after five months. This is standard procedure for a majority of tribes in Nepal. The maternal uncles are the most active and important in these tribes, however among the. Hudke the rice feeding ceremony has no special name and consists of the feeding of solids to the child after which the newly stitched clothes are put on it. The initial feeding and anointing is generally done by an elder of the family or any other village elder who has been specifically invited to perform the anointing. This indicates the importance of this ceremony even though it doesn't have a special name.

**Chhaewar**

The hair shaving ceremony is also called *chudakarma* or *chhaewar* and here the boy has his hair shaved at the ages of three, five or seven. Here the maternal uncles or *mama* play a crucial role and are especially invited for this occasion. The boy's sisters are also necessary for they are the ones who have to function as the cleaning party, meaning that they have to dispose of the shaved locks after performing proper *puja*, etc., while the *mama* has to function as one who helps the child into his new clothes, which have been presented to him for this occasion.

**Marriage practices**

Though child marriages were prevalent in the past and children were married off at the tender ages of 7 or 8 years, today this
practice has been curbed to an extent and the ages have been raised to 12 or 14 years. Marriages occur among Hudke of the same category but not related by blood such as mama, bhanja, bhanji, etc. This indicates that Hudke marry endogamously or within the tribe. Similar to other tribes, the boy's father goes to the girl's father to ask for the hand of the girl for his son. Once the preliminary talks are over, the custom theki-lagnu has to be performed where a theki of curds, puri, kasar, roti, 2-4 bottles of raksi and some people accompany the boy's father to the girl's house.

Once these gifts are accepted by the girl's parents, they openly state that from that day onwards, the girl belongs to the boy and accordingly this couple is anointed with tika as a sign of betrothal. Thus the agreement or betrothal is made and sealed with the anointing and the boy's party returns home. Marriages usually occur in the months of Baisakh, Jestha, Asadh, Magh, Falgun and Mangsir. The exact time or lagan is calculated by an astrologer. Once the month and date are determined, the decision is conveyed to the girl's parents from the boy's side.

On the day of the marriage, a yagya is performed at the groom's house and his bratabandh is also completed, followed by a feast of the usual rice lentils, chicken, pork, motton, etc. raksi and jad, all excesses depending upon the financial status of the groom's parents. On this very day the janti or groom's party, moves towards the bride's house.

The janti consists of the groom's brothers, cousins, friends, neighbours, etc. The women folk who remain at home sing and dance while they wait for the groom to bring the bride. In the past, the Hudke groom used to wear long flowing skirt-like dress and a turban on his head, but this sort of attire seems to have gone out of style since today we see the Hudke groom's wearing the usual pants, shirts, shoes, coats, etc. or the daura-surwal, outfits. One day prior to the departure of the janti to the bride's house, the bride's parents order the groom's people to send gifts of things they demand. These gifts are called koselee and consist of 8 - 10 pathi of raksi, 1 mar or animal for slaughter (this is either a male buffalo or castrated goat-khsi), 3 healthy kids (one each for the girl's maiti, her mauli and village thalu), 2 - 4 gagro of jad, 10 pathi uncooked rice.
A set of *gunew*, *cholo*, turbans, etc. are taken for the bride and her brothers. The groom’s father carries *phuli*, *dhungri*, *tilhari* and such ornaments for the bride along with *gunew*, *cholo*, shoes, other clothes, etc. as is the traditional custom. Items like *sindur*, *doro*, *pote* are also deemed necessary for the bride to decorate herself. The clothes and ornaments presented to the bride can vary in valuation depending to on the desire exhibit their affluence.

When the *janti* reaches the bride's house, it is welcomed and provided with refreshments and food. According to the bride's parents, financial position, the quality of the food depends. After this the bride groom’s father shows the paper wherein the time of the *lagan* is noted. Now watches are synchronised and the *yagya* commences just outside the bride's house. Once the *lagan* is completed and the nuptial knot has been tied the bride is presented with *daijo* or gifts which consists of utensils, animals, bedding, furniture, etc. according to what her kin can afford to present.

The *janti* remain this night at the bride's house and are entertained with songs dances and feasting, along with a regular supply of *raksi* and *jad*. The following day, the bride is given a tearful farewell and the groom triumphantly carries away the bride to his house with the happy *janti* who accompany him back. There is a custom among them that states that the groom's parents are not (to enter their house, prior to their son the groom bringing their daughter-in-law or *buhari*. Once she is brought then the groom's father anoints her with *tika* and then only do they enter the house. The next day, a ritual called *chatiya pakhalne* or washing of the *sindur* or vermilion is performed by a *bahun* at a *yagya* within the house. A feast of rice, meats, lentils and alcoholic beverages such as *jad*, *raksi* are offered to the groom’s kin and *bhate* meaning neighbours. The bride's brothers, who had accompanied her are given a special feast which consists of the above mentioned foods with the meat of a healthy young *khosi* or castrated goat as an extra course indicating their level of respect.
After all this feasting is over, the bridegroom and bride, the groom's father and the bride's brothers, all go to the bride's house or maiti carrying jad, raksi, roti and such gifts along with them as is the custom. The groom, his father and the bride stay a night and return the next day. While bidding farewell the jawai or son-in-law performs namaskar to his in-laws or sasu (mother-in-law) and sasura (father-in-law). But the sasura has to show his acceptance of the namaskar by touching his jawai's feet as is the tradition and age old custom so it is said. The sasuis exempted from this sort of activity.

Though this sort of arranged marriage pattern exists among these people, there is also seen to have gradually evolved the pattern of love marriages where the male entices the female with honeyed words and a lot of promises. Not only this but the system or custom of jari biwaha or marriage of other's wives is commonly practised among these Hudke as in other tribes in the kingdom.

The custom is that should a male marry a female Hudke and should this male be of any other jat, whether higher or lower in social status, the custom is to also make him a Hudke. Though it is hypergamy when a Hudke female is married by a male of a higher jat or social status, among these people it is not so and the male has to accept his demotion to the level of his Hudke wife, instead of being able to elevate his wife and bring her to his level as should have been the case in hypergamous marriages at other places and in other tribes. Mutual agreement between males and female leading to matrimonial alliances occurs mostly among the Hudke folks with a few hypergamous cases as stated the above.

There seems to be actually no prefixed marriageable age for Hudke children. Since these Hudke are considered on a much lower plane that the Sunar, Damai, Kami and Sarki (occupational castes) in the caste ladder, there is no question of intermarriages between these jats. Should a Hudke female marry a male from another tribe or jat, even hypergamosly, then she is cut off or ostracised from her family. This means that anything cooked by her is not consumed by her parents and even any liquids offered by her are not drunk, indicating their non-acceptance of her union which has caused her to break the rule of jat endogamy.
Death Rites

When death occurs in a family among the Hudke people, the agnatic kin such as the brothers and such assemble while those far away are called in and when all have finally collected, they commence the death rituals.

Initially, the corpse is covered with a white shroud which is approximately two cubits in length and there is also another yellow cloth which is about 2 meters long. After the corpse is wrapped and tied up, it is carried to the burning ghat or cremation grounds. While some Hudke take a calf across the river and release it prior to carrying away the corpse, other Hudke do nothing of this sort. There does not exist any sort of daha sanskar or last rites of farewell, but while the corpse is being purified by the fire, the brothers and sons of the deceased have their heads shaved after which a bath is the prescribed and sort of compulsory ritual which seems to end the days activities.

When the funeral procession along with the shaved agnates reaches the house of the deceased, they immediately erect a sigro or dhikuro (shrine besides a small river, pond, stream, spring, dhara, pandero or any such water sources which exist nearby. For the next ten days, pind is offered at this sigro, an oil lamp or diyois lit, the area is cleaned with the mixture of dung, mud and water, worship is offered here and a single meal is (cooked) and eaten here.

On the 10th. day, the sigro is destroyed and the agnates are permitted to commence eating salt which they had been abstaining from since the death of their kin. On the 11th. day, the person or persons who are in the kuro and who are called kriyaputri brand and release a bull, only after which he eats salt, which is fed to him ritually by his sisters and neighbours. On this day the funeral goers are given a feast where the sisters are also present. These sisters are presented with daksina or donations (for their troubles) by their brothers the kriyaputri. For the following 35 days, these kriyaputri wear white clothes. On completion of the total 45 days after death, a feast is given relatives, friends funeral goers along with daksina and then only can the white clothes that these kriyaputri be removed.
Observance of monthly post-death-rituals are not done by the Hudke, but after a year from the death, the kin folks are all invited by the sons of the deceased and grand feast is offered to all those present. A brahmin priest is given *daksina* which consists of uncooked rice one *mana*, Rs. 5.00 along with performance of *sraddha*. The next ritual in connection to the death is the annual *pitree puja*.

**Religion and Festivals**

Similar to the other tribes that inhabit the regions of mid-western and far-western Nepal the Hudke are a kind of Hindu and celebrate festivals as do these other tribes. Basically they worship the deities of the Hindu pantheon, with a few locally assimilated ones as is the case for most tribes in the kingdom.

The festivals they celebrate consist of - Bhasi, Masta, Pitree, Dasai, Tihar, Aunsi Purnima and others.

**Bhasi**

On Kartik Krishnapaksh Aunsi which is a day prior to Laxmi puja, all the brothers or agnatic kin gather at the main or *mul ghar*, where they collectively slaughter *khsi, kukhura* and such animals which form the main courses of the feast that follows. On this same evening, oil lamps or *diyo* are lit and they carry these in their hands and proceed to the place where they resurrect Bhasi and then bury the *kilo* in the earth. The ritual of *Bhasi jagaune* occurs and this is followed by the coronation of the Bhasi by a brahmin priest. Then the flaming torch brought from the house of the *dhami* is used to light the lamp.

**Masta:**

This *puja* occurs in Jestha Purnima. The *dhami* invokes the deity to enter his person which is called *deuta basnu*. Once he is possessed with the spirit of the deity, he is able to analyse all the problems the individual or family is facing and also to voice solutions while under the influence of the deity's power. Besides food items like *khir* or sweet rice and *roti*, other things are also readied for this *puja*. While the presiding priest is an Upadhyya brahmin, the *dhami* is a Ksetri. This worship of *Masta* is performed at the place where the Hudke were originally supposed to have originated or resided.
This place lies in Davda, Ward No. 3, Khadi Gaiya VDC, Dailekh in western Nepal. There is an old house where all Hudke of the concerned family gather along with the other Hudke folks living in the vicinity of this place and from that region congregate when they hear that Mast puja is to be performed here. Then they collectively offer their worship to the great god Masta.

The puja commences when the dhami, bearing a bell, chamar and dhvja enters the house where the Masta worship is performed, and a screen is placed over the main doorway. It is believed by the Hudke folks that the dhami is transformed into a tiger inside the house. After this, the Upadhyya brahmin using his ulta hath (hand which is not used for regular work) throws in the boka or uncastrated goat and kids brought to be sacrificed by devotees without looking in the direction of the doorway. They say that these animals are killed by the dhami now turned tiger and the blood is drunk by this tiger. Finally, an uncastrated goat or boka which has been purchased with the money collected as contributions from the devotees, is thrown into the house or temple of Masta where the bagh-dhami kills and drinks its blood and then changes into his human form once more.

After this, the dhami emerges from the small window at the side carrying the bell, chamar, dhvja and dragging the last boka behind him. Now he dances for about 15 to 20 minutes in the compound while he simultaneously sucks the blood from the severed body of a kid. While this frenzied dance is in progress, the phulpate who is a Jaisi Brahmin goes and catches the dhami, while the Upadhyya brahmin pours water on the dhami’s head and this is followed by the others pouring gagro after gagro of water on the dhami’s head which seems to bring the dhami out of his trance. The final ritual is distribution of the prasad or Nai veddah to all the brothers or kin who are present. This prasad is taken home to be annointed with and eaten as well.

Pitree

This is ancestral worship performed by the Hudke on Baisakh Nawagi in Baisakh and Dhan Navagi in Marga. A year or more after the death of parent, they select a spot under the shade of a tree and perform pitree puja there. Should this worship be offered to a deceased father (male) then a rooster is sacrificed symbolising the maleness, while a hen is sacrificed in the case of a mother or
female deceased. Roti, meat and such items are offered to the pitree on this puja and the spirit of the deceased is called upon to reside in the store or granary of the household so that she or he can guarantee the proper functioning of the family, by preventing food shortages, protecting the household in general and from various calamities, and forgiving them should there be any mistakes on their parts. After this puja is over the main functionary, normally the male household head, takes some prasad and distributes it among the householders who consume this with reverence and belief.

Dasai

Like most Nepalese, the Hudke consider Dasai to be an important festival and celebrate it from the day of Ghatastapana or planting of the paddy grains, paying obeisance to the mother goddess Durga in her various manifestations and through Phulpati, Astami, Navami, and Dasami till the purnima or the full moon. During this Dashera or Dasai period, these Hudke, like all other tribes in Nepal, eat drink and make merry for almost the whole fortnight which encompasses this greatest of Hindu festivals.

Tihar

This is also one of the festivals which the Hudke celebrate with a lot of enthusiasm and is considered one of great importance too. The first part of Tihar is the part where they have the Laxmi Puja. Here, the goddess of wealth, Laxmi, is propitiated, while in the second part where the Bhai Tika is the focal point, the sisters anoint their brothers (elder and younger) with specially coloured (multi) tika so that they are protected from harm throughout the year.

Similarly, Hudke also participate and organise the carolling groups like deusi (for boys) and bhailo (for girls) during the Tihar festival. At this time it can be seen that the boys are splendidly attired with tika on their foreheads and the special garlands around their necks or sometimes slung from one shoulder to their waists and their Nepali topi perched jauntily on their heads which are slightly fuzzy with the liquors they have drunk when offered by their sisters during the rituals following the tika ceremony. This aspect of Bhai Tika is seen to be found only among the Nepalese, though some less, colourful aspects exist among the Bengali people of West
Tribal Ethnography of Nepal

Bengal, India.

During this Tihar period, *roti*, meat, *jad*, *raksi* and such are consumed in large quantities and there is an atmosphere of carefreeness and gaiety among the Hudke and also among all the Nepalese during this time.

Aunsi Pumima and other festivals are also celebrated by the Hudke people in much the same way as other Hindus and Nepalese do. Some of these Hudke are said to perform worship to the fearsome deity - Kal Bhairav too.

Except for the festival of Bhasi, women are allowed to participate in all other festivals side by side with the Hudke males. While dancing and singing on these occasions, they play on their *Hudko* and one among the group commences a song to which harmony and tune are added by a few more voices, bringing out its full impact on the listeners. This is called *geet chopnu* and is in reality a tradition.

The way in which the *Hudko* is played is that it is held with one hand hit or beat with the other to produce a rhythmic beat. The songs sung by Hudke folks are mostly centred around brave men and women performing brave deeds, wars and battles won and lost, and such as sung by minstrels and balladeers all around the globe. This sort of story-telling in balled form is traditionally called *Kasiram Bharat ga ko*.

It is said that the Hudke sing ballads about brave deeds performed by their ancestors while in the services of the Raja of Dailekh in the distant past, and how, many Hudke died for their beloved king while some straggled home. These are the kind of songs with which the Hudke entertain their audience and the beat of their *Hudko* does seem to have a hypnotic effect on the onlookers. They perform on occasions such as their festivals and other public ceremonies including those like 7th. Falgun and 14th. Poush.

**Income Source**

Hudke live from day to day and hand to mouth as any poor and downtrodden tribe living in Nepal does. Their income sources are dancing to entertain at various fairs and crossroad markets where they collect some cash, then they use the method of direct begging
where they implement drastic ways like holding onto a pedestrian's leg till he or she pays up and accepting or begging donations during festivals from the financially affluent people, who may be in generous moods at these times.

They state that currently, they have begun to work as manual labourers. The incomes they generate from the hired labouring, selling stones beaten into gravel and chopping up trees into bundles and selling these as fuel in the towns, are used to maintain themselves and their families today.

Fooding Habits

Like other poor people in the country, these Hudke also eat the usual rice, beaten rice, roti, mush or dhendo, gundruk or dehydrated vegetables, lentils, chicken, mutton, pork and the inevitable jad and raksi as long as they have the purchasing power. When they fall short of money, or when their incomes are low on account of various factors, they eat extremely low quality fare like rice and gundruk, dhendo, roti with chillies, etc. but they do not complain and do not seem to feel that their fooding quality has decreased.

They can be seen to smoke cigarettes, bidi, and tamakhu, which is made out of indigenously grown tobacco, and smoked in a sulphur or chillum as is the traditional way. Both men and women are seen to smoke.

Society and Economy

Like other tribes, the Hudke have their own society and social structure. Their's is a society still steeped in superstition and ancient traditions. Though they are under compulsion to live in utter poverty in their society created social backwaters, they still adhere to various social obligations even today and this is because they have stagnated as an underdeveloped and abhorred tribe.

However, it is observed that these so-called backward Hudke have begun to slowly identify themselves with the Damai identity and also mention their surnames as Damai or Masterji. But when they are questioned regarding their sept they state that they are baghdas Damai and follow the same rites, rituals and customs.
As in Hindu society it is believed, even today, that a woman must never utter her husband's real name, so also in the Hudke society the women are similarly bound, however, the uniqueness of this aspect is that even the Hudke husband is not permitted to call out his wife's name. This situation of neither the husband nor the wife calling out each other's name is compromised by the husband or wife asking another person to mention the wife's or husband's name if so required. Though strange, but such is the practice among the Hudke people. Teknonymy is a common feature in most regions of rural Nepal.

As previously mentioned, the Hudke keep themselves by dancing and entertaining, begging, and also by working as labourers. Though previously they were working on fields and such, today they have started to work as porters, truck loaders and unloaders, small scale contractors who sell 20-30 cement bags of manually broken gravel per week. Thus it can be seen that their sources of incomes have diversified and led them to put in more physical labour now than before, when they took the easy way out by begging or dancing. Besides these sources of income generation the Hudke do other works as the area of settlement, topography and existent social environment dictate.

Other sources of income are selling wood fuel where the trees are available and the demand is good, but manual labour is also a good source where there are various construction projects underway. Inspite of this, it is seen that while some Hudke work hard as porters or manually pulverise stones into gravel, there are others who are still scavengers on the fringes of that area's society, as they seem to possess neither lands to cultivate not animals to rear. In most Hudke areas of settlement, the picture is one of abject poverty, with them possessing nothing besides the little rags they have hanging on their bodies. They are mostly landless, loveless and homeless. As long as their bodies are strong they work as manual labourers, but as sickness or age creeps in, it is the beginning of a painful and slow death.

To make matters more complicated, the Hudke who claim to be a type of Damai or tailor caste, do not seem to know the front or rear of a sewing needle, and the use of a sewing machine is out of the question. In spite of this humorous but sad fact, they are uninterested to learn their trade and have thus condemned themselves and their future generations to remain in the pit of
poverty. For lighting within their dwellings, these Hudke use the chip of wood called a *diyalo* for it burns and gives off light. Kerosene oil is unheard of and so not used due to its alien nature.

When looking at the educational aspect among the Hudke population, it is seen that it is a concept which is naturally not at all understood thus the practise of sending their children to school is non-existent. Hudke are unhygienic, possess extremely filthy personal selves, and do not feel any sort of asphyxiation while living in polluted environments. The Hudke have the desire to rise to the level of the common Nepali as is the natural desire of any human species and for this they should be given thought and a chance to save themselves from complete extinction.
THE JIRELS

The Jirels inhabit the eleven villages of Jiri, Sikri, Kavre, Dung, Okma, Yarsa, Jhyakhu, Chatpu, Darkha, Manganga and Chetrangu situated within the Dolakha district in eastern Nepal. They number an approximate total of 700 households with a 3000 head count. In reality, the population is concentrated within the VDCs of Chetrangu, Jhyakhu, Paldungung, Jiri, Sikri, and Jugu which all lie in the region of the Tama Kosi and Khimti Khola. The most densely populated villages of these Jirels can be found in the valley that lies between Jiri and Sikri. Some Jirel families have migrated further east, where they are scattered in pockets in various districts.

SEPT (THAR)

Jirels call themselves Jiripas and they are of distinct mongolian origin. Although these Jirels allege themselves to be Sunwars, the Sunwars consider these Jirels as an inferior tribe and counted among the Dus Thar, Sunwars never intermarrry with Jirels and neither do they eat food cooked by Jirels. In areas where Sunwars do not live in proximity to the Jirel villages, these Jirels call themselves Sunwars, and they also try to remain unconnected and aloof from the Sherpa community, pretending to be superiors. The thars of these Jirels have not been altered from that of the Sherpas and Sunwars as the area of their ancestral origins is the same and the mixed tribal marriages that occur are very much similar, as can be clearly observed. A brief comparative list of thars of the Jirels, Sherpas and Sunwars will clarify matters.

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Historical background

It is said that, approximately 7 or 8 generations ago, the Sunwars of Sanalu village, lying in the Khimti Khola region used to go hunting in the high hills of Chordam. One day, so the story goes, a Sunwar hunter came across the village of Dunge and fell in love with a Sherpa lass and their relationship led to a sexual liaison which resulted in the birth of a son. The Sherpa girl waited for the Sunwar hunter to arrive till the day of christining, however, when there was no sign of his arrival, she (the Sherpa woman) purified herself from the birth pollution by sprinkling gaunth (cow's urine) on her body and named the boy Nandare.

One day, so the story continues, a Tibetan lama saw the boy and asking the mother's permission, took the child to Jiri and reared him. It is from this child that the Nan Jirel thar emerged, as told by the Jirels. In this way, the Jirels claim that they are the descendants of a Sherpa mother and a Sunwar father and thus prefer to call themselves Sunwars. However, due to this tribe's social and cultural activities, within their approximate population of 4000 heads, they seem to, have evolved into a distinct tribe as has been observed.

The story continues, later on the boy Nandare was granted the responsibility of caretaker of the government cattle pens (sheds) in the Jiri area through the issue of a lal mohar (official authorization paper) in his name, and so gained the opportunity to receive a regular payment. The genealogy is as follows:

Nandare to Sano Khewa
Sano Khewa to Manoram
Manoram to Karnabir
(4 generations in all)

After the death of Karnabir, and during the period of his son Harka Bir, the payments were stopped, seemingly because the Lal mohar was invalidated. When these Jirels are questioned regarding the dates and years of the existence of the above mentioned persons, they are at a loss to provide any sort of answer.
Life cycle rites

Navran

The navran (naming ceremony) of a son or daughter is performed 3 or 7 days after the day of birth. The date and time is fixed by a lama after careful calculations are made. This is also done by jhankris at times. Lamas and jhankris are called pembo and fombo respectively. The child is named on the navran. A rooster is sacrificed if a son is born and a hen if it is a daughter. The parents of the newborn baby have to arrange a feast where relatives and neighbours are invited and fed with meats, rice, other foods and the ever present jad (millet beer) and raksi (distilled alcohol).

Pasni

This rite called pasni (rice feeding ceremony) is performed 6 months after the daughter's birth, 7 months after in the birth of a son. This ceremony is performed under the aegis of pembo or fombo. Prior to the feeding of rice to the child, the mother chews some rice and meat, and then feeds the baby with this polluted food or jutho. This is the first external food eaten by the child after its birth. This is followed by the feeding of rice by relatives, invited guests and all those present on this happy occasion. Rice feeding is followed by the placing of tika on the child's forehead and a gift (commonly clothes and money) is offered to this child. When all such rituals are concluded, a feast is offered for all in attendance and eating, drinking (liquors) and making merry are the main features thereafter. The pasni ends when the guests go home and then the householders begin to lie down to sleep.

Chhaewar

This rite is performed only for sons and between the age range of 5 to 7 years. In this particular ritual, the child's matrilineal or maternal uncle is indispensable, since he has to initiate the shaving off of the child's hair. If such an uncle fails to make his appearance or is non-existent (if the mother has no brothers), then a man of the same thar as the child's mother is selected as a pseudo-maternal uncle, to do the job. After this hair shaving ritual is over, the boy has to bathe. Then the maternal uncle has to present the child with a set of new clothes and also hand him some daksina (gift of money) after the ritual is concluded. This is followed by a feast for
all present and merry making is in the offing.

**Piercing the nostril and ear**

For girls to have their nostrils and ears pierced, so as to wear *phulis* (nose rings) or *dhungris* (ear-rings) respectively, they have to wait for the stipulated age which is between 5 to 7 years. Sometime within this period of 5 to 7 years, an auspicious day is selected and the piercing ritual is performed. It is to be noted, that when a girl reaches puberty, and has her maiden menstrual cycle, or menarche, the Jirels maintain a strict 7 days pollution, as has been observed.

**Marriage Practices**

In the past, it was customary to get children married off at a very tender age, but now a days, it is customary for the boys and girls to seek out their own partners. Due to this change in the custom of marriages, the age old practice of child marriages is slowly diminishing.

**Arranged marriages**

A *pembo* consults the astrological charts and selects a particular day, which is deemed auspicious for tying the nuptial knot. For performing this sort of marriage also called *Magi biwaha*, it is extremely important for a *pembo* or *fombo* to be present, and for such rituals they never select Saturdays or Mondays, because these days are considered inauspicious by the Jirels. For those who can afford the expenses, the marriage procession that goes to the bride's house is preceded by a band of *pancha baja* (five-piece band). The youths in the group sing and dance while the procession inches its way towards the bride's house. It is customary for the groom's party to carry gifts of clothes and ornaments for the bride along with *roti* (bread) and *tongba* (millet beer in containers with the millet and water mixture) for the bride's mother.

In the final ceremony there is an exchange of *kalas* of the bride and groom and unlike other tribal communities where the groom puts the *pote* necklace around the bride's neck, the *pembo* is the one to have this privilege. Following this, the *pembo* or *fombo* recite the *mantras* and give the couple *tongbas* to drink from a single urn, thus concluding the ritual. Festivities follow this ritual and food, drink and meat are consumed, and the whole night is spent in
dancing, singing to the rhythm of the *damfus* (tambourine-like instruments without the metal attachments) and *madals* (cylindrical hollowed piece of wood or earthenware tubes on whose opposite ends skins are stretched), thus finally giving the marriage a musical finish in the wee hours of the morning.

**Elopement marriages**

Marriages by elopements or *Chori biwaha*, are also common practice among these people. In places where people congregate on occasions such as marriages or at weekly bazars called *hats* or at fairs and festivals, the boy and girl meet, talk and then run off together. The boy never takes the girl directly to his house but instead keeps her at his maternal uncle's place for a few days, and then returns her to her parents. After this, it is taken for granted that the boy, with whom this girl has eloped has every right over the concerned girl. Although this fact is true, to declare this girl as his wife socially, the boy must prepare for a wedding. In this sort of circumstance, the boy's kin must present some gifts to the girl's parents so as to console them for their loss.

**Jari Marriages**

It has been observed that in the Jirel society, though married, women leave their husbands and remarry other men. This is called *Jari biwaha* and in such a case, the first husband has a right to claim *jari* (compensation) which falls within the range or Rs. 100 to Rs. 1000 as has been seen to be prevalent among these people. While the second husband is called the *jar* of the first, the first husband is known as the *sadhu*.

Another custom that is prevalent among these folks is that in the event of death of a previous wife, the widower must marry his sister's in-law (younger sister of his deceased wife) called *sali*, in a sororate union sister's daughter or *bhadaini*. According to a majority of the Jirels, it is understood that the brother-in-law of *bhenajyu* has the first right to his *sali* and to his *bhadaini*. In this circumstance, should the *sali* or *bhadaini* be married already, the person does not hesitate to `steal' them from their husbands and later on pay the stipulated *jari*.

Widow marriages are also existent in Jirel society and should an elder brother die, it is perfectly alright for the younger brother to keep his elder brother's wife or *bhauju* as his wife from then on in
a levirate union. In spite of all these practices, the matter of divorce is unheard of in Jirel society. Thus it is but natural that elopements and *jari tirne* patterns of marriages flourish among these people.

**Death Rites**

When a death occurs among the Jirels, the corpse is properly bathed and clothed with a new set of clothes. The clothes worn at the time of death are not thrown away, but are either buried or burnt along with the corpse. A copper coin is placed in the corpse's right hand, a little mud from the *pindi* (verandah of the house) is placed in the left hand and a smouldering coal from the hearth is placed on the corpse's mouth. If death has occurred on the inauspicious days of Saturday or Monday, the corpse is not removed from within the house on these days, but only the next day. In this sort of situation the corpse is removed only after killing a small chicken as a sacrifice. However, if death occurs on any other day besides these days, then the Jirels believe that the corpse should not be left to remain a night within the house.

Prior to the removal of the corpse, the *pembo* or the *fombo* precedes it rattling and beating his *damaro* or *dhyangro* respectively. Next the deceased's family follows and then those other funeral goers. All along the way, the *pembo* or *fombo* beat their *dhyangro* and rattle their *damaro*, simultaneously chanting mantras. Thus they reach the grave site where the corpse is buried. Only when the corpse reaches the grave site, is the hole dug.

After the hole is completely dug, straw is laid at the bottom, on top of that a white or yellow cloth is placed, and then the corpse is laid in the grave. Again a similar sort of cloth is placed over the corpse and then that is covered with a layer of straw. When this is completed, the *pembo* or *fombo* throw handfuls of earth into the grave on the corpse and this gesture is followed by the others. After this the funeral goers return leaving a few to fill in the grave. On returning, these funeral goers stay overnight in the house of the deceased while the *pembo* or *fombo* rattle and beat their instruments performing ritual dances the whole night.

Observation of death pollution varies greatly between rich and poor Jirels as has been noticed. When poor Jirels die, death pollution is observed for 5 to 7 days, eating only once a day. The food is cooked for them by those in the household kitchen. The more affluent Jirels observe this death pollution for 25 to 30 days.
Tribal Ethnography of Nepal

and remain completely separated from the others during this period. No family member is to participate in works such as planting, reaping or any other outside works. Purification is done by the pembo or fombo after which the death pollution period is considered over. On the death of a rich person, a ghaewa (final passing-of-the-soul ceremony) is performed by a pembo after 45 days from the day of death. The requirements for this occasion are: approximately 20-30 pathis of jad, 2-3 muris of rice, 2 muris of flour (either wheat, millet, barley or maize) and a goat or buffalo has to be slaughtered. All those who come for this ghaewa have to be fed with meat, rice, jad, raksi, in the morning and dhendo (maize or barley mush) in the evening. On completion of this ghaewa the pembo has to be given a new set of clothes and money for his services.

Religion and Festivals

Jirels are Buddhists. They have their own lamas, gompas and religo-tribal rites and rituals. Lamas and also jhankris act as priests in their rites, rituals and festivals. On Panchamī purnimas, the Jirels of the Thabo sept make 10 tormas and sacrifice a fowl to their household or tutelary deity, while the Joong Chetpu Jirels make 2-3 pathis of tormas and sacrifice a fowl too. This ritual is known as pathi bhara. Once a year, the Jirels worship the goddess Gaura Parvati on Dhaniya Pumima with fruits and jad. On Chait Dasain or Ram Navami, they offer worship to Bhimsen using a chicken egg or chicken or a buffalo as blood sacrifice. For the security and protection of their houses, the Kamba Kul Jirels worship the deity called Charmane Sikari with either a chicken's egg or a chicken blood sacrifice. Jirels do not allow pork to be brought into their houses and do not consume this meat, since they believe that Charmane Sikari will be annoyed. It has been observed that, even before the consumption of their daily meals, the Jirels offer a little bit of everything they have on their plates, such as rice, curry, pulses, milk, etc. to this deity.

After the harvesting and storing of the new produce from their field during the month of Marga, a basket, decorated with various fruits and flowers and containing an earthenware pot full of jad is placed under a tree. The pembo or fombo sprinkles this jad on the fields and surrounding areas simultaneously chanting mantras and in this way the rite of nwagi is completed. In order to begin the consumption of jad produced from the newly harvested grains,
the *pembo* or *fombo* must be invited to bless this drink and give permission. This blessing ritual is called Chang Chotsiya.

During the months of Chait or Marga, the Jirels sacrifice fowls to their Bhote Devta and pray to this river god to be merciful and not plague their community with diseases.

**Economic status**

Most Jirels are basically agriculturists. A negligible few are literate to the level of knowing the basic alphabets only. These people bring butter, chickens, ducks, goats (both castrated and uncastrated), vegetables, home woven baskets or *dokos*, *tokris*, *namlos* or thurnplines, to the bazars or *hats* and sell these items here. The cash they earn from these sales is used to buy necessities such as spices, salt, cooking and burning oils, clothes and other miscellaneous items. According to the times, however, Jirels are in the process of exhibiting the changes that they are undergoing currently.

After the establishment of a Multi-Purpose Development Programme with the aid of S.A.T.A. in Jiri, many Jirels have been provided with opportunities for work. This has thus aided in granting a slight boost to their poor economic condition. The school, health centre, etc. established through this programme have greatly contributed to the welfare of the Jirels who are in the process of trying to make the most of these facilities provided. Nowadays, Jirels have also started going to Kathmandu and pursuing further studies in the various colleges there.
In most of the village spread around Nepal, be they in the mountains, valleys or plains, the tribe known as the Kami will be found. These people are one of the so called occupational castes of Nepal and are classed as Untouchables in the tradition of the Hindu hierarchy. The reason for the widespread nature of the Kami people is attributed to their occupation as blacksmiths, who are extremely essential in a farming community which most of Nepal consists of. Thus, a particular habitat cannot be associated with these people as in the case of many other tribes in the kingdom.

Origins

Though the origins of the Kami are vague, however, in comparison to the bits and pieces available of the others tribes, it can be stated that they can be placed within the Brahmin and Ksetri category. The reason for this is, the Kami septs are akin to those of their peers the Brahmin and Ksetri. Sapkota, Ghimire, Adhikari, Acharya are some of the septs that can mean the person could be a Brahmin or a Kami or a Ksetri. To judge what is the truth, it can be said that their ancestors were Brahmin and Ksetri.

The question arises as to why are they Kami now and the answer is said to be that they fought with their own brothers or agnates, or with their maternal kin. This fighting or disputing was the attempt to break up the agnatic unity also called had phoda (breaking bones), by marrying within agnatic lineages and heading towards liberalisation or emancipation. But they seem to have lost the fight and thereby severely punished. This punishment involved nothing physical but instead, they were ostracised or cut off from their agnates and maternal kin and the related lineages. They were pushed below the equality of water they possessed earlier, meaning they were dropped in the social ladder as a pani na chalne jat. It is claimed that this group of Brahmin and Ksetri were ancestors of the modern day Kami.

Language

The Nepali language is what they speak normally, but in places where they are outnumbered by a tribe speaking the tribal language, then here these Kami speak the language of that tribe.
Kami

In a Magar speaking community the Kami also articulate in *Magar kura*.

**Physical Characteristics**

They resemble the Brahmin in features, however on account of much admixture, their physical range in from the Austrodoid to the Caucasoid types.

**Sept (Thar)**

Though they claim Brahmin and Ksetri ancestry, these Kami people are seen to be the admixture of many ethnic groups and tribes which specialised in a particular profession, that consists of iron-working and now the profession has given them another identity, that is of the Untouchable category. The Kami tribe does not consist of a people of a particular tribe or community or racial group for that matter, thus the difference in their facial features and also their names or *thars* could be reasonably assumed to be correct.

These people who are known as Kami and Lohar in the kingdom, exist as Kannaujiya, Koksas, Mughiya, Mathuriya or Mahuliya, Kamark alla, Birbhumiya, Govindapuriya, Shergariya, etc. in small communities found in various pockets of India. Like these stated communities, the Lohar is listed under the Kami title in the regions of Champaran and Darjeeling in India. The Kannaujiya consider themselves to be the highest in the Lohar hierarchy, claiming Viswakarma to be their ancestor and Vishwamitra in worshipped by them as the protector of their profession.

**Life Cycle Rites**

**Navran**

When a child is born, the mother is kept in quatrintine for a period of 11 days, and for the same number of days she is not permitted to touch rice and water. On the 11th. day, the *navran* is performed and the child is given a name. The *navran* is performed by the child's father's nephew (or the child's cross cousin - matrilateral). A feast is given for all those present.
Pasni

This ceremony or ritual is performed six months after the birth of the child (male). New clothes are given to the child and the custom of feeding it with a sort of sweet rice called *khir* is done in accordance to the common Hindu ritual practised by all Hinduised tribes in Nepal. In the case of the child being a female, the pasni is set on the 5th. month after the birth, also in accordance with the Hindu custom.

Bratabandh

This ritual is performed when the male child is seven years old as is the custom. The maternal uncle or *mama* will clip off the boy's hair then to the accompaniment of various musical instruments, the child is proudly exhibited around the neighbourhood. This procession-like thing is called *desh ghumaune* which means taking the boy for a tour around the country. This is an extremely happy occasion for the boy, his householders, kin and the community as a whole. Fowls and goats are slaughtered and special foods are prepared to celebrate and mark the importance of this coming of age ceremony of the young Kami boy.

Marriage practices

Child marriages are not observed in Kami communities anywhere in the kingdom, though there may be isolated cases of which we are not aware. Tradition says that a boy and a girl can marry only after they attain the age of 16 years. After the boy's folks talk with the girl's parents and they indicate their authorisation, the match is agreed upon. This is followed by five people from the boy's side going to the girl's house with *koselee* or gifts which consist of *raksi*, chickens, etc. and in this way the girl's folks are feasted in their own house.

A Brahmin astrologer is consulted to fix the *lagan* or the auspicious time of the marriage. Besides a Brahmin, no one is used for this function. On other occasions like *navran* or *pasni*, a Brahmin or *bhanja* can be used.

On the actual marriage, the *bariyat* or *janti* accompanies the turbaned groom to the bride's house. The musicians are Damai folks. The *hom* (or offering of oblations to the fire god Agni in a
yagya where the fire is burning) is performed by two of the bride's nephews along with two of the groom's nephews. Once the hom is concluded then all rituals are over and the marriage concluded in the brahmanical way. The next day, accompanied by musicians, the groom departs with the bride towards his own house. On reaching his house, the bride is anointed with tika by the groom's sisters, to bring luck and blessings on this occasion for the household and the couple. In this way the Kami wedding is complete.

Gufa Basne

This is a ritual done by some tribes in Nepal. When a girl commences her first menstrual cycle or menarche, then she is considered polluted or na chu ne (not to be touched) for a period of 15 days. This period is called gufa basne or literally 'sitting in the cave'. Actually this involves the girl to be quarantined for the said period and not permitted to look upon the face of any male person. Thus she is not to look at her brothers, father, uncles, and such people also. Thus she is kept separately where males are not allowed to go and hence akin to being placed in a corner or carve. This also done by the Brahmin, Ksetri, Newar and some other tribes in Nepal.

When the girl has her second menstruation then she is considered polluted for a period of only 5 days, and on her third cycle, she can observe the pollution of the normal 4 days as is the custom throughout Nepal.

Death Rites

The practice of observing death pollution for a period of 13 days is prevalent among these Kami. The corpse is cremated and the daag batti is placed on the corpse's mouth by the son, as is a customary ritual of all Hindus. The ashes of the cremation are thrown into the nearby river or water source like a stream, or such. The person (mostly son) who fires the pyre or chita wears white and abstains from eating salts for the next 13 days of death pollution. On the last day, the purification is done and on this occasion also, the nephew plays the role of bahun or priest. One sraddha is done after six months and another after a year.
Religion and Festivals

From a religious standpoint, these Kami are not fanatically orthodox as other Hindus. They celebrate Deoli or Diwali or Tihar annually, where, using fruits, fowls and other foodstuffs they worship their Kuldevta. They believe in bokshi, dhami, jhankri and also celebrate Dasai and other festivals that all Hindus do. Besides worshipping Pasupati and Guheswari, they also pray to and worship Bagh Bhairav, Champa Devi, etc.

The Kannyaujiya Lohars and the Bihar Lohars may be lumped together and classified as devout Hindus. The Lohars inhabiting the terai regions also follow the Hindu devtas and cultures. These people not only participate in socio-religious festivals, but also worship Kali, Badri, Brahma, Mangal, Bhuicha, etc. and locally popular deities like Maniya-pitha and devi-deota.

Occupation

Kami people anywhere in the kingdom are mostly dependent on their traditional occupation which is running a smithy, for their livelihood. It may be said that they have no custom of practising agriculture. Those Kami good in their profession as blacksmiths, seem to be diligently pursuing their traditional occupation and earning a lot more today than in the past. It has been observed that the Lohars are professional blacksmiths and also carpenters today. No matter how much demand for work exists and no matter how hard a Karni blacksmith works and no matter how much money he earns, he is easy going as is his tribe, and so the hard earned money is spent on feasting and the consuming of raksi which has become compulsory in a feast anywhere in the kingdom.

Thus, due to social stratification, the Kami are low on the ladder and in addition their economic condition is not pleasant to observe as they are still seen to be living in primitivity at places and also their attitudes have not changed much though everything around them has altered and developed so much.
KUMAL

The Nepalese terai, Inner Madesh and many hilly areas are inhabited by a tribe of people who make earthenware pots and sell them to the surrounding villagers. This tribe is known as Kumal.

Settlement

The areas of settlement of these Kumals are: Morang, Jhapa, Biratnagar, Dhading, Gorkha, Lamjung, Chitwan Nawalparasi, Rupandehi, Kapilvastu, Dang, Deokhuri, Tanahun, Parbat, Syangja, Gulmi, Argha Khanchi and Palpa districts. Due to the fact that these people fall in the minority category, it is observed that they do not want to remain separated from their fellow-tribesmen in a bid to maintain their cultural integrity. Similar to many other minority tribes, they live together in closely clustered settlements, as seen.

Kumal - Origin of the Word

On account of their profession of making earthenware pots, they are said to be called Kumals. It is said that this word has its origin from the Sanskrit language, where Kumbhakar was changed to Kumahar and then to Kumahal. Finally the original word became Kumal. This is stated by some scholars and experts. But other sources say that Kumbhakar changed to Kuhar and Kumole or Kumbhakar to Kumahar and then ultimately Kumhal and Kumal. Whatever the truth, these people are called Kumal through this description of their culture.

Physical Characteristics

The Kumals are generally dark skinned, of medium stature and appear somewhat mongoloid in features, however, it is stated that they have Aryan roots and possess a religion and culture adapted from the Aryans. Physically, they resemble the Majis to a startling degree. They are extremely susceptible, honest and straightforward folks. Once they are familiarised with someone, they tend to become extremely friendly. Due to their hardworking nature (manual work), they are robust tough and healthy. Their womenfolk are also cheerful and very knowing in matters of extending hospitality to guests.
Dress up and ornaments

The *kachhad* is the dress for the menfolks. They wear *gharo* to cover their bodies and a cap on their heads. Women wear *dhotis*, black *gunew* (sari-like clothes), *patuka* (waistbands), *cholo* (blouses) and *ghalek* (cloth knotted at the shoulder and worn crosswise from shoulder to waist like a cartridge belt). Lately, however, the modern dress mode seems to have effected these people to a great extent, especially the youths.

Ornaments include the *phuli* (on the nostrils), *jhumke bulaki* (tasseled nose rings of gold), *marwari dhungri* on their ear lobes, *raiya* (bangles) on their wrists.

Septs (*Thar*)

Like the other tribes within the kingdom, these Kumal people also have various *thar* or septs. When one delves deeply into their *thar*, it can be clearly seen that these *thars* through the centuries, have been based on names of places of settlement and professions they practiced in those early days. There are: Khatris, Thim Thine, Bagol, Arghali, Sikharli, Pyuthani, Saplunge, Kiran, Pokhrel, Gochunge, Posthare, Sapkote, Baddhare, Hardiya, Ranguje, Bangbote, Saweengee, Rajput, Gorsthe, Masuke, Boskhar, Hardelee, Boskhar, Chappkote, Athbhaiya, Palpali, Parbate Syangjali, Naya Chittoure, Rana, Chol, Bas, Bote, Dudhpam, Halise, Dale, Mudule,Pathak, Bhattarai, Syan, Santha, and such.

Language

Though the Kumal language has persihed in some parts of their habitation, there are other places where the language has been preserved and nourished through usage. They use the Nepalese language while communicating with other non-Kumals but within their society and homes, the Kumal language is adhered to or preferred. Their language is included within the Indo-Aryan category and it is their tribal medium of communication and contact.

The language is spoken by the *jhankri* of the Kumal community when in a trance. A sample of Kumal words are listed with their approximate equivalents in Nepali and English.
Kumal

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kumal</th>
<th>Nepali</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>min/mui/muke</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tui/tuke</td>
<td>tan/timi</td>
<td>you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ture</td>
<td>tapai</td>
<td>you (honorific)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ago</td>
<td>ago</td>
<td>fire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pani</td>
<td>pani</td>
<td>water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mati</td>
<td>mato</td>
<td>mud/earth</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Khas jai alla kes? - Where have you come to go?
Tuke batai aila ka - I've come to meet you.

Life Cycle Ries

Chhaiti

On the sixth day after the birth of a child, the chhaiti is performed. It is the custom that on the night of the chhaiti, all the villagers gather at the concerned house to sing jhamrae geeth, beat the madal, dance, drink jad and raksi, and keep a whole night vigil to celebrate the birth of a descendant. It is the common belief that on this night, bhabi or Fate, comes and writes the destiny of the infant. This writing by Fate is called doro halcha. The all night vigil and the merry-making is thought an essential part of this process, by these simple folks.

Navran

The next ceremony is the navran or naming which is done on the ninth day, after the birth pollution is purified. First the woman is given a bath along with her child in the morning and then they are purified. For this ceremony, the Kumals do not use the direct services of a Brahmin priest, but the child's father instead, goes to a priest, consults him regarding the child's name, returns home and ties the yellow thread on the baby's hands, legs and waist. This is followed by the sacrifice of a rooster if it is a boy and a hen in the case of a girl being born. The typical Hindu custom of using gaunth (cow urine) to purify both the woman and the house is unheard of in the Kumal society and hence not practised, though they claim to be Hindus.

Pasni (Bhat Khuwai)

After consulting the astrologer and a Brahmin priest, the date is set for the child's pasni or bhat khuwai (from this ceremony onwards,
solid foods are given to the child). In the case of a girl's *pasni*, the time is five months after birth and six months for a boy. The child is made to wear a set of copper or silver bangles on the wrists and given a set of new clothes. Using a mixture of curds and rice grains, a paste is made and this is used for putting *tika* which is pasted in the middle of the child's forehead with blessings. The first one to have the privilege of putting this *tika* is a virgin girl who then feeds the child with pulses, rice fish, meat and such foods. This is then followed by the parents and others who are invited (guests), relatives and neighbours. The child is given presents of sweets, money, clothes, etc. This custom of a virgin girl putting the initial *tika* is also rather different from other tribes throughout the kingdom.

**Marriage Practices**

Marriage is an important social institution among the Kumals and it is through a thorough observation of this, that we can get an idea of their traditional rituals, social importance of rites and rituals and behavioural patterns. The Kumals living in and around Palpa area have marriage customs and rituals very much similar to the majority Magar population in many aspects, since these Kumals live with these people in extremely close proximity resulting in a natural cultural exchange.

This closeness is brought about between these two tribes by the custom of *jhamrae basne* (sitting down to sing and dance), drinking *jad* and *raksi*, and such activities which play an important and even crucial role in the shaping of tribal cultures. The Kumals practice two kinds of marriages which have become socially popular namely:

(a) marriage through mutual liking or wish of couple  
(b) marriage arranged by parents.

The first type of marriage is also called a `love marriage`, and it is not necessary that the parents of either boy or girl, should be in agreement with the marriage, however, in ordinary circumstances these sort of marriages are sanctioned by the parents. Even in the case of no sanction the marriages occur. As observed, the parents' decision is not at all essential. The *dhog-bhet* is also a difficult task to fulfill, however, in the second type of marriage the couple's agreement is considered desirable.
In Kumal society, marriages do not occur through coercion by parents. The Kumal marriage practices are healthy and in line with contemporary beliefs. In the marriage rituals of these people, two different steps are observed. The first step maybe called the first half of the marriage, while the second step is the second half. The first half consists of the ritual of taking the bride into the groom's house, and the second half involves going to the in-laws and *dhog-bhet phukaune*. For the completion of a marriage, the above mentioned two steps are extremely important. In both types of marriages, the first step is the taking of the bride into the groom’s house or *dulahan bhitraune*. In marriages where the boy and girl desire to marry, of their own free will, the girl is brought home by the boy from the forest where she is collecting firewood or from a *jhamrae* dance where she is a spectator or while she is on a shopping errand. It is customary that boys bring home girls from local fairs and festivals too. Even in marriages sanctioned or approved by their parents, it is imperative that the bride is initially brought into the house by their son.

Prior to the entry of the girl into the boy's house, the two sides of the door are decorated with *kalas* filled with water and flowers, and oil lamps are lit. The bride and the groom perform *puja* to the *kalas* and oil lamps with a mixture of flowers, rice grains and sandal wood *chandan*. After this, the groom pours vermillion powder or *sindur* on the bride's hair parting and guns are fired in joyous celebration of this auspicious moment, while a fowl is slaughtered outside the door. Prior to the slaughtering of the fowl, the groom calls out thrice:

```
'khukuri ko dhar rato, chhapani ko pindh chisogaraun tah? Lau tah kataun ? kataun?'
```

This means -
Shall I make the blade of the *khukuri* red and the bottom of the *chhapani* (jad strainer) wet. Shall I cut? Shall I cut?

When the *kat* (cut) order is given, the groom tells the bride `*Rato pahelo na herne*` - don't look at red or yellow which means she is never to doubt her husband being involved with other women. This habit of doubting one's husband to be having an affair with another woman is called *ankha laune*. After saying the words: `*Rato pahelo na herne*` the groom beheads the fowl with a single
stroke. But if a single stroke doesn't finish off the fowl, then a fine of Rs 5/ must be paid by the groom to the household head. After this, the bride is to walk over the blood oozing out of the fowl holding a kalas in one hand and sticks, broom and a bunch of leaves in the other, thus crossing the threshold and entering the groom's house.

Once inside the bride pays her respects to her sasu and sasura (mother and father in-laws), jethajyus (elder brother-in-laws) and other neighbours and guests present, according to their statuses in the social hierarchy. Prior to the sprinkling or pouring of the sindur, the groom must present the bride with common items such as bangles, thread for plaiting her hair, pote (glass bead necklace), sari, mujetro (shawl), ghalek, cholo, etc. Special clothes and ornaments have to be given at the time of the dhog-bhet phukaune at the bride's house. Prior to this ritual, the bride must never leave the groom's house in an official or formal way while going anywhere. If she does so, she is considered dirty and impure which means that she is suspected of having cohabited with another male. This ends the first phase of the marriage.

The important part of marriage's second phase is for the couple to go to the bride's house for dhog-bhet phukaune and presenting of sagun (gifts and offerings). The actual preparation is done at this point and this ritual is considered as an official announcement from the Kumal social viewpoint. For this dhog-bhet phukaune to take place, the groom's parents must send some people to the bride's house to inform them, and within three days after the bride is taken into the groom's house. A man or men are dispatched with a bottle of liquor (raksi) to the bride's house to inquire as to the number of janti and guests they can accommodate. This man is briefed about the janti size, the number of guests to be invited and when to bring the procession. Accordingly, the necessary items are readied by the groom's folks and on the day of the dhog-bhet phukaune, the janti sets out with the quoted number, towards the bride's house. On such occasions, jad and raksi are considered objects of extreme importance.

Almost everyone is intoxicated with the alcoholic beverages on this happy occasion. As guests, the janti carry along about five fowls, sale roti, chhapte roti, pickle, batuk (jhilungi, bodi or soya is ground into flour, kneaded and cooked in oil with a hole in the centre like a doughnut), jad, raksi, pork, pulses, rice, etc. to the
bride's house. These foodstuff are taken since it is customary that the groom provides these for the feast given to both the janti and the relatives of the bride. Therefore, the janti are lucky enough to receive one meal from the bride's side and one from the groom's. Porters are not required since these items are all carried by the janti members themselves to the bride's house. As a form of respect to the janti the bride's folks sprinkle them with coloured rice grains as they arrive at the bride's house. As a form of sagun, the person who leads carries a theki (woden vessel) of curds and a bunch of sag (green leafy vegetables) which symbolises the green and prosperous life of the couple in the future and the curds in the theki heralds a productive increase in progeny so these Kumals believe.

After the janti have been properly welcomed out of the five fowls brought by them, two (a rooster and a hen) are simultaneously sacrificed on the main door by the jawai-chela (son-in-law), one is kept for chhak chodaune (making the bride leave eating her meals at home), to be done the following day. Immediately after the fowls are sacrificed, they are covered with a dhakar (thumche) woven V-shaped basket within which the fowls twitch and die. When death is complete, the basket is removed and everyone looks at the omen. This is a ritual to assess the couple's future, as is the general Kumal belief. What is expected is that both the fowls should have died in the same posture and their bloods should have flowed into one another's, mingling at a single spot so as to look like flowing out of one body. This omen is supposed to predict whether the couple's married life will remain happy or not their domestic life runs smoothly or not with cooperation and understanding and will their earnings be sufficient or not. If the fowls don't show the expected positive signs, then it is believed that their married life will not run properly or some unforeseen calamity will befall them. This is a very firm belief of the Kumals, and so the crowd to see the omens is rather large and excited.

Although this ritual does momentarily effect those gathered there to see the omens, the couple are the most effected and in a state of extreme anxiety and even high tension. It is said that the situation where the omen is bad, seldom occurs. Though this method of determining a couple's married future life, has no scientific base, the method itself is rather strange and unusual for forecasting a couple's future destiny.
Now comes the process of inviting the guests inside. Initially, those carrying the *sagun* enter the bride's house and keeping the items inside, they emerge. Either the bride's father or her brothers, put the coloured rice grains *tika* on the foreheads of the couple and also of the *janti* members. The Kumal custom is for the bride's sisters to obstruct the couple from entering the house, and are only allowed to pass when the groom pays a *danda* (compensation) in the form of some money. For snacks, the *janti* are provided with *jad*, *raksi*, pickles, meat, *batuk* and bread. All are happy and enjoy themselves when the *jhamrae* is danced and music is played to the sounds of guns fired into the air to mark this occasion. When the food is ready, the *janti* are served with a feast of *dal-bhat*, *tarkari* (pulses, rice and curry).

At night, the bride's kin wash her feet and drink the water and also of the groom. Then they put *tika* on the foreheads of the couple and give presents of money. The groom is presented with a sort of dowry consisting of money and utensils. New clothes and ornaments are given to the bride by the groom. These are traditional rituals which are still adhered to. The whole night is spent in merry-making singing, dancing, joking and such entertainment by the *janti*. The next day, whatever vessels containing food which had been brought by the groom's group, are returned along with some *sagun* placed within these containers. These are again carried back to the groom's house by the *janti*. The meat taken by the groom is weighed and payment for half the amount is made as is the custom. Whatever *sagun* the *janti* had taken, they eat or drink on the way.

After the return of the *janti* to the groom's house, the vessels and utensils used are stored away. Then songs, dances, music and firing of guns all make a cacaphonic mixture to express the importance of that unforgettable day. While the *janti* are at the bride's house, on the previous night, the women folks of the groom's side collect at the groom's house to sing and dance the *jhamrae* and enact *ratauli*. Three days after the *dhog-bhet phukaune*, the couple, taking *saugat*, go to the bride's house to fulfill the *dulahan phadkaune* (return of the bride) ritual and stay there for three days as is compulsory and customary too.

*Purna Biwaha* (a married woman elopes with another male) is prevalent among Kumals, but they do not consider this a marriage, instead in their society it is known as *jari garne*. If this is the
male's first time then he has to pay a fine or jarikhat of Rs 60/-. The amount becomes half the first or Rs 30/- if it is the second time and on the third time, the jarikhat is waived.

Marriages are not permitted between people of the same gotr-thar (gotr-thar exogamy) and this effects even the jari cases. The aspects of devar-bhauju marriages is a reality within the Kumal society. The devar (a woman's husband's younger brother) has to look after his bhauju (elder brother's wife) should her spouse die and if the devar and bhauju are on good terms with each other, both mentally and physically. Among the Kumals it is compulsory for the daughters to accept the money presented to them, to compare and tally horoscopes of the couple prior to marriage and called Lagan chhopne.

Since the months of Kartik, Chaitra and Srawan are considered inauspicious, no Kumal will marry during these months. The other nine months of the year are used for marriages and a date is fixed for the ceremony. Similar to the Magars, these Kumals also have full rights to marry their maternal uncle's daughters (Matrilateral cross-cousin marriages) and these girls are not allowed to be married off elsewhere unless and until the boys do not grant permission (verbal) or express their intention of not wanting to marry them. Regarding polygyny, the Kumals are said to be very much similar to the Bhotiyas since this marriage practice is very prevalent among these Kumals also. However, things such as unmatched marriages (where the man is old and the girl is young or vice-versa) and child marriages are very rare among these people.

After the parents of the couple have decided and set the date of marriage, if the girl elopes with or is taken away by another boy, prior to the arranged marriage is done, then this boy who has taken the girl has to pay a compensation or fine to the girl's parents. This amount depends on the demand of the parents of the girl, and only after this is paid can the couple get ritually married. This social fine is called changra chhodaune. This fine is given to their daughter by the parents as her personal security for the future, but today, this practice is dwindling and at the point of total disuse.

In Kumal marriages, young and old of neighbouring villages also congregate at the village where the marriage occurs. They are uninhibited and participate freely in the jhamrae that are in full swing. Though the pancha bajas and the naumati bajas are
absent the marriage can be made extremely colourful and entertaining by the dance and songs of the jhamrae, which creates a festive atmosphere. Unlike the custom of the Ksetri and Brahmin, the Kumal bride doesn't cry too loudly and mournfully as to create an atmosphere of sadness and gloom among her family, neighbours and the whole village, but on the contrary at this moment the bride and groom exhibit happy faces and participate in the jhamrae that are in full swing. Dhog-bhet is considered extremely important in marriages. After the couple leaves the bride's house and come to the groom's house, they have to perform dhog-bhet to all those worthy of their respect and on a seniority basis.

Death Rites

In respect to certain rites and rituals of death among the Kumals, there exists a certain degree of similarity with rites and rituals of other tribes within the kingdom, however, there are other aspects which are quite different and unique to the Kumals. Water burials in rivers or burials on river banks are ways in which a corpse is sent off and accordingly the kaj kriya is performed. These compose the death rites among these people.

If the death has occurred at night, then all those present sit around the corpse awaiting dawn. The next day, after all have eaten, the corpse is taken out into the compound and then all the household members, in turns, put rice grains on the deceased's mouth simultaneously thinking of his name. Also, 5 or 10 paise coins are put on the corpse's mouth to enable him (his soul) to purchase land at the place (hereafter) he is migrating to. Then the corpse is wound in a white shroud, tied to a bamboo pole and carried by two men on their left shoulders and taken to the river bank.

Once the corpse is taken away, the house is cleaned with a coating of cowdung and water mixture, but with strokes in one direction only. The personal effects together with the straw mat on which the corpse was laid are also taken to the place of burial and burnt at a lonely spot. On reaching the river bank, the corpse is given a daag batti (farewell fire) place on its mouth by the the son according to the Hindu custom and then the corpse is either thrown into the river or buried on the river bank. After this, the funeral goers have a bath and offer three cupped handfuls of water in the name of the deceased. The kriyaputri (one who has to observe death pollution of the deceased directly - normally a son) has his head shaved at
the river bank, cooks *pind* (rice for the deceased) which he empties out in one stroke onto a leaf without leaving a single grain in the pot. Then he shifts this *pind* onto a *tapari* (leaf plate) nine times and then dips this is water alongwith *jaun* (barley) and *til* (sesame) and then throws it into the river. When all return from the funeral, a short distance before they reach the house, they all inhale incense smoke and with their left foot, step on a stone under which is placed thorns and cross this barrier to go home. This is said to be done, as they believe, so as to create a barrier for death to be unable to cross over to the land of the living. The funeral goers are then made to drink *arnipani* and follow the *kriyaputri* towards home.

On the evening of the funeral, the *kriyaputri* is allowed to eat bananas fried in *ghyu* and drink *jad* and *raksi*, only. A place for the *kriyaputri* is made in a corner of the *pindi* (open verandah in front of the house and having roof) where it is cordoned off with straw mats or woven bamboo *bhakaris* (mats). He is permitted to sleep only on straw and nothing else. At night, he must light an oil lamp made of mud and place it on a lump of straw.

On such occasions, the Kumal society have a rule for offering donations to the household where the death has occurred. The stipulations are to donate: 4 *manas* of *anna* (foodgrains) 1 *mana* of rice, and Rs 2/- per household. This is considered compulsory, and is know as *ghot* or *bhoti uthaune*.

Every morning, the *kriyaputri* goes to a nearby stream or river, has a bath and offers three cupped handfuls of water in the name of the deceased. When he returns home, he cooks pind, which he offers in the deceased’s name and in which he pours water thrice. Vegetables, *jad*, *raksi* and ginger are also added to it. For a period of 13 days, the *kriyaputri* must eat only one meal a day.

Among these Kumals, the accepted tradition is that a *kriyaputri* who is observing death pollution by staying in *kora* (quarantine like state) is allowed to eat ginger and bananas, and drink *jad* and *raksi*, however, he is not allowed to touch milk, meat, salt, oil, etc. On the 10th day, he has to feed some virgin girls.

On the third day, the *kriyaputri* is taken out of *kora* and the little hair that has grown is again shaved off by a *jawai* (brother-in-law). The female folks of the house clean it with a mixture of cowdung
and water, but this time a to and fro stroke is used which is called ulto sulto phukaune.

The kriyaputri has to bathe and come back once more to cook the pind. In one corner of the compound, a statue of siru is placed and pind daan is offered here. After this, meat of buffaloes, pork, chicken, etc. which are saltless, sidhara, etc. are placed in separate leaf cups (dunas) and offered around the pind. Meat, phaphar and jhilungi are kept in separate dunas and placed around the pind. At the centre of the pind, a statue of siru is embedded and an oil lamp is kept burning directly in front of it. In this way, the kriyaputri completes the the ritual of pind daan. This is followed by the jawai presenting everyone with a little bit of gaunth (cow urine) to drink and purify the self. The custom of putting tika, presenting new clothes, money, plates and bowls to jawai and virgin girls is existent among these Kumals, and is done on the day of the purification rites.

The sons must observe death pollution of parents for 6 months, if not for 45 days at the least. When children die, their death pollution is observed for 9 days or 5 days as per the necessity felt by the village and household elders.

Songs and Dances

Similar to the Gurungs, the Kumals have a custom of collecting at someone's house and singing and dancing the whole night. In this gathering of youths, in a majority, and more mature folks, in a minority, where group dancing and singing is done, there seems to be no restrictions and all are permitted to participate. Thus we can find: brothers and sisters, sister-in-laws and brother-in-laws, and such. Such programmes are impromptu and occur when these people are free or at leisure. This is known as jhamrae basne or jhamrae nach. Nepali folk songs are sung in tunes that are currently popular and the dancing is performed by males and females to the rhythmic beat of a madal. This jhamrae seems to be an outlet for this monotony and is therefore a source of immense entertainment and popularity for these simple people. If this jhamrae to be done in someone's empty house, the raksi and jad expense is borne by the whole group, jointly, otherwise the house in which this jhamrae takes place manages the jad and raksi.

In Kumal society, prior to anyone inhabiting a newly built house, a
jhamrae is performed in it firstly and then only is to considered fit for habitation, they believe. Likewise, during festivals and community agricultural works, it is customary to sing the jhamrae. On the day of the harvest, when the grains are stored in the house or bhakari (granary) all those people who had worked together to get this harvest in, congregate at night at the concerned house and there they are given biraula (various pulses soaked in water and then cooked into a sort of soup) to eat and the ever present jad and raksi, to drink. After the eating is done with, the young girls and boys and others who have come, dance and sing the jhamrae throughout the night in accordance with the mood influenced by the intoxicants.

Actually, in jhamrae (like the rodhis) it is customary for young boys and girls to sing doharis (duets, where one questions and the other answers and vice-versa). The jhamrae of the Kumals is slightly different from the rodhis of the Gurungs. On marriages, even if there are no musical instruments, the atmosphere is made extremely merry with the jhamrae where there are songs and dances. In the Kumal society, one can get a chance to hear Nepali songs translated into the Kumal language and sung on these jhamrae. An example of such a song is given as follows:

Nepali version
ghar tah mero ho ridi bazar, jata maya uthi bata nazr, dai tah pasale bahirike udilas minibusale

Kumal version
chauparima chhaplak chhapai, jasam maya osanbatu maie pini, dai tah pasale bahirike udilas minibusale.

In some Kumal villages in various districts, there is a custom of dancing the karuwa dance, where the singing is done by the girls while the boys do the enactment and dance according to the rhythm of the song and the words. At times, such jhamraes are jointly organised to provide entertainment to the whole Kumal community meaning the whole village or villages in that area.

Religion & Festivals

Though Kumals are mostly mongoloid in appearance, they are actually Hindus and their main religion is Hinduism. It can be found that these people believe in heaven, earth, sin, virtue, god, metempsychosis and Fate, which are pillars that uphold Hinduism.
They worship the sacred cow and perform Laxmi puja. The urine of the cow and its dung are also considered sacred and they believe that if one does some charitable works on this earth while alive, then the road to heaven and the afterlife is clear.

Though Kumals eat various meats like buffaloes, pigs, mutton, chicken, they do not eat anything which has died prior to being slaughtered. They breed chickens and pigs and simultaneously believe in Ganesh, Siva, Vishnu, Bhagawati and other such gods and goddesses in the Hindu pantheon.

Satyanarayan Puja, burning one lakh lamps for the deceased's soul to rest in peace, making small wayside resting places in the name of the deceased (these are called chautara), planting the bar and pipal trees which they take as symbols of great religious significance, are performed and done by the Kumals. Though they wear no sacred threads like the Ksetri or Brahmin, except for a few slight differences, all their religious beliefs and works are purely Hinduistic and so it may be said that their society is firmly fixed within the rites and rituals of the Hindu culture.

Kulain Puja

The religious works performed by the Kumals in fond remembrance of their deceased ancestors is known as kul devta ko puja, in their society, or Kulain puja. Once a year, on Mahaastami, in Dasai, they perform this puja to honour their ancestors in a most solemn and devout way. These people honour their pitree (recently dead ancestors-three generations) and put them in the pantheon of Kul devtas (tutelary deities) and so it is called Kul devta puja. In the past the tradition was to perform these puja thrice a year that is on Srawan Sankranti, Shree Panchami, Mahastami in Dasai, however, now a days only those who are rich and affluent can finance this puja thrice a year, while the common folks perform this puja only on Mahastami as earlier mentioned. While slaughter and bloodshed is prohibited religiously, when Brahmins and Ksetri do their pitree pujas, the Kumals are compelled to slaughter at least five fowls and offer them to their kul devtas. On the morning of such pujas, the concerned people bathe to purify themselves and don clean clothes.

For the Kulain Puja, not less than 9 manas (one kilo = 2 manas
approx) of rice grains are compulsorily required, out of which one \textit{mana} is kept aside for making \textit{aksata}, \textit{panch} (five) \textit{muthis} (handfuls) are cooked for the \textit{pitree} and the remainder 7 1/2 \textit{manas} are made into flour through grinding and then this is kneaded and made into a dough. Then small round balls with depressions in the centre are made. These are \textit{pind}. They are put into a pot of boiling water, the lid is closed and then boiled. This is all done in the dark interior of the house called the \textit{bhandar kotha} (place or room where things are stored, especially grains).

Initially, an oil lamp is lit in the corner of the \textit{bhandar kotha} and remembering the \textit{pitree} names and the \textit{puja} is done to the \textit{kul devta} on the floor with \textit{aksata} and flowers. The words which are chanted during this \textit{puja} are some thing like this:

\begin{quote}
`Pahila bhayo manau ko rup, ahile bhayo deota ko rup. Lau parmeswari hamilai kunai ghachaghur na deo'.
\end{quote}

These words roughly mean: At first you were a human being, now you are a god. Please do not give us any sort of trouble.

Thus chanting, the household head pours water on a fowl and systematically 4 fowls are slaughtered one after the other and offered in the name of the \textit{pitree}. Then all the names of the \textit{pitree} are called out one after the other and the boiled rice balls are placed in the respective places. The \textit{panch muthis} of cooked rice are offered only in the name of the dead parents. The rice balls can be given to the other \textit{pitree}. Next \textit{jad} and \textit{raksi} are offered to the \textit{pitree} alongwith roasted chicken and finally incense. This \textit{puja} has to be done either by the son of the deceased or by his brothers in the case of no male heirs. While offering food to the \textit{pitree}, many things have to be chanted and so it is essential to have a presiding priest or person who knows what is to be chanted, and he should possibly be of the same \textit{jat} and \textit{thar} as the householders. As long as the \textit{puja} is in progress, the oil lamp should not be allowed to go off. This \textit{puja} commences in the afternoon and ends in the evening. Then the rice balls, \textit{jad} and \textit{raksi} offered to the \textit{pitree} are distributed as \textit{prasad} to the gathering. \textit{Jawai}, daughters and other are also invited to these \textit{pujas}. Since it is the custom to feed all those present with \textit{jad}, \textit{raksi}, rice, meat, and such things, these \textit{pujas} are extremely expensive affairs.
In the pitree or Kulain puja of the Kumals, jad, raksi and chicken meat are not considered defiling at all. This puja is also known as Khand puja by many of the Kumals. This is because all weapons like khukuris, khundas, swords, etc. are collected and puja is performed on these items, thus the name Khand puja. The Kulain puja of the Kumals somewhat represents Durga Puja in some respects, and into some respects it is similar to the sraddha of the Brahmin and Ksetri. It is believed that in ancient times, Kulain pujas were conducted by offering human sacrifices however, it was legally banned later on and thus this practice slowly vanished, so the old Kumals say. Even today, in this twentieth century, Bagale Kumals or Kumals of the Bagale sept offer blood from their own bodies to their kul devtas by cutting their chests and they say that a few rice grains (aksata) must be reddened with the blood of their bodies.

Same puja

Same is regarded as the deity of the animals and he is worshipped so as to gain favour for the protection and security of livestock. This puja to Same is also called Jhankri puja. Here, stones are embedded in the earth and 4 spaces are made and within each space, lines are drawn to construct 9 squares, which totals 36 squares. Thus, 36 pujas have to be performed. Same jhankri and Same bala each have to be propitiated with one crowing rooster. Each of the 4 squares have to be filled with a bow and an arrow, a container or khori of law, a cow's milk and 4 bread made from finely ground rice. A thread has to be tied five times round a stone image. A piece of clove and betel nut have to be offered also. 8 dhvjas (cloth banners or pennants) have to be tied and erected at 8 places. This Same puja is done in the months of Falgun and Baisakh.

Nag-Nageni Puja

The nag (male serpent) and nageni (female serpent) are worshipped as gods of the earth by the Kumals. Natural calamities such as floods and landslides are attributed to their anger and so to remain secure from these disasters, the Kumals propitiate the nag and nageni. Kumals believe that the Kali Nag, Seti Nag, Sesh Nag, Basuki Nag, Ogo Nag (one which accepts sacrifices of pigs), Chidi Nag, Phoke Nag, Dhade Nag, Kuga Nag, Lula Nag, Dunda Nag, Khasre Nag, Phusre Nag, Chewre Nag, Dhule Nag, Surukha Nag,
Loha Nag, etc. exist and it is when these are angry that natural calamities like landslides in fields, lightening striking houses, crippling or handicapping people, causing spasms, convulsions and bodily pains, lumps forming all over the body, etc. occur. Thus it is thought that these nags and nagenis must be propitiated with pujas and offerings.

When doing puja to these deities, their images must be made out of ground rice which is kneaded into a dough. Then using ashes and vermillion, horizontal lines are drawn to beautify these images. The tongues are made of dubo (grass stalks) and eyes of mas (a kind of pulse which is dark greenish-black in colour). Nag puja is done by using ground rice or rice flour to draw lines making five squares. Using a burning oil lamp, flowers, dubo and aksata (rice grains), every square is worshipped. Keeping lawa (roasted rice grains) in one khori (container), and cow's milk in another khori, these are offered to the Nag Nageni and a stream of milk is poured over these images. Simli or pati poles are erected and on them dhvjas are tied.

Even after the puja is over, two fowls have to be slaughtered and the deities have to be offered incense. The main place where this puja is done is the corner of the fields where water gushes out during the monsoons or mul phuteko. Besides this puja, the Kumals perform the Bhairav and Bhagawati Puja when they have vowed to do so on fulfilment of some wish, and for this, there is a custom of taking the pannchal. In all these pujas, in accordance to the local environment, various influences can be observed and among these various pujas, slight differences can be found among Kumal communities spread across the different areas of the kingdom.

Bansakhandi or Sikari Puja

Since there are about 50 to 100 Bansakhandis, it is customary to call them Satbhaiya and Pachbhaiya. They are worshipped so that while one goes to the jungle, no sudden illness should afflict this person. The paraphernalia compulsorily required for this puja are: a set of bow and arrows, a catapult (Y shaped), a bamboo pole on which are placed five to six arrows, a clean and unused chillum (tobacco or marijuana smoking earthenware holder), a bamboo hooka (hubble-bubble), smoking tobacco and chewing tobacco kept in a bag or jawaiya and a filled chillum. At the place of
worship, on the ground, mud, ashes and coals, must be used to draw horizontal and vertical lines of 4 types and a total of 12 squares will be used for the worship. 4 long poles fixed with cloth pennants are imbedded into the ground on the four sides. Cloves, betel nuts and other things have to be offered to Bansakhandi and at the top of the puja area, an oil lamp must be lit. In the end, two fowls have to be sacrificed and incense must be burnt as an offering. In this way, this puja is concluded.

Mandali Bai and Samere Bai Puja

These deities are also worshipped as important gods. Mandali Bai is the image of Ban Devta (male forest deity) while Samere Bai is that of Ban Devi (female forest deity). It is believed by these Kumals, that if these bai are not worshipped and propitiated, then the consequence is that the whole community or village is plagued with illness. Thus, to immunise themselves from any illnesses like coughs, destruction of foetus in the womb, diarrhoea, indigestion, loss of appetite and such, these Bais are worshipped and propitiated.

These deities are worshipped in secluded and clean places at the edge of fields, where there are trees and bushes under which these pujas are performed. On the ground, vermillion or finely ground rice powder is used to make horizontal and vertical lines which should enclose 25 squares. Within these squares, 25 different types of foods are placed and using pati and rice grains, puja is offered to these deities on each item of food individually. Both deities have to be offered a stone tied with thread, dhvja (a piece of cloth), aksata (rice grains and must be washed clean. 4 tall amala lingas (poles) tied with a dhvja each have to be erected and kept in the centre of the 25 squares, an oil lamp has to be lit above or at the top of this area of worship. Finally after completion of these rituals, Samere Bai has to be worshipped and propitiated with a blood sacrifice of a hen and Mandali Bai with a rooster. This puja is rounded off by offering burnt incense to these two deities of the forest.

Deshantari Mai and Phirantari Mai Puja

These deities are associated with diseases. They are worshipped and propitiated so that diseases such as asthma, coughs, smallpox, cholera and such do not trouble the village or community, crops and family not be harmed, cattle not be effected with chin swelling
and sores in the hoofs and inside the mouths. It is customary to perform this *puja* once a year as an individual family affair and once a year as a joint effort by the whole community in the month of Jesth.

Since it is a community affair, it is sometimes called Samcehhe Puja or Bheja Puja. To carry out this *puja*, villagers collect donations and purchase an uncastrated goat or *boku* and two pairs of cocks and hens. Every household has to donate items essential for this *puja*. It is compulsory that a person from every household be present at the place of worship.

The priest bathes to purify himself and then goes to the place of worship, where he draws lines so as to make 14 squares. He ties 14 *dhvjas* of various colours, taken from the cloth pieces donated for the *puja* by the community members. Flowers and *aksata* are used to initially offer worship to the *diyo* (oil lamp) and *kalas*. The items that are offered to the deities are: rice grains, flowers, castrated goats (mutton) or *khsi*, pieces of liver, blood of the sacrifice, cloves, betel nuts, vermillion, money, coins, etc. and lastly a fowl is slaughtered and offered to the deities. At this stage, incense is offered and invocations chanted as is below:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Sasana meda puja deum,} \\
\text{Khetipati, bastu bhau ra lalabala kasaili} \\
\text{Rog byadi na lagos,} \\
\text{Sabbai ko racche garideo hai} \\
\text{Deshantari ra Phirantari Mai.}
\end{align*}
\]

When this invocation is clarified in the English language, its meaning is somewhat as follows:

"We have offered a minor *puja* to you, so please let no illness befall our crops, cattle, children. Please protect everyone Deshantari and Phirantari Mais'"

When this *puja* is done by individuals or households, those who are able to afford offer 3 pairs of cocks and hens, while the financially weaker people offer only two pairs. This *puja* is not lumped into the one done on the community level. They use a different direction and perform it near a river or on a pasture. The animals sacrificed, on these community sponsored *pujas*, are cooked and
distributed to all participants equally, on the spot. Everyone present eats rice, meat and gravy. Then they return home singing Mahadev Panidejo joyfully. This community puja is somewhat like a village or community picnic and is seen to be practised by many tribes in the kingdom.

**Chandi Devi Puja**

This puja also called the Chandi Devi Pujais celebrated in a great way by the Kumals on a Baisakh Purnima On this puja, agnates (father's relatives) and affines (relatives through marriages) are all gathered, thus giving the occasion a very festive look and colour. Every household offers a fowl to Bhawani Chandi Mai. The priest cleans and mud-coats the Chandi Than (shrine or place where Chandi Devi is worshipped), then he offers puja to the oil lamp and kalas. A dhvja is tied to a tall bamboo pole, then incense is burnt as an offering and the blood of sacrificed fowls is offered to the goddess. Animals are slaughtered in pairs. The main reason for offering this puja by the Kumals to the Chandi Devi is to ask protection for their children while they (children) are going some place or travelling.

**Belief in Dhamis & Jhankris**

Like many tribes in the kingdom, the Kumals are also awestruck and glued to the ancient traditions and superstitions. They still adhere to the old beliefs of spirits, demons, lago bhago, lame jhankri, bokshi, bhakals, all of which are based on purely blind faith. During any sickness, the proclivity to immediately estimate the source or cause as being a certain deity like Bhawani, or Bhairav, or Kot devta, or Kul Devta or any such, according to the symptoms, and to make bhakal (vow) that should the sick person recover, they would offer a blood sacrifice, is still very much prevalent and in a great majority too. Instead of carrying the patient to a nearby hospital, the diagnosis shows the cause to be an evil bhut or pisach, thus requiring the services of a jhankri or a lama. These shamans come and chant mantras, beat on their dhyangros and simultaneously telling the evil power within the patient to appear and speak through the patient they throw out or exercise masans, do the jhar-phukh (blowing of mantras and use necklaces or brooms to dust the patient of the evil influence) and such.
Traditional beliefs of such things as bhut-pisach puja, have remained deeply and un-uprootably in the minds of these simple Kumals. Such traditional rituals and blind beliefs vary in Kumal society according to their place of habitation and this is applicable to the bhut-pisach pujas as well as worship of devi-deotas. There are plenty of stories of deceased people's souls troubling their families. In such situations, it is customary to call a jhankri or lama to treat the patient, in his house.

They believe in a thing called bhedaan, where the lama uses a branch of a bush with the leaves on it or shywla and makes the patient say what the matter is. After hearing the problem and making a diagnosis, the lama attempts to heal through the blowing of mantras or jhar-phukh. If it is found that a witch (bokshi) or a warlock (boksha) is up to mischief, then the patient has to wear his clothes inside out for a whole day, from sunrise to sunset. If it is found that the patient is attacked by two types, then the lama chants to remove the spell and simultaneously pours water on the patient's head.

Should the cause be estimated as an evil bhut-pisach (mari masan), then the lama chases it from the patient's body by jhar-phukh. A mari masan is the evil spirit of a person who has died but whose death rites have not been completed so the Kumals generally believe. It is believed that spirit hangs around his old home area and if not given an offering of food during festivals or occasions such as marriages, then this individual troubles the household. At some places, it is observed that the puja customarily offered to these dead souls is called Mari Puja. In this puja, a fowl is sacrificed and placed at a cross road, where ashes and red mud are used to make horizontal and vertical lines. Aksata coloured with turmeric, yellow dhvjas, and pati plant are used. A fowl must be offered as a blood sacrifice to the spirit and incense must also be burnt. This mari masan is also known by the name of Choduwa Pitra (meaning an ancestor spirit who has been left behind, dangling in between the living and those souls who have attained liberation or moksha).

Among the many beliefs of these Kumals, the god Bansakhandi is considered extremely dangerous because he is in reality a psychic representation of a tribe who live in the jungle and hunt, as mentioned earlier, and he can shoot an invisible arrow to kill any man or woman or animal when he is out hunting. It is further
believed that when he shoots his arrows, then the victim dies on the spot or a little later. However, if a good lama is brought in, he is capable of saving the sick person or the person who has been hit by Bansakhandi's arrow, through his jhar-phukh is stated by some Kumals who have observed such happenings.

Economic Status

In the matter of their traditional way of making a living, most Kumals still adhere to their and tribal profession (earthenware pot making) while some are in the field of agriculture solely. In some cases, they do the work of pot making and agriculture too. Their main profession is to make various types of pots and sell these from door to door or in the local weekly bazars or hats, or in fairs. Thus while going around villages, they exchange these pots for foodstuff such as maize, millet, paddy. etc., but in the hats they only accept cash payments. However, since these Kumals fall under the matwali category (meaning that they are permitted to consume alcohols) they are incapable of being able to save money and so this directly effects their economic status, which is rather low and which these Kumals have not been able to nurture and give boost. Another thing observed is that, though some Kumals are trying to be agriculturists, they have a shortage of land and hence cannot produce the necessary amount grains for feeding the family. Thus they are in a state of economic stagnation.

It is seen that Kumals are tenant farmers and lease others lands to plant crops (addya khane), or they work as hired labourers, on a contract basis. Therefore, just receiving daily wages is definitely not going to elevate their economic status. Besides these works, they work as lumber-jacks, sawing planks from large wooden blocks, carpenters, labourers (porters), distilling homebrews selling them to get that extra income. There exists a system called nimek khane meaning working as manual labourers, or dishwashers, waiters, etc. and being paid wages. They are good weavers and make baskets, dokos, namlos, and they catch fish also. All these items they sell to obtain money which they use frugally to maintain their livelihood. In some places Kumals also work as hired people to carry the local palinquin or dola. It is observed that even today, these Kumals are not that accustomed to or acquainted with the rearing or breeding of livestock. In spite of the Kumals doing all sorts of jobs, they have been unable to achieve a slightly higher standard till today.
KUNWOR

In the Mahakali zone which lies in the far-western region of Nepal, and north of Darchula district in the area called Duhu, is located the only VDC known as Huti. It is north west of the district headquarters Darchula, and keeping India to the west of the Mahakali river, this VDC of Huti lies north east and at a higher altitude, while Darchula itself lies south west. In this Huti VDC there is a village in existence with the same name. This village is the habitation of the tribe called the Kunwor and they claim to be aboriginals of this region.

Settlement

It is claimed that the original inhabitants of this village are the Kang Rath Kunwor who have been allegedly living there since ancient times. The population is stated to have increased greatly as quantitative mass migrations occurred from Gangalihat in India. These kang believe that they were in existence prior to the gods and after the creation of the earth or mato.

Some years after the Kang migrations from India, they gathered together and three brothers, living at a place in Jumla called Jumla Rathkot lying in the Kamali zone, separated and dispersed in three different directions. The Kunwor are of the belief that one brother settled at Achham, and from his lineage the first prime minister of Nepal, Jung Bahadur was born. The other two brothers, Rtu and Jgt reached this place of Kang inhabitants where they asked for shelter claiming descent from a high class Thakuri lineage. The next morning when these two brothers woke up to the crowing of the rooster, they were extremely angry and expressed the fact, and also felt that they had lost the high status of their tribe by sheltering with such low caste people. After this, the Kang Rath folks of that village gifted lands to Rtu and Jgt who remained there and eventually settled down.

It was later on that the three Rath - pcal kri, mjhai, mukhy emerged from Rtu while from Jgt emerged - malgai. The three Rath of Rtu were of one gotr and even today they do not intermarry as they practice gotr exogamy. Thus in this VDC there are five Rath, namely kang, pckari, mukhy, malgai, mjhai. These Rath were divided from the period of Rtu and Jgt and as time passed, inter-
Tribal Ethnography of Nepal

Rath marriages began to occur. Besides this VDC, these Kunwor live in adjacent and neighbouring VDCs and even in areas that fall in Indian territory, but their culture is the same no matter where they live.

Houses

The Kunwor build houses with stone walls and roofs. An abundance of these rocks, their long-lasting nature, cheap and strong are reasons for such types of houses incorporating stones mostly are built. Most houses are three storied. The lowest floor is on the ground level with a single door and houses livestock, normally. The next floor or the first floor which is above the livestock stalled area, consists of rooms and is inhabited by the household members. These rooms are low ceilinged and windowless, therefore dark. This windowless nature of these rooms is due to the extreme cold climate of this region. The top most or second floor is called the tad and consists of a low ceilinged, but long room.

The stones used for roofing are called par and are properly dressed prior to use. Though the necessary doors and existent windows are small, they are ornately carved, exhibiting the local woodworking talent and general craftsmanship of the region is reflected from such works. Separate cowsheds are not made and some people have only a single storied house so they share this area with their livestock.

Physical characteristics

The Kunwor folks are not of the fair complexioned type as they should be on account of the cold climate existent in their area of habitation. In this matter, some scholars have ventured to explain that this is due to the fact that these people sit around fires most of the time and also because of the smoke from their cooking fires as there are almost no windows of the regular kind in their dwellings. Regarding this sort of deduction, it is necessary to state that anthropologically, the change in physical characteristics (like the skin pigmentation), though greatly influenced by the environmental conditions, do not remain influenced as this is only a temporary effect. Thus there is no reason to assume that this change is passed onto offspring, since evidence regarding such matter is not available till date.
Language

The language spoken by the Kunwor people is the national lingua franca, however, there are variations in this according to the areas and tribes inhabiting these places.

Dress and ornaments

The dress mode is similar among all the various tribes that inhabit this region. Environment, topography and economics determine the dress of these people. While the males are seen to be wearing the usual daura surwal, shirts, coats, vests, woolen cloaks made out of locally woven wool and woolen coats too. A majority of these people do not wear shoes. Due to their poverty, it is natural that they use pakhe (a thick woolen blanket-like covering) to warm themselves in the cold winter of this area, instead of the common coats and sweaters used by a majority of rural folks all over the kingdom. They wear old, tattered and torn clothes since they have to work their fields most of the time and besides this they do not possess the clothes necessary for changing.

The women folks wrap a pakhi or a radi (coarse woolen blanket) from top to bottom. On account of the extreme cold and shortage of clothes (due to lack of purchasing power), they are compelled to wear these pakhi and radi, or freeze to death. The cold season lasts from the month of Bhadra to Jestha. During the day in the warm season, the women wear petticoats and blouses (brassieres are not known about and therefore not used) while, some only wear a single sari in which they wrap their whole body. Shoes are not worn for two reasons, namely: because they are too cumbersome during field work and economically these people are week to purchase this luxury item.

Ornaments worn are pote necklaces, bulaki and phuli on nostrils, dhubodhgo on their festival called gohra, and these threads (dhago) are changed on every annual gohra festival. Children wear the usual crotch-split-open surwal practical for the child's defecating and urinating activities. Students wear the modern pants, skirts, shirts and blouses.

Feeding Habits

Agriculture is the basic and most important occupation of these
Kunwor and on which they depend. The foods they eat consist of maize, wheat, barley, millet, paddy, cino, and kaun. Among these, maize, wheat and barely are the staple foods. Besides the months of Poush and Magh, the other ten months of the year are spent in their fields, expressing the importance of agriculture for these people.

Their foods are extremely salty and spiced with generous quantities of hot chilli, including their pulse and lentil broths. They eat bread (roti) baked out of maize flour, however, they do not eat the popular maize mush or better known as dhendo. The maize grains are ground into flour in their gahtta (mill stones rotated by the flow of water) and then this is (kneaded into dough and) cooked into bread. While they rarely eat fish or meat, they do not hesitate to eat the dead carcass of goats (both males and females) regardless of whether they died through illness. They prefer to eat the slaughtered female goats or bakhri, which is opposed to the general palate of Nepalese who prefer the male goat or khsi. Most of these Kunwor consume alcoholic beverages and other intoxicants, but there are some who wear the Hinduised dhoti and perform purification rites or chokho nito prior to consuming their meals. The strangest feature of these people is that they do not eat anything that has been touched by women, though alcoholic beverage and meat are allowed entry into their kitchens.

Life cycle rite

The woman in this area of Nepal suffer more than any woman of any other area and tribe, and this is clear from the fact that when she delivers a child, she is considered polluted and so no one touches her. Sometimes these women are not touched by even low caste women and thus they have to fend for themselves from beginning till end. Women who are involved in caring for this newly delivered mother, are also considered polluted as they wash clothes and massage also. This pollution lasts for a period of seven days within which the food cooked for nursing mother is passed on from afar (kept on the floor and propelled forward).

Navran

The actual navran is done on the ninth or eleventh day after the birth, and Brahmin priests are used to preside over these rites. China banaune or horoscope writing is not prevalent among these
Kunwor in a majority, though a negligible few do make these *china*. A thread is tied to the wrist of the newborn and parents, after which the purification is done with *gaunth* or cow urine. The mother of the new born baby is not allowed to touch water for a total of 22 days after the birth. Once this period is over, she has to bathe and cleanse herself with water thus making her self pure both physically and ritually. During the *navran*, songs are sung for the well being of the child just born. A sample of such a song is shown below:

**Kunwor version**

\[
ganga\ jti\ pani\ chnjel\ ummr\ hoirlo\ 
himal\ hiu\ culi\ chnjel\ vala\ vaci\ rhe\]

**English meaning**

'let your age be as long as there is water in the *ganga* (river). May you live as long as the mountains and the snow exist.'

Such songs are sung in this area of Nepal, according to the existent custom which is followed by the other hill tribes also.

**Pasni**

A child has his or her *pasni* (initial rice feeding - or solid food feeding - ceremony) on reaching the age of 6 months. During this ceremony, *halva* is cooked in milk and fed to the child and the hair is also clipped if the child comes from an economically well off family, then the parents invite the whole village for a grand feast with full musical support from the local *Damai baja* The village women sing a *phak* during this ceremony.

**Bratabandh**

From the age of seven still seventeen or eighteen, a Kunwor boy has his *bratabandh*. The affluent Kunwor perform this ceremony with great show and feasting by calling the local *Damai baja* and throwing a feast for the whole village. On this *bratabandh* day, only one meal must be eaten by the boy whose *bratabandh* it is. Here it is seen that a Brahmin is used to perform the *puja* on a *jagge* and then uttering the *mantra* into the boy's ear. The boy wears a *surwal*, shirt and turban which are all white in colour. Then he is given the *janai* (sacred thread) after which he dons a *dhoti* and then eats his food (meal). Like in the eastern regions of
Nepal, *bratabandh* in the areas of the Kunwor settlement, it is not celebrated with grandiose and pomp.

**Marriage Practices**

For people engaged in monotonous labour in their fields, a marriage once in a while is reason enough for them to dance sing and enjoy themselves thoroughly. Marriages occur either within the village or with neighbouring villages, in other panchayats or with Kelajuma village situated in Indian territory, and in proximity. On account of traditional marriage practices, where financial extravagance is the main feature with which these people save face, these Kunwor have been economically paralysed. Marriages among these people are of various types which consist of - traditional marriages, love marriages, deception marriages, handing over marriages, exchanging-daughter-for-money marriages, *jari* marriages, widow marriages and child marriages.

**Traditional marriages**

In such marriages the matchmaker or *lakhuri* takes the proposal to the girl's folks and after receiving a positive answer, he informs the boy's folks. In most cases it is the boy's folks who use this *lakhuri* to make the proposal or first move. This is done they say and it is also seen, because of the scarcity of girls in this region among the Kunwor people. Should all be agreed on, the *lakhuri* presents the girl's folks with Rs. 2, eats a meal there and then returns to the house of the boy. This is known as *sai* and can be done on the day after the proposal is agreed to by the girl's folks.

This is followed by *magani* which involves the boy's parents along with the village elders and the *lakhuri*, who all go to the girl's house with cooked foods of *roti, puri*, etc. This group reaches the girl's house, eats two meals there, determine the amount of money which is acceptable by the girl's folks and then they depart. The next step is to invite the girl's parents and others to the boy's house where introductions between the two families (about to be joined in kinship by wedlock of their progeny) are made. At this time the *tika* is presented to the juniors by the elders and two meals, as is customary, are fed to those who are present there.
Once this is over, the Brahmin who is also called for this occasion, sits down and determines the actual date and time of the marriage. The exact time for tying the nuptial knot or *lagan* is the main thing to be set on this day. Then the message of this auspicious occasion is sent to the girl's folks by who else, but the *lakhuri*. The actual marriage can occur 4 or 5 years after the *magani*.

The traditional dress worn by the groom is the *daura-surwal* or shirt-pant, canvas shoes, and a turban. All these are white. A short daggar or dirk is placed in the *patuka* or waistband of the groom's attire and a sword is dangled from his hips. Accompanied by the local band or *Damai baja* and under the shade of an umbrella, the groom proceeds towards the bride's house along with the *janti* or marriage procession. When the *janti* reaches the bride's house, the rites of marriage are commenced. The custom is for the groom's mother to advise her son prior to his departure to the bride's house while the village women provided the background music by singing songs. As soon as the groom reaches the bride's house, his father-in-law (sasura) or paternal-uncle-in-law (*kaka sasura*) hoists him onto his shoulders and carries him and pours water on his feet and then places him on the ground. This is called *janti parsane*, and at this time the Brahmin has to sprinkle *jyunal* or *aksata* and flour mixture.

The bride's people give the *jantipuri* (oil fried roti) to eat in the evening and rice in the morning. On reaching the place where the bride is, the women from her side sing a song, part of which is something like what follows:

>'lugn vali lugu vali gavaki bhjh toika lakha
smalu vrati’

After the feast is over, the *janti*, villagers and others present play *deuda*. The *janti* also includes females in the Kunwor society. A *jagge* is designed and the marriage is performed with due rites. *Sindur* is poured along with the hair parting of the bride from the forehead till the rear part of the cranium. The bride is presented with a *mundri*, *bulaki*, *sari*, blouse and a pair of shoes which are considered as compulsory gifts. *It* is not necessary for the groom to be given presents from the bride's side in reciprocation as is customary in other tribal cultures. In the morning, at the time of *anmaune* (bidding farewell), the bride is carried to the *doli* and according to tradition, she has to sing a song while simultaneously
exhibiting shedding of tears (whether real or crocodile) which are mostly real at this time.

On reaching the groom's house, the groom's mother or the bride's 
sasu (mother-in-law) places a theki of curds on the bride's head and holding her, guides her into the house. After the bride performs puja with aksata, she presents a ring to her nanda (husband's sister-younger) and then enters the house where she performs dhog or bows to her sasu and sasura (father-in-law). Here also the women of the village sing a welcome song.

Now the people gathered are given a feast, after which deuda is played. The next day the couple go to the bride's maiti (parents house) which is the groom's sasurali (in-laws' house). They both return after a stay of a day and a night. In this way a traditional Kunwor marriage is concluded.

As earlier stated, such marriages are rather expensive, therefore they are going out of style as lesser and lesser Kunwors perform these, at the same time the other types of marriage practices are gaining popularity due to their quick and easy rituals and rites, probably, but definitely due to their reduced extravagancies. In these traditional marriages, the couple are married off at a very young age and without any money such marriages do not occur, for in this region, it is customary to pay money prior to arranging these child marriages.

Even though the male is a good lad, without money, he cannot be married or a girl's folks will not agree to the marriage. Thus these traditional types of marriages are limited to the child marriage category as has been observed also.

Love Marriages

When a boy and girl fall in love and consequently elope, then this is called a gandharva marriage and this sort of practice is prevalent among the Kunwor people of this region. It is obvious such unions occur due to the marriages that occur between the various septs or rath. The reason for this practice is on account of the sanja and deuda which are sort of songs and dances programmes organised during festivals like Dasai, Tihar and occasions like marriages and melo (community works or activities). Towards the evening the boys and girls gather at a place to sing and dance holding hands
throughout the night. In this way they somehow fall for each other and some do elope as stated earlier. Some scholars have stated that this is the main reason why such marriages occur. Due to the prevalence in child marriages, most of these girls who elope are, in the social context, wives of others, hence this is almost a kind of jari marriage, technically.

Deception marriages (*Chhal biwaha*)

Without the prior knowledge of the girl, she is taken to the boy's house, adorned with ornaments and married off. It is also possible for the girl to be asked for, proposed to and married in such cases. Should the boy not be present, even then such marriages can occur. Cases exist where the boy is not at the village and even not in that region, still the parents get a girl for him as his wife, whom he must accept when he returns. This occurs, as stated by these people, on account of economic reasons, meaning that she compensates for the shortage of labour in the fields and the house.

Handing over marriages (*Jimma dine biwaha*)

Should the girl's parents be unable to bear the marriage expenses, they just hand over the girl to the boy's folks without any sort of rites or rituals. This is *Jimma dine biwaha*. A custom exists where the girl's parents demand a certain amount of money from the boy's folks and then give away their daughter in lieu of this money paid. But without the involvement of money, such marriages do occur among the Kunwor families. This is especially perceived in widow marriages. In this way, they curtail the unnecessary marriage expenses. When the boy goes to the girl's house, she is handed over without rites or rituals and is accepted by the boy as the talks for such marriages are concluded before hand.

Marriage where the daughter is married off on receipt of money

A considerable number of marriages occur where the tender girl is married off to an old man, against her wishes, because the girl's parents receive money from the groom's side. Thus it could be assumed that people are happy when girls are born rather than boys. It is a normal matter for the Kunwor people to consider the monetary aspect of a marriage more than the capability of the male in question. The main reasons are economic backwardness and
illiteracy, lack of social consciousness and total ignorance. On account of this sort of activities, the jari biwaha are in abundance, not to forget the elopements and extra marital liaisons. Some girls are married off even as much as five times for the sake of money. The custom is for a husband to sell his wife to the highest bidder and then buy another wife for a much lower price pocketing the rest of the money as profit of his wife-sale. Another method is to beat the wife and create the situation for her to elope, after which the first husband collects jari kur or compensatory money from the second husband. These practices are prevalent even today.

Marriage with another's wife (Jari Biwaha)

For someone's wife to elope with another person is a normal matter among these Kunwor, since the percentage of jari biwaha is more as earlier stated. The second husband has to pay jari kurto the first husband earlier stated also. This woman is anointed with tika and then accepted by her in-laws. This ritual of anointing is performed only after the payment of jari is made. The increasing number of such marriages is mainly due to the financial angle, because even if he boy has ability, money is the ultimate deciding factor, therefore, they are compelled to form such liaisons, as can be clearly seen and felt. Such cases are assessed and settled by the villagers themselves after they receive some donations from the boy or male who has made this jari biwaha. Another reason is also the fact that young girls are married off to males who are very much older than these girls, thus causing disillusionment of these young females both socially and sexually. Entertainment in the form of ganja and deuda are sought after and as these are the times when girls and boys are brought together for fun and relaxation from the monotonous chores of agriculture.

Widow Marriages

These kinds of marriages are very popular among the Kunwors. Since young girls are married to much older men, these females are widowed at a very early age. Once the husband dies, the young widow goes to her parents' or brother's house to live in, while the old widows remain in the house of their deceased husband. During the period of their stay at their maiti, these young widows elope. In such cases, the widow's deceased husband's family accuse the maiti of instigating this activity and thus the maiti go to the widow's new husband and collect the required compensatory money which they
present to the family of the deceased husband, indicating their acknowledgement of that relationship in spite of the death.

It is also seen that a father of a widowed daughter collects jari money from his second jawai (son-in-law). Should this happen, then there is a quarrel between the family of the deceased husband and the widow's maiti. The rule applicable for such marriages is for the boy's brother or other kin to go to the widow's maiti, settle the marriage, pay the money to the widow's father and then bring the widow home for the boy in question.

Child Marriages

The custom or tradition of pairing off and marrying children is a practice that is strongly prevalent and adhered to among these Kunwor people, even today. In some places these marriages are set while the children are still within the wombs of their mothers. Magani is performed when the children are seven or eight years old. This social evil exists in the form of a tradition here in this region.

Polygyny

Though it is banned by the Mulki Ain (law of the region) polygamous unions are still very much prevalent. This occurs when males pay jari and marry as many females as they want to or are able to afford financially. But as this male keeps on marrying on one side, his other wives keep on eloping on the other side and finally he is actually left with only a couple of wives though he has officially married in the dozens and even scores. Thus it is seen that the Kunwor male does not get a chance to build his harem, which is regularly stocked but contains actually only a couple of women at a time, for the inflow and outflow balance out each other.

Socially evil practices like child marriages, polygyny, unmatched marriages are prevalent even today as they are part of the ancient traditions, so the Kunwor say. Therefore, they have to be accepted as social evils which are necessary to maintain the traditions. Consequentially, the usage of these practices has increased to a great and quite alarming degree, so much so that these are the very factors which are causing Kunwor people of that region to stagnate both economically and culturally. Some scholars are of the
opinion that these unnecessary social evils should be controlled and if possible eradicated, so that the Kunwors can get a better lease on life.

Death Rites

On the death of Kunwor, the corpse is taken down to the banks of the Mahakali river, approximately three kilometres away and then cremated. On the river bank here, every village has its own area demarcated where they cremate their dead and never in any area outside their's. After the cremation, the funeral goers lay a white piece of cloth lengthwise on the river bank so that anyone looking from afar will know a death has occurred in a particular village according to the area in which it is perceived.

When a male or a female Kunwor dies, 2 to 4 persons proceed the corpse, carrying a white cloth showing the dead soul the way, as is believed, while the rest of the funeral goers walk behind the corpse shouting that a certain person (calling out the name of the deceased) has died. They state that this shouting is to spread the news of the death in that vicinity so that everyone is aware of this fact. The daag batti is burnt by the son, brother or father of the deceased. If a woman's husband has expired, then her sindur is wiped off and her bangles broken as is done in Hindu tribes. The son of the deceased has to observe death pollution, and the wife of the deceased is exempted from wearing the horried white mourning clothes of widows as in Hindu society, as it is not considered compulsory. For the next three days, the son observes pollution by eating absolutely nothing and on the third day, after the priest performs puja then only is he allowed to eat one meal on that day, but bathing twice. He is allowed to retain only one bedsheets and wears only a langauti. This person remains like this for the next 11 days without covering the body with anything but the bedsheets he has. On the 12th. day the funeral goers are fed and then the kriyaputri is allowed to wear a cap, and regular clothes.

If a father dies, the son abstains from eating meat for a year and should the mother die then milk is abstained from for a year. If there are many sons, only one stays in kriya, but all of them observe the wearing of the white mourning clothes and abstain from the taboo foods for a year. A single son represents the whole family, so they state, but this could be due to the financial reasons.
Religion & Festivals

They perform their *pujas* in the front of their temples, and they have to follow the orders of their *dhami* who speak as representatives of their gods. Even village quarrels are settled in front of their temples rather than at the VDC. Quarrels for property sharing, robberies and such cases are all settled at the front of the temple. If a case of theft occurs then every house has to give some *aksata* (rice grains) which is offered at the temple. Here the guilty person refrains from offering the *aksata* out of fear that the deity may punish him and so he or she who is guilty is found out. Thus a theft is detected and the necessary punishment meted out according to the rules of their society.

The greatest Hindu festival - Dasai, is not found to be celebrated by the Kunwor people, although they claim to be Hindu. They do not practice or give any sort of importance to the ritual of anointing with *tika*, which is synonymous to Hinduism. Since the Dasai is not celebrated, the going to or coming from each others relatives houses is also non-existent. Some follow the practice of keeping *jamaro* during the Dasai period and pouring cow milk on it till the *purnima* or full moon, on which day the *dhami* offers worship and goes into violent convulsions. To mark this day and occasion, *deuda* and *ganja* are performed.

Similarly, the festival of Bhai Tika which is an expression of love and affection and kinship between siblings (cousins also included), is completely non-existent among these people. Every festival is called Tihar, but the real Tihar, where Laxmi Puja and Bhai Tika are the main features, is non-existent is quite ironical. The Tihar that is celebrated in this region is on Marga Aunsi or the *aunsi* after Diwali. At this Kunwor Tihar, the girls and boys of the villages go from house to house and collect paddy, rice, money with which they organise a feast or *bhoj*. They make someone Bali raja and feed him too.

Vis Tihar

On the first of Baisakh or Nepali new Year's Day, these Kunwor folks have a custom of hitting each other with bunches of *sisna* (stinging nettles) because of the strange belief they have which says that if this is done then snakes will never bite these people or to remove the effects of the poison (immunity measures) which
Tribal Ethnography of Nepal

may be injected into the body in the future. They mostly fool among themselves and it is the bhauju and devar, bhenajyu and sali, girls and boys and so on who hit each other in sheer fun. This is a very important Tihar among the Kunwor and all houses are cleaned with cowdung, mud and water mixture. The evening of this day is marked by dances and songs.

Maghe Sankranti

Maghe Sankranti is the main Tihar of these people, and it falls on the last day of Poush and the first day of Magh. The females go to their maiti to celebrate this festival a few days earlier. Roti is cooked on this day. On the morning of the 1st. day of Magh, mostly all the Kunwor people, both males and females, bathe after which children feed the crows with roti. It is believed that unless and until the crows don't eat the roti, those who have gone to give the roti must not return. On this night all the villages of these Kunwor celebrate with deuda and gnja throughout the night.

Basanta Panchami & Siva Ratri

Basanta Panchami is also celebrated in the form of Tihar and the gods are worshipped, while the usual roti is cooked and eaten. Every year, on Siva Ratri, there is a big fair called mela or jatra at a place called Tato Pani which is about two hours walk from Huti village. All the Kunwors and other tribes of this region converge there. This place lies within Sapta VDC and in a place called Sinha, where there are hot springs and in which the people bathe and worship the gods while entertaining themselves with gnja and deuda

Gohra

Is the greatest festival of the people in that region and it is celebrated in Bhadra. Here, there is a point worth noting and that is the fact that this festival has been celebrated here in this area only for the last 10 to 11 years, indicating its adaptation from somewhere else, recently. During Gohra, the people of this region enjoy themselves by accumulating at the mul ghar (main paternal house) and family members meeting each other, children wearing new clothes and walking around with a mood of overall happiness, similar to the Dasai mood prevalent in the Central and Eastern areas of Nepal. During this festival, women eat only one meal a
Songs and dances are also performed after which the statue is immersed. The whole night villagers sing songs.

They sing songs about Siva's consort Parvati and her sister whom Siva is supposed to have married polygynously and as the song progresses they marry Siva to Parvati's sister (all in song). The hurt and anger that Parvati feels is clearly shown in the song. Veruda is made during this festival and it consists of klu, ght, mas, gahu and gurans. After cleaning their houses with a mixture of cowdung, mud and water, the villagers collect at one preselected house where the images of Loli and Siva are placed. Initially a grass image is made which is called the creation of Loli.

The next step is on the following day where Maheshwar's image is brought to each home and worshipped there. Thus they bring these two images and marry them and place them in the compound of the house where the villagers have accumulated to sing and dance throughout the day and the night. The place where the statues are kept is guarded throughout the night by the people who keep a vigil and they perform ganja and deuda for entertainment.

Panch Veruda is composed of five things, as panch meaning five, signifies. It is washed in front of the gohra and cleaned, and then again taken into the house and washed and soaked in water. On the fourth day, these five items or panch veruda are dried on a banana leaf. Every Kunwor household does this and on the fifth day, these items will have grown into seedlings. They are worshipped on this day on lugai of the women. Women sing and surround the gohra to worship it. The veruda that remains is worshipped first, then fried and eaten. Prior to this, all the villagers gather, and then dancing and singing, they proceed towards the temple or hadcan madi, where they leave or rest (selaunu) the image and return home.

Strange socio-religious practices

There are certain strange practices both traditional and socio religious which are prevalent among the Kunwors of that region and in particular of those residing at Huti village.
The Local deities go on a foreign tours (Srawan ek gatae)

This is done on the first day of the month of Srawan which falls in the first quarter of the lunar calendar followed here in Nepal. They say that on this day all the local deities travel to the shrine of lord Siva which is at Kailash. They travel to this place via Tibet to gain salvation for the Kunwor people of that region. On reaching Kailash, the various deities ask Siva for a boon or request for something. Thus it is believed that during this month, the demons attack the village as the deities are absent and therefore cannot protect the people there. To save themselves from these marauding demons, the villagers select a Tuesday or a Saturday near the 1st Srawan, and then buy a goat with their combined donations. This goat is sacrificed at the dampha after which this goat's carcass is shown around the whole village and shared. Those who have not paid their share of the donations required for the goat price, are permitted to pay later on. On the door of every house, thorns are placed with the belief that the demons will not enter their dwellings. At the time of the sacrifice, every household has to pay mas, mustard, chillies, etc. which are thrown away along with the bones of the goat after it is eaten. As earlier mentioned, the Kunwors mostly use female goats for sacrifices. When all this is over, it is believed that these demons cannot enter their houses. Throughout this month, the villagers collect at the dampha (high place or platform where the deities are placed) to sing and beat their dama the whole night.

Return of the deities from their pilgrimage: (Bhadra ek gatae)

The first of Bhadra is the day when the Kunwor celebrate the return of their gods from the pilgrimage of Mount Kailash, and at this time a forecast is made, by the dhami present, for the whole of the coming year. During this event, the dhami go to the dampha and there they are possessed by the deities, hence they are able to predict snowfalls, rains, hailstorms, diseases, epidemics, quality of crops, quarrels and any calamities, similar to the oracles of many tribes. Those that will or will not happen are forecast at this time, and both good as well as bad. This occasion is celebrated in the form of Ghamauli Tihar and many people congregate at this place, spending the whole night in entertainment with ganja and deuda, which consists of various groups spread out in that area around the dampha of the deities.
Kunwor

Bhetenla (Throughout Chaitra)

To continue the already existent relationships between brothers and parent and married daughters or sisters, the maiti or woman's parents or brothers have to go and visit her at her husband's house (ghar). This custom of the maiti going to visit their cheli with as much food items as they can afford throughout Chaitra, is existent not only in the Kunwor inhabited regions around Huti, but also in Baitadi, Darchula in Nepal along with Pithorgadh across the border in India. This custom of going to meet the daughters or sisters by parents or brothers respectively, lasts throughout the month of Chaitra, the last month in the lunar calender.

Mare Pachi Bheten Asa: (Pandhra Poush)

The Kunwor people ardently believe in the afterlife. Every 15th. Poush, in the evenings, the father, mother, relatives and kin, sit together to eat a meal. This is done with the firm belief that all those who eat the meal together will also be together in the hereafter. Since this ritual is very important, everyone makes it a point to participate in such meals on the 15th Poush every year.

Food cooked by women is not eaten by Kunwor males:

These Kunwor, living in an environment of ancient cultural beliefs and traditions and who have begun to wear jartai since as recently as 1942 A.D., have the fixed concept that women are mammals of an inferior quality and accordingly grant them statuses no more than common house servants. A reason for this sort of conception is the fact that jari marriages among these folks, sanctions the practice of passing the women from one male to the next and so they are considered contaminated, hence the males do not eat what these women cook. This is stated by Kunwor people of the region, but the true reason is seen to be lost during the past centuries.

Khsi katne niu: (An excuse to slaughter a khsi)

When a married daughter proceed towards her maiti without the prior knowledge of her parents and brothers, who themselves are going to her ghar to meet her and they suddenly confront each other on the road, then this is considered a very unlucky and evil omen. The woman's parents and brothers (maiti) do not return home or go to their daughter's ghar, but instead go elsewhere to
ward off this evil omen, it is considered necessary to slaughter a khsi as is the prevalent custom. This khsi slaughtering is done by whoever's house is nearest.

**Aimai ko Masik Dharma**: (Monthly religious practise of women)

It is a natural thing that every woman who has attained puberty has her menstrual cycles every month. This period is considered polluted in most tribal societies and the menstruating woman is quatrinated according to the prevalent customs. The first menstruation of a girl who has attained puberty is considered an event needing a gathering, so they cook bread, puri and eat and make merry. This occasion is called *bas basaune*. The girl is kept in the cowshed of three days, after which she is taken out and made to bathe and wash her clothes and then only is she purified with *gaunth*. Till the fifth day, any food or water touched by this girl is considered polluted. On the sixth day, she bathes and is purified. There is no specific taboo which states that her brothers or any males should not look at her, at this time.

Women who have their menstruation have to remain away from the mainstream of Kunwor society for the stipulated period and thus observe pollution, however this is a tabu not strictly adhered to and in fact not even noticed or cared for. This is said to be so because of the fact that men folks do not eat what women cook so there does not arise the need for them to observe the pollution (which is generally applicable to food mostly) at all.

**Pado marne** (Slaughter of the tender male buffalo-*pado*)

Due to the great financial burden that these Kunwor folks bear, there is a custom that if a buffalo gives birth to a male calf, it is killed. This calf is thrown down the terraces below the cowshed, immediately after birth, in such a way that the mother buffalo does not, see this being done, meaning this is done while the mother is looking in front. Thus the *pado* is killed. If the calf tends to be a female, then it is permitted to live as is the prevalent custom, in the regions of the Karnali Hills.

The reason for such brutality is quite practical when viewed from the point of view of the Kunwor. A *pado* drinks the mother's milk, it is difficult to rear, eats crops and when it grows up, it has to be taken to Mahendranagar, which is a month's walk away, to be sold.
Thus they believed in keeping a single male buffalo in the area for the purpose of supplying the seed for reproducing progeny. On the occasions of such killings, the villagers gather to watch this bizarre spectacle and also for a share of the meat, which is their source of proteins.

**Pachi samma smjhine bato** (To be able to remember till long in the future)

When Kunwor boys and girls meet, fall in love and decide to marry each other, they brand each other on their cheeks with burning *bidis*. Sometimes the boy does this forcibly and is reciprocated by the girl in a similar manner. This branding, they believe, serves to act as a reminder, in their old ages, of their youths and their follies. This sort of queer branding practice in love is prevalent in these regions and found to be practised even by married males and females.

**Jagni**

Every three years, there is a huge *jagni* organised in the village of Huti. The people of surrounding panchayats and areas in India also participate in this *jagni*. The numbers swell to almost 4 to 5 thousands. Every person has a separate place set aside for eating food. Paddy barley, wheat are collected from the people throughout the Huti VDC and two days are spent in worship, singing and dancing.

**Method of local medication**

Every Kunwor possesses a scar or two on his or her body. In the case or a headache, the forehead is burnt (branded) with a red hot iron, and if it is a toothache then the cheek is similarly burnt. This burning is very prevalent as a method of healing among these folks. Even children who have stomach aches burn their own stomachs with red hot irons. If it is a Tuesday, and a dark moon or *aunsi*, a foot-long iron piece is heated and then used to burn anything. Since these burnings have a very psychological influence, diseases are seen to have been cured.
KUSBADIYA

Among the many backward tribes that inhabit the kingdom, the Kusbadiya are also one. They have been observed to have settled in the mid-western region in the Bheri zone, only at Banke and Bardia. Besides these two places, there is no evidence of these people residing in any other part of the country. Although the Kusbadiya are not mentioned in historical records, they exist and possess a separate identity, from other tribes. They have remained exploited and ostracised by society and they express their feeling of oppression and exploitation. These Kusbadiyas are similar to Rautes in relation to their nomadic ways, but the difference is that, although the Rautes' nomadic movement patterns have their base in and around the existent forests in that area, the Kusbadiyas have made the cities and towns their base around which their movements occur. Currently, it has been observed, that they are attempting to curb their nomadic behaviour and settling at one single place permanently. At present, they are settled in Banke district within Ind, Purauni and Manikapur VDCs.

Settlements

The settlement of the Kusbadiya villages are seen to be haphazard and unsystematic. When living near a town or a village, they always construct their dwellings some distance away from houses of other tribes (jats) and in a remote corner as decided among their elders. They do so because the other tribes look down upon them and do not appreciate them camping in close proximity to their villages or towns, so these Kusbadiya state.

Houses

Kusbadiya houses are small structures with walls made up of bamboo frames layered with straw and mud-plastered. The roofs are thatched or consist of flatly placed wooden planks. The hut does not possess any window resulting in a dark interior. The inside of this hut consists of a single room, unpartitioned. One corner is occupied by the family hearth where their meals are cooked, and the necessary utensils and paraphernalia for cooking are stashed. Another corner is occupied by their working tools such as chisels, hammers, spears, pickaxes, axes, digging implements etc. The remaining place is used for sleeping at night.
Language

The Kusbadiya use two types of languages. While speaking to others they use Awadi, but among themselves they use a language which has no written script and of which they possess no knowledge as to its background, or how it originated.

Physical characteristics

Almost every physical aspect of these people resembles the terai dwellers, the Tharus. When suddenly encountered, they look extremely dirty, possessing long, dirty, unkempt hair, haphazardly growing finger nails, overally dirty and almost 'savage-like'.

Totem (Gotr)

These Kusbadiyas claim descent from the royal line of the Patthar kut Thakurs. Due to their extremely low population, they have remained as a single tribe though there are many gotr within. Some examples are: Koti, Matauram, Utwar (Udhwar), Sohanda, Shekut, Bhaise, Bhuriya, Purbiha, Panchaha, etc.

Historical background

On account of the help granted by the kingdom of Nepal during the Indian Sepoy Mutiny of 1857 A.D., the British in India returned the lands of Banke, Kailali and Kanchanpur, which had been earlier annexed according to the conditions of the Segouli Treaty of 1816 A.D., back to Nepal. At that time, these areas were in reality huge tracts of forests from where the timber was being utilised by the British for rail-track sleepers. This area also contained a heavy growth of the kus grass.

After obtaining these areas, Jung Bahadur Rana, the Prime Minister of Nepal at that time, decided to settle this area with Nepalese. This area he named Naya Muluk meaning New Territories and encouraged Indian businessmen to settle here, by giving grants of gold. The abundance of kus grass was one factor that caused the Indian migration. They dug up the roots of the kus grass, made kuchoos (brooms) and sold these in the markets. Kus is the name of a particular type of grass, as has been earlier mentioned, and badiya is an Awadi word which means related to or a relative. In this way, the name Kusbadiya was coined and it
stuck. Besides the above stated historical assumption, these Kusbadiya claim the Patthar Kut Thakurs to be their ancestors. These Thakurs were inhabitants of areas in the state of Bihar in India. Judging from the occupations of both the Kusbadiyas and the Thakurs of Bihar, a distinct similarity can be perceived. Both do works such as stone-cutting, millstone sculpting, pestle carving and such.

From the above fact, it can be seen that the Kusbadiya name was affixed to them at a much later date after their migration into the kingdom. On looking at their history of migration into Nepal, it is clearly observed that the time span is slightly more than a century (130-131 years ago). Although this period is not significant for recording in historical annals, however, since these people have already settled within the kingdom and are legal citizens, it is perfectly correct and extremely essential to include them as a tribe of Nepal.

Dress up & Ornaments

The Kusbadiya males wear loincloths, dhotis and shirts, while their females wear lahegas odanis, and kurtas (half-sleeved, shirt-like clothes till thighs or knees). Modern dress sense has also influenced the youths and they indulge in this sort of attire. Females adorn themselves with ornaments made up of aluminium and giltee (alloy). They wear fuli (on the nostrils), hasuli (necklaces), dediya (bangles or armbands) on their elbows, etc.

Population

Besides particular places in the Banke district, other settlements of these Kusbadiya have not been found in any other areas till date. In the stated areas of Banke district, there are a total of 35 families among which the total head count is 210 heads. Theirs is a patriarchial society, as the eldest male member of the household is the highest authority within the family structure.

Life Cycle Rites

When a woman is at the point of delivering a baby, she is not rushed to the nearest health-post or hospital as this awareness is not imbedded among these people, in a majority of their cases. When labour pains set in, it is the signal for the neighbouring hags to
converge at the spot, and it is by their guidance and ability that the baby is delivered. When the pains commence, children and adult males are not permitted entry into that house or in the vicinity. The hags are permitted to occupy the neighbouring houses till the child is born. During this period of anxiety, the males gather around and sit huddled in the compound of the particular house. Pregnant and post-delivery females are fed with special foods from the time of conception till some time after the delivery.

After delivery, the new-mother is massaged (whole body) for a period of 12 days. Whether the child is a male or a female is of no concern to these people. On the sixth day after the birth, the chhaiti is performed. On this night, the household members and some neighbours keep a vigil the whole night. The naming ceremony is not special like other tribes who call it navran, thus the child can be named at any time they desire.

Marriage Practices

Due to the fact that these Kusbadiyas possess their individual gotr, they do not, because they are not permitted to, marry outside their gotr and thus practice gotr endogamy (within the gotr). Monogamy is the common marriage pattern and polygyny does not appeal to them, it is observed. In fact, they abhor this system absolutely. In proportion to their economic conditions, their marriages are extremely expensive affairs, since they have to spend more than they can actually afford. To get their children married, they accumulate money through various means such as begging, working as labourers, selling wares made by themselves, etc., but they never borrow money for their marriages.

The initial talks for marriage is commenced by the prospective bridgroom's father. It is a traditional practice, to give the girl and boy an opportunity to appraise each other and possibly mutually like one another. The practice of the groom's folks to ask for the hand of the girl for the boy called magne, is non-existent among these people. It is only after either the boy's father or the girl's father initiates the talks of marriage, that the girl's father goes to the boy's house and completing the necessary rites and customs, asks the boy to marry his daughter, which is the formal custom, as has been observed. The practice of dowry in also non-existent among the Kusbadiya.
No priests like Brahmins are used for presiding over marriages among these people. The people necessary to be present for the marriage to occur are *phupajyu* (paternal-aunt's husband), *bhenajyu* (elder sister's husband), *jawai* (younger sister's husband) and *bhanja* (sister's son or nephew). Prior to attending a marriage, the Kusbadiya wear turbans of white cloth covered with decorated paper crowns. They then go in a procession, *janti*, complete with band, to the bride's house. The above mentioned, important relatives are also part of this *janti*. The instruments used during their marriages are *nagada* and *tasha*.

When the *janti* reaches the bride's house, it is welcomed with great respect by the bride's kin and kindred present there. The *jagge*, is the central point of the ceremonies that have to be performed during the marriage. Here the deities of the bride's house are invoked and worshipped. Then the *phupa*, *bhenajyu*, *jawai*, *bhanja*, together tie the nuptial knot and tell the couple to circumambulate the *jagge mandap* seven times. In this way the marriage ceremony is concluded. When the *janti* returns with the bride, a large feast is in readiness at the bride groom's house. All guests and members of the *janti* are fed with food and given free access to alcohols and homemade beer. They make merry the whole day and night.

The customs of widow marriages and marrying one's *bhauju* (elder brother's wife) after the death of the elder brother are seen to be prevalent among these people. Married women are separated from their husbands and remarried to other males, even though these women have progeny from their initial spouses, is a custom very much existent among these Kusbadiya. However, the concerned woman's father's authorisation is deemed extremely essential in such cases. *Jari* (compensation) has to be paid in such cases and the range has been decided from Rs 1000 through Rs 2000. Divorce is also common among them and this is decided by the tribal council.

Kusbadiya seldom, if ever, marry into other tribes. They basically practice *jat* endogamy. However, if a female does marry a person of another tribe, this union is looked upon with scorn and disgust. In the case of a male marrying a female of another tribe, the tribal council comes into action and a fine is levied on the concerned male Kusbadiya. When this amount is paid, the female is assimilated into the Kusbadiya tribe. This fine has to be paid by the male's father and not by the concerned male directly. Though the
actual fine is a meagre sum of money, a feast consisting of
delicacies and pork, alongwith great quantities of alcohol must be
provided for the people of the community as a kind of payment of
the fine, in kind.

Death Rites

Burials are preferred by these Kusbadiya, and it is their custom too.
On the death of a member of the community, the neighbours get
together and remove the corpse from within the precincts of the
house as soon as possible and carry it to the cemetery. They have
no pre-burial rituals. They have a very practical belief that when
anything gets old or is spoilt, it loses its importance and no one
cares for or notices it. Similarly, when a person expires there is no
care or notice towards the corpse and therefore no rituals. Care,
they feel, should be provided prior to death. After the burial is
over, all the funeral goers sit around the grave, drink raksi
(alcohol) as a toast to the dead and then only return home.

Customs such as death pollution kriya barne, (observance of death
pollution by the sons of the deceased in a special way), daan (gifts
to the brahmins) in the name of the deceased, are non-existent
among the Kusbadiya society.

Foods

The Kusbadiya are non-vegetarians and consume great quantities
of commonly available meat such as mutton, pork, however, they
also consume exotic meats such that of tortoises, snakes, jackals,
wild cats, and others. Alcohol or raksi is also consumed in
extremely large amounts by these people. On account of their total
dependance on begging for a living, their diet is of an extremely
poor quality and pitiable when observed. They do not hesitate to
eat leftovers of foods partially eaten by others.

Religion

Kusbadiya are adherents of Hinduism and call their deities
Masaniya. In their villages, they do not possess separate shrines for
idols, and they are not keen on constructing shrines for idols of
their deities. But they do make bhakals (vows made to offer
sacrifices on completion of some works they have wished and
prayed for) which they fulfill by walking down to Nepalgunj and
offering blood sacrifices to the deity at Bageswari temple there. The Kusbadiya of the Kari Thar offer sacrifices composed of a buffalo made of til (sesame) while the others offer pigs as blood sacrifices. It is strange that during Holi, these folks decorate their area with oil-lamps like in Tihar, while only a few of them observe the greatest Hindu festival of Dasai, although they claim to be Hindus.

**Economic Status**

The main occupation of these Kusbadiyas is begging, and the next is working as hired manual labourers. Besides, this they make kus brooms, millstones, mortars and pestles, ropes, etc. and sell these to earn extra money. Due to lack of land on account of their nomadic existence, agriculture is impossible for them. Consequentially, even the huts they live in do not belong to them. In their settlement areas, no domestic animals like cows, buffaloes, sheep, goats, etc. are observed, however, fowls and pigs are reared. It is observed that being nomads and hunting enthusiasts, the resultant life style has caused them to possess dogs, which are seen in every Kusbadiya family.

**Begging culture**

Since begging is the main occupation and source of income of these people, whenever they see a new face, they begin their begging ritual. They are very tenacious and try all sorts of methods to get something out of the 'victim'. However, if they fail in their attempts, they spit thrice on the ground in front of the 'victim' indicating their open anger at being ignored and disappointed, and they walk off. This behaviour of vehement triple spitting is in reality some sort of invocation for bringing down a curse upon the concerned person, as interpreted by other tribal societies. It is also heard that the curse of these Kusbadiya is rather strong and bad, so their tribal neighbours say. Although these Kusbadiya are economically dependant on other tribes in respect of their begging and wares selling occupations, they are completely cut-off in matters of social contact with these tribes. They are not at all in social contact with tribes living nearby. Thus, they have remained ostracised and on the periphery of development, so much so that the local administration also keeps them at arms length.
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