

**Social Exclusion of the Chepangs in the Era of Post-Political
Revolution in Nepal - A Case Study of Dhading District.**



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Master of Philosophy in Anthropology of Development

By

Baikuntha Khanal

Department of Social Anthropology



University of Bergen

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Abbreviations

ADB	Asian Development Bank
CBS	Central Bureau Statistics
CDO	Community Development Organization
DFID	Department for International Development
GoN	Government of Nepal
ILO	International Labor Organization
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
NCA	Nepal Chepang Association
NFDIN	National foundation for development of Indigenous Nationalities
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NPR	Nepalese Rupees
NSD	Norwegian Social Science Data Services
PAF	Poverty Alleviation Fund
PDP	Praja Development program
SLC	School Leaving Certificate
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNHCS	United Nations High Commission on Structure
UNRISD	United Nations Research Institute for Social Development
USAID	United States Agency for International development
USD	United State Dollar
VDC	Village Development Commitee
WHO	World Health Organization

Prologue

No Grains at home

***Kangsirang's* Brother-in-law makes us alone.**

How unfortunate!

Wherever we go grief is with us

No food without heavy task

Visit *Chyuri* tree to trap bats

Drink *Jaad* with nonsense talks

How unfortunate!

We are poor working in our landlord's field

Leave our own lands barren without yield

Dhading court/government is deaf for us

Village leader turn their back to us.

How unfortunate!

Source: Song Sung by an old Chepang in fieldwork

During my fieldwork, I spent most of the time with the local Chepangs engaging in different household works and other outside works after establishing good rapport. Most of the Chepangs were dependent upon agriculture for their subsistence, so their main activities were to work in the field, grow crops and vegetables, and graze cattle in forest. During fieldwork, I used to go to the forest with a herd of goats with an old Chepang who was 'an expert' to sing songs in both Nepali and Chepang language. This song above was sung by Sukdev Chepang, an old man of 70 year in his own Chepang language which I recorded it with his consent. In the beginning, I could not grasp the meaning except melody and rhymes due to unfamiliarity of the Chepang language. Since he could speak Nepali language very well, he translated it into Nepali language in my request. I think this song exposes the plights and vulnerabilities of the Chepangs in the post political revolutionary context of Nepal. This song makes a statement of the Chepang's, an indigenous group of Nepal, walk of life which is my main objective to explore in this thesis.

This thesis examines the Chepang's livelihood pattern, cultural identity and their access to natural resources in relation to social exclusion and it aims to investigate the mechanisms of social exclusion. Prior to my fieldwork, I knew through internet and newspaper that the Chepangs were hit by famine and they wandered in the forest to gather wild fruits for subsistence but I had never met the Chepangs in person. Hence, their lifestyles and location were unfamiliar to me. I used to hear that Chepangs still lived in caves in uplands which were a surprise to me. Then, I had a burning desire to understand the Chepangs myself in detail instead of relying on newspapers and television broadcasting.

I selected Jogimara VDC as my field site because the news which I heard about Chepangs was Jogimara. The Chepangs live in my own district but I had never seen and met them in person. Therefore, I was quite unfamiliar about the Chepangs and their ways of life. I was unaware about the field site and none of my relative had any knowledge about their localities or culture. In these circumstances, my research topic was very significant because it gave me a chance to understand the life situation of the Chepangs, and of indigenous group in Nepal.

Chapter I

Introduction

Social exclusion of the Chepangs

The term ‘social exclusion’ is polysemic and context specific in a sense that it can be employed in describing a wide range of phenomena and processes related especially to poverty and deprivation, and also socio-economic and political disadvantages (Pradhan, 2006). The term ‘social exclusion’ was coined by Rene Lenoir in France in mid 1970s in response to the failure of the welfare state in poverty reduction. During the period of socio-economic and political crisis in France, the state was unable to integrate unemployed, abused, handicapped, aged, and minorities to the main stream society. These people then were considered as socially excluded and the term gained popularity when it incorporated not only the poor but also disadvantaged section of the society (De Haan 1999). The concept of social exclusion gradually diffused in Europe during 1980s mainly through the efforts of United Nations agencies such as the ILO, UNDP, UNESCO, UNRISD, WHO, and UNHCS with an objective of poverty elimination. The term was used in Europe to refer to various kind of social disadvantages such as unemployment, ghettoisation, rupture of social bonds, and integration of immigrants such as Muslims due to welfare crisis (Pradhan 2006:1).

European Union and various international agencies such as the World Bank, ILO, UNDP, and WHO also played a vital role in dissemination of the idea of social exclusion in South Asia, Latin America, and Africa. European foundation defines social exclusion as “the process through which an individual or groups are wholly or partially excluded from full participation in the society in which they live” (quoted in De Haan 1998: 4). The modern concept of social exclusion was disseminated from Europe to South Asian societies recently during 1990s. However, according to Manandhar (2009), the practices of social exclusion were prevalent in South Asian societies even before the origin of the term in Europe. He says that the people in South Asian societies were categorized as privileged and non-privileged groups based on ethnicity, gender, caste, and class which ruptured the social and moral bonds leading to discrimination and exclusion. The special nature of social exclusion in south Asian societies can be understood while studying the historical character of caste, ethnicity, race, and cultural diversity (Manandhar 2009).

The concept of social exclusion gained considerable currency in both official and development discourses in Nepal when the government recognized inclusion as a policy to adjust all marginalized groups to the mainstream society in the tenth national plan in 2003 (Rawal 2008). This was largely due to the significant influential of two powerful international agencies the World Bank and the Department for International Development (DFID) in policies of Nepal with financial clout (Pradhan 2006). However, historically social exclusion in Nepal has been rooted in Hindu dominated political and social ideologies and in the remoteness of some geographical regions. Nepal is a country with complex geography and diverse religions, and ethnicities. There are more than 10 religions, 125 castes/ethnic groups, and over 100 languages (CBS 2011). Among them, Hindu, Brahmins and Chhetris mostly with Nepali Language are dominant whereas minority groups of Sudras, ethnic groups and Muslims, and their mother tongues and their religion are often despised and ignored. Indigenous ethnic people and Sudras still live in poverty because of deprivation from employment, natural resources, and socio-cultural opportunities (Bhattachan 2009).

Nepal came across different movements such as people's movement 1990, people's second movement 2006, and Indigenous people movement 2007 which ensured equity, integration, and social protection to all marginalized people. Several development organizations work for the reduction of poverty in Nepal and various conventions are also ratified by the government of Nepal to ensure the indigenous rights. However, all these efforts could not bring significant improvements in the lifestyle of the poor, marginalized, and helpless people. There are many constitutional reformations to uplift the suppressed people in Nepal. However, the Chepang people are still excluded in terms of livelihood, cultural identity and access to natural resources. On this background, I would like to examine the processes and mechanism of the social exclusion of the Chepangs rather than mere description of their life situations.

Multiple perspectives on 'Social Exclusion'

“Social exclusion is a theoretical concept, a lens through which people look at reality, and not reality itself” (De Haan 1999: 6). There are multiple perspectives on what social exclusion entails.

Silver (1994) illustrates three kinds of paradigms named as solidarity paradigm, specialization paradigm, and monopoly paradigm, on which the meaning of social exclusion rested upon. In the solidarity paradigm, exclusion is interpreted as a breakdown of cultural and moral bonds rather than economic disparity between the groups and individuals within a society. The specialization paradigm defines exclusion as a denial of individual's participation in the community due to social differentiation and discrimination. In the monopoly paradigm, a powerful group restricts powerless groups to use opportunities and resources through social closure.

Likewise, Young (2000) defines social exclusion and inclusion from political perspective and argues that it is misfit to use this concept limited to social problems and disharmony. She elaborates it as;

“The main type of exclusion is political exclusion that is exclusion from basic political rights, from opportunities to participate in discusses and decision making. This political domination is exercised by socially and economically powerful actors in which powerless groups are kept out from the interaction and decision making” (Young 2000, cited by Pradhan 2006a: 8)

Similarly, Eller (1998) interprets social exclusion and inclusion concept from multi-cultural perspective in which groups of people are excluded on the basis of cultural domain such as knowledge, arts, culture, and values. For example; “in America, the dominant white considered themselves as interpreter of knowledge, truth, culture, and values and they shape the truth and culture. However, history, culture, and knowledge of non-white are ignored and despised” (cited in Pradhan 2006a:8)

I employ De Haan's perspective on deprivation to analyze social exclusion. According to De Haan (1998:5), the notion of “social exclusion stresses the process through which people are being deprived from employment, education, housing, labor markets, and food etc. instead of mere description of the situation of deprived groups”. Pradhan (2006) supports De Haan and holds that a researcher should focus on processes and mechanisms that the government and the dominant group follows to assure the support to their norms, values and laws they create. In my opinion, this deprivation perspective is quite relevant to examine the situation of the Chepangs because my aim in the present work is to investigate the processes and mechanisms through which the Chepangs are being deprived of their basic needs, employment, and citizenship rights

and so on. In this thesis, I will discuss on the Chepang's livelihood, ethnic identity, and access to natural resources through deprivation perspective and find out the mechanisms of their marginalization.

Indigenous ethnic groups in Nepal

The UN defines indigenous people as those who, owing to the legacy of colonial boundaries, find themselves under a state structure which incorporates national, social and, cultural characteristics alien to others (Sharma 1992, cited by Gurung 1994:112). Government of Nepal (GoN) defines "indigenous nationalities...[as] those ethnic groups or communities, who have their own mother tongue and traditional customs, different cultural identity, distinct social structure, and written or oral history"(Cited in Gurung 1994: 59). Since the Chepangs have their own mother tongue, cultural identity and specific territory, they are indigenous group of Nepal.

There are 59 indigenous ethnic groups which are officially recognized by the government of Nepal. They are categorized in five groups based on development such as advanced groups, disadvantaged groups, marginalized groups, highly marginalized groups, and endangered groups among which the Chepangs belong to highly marginalized ethnic groups (See Annex 1). The identification of indigenous groups in Nepal was based on particular territory in which they live as first inhabitants. The indigenous peoples are no more than helpless creatures indulged in poverty, illiteracy, powerlessness, and deprivation (Gurung 1994). They are deprived of power sharing in national affairs, and economically depressed with land expropriation. They do not have same privileges and access as other dominant groups and their traditional cultures, religions, skills, and languages are threatened due to the influence of Hindu culture (Gurung 1994, Manandhar 2009). The centuries of domination and discrimination of indigenous people in Nepal by the oppressive state prevented them from organizing and demanding social inclusion and inclusive democracy. After establishment of multi-party democracy in 1990, those suppressed groups got chance to pour out the pains of exclusion. The space for expressing organized demands was widened after 1990 and 10 years Maoist insurgency made the relegated people aware regarding their rights as citizen (Bhattachan 2009). People's movement of 1990, ten year's Maoist armed insurgency between 1996-2006, and people's movement of 2006 are considered as the significant turning points in Nepalese history to allocate the equality, opportunities and benefits to all suppressed and oppressed groups. This section illustrated the

characteristics of indigenous groups and their marginalization for centuries which helps to understand the Chepangs and their present socio-economic and cultural situation.

Myths of Chepang's Origin

There are several myths about the origin of the Chepang people. The first myth is about language and their meaning. They call themselves '*Chyobang*'. *Chyo* means 'on the top' and *bang* means 'stone'. The Chepangs claim their ancestors lived in rock shelters and caves and most believe they originated from stone (Rai 1985:1). In regards to the origin of the Chepangs, Gurung (1989) mentions that in Chepang language, '*Che*' means dog and '*pang*' means arrow. It is believed that the Chepangs used to hunt wild animals with dog and arrows and therefore were named as Chepangs. As Gurung (1989) said, I observed that the Chepangs of my study area hunted wild animals with dogs and arrows in groups in which I also got chance to be involved during my field study.

Likewise, Hindu mythology also narrates the evolution of the Chepangs. One of the traditional Hindu stories mentions that the Chepangs are the children of the heroine Sita, of the famous Hindu epic *Ramayana*. According to the story, Sita gave a birth to a son named *Lohari* while she was in exile in a hermitage near the Gandaki River. One day Sita took out the baby out of cradle to show the monkeys as they were playing with their children without giving knowledge to *Balmiki*, her protector. When *Balmiki's* eyes rested upon the cradle, the baby was not there. He thought that Sita would be shocked and accuse him for not looking after the baby properly, he made a baby same like him out of *Kusha Grass* and Put in the cradle. When she returned home, she was surprised to see another baby in the cradle. Then Balmiki sage told her a story and asked her to look after them as her own sons. He was named as *Kushari*. But they became enemies after they grown up. The descendants of *Lohari* called Chepangs and of *kushhari* called kusunda (Bista, 2000).

Another myth about Chepang's origin is that a virgin woman in ancient times gave birth to a child. Then, she took the infant into the jungle and left it there pressing it with a stone to hide her guilt. However, the child luckily grew up in the state of nature so he was given the name as Chepang. This is the distorted word of *Chepiyeko* or squeezed between (Adhikary 1977, cited by Gurung 1995).

During my visit in the field, one of my informants explained that they are the offshoot of kirati people. He mentioned that during Kirati's kingdom, the Chepangs were attacked by the enemies but they could not protect the kingdom from enemies, and they ran away. They would call the elders as "Teppang" and Youngers as 'Chuppang'. Teppang elders who were able to run away to the east but younger could not run but hide into the jungles of Mahabharat range. The distortion of the word 'Chuppang' became Chepang later.

Chepangs were called 'Praja' after the king's visit to their localities for the first time in 1977. Even though the term Chepang was derogatory until 2000, they prefer Chepang now. During my fieldwork I knew that they dislike the word *Praja* because *Praja* is a word combined with Nepali words '*Para*' means 'far/away' and '*Ja*' means 'go'. For them, it means "Go Far" from opportunities, benefits and basic rights. Moreover, they prefer Chepang to Praja because '*Praja*' refers to all the citizens instead of giving their actual and distinct ethnic identity. But, the word Chepang gives them real and distinct identity. Nonetheless, I noted during the field study that some Older Chepangs also liked to be called *Praja* and still the others like both the terms *Praja* and Chepang.

The Chepang people

The Chepangs, one of the deprived and highly marginalized groups among indigenous communities of Nepal, have been residing in the hilly terrain which constitutes about 0.25% of the total population of Nepal¹. They are inhabitants of steep sloppy marginalized land of Dhading, Chitwan, Makwanpur, and Gorkha district of Nepal. They are from the mongoloid group who has ancestral affinities with Tibetans. They have short and flat noses, round faces, a dark and brown complexion, thin and medium ears, dark eyes and prominent eyebrows and of medium height (Gurung 1995). The Chepangs have their own language and in general, they can communicate in Nepali language as well due to the influence of outside dominant communities and also due to migration of some community members. Even though they were nomadic groups a century ago, all the Chepangs at present are settled and are involved in agriculture. Most of the Chepangs are illiterate. The UN reports that education is a dream for the Chepangs and almost 75% of the total Chepang population² is illiterate and only one percent women can read and write

¹ The total population of Nepal is 2,64,94,504

² The total population of the Chepangs in Nepal are 68,399.

(UN report 2012: 2). Still they depend upon forest fruits for food due to an insufficiency of food for a whole year. They wander in the forest to collect wild tubers like *Ghittha*, *Vyakur*, *Tarul*, and *Bharlang* for food. They celebrate their tribal festivals *Nwagi*, *Saune Sakanti*, *Gaidu* along with Hindu festivals *Dashain*, *Tihar*, *Maghe Sakranti*, and so on. The indigenous dress of Chepang women is *Gunyu*, *Choli* and *Ghalek* and men's dress *Daura*, *Patuka* and *Nepali cap* which are rarely seen or are almost disappeared. However, nowadays, men wear cap, shirts, t-shirt, half pant and pant whereas women wear blouse and sarong.

Many researches have been carried out on the Chepangs. Brian Hodgson was the first scholar to study Chepangs in 1848. In Journal entitled *On the Chepang and Kusunda Tribe of Nepal* (1848) he mentions that Chepangs dwell amid the dense forest in few numbers and nearly in the state of nature. Grouping them with a related group the *Kusunda*, he states that “these aimless and helpless Chepangs were living entirely upon wild fruits. Referring them as a broken tribe, he further mentions that they do not have any connection to development and civilization but kill the beast using bows and arrows. They do not toil neither they spin” (Hodgson 1848:1).

Nepali Anthropologist Bista is the second man who studied the Chepangs in brief about their socio-cultural settings, economic condition and their lifestyles in his book *People of Nepal* (1967). Upreti (1967), Bista (1971/1972), Caughey, Dahal and Bandhu (1971), Varya (1972) Thapa (1974), Adikari (1977), Byaju (1977), Gurung (1989, 1995), Swoveet (1992), Rai (1985), Riboli (2000) are the pioneer researches about the Chepangs in which livelihood, cultural practices, indigenous festivals, origins, beliefs and economic situation were illustrated. Most of the researches were not ethnographic. Some researches investigated their precarious living condition whereas some researches interpreted the Chepangs as they were on the way of improvement and gradual transformation. However, very few ethnographic research projects have been carried out on the Chepangs and nobody has studied on the context of social exclusion regarding the Chepangs. Previous researches mention that the Chepangs are poor and marginalized however I did not find any researches which explored the reason of marginalization of the Chepangs in post political context of Nepal and thus, I believe that my ethnographic research might be an asset in anthropological literature of indigenous groups of Nepal.

Problem statement

The main aim of the present work is to investigate the processes and mechanisms of marginalization of the Chepangs in the era of post political situation of Nepal. I will examine particularly three issues a) livelihood b) ethnic identity c) access to natural resources in relation to exclusion, and will discuss why the Chepangs are still in the vicious circle of poverty. To do so, I will explore their access to land, forest, and mines and its impacts to livelihood and ethnic identity. Furthermore, I focus on food, housing, employment and labor markets which I see as markers of sustainable livelihood. To grasp the objectives of this research, the socio- economic relationship between the Chepang and non-Chepangs and contribution of the state and NGOs for the Chepangs will also be discussed.

Specifically I will try to find the answer of research questions as: To what extent are the Chepangs not entitled to natural resources such as land, forest and mines? In what ways are the Chepangs spending their livelihood? Do they get employment opportunities and access to wage labor and labor market? To what extent are the Chepangs deprived of infrastructure development of the village? What sort of relationship do they have with non-Chepangs? To what extent, do I/NGOs and state privilege the Chepangs to eradicate poverty and to fulfill their needs, aspirations, and demands? In what ways do the Chepangs preserve, promote, and practice their religion, culture, and indigenous festivals? On what bases do the Chepangs feel that they are socially excluded?

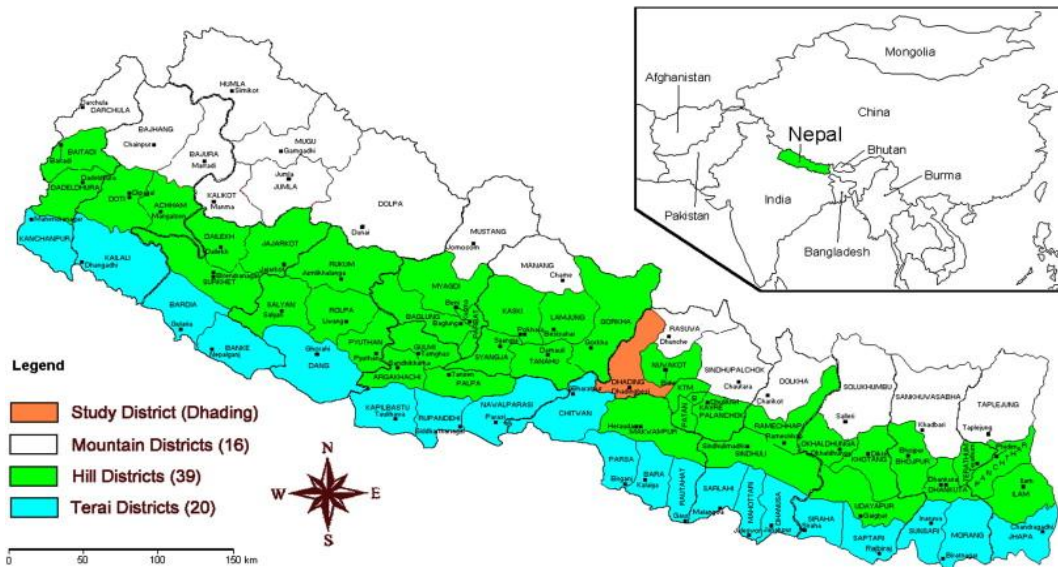
Central theoretical perspective

I employed anthropological perspectives and theories to answer above mentioned questions. Social exclusion is both the cause and consequences of high poverty, poor health, and unemployment and political instability in Nepal. The concept of Poverty, graduated sovereignty, patron- client relation and entitlement approach will be used to illuminate the deprived situations the Chepangs. In Nepalese context, poverty is an inarguably inevitable factor for the social exclusion of the Chepangs (Pradhan 2006). I use Crewe and Richard (2013) to discuss how the poor Chepangs are stigmatized by the dominant groups and how do they internalize intergenerational transmission of poverty which isolates them from socio-economic opportunities. The state is a primary agent of social exclusion and inclusion. Therefore, in the

case of the Chepangs, discriminatory and prejudiced practices of the state deprived them from their rights of livelihood security and their control over natural resources. Graduated sovereignty refers to differential treatment of the people by the government which privileges economically powerful people with an expectation of maximum benefits in return whereas marginalize those who are not profitable in the eyes of government (Ong 2000). Therefore, relying on *Graduated Sovereignty in South East Asia* (2000) of Ong and I will try to show that how does the discriminatory treatment of the state to the Chepangs based on ethnicity make the Chepangs poor and deprived. In line with Scott's (2009) perspective on patron-client politics, I investigate how do the unequal power relations and imbalance exchanges of the Chepangs with Brahmins and NGOs exploit the Chepangs economically? I will also discuss how the basic subsistence needs of the Chepangs cause their stigmatization and discrimination by the Brahmins and NGOs. In line with the entitlement and capabilities approach of Sen (1981) I discuss the poverty among the Chepangs due to their lack of command over goods and natural resources. I will be using spatial disparities, and short term consumption pattern of the Chepangs which further make them poor and ultimately contribute to the Chepang's exclusion. I will introduce anthropological theories briefly in the Chapter in which I use but all perspectives will be discussed in detail in Chapter four with comparative and contrastive cases.

Research Setting

In this section, I would like to introduce my field and ethnographic context where anthropological research was undertaken in between June and December 2013. The following maps are of Nepal and Dhading district with my field site, Jogimara VDC.



source:sciencedirect.com

Figure 1: Map of Nepal



figure 2: Map of Dhading district with Jogimara VDC source: ncthakur.igto.com

Nepal is a mountainous country sandwiched between China on the north and India on the south, east, and west. At present, Nepal has five development regions, 14 zones, and 75 districts according to administrative set up. Dhading is one of the districts of Central development region

which is administratively divided into 30 VDCs. Dhadingbesi is the headquarters of Dhading district and it is 85 km far from the Capital city Kathmandu. Jogimara, where I conducted my fieldwork, is one of the VDCs of Dhading district where 35% of the total population (7744) of the VDC consists of Chepangs (CBS 2011).

Jogimara VDC, with an area of 47 sq.km, lies in the southwest part of Dhading district in the mid hill region of Nepal, having a warm temperate climate, hilly terrace and slopping lands. The altitude ranges from 292- 1770 meter above sea level. Despite of having connection with the Prithvi Highway, most of the parts of Jogimara are quite remote and are geographically isolated. Jogimara VDC is largely occupied by Chepangs; however Brahmins, Chhetris, and Newars also live there. Two limestone mines were conducted by two companies such as Annapurna Queries and Hetauda Cement Pvt.Ltd. To some extent, these mines have been the source of wage labor for the Chepangs and non-Chepangs as well. Jogimara is the VDC where I conducted my fieldwork has been divided into nine wards. It was not possible to cover whole area in my study due to large territory, big ranges of people, and limited resources. Therefore, I selected specific villages *Laitak* and *Robang*. Even though these two villages were in four hour walking distance, I used to visit the villages one after another every month.

Majhimtar

It is the village headquarters of Jogimara VDC where I found health post, schools, and colleges, markets and electricity and transportation facilities because it is linked to the Prithvi Highway. It was the potential centre for the agriculture, activities and agro-based cottage industries. Since there were no secondary schools and health post in remote areas like Laitak and Robang, the Chepangs and non-Chepangs visit Majhimtar for shopping and schooling. Hugdi Khola is a name of the stream and of the small market place at Majhimtar where few Chepangs live by capturing *Aailani*³ land for business purpose besides Prithvi Highway. This is the particular market place of the Chepangs who buy and sell their home made agricultural products such as honey, vegetable, oranges, and so on. From here, it generally takes Five hours to reach Robang and two hours for Laitak.

³Unregistered land

Laitak

Laitak is a mixed community where high caste people Brahmins, Chhetri and Newar, and low caste ethnic group Chepang have been living together. It lies on the slope of east west oriented Mahabharat range with elevation from 220m-1770m above sea level. It is three km far from Hugdikhola; however it took me two hours to reach due to hilly terrain. There was no motorable road in the village at the time of my first visit there; however it was constructed during my stay in the field. I observed that there was the facility of electricity. In Laitak, most of the Chepangs were dependent on agriculture. Slash and burn cultivation was almost disappeared because of biodiversity conservation policies of the government. Therefore, goat rising, bee keeping and vegetable growing were innovative income generative occupations to them. They rely on wage labor for cash income. During food insufficiency, some Chepangs depend upon forest fruits such as yam, tubers, and stinging nettles for subsistence. Chepangs also rely on money lenders specially Brahmins for cash and food grains because Brahmins are considered rich as they usually have wide and enough land and well paid occupations. It is because most of the Brahmins have wild and fertile land and they hold well paid jobs. The Chepangs often raise buffalos, cows, goats, chickens, and pigs. However, very few Chepangs had their own buffalos because it was difficult to afford for poor Chepangs. Generally, it would not be incorrect to think that those who had buffalos were comparatively well off than other Chepangs.

Most of the Chepangs houses were small and narrow with thatched roof but some houses were made up of mud, stone and tin. During fieldwork, I got knowledge through observation and informal talking with Brahmins who had good houses and fertile and wild land whereas the Chepangs either had limited rugged land or were landless. Most of the Chepangs were dependent on agriculture however; the output from the field turned to insufficient due to stony and limited land. Therefore, they were dependent on wild tubers for food. Moreover, they rely upon Brahmins for food grains and cashes. The Chepangs grow vegetables only in monsoon season because there was not any irrigation system in the village. They sell vegetables in local markets such as Hugdikhola and Majhimtar. Non-Chepangs also grew vegetables for cash income. The Chepangs were illiterate and hardly encourage the children to enroll in school but Brahmins often educate the Children even if they are in debt. There were primary schools and one secondary school in Laitak, and they would go to Majhimtar for higher study. I came to know

that only two Chepang girls passed intermediate from Laitak Village. Instead of joining school, Chepangs get entry to wage labor in small age.

In Laitak, all the Brahmins were Hindus however the Chepangs were bifurcated into Christian and Hindu. During my fieldwork, I came to know that Brahmins despise the Christian Chepangs and did not even allow entering their houses. Surprisingly, the Chepangs could not speak their own language and did not celebrate many indigenous festivals. There was a church in the village and most of the Chepangs now believe in Jesus Christ. When they become ill, at first they go to Pastor whereas other Hindu Chepangs visit Shaman at the time of illness. I observed that Christian Chepangs considered themselves as superior to other Chepangs and did not touch the corpse of each other at funeral. Those who lived there with a cemented house were considered well off, clever, and to some extent, renown. I came to know that some Chepangs work in house construction, cleaning drainage, and carrying loads. There were two limestone mines near Laitak but only few Chepangs worked there because of technological use in extracting limestone. Technology reduced the wage labor opportunities to the Chepangs. Due to the rugged and limited land, the Chepangs of Laitak had food deficit problem. They collect Ghittha, Vyakur, Tarul, stinging nettle and its leaves for food. But, they depend more upon wage labor and Brahmins rather than forest fruits. The grains which they grew in their field hardly sufficed for the whole year.



Figure1: A girl picking stinging nettle for food

The Robang Village

Robang is my other study site which is the remotest part of Jogimara VDC and it lies in the steeper slopes of Mahabharat range. Generally, it takes five hours to reach there from the market (Hugdikhola) or prithvi highway. The temperature seldom rises above thirty seven degrees Celsius from April to September and falls below five degrees Celsius from December to February. It is the pure Chepang community where most of the indigenous activities can be observed. In contrast to the previous site, the people of Robang speak their own language. It is geographically backward and therefore there are no any facilities of transportation, electricity, clinics and even small markets. There was only a primary school and house were too much scattered. Generally, it takes one to two hours to reach school for small children. Their settlements were surrounded by the forest areas. During the monsoon season, the narrow trails to the village would be slippery and trails would be covered with bushes. Chepang's dwelling is broken and scattered therefore it normally takes more time than we expect because of ridges and rivulets. Most of the Chepangs fulfill their daily life subsistence from agriculture, animal husbandry, horticulture, and vegetable growing. Those who were rich had their own buffalos and goats however majority of the Chepangs did not have any animals of their own but as share of others. They practice slash and burn cultivation in contrast to the Chepangs of Laitak even though it is illegal and banned by the state. I did not find any facilities of lower secondary schools, markets, and drinking water facilities in the locality.

I observed some positive signs of village development and improvements in their ways of life. Road construction project was started and few new houses were built with government support. Like in Laitak, vegetable growing in the monsoon was widespread income generative activity among the Chepangs. In addition to this, wage labor in off agricultural season was another source of income. During my stay, an NGO Sahas Nepal made a committee to generate electricity through local water resources. The Chepangs are aware about the value of education and gradually the enrolment of the Chepangs kids were increasing. I studied nearly 50 households in Robang area.

The Chepangs in Robang followed Slash and burncultivation because the wide and fertile land was overtaken by the other earlier settled groups. Most of the Chepangs grow maize and millet on the steep and rugged land. Even though it is banned by the government, the Chepangs are still

adopting because it is less labor consumptive and easy. Due to the low productivity of land, they could not grow sufficient food grains. Therefore, they relied on neighbors and wage labors for their subsistence. During my fieldwork I observed that knew from my fieldwork that women were at home while most of men go to work as laborers except during harvesting time. They cut and burn bushes in the steep slopes and grow maize and millet however they change or rotate the farming land in every two years when the production decreases.



Figure 2: slash and burn cultivation

Even though I am from a higher caste Hindu hierarchical system, I ate the food prepared by them. However, they asked me if I take the food prepared by them since they belong to the Vaishya category. They hesitated to give a food *Dhido and Sisnu* because it is supposed to be the diet of paupers. Even the small children do different type of work because all the family members have to work to join their hands.



Figure 3: The Chepangs and their hut

Instead of their original religion of animism, Christianity was widespread all over the Chepangs area. The Chepangs were bifurcated into Hindus and Christian. Those who was not Christian told that they were unfamiliar about animism but they were the follower of Hinduism.



Figure 4: The Church of Christian Chepangs

In both field sites, Church was established because almost half of the Chepang of both villages started to follow Christianity by then. In Sunday and Saturday, they were gathered to pray Jesus Christ. After finishing their prayer, they sing and dance in Nepali folk songs to entertain because most of the time they were busy in their household works. Due to the lack of awareness to the parents and long distance, small children were not interested to join school. *Dhido* is the main food of the Chepangs because they do not have irrigated lands to cultivate rice. Rice was eaten in feast and special occasions.

Methodological consideration

Access to the field

Since the field site was unknown to me, I went together with my brother-in-law and father-in-law, towards Jogimara VDC by bus. My father-in-law had a friend Laxmi poudel from Jogimara,

who was non-Chepang and was a teacher. My father-in-law talked to him in telephone and asked for location. With his instruction, we got down from the bus at Majhimtar where we met a person on the road and asked about Laxmi poudel's house. During conversation, I knew that he was the village secretary and assured to help me by providing data about Chepangs and their locations in Jogimara VDC. We met Laxmi Poudel at his home. It was almost dark when we reached there. He took us to the market of the Chepangs, Hugdi khola where Chepangs from different villages, were living there with business purpose. I talked to them and explained my objectives to be there and my student status. They tried to resolve my queries about them by illustrating me about whole VDC and the Chepangs. That was my first encounter with Chepangs however the field site was still to be reached. Discussing with the Chepangs and the secretary of the village, I decided to go Laitak, a mixed community where Chepangs and Brahmins live together. I got a VDC profile from Jogimara VDC and a brief description about it. Then I got ready to go to Laitak. The Chepangs of Hugdikhola suggested us where to live and helped us to reach in the village. I selected Laitak to understand power relationship between Chepangs and non-Chepangs.

Robang , my other study field, is a small community of the Chepangs which was isolated from other communities. Gopi Chepang, one of the informants of laitak led me to the Robang village because his brother-in-law lived there. It was very easy to me to get access to Robang I went with Gopi Chepang who interpreted them about me and my objectives of being there. I did not have confusion where to live and how to build rapport with them because he advised me to live in his brother-in- law's house. The Chepangs of Robang said me that they are the real Chepangs because they follow indigenous rituals, speak their own language and practice slash and burn cultivation. In Robang, I used to visit the houses of all Chepangs and explained my student status and objective of being there to produce thesis. Over the month that followed I interacted with many chepangs and non-Chepangs of that village to get in depth understanding of the issue.

Chepangs were categorized as *Pukunthali* and *Kachhare* in terms of living style and geographical location. *Pukunthali* are those who are comparatively civilized, depended upon agriculture and are supposed to live in easy and accessed area whereas kachhare live in the western part and still depend upon forest fruits and slash and burn cultivation (Bista 2000). Referring to Bista, I can say that the Chepangs of Laitak are Pukunthali and of Robang are *Kachhare* based on territory they live. Addressing the pros and cons of multi sited ethnography

Cindy Horst (2003) says that multi-sited researches are accused of neglecting deep dimensions within culture and hidden layers of meaning. It also takes longer time to gain access and networks of informants. However, multi-sited researches deal with realities of many people's life and help to explore objectives and real meaning of the research. In other words, for him, meaning is important than premises. In my case, I thought that leaving one category of Chepangs; my study will not be completed. So I selected two villages Laitak and Robang as my field sites. From just a single site I could not investigate the relation and perspectives of Chepangs to non-Chepangs and vice versa and indigenous ways of life such as slash burn cultivation and ancient cultural practices. Even though it was the same VDC, I could not visit these two places because it would take me 4 to 5 hours to reach from one village to another. In monsoon, I could not go from one village to another because of lack of bridge over the stream.

Participant observation

My ethnographic research was undertaken in between June to December 2013 based on participant observation. "Participant observation is a method in which a researcher takes a part in daily activities, rituals, interactions and events of group of people as one of the means of learning the explicit and tacit aspects of their life, routines and their culture" (Dewalt and Dewalt 2002, quoted in Budhathoki 2012:15). During fieldwork, I visited Chepang houses and spent most of the times with them. I observed daily activities, cultural practices and events being a part of Chepangs life. I was involved in *Nwagi* their indigenous festival and *Sahune Sakranti* through which I knew their cultural practices and feasting habits.

Ethnographic material based on participant observation is widely condemned to distort reality and not to produce an objective knowledge due to the researcher's subjectivity, prejudices and self interest. Nevertheless, the strength of participant observation is that unlike survey, it helps the researcher to get access to non verbal knowledge and in depth understanding of everyday life in original setting (Jenkins 1994). My involvement in religious practices and rituals gave me knowledge about their perceptions, attitudes and attachments which are connected to their ethnic identity. In *Nwagi*, I with other Chepangs went to *Pandey's* house and I observed how they celebrated it. Working in the farm and grazing cattle are the very common work in Chepangs life therefore I used to go for tending grazing cattle and I worked in the field with them. Foraging is also a well known practice for the Chepangs therefore I went with Chepang girls to pick up the

buds of stinging nettle for food. This kind of involvement gave me knowledge about their ways of living and livelihood strategy implicitly. I engaged in the social activities such as making walking trail and celebration of Hindu festivals like *Teej and Tihar*. I also joined christian prayers with them together. Singing and dancing were the usual activities of the Chepangs in which I involved too.

I also participated in public meetings and school meetings whenever I was invited. It helped me to understand the Chepangs relation to non-Chepangs and their position in their community. Through observation, I got knowledge about how the Chepangs were dominated and exploited by non-Chepangs in a form of bonded labor. Through their interaction, I understood their power relation and how were the Chepangs ways of life devalued and despised.



Figure 5: The *Pandey* enchanting in *Nwagi*, an indigenous festival.

In activities where participant observation was not possible, I observed their livelihood, the role of the government representative and NGO workers and their attitudes towards Chepangs.

Oral history

I have employed Oral history, a research tool of ethnographic research to gain new insight into the Chepang's past life. Since social exclusion is a process, it is very essential to understand the past in order to understand the present situation of the Chepangs. Giles-Vernick (2006) says that "Oral history reveals the ways in which particular people recall past livelihoods, conflicts, political authority, self conceptions and social practices" (Giles- Vernick 2006: 85). This method was useful to me to understand their semi nomadic life, experience of bonded labor and their livelihood strategy in the past. It also helped me to know about the past social practices and their attitudes about it. "Oral history method provides a glimpse into how people of the past constructed their worlds- what they believed, imagined and valued" (Giles Vernick 2006: 87). Through this tool, I understood the perception of old Chepangs generation towards the role of the state and Brahmins in their life and how such values and perception are transmitted to the new generation of the Chepangs. It was my experience that I spent long hours by listening their past histories and they also would be happy to narrate their good and bad stories. They explained me about their hunting, gathering, and cultural practices and how it was banned by the government. It was significant to understand their past semi-nomadic life and bonded situation of the Chepangs which was changed and abolished in Nepal but its impacts are still in existence. While noting down the oral histories, I got the chance to go back in the past history of my informants.

Ethnographic interviews

Ethnographic interview is taken as a sequence of friendly conversation in which the researcher introduces new elements and facilitates informants to respond in an easy way (Spradley 1979). After having engaged in participant observation, I conducted some interviews on the Chepang's socio-economic condition; livelihood, religion and culture, power relation of the Chepangs with non-Chepangs and role of the state and I/NGOs for their betterment. I used unstructured interviews because it is informal, open, and easy to proceed. I asked questions to my informants without constraints and they also replied me in confidential and spontaneous way. During my fieldwork, I came to know that Chepangs were glad to talk in informal ways and delivered more information in causal talk. As language problem comes in between the researcher and respondents in interviews and interactions, the role of interpreter is vital (Budhathoki, 2012). However, in my case, I did not face language problem much in a sense that all the Chepangs

could speak Nepali language very well in spite of their own Chepang language. They could speak Nepali language due to their contact with neighbor communities and market places. The Chepangs celebrate indigenous festival and communicate to each other in their own language however I used to ask to the speaker and used to clarify. School education and Christian influence through Nepali language helped the Chepang kids to know Nepali language from earlier age. But one significant thing is that the Chepangs of Laitak could not speak Chepang language but Nepali language due to high influence of Brahmins in the community. I also learnt some vocabularies and simple sentences of the Chepang language during my stay which helped me to establish trustworthy relation with them.

Unlike Scheyvens, Nowak and Scheyvens (2003) experience, the Chepang women did not hesitate to talk to me as I am man and their freedom in public domain were not constrained. However, I talked to the women about their livelihood and ways of life because they would reply 'no' if I asked them about the role of the state and NGOs and so on. During my fieldwork, I interviewed Chepang men, women and shaman to understand their livelihood, lifestyle, and cultural identity. Similarly, my other interviewees were government representative, NGO workers, Brahmin men and teachers of the Chepang community. From them, I got knowledge about power relation between the Chepangs and non Chepangs, role of the NGOs and the state. Especially, unstructured interviews were conducted in their houses, public places, working field and offices.

Ethical consideration

While conducting ethnographic research among highly marginalized Chepang people, I faced many ethical dilemmas. As Curan (2006) experienced, my first entry as stranger in an unfamiliar community caused the locals to develop a sense of suspicion which created an atmosphere of mistrust and refusal. Due to unfamiliarity, they were ignorant and indifferent to me and they did not talk to me very openly. To overcome this, I explained my objective to them in detail and visited the houses of Chepangs with my host for in his leisure time. The Chepang expected monetary and other supports as they knew that I was from Norway. When I explained my student status and my purpose of studying them to write my M. Phil thesis, they turned disinterested to my inquiries. It was because I was there for my own benefit to complete my M. Phil and they were not going to get any support from me as they got from government representative and NGO

worker. Monetary expectation of informants from the researcher is very common in poor and marginalized area (Short 2006) and my host also asked me for loan to buy land. I was living in her house and taking much informations from her however I was unable to do fanancial support since I was there as student. This kept me ethical dilemmas that there was unfair reciprocity.

I maintained the anonymity of my informants in field notes by writing pseudo names and I will also respect the rights of my informants to remain anonymous inmy thesis. In the process of research, I found sensitive information about bribery, explotation, bonded labor and accusation among the Chepangs, non-Chepangs and NGO workers. I will not disclose the real name of my informants except for the organizations and political leaders in this thesis. Curran (2006) and Nowak (2003) believe that anthropologist needs to respect the informants without any deception and needs to take oral consent of the informants in research. Acknowledging their statement, I respected all my informants and took oral consent in interviewing them and in taking vedios and photographs.

I knew from fieldwork that the Chepangs felt themselves as powerless and me as powerful. Therefore, they requested me to solve personal conflicts in the community which I could not do as a researcher. Scheyvens (2003) holds that there will be a danger if the researcher shows pity towards economic and other hardships of marginalized groups instead of valuing the informants and the knowledge they have. I observed that the Chepangs were deprived of food, clothes and they were living under a leaking roof due to lack of good house. I also saw that the Chepangs would not consult to the doctor due to lack of money eventhough they were sufferring from diseases. As a researcher, I were not swept away by the emotions of pity, anger and suspicion devaluing the information and knowledge they have and I would tell the participants times and again that they are free to join and withdraw from participation in my research at any time. Moreover, I assured them that all ethnographic data will be deleted after submission of my thesis.

As a student in Norway, I have filled out and sent in the notification form of Norwegian Social Science Data Services (NSD) and I comply with the ethical issues required by the NSD.

In this chapter, I introduced the term social exclusion and an indigenous group of Nepal, the Chepangs. I described previous studies about the Chepangs and significance of my study. I also

illustrated the problem which will be examined and central theoretical perspective which I use in this thesis. I explained how did I get access in the field and the tools which I employed during the research.

In the next Chapter, I will discuss the constitution reformations and efforts of the government and non-government organizations to eradicate poverty of the Chepangs after 1990 in Nepal. I will show the patron client relationship of the Chepangs with the Brahmins and NGOs and argue that only supplying the Chepangs with material resources by NGOs will not eradicate the poverty. I will also argue that the patronage of the Brahmins cause the Chepangs stigmatization and economic exploitation.

Chapter II

Transformations in constitutional policies and of the lives of the Chepangs in Nepal

This chapter discusses the reformations in laws and policies regarding indigenous rights and the socio-economic development of the Chepangs after the establishment of the multi-party democracy of Nepal in 1990. I will also illuminate the NGO's contribution for the improvements of socio-economic condition of the Chepangs. Nonetheless, the Chepangs are still indulged in poverty. To explain the poor condition of the Chepangs, I will employ anthropological perspective of patron-client relationship between NGOs and the Chepangs. Patron-client relationship is a didactic relationship which is based on power relations. The powerful figure supplies the basic goods and services to the poor people who have less bargaining power but provides compliance and personal assistance in returns. Such exchanges of the roles between them make the patrons benefitted and the client poor (Scott 2009). Using this perspective, I will argue that NGOs are working as patron in Chepang's area with negative attitudes towards the Chepangs and they work with their predetermined objectives for their own renown and status instead of make the Chepangs independent and empowered. I opine that the situation of the Chepangs will not be improved with distribution of material support and constitutional reformations. Therefore, NGOs should focus on power relations and human rights issues dismantling the relationship of patronage and clientage with the Chepangs.

Discrimination of Indigenous groups in pre-revolution era of Nepal: Caste

Indigenous people in Nepal were marginalized and impoverished due to social exclusion from ancient time despite the fact that this new concept of social exclusion came during 2000s. It is a common belief in Nepal that Hindu domination is the first mechanism of marginalization of the indigenous people. The king *Jayasthiti Malla* in 14th century classified the people in 64 castes based on occupation in which Brahmins are at the top and *Sudras* are at the bottom. This hierarchy privileged Brahmins and discriminated indigenous people and minorities of Nepal (Bhattachan, 2008).

Indigenous people experienced persistent discrimination and exploitation after the territorial unification of Nepal by the king P.N. Shah in 1769. Before unification, indigenous nationalities

were ruling in their respective homelands but P.N.Shah captured their isolated and independent small territories either by sword or by mutual agreement and created the modern Nepal. This physical violence of indigenous people by the king was a beginning of exploitation and exclusion (Bhattachan 2008). One myth about the Chepang is that five Chepang kings, *Poni, Gil, Rini, Raji and Ponthe*, would reign in Pukunthali (now Dolakha district) in the 14th century. Then Malla King of Bhaktapur attacked them and they ran away to the jungle and settled on hills of Mahabharat Range (Rai 1985). As Nepal was a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural country, P. Shah accepted Nepal as *a garden of Four Varna and Thirty six Castes*. But in practice, Nepal never became a garden of all minorities and indigenous nationalities when he declared Nepal as Hindu state at the same time. Hindus were dominant and exercised their power upon the weak and defeated minorities (Gurung, 2009). With brutal physical violence and unification of modern Nepal, indigenous nationalities lost their independence and control over natural resources such as water, land, forest, mines etc. Moreover, they began to lose their indigenous knowledge, language and culture in a slow pace (Bhattachan 2008). Though King P.Shah unified territories with brutal force, he failed to unify the ambitions, wishes and aspirations of the minorities. As a result, indigenous people were deprived of socio-economic opportunities and their indigenous rights (Gurung 2009).

National Code of 1854 was also a discriminatory marker of indigenous people during the 104 years autocratic Rana rule from 1846-1950 (Bhattachan 2008). This national code was codified to all over the country which restructured the hierarchy of caste and ethnic groups in a fourfold classification. Although these people did not belong to Hindu Social system, they were legally included in the second category as alcohol drinking caste where Brahmins and Chhetris were on the top. Due to the influence of Hinduism, they lost their language, culture, religion and ancient practices. More than this, the ruler took control over their *Kipat*⁴ land tenure and redistributed it to dominant and powerful Brahmins (Bhattachan 2008) something which resulted in their exclusion from their own land.

Indigenous people and minorities of Nepal including the Chepangs experienced new form of discrimination and exploitation during autocratic rule of King Mahendra and King Birendra from 1960-1990. He launched a campaign of “One King One Country, One Language, One Dress”

⁴ communal land

which prioritized Hinduism and the Nepali language ignoring the reality of multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, multi-cultural society. So, the state policy of *Hinduization* and homogenization of cultural plurality prevented indigenous people and minorities groups to preserve and protect their language, culture, religion, and dress etc (Hachhethu 2003). They were not allowed to open any organizations to preserve their religion, culture and ethnic identities because such initiatives were taken to be 'anti-national'. Even though caste based discrimination was abolished with the revised national code in 1963, it is still widespread in practice because Nepal was declared as Hindu state and caste based discrimination is a product of Hinduism (Bhattachan 2008). Until the reestablishment of multi party democracy in 1990, the Chepang did not get assistance from NGOs because there were very few NGOs in Nepal and their role was considered as "anti-social and anti-national" by aristocratic ruler (Gurung 2009). The ruler of that time did not want NGO's assistance by all means to the people because people could be aware about their rights and freedom that could threaten autocratic reign of the king. Absence of NGOs and ignorance of the government towards people needs at that time in Nepal made the indigenous people marginalized. This illustration is significant to understand how indigenous people of Nepal were socially, economically and culturally discriminated and excluded by the state in pre revolution era. In the following section, I will discuss on policy reformations after 1990 which opened a ground to indigenous people to claim rights and identity.

Constitutional Reformations after 1990: multi-cultural state

The people's movement of 1990 against absolute monarchy was a significant turning point in Nepalese history because it threw out absolute monarchy and established a multi-party democracy (Gurung 2009). With declaration of the constitution of Nepal in 1990, indigenous people got the opportunity to articulate pains, injustices and suppressed grievance for the first time in Nepalese history. Moreover, this constitution declared Nepal as a multi-lingual, multi-ethnic and multi-cultural democratic state. The constitution guaranteed the freedom of speech, freedom of language, freedom of organizations, freedom of religious practices and civil rights (Gurung, 2009). All ethnic groups and minorities were allowed to establish any organization to preserve ethnic identities. So the Nepal Chepang Association was established in 1998 to preserve their ethnic identity and fight for their indigenous rights. "The constitutional commitments to maintain cultural diversity, right to promote literature script, arts and culture of different groups, freedom

to protect religious places and trust and recognition of other that Nepali (languages of nationalities) are certainly new contents which were not found in previous constitution” (Hachhethu 2003: 10). This indicates that Constitution of 1990 created a foundation for the Chepang and all indigenous people to promote their ethnic identity and to claim indigenous rights.

Interim constitution 2006 was endorsed after the second people’s movement of 2006 in Nepal which transformed the nation from a Hindu state to non-Hindu state and from a monarchy to a republic state. This is very significant for indigenous people because Hinduism and caste based discrimination are the main causes of their suppression and exploitation (Bhattachan 2008). It was assured in interim consttution that “excluded groups of Nepal such as women, Dalits, indigenous ethic groups, and Madhesi communities, who are economically, socially or educationally backward, will be integrated into the mainstram society” (GoN. 2007:8). There is also provision that every Nepalese citizen have rights to get free education and free health services and no discrimination in terms of caste, tribe, class, religion (GoN 2007). These reformative and progressive laws are significant for the Chepangs even though it is not properly implemented.

The ILO convention No. 169 is a very significant declaration for the Chepang because it guarantees the rights of indigenous and tribal people regarding control over natural resources, basic human rights like social security, health and education and promotion of cultural indigenous values. The Nepal government ratified this convention in 2007 to ensure these rights to indigenous people with an intention to uplift and promote ethnic identity (Gurung 2009).

“Article 15(1) the rights of these people concerned to natural resources pertaining to their lands is safeguarded. These rights include the rights of these people to participate in the use, management and conservation of these resources.

Article 14(1) the rights of ownership and possession of the peoples concerned over lands which they traditionally occupy shall be recognized.

Article 23(1) Handicrafts, rural and community based industries and subsistence economy and traditional activities of the people concerned such as hunting, fishing, trapping and gathering shall

be recognized as important factors in the maintenance of their cultures and their economic self reliance and development (ILO 169)”

This convention is important to discuss here because it is ratified by the Nepal government in 2007 to ensure these rights to indigenous people of Nepal. Yet, the Chepang are still deprived of using natural resources due to lack of implementation as I will show in chapter three. The Government of Nepal has attempted to include the Chepang into mainstream society by ensuring rights on livelihood, cultural values and natural resources after 1990 but such efforts are limited to paper and never actualized in practice. In the following section, I will discuss the contributions of the government and I/NGOs for the betterment of the Chepang situation.

Changing notion of ‘Development’ in Nepal

In the period of globalization, many non-state organizations are involved in development activities and human rights with an objective of reducing or eradicating poverty all over the world. Numerous international development agencies like DFID, the World Bank, the IMF, UNDP, and USAID in mid 1990s have designed new policies on human rights issues and freedom which are considered as the devices to reduce poverty (Crewe and Richard 2013). The perspective of development of material distribution and infrastructure building has been changing and it is defined as “development is no longer to be seen as gift to be given but it is a right that must be claimed” (Crewe and Richard 2013: 108). With this concept of development, the states of the world committed to incorporate and to promote the human right issues of excluded people into policies and development organizations concentrated on their human rights and freedom issues (Crewe and Richard 2013).

In Nepal, I/NGOs were sprouted following the multi party democracy in 1990. After 1990, non-state organizations in Nepal are considered as development partners which is advocated by Ninth five year plan of Nepal in between 1997- 2002. Social welfare act of Nepal 1992 banned INGO to implement its project very directly but with partnership of local NGOs (Tanaka 2010). NGOs were encouraged to focus on excluded and marginalized groups such as indigenous groups, Dalits and Madhesis and Right Holder Organizations (RHOs) were also established by the excluded people themselves to claim, preserve and promote their rights and identity (Tanaka 2010). Therefore, Nepal Chepang Association (NCA) was also formed in 1998 to fight for the

Chepang's rights and ethnic identity. Even though Tanaka illustrated the role of CDO, a NGO (community development organization) not as a project implementer rather as proclaimer for the rights of marginalized people, most of the NGOs have not played very crucial role to eradicate poverty focusing on Right Based Approach (Tanaka 2010). Now I would like to discuss the attempts of the governmental organizations and primarily non-state organizations to eradicate poverty.

Government initiatives for the development of the Chepangs

Development in Chepang context can be defined as eradication of poverty, illiteracy, poor health, low agricultural production and lack of infrastructure development such as good walking trails, roads, school buildings so on. Therefore, the government of Nepal has initiated to modernize 'backward and primitive' people to integrate into mainstream society (Gurung 1989).

Praja Development Program (PDP) was concerned with the welfare and development of the Chepang, initiated by the directives of the late king Birendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev in 1977. Observing the very vulnerable situation of the Chepangs, King Birendra gave instruction to the government to initiate programs on different fields such as education, agriculture, health, industry and so on (Gurung 1989) It also focused on education for Chepang pupils by constructing primary schools and distributing of stationary goods and scholarship (Gurung 1995). After the establishment of the multi-party democracy in 1990, the District Development Committee was assigned authority to launch different programs to enable Chepangs. Then, National Foundation for Development of Indigenous Nationalities (NFDIN) was formed in 2002, an umbrella organization of all the indigenous group of Nepal, which took over all the responsibilities to support deprived and marginalized groups like Chepang (Rai, 2010). Gurung (1989) states that the program was not succeed due to lack of monitoring and evaluation, lack of manpower and little knowledge about Chepang people and their culture. I consent with Gurung in the sense that it is very essential for development partners to understand their culture, ways of life, language and power relation to get expected results (See also Crewe and Richard 2013).

Poverty Alleviation Fund (PAF) is a government project which has been working in Chepang area since 2005. This project is supported by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) to address the necessities of poor and marginalized Chepang. Education and income generative activities are

the prime objectives of this program. So it has supported to construct primary school buildings and distributed loan in low interest in livestock rising and vegetable growing (Rai 2010). PAF is implementing targeted programmes to address the issues of spatial exclusion and reduction of poverty of marginalized communities in 24 districts. But its impact on the life situation of Indigenous nationalities in Nepal was not seen despite the fact that PAF claimed for its effective and efficient completion (Kirat 2007).

The sub-secretary of Jogimara VDC office, Parashuram Ghimire informed me that People's Residence Program is a government project which has been working in allocating allowances for housing to the Chepangs through Nepal Chepang Association (NCA). According to him, it's a ten year project which started its work in 2010 to distribute economic support to Chepangs who live in poor housing conditions. I also observed during my fieldwork that some Chepangs were building a house with government allowances. They were building a house with many rooms and with plastered stone walls and tin roofs and were happy to possess a good house. However, Parashuram expressed his doubt for its effective implementation due to the lack of government monitoring. It seems to me that lack of proper utilization of resources and absence of monitoring of the government can be taken as impediments for efficient implementation of the program.

Initiatives of I/NGOs for the betterment of the Chepangs

In 1988, SNV was the first INGO which worked for the empowerment of the Chepangs, one of the marginalized ethnic nationalities of Nepal. Its main target was to empower and include the Chepangs into the mainstream development (Kirat 2007). So it supported the Chepangs in bee-keeping project which was initiated by the ministry of agriculture of Nepal for income generation. Moreover, it initiated Praja Community Development project (1996- 2000) and Praja capacity development project (2000-2003) for the personal development of the Chepangs (Rai 2010). Another project of SNV named as 'Chepang Mainstreaming Programme (2004- 2007)' was initiated with a coordinating agency of Nepal Chepang Association is under implementation in Chitwan, Dhading, Gorkha and Makwanpur districts where Chepangs are densely populated. "The project is specifically targeted to Chepang and it aims at improving food security and income; educational status and management of natural resources; obtaining citizenship certificates; establishing land rights; promoting culture, language, history, traditional knowledge and skills; enhancing organizational capacity and increasing participation and representation of

women” (Kirat 2007 : 8). Even though SNV claimed for its encouraging results, I did not see such changes in those areas as he claimed.

As I knew during field work that numerous NGOs Shanti Nepal, Focus Nepal, Sahas Nepal, Rims Nepal and Suppress Nepal are working in different aspects of life on education, health, income generative activities through vegetable growing and animal husbandry and infrastructure development.

Shanti Nepal was working on health issues such as sanitation, pure drinking water, nutrition, pre and post natal care that are significant for illiterate Chepangs who are unfamiliar with these issues. In an interview, a social worker from Shanti Nepal and Nepali folk singer Rana Bahadur Chepang said that his organization is working for the Chepangs as a facilitator of the government from last four years because most of the programs they launched are in combined effort with Jogimara VDC. He further explained me that they are working on health and sanitation of the communities. They distributed toilet building materials like pipe, cement, tins, and toilet panel to all the Chepangs of Jogimara VDC to build toilet. As this program was completed successfully, they declared this VDC as free defecation area. According to him, they conducted awareness program about safety delivery, pre natal care and nutrition. During my fieldwork, I used to visit all the households of the Chepangs. Without exception, most of the Chepangs had used those materials in making toilets which kept them in clean surrounding. But the Chepangs were not aware in all aspects of health issues and I observed many Chepangs kids who were ill due to malnutrition and they were dependent on the churches and shaman than medication.

Focus Nepal is another NGO working on infrastructure development and livestock rising to support the Chepangs. A local Chepang man, Chandra kumar who was a local leader and member of Focus Nepal, told me that Focus Nepal had started to construct the road trails to Robang with its NPR. 3500000 (USD 35,962.5) budget and VDC office also had supported small amount of money. Again, focus Nepal had formed cooperatives in the village to support loans in low interest to buy and rear goats, buffalos and cows. There were both negative and positive views of the Chepangs towards Focus Nepal’s support to animal husbandry. Those, who were doing progresses with loan and returned loan successfully, appreciated the role of this organization but those who could not get benefits and still have loan to repay accused this organization of making them poor. It seems to me that Focus Nepal made an effort to construct

road trails in the Chepang area by spending large amount of money, but topographic difficulty remained an obstacle to complete this project. If it was not steep and stony cliff but plain terrain, this amount of money might be enough to construct the road trails. Due to topographic difficulty, the constructed road trails were destroyed by rains and landslides. Gurung (2006) states that geographical exclusion cannot be totally eradicated but it can be reduced by the government through the facilities of transportation, markets, education, health post and so on. But the Chepangs are deprived of above mentioned facilities in their village.

Nepal Chepang Association (NCA) is the Right hold organization of the Chepang which works for the overall development of the Chepang people of Nepal. It focuses on awareness raising, skill development and participation of the Chepang in development projects. Moreover, it works jointly with local NGOs and government organizations and helps the Chepangs in all aspects of life such as housing, health, education, infrastructure development and livelihood (Rai 2010). This long list of NGOs and government projects shows that there have been efforts in multiple sectors of Chepang life to uplift them from deprivations since 1990. But I opine that the role of NGOs was just to deliver goods as gifts to poor people instead of understanding the wishes and aspiration of the Chepang people. I agree with Crewe and Richard (2013) who opine that NGOs should understand the cultural diversity and power relations of marginalized groups and they should understand the situations in depth.

Improved living condition of the Chepang

From food deficit to sufficiency

Bir Man Chepang came from a very poor family. He was 62 years old and he had five daughters and two sons out of a total of twelve children because the others died in infancy. His father was a bonded labourer who used to work in Brahmins field leaving his own field barren. He said that his father had taken NPR.100 (USD 1.02) from local money lender to buy cocks to heal his ill daughter. Being unable to pay off the debt, he had to plough the field of Brahmins for 10 years. Birman recalled that his father used to work in Brahmins's farm from early morning to late evening and used to come only to sleep at home. Sometimes, he used to bring the lunch which he was given and used to share to children. The Brahmins were coercive and the Chepangs had no alternative of giving their services to them. He further added that even if he ploughed the field of

Brahmin for 10 years, his debt was not cut off but only interest was reduced. He remembered that his father paid the debt to Brahmins selling winnow fans after being free from bonded labour. He said that Brahmins are really 'exploitators'. According to him, if the bread earner works in a Brahmin farm, then occurrence of food deficit in his household is inevitable. Birman used to wander the forest to collect vegetable and hang in the *Chyuri* tree for its nectar to survive. Forest fruits and wild tubers were scarce because all the Chepang would wander in the forest to gather wild tubers. Having scarcity of wild tubers too, Birman's family used to crunch salt and drink water for few days.

He smiled while saying that he was sold to money lender by his own father due to the food deficit at home. He said that when he was 16 years old, his father sent him with a local creditor to work by taking 20 *Pathi* (40 kg) maize from a creditor. Then he worked for five years in money lender's farm in Chitwan. Birman told me that during his stay, he had to do all household and farm work such as cleaning, cutting grass, ploughing, tilling, washing, and carrying loads except cooking because he belonged to lower caste than owner. He used to be given little *Dhido* but had to work from early in the morning to late evening. He could not run away because there was an oral contract between his father and his owner. And his owner made him free after five years and Birman returned home empty handed. According to Birman Chepang, after he came back to the house, he asked his father why he sent him to a new man without asking him about it. He said that his father confessed that he had taken 20 *pathi* (40kg) maize from the creditor to avoid hunger for few days. He further said that he had very a vulnerable life in the past because he lost his youth for nothing.

According to him, food insufficiency was a common problem for the Chepangs. Then wage labor and tuber collection were the alternatives for their subsistence. He went to Chitwan for wage labour. When he worked in the Brahmins farm, he used to get two *mana* maize (1kg) in a day and his family members used to search wild tubers in the forest for subsistence. He came back after 15 days with 15kg maize. He recalled that when he returned home with grains, he knew his three year old son died due to malnutrition. It was not a very shocking event for him because he had already experienced this terrible situation before due to famine.

He remembered that he had few steep and stony lands. Therefore, there was no good production due to lack of manure and skills. He said that wild animals were also the cause of destruction of

the crops. Therefore, they had food for hardly 3-4 months. All the time they used to think of ways to fill their stomach. According to Birman Chepang he had to spend most of his time to manage food for his family. He did not have time to think about education and other things. There were no facilities given by the government and NGOs were not working in the area.

At present, he felt proud that he had sufficient food for his family. He claimed that he had same portion of land now as well which produces enough food for them. He said that due to the lack of skills and manure, there was no good production in his field. Now, he had sufficient manure because of larger livestock and acquired knowledge, seeds and chemical fertilizers from NGOs. So the life which he was spending was like heaven because he had no scarcity of food nowadays. He grows maize, paddy and millet in the field and he even sells for money. He believes that he has no problem of food because the NGO focus Nepal helped the Chepangs in income generative activities such as animal husbandry and vegetable growing to mention but a few. He reared goats, buffalos and kept bee hives which were the source of income. He told me that his three daughters eloped and two daughters were studying. He did not have any problem for subsistence because his sons were working as a wage labourer. Even though there was no food deficit at home, he still gathers wild tubers like *Ghittha*, *Varlang*, *Stinging Nettle*, *Tarul* because he believes that it is their ancient practice and these forest fruits are considered as nutritious as well.

The story above of Bir man Chepang exemplify that he had food insufficiency because of the extreme exploitation of the Chepangs by the Brahmins in the form of bonded labor. He had to leave their field barren and he had to work for Brahmins which inevitably made them vulnerable. But at present, he had no problems of food defecit which is appreciable. According to him, NGOs distributed seeds and chemical fertilizers and helped in income generative activities such as vegetable growing and goat rising. It is releveant to discuss about Sen (2000) who states that famine is not due to lack of food but lack of entitlement. Here, 'entitlement' means to command over goods and socio-economic opportunities rather than mere possession of the goods. My argument is that the NGOs only supplied material things to the Chepangs which can not eradicate poverty. Birman had food sufficiency not because of land entitlement so the problem of food defecit may occur anytime. I understand from his saying that his sons work as wage labourer which also helped him to avavoid food insufficiency. For Birman, only filling the stomach is heaven and his family were unconcerned about education and so on. Did the NGOs

proclaim for their indigenous rights and land entitlement? Did they look othersides of life such as education, health and personal development? As Crewe and Richard (2013) said, the Chepangs were distributed with seeds and chemical fertilizers as a gift which does not necessarily eradicate poverty but it rather makes them dependent. If NGOs or State had distributed land to landless Chepangs, I would have said that it is done with long term vision which may support to avoid food deficit permanently. But it's not more than the supply of patron to his client.

From subsistence economy to wage work economy

Robin Chepang is man of 48 year who has a wife, three sons and two daughters-in-law. He could hardly read and write but he is a community leader because he could formulate the problems of the village to NGO workers and VDC officials which is a very great and courageous work for other Chepang. One interesting thing is that he was the chairman of six local committees such as school management committee, road consumption committee, water consumption committee, cooperatives, and so on. According to him, he was elected to different committee because other Chepangs are not willing to take on such positions. In most of the meetings and discussion organized by NGOs and VDC office, Robin had a special position as a village representative.

Robin said that he used to struggle to fill up the stomachs of all his family members before the existence of NGOs in his village. Since his past generation was forest dwellers, all Chepangs including himself were isolated from modern way of life such as money making activity and cash cropping life. According to him, his main occupation in the past was agriculture in steep and stony land where production was too low due to the lack of skills and uncultivable land. Due to insufficiency of food, he wandered in the forest with his family to collect wild tubers to eat. He further said that he used to do indigenous practices like hunting, fishing and honey making for livelihood. In heavy scarcity of food, he worked as wage labourer in Brahmins farm to get grains for food.

Robin recalls that he did not have any knowledge about income generative activities like raising livestock, vegetable growing and horticulture before the multi-party democracy in 1990. He used to live in a small hut with his family, and from morning to evening he had to work for food management. He could not turn his mind to education, health, employment, ethnic identity; basic

rights and village development because he had to use all his energy just to survive. According to him, he did not have any plan to make a house, educate his children or income for saving.

He smiles while saying that the role of NGO in his village is quite appreciable. Now he was actively involved in income generative activities such as vegetable growing, bee keeping and raising livestock. He said that an NGO, Focus Nepal, contributed them with loan for raising livestock specially goats. He had few goats as share of others at his home before NGO's presence because he could not to buy them. He did not have any buffalos because they were very expensive to buy. At the same time, focus Nepal lunched a program of livestock rising which became a significant contributor in income generation. Then he got NPR.9000 (USD 92.4) to buy goats. The NGO not only distributed money to the Chepangs but also launched an awareness and skill development program in livestock rising. Happily he told me that he returned his debt to focus Nepal and now he had twenty one goats of his own. He sells male goats at the market to get money/cash and he does not need to spend money to buy goats to celebrate festival and for meat. But, Bhim Maya Chepang said that focus Nepal has made them poor. The project had been distributing loan for animal husbandry. She also took loan NPR.9000 (USD 92.4) and bought two goats but it died due to disease. Now she has to pay NPR. 9000 to focus Nepal which she cannot because neither had she had employment nor did she produce enough food grains to earn money. According to her, the creature with breathe may die anytime. Focus Nepal should have given them skill in horti-culture. She was dissatisfied with this NGO because it distributed the loan for animal husbandry but they did nothing with supplying vetenary services. She was distressed because focus Nepal made her indebted.

Vegetable growing and selling, such as Beans, Brinjal, Tomato, Green Chilli, was an extremely motivated money making activity of the Chepangs. Robin said that this activity brought drastic changes in his life because he earned money through cash crops. Despite the lack of irrigation system, he grows beans, tomato, and chilli in his own field only in monsoon. He trades this at the market even though it takes a whole day to sell in the local *Paurakhi Cooperatives* besides the Prithvi highway. By vegetable growing, he earns approximately NPR.50000 (USD 513.7) in monsoon season. At the same time, he told me that they had 'anti-market' relation with vegetable growing. In monsoon season, they produced more vegetables but sold in lower prices. But, they do not produce in summer when they could get high prices. He added that they have to sell the

vegetables to Brahmins in low prices because there is an oral contract between the Brahmin seller and the Chepangs. There is an oral contract because the Brahmins give seeds and chemical fertilizer to the Chepangs in credit. He wishes there was an irrigation system so that he got the opportunity to grow vegetables throughout the year.

I would like to mention here a case from Laitak, another field site where electricity and transportation facilities were available. Saila Chepang is an illiterate man who is Christian and own good house with little rice mill. He says that the government has supplied them with electricity which made their life better. He further says that almost 65% Chepangs in Laitak community do not use electricity but he has been using electricity from last year. According to him, he did not know the importance of electricity but he generated an idea of income generation by utilizing the facility of electricity. He states that he has kept a small electronic rice mill which is the reliable source of income for him. He smilingly says that he is proud to be a small business man being a son of Chepang who were supposed to carry loads and to do wage labor. With income, he has bought a television which all his family members enjoy and get information from all over the world and entertainment by watching songs and movies. This can be taken as drastic improvement in the Chepangs life because few Chepangs are still cave dwellers and have not heard the name of television in Nepal.

He continues saying that Brahmins used to exploit and dominate him and calling him by names such as 'forest dweller', 'wild', 'thought less 'but now he proudly said that he is not less than Brahmins. He had a good house, food sufficiency and good income, just like the Brahmins. He further states that he also had bank account to save money for the future and no longer had he faced any difficulties for livelihood. Now they had learned the skills of carpentry, plastering and driving which provides for good income.

These two cases of Robin and Saila indicate that non-state organization contributed to the Chepangs for income generation but they were still dominated and they were stigmatized by the Brahmins. Robin had to sell vegetables in low prices to Brahmins. Bhim maya was in debt when her goats died due to diseases. She did not take the support of focus Nepal as for income generation but as debt making. Therefore, all development partners have to make their efforts to enhance capabilities of the Chepangs and to break the consolidated domination of Brahmins rather than distributing the goods for short term use.

Citizenship Certificate

In the past, there was a provision in constitution that land ownership certificate was essential to get citizenship certificate and also, citizenship certificate was significant to own land (Adhikari 2010). Since they were nomadic originally, neither they had citizenship certificate nor land ownership certificate so the Chepangs were denied citizenship certificate even after 1990. In a general sense, lack of citizenship means to be deprived of claiming allowances for senior citizen, getting entry to government job, getting passport, buying and selling lands, opening bank accounts, voting rights to mention but a few (Piya, Maharjan Joshi 2011:122). The chairperson of NCA claimed that more than 90% of the Chepangs did not have citizenship certificate before 2006. Then, they started to make all the Chepangs aware about it and took initiation to pressure the government. Apart from this, one of the NGO named as CDO (community development organization) conducted an innovative and creative campaign with NCA representative claiming for land and citizenship rights issues (Tanaka 2010). Along with the pressure of NGOs and NCA abolished the provision of obtaining citizenship through land ownership certificate (Adhikari 2010). Moreover, this constitution made a provision to provide citizenship certificate to eligible candidate based on their permanent living within a territory of the state. For that the government sent citizenship dispatch team in all VDCs to distribute citizenship certificate who were deprived of getting it earlier (GoN 2007).

Gokul Chepang was an illiterate man of 45 year who did not have the certificate until 2007. When the citizenship dispatch team was in his VDC office, he went there with required documents of recommendation letter of the local secretary. Then he received it after a week from his own local places. He shared me an interesting thing is that he and his 23 years old son made it together for the first time. He told that he was happy to receive it because he gets an old age allowances by the government but still he did not use it since he got it.

When I talked to NCA president Jeet Bahadur Chepang regarding citizenship certificate he replied that 90% Chepangs got it which was denied earlier and 10% of the Chepangs have not still got due to illiteracy and unfamiliarity to make documents. His saying is supported by Parshuram Ghimire, sub secretary of Jogimara VDC, who claims that Chepangs are unaware of the importance of citizenship certificate because some of the Chepangs who did not come to

receive the certificate for a year. During my fieldwork, I knew that most of the Chepangs hold this certificate and hardly few had not received it yet which I mention in the following part.

Lekh Kanchha is an illiterate farmer of 42 year who did not get citizen certificate yet. He explained me that the government had dispatched a citizenship to Chepangs with a key role of Nepal Chepang Association in Jogimara. The citizenship dispatch group had come in Jogimara VDC in 2012 but he did not go there because he had to make and submit some documents to get it. Therefore, he did not know how to make it and where to submit it and he did not have money to go to the headquarter of Dhading to make documents. He further said that he does not need it because it was not needed till this age but he was planning to make in coming year.

Another 72 year old woman Gyanu Chepang did not have a citizenship certificate either.

I: why did not you get the certificate when it was dispatched?

Gyanu: *I don't need it, Nani. I did not need it yet, why do I need it now?*

I: you can get old aged pension after 70 years as you are. You get NPR 500 (USD 5.5) a month.

She: *No. I don't want to receive money from the government.*

I: why?

She: *To take money from the government is to carry sin. I don't want to carry sin even after my death.*

I: Doesn't it help to buy kitchen material like oil, salt and spices etc.?

She: *No; nani. My son's income has not been enough for us, and then what can I do with this little amount of money?*

I: Do you know you cannot use voting right in this election if you don't have citizen certificate?

She: *I don't know. But no matter if I get chance to vote or not. Leaders will not do anything for us. They enjoy themselves.*

I understood this short conversation to imply that to receive money from the government as old pension is to carry sin even after death. She believes that all citizens should depend on

themselves for livelihood. Even though it's the government allowance, she thinks it is as debt and not to pay the debt is considered as to carry sin forever. It shows patron-client relationship between the state and citizen. Scott (2009) opines that the patron is more resourceful who supply goods and services to the clients for their welfare and well being. Due to imbalance reciprocity, clients develop a sense of debt and obligations until they need and they get services from patrons. So Gyani maya Chepang also felt indebted and obligated to the government to get money in free. She did not claim it as other Chepangs do.

The cases of Lek Kanchha and Gyanu maya Chepang imply that the Chepangs are not the conscious citizens of the state who know their formal rights and duties of citizens but they have their own understanding of cultural citizenship. Rosaldo (2011) defines cultural citizenship not as a political citizenship which is important to those who are politically aware about their rights and duties as a citizen. But cultural citizenship is a claim against the state which is socially constructed and connected with ethnic minorities and their vernacular, social activity and distinct cultural practice and ways of life. Penan people are ethnic minorities in Malaysia who are living in the forest. The government wants to improve and transform 'primitive' groups through modernization and national development project. But Penan thinks that this oppressive notion of the state further marginalized them instead of including them. National integration is irrelevant to them because they think that integration into the state is to loss their identity and distinct way of life. Therefore, they want to enjoy their own cultural citizenship through their social activity and way of life, they do not expect any support from others but they wanted to be treated with respect.

Unlike the Penan, The Chepangs do not think integration is irrelevant but they are looking government's support for integration in the mainstream society. It seems to me that providing citizenship certificate to the Chepangs is praiseworthy but the question arise here if this is enough for the Chepangs for their ethnic identity and livelihood? The common answer is 'no'. As Rosaldo (2011) states, along with citizenship certificate, cultural citizenship is also essential for the Chepangs. The above case shows that the Chepangs, who got citizenship certificate, did not find its proper utilization and those who have not got it are not motivated and interested to get it because normally citizenship certificate are needed for employment, land buying and selling, international migration, and so on. NCA and CDO claimed that they raised an issue of

citizenship certificate and the Chepangs got it. But it's unfortunate that some Chepangs did not go to receive it and Gokul Chepang saw its usefulness just to get allowances in an old age. Eventhough they got it, they do have entitlement over it. Therefore, NGOs should fight for their rights of both cultural citizenship and political citizenship so that they eill be entitled with it. Since they are illiterate and poor, their wants, dreams are limited and they do not claim for political rights. But they do not think it as assimilation or subordination the same way of hinterland ethnic groups perceived. As a cultural citizenship, they wanted to perform their own indigenous practice of hunting, gathering and so on. They wanted to be treated well by the dominant groups and the states with assurance of supporting their indigenous cultures and ways of life. My point is that NGOs should formulate plan by understanding the Chepangs in depth but they should not go to the field with predetermined objectives.

Employment and infrastructure development

The Chepangs have improvements in their socio-economic condition with the contribution of NGOs and the government. However, the Chepangs are still indulged in poverty due to patronage of NGOs. In informal conversation with a social worker of shanti Nepal, Rana Bahadur Chepang said that the Chepangs are backward and socially excluded by themselves. According to him, they spent large amount of budget in their health issues such as safely delivery, sanitation, an immunization, pre-natal and post-natal care and nutrition. He further added that there was significant changes in the lives of the Chepangs in comparision to last four years but there are still much things to be done. He shared me an event that when Sahnti Nepal distributed toilet making equipments to the Chepangs, a Chepang sold cement and tins in low prices for liquor. Then he was reported about it and went to meet the chepang but he was not at home. According to him, he was reported that he left the houses for few days being afraid. For him, such habits made the Chepangs poorer. He said that the Chepangs are 'wild', 'brainless' and 'uncivilized'.

One of the informants Gokul Chepang said that he got an employment opportunities in local NGO named as Suppros Nepal as he passed grade 10. According to him, he was offered a job as an assiatence in his own village. His responsibility was to visit the houses of all Chepangs and to lead other NGO workers but his salary was just USD 20 in a month. He said "*the job made me poor and caused crisis of food because I used to spend the time in field site leaving my field*

barren and my wife could not do agricultural works alone in my absence". The problem for him was that the money which he earned was insufficient for subsistence on one hand and there was no agricultural production due to lack of agricultural practice on the other. He added that then he left the job and started to grow crops in his own field. It seems to me that imbalance exchange between them made the NGO prosperous and the Chepang poorer which is not other than patron client relationship between them.

During my fieldwork, a representative of Sahas Nepal an NGO came to Robang with a plan of generating electricity from local stream. I was also invited in public meeting to discuss about electricity project. An NGO worker, Hari Chepang informed among local Chepangs that they could complete the project if the local chepangs supplied their free labor. I observed that the Chepangs could not decide what to do and at last they agreed to give their free labor for that project. It was August when most of the youth Chepangs were migrated to urban areas to earn money to celebrate Dashain festival but they were called for free labor supply. Fifty year old Chepang named as Gokul Chepang said that *"we are providing free labor in everything. At present, we are supporting with free services to build school infrastructure. When do we work for ourselves then?"* In my opinion, it's a patron client relationship between the Chepangs and NGOs because NGOs contributed to their poverty. When the Chepangs face difficulties even for subsistence, how could they supply for free labor? The Chepangs are 'weak' and 'soft' where as NGO are wealthy and powerful. Such imbalance relations made the Chepangs to accept their proposal even though they do not really desire for it. It shows that NGOs are working with their predetermined objectives for their own renown but not for the eradication of poverty. I hold a belief that this relationship is not beyond patronage and clientage which impoverished the poor and weak groups like Chepangs.

Bal Bahadur Chepang, a literate farmer of 43 year, said that NGOs are working for their own interest, not for their upliftment. He exemplified that santi Nepal was there to disseminate Christianity in the name of the support to the Chepangs. The representative convinced them to follow Christianity to reach heaven instead of living in hell. They like those who are Christian but they look down upon to those who are still Hindus. He said *"look! If NGOs to uplift the Chepangs, why is the Chepang's situation almost the same. NGOs are working for the Chepangs for many years and numerous NGOs came and went. However, we are not leaving to gather*

tubers for food and still in poor houses. NGOs are fighting for their name and fame not for our welfare”

It seems to me that despite some improvements in their living styles, NGOs are working as patron to the Chepangs. The negative attitudes of NGOs towards Chepangs showed that they are patrons who stigmatize them instead of understanding their real situation. If NGOs studied the reason behind selling of toilet making equipments for liquor instead of calling them ‘wild’, I would not say that they are patrons. The case of Sahas Nepal justifies that the NGO are contributing their precarious livelihood with demanding their free labor because the Chepang are in such a condition in which they are struggling to join their hands to mouth with everyday working. The NGOs which are working for their own fame, name and with specific purpose behind eradicating poverty, they are patrons. If the NGOs fought for their rights over natural resources and supplied the Chepangs with long term oriented skills and training, I would not illustrate the relationship of the Chepangs and NGOs as patron and client. Unlike Crewe and Richard(2013), I opine that NGOs are failure in its objectives not because of its inability to national reach and support his argument that lack of accountability and institutional interest made them failure to eradicate poverty among the Chepangs.

Summing up

In this chapter, I discussed constitutional reformations of Nepal which are sweet and favorable to uplift the Chepangs but enforcement is lax which I will illustrate in chapter three. On the basis of above cases and discussions, I hold that NGOs treat the Chepangs as their clients and, not as respected and rightful social agents. Instead of understanding the Chepangs, their culture, wants and ways of life, NGOs have distributed them with material goods that cannot disconnect the root of marginalization despite its short term benefit. Birman Chepang was distributed with seeds and chemical fertilizers instead for fighting for land entitlement. Bhim maya Chepang fell in debt when her goats were killed by the diseases. Robin Chepang was ignored and dominated by the dominant neighbors and Gyanu maya Chepangs was unconcerned with political rights such as voting and so on but she was affiliated with her own cultural citizenship of slash and burn cultivation, foraging and indigenous practices. If the development agencies turn their attention to their power relations, entitlement and cultural citizenship and respect the Chepangs status and ways of life, the Chepangs will have a chance to become socially included. If the NGOs were

fighting for their socio- economic entitlement and indigenous rights, the Chepangs might have a chance to lead a good life. When the NGOs work with predetermined objectives and coerce the Chepangs for their interest and benefits, it is no other than patron client relation which made the Chepangs vulnerable.

In the following chapter, I illuminate the conditions of isolation and deprivation of the Chepangs from livelihood and natural resources. I also discuss ethnic identity and argue if the state, an agent of social inclusion and exclusion, is irresponsible and ignorant for backstop support to the Chepangs; they are liable to be excluded from all aspects of life.

Chapter III

The Chepangs: Livelihood, Ethnic identity and Natural resources

In this chapter, the Chepang's livelihood, ethnic identity and access to natural resources will be discussed in relation to social exclusion based on empirical data gathered during fieldwork. I will examine the prominent aspects of Chepang's livelihood such as food, housing, employment, health and education. I will also analyze ethnic identity based on their mother language, culture, religious practices and their control over land, forest and mines. By employing Ong's (2000) concept of graduated sovereignty, I argue that the Chepangs are deprived of livelihood security, ethnic identity and entitlement over natural resources due to primarily discriminatory treatment of the government based on ethnicity and poverty. I will also argue that marginalization and impoverishment of the Chepangs is not only due to the discrimination of the government, but also by the patronage of the Brahmins. In my view, Scott's (2009) idea on patron client is also relevant here to justify that Chepang are socio-economically and culturally poor due to Brahmins's exploitation.

Insecure livelihood

Livelihood is a determinant factor of social exclusion (Kabeer 2006). Livelihood can be sustained if people have control and command over natural resources and entitlement in economic, political and social aspects for what the role of the state is valuable (Chambers cited in Crewe and Richard 2013: 93). Therefore, I would like to assess the Chepang's livelihood through different determinants such as land, food, employment, housing and education and how are they prevented from secure livelihood. The issues such as livelihood, ethnic identity and natural resources are entangled and interconnected in a way that one's impact is great upon other.

Land dispossession

Land is a crucial factor for income and livelihood for many people in developing countries because there are not employment opportunities like those found in industrialized countries. Therefore, exclusion from land in an agrarian country like Nepal inevitably causes livelihood insecurity (Adhikari 2010). This statement is backed up through the study of the Chepangs who are deprived of having sufficient and fertile land which causes a permanent situation of food

crisis and poverty. I will argue that landlessness and scarcity of land is what causes poverty in agrarian societies of Nepal.

Ganesh Chepang, a 25 year old man, who was studying in bachelor level pinpointed what he thought was the reason of the Chepang landlessness. According to him, non-recognition to their traditional practices of slash and burn cultivation is the main cause of lack of access over land. He said that Slash and burn cultivation is the Chepang's indigenous practice but the government snatched the land and restricted this practice in the name of preservation of the ecology. Instead of giving them compensation and other alternatives, the government declared it illegal to do slash and burn cultivation which raises threat in livelihood and distorts their ethnic identity. He further said that slash and burn cultivation practice was important for landless Chepangs to grow maize and millet in such steep and stony land where irrigation facilities were not available. Therefore, now neither they can buy land nor produce enough food for all family members in such a stony and rugged land which ultimately cause debt. Ganesh added that the Chepangs have to work as wage labor in low wages and share cropper in unfavorable condition and the Chepangs have to bow their heads to local creditor for survival which further marginalize the Chepangs. In his view, due to near landlessness, the Chepangs have to wander in forests to collect fruits like *Ghitta*, *Vyakur*, and *Tarul* and have to depend on wage labor for livelihood which is not reliable all the time. He wished for big portion of land which he thinks as a symbol of wealth, social prestige and a means for secure livelihood.

Regarding the possession of land, one of my informants Bhimmaya Chepang, an illiterate mother of 5 children said;

Mahakali road construction project made me real landless. It was an 'anti- human' activity in the name of development. I yelled in the mid way to save my land requesting to change the road trails but I was unheard. I don't have an inch of land even to grow vegetable now and my house may fall anytime due to landslide. The road is only beneficial to those who are rich and who can grow vegetable in their field and do business. The road facility does not give the poor to eat. Therefore, it is against our will. The local committee decided to give only 4 Ana⁵ land but what can I do with this portion of land? If I go to dig up the khoriya, the government will arrest me.

⁵Measurement of land 1 Ana=3179 m²

Hirsch, Hall and Murray Li (2011:10) believes that the actors who seize and use the land of poor and marginalized people do not perceive it as land grabbing but as a step for ecological preservation or development activities. It applies the same in the case of Chepang. The Nepal government has banned slash and burn cultivation through private nationalization act (1977) and the land of Bhim maya Chepang was destroyed in the name of development of the village. But the government turned its deaf ear to the precarious livelihood of the Chepangs. The government provided neither land nor any other alternatives to them which inevitably threatens their livelihood. Annapurna Quarries and Hetauda limestone mines were conducted in Jogimara which directly affects the Chepangs lives relocating them from their land. Regarding dislocation, one of my literate interviewee a 46 year old social worker who now is doing farming, Ram Chepang expressed his frustration asking that what benefit the Chepangs get from Annapurna and Hetuda limestone mine. Rather, it destroyed their house; it displaced them from their birth land and made their live more miserable. The president of Nepal Chepang association, a leading organization of the Chepangs, Jitendra Chepang claimed that the Hetauda limestone mine, owned by the government, displaced the Chepangs from their land without previous information and compensation. Then in the NCA initiation, the Chepangs protested against the government actions something which led to government compensation for the loss of land but the money which they got was too insufficient for next settlement. Hirsch, Hall and Murray Li (2011) state in South Asian context that the compensation given to the victims is insufficient to settle down. I am fully convinced with this idea that the Chepangs who were dislocated from their birthplace in order to enlarge mining area. But the government gave the minimum compensation to the Chepangs after pressure of the NCA which was not enough to be settled. This act of dislocation makes the Chepangs impoverished and marginalized. It is the right of the government to seize the private land for public use but compensation is necessary. If the government rehabilitated them in certain area with support, I would not say that the government is discriminating the Chepangs based on ethnicity. It's the nation's discrimination on the basis of ethnicity and poverty. Dissatisfying with his geographical landscape, Jitendra mentioned that Nepal government could transfer them to very fertile and plain land if they wanted. He expressed his anger towards the government that it has kept the Chepangs in steep, infertile and disadvantaged area whereas it has kept the animal in plain, fertile and easy access area where transportation facilities are also

available. It shows how the Chepangs were dissatisfied in their land which has made them disadvantaged and poor.

Rajan Chepang, a 40 year old man, was working as a social worker in Jogimara expressed his viewpoint on the situation of the Chepangs. The Chepangs are poor because of exploitation of the Brahmins. According to him, Brahmins and Chhetris captured good and fertile land making fake documents as they were literate and clever. Since the Chepangs do not have land, they must borrow money and grains from Brahmins for survival. But the Brahmins use this as a way to exploit them in the form of bonded labor and put on heavy interest in loan. Due to the lack of income, the Chepangs cannot pay their debt on time. Then Brahmin exploit and dominate them and in the end Brahmins seize the land and whatever valuable he has. This above saying confirms that money lending and the debt determines social relationships and social and economic equalities might exclude the poor class like the Chepangs from the land. Exclusion of the land is structured by power relations where a powerful actor evicts the powerless from the land with tricks and power (De Haan 1999). De Haan's idea is almost similar to Scott's (2009) view on patron client relationship. They both opine that powerful actor based on wealth and tricks snatch the land of powerless. As De Haan and Scott illustrate it as a result of patron client relationship, I see Brahmins as patrons who get benefitted with exploitation over the Chepangs and they also seized the land of the Chepangs with making tricks which made the Chepangs landless.

In informal conversation with my host, a sixty seven year old and illiterate Chepang woman Gopimaya Chepang who had six sons and two daughters, expressed her grief and sorrows of having less productive land. She mentioned;

Sir, I own little unproductive land on which productive is too low. As there is no sufficiency of food, I fell in debt. If there was wide and fertile land, we would produce large amount of grains. We consume more labor but we produce little grains because of stony and step land. I am poor because of lack of land. If I had enough land, I could produce enough grains for our family. Due to the scarcity of land, I have worked on Brahmin's land as share cropper. When he does not allow me to work on his field, then I cannot think what I do. I have debt in local groceries too.

Hirsh, Hall and Murray Li (2011) state that if there is little land than the production cost such as manpower and seeds, there is likely to fall in debt. I understand that poverty and spiral of debt is

because of unfertile land and landlessness. If the Chepangs do not produce enough food grains, they have to buy goods for subsistence in credit and also they have to work as share cropper in Brahmin's field which causes them to fall in debt. So as Adhikari (2010) said, I hold that land in agrarian societies is potential resources for sustainable livelihood.

In summarizing an issue of land I will say that while agriculture is and has been, the basis of the Chepangs livelihood, as of today, it is insufficient for sustaining life. They have little control over the lands primarily due to unfavorable policies of the state to the Chepangs and encroachment of dominant communities upon their land. So the Chepang are becoming poor due to control or no control over land and due to the negative spiral of debt and dependence on Brahmins. So they are excluded from the land that generates other social and economic deprivation such as prestige, wealth and livelihood security.

Food insufficiency and consumption

“Food is a necessity. Food is a protection. Food is a status and food is a well-being. Food represents growth and development. Food is overall livelihood and life. Food is pleasure and prosperity. Food is respect and love. Food is culture” (Rai 2008: 1), but the Chepang are estranged from getting enough food. When I asked the Chepang about food security, one common saying was “*six month's famine, six months food*”. The main cause of food shortage for the Chepangs is little control over land, or landlessness. Therefore wild tubers such as *Gittha*, *Vyakur*, *Tarul* etc., are gathered and consumed as ‘emergency food’ during seasonal deficit. According to Dilman Chepang, a farmer and local leader of 45;

I have little portion of land and the land which I have is unproductive, stony and steep. So I have to do hard labor to produce low amount grains which is insufficient for family. I mainly grow maize and millet on such land where yields are low and hardly sufficient for 6 months. From March to July there is scarcity of food so I have to rely on forest vegetables such as yams and wage labor for supplementary of food.

In the previous topic, I discussed about exclusion of the Chepangs from land and its negative impacts in their livelihood. Based on above mentioned information, I can say that landlessness is a strong factor of food deficit. So the Chepangs have to spend most of the time to join ‘hands to mouth’ for livelihood. Therefore, they are also excluded from education, awareness programs

and so on. It's the duty of the government to protect them from famine but they are away from the eyes of the government because they do not claim for food rights. So lack of food for the Chepangs necessarily makes the livelihood precarious.

The Chepangs were nomadic 150 years ago and they used to live in forest and caves. Therefore, they were solely dependent upon forest fruits, hunting and fishing (Piya Maharjan and Joshi 2011). It means forest products would play very vital role in their livelihood because they had access over supplemental foods, timber, firewood, medicine and commercial forest products for income generation but unfavorable forest policies prevented the Chepangs from their control over forests (Piya, Maharjan and Joshi 2011). Chudamani Chepang, an old Shaman of 75 year said that the government of Nepal before 1957 was very generous to the Chepangs. He shared his experience that once he hunted a big deer with bows and arrows in the forest without returning at home for three days because he had promised his wife to bring a deer for meat consumption. He used to cut timber for his use without restrictions. He used to collect bamboo from the forest and would make winnowing fans, baskets, and wicker baskets for cash income. They were free to consume forest products as they wanted. But nowadays the government arrests them if they hunt wild animals and cut timber from the forests. His skills in handicrafts are less useful due to lack of raw material which can be obtained from the forest. During my fieldwork, I used to go to the forest with the Chepang to gather forest fruits like Ghitta, Vyakur, Tarul, Varlang, Stinging nettle, Leaves of Tanki⁶, fruits of Chyuri⁷ and so on during food shortage. It has helped the Chepangs to minimize the food deficit but the restriction of the government to hunt and to collect timber products failed to address the problem of food insufficiency. Hence, food insecurity is a prominent issue of the livelihood of the Chepangs.

Short term consumption practice is a significant factor of food shortage in the Chepang community. Kaila Baje, a Chepang man of 70 year, was a Hindu Shaman who converted to Christianity. In a conversation he shared his experience and told me that the Chepangs finish large amount of grains by making the local alcoholic beverage *Jaad* and celebrating indigenous festival. He was shaman two years ago. Due to the religious and cultural practice of the

⁶Name of the tree

⁷Chyuri is a Nepali name for an Indian butter tree(*Diploknemabutyracea*Roxburgh) Chepang name for Chyuri is 'yosi'

Chepangs, food would be sufficient for six months and he would search forest products and animal husbandry for subsistence for the rest of the months. He said that if the Chepang is ill, Shaman has a great role to recover him/ her. They should manage money, *Jaad*, cocks, goats, and pigeon in the process of making recovery. He further said that it is uncertain whether he/ she will be recovered even after expenditures. For him, it is superstitious. Therefore, he became Christian. In Christianity, they should not spend money on unproductive expenses because prayer is enough to recover ill persons. After he became a Christian, he stopped drinking *Jaad* and celebrates Hindu festivals which had made him indebted. Now he consumes the grains which they produced on their own land, for nine months and it is less complicated to sustain their livelihood. In an interview of another informant, a woman of 32 year who is an illiterate Hindu, she said that food insufficiency for them is due to their excessive consumption habits. She said;

I had bigger heap of maize than the Brahmin's but it was finished within six months because I consumed grains for preparing jaad and celebrating our festivals. Brahmins are stingy and save everything for future being starved but I do not like this. We have to enjoy our lives because we are unknown about our death. Whether in Nwagi or Teej, Dashain and Tihar, I prepare many pots of local wine from maize and drink it with meat and pork. About 50% of the grain is consumed in feasting and Jaad making. Sir, Jaad is the tea and coffee for us. Either in festivals and farm work, it is important. If grains finish; we borrow from our neighbours and prepare Jaad. Without it, we are crazy.

I also observed that Jaad is the very essential for the Chepangs not only in festivals but also in everyday lives. I understand that drinking Jaad is the culture of the Chepangs as they belong to Matwali groups in caste hierarchy (see Index II). I do not think that the Chepangs spend money on unproductive expenses due to their illiteracy. I opine that they are celebrating festivals as what their ancestor did and drinking jaad as a part of their culture. Liquor beverage is one of the causes of food insufficiency for the Chepangs but it is not their defect rather it is due to cultural influence.

On the basis of the above mentioned data, I say that food insufficiency and food insecurity is the most prominent aspect of the Chepang's livelihood due to unfavorable forest policies and lack of entitlement on land. Short term consumption practice is also a pushing factor for food insecurity. The forest has also played a vital role in bridging the gap when stored grains are depleted and

new crops are yet to come but it is not sufficient. In second chapter, I mentioned that in interim constitution of Nepal 2007, GoN has guaranteed the right of food for all the citizens but implementation is lax. Therefore, the government should address their problems either by land distribution or provision of entitlement over forest products. When the Chepangs face the problem of food deficit, it shows their poverty and exclusion from secure livelihood. In the next section, I will elaborate patron- client relationship between the Chepangs and landlords/ mine owners in the labor market which adds to their situation of poverty and exclusion.

Discrimination in the labor market and wage labor

In the circumstances of landlessness, labor is the prominent source of the livelihood because laborers generate income through selling their labor. In this case labor markets have pivotal role in alleviating poverty and improving life standards of the people (Papola 2012, Adhikari 2010). But, labors are not only discriminated based on age, education, occupation and skills but also on ethnicity, sex, caste and gender. There are income disparities due to the perception and prejudices of the buyers. So labor markets are a mechanism of both improvement and discrimination and exclusion (Papola 2012). Relying on papola's view, I will discuss how the Chepangs are discriminated and excluded from labor markets not based on skills, occupations and knowledge but based on ethnicity.

Madhu Chepang was a 43 years old man who spent almost 25 years as a wage laborer. Since yields are low in the field, there was scarcity of food. He said that although forest fruits have great role to avoid hunger, it is not the solution. Due to lack of availability of wage labor in their village, he migrated to work in limestone mines in Jogimara and urban areas. He works in limestone mine is to extract small piece of stones by digging and unload it on truck. Moreover, he goes to work as wage laborer out of his districts as well. Once he went to work in Dolakha district where he had to carry sands for road construction. Due to heavy work, he was ill and returned home. He further said that since he was illiterate, his main works were carrying loads, cleaning streets and making street walls. He opined that he has to go anywhere and to do any sort of work because of unavailability of wage labor and illiteracy of them. He explained me that he has to work for twelve hours in a day from 6:00 am to 6:00 pm but usually gets less than NPR.400 (4.1 USD). He believes that the owner knows that Chepangs are poor and cannot speak against him about payment. Due to unavailability of wage labor, it is the Chepang's compulsion

to work in such unfavorable condition. Through my observation, I knew that the Chepangs migrate in urban areas for wage labor in off season of agricultural works. I observed that most of young Chepangs were migrated to earn money for celebrating the main Dashain festival in September. As Adhikari (2010), said, wage labor was important for the Chepangs to sustain their livelihood in the situation of being landless. As they were economically exploited, I do not think that labor market in the case of Chepangs is a mechanism of improvement. In my opinion, the situation of ethnic minorities in Bangladesh and Nepal is similar. As Vinoj (2012) said, ethnic minorities in Bangladesh are also landless and dependent on wage labor. They usually work on construction sites and mines with low payment. The situation of the Chepangs is no exception of it because the Chepangs are also landless and do wage labor on construction sites and mines.

Since there are no markets nearby the Chepang area, there are no employers to offer employment opportunities to the Chepangs. Migration for work is very important for the poor people of south Asia for their survival (De Haan and Nayak, 1995). I also found out that rural- urban migration is very common among Chepangs. Since there are no any factories and market areas and availability of wage labor in Chepang's area, they migrate to urban areas where they can get waged work. Since there are two lime stones mine in Jogimara, they migrate and work staying in the field but it does not offer more jobs due to technological uses. In my view, rural-urban migration of the Chepangs is not a desirable act but it's a compulsion. So I take migration as an exclusion from land and income.

Ram kumar Chepang, another informant of 43 year who is illiterate farmer and wage laborer, told me that the Chepangs are illiterate and poor so they do not aspire to get new job and start a new career. The Chepangs do not know more than coolie work so contractor of the project exploits the Chepangs. He further said that Chepangs are following the occupation of past generation because they lack innovation and determination to start a new way of life. He explained that he had done wage labor to make contractor richer. According to him, he began with coolie work from the age of 11 and worked for 28 years. He stated that there was no improvement in his life but he has not to keep their stomach empty. Wage labor is widespread in the Chepangs community. Since they lack food, the earning for livelihood is wage labor. He said that the Chepangs might get works if they go farther to carry loads, to make dams, to cut woods, and to construct houses and schools. I did not find any women who worked in this limestone

mine. Because they said that this hard sort of work can be done only by men while women do household work and agricultural work such as collecting fodder, cooking, thinning maize and grazing cattle.

Chepangs work as wage laborer in patron-client relationship. Regarding patron-client relationship, Scott (2009) states that there is unequal exchange between two parties where power figure provides support or security and powerless gives personal assistance, compliance and emotional support. I am fully convinced with his idea that the owner exploits the Chepangs with minimum wages but the Chepangs have no courage to speak against this but show compliance and personal assistance in the form of labor. This exemplifies that the Chepangs are excluded from labor markets and are indulged in poverty which cause threats in their livelihood.

Once I was talking with an old Brahmin man of 70 year, a Chepang came and sat down with us in the courtyard. Then the old man commanded him to carry a wooden log from the jungle which was already cut for house construction. I saw that he went in silence which meant he did not like to go but he could not reject because of culture of servitude. He could not reject this command because he is dependent upon the Brahmins to borrow grains for his survival. Expectations of free labor of the Chepangs to the Brahmins strongly indicate that there is an established patron-client relationship between them which influences the poor situation of the Chepangs since they often also are indebted to the Brahmins. In informal conversation, Ram Prasad Dallakoti, a Brahmin man of 45 who is working as a driver, said that if the Brahmins give food and grains to the Chepangs in their need, the Chepang would do everything for free. He further said that Chepangs do not ask for anything although they carried a sack of rice from the market. So Brahmin's exploitation and the Chepangs inferiority prevent them to generate income. From this fact I can say that wage labor is the alternative job of agriculture. Even though they get such work, they are highly exploited in economic issues. And they are also ready to do this because of their inferior caste status and their indebtedness to their patrons. So illiteracy and poverty compels them to stay on in the patron- client relationship.

My assertion is that in the labor market there is a mechanism in which exploitation and inequality is produced and reproduced. Due to illiteracy and unavailability of wage labor, the Chepangs works in unfavorable conditions which makes them impoverish and vulnerable. The owner knows that the Chepangs are illiterate and cannot speak against their action. The

Chepangs also have fear of losing their jobs. Exploitative labor relations have isolated the Chepangs from sufficient means of existence but they are included through patron-client relationship in the community. The following section discusses unemployment and discrimination of the Chepangs based on ethnicity which causes precarious livelihood.

Unemployment and discrimination

Unemployment is not an essential factor of social exclusion because he/ she might get job opportunity in the course of time but discriminatory processes and mechanism cause persistence of employment which necessarily hampers livelihood. In other words, if the people are prejudiced and discriminated based on socio-economic status, age, gender and caste/ ethnicity, they are socially excluded and unlikely to get job (Papola 2012). Chepangs are also deprived of getting employment based on ethnicity and lack of social networks even though they are eligible. I knew through fieldwork that the Chepangs were prejudiced and excluded being Chepangs. Due to uncertainty of jobs and ignorance of the government to uplift the Chepangs, the Chepangs hardly enroll the school and they leave school even though they enroll. The Government discouraged the educated Chepangs to study as they were not assured of employment opportunities.

Ramhari Chepang is a man of 23 year who was studying at bachelor level. Even though he passed intermediate, job is not guaranteed. So, as he saw it, it is mere spending money. He was no longer interested to study. He was quite frustrated, He was in dilemma whether to leave or continue his study. He had thought that he would get a job after intermediate level because he was the only one boy who has passed intermediate level from his village, Robang. He had also thought that the government would provide employment opportunities to encourage other Chepangs to study but nothing happened. According to him, to pass intermediate level is a real challenge for poor Chepangs because of unavailability of schools in the village and expensive stationary goods. He said he cannot work as collie because of his education. His younger brother who works as wage laborer earns NPR 6000 (USD 61.5) in a month but he earns nothing. He believes that his Brahmin classmates study with a certain aim, confidence and determination but he is studying without a clear aim. He is the only one of this village who was reading at bachelor level but he had not got a job yet. He expressed his frustration in a way that if the Chepangs are

not guaranteed employment opportunities after certain educational level, it is useless to spend money on education.

Jeffrey (2010: 465) also examines the experience of unemployed young men in the north Indian city of Merrut. According to him, lower caste of people in India face social inequalities and they are discriminated in each sector of society based on caste. Rajesh, a PHD holder in India was prevented from getting employment and was doing 'timepass'. Here time pass means to spend time without doing any fruitful work which cause suffering and mental anguish. Social networks are really important in India because it strengthens social and cultural capital which helps to live a dignified life. But higher caste of people who are economically and culturally rich, capture very profitable and secure employment because they have good social networks, mastery in English and expertise in IT in addition to their knowledge on particular subjects(Jeffrey 2010). Due to the lack of employment, marginalized youth felt terrible frustration and realized that they did not have social network which they needed in order to get a job. It makes them realize that they are left behind, excluded from secure adulthood and threatens socio- economic standing. This is similar to the Chepang case. Ramhari Chepang, who is also educated, is a marginalized youth who feels frustration due to lack of employment and he realizes that he was deprived of getting employment having no social connections. I opine that if the government wants to encourage the Chepangs to study, the Chepang like Ramhari should be given an employment opportunity that fits to him. So that other Chepangs will be encouraged to study. In fact, they should be given what the Chepangs deserve, but they should not discriminate on the basis of ethnicity.

The president of Nepal Chepang association, Jitendra Chepangs, says that Chepangs are inferiorized due to illiteracy and lack of awareness of rights. In his view, elite groups and government officials in local village do not like to make them privileged. He questions; "why the Chepangs are not getting job in local community as an office assistant and cleaner? If the Chepangs are not offered due to illiteracy and lack of knowledge, why are not the Chepangs offered job for local office assistant and sweeper? Do they not know to sweep the floor and clean offices? His idea sounds convincing that if the Chepangs are not given employment opportunities due to lack of knowledge, they should have got a chance to work as they deserve. But in fact, they are discriminated by the government and dominant groups based on poor ethnic groups.

Maya chepang, a girl of 23 years and a student of intermediate level, shared her experience of being excluded from employment opportunity. She said that there was a vacancy for a primary teacher in her community. There are a total of 105 students in the school and out of them only 15 are non Chepangs. But there was not even a single teacher from the Chepangs. Even though she is qualified for that job, she was not kept as a teacher there because all decision makers were Brahmins. She further said that it was not government position but community could decide whom to select for teacher. But a Brahmin boy was selected as a teacher. She stated that this is discrimination to the Chepangs by the elite groups like Brahmin, Chhetri and Newar which cause frustration and discouragement to study more. It's because non Chepangs hold the senior post in school management committee and Chepangs who are in the committee clap their hand whatever decision is made. They never raise voice in favor of them. If they could raise an issue and demand for it, obviously she could get it.

It seems to me that the Chepangs are isolated from employment not only because of their incapability but also because of discriminatory behavior by the elite neighbors and irresponsibility of the state. Rajesh was unemployed due to caste discrimination which caused economically poor and psychological suffering. Maya Chepang was denied an opportunity of school teachers not due to lack of capacity but due to prejudiced behavior to them. Similar to the case, the consequence of unemployment for the Chepangs is that they are economically poor and mentally anguished. The following topic illuminates the poor housing condition of the Chepangs something which explicitly shows their vulnerable situation.

Housing

I observed different kinds of housing patterns of the Chepangs in my field sites. Some houses were wide with stone walls, and tin roofs. And most of the houses were traditional, small and narrow with thatched roof. Traditional houses also had two storeys with walls of wooden sticks and a kind of rough mat made of split bamboo. Due to the lack of enough spaces in the houses, all family members sleep together near the hearth but the Chepangs are going to build a new house with government's economic support. Regarding this, one informant of 54 year who is a farmer, Balaram Chepang says *"I am the poorest of the village. The roof of my house is leaking and here is no enough space to sleep and keep grains. But the government does not give me money to construct house. They give economic support to such Chepangs who can serve beer*

and meat to them. I cannot do this because it is difficult for me to join hands to mouth so I did not get the allowances by the government”. Some Chepangs who got economic support for building house poured dissatisfaction. A man of 40 year, Kaila Chepang, said “the government has decided to give us NPR 160,000(USD 1644) but the representatives of NCA gave only NPR.130000 (USD 1335.7). Not only this, they tried to convince to say having got full money instead of part of it in front of senior officers”.



figure1: typical Chepang dwelling



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Figure 2. A modern house of the Chepang with brick walls and tin roof.

A widow of 34 years who is a mother of six children, Gorimaya Chepang, said she is afraid that her house is going to fall due to landslide caused by road construction. Neither the road construction committee nor Chepang Association pays any attention to reconstruct her house or give her some form of compensation. When I observed her house I saw that it might be destroyed by landslide any time in that monsoon period. In such critical case, road construction committee or NCA should have solved her problems but she said that she was given assurance only. She believes that those who can speak and deliver beer and chickens to officers who hold responsibility to provide allowance for housing, they get houses. She said that she went to the VDC office to report the bad condition of her house, but her voice was neglected. Baksing Chepang, 80 years old man who was landless accused the government's act as discriminatory. He mentioned that under PRP, the government decided to give allowances to construct a house for the Chepangs but the condition is that those who are landless will not get allowances. He expressed his dissatisfaction; "*Sir, the government seems to help the poor with distribution of the allowances to construct a house but the condition is ridiculous that landless Chepangs like me do not get it. I think the government is mad*". To get confirmation I talked to the sub secretary of the village. He replied that it is true that landless Chepangs do not get the government allowances. According to him, if the Chepangs do not have land just to make a house, neither the government can provide the land nor recommend to construct a house in other's land. It seems to me that it's a prejudiced and biased provision of the government to the poor Chepangs. The GoN should have provided the land and government allowances to the poor Chepangs instead of supporting well off Chepangs.

I showed how the poor Chepangs were excluded and economically cheated by officials due to the lack of the monitoring of the government. The government's decision to give allowances is good but the discriminatory provision not to give allowances to landless was unjust. Due to the lack of proper implementation, the poorest Chepangs were excluded to get it. I believe that if the Chepangs have sustainable livelihood, then only they have chance to fight for their ethnic identity and rights. Therefore, the ways in which the poor Chepangs were excluded, indicate their poor living. I now turn to analyze the situation of education and health of the Chepangs which further illuminate their livelihood.

Isolation from fundamental rights of Education and Health

Education is a significant factor which alleviates poverty and culture of poverty with income generation that has positive effect in livelihood(Kabeer 2006) But due to lack of education, the Chepangs have impoverish living conditions (UN Report 2012). Not only this, education makes mentally enlightened and proves self worth. One of my informants Kaila Chepang, a prosperous man of 40 year who owns an electric rice mill, said “*We don't get job after education. Therefore, learning to read newspapers and write letters is enough. An SLC passed person come to do coolie work with me due to the lack of employment opportunities*”. Rishi Chepang, literate pastor of the local Church and father of seven children, sent his 13 year old daughter in Hugdikhola⁸ to enroll in grade six because there was not lower secondary school in the village. He took a room in rent near the school and would pay monthly NPR.1000 (USD 10.2). Even though it was not easily affordable, she studied one year living in rented house. But he withdrew her from school when she was failed in grade 6 and she was not given the chance to study further. He explained me that it was hard to afford her in a rented room, to pay school fees, buy stationary goods and to manage food to eat. Moreover, he had buffalos and cows but no person to collect fodder to animals so he took her back from school. When he and his wife could not manage agricultural works and animal husbandry, he needed his daughter's help so he withdrew her from school. Lack of school facilities nearby and cost of schooling prevent them from taking education.

Linguistic differences are also a factor which discourages the Chepangs kids to continue their studies. The President of NCA, Jeetendra Chepang stated that the chepang are backward due to illiteracy. Among various reasons, linguistic difficulty is a problem for the Chepangs kids. Chepangs kids speak and communicate in their own Chepang language in the community. According to him, they do not even understand Nepali language. When they are five years old, non Chepang teachers teach them in the Nepali language that does not motivate them to go to school. Insincerity, absenteeism and rude behaviors of teachers to the small kids make them afraid and discouraged. So they prefer to go to collie work at the age of ten instead of study. Hence, the government and NGO need to set their programs involving the targeted community in analyzing their problems, setting objectives, formulating plans, and programs and implementing them. In my separate conversation with teachers, they accused the Chepangs parents of being

⁸Name of the place where markets and higher secondary schools are available.

ignorant for not sending their children to school. Providing schools and schooling for children in their mother tongue in primary level is also a responsibility of the state. But in Nepal it is only limited on paper.

Resham Sunuwar is a non-Chepang teacher and a student of bachelor level who is residing within Chepang community in Laitak. In our conversation, not only did he accuse the Chepang parents for being ignorant but also talked about the importance of awareness program for the Chepangs. He explained me that lack of awareness and discouragement of the parents are the problems that stop the children to enroll and go to school. He illustrated to me that guardian come and ask them not to scold and blame for keeping their Children at home. He said it is the irresponsibility of the parents because they should have brought school dress, bought copies, made dinner on time and they themselves should have left the children to school. According to him, the teachers launched awareness program in the beginning of the session and advised them to send their children to school but that was not their concern. Moreover, the government has provided school uniform, everyday lunch, books and NPR 400 (USD 4.1) a year to Chepang kids upto five grade to fascinate and enroll them in school but it did not bring any significant changes. Until and unless, they do not change their mind, it is fruitless to think that improvement will come soon in their life.

Barule kanchha, an illiterate man of 46 years and a farmer, explained about the geographical difficulties of the area.

Our 6/7 years small kids have to walk 1 to 2 hours to reach their school. There are stream without bridge on the way and have to cross through it. The way to school is too difficult for small kids. Due to the far distance, the school administration has decided to close the school at 3.00pm instead of 4.00pm. Otherwise, night might be fall before they reach their homes.

It seems to me that their poor economic condition of the Chepangs prevents them to think about other aspects of life such as education, health and recreation. Lifetime is spent on earning a livelihood. Next, lack of school building in the village is the main obstacle for the Chepangs to study. Poverty causes exclusion from education and health facilities. In this circumstance, I argue that the government is irresponsible and should support them in education which will yield good

results and employment opportunities. Hence, education plays pivotal role in ending poverty and strengthening livelihood.

Health

It was written in constitution that it's the duty and responsibility of the government to provide free health services to its citizen (GoN 2007). Through my observation, I saw that some Chepangs who were suffering from measles, fever, wounds, stomach swelling consulted to shaman and pastor, not the doctor. Due to poverty, their attachment to shaman and pastor and lack of health facilities in their village, they are living a very risk life. It's the duty of the government to provide health facilities and save the life of the people, but it has not initiated any visionary plans in health issues. According to Toplal Chepang, an illiterate farmer of 46 year and father of six children, two Chepangs died due to lack of health centers in their village and geographical aloofness. Last year, two persons fall down from a cliff. One died on the spot but the other one was seriously injured. They brought him at home from jungle and they decided to take him to the hospital next morning because it was getting dark and the neighbors should be gathered to carry him. Next day, they took him to the health post but he was referred to hospital. But on the way to hospital, he died. If they had small primary health centers in village, he might not lose his life untimely. There is one health volunteer in the village but according to him, neither she disseminates important information about health nor play vital role. Shanti Nepal is a NGO working on Chepang area on health and sanitation issue. Bikash shrestha, a man of 32 years and a social worker from Shanti Nepal said;

Our organization is working from last four years in this area. Our main concern is to make them aware on sanitation, nutrition, and pregnancy, in their active participation. We distributed toilet equipment to build toilet in whole Jogimara with the combined help of Jogimara VDC office. Now Jogimara VDC is declared as the free defecation area⁹. We have given awareness program about health related issue especially about delivery of the child, regular checkup, nutritious food; we are becoming facilitator of the government programs.

But the Chepangs are not getting such kind of health facility as described above in their village. Santaram Chepang, a man of 45 years, had 17 Children but only seven are alive now because of

⁹In Nepal, if people use private toilets and stop to defecate in public places, the area is called free defecation area.

food deficit. Prakash Chepang who is 23 yearold has 4 children and waits for the next one. I asked his pregnant wife if she was going for regular checkups. She replied “*sir, why should I go to see a doctor. I am fine. I am not ill*”. Therefore, NGOs should work with honesty to facilitate the people rather than mere to accomplish the work and make good report. GokulChepang, a Christian Chepang man of 46 year and used to work as social worker, expressed his anxious moment to me about his wife’s illness a few days ago. After delivery of a child, she was bleeding continuously. Since he was Christian, he took her to church and pastor blessed her but nothing happened to improve her condition. Then he gathered some neighbors to take her to hospital. The way is difficult so it took them 6 hours to bring her to the health post in Jogimara. The doctor referred to take her to the hospital. Immediately, they took her to Gajuri hospital. Then she became well after 3 days. The doctor said to if they had waited and brought her later, she would have died. This case illustrates that they are living very risky lives being isolated from health facilities. Hindu followers take the sick persons to the shaman at first. If no improvements happen, they bring the ill person to the hospital. Christian followers also believe in prayer and pastor. Then if nothing improved, they take ill person to the doctor. So the Chepangs experience untimely deaths due to the lack of small clinics in their village. It is the government’s responsibility to provide the basic facility of health to its citizen and lack of honesty of the NGO to ensure this facility in a reliable way. In the next section, I will discuss on ethnic identity based on language, religion, indigenous practices and festivals and argue that the discriminatory practice of the government and hegemony of the dominant groups are responsible for erosion of ethnic identity.

Ethnic Identity and politics: Chepang Language and Religion

After having discuss on livelihood of the Chepangs, I would like to discuss about how the Chepangs construct their ethnic identity and how they experience threat to preserve and promote it. I argue that the ethnic identity of the Chepangs is at the verge of extinction due to discriminatory and prejudiced treatment of the Chepangs by the government. In addition to that, I believe Scott’s (2009) Patron-client relationship is also relevant for a discussion how the dominant groups stereotype and stigmatize cultural practices and ways of life of the Chepangs.

Primordialism and instrumentalism represents two different understanding of ethnicity. Premordialists hold the notions of interconnected power of ethnicity and culture. In other words,

cultural features are the decisive factor of ethnic categorization and these cultural features are acquired by birth which grants ethnic citizenship (Eriksen 2002). Shared biology, ancestral origin and innate tendency which are ascribed by birth are irreducible factors of ethnicity (Cohen 1974 cited by Camarroof 2009: 39). But Barth, who is known as instrumentalist, believes that ethnicity is the product of social processes rather than a culturally given, made and remade rather than taken for granted chosen depending on circumstances rather than ascribed by birth (Barth 1969, cited by Wimmer 2008: 971). There are multiple perspectives of scholars on ethnic movements in Nepal. Some Scholars look at ethnic movements from a primordialist perspective that it is a quest for identity, while some scholars who belong to Brahmin and Chhetri take the instrumentalist stand and claim that ethnic movement is for political and economic benefits and opportunities. Representing both ideas scholar Prayag Raj Sharma states “the ethnic politics of Nepal in the 1990s seem to have elements conforming to both the primordialists and the instrumentalists models (1997: 483, quoted by Hachhethu, 2012). I agree with Sharma’s view that ethnicity can be defined as a synthesis of inalienable natural essence and constructed practices and behavior because the Chepangs have a ‘we feeling’, respect to ancestors, common language and territory and they have also changed their religion, cultural practices and nomadic ways of life. So ethnicity is a combination of primordialism and instrumentalism.

Jitendra Chepang, the leader of Nepal Chepang association (NCA) said that the distinct Chepang language, Chepang dress, shamanism, foraging and slash and burn practices, territory and indigenous festivals and rituals that give ethnic identity to the Chepangs. He further said that some Chepangs do not speak Chepang language and some Chepangs have left Hinduism and started to follow Christianity. Some Chepangs do not celebrate indigenous festivals like Nwagi and Hindu festivals Dashain, Tihar and so on where as some Chepangs celebrate it. This differentiation does not refer to cultural erosion but as a marker of distinctiveness which occurs with an advancement of time (Eriksen 2002).

Since language is a crucial marker of Chepang’s identity, it is going to be disappearing due to the great influence of Nepali language. Gokul Chepang, a man of 52 year who can read and write because he passed grade ten. He worked as a social worker in his village for 2 years but nowadays, he was busy in agricultural works. Regarding disappearance of Chepangs language, he viewed that;

The government is solely responsible for the disappearance of Chepang language. Firstly, in school level, the Chepang kids are not taught in Chepang language but the medium of teaching is Nepali language which is incomprehensible for them. Secondly, Nepali language is an official language so our language does not get any recognition by the state. Thirdly, I have not seen initiation of the government to promote and preserve Chepang language through Medias and newspapers.

It was written in the constitution that the Chepang kids will be taught in mother tongue up to primary levels. The government has also imposed Nepali language as an official language which makes the Chepangs to give priority to Nepali language instead of their own. It shows that the government favors the Brahmins and their festivals but it does not recognize the Chepang's festival. It is due to its prejudices to the Chepangs based on ethnicity.

Referring to the Indian context, Kabeer (2006) states, that dominant group devalue the culture, religious practice and lifestyles of certain despised groups which compel them to leave their disparaged and ridiculed practices resulting in the vanishing of their identity. In line with Kabeer (2006) I hold that the lifestyle and cultural practices of the Chepang are despised and ridiculed by the dominant group of Brahmin and Chhetri something which causes disappearance of their language and cultural practices. During my field visit, I know that the Chepangs of Laitak could not understand their own mother tongue. My host Gopilal Chepang, a man of 68 year expressed his regrets of losing his language.

We are living in Brahmin community. They are higher than us in terms of caste hierarchy. We used to plough their field. We were servants of Brahmins. They would communicate in Khas language because they would not speak our language. They would be angry if we speak our language. Due to forced assimilation, we lost our language. I feel shame when I cannot speak my own language. Beside our language, we are leaving our indigenous festivals and religions day by day. We are living among Brahmins and Chhetris so we celebrate what they celebrate. Due to persecution of Brahmins and domination of Hinduism, we left our indigenous culture and our particular dress.

Krishna Devkota, a Brahmin man of 56 years who was a local businessman, confirmed that Brahmins ridicule the Chepangs way of life and culture. He said that Chepangs were still wild and thoughtless because they eat wild fruits and wild animals. Slash and burn cultivation is the

traditional agricultural practice of the Chepangs but he despised this practice accusing the Chepangs for destroying ecological harmony by deforestation. Furthermore, he said that Christian Chepangs are placed lower than Sudras in the caste hierarchy because they do not celebrate Hindu festivals and follow Hindu norms and values. For him, Christian is untouchable so he does not let them enter his house.

I hold that Chepangs language, religion and lifestyles are despised and demeaned by the dominant group. The Brahmins wish for the Chepangs to leave their 'inferior and degraded culture' and follow Hindu culture and speak Nepali language. The Chepangs also wants to please the Brahmins in order to get material and emotional support. So the patron-client relationship between the Chepangs and non-Chepangs causes disappearance of language and their festivals.

However, domination of the Brahmins is not only the cause to lose their ethnic identity. A primary teacher of 21 years, Ganesh Chepang, expressed his anger to the government. He said that *Nwagi* is the main indigenous festival of Chepangs. But the government resists giving a public holiday for *Nwagi*, which falls in the first week of September. The government should recognize their festival and give a public holiday for *Nwagi* as it has given ten public holidays to celebrate the Hindu's main festival, Dashain. He added that the government's unconcern to their demand for ethnic identity is due to the division of the Chepangs in terms of religion. Some Chepangs are Christian whereas some are Hindus. Christian believers left to celebrate *Nwagi* and other indigenous festival so they do not demand for a public holiday to *Nwagi*. According to him, these two groups debate about their own superiority something which has caused religious misunderstanding and conflict. However, due to the division of the Chepangs in terms of religion, their voice for recognition of ethnic identity against government is weakened. Regarding Shamanism, an old and popular shaman Ram Bahadur Chepangs said that he was able to cure the diseases which were not be cured by medicines. For him, it was very reliable method to cure ill man in an easy way. But the dominant groups in the village perceive this activity as superstitious. They think that the Chepangs are wild man and are fearful to visit the doctor and use medicine. This is no doubt that the Chepangs ancient cultural identity is ridiculed by non-Chepangs. As a result, the Chepangs are gradually leaving their cultural practices and rituals.

Regarding ethnic identity, chairperson of Nepal Chepang Association Jeetendra Chepang told me that Chepangs are fighting against the government demanding recognition of their festivals, culture and way of life which is their identity but due to polarization of the Chepangs in terms of religion, the government is not paying attention to give public holiday in their main festivals. Disintegration in them has made them weak. According to Jitendra, the festivals the Christian followers celebrate are quite different to the festivals of the Hindu. Burial ceremony and other religious practices are different. Christian followers take themselves as superior and holy and other as inferior and they restrict Hindu follower to even touch their corpse but Christian can touch Hindu's corpse. Untouchability among themselves in terms of religion is bitter and precarious to their identity. He said that; *"I accept that there is a crisis to preserve our ethnic identity. Ethnic identity is not just attached with name and face but with culture and lifestyle"*. He further mentioned that the Chepangs have their own distinct culture and lifestyle.

To sum up, the cultural practices and ways of life of the Chepangs are stereotyped and despised by the government and the dominant groups. I see this is causing their marginalized situation. The Chepangs indigenous cultural practices of like fishing, hunting, shamanism and collect forest fruits for food are still practiced today, however Brahmins and Chhetris are stigmatizing them by derogatory terms such as wild, unaware, shy, and thoughtless. Biasness of the government to preserve ethnic identity in Nepal has been obstacles in the strengthening of the Chepangs ethnic identity. With forced assimilation to Khas (Nepali) language and with the lack of citizenship certificate, they did not gain their rights as citizens in society. The following section will discuss the Chepangs's infrastructural situation in and around the village.

Access to natural resources

Indigenous people have a very special relationship with natural resources such as land, water, mines and forests. Natural resources were not only the basis of livelihood of indigenous groups but were linked to whole life system. They derived their cultural meaning and identity from their living in certain location and using certain natural resources but their rights have been curtailed by various resource management policies and regulation of the state(Upreti and Adhikari 2006: 6).

A well educated man of 45 year, Jeetendra Chepang is the leader of Nepal Chepang Association (NCA) claimed that access to natural resources to Chepangs can be understood as an authority to use land, forest, water and mineral resources without any interference of government and other neighboring community. He further said that NCA has taken an initiation to pressure the government to implement that convention. Jeetendra added that if they had access to natural resources of that community like land, water, and forest, to some extent their daily needs would be fulfilled and all aspects of their life will be improved. According to him, the government was irresponsible because the Chepangs of Jogimara were threaten and their houses were destroyed without previous information and appropriate compensation to enlarge the area for Hetauda cement factory which was established in 1970. Then they revolted against the government action and demanded for compensation and relocation but that movement was suppressed. He puts forward his dissatisfactions that the state never considers the Chepang as its citizen because the state displaced them without any compensation and never makes a policy to give certain percentage of income to the Chepangs in the vicinity.

I hold that the Chepangs are displaced from their location due to the government policies of graduated sovereignty. Graduated sovereignty is a discriminatory treatment of the government to its people based on ethnicity and caste in terms of market relations. The government follows different modalities of treatment of populations which aims to maximize the returns on doing what is profitable and to marginalize the unprofitable (Castel 1991 quoted in Ong 2000: 58). The purpose of the government to enlarge the area of Hetauda cement factory was to accumulate huge profits and benefits, but the government does not compensate and relocate the Chepangs because Chepangs are seen as unprofitable. According to Ong (2000) the tribal people of Irian Java, Amungne, lost their land because American mining company leveled two mountains and was planning to conduct numerous mines in highlands where these tribal people were resided. But the Amungne people were neither given any compensation nor given employment opportunities in the mines. Instead, they hired Javanese as their staff in their mines (Lewis 1994, quoted in Ong, 2000: 64). The case of the Chepangs and Amungne is comparable because they were displaced from their land due to the profit making intention of the government.

There was a limestone mine owned by Hetauda Cement Company where the Chepangs of Laitak community has been working since 1970. Few Chepangs are mere workers in Hetauda cement

pvt. Ltd but the huge benefit is shared by others not by Chepangs. Nepal is the signatory of ILO 169 convention (Gurung, 2009) which guarantees IP's access and control over natural resources but in my view that rights in the case of Chepangs limited to paper. Due to the lack of implementation, they don't have access to forest for timber and hunting wild animals which were used by the Chepangs from ancient time. Bishnu Chepang is one of my informants of 43 years old who is concerned about developmental work in the village. He said;

The Annapurna quarry and Hetauda Cement PVT. LTD. has been giving NPR. 500000 (USD 5137.5) per year for our village development such as electricity, roads and water supply. But we don't know how much they give or don't give nowadays because Brahmins of our community deal about it with these mines and they themselves decide what to do and what not to do. They think we are illiterate and know nothing. Our views are not heard. Annapurna quarries has paid for nine teachers who are teaching in our community but it is pitiable that Chepangs are not kept as a teacher in local school where 80% students are Chepangs. Although we have majority in number, Brahmins monopolize and dominate to use available resources.

Through my fieldwork I learnt that the Chepangs are still dependent on the jungle for collecting food, hunt for meat and gather timber wood. When I talked to an old man, Bakrisram Chepang, he said that he preyed animals with bows and gun before 1990 as animals wandered here and there but now it was illegal to keep guns at home and prey animals because the government curtailed their rights in the name of preserving the forests and wild animals. An illiterate but reputed Shaman Of 50 years Karma Chepang who was curer of diseases, Complained that Brahmins and Chhetri who feel themselves as superior, cut woods and timber in community forest without giving any knowledge to community dwellers. They cut the forests not only for private use but for illegal export but the Chepangs are not allowed to cut the trees even for constructing houses. If they cut trees without giving any information, either they are fined or arrested. In this sense, the Chepangs are actively excluded being deprived of utilizing natural resources which were the means of livelihood for the Chepangs in Nomadic life and now as well. On condition to protect his name, one informant said that Chepangs do not have authority to use the forest resources in Robang. In spite the fact that there is a pure Chepang community, other caste/ non-Chepangs cut the trees and sell illegally.

Sir, you can see how the forest is deforested. It was dense before a decade but now, the trees are cut down randomly and exported illegally. Here, my uncle with other non chepangs from other village, cut down the trees and exported to wood factories. Some people kept quite even though they know. When I raised a question, then my uncle do not talk with me interestingly. Being unemployed, how my uncle would build a cemented house in Hugdikhola if he did not get the money through illegal export? Now the forest is owned by community. Without consent of whole community, none can and should cut it down. But Brahmins, being superior to us, use the forest resources for private use but put question in our legal use. So our voices are unheard and our necessities are under privileged but they can do without the consent of community.

Surya DC, a Bramin man of 42, was a head teacher in a primary school of Chepang community, strongly disagreed with the Chepangs view that Brahmins are excluding the Chepangs from natural resources. He said that non-Chepangs and Chepangs are living in the same community and sharing the benefits in equal. Strikingly, Chepangs are getting more benefits in Brahmin's leadership and initiation. For instance; Annapurna queries has been supporting their community by providing NPR.500000 (USD 5137.5) per year and has paid for nine teachers in local school. He claimed that that amount was spent in road construction and electricity which was shared by all. If Brahmins had not taken initiative, the mine would not give anything to their community.

Based on above mentioned data and discussions, I claim that the Chepangs have little control over land, forest and mine. They are marginalized due to extreme domination by the Brahmins and due to the government regulation and policies which frame traditional Chepang way of life as illegal and backward. It was assured by the government that the rights of the peoples concerned to the natural resources pertaining to their lands shall be specially safeguarded. These rights include the right of these peoples to participate in the use, management and conservation of these resources (ILO 169) but the Chepangs never experience paper limited rights in their lives.

Chapter conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed Chepang's livelihood in relation to land, food, employment, labor market and, housing. I found that the Chepangs had a precarious livelihood because of the government's biased and partial treatment of the Chepangs who they deem as unprofitable interms of market relations. Similarly, the Chepang language, festivals, their religion and ways

of life are despised by the dominant groups and they did not get any recognition by the government where as Nepali language and Hindu festivals were privileged by the state. At last but not the least, the Chepangs were not entitled to forests and mines rather they were displaced from their own land in the name of development and industrialization. Comparable to the displacement of Amungne people of Irian Java (Ong 2000), the Chepangs were dislocated but they were neither compensated nor employed. So non entitlement of the Chepangs over natural resources directly affects livelihood and indigenous practices. I thus claim that patronage position of the dominant groups and discriminatory deployment of state modalities based on ethno-racism exclude the Chepangs from partaking as citizens in the mainstream society.

In the next chapter, I will discuss mechanisms of social exclusion with anthropological perspectives I employed in previous chapters and argue that the Chepangs are socially excluded due to poverty. It was because poor Chepangs experience institutionalized inequalities and they are stigmatized by the dominant groups which produces low self-esteem and poor social status.

Chapter IV

Mechanisms of Social exclusion

Introduction

As per main objective of my research, this chapter throws light on the different mechanisms of social exclusion. To understand the social exclusion of the Chepang, I employed De Haan's (1999) concept of deprivation which examines the mechanisms and processes through which people are isolated from livelihood security, employment, ethnic identity and education so on. It stresses on underlying social relations instead of mere illustration of vulnerable lives. Major finding of my research reveals poverty as a major reason behind the social exclusion and marginalization of the Chepang community. My assertion here is that the state despise and demean the Chepang's ways of living and isolate the Chepangs from socio-economic opportunities based on ethnicity, class and region. The state in Nepalese context has used its power to privilege elite groups with different socio-economic and cultural benefits whereas the Chepangs are considered as not valuable in terms of profit. So they are partialized from benefits, rights and basic needs. Furthermore, relying on the views of Scott (2009) on patron-client relationship, I argue that unequal power relations and imbalance in exchange between the Chepangs and non-Chepangs highly benefits the Brahmins but such instrumental relationship makes the Chepangs impoverished. Moreover, I see the relationship between the NGOs and the Chepangs as patron-client because the NGOs supply material resources to the Chepangs, as the Brahmins, and they also show their compliance to the NGOs but the Chepangs are not made independent through this relation. I also investigated spatial and cultural mechanisms which contribute in creating impoverished and disadvantaged position of the Chepangs which I illustrate in following section. Thus, social exclusion of the Chepangs is not due to their own defects; rather, it is the result of structural discrimination, cultural influence and institutionalized inequalities in Nepal.

Poverty

In the previous chapter, I examined the vulnerable situation of the Chepangs with regards to land, food, good housing and employment. I found that most of the Chepangs were illiterate and

deprived of indigenous rights and natural resources. De Haan's (1999) deprivation perspective states that if the people are deprived of the basic needs and their rights at the same time that indicates poverty and social exclusion. Therefore, I can say that the Chepangs are poor and poverty is the main cause and consequence of their social exclusion. The Chepangs were poor and illiterate. Therefore, they had precarious livelihood on the one hand and their social positions and cultural practices were despised by the state and dominant neighbours. Kabeer (2000) argues that poor people are socially excluded when institutional mechanisms distinguish people and allocate resources and values in disproportional ways which privilege certain group of people and deny other group of people to involve in different activities of the society. This kind of discrimination makes the rich richer and poor poorer instead of eradication of poverty. She further says that if there are different segments of people in society, the privileged groups occupy central positions in mainstream institutions of society and formulate social norms and values through which social activities are proceed. But, less privileged people have no authority to formulate and change these rules but unwillingly accept it (Kabeer 2006: 87). This idea of Kabeer is applicable to discuss the position of the the Chepang in community where Brahmins are privileged and Chepangs are discriminated. The Brahmins are educated and wealthy in comparison to the Chepangs and hold higher position in the caste system in Nepal. Therefore, they formulate norms and values in their favor and take decision under it. In Chapter three, I mentioned that Maya Chepang, a girl of 23 year studying in intermediate level, was excluded from employment opportunities in the village. There was a vacancy of primary school teacher in which she was qualified, however the Brahmins who were in school management committee made a rule that only those who have already passed intermediate level are eligible for the position. There was not written anywhere that candidate should pass intermediate but the committee were the decision maker to exclude the Chepang from this job. In fact, she was excluded from employment opportunities not because of lack of eligibility, rather due to discriminatory institutional rules they themselves created. Therefore, poor Chepangs are excluded from socio-economic opportunities when powerful actors are decision makers of social life. Brahmin's stigmatization on Christianity, foraging and pork eating are no other than their institutional prejudices. So constructed institutional rules make them economically, socially and culturally impoverish. Are the Chepangs poor by themselves? The answer is absolutely no because they are in webs of discriminated institutional rules.

Crewe and Richard (2013) discuss poverty and claim that Poverty is not only associated with material and economic concept rather it is connected to culture and ways of life.

Poverty is not just about goods or materialism, it affects people status- it is socially stigmatizing. In general, poor people are not accorded respect. Since they are well aware of the stigma associated with poverty, an increase in income and changing economic relationships with others is bound up with social status as far as they are concerned (2013:100).

According to them, culture shapes the activities, ways of thinking and attitudes of society. They illustrate an example of attachment of money with self-esteem, social status and culture of societies. In Bangladesh, poor women who wanted to have enough clothes and foods not for themselves but for their children and husbands. Their demand of food and clothes are attached with self esteem and happy life because she would not be hurted by her husband and her responsibility of feeding children would be completed (Crewe and Richard 2013: 100).The Chepangs are economically, socially and culturally poor in the society because they have inferior position in the society and their language, culture and rituals are despised and demeaned. Saila Chepang was a small mill owner and he earned property but he was attached to foraging. Eventhough he was economically sound, his social position was low as he was Christian. So they are being stigmatized by the Brahmins as “wild and thoughtless human tribe”. Are the poor socially excluded? In my opinion, if poverty is understood not only as materialism but also as culture, social status and way of life, poor people are socially excluded like Chepangs.

Regarding culture of poverty, Crewe and Richard (2013) support the Claim of Appadurai that Poverty is embedded in culture which is reproduced and nurtured. It is because the poor and excluded people do not aspire for better future due to socio-economic disadvantage and inequalities. Supporting the claim of Appadurai, Kabeer (2006: 10) states “Children from marginalized groups tend to reproduce parental patterns of illiteracy and early entry to work”. My findings are in line with Kabeer (2006) because poverty as culture is trans-generational among Chepangs as well. The Chepang children leave school after primary level and get entry to wage labor in early age. Most of the Chepangs who are illiterate do not encourage their children to go to school but become happy when they start labor work. They are exactly following their parent’s ways of life instead of exploring new occupations which inevitably trap them in vicious circle of poverty. As Crewe and Richar (2013), I can argue that the Chepang should not be

blamed for their poor economic status because they are a part of society. Therefore, socio-economic inequalities and underlying power relation cause poverty.

Kabeer (2006) believes that poverty of the marginalized groups in South Asia can be reduced through knowledge about rights, economic support, institutional and infrastructure development and social protection of them by the government. Crewe and Richard (2013) believe that if development partners understand the targeted people, their culture and socio-economic conditions instead of giving only economic incentives, reduction of poverty is possible. They further say that negative treatment and attitudes towards the poor should be changed and their participation in development work should be ensured (Crewe and Richard 2013). Unlike Kabeer, I believe that awareness raising and targeted programs do not necessarily eradicate poverty. I think if NGOs and the state had perceived development not as merely economic growth but cultural, social, intellectual and emotional upliftment, the Chepangs would not have been living a vulnerable life.

In the above section, I discussed poverty as the main cause of social exclusion of the Chepangs and I also argued that various mechanisms play vital role to generate poverty. So, in following section, I would like to mention those factors which cause poverty of the Chepangs.

Graduated Sovereignty in Nepal

Sovereignty as state power which is different from conventional understanding of prevailing order and stability through military forces in its territory but maintains order and regulate the state and its population following governing modalities of control, regulation and monitoring in relation to global market forces (Ong 2000). Ong (2000) illustrates that the states of Malaysia and Indonesia follows different modalities for governing the populations influence by increasing economic globalization. In South Asian context, she illustrates graduated sovereignty as an outcome of the state and global market relations.

It refers to the differential treatment of the population in relation to market calculations thus intensifying the fragmentation of citizens already pre formed by social distinctions of race, ethnicity, gender, class and region. Next, state transnational networks where by some aspects of state power and authority are taken up by international corporations located in special economic zones” (Ong 2000:57).

Referring to Robert Castel, she views that the state adopts different mechanisms and invests large amount of money in economically powerful people with a hope of returning maximum profit of it whereas it is indifferent to marginalized because they are unprofitable. It means the people get different treatment by the government base on ethnicity, gender and region (Ong 2000: 58). Among various modalities of the government, the state executes civilization missions towards the people who, in the eyes of the government, are uncompetitive and backward to make them civilized. Officials think that ethnic people are uncivilized and as an obstacle for development. Therefore, the government representatives convince them to leave their way of life and follow other mainstream culture (Ong 2000: 62). For example in Malaysia, Malays are well treated by the government whereas aboriginal tribes are forced to leave their nomadic life to follow Malay mainstream culture and agricultural practices to get support from the government as Malays. “In fact, aboriginal people enjoy very limited facilities and protection in relation to their livelihood, territory and cultural identity” (Ong 2000:62). The views of Penan foragers of Sarawak, as i discussed in chapter three, are differently shaped with different treatment of the government on territorial encroachment. The eastern Penan strongly resisted and protested against logging companies where as western Penan admitted it as a Malaysian rule. Due to encroachments and logging activities, there was a threat in their survival as nomadic groups. The government categorized them as ‘would be Malays’ and their territory is used as development site (Ong 2000).

Based on Ong’s assertion in south Asian context, I understand state power in Nepal as the state follows different modalities to govern the people in which elite groups are favored by the state with pastoral care whereas the Chepangs are discriminated based on ethnicity and region. In Chapter three, I discussed ethnic identity of the Chepangs based on language, indigenous festivals and hunting and slash and burn cultivation practice. However, the government has imposed Nepali language as an official language and the Chepang kids are taught in Nepali language instead of their own. Due to assimilation, the Chepangs of Laitak do not understand their language. With regards to indigenous festivals, the government has given public holidays to celebrate Hindu festivals *Dashain* and *Tihar* but the government has not declared public holiday in *Nwagi*, the main festival of the Chepangs. The state’s privilege for Hindu festivals and Nepali language eroded the Chepangs ethnic identity. In this sense, the state has not revealed serious concern to promote and protect Chepang culture as if they are wasteful and their culture are no

more valuable. It seems to me that if the Chepangs were a source of income for the government, they would not be treated as wasteful and their culture would not be looked down. However, they are treated as uncivilized since they are unprofitable. As Ong (2000) described, indigenous people are convinced to follow mainstream culture. So the intention of the state in Nepal is to make them convert and assimilate into mainstream culture.

Likewise, the Chepangs do not have access to natural resources like water, land and forest that is directly linked with their livelihoods and cultural identity. The government introduced the Private Forest Nationalization Act (1957) which brought all the forests and uncultivable lands under the government's control that was used for traditional rights without any compensation. The Forest Act 2049 (1993) in Nepal made the Chepangs resource less because it owned river banks, rivers and uncultivable lands nearby the forest to put ban on slash and burn cultivation practices. In 1993, Community forestry was introduced with an aim of supporting especially marginalized groups (Adhikari and Upreti 2006). These acts seized the land of the Chepangs where they used to practice slash and burn cultivation without giving other alternatives. Similarly, in the name of enlargement of Hetauda Cement limestone mines, the Chepangs were dislocated without compensation. As Ong (2000) claimed, I admit that the state dislocated the Chepangs to get maximum profit from the limestone company. If the Chepangs were compensated and relocated, I would not say that the government is discriminatory. ILO 169 convention ensures entitlement of the Chepangs over natural resources such as forest, water and land. However, the government of Nepal does not implement it even though they ratified the convention in 2007. Conversion of forest to community forest undoubtedly favored the elite groups because in mixed community, non-Chepangs have decisive role to use, preserve and control the forest resources whereas illiterate Chepangs can do nothing except accepting it. The activities of the government has implicitly supported non-Chepangs who exercise power over powerless Chepangs regarding natural resources. Next, the government has restricted the Chepangs to continue slash and burn cultivation, hunting and timbering which directly affect their life. As Ong stated above, the government follow civilization mission if the people are uncivilized and backward in its eyes. Therefore, the penan of Sarawak were forced to leave nomadic life and to follow mainstream culture. Similar to Penan people, the Chepangs were also treated as uncivilized and backward for the state and the government forces to leave slash and burn cultivation. This restriction on one hand creates a threat in livelihoods of the Chepangs because they are dependent on the forest

products for sustaining their livelihood. On the other hand, their cultural practice of hunting and slash and burn cultivation is going to be disappeared.

It is worth to mention that the Chepangs were denied the citizenship certificate until 2007 and still some Chepangs have not got it. The Chepangs were listed as aboriginal people of Nepal by the government but in practice, they were not treated as citizens because they were unprofitable for the government and behave them not as rational human being but as wild. In Chapter three, Jeetendra Chepang said that there are transportation and electricity facilities in *Syadul* a Brahmin village which is far than Chepang locality. But in Robang, there are not secondary schools, electricity and road facilities. The government actually invest more for the Chepangs. In poor countries, development activities are conducted for special people in particular place not because of lack of man power and insufficiency of budget, but due to the bureaucratic cultures and different attitudes of the government towards its people (Crewe and Richard 2013: 58). This idea of Crewe and Richard is similar to Ong's (2000) graduated sovereignty because the government invests more on economically powerful people and marginalizes unprofitable people. Therefore, my assertion is that like in Malaysia, the indigenous Chepangs of Nepal do not enjoy protection in relation to territory, cultural identity and livelihoods because of being unprofitable to the government. When the Chepangs encounter a threat to livelihood and ethnic identity due to the discriminatory treatment of the state as similar to eastern Penan, they are economically and culturally poor and socially excluded.

Spatial disparity

Nepal's low level of economic development is associated with pronounced spatial disparity. Some regions are economically sound and are densely populated owing to their geographical advantages. On the other hand, other regions remain backward due to the lack of different facilities and remoteness where lack of economic opportunity leads to out migration of youth that impoverishes the region (Gurung 2006). As Gurung stated, Chepangs live in along the steeper slopes of Mahabharat range between 2500 and 4000 feet from sea level. In the line of Gurung, Kabeer (2006: 3) states that "rural areas tends to be associated with remoteness, low agricultural or resource potential, weak integration into the national economy and poor services". Most of the tribal groups in India are also found to be in difficult geographical terrain amidst forest areas where there are no facilities of village infrastructure (e.g. roads, schools, health posts etc),

markets opportunities and well paid jobs (Kabeer 2006). I agree with him that the Chepangs who live in isolated geography are poor because of lack of employment opportunities, rugged and infertile land and low paid farm wage labor. The case of Chepangs who also live in remote part is comparable with Indian ethnic groups.

In chapter two and three, I discussed that due to the geographical isolation, Chepang people were deprived of road facilities, market and health and education. Robang, is the remotest part of the Jogimara where there were no above mentioned facilities. The trail leading to settlements was too narrow and covered with bushes. There was no bridge over the stream. There was only one primary school. Therefore, the Chepang kids leave their education after primary level. Due to the lack of health clinic in the village, the Chepangs were living a risky life. As Kabeer said, the Chepangs were living in such a remote area where there are no infrastructures and economic activities. In labor market and wage labor section, I explicitly mentioned that since there were no markets, the Chepangs migrated for wage labor in urban areas. Madhu Chepang, a 43 years old man, migrated to urban areas for wage labor because of lack of such facilities in the village. The Chepang were living in such a steep slope of Mahabharata range where the eyes of government, politician, and NGOs hardly reach there. Spatial isolation is a contributing factor of poverty which is justified by the president of NCA. He accuses the government because of the irresponsibility to migrate the Chepangs in easy accessed area. As Kabeer claimed, the Chepangs, like Indian tribes live in the remotest part and they are deprived of infrastructure development and excluded from employment opportunities. Therefore, I can say that Chepangs are poor also due to locational disadvantages.

Furthermore, the Chepangs are living in such areas where food deficit is common due to rugged, limited and infertile land and employment opportunities are scarce which inevitably cause poor living standard. As Gurung (2006) said, the government can reduce geographical isolation through infrastructure developments such as schools, markets, and transportation, however it is not easy in terms of resources, manpower and budget. I observed that Focus Nepal, a NGO has started to construct the road trails in Robang with government support. I knew through president of *Hugdikhola-Robang road consumption committee* that large amount of the budget was finished but it was halted because of budget insufficiency. Another thing to note is that the road trails which they constructed, needs reconstruction because it was destroyed by landslide and

heavy rain. If the Chepangs were in plain and easy area, either the government or NGOs might initiate development programs and Focus Nepal should not have stopped its work in the lack of budget.

Through my observation I knew that Chepang people lived in remote part than the Brahmins geographically. Andrade and Palomo (2002) studies in EL Salvador about geographical isolation and its impact in labor participation, employment opportunities and labor income. He found out that despite its negative impact on employment and labor income, it encouraged people to use their labor for agricultural production. Mostly women earned money working on their own field. Since there was no opportunities to do wage labor due to geographical disparity, they concentrated on agricultural production which sustained their lives. Examining the case of Chepangs, I consent that geographical isolation prevents the people to have basic village facilities and employment opportunities similar to *EL Salvadoran* people; however I refute with him in a sense that the Chepangs are deprived of possessing enough wide land like EL Salvadoran people. Therefore, the Chepangs cannot work on their farm and produce enough agricultural products. That's why, the Chepangs are compelled to be isolated from employment, labor income and basic facilities which lead them towards poverty.

Patron -client relationship between Chepangs and Non-Chepangs

Patron and client is didactic relationship in which a power figure who gives security, emotional and economic support and fulfills the basic needs of a poor people who in return contributes his loyalty, personal assistance and services (Scott 2009: 94). She further illustrates that it is an unequal exchange in which a powerful one who supplies goods, services, seeds and money which are necessary for well being and survival for poor people whereas powerless one reciprocates with compliance and debts of obligations. For Scott(2009), in an agrarian society, a dominant local landlord is a resourceful person who provides socio-economic support, pays tuition fees of children, supplies food grains in scarcity and gives access to fertile land to poor and landless farmer in the village but he expects devotion, compliance and personal services. He further says that an imbalance creates a sense of debt and obligation in client's part towards patron unless a client keeps a sense of obligation and debt towards patron until a patron fulfills basic needs of a client and a client also needs and wants support from patron”(Scott 2009:94).

Scott (2009: 93-94) states that there are four alternatives for potential clients not to be patron's subject. A client is free from becoming patron's subject if he reciprocates with the services that is badly needed to the patron, if a potential client secure needed services elsewhere, if client coerce patron into providing services and if a client manage himself without patron's support.

Brahmin-Chepang Patronage

Based on Scotts understanding of patron-client relationship, I can say that the Chepangs and non-Chepangs were tied in patron- client relationship because the Brahmins and Chhetris provide economic support and food grains in their needs for survival and the Chepangs reciprocate them in return with great compliance and their labor. As Scott (2009), I believe that such relationship exists neither due to force of patron nor willingness of a client but it is the result of needs and compulsion. In her master's thesis, Budhathoki (2012) discussed a case of Sumitra, a Tharu girl who was working as Kamlari or bonded laborer in her mistress's house but she does not get paid because there is a oral contract between her father and her mistress regarding payment, works and working period. It is because her father gets economic support and food in bad times from local landlord and in return he sends her daughter to work as Kamlari which inevitably cause poverty of Tharus. The cases of the Tharus and the Chepangs are similar. Imbalance relationship between Chepangs and non-Chepangs make the Chepangs poorer and marginalized. In chapter two, I mentioned a case of Bir Man Chepang who had been a bonded labor in the house of local landlord due to food deficit and he had been sold by his own father for little food grains. It was his father's compulsion because of dire need of the food. Scott (2009) argues that patron exploits a client more when patron's services are vital. It is exactly the same because he had less bargaining power in food scarcity. This was a past case of Birman Chepang but such relationships are still in existence in new forms. A Brahmin man of 42 year, Ram Prasad pokharel has kept a 13 year old boy as an assistant in poultry farm in salary but he was assigned to do household works except cooking such as sweeping, cutting grass, cleaning houses, and carrying loads. He would not cook because he belongs to lower caste and Brahmins do not eat food touched by lower caste. The Mistress of Ram Prasad claimed his monthly salary to be NPR 3000 (USD 30.8); however he was just getting NPR.1000 (USD 10.2) per month. The Chepang boy disclosed it when we were returning from markets together. He told me that that if he gets opportunities elsewhere, he will leave to work in Brahmin's House. This is because of poverty

and caste system where Brahmins are higher caste hierarchy than the Chepangs. Such unequal exchange of role between the Chepangs and Brahmins make Brahmins richer.

The Brahmins despise and demean the Chepang's language, foraging, slash and burn practice and pork eating and coerce the Chepangs to leave such 'uncivilized' practices. As a result, Chepangs of Laitak cannot understand their own language and celebrate Hindu festivals instead of indigenous festivals. Brahmins hate Christian Chepangs and favor other Chepangs who follows Hinduism. This kind of coercive activity is not other than patron client relationship. The Chepangs obey Brahmin because they are the source of their living. Therefore, they cannot resist them but want to please them. They are not potential client who cannot either reciprocate the patron in equal way or can find other alternatives. Therefore, their ethnic identity was at the verge of extinction due to patron's coercive power. In labor market as well, the Chepangs were given little wages as Madhu Chepang received. According to him, he worked from 6.00 am to 6.00 pm but he received only NPR. 400 (USD 4.1). They cannot speak against the boss because they are afraid of losing wage labor. In Chapter three, I discussed about the factors of landlessness of the Chepangs. One of the reasons was that when the Chepangs could not repay the debt of patron on time, then they lost the land. So I think such improper and imbalance relationship ultimately keeps the Chepangs in the vicious circle of poverty.

NGO-Chepang Patronage

In neoliberal globalization, private sector organizations are growing in huge number for development. The role of NGOs can be as significant to eradicate poverty as the state. In some countries, private organizations have more staff than the state. So the government and private organization are working jointly and there is no bifurcation between them as their purpose is to eradicate poverty (Crewe and Richard 2013: 61). In Nepal as well, private organizations are the development partners of the state and NGOs conduct different programs in association with government (Tanaka 2010); however the role of the NGOs are not efficient to eradicate poverty among the Chepangs.

In second chapter, I discussed the development activities of NGOs in Chepang's area where they have focused on health, housing, infrastructure development and livelihoods. SNV was the first INGO which started its work in 1988 to empower the Chepangs through income generation.

With combined efforts of government, it invested on bee keeping project (Kirat 2007). Likewise, praja community development project (1996-2000) and Praja capacity development project (2000-2003) was conducted for the personal development of the Chepangs (Rai 2010). Then, Chepang mainstream program (2004-2007) worked in multiple aspects of the Chepangs life such as food security, income generation, education, management of natural resources, citizenship rights, land right and promotion of language and culture (Kirat 2007: 8). These long listed programs should have provided at least basic human rights of the Chepangs. But I discussed in Chapter three that the Chepangs still have the problem of food deficit, health and education. Did all NGOs work efficiently for the upliftment of the Chepang? With observation and available data, I can claim that few NGOs worked as patron imposing their predetermined objectives instead of understanding their real situation, their aspirations and needs.

In Chapter two, I mentioned that Bhim maya Chepang who got loan from Focus Nepal for goat raising but she fell in debt when her two goats died from diseases. In my opinion, NGOs should initiate their programs understanding socio-economic condition of the Chepangs people. As Bhim maya said, breathing creature may die at any time so they should have provided veterinary services. Moreover, if goats were died naturally, NGOs should cancel the debt and should provide other alternatives of income generation. But here the role of the NGO seems for profit making instead of social welfare. When Sahas Nepal came with an electricity project in Robang, it was appreciable. But, instead of acknowledging their socio-economic condition, they asked for free public services. The situation of the Chepangs was that they had to do wage labor in day time to fill the stomachs in the evening but NGO asked free labor from them. As client has no bargaining power, they did not say whether electricity was their top most priority but accepted it. This imbalance relationship necessarily make the Chepangs poor. Bal Bahadur Chepang told me that Shanti Nepal was there not to support the poor Chepangs but to spread the ideas of Christianity through supply of materials. If their interest was for their benefits, not for the poor Chepangs, NGOs are none other than patrons.

I agree with Tanaka in a sense that for him, the failure of the NGOs to eradicate poverty is due to the lack of professionalism, and lack of expertise in capacity development of the NGOs (Tanaka 2010:502). In my view, there was not equitable relationship between NGOs and RHOs (Right Holder Organization) rather they have patron client relationship between the local

Chepangs and NGOs. There is patron client relation in a sense that NGOs operate different development programs in the village without understanding their real aspiration and necessities but they work with predetermined objectives and Chepangs, as client accept it with loyalty and personal assistance although NGOs were working against their needs and wants. For example; CDO (community development organization) was a NGO which was established in 1991 to uplift the marginalized people of Nepal . NGOs should work with RHO to understand the people and their needs otherwise linguistic and cultural differentiation between NGOs worker and local people becomes barrier for the efficient implementation of the program (Tanaka 2010). CDO has changed its role from community development to specific rights of the peoples on natural resources, livelihood through campaign. When CDO was working on land issues in favor of *Meche*, one of the endangered¹⁰ ethnic groups of Nepal but unsuccessful in fulfilling their objectives. They themselves realized that until *Meche* are not ensured rights a means to livelihood, their project of credit schemes and income generation would not be effective and cannot yield appropriate results. Then CDO critically reviewed its approaches and confessed to shift their role from community developer to supporter and promoters of RHOs to overcome the problems of marginalized groups (Tanaka 2010).

If the NGOs had shifted their role from supporter to promoter of RHOs to uplift from their marginal position, the Chepangs should not have encountered with food insufficiency, risky health and citizenship problem. Then I would not say that it's due to the patronage of NGOs. Development is embedded in culture and the purpose of development activities is to eradicate poverty. Therefore, development organizations should focus on their culture, power relation and socio cultural situation of targeted people (Crewe and Richard 2013). Being full convinced with their idea, I claim that it is futile to provide the Chepangs only with village infrastructure and economic support instead of fighting for their rights and making them empowered. Until and unless development organizations do not concern about their culture and human rights issues, the Chepangs will not come out of poverty.

¹⁰Indigenous peoples of Nepal are categorized into five categories based on development such as advanced groups, disadvantaged groups, marginalized groups, highly marginalized groups and endangered groups.

Short term consumption pattern

“Short term consumption as a transient form of consumption which is even changing and durable for only short periods whereas long term consumption indicates the expenditure on future oriented investment such as in the education of children and housing” (Osella and Osella 1999 cited in Budhathoki (2012 :57). Based on this definition of short term consumption, I can say the Chepang’s ways of feasting and drinking habits obviously falls in this category. I found that the Chepangs celebrate their own indigenous festivals such as *Nwagi*, *Saune Sakarnti*, *Gaidu*, *Aaitabare* along with Hindu festivals such as *Dashain*, *Tihar* and so on. It’s my finding that Chepangs have numerous festivals and rituals and their over consumption pattern to celebrate with feasting and drinking necessarily deteriorate their situation of poverty.

In Chapter three, I discussed that short term consumption habit of the Chepangs is one of the causes of food insufficiency. Romakanta Chepang, a social worker from Shanti Nepal said that Chepangs are living in a poor condition because of excessive use of grains to prepare *Jaad* and different varieties of food in their festivals. He said that the traditional and superstitious cultural practices are too expensive to afford. According to him, in *Teej* festival, the Chepang women have to prepare different items of pork and chicken and 4-5 pots of *Jaad*. Then the brothers have to give them the money to cover the cost. He said that they have more than twenty festivals like *Teej*. The Chepangs should change their such cultural practices. In Chapter three, a shaman said that Shamanism is a cultural practice of healing that is too expensive for the Chepangs. Supporting Shaman, Romakanta explained me that if the poor Chepang is ill, they go to shaman and the shaman demands goat, chicken and peagon looking at seriousness of the case. The goat which approximately costs around NPR.3000 (USD 30.82) which is not affordable but the Chepangs manage to purchase by one way or other. Even after doing this, it is not sure that he/she will be healed. Romakanta added that this sort of superstitious practices has made them poor. He shared his experience about the Chepang’s liquor beverage habit which made them even more vulnerable. According to him, *Shanti Nepal*, an NGO in which he has been working, distributed toilet making materials to all the Chepangs focusing on sanitation. However, it was reported him that one Chepang sold these materials for liquor in lower prices to local businessman instead of making toilet. At the same time, he confirmed that Chepang’s alcoholic habits force them to sell the things which they have and motivate them to take loan from

neighbor Brahmins and Chhetris. Temptation of *Jaad* for Chepangs is taken as implicit cause which ignites to be poorer. In my opinion, drinking *Jaad* and feasting is their cultural practices and they celebrate it as for preservation of their culture. In caste system, they belong to Matwali groups that means *Jaad* is common to them.

During my fieldwork, I observed that some of the Chepangs consumed liquor not only in festivals but in daily life. To illuminate the short term consumption practice of the Chepangs, I would like to compare it with the Tharu's drinking and feasting habits which is exactly the same as both of them are one of the indigenous groups of Nepal. Budhathoki (2012) mentioned that the Tharus celebrate numerous festivals with great fun and *Jaad* is the common in feasting. They made *Jaad* in their home out of maize and it is the part of their life as the tea and coffee for others (2012: 58). Regarding short term consumption habit, I could not differentiate the Chepang and Tharus because *Jaad* making and drinking are very common for both Chepang and Tharus. They are same in terms of unproductive expenses because they do not invest on land, education and infrastructure and do not save for future rather they want to have fun for short period. They finish their grain in alcohol making and rely upon local money lenders to borrow grains and money but never stop it even though they are indebted. I think that unlike Brahmins, they do not spend money for long term consumption because neither they have employment opportunities nor they produces enough grains for them. Due to poverty, they do not aspire for investing in education, land and other things. But their aim is to fill their stomachs and enjoy with feasting and drinking.

During my field work, I participated in several festivals and public meetings whenever I was invited. I took part in their tribal festivals in *Saune Sakarnti* and *Nwagi*. *Nwagi* is the main tribal festival of the Chepangs which is the auspicious day to take new food. Until and unless they celebrate this festival, they are not supposed to eat new agricultural products. They consider it as an important festival to please the gods by offering the food. It was a surprise to me that in *Teej*, the Chepangs prepare different dishes of chickens, goats and pork and spend large amount of maize to prepare *Jaad*. We Brahmins also celebrate *Teej*, but we do not celebrate with heavy expenditure so they would tease me as Brahmins are stingy. They enjoy drinking and feasting so they never step back from spending on it although they are indebted.

Chepang people say that *Jaad* is important for them not only in festivals but they drink it as we Brahmins drink tea- and coffees. They drink *Jaad* with lunch and dinner. They spent a lot of

their earning in drinking and feasting and they fail to save amount and invest for long term uses like education and housing. Krishna Devkota, a Brahmin man told me that Brahmins are not despising the Chepangs but their 'uncivilized' and 'thoughtless' habit. He added that the Chepangs do not sew the school uniform of the children which was given by the education ministry claiming that they do not have money to sew this but they have money to drink alcohol.

Based on observation and conversation with Chepangs and non-Chepangs, I can say that liquor beverage habit of the Chepangs which deteriorated their living condition but I should not forget to mention about the power relationship between the Chepangs and non-Chepangs. I believe that socio- economic exploitation of the Chepangs by the Brahmins make them poor and indebted. When the Chepangs are in debt, they do not think beyond living a simple life. I claim that their drinking and feasting habits are not personal but are a part of their culture which made the Chepangs poor.

Lack of Capabilities and Entitlement

“The entitlement concept draws attention away from the mere possession of certain goods, towards rights, the command families have over goods, using various economic, political and social opportunities. In other words, this concept stresses on what counts is not what poor people possess but what it enables them to do (Sen 1981, cited in De Haan 1999:10). Supporting the claim of Sen, Nayak (1994) argues that entitlement is an effective empowerment of the persons who expose their ability in labor market and sustain their livelihood independently. He further claims that entitlement is necessary which enables the people to command over goods and services. After having this quality, people can enhance their capabilities and realize their potentiality. In this section, I will argue that poverty among Chepangs cannot be eradicated by supplying material goods and services but they should be entitled and capable to expose their potentiality. Until and unless the Chepangs are armed with entitlement, the situation of the Chepangs will not be improved and become socially excluded.

Despite the contribution of NGOs and the government organization in income generative activities and distribution of material resources to uplift Chepang people from vulnerable and impoverished life, the Chepangs had still the problem of food, housing, health and education

facilities. Government of Nepal was distributing allowances to build a house for all Chepangs of Nepal who are living in poor housing condition. In combined effort of Shanti Nepal, an NGO, it also distributed toilet making equipments to them in free of charge. Moreover, the government provided the Chepang kids with lunch in school, school uniform and stationary goods to name but a few. An NGO named Focus Nepal, contributed the Chepangs in income generative activities through animal husbandry, vegetable growing and infrastructure development. Shanti Nepal, another NGO lunched awareness programs on health issues such as sanitation, pregnancy and delivery of the child in order to make the healthy and less risky life of the Chepangs. In Laitak, there was transportation and electricity. More importantly, the Chepangs who holded citizenship certificate did not find its significance because citizenship certificate is usually for employment, land transaction, bank account which they do not aspire. I think that all these contributions of NGOs and government are positive and appreciable. However, is it possible to reduce poverty among Chepangs through material support and village development? Are they concentrated on right based approach and capability enhancement of the Chepangs?

In social development papers *Social Exclusion: Concept, Application, and Scrutiny* Amartya Sen (2000) states that poverty is the result of capability failure. He further mentions that “hunger is not simply a lack of access to food due to low production- it is unequal distribution and lack of entitlements that accounts for extreme poverty and famine” (Sen 1982, cited Crewe and Richard 2013: 94). He means entitlement is an utmost essential thing to eradicate poverty. I would like to present an example of how entitlement inequality was gendered in Bangladesh. Women in Bangladesh are not considered as capable and independent because they do not have access to employment, decision making, social status, political networks and social security. A woman in Bangladesh was trying to get credit from the bank but it was difficult to get access. In frustration, she expressed that if women go alone to get loan from the bank, they are not treated well. The women are unknown about its procedure to get the money and the people in the bank show indifference and rude behavior to them instead of explaining procedures and providing loan (Kabeer 1994 cited by Crewe and Richard 2013). I also think that Chepangs are backward and marginalized due to entitlement deficit. They do not have control and command over natural resources and they do not have ownership on land. Like a Bangladeshi woman, the Chepangs are deprived of entitlement over basic goods and socio economic opportunities such as employment, social status, property and decision making.

In third Chapter, I mentioned that the land of Bhimmaya Chepang was destroyed with road construction. She said that the road is useless for them when they do not have land to work on it. I observed and found out that most of the Chepangs of Laitak were not using electricity due to poverty. The Chepangs who hold citizenship certificate perceived it as useless. In such circumstances, I pose question that why do the Chepangs experience the problem of food insufficiency? As Sen Claimed, my finding is that the Chepangs have food deficit due to the lack of entitlement. If they had entitled with socio-economic opportunities, the Chepangs should not have worked as client and they would have command over basic goods.

I support Sen's view that government officials and development projects should give priority to enhance the capacities of the poor people so that long term improvements occur in their life. However, I argue in contrast to his idea that capability deprivation is due to individual's failure. Appadurai (2004 cited in Crewe and Richard) criticized him not paying attention to culture, socio-economic and political inequalities which are the main cause of entitlement deficit. Based on above mentioned data, I also support Appadurai the institutionalized inequalities and government discriminations are the cause of entitlement deprivation which cause poverty.

Summing up

The Chepangs do not want to live an isolated, disadvantaged and vulnerable life but want to be included into the mainstream society. Poverty is the prime factor of marginalization of the Chepangs. If the Chepangs were well educated and economically powerful, they might have sustainable livelihood, their social position might be respected and they might fight for the promotion and preservation of ethnic identity. The Chepangs are poor due to the discriminatory treatment by the government because they were unprofitable in the eyes of government. Next, locational disadvantage is also a contributing factor for their poverty. The Chepangs live in such an isolated place where production is too low and there are no facilities of employment, health, education, transportation, markets and so on which necessarily made them poor. The another factor for their poverty is patron client relationship between the Chepangs and Brahmins. As the Brahmins were the source of their sustenance and well being, the Chepangs offered free labor and the Chepangs were coerced to leave their 'uncivilized' ways of life and to follow Hindu culture which raise threat in their ethnic identity that makes culturally and economically poor. Furthermore, the NGOs developed the sense of negative attitude towards the Chepangs and

worked with their preoccupied objectives which did not very efficeiently but rather makd them dependent. I found that drinking and feasting habit of the Chepangs also added fuel to the fire in their poverty. Due to numerous festivals and their cultural practices of drinking *Jaad*, they spend large amount of grain and money in merry making and fun which makes them poor. Last but not the least, Chepangs are poor when they were not armed with entitlement over socio-economic opportunities and natural resorces. They should have command over goods and services so that they could sustain their lives. Based on above mentioned argument, I can say that the Chepangs are socially excluded due to poverty.

The next chapter will be entitled with summary and conclusion in which I will briefly summarize the whole reserach work.

Chapter V

Summary and conclusion

The Chepangs are one of the highly marginalized ethnic nationalities of Nepal. They were nomadic almost one and half century ago but at present, they became settled. Prior to my fieldwork, I heard about the Chepangs that they still live in caves, eat wild fruits and enjoy their lives in the forest. Furthermore, what I heard about them was that they do not want to be a part of nation but want to remain out of the reach of the state. But through this anthropological study, I got in-depth understanding about their vulnerabilities and positioning in the society. Unlike what I heard before, I came to know that the Chepangs of Jogimara were settled and they were looking for the assistance from the government and non-government organizations to be uplifted from their excluded and isolated life. Numerous previous researches found out that the Chepangs were deprived of land, housing, foods, citizenship certificate and so on but no researches studied about the mechanisms of social exclusion. To understand the concept of social exclusion, I employed De Haan's(1999) perspective of deprivation which emphasizes the mechanisms and processes through which the Chepangs are prevented from rather than mere description of poor condition of the people. Since poverty is the prime factor of social exclusion, I found out that the biased and discriminatory treatment of the Chepangs based on ethnicity and poverty by the GoN is one of the causes of poverty. Patronage of Brahmins and NGOs, spatial disparities, disentanglement of socio-economic opportunities and unproductive expenses are also the contributing factors of poverty. One the basis of having leaked roofs, food insufficiency and landlessness, it is immature to draw conclusion that the Chepangs are poor and socially excluded because prosperous person may also live in a poor house and they also may be landless. But the mechanisms and processes that play key role to make the Chepangs poor which compelled them to be socially excluded. Therefore, I claim that the Chepangs are socially excluded not because of their own defects but due to structural and cultural impediments.

Poverty is the cause and consequence of social exclusion of the Chepangs. I illustrated that the Chepangs had precarious livelihood and their ethnic identity markers such as language, religion, and indigenous practice were eroded. And also, their cultures and ways of living were despised. In my opinion, poverty led the Chepangs to have excluded position in the community because the culture of poverty is nurtured and reproduced in Chepangs's generation. Moreover, the

Chepangs were treated as wild and uncivilized and their cultural practices were unrecognized by the state and the relationship of the Chepangs with Brahmins and NGOs as patron client was established due to Chepang's poverty. I believe that if the Chepangs were not poor economically and socio-culturally, they might have less chance to be dominated and despised by the powerful agencies such as state and dominant community. Crewe and Richard (2013) claim that poverty is not only lack of material property and resources but it is a culture which is transformed across generation. The Chepangs developed a sense of culture of poverty because they inherited the culture of bonded labor and ways of life of the past generations instead of exploring the new ones. This culture of poverty is produced by persistence of exploitation and domination by the Brahmins to them which cultivated self imposed inferiority and self humiliation among Chepangs. Thus, culture of poverty hampered their will power and raise questions against capability which leads towards social exclusion.

I investigated many underlying mechanisms of poverty which cause social exclusion of the Chepangs. One of the findings is that the Chepangs were poor due to the irresponsibility of the state to provide the basic facilities and implement the convention like ILO169. In line with Ong (2000), I explored that the discriminatatory treatment of the Chepangs by the state based on ethnicity and poverty is the cause of the poverty. As in other South Asian contries such as Malaysia and Indonesia, the state privileged the Brahmins with socio- economic opportunities with an expectation of maximum profits in returns whereas it marginalized the Chepangs because they are unprofitable. The Chepangs were treated as wild and uncivilized even by the state because the rulers of the state belong to higher caste according to caste hirarchy.

With Scott's (2009) perspective on patron client relationship, I analysed the power relations of the Chepangs with Brahmins and NGOs and explored that socio-economic exploitation of the Chepangs by the Brahmins contributed the Chepang's poverty. The Brahmins were the source of economic support and they had more bargaining power and the Chepangs were dependent on them for grains and money. Therefore, the Chepangs could not aganist the Brahmins even though they were exploitated. Budhathoki (2012) illiustated the Case of Sumitra Tharu in her thesis that patronage of the Brahmin exploitated her in the form of bonded labour. Such unequal power relations made the Brahmins richer and the Chepangs impoverished. The case of Birman Chepang is not an exception because he served the Brahmins for five years for nothing. They

treat the Chepangs as wild and thoughtless and despise their culture and ways of living because they are also higher than the Chepangs according to caste system. Brahmins and Chhetris supplied economic and emotional support to the lower status people the Chepangs since they need for their survival and well being. This kind of exploitation by the Brahmins to the Chepangs yielded self imposed inferiority and intergenerational poverty.

I also found out that NGOs role to eradicate poverty among the Chepangs was inefficient due to the lack of professionalism and predetermined objectives of NGO. As the NGOs are globally recognized as development partners of the state, the role of NGOs for the Chepangs, was not different from patron because they mere supply the short term material resources to the Chepangs instead of understanding the socio-economic situation and their aspirations to eradicate poverty. After being failed to achieve their goals, CDO, an NGO, changed their role from community developer to supporter of RHOs but the NGOs in Chepang's area claim of their great contribution and accuse the Chepangs for their poverty. I also explained that they had interest in their own fame and name but not to the poor condition of the Chepangs. Unequal power and wealth between the Chepangs and NGO benefitted NGOs to get their name, fame and an interest whereas Chepangs were poor supplying free services.

Likewise, I investigated that geographical difficulty was an obstacle for the development of the Chepangs. The Chepangs live on hilly and steeper slopes of Mahabharat range where there are no infastucture facilities such as of market, secondary schools, health post and so on. Especially in Robang, the Chepangs had limited stony land where productivity was low which was one of the reasons of food deficit for them. Since there were no market facilities nearby, they did not get employment opportunities and also difficult to sell their home made products such as honey, vegetables and woven baskets. Rural-Urban migration was common for them in search for wage labor due to topographical isolatedness. Kabeer (2000) also stated that Indian ethnic groups were also lived nearby the forest area where there were no facilities of markets, and employment so on. It shows that the indogenous groups such as Chepangs, penan people and Indian ethnic groups of South Asia live in a remote part. In the case of the Chepangs, I claim that they are backward and poor due to remoteness of the part.

Relying on Sen's concept of entitlement and capabilities (2000), I explored that the Chepangs are living a poor life due to their lack of entitlement over socio-political and cultural

opportunities. The Chepangs should be made enabled to do something instead of providing material resources. If the Chepangs had entitlement over land and natural resources, they could work on their own land instead of as sharecropper and could earn money with selling timber. Due to the lack of entitlement over citizenship, the Chepangs took it as useless. It shows that access to citizenship and natural resources was not enough but entitlement is essential to eradicate poverty. Entitlements enhance the capability of the people so the entitlements over socio-economic opportunities enhance their capabilities to realize their potentiality. Until and unless the Chepangs are deprived of entitlement, reduction of poverty is not an easy task.

Similarly, I investigated that short term consumption practice is a minor factor which also had a role to make the Chepangs poor. Some Chepangs celebrated numerous festivals with feasting and drinking jaad to preserve their ancient culture. They did not invest on long term consumption such as education, land and housing because of debt and economic exploitation of them by the Brahmins. They felt themselves as in heaven if they get enough food. They did not aspire for long term consumption because they did not have income sources. Therefore, socio-economic situation and power relation with non-Chepangs forced them for unproductive expenses.

This shows that the Chepangs are excluded not because of their own deficiencies but rather power relations and socio-cultural and regional inequalities. The reasons which I mentioned above are interdependent and interconnected which cannot be isolated. They are not only the causes of poverty but also the consequences of poverty which cause social exclusion of the Chepangs.

If we relate the Chepangs with indigenous groups in South Asian context, I can say that all indigenous groups are almost similar in terms of their ways of living, livelihood, territory and their marginalization. Most importantly, the treatment of the South Asian state to the indigenous groups and geographical location is also more or less the same. Like Penan People, forests are very important for them for their livelihood and ethnic identity. But in the name of ecological preservation and making them civilized, the forest area of the Penan people were encroached by the Malaysian state and the Chepangs were also dislocated by the state to initiate limestone mine. Both states treated indigenous groups as wild and uncivilized and marginalized them since indigenous groups are unprofitable to them. Like the Chepangs, indigenous groups of USA, EL Salvador and Indian ethnic tribes also live in topographically difficult areas where

there are no facilities of infrastructure, markets and employment opportunities. Hence, indigenous people in south asia are in marginalized position.

To tackle with the problem of social exclusion, I can say that government of Nepal should avoid all existed discriminatory policies and prejudiced treatment of the Chepang people based on ethnicity and poverty. Since the state is the main agent of social exclusion, it's role to overcome the problem is inevitable. NGOs also should work with sincerity and professionalism for the targeted people instead of their own social position and prestige. They should not mere supply the short term consumption items but they should fight for the Chepang's rights. NCA should raise a voice for their rights and against domination by Brahmins. If these triangular organizations work with determination and will power to reduce or eradicate poverty among Chepangs, it can be achieved in near future.

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GLOSSARY

Terms	Meanings
Aaitabare	Sunday goddess is observed in a full moon night in December with Offering a cock to remain safe from epidemics
Ailani	Unregistered land own by the government
Ana	An unit of measurement of area in which 1 ana is equivalent to 3179m ²
Balmiki	Name of the sage in Ramayan epic
Bharlang	Tuber bitter in taste
Chepiyeko	Squeezed between
Chyuri	A fruit tree widely grown at high altitude area of sub tropical regions.
Dashain	An auspicious festival of Hindus which falls in late September and early October which is celebrated as victory of gods over the demons.
Dhido	Maize and millet porridge
Gaidu	A cattle goddess is worshipped in June for the prosperity of the cattle.
Ghalek	Cloth piece tied across one shoulder to the opposite waist
Ghittha	Bitter yam
Gunyu	unstitched clothes tied in waist which is looks like sarong
Jaad	A white liquid made from maize and millet
Kachchare	people living in remote place
Kangsirang	Name of the Chepang village
Kusha Grass	A holy grass which is used to perform Hindu rituals
Kusunda	One of the indigenous groups of Nepal
Lohari	A son of Sita, a heroine of Hindu epic Ramayana
Maghe Sakranti	first day of the month 'Magh' which falls in Mid January
Mahabharat	A major east-west mountain range with elevations 1,500 to 2,700

Mana	An unit of measurement of mass which is equivalent to $\frac{1}{2}$ kg.
Nepalese Rupees	Nepalese currency
Newar	One of the indigenous group of Nepal
Nwagi	Chebang's tribal festival for eating new crops
Pandey	Chebang shaman
Pathi	An unit of measurement of mass which is equivalent to 4kg.
Patuka	A long Clothes which is binding on waist even by men and women
Praja	Subjects of the king
Pukunthali	Civilized and modern Chepangs
Ramayana	A great Hindu epic
Ropani	An unit of measurement of an area in which 1 Ropani is equivalent to $50,864\text{m}^2$
Saune Sakranti	Festival celebrated in first day of Shrawan (July) as a victory Over food shortage
Sisnu	Stinging nettle which is used for food by the Chepangs.
Tanki	Name of the tree
Tarul	Tuber which is eaten in food shortage
Teej	Hindu women's festival in which they do fasting for their husband's long life.
Tihar	Hindu festival in which brothers are worshipped by their sisters for long life.
Vyakur	A tuber which is consumed by the Chepangs for food.

Index I

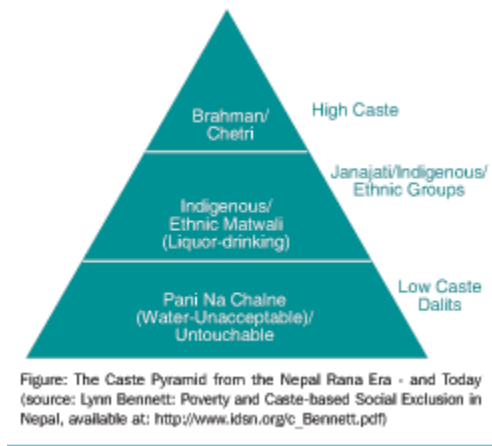
Categorization of Indigenous groups based on development of Nepal

Advanced Group (2)	Newar, Thakali
Disadvantaged Group (14)	Tangbe, TeengaunleThakali, BarahgaunleThakali, MarphaliThakali, Gurung, Magar, Rai, Limbu, Sherpa, Yakkha, Chhantyal, Jirel, Byansi, Yolmo
Marginalized Group (19)	Sunuwar, Tharu, Tamang, Bhujel, Kumal, Rajbanshi, Gangaai, Dhimal, Bhote, Darai, Tajpuriya, Pahari, Topkegola, Dolpo, Mugal, Larke, Lohpa, Dura, Walung
High Marginalized Group (12)	Majhi, Siyar, Lhomi (Shinsaba), Thundam, Dhanuk, Chepang , Santhal, Jhagad, Thami, Bote, Danuwar, Baramu
Endangered Group (9)	Kusunda, Bankariya, Raute, Surel, Hayu, Raji, Kisan, Lepcha, Meche, Kuswadiya

Source. nfdin wage page. www.nfdin.org.np

Index II

Caste Hirarchy in Nepal



Source. <http://www.socialinclusion.org.np/content-detail-51.html>