

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

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This thesis examines one aspect of social change in Nepal. Contact with the outside world since 1951 has provided a non-traditional means of achieving access to highly valued occupations, resulting in the formation of an emerging elite. High caste status is no longer absolutely necessary to gain access to education, although it is still a factor. Education, and with it prestigious occupations, power, and wealth, is thus more accessible to lower and mixed caste people than before 1951. Data presented in the life history show the informant to be a mixed caste, educated, professional woman who has a prestigious occupation and earns a relatively high salary. This life history amply demonstrates the validity of the thesis advanced.

Social Change in Nepal: A Case Study

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# Social Study in Nepal: A Case Study

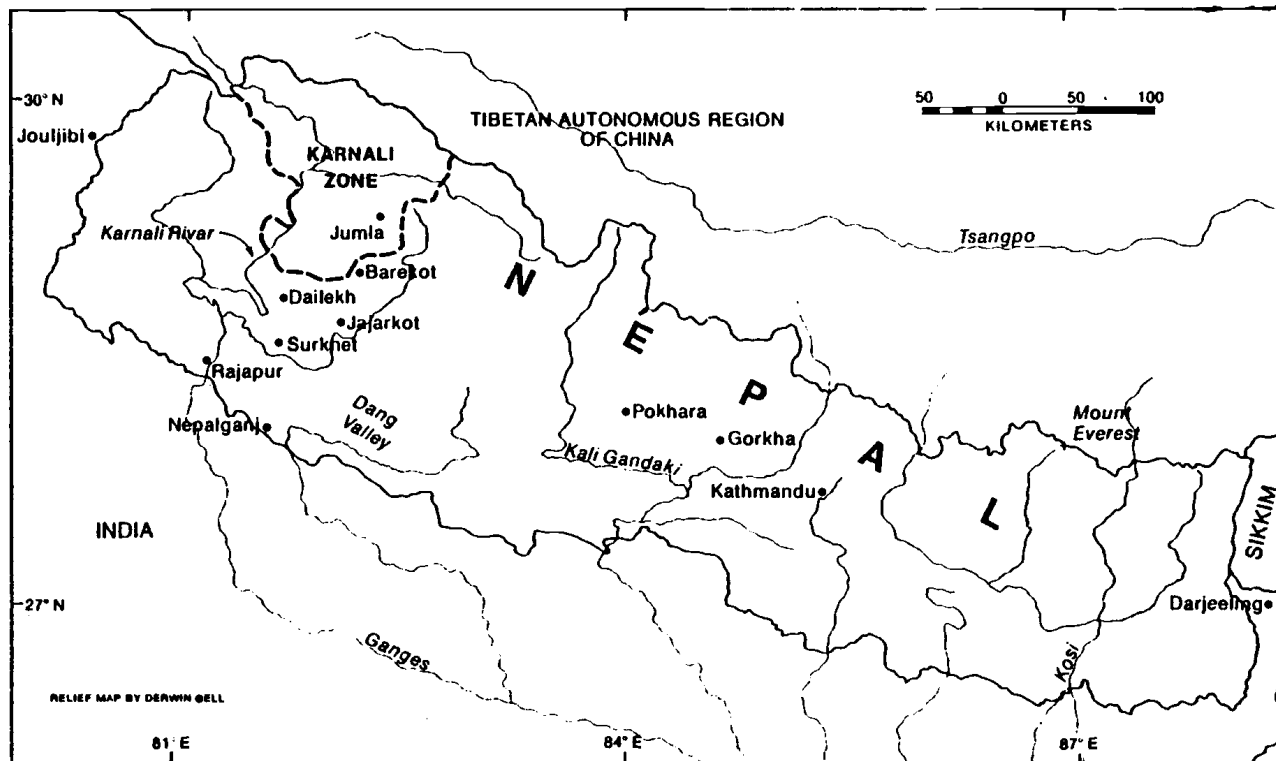
## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### Geographical Background

Nepal is a long, narrow, rectangularly shaped country on the southern slopes of the Himalayan mountain range, with an area of roughly 141,000 square kilometers. It is located between 80°-88° E longitude and 27°-30° N latitude. It has a wide range of climates due to its monsoonal rainfall pattern and the rapid change of elevation, from 180 meters to over 8,000 meters, within 145 kilometers of latitude. Almost every climatic zone of the earth is represented, from humid subtropics in the south to arid steppe in the north. Precipitation varies from 150 millimeters to 6,000 millimeters and 80 percent of this precipitation occurs between June and September. In general, more precipitation falls in the southern part of the country and less in the north. These variations within Nepal's physical environment lend themselves to division into generalized geographic regions.

The three major geographic regions in Nepal are: the Terai, the Middle Hills, and the Highland Himalaya regions. The Terai lies between the outer foothills and the Indian border. It is as wide as 40 kilometers in some places and is part of the Gangetic outwash plain, although still politically part of Nepal. The Middle Hills region is located between the outer foothills and the main snow-covered Himalaya range. This region is the most densely populated region. The Highland Himalaya region consists of the Himalayan peaks and high-altitude valleys. It is sparsely populated and portions are totally uninhabitable (Hagen 1961:49).



Map of Nepal

### Purpose and Model

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the dynamics of one aspect of social change in Nepal. Contact with the outside world has provided a non-traditional means of achieving access to highly valued occupations among a small elite group of Nepalese. This has resulted in the formation of a new social category, that of an emerging elite, which has achieved high social status through education and occupation rather than having status ascribed them by the traditional criteria of birth and marriage. Social conflict occurs between the traditional elite, trying to maintain their control over society, and this emerging elite who favor a change in the traditional hierarchy.

Nepal is a Hindu kingdom. As such, it bears cultural similarities to India, its southern neighbor and the largest Hindu nation in the world. Although India is a traditional and sacred society (one in which ways of life are prescribed by custom and endorsed by religion), no one would be likely to claim that it is static (Berreman 1976:294). Thus India can be used as a model of a traditional Hindu society undergoing change. Nepal fits India's model, both in the past and today.

Since the late eighteenth century, Nepal has adhered to a rigid caste hierarchy. "A society subjected to a caste system consists of a number of subdivisions or castes which are exclusively endogamous, which show a strong tendency to be socially exclusive, which perpetuate themselves hereditarily, which are hierarchically superposed on a basis of standard supposedly cultural, and which by the working of these four tendencies within the social field of their own delimitations may split up into more and more castes indefinitely" (Cox 1959:5).

Conflict in this society occurred not between members of the Hindu caste system and an outside influence, but between the castes themselves. Though this may seem counterproductive at first glance, the inter-caste conflict actually served to maintain the

the structure as a whole: "This (caste) hierarchy may be called the "structure" of the system; it is self-regulating and graduated all the way from top to bottom. Each caste has its particular rank, defined by tradition and public opinion, and each one maintains it at all costs, or strives to advance itself. This defensive-offensive, inter-caste relationship constitutes the basis of caste rivalry. Thus we may think of the caste system as a number of cultural unities inviscerally juxtaposed; and the greater the struggle for position, the more secure the structure as a whole" (Cox 1959:11).

Cox continues, "The contests themselves and the long, drawn-out struggles prove to what point these units of Hindu society are obsessed with the idea of right to be organized hierarchically. To be sure, the system itself is never in question" (1959:11). What is interesting about this statement is the footnote which follows: "unless we call attention to it, we are not here concerned with the caste system under the impact of Western culture" (Cox 1959:11).

This footnote implies that the caste system under the impact of Western culture is different than previously stated, that is, not as structurally secure. Contact with Western culture leads to a questioning of ancestry being the only road to high status. With its industrialization, modernization, and education, Western culture upset the balance in the Hindu caste system, and thus introduced a different kind of conflict into Nepal. This conflict is not among the different castes of the Hindu hierarchy, but between the traditional hierarchy as a whole and an outside culture maintaining that high status can be achieved without high caste.

Thus Nepal, with the advent of modernization, has two elites, the traditional elite with ascribed high status, and another elite which has worked for and achieved its high status. The social conflict now is between a segment of society which believes in the Hindu social system of caste hierarchy, and a segment in which "upward social mobility is institutionalized, in which achieved rather than ascribed status dominates" (Coser 1956:36).



Prior to western contact, the caste system was considered "legitimate" by the people of Nepal; that is, low and high castes alike accepted the caste distinction. Since modernization began, this social structure is no longer considered legitimate by some members of the society. When this occurs, "individuals with similar objective positions will come, through conflict, to constitute themselves into self-conscious groups with common interests," forming a new social group (Coser 1956:38).

Thus it may be argued that Nepal fits the model of a culture experiencing social conflict. In the life history chapter of this thesis I will show my informant to be a member of the new social group which is, intentionally or not, involved in this conflict. My thesis question, which deals with one result of this social conflict and subsequent change in values, follows.

### Thesis

Before 1951, Nepal was ruled by the Rana family oligarchy which had a vested interest in keeping Nepal in an underdeveloped state, that is, maintaining the status quo of poverty and illiteracy prevalent in the country. Occupation, then as now, was the means by which people obtained power, wealth, and the benefits of their society, and education has always been required for these prestigious occupations. In the traditional society, education was available only to high caste people; therefore, only they could attain prestigious positions, and thus the power and wealth of their society.

In 1951, however, the Ranas were overthrown and modernization began in Nepal. With modernization has come social conflict and change. Education is now available to people of low and mixed caste, which means that prestigious occupations, wealth, and power are also achievable. High caste status is no longer the only means to obtain an education and the occupations and benefits that result from an

education. It is my thesis that since education is now available to lower and mixed caste people, the benefits of education, such as prestigious occupations, power, and wealth, are available to these people as well.

## CHAPTER II

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

#### Historical Background

At the dawn of the sixteenth century, Nepal as a united country did not exist. Instead, the area that is present-day Nepal was composed of approximately 46 small kingdoms (Regmi 1961:1). Some of these kingdoms were Hindu, some Buddhist, and some practiced their own ethnic religions.

At that time Nepal had been subject to Indian invasions from the south and Tibetan invasions from the north for hundreds of years. These cultures influenced and, in turn, became influenced by the indigenous tribes of the area, socially, genetically, politically, and religiously. Though even today the different ethnic groups have different customs, wear different clothes and speak different languages, as Rishikesh Shaha states, "The concept of racial purity is nothing more than a myth in Nepal" (1970:5).

Dravya Shah lived in the first half of the sixteenth century and was the founder of the Shah dynasty which still rules Nepal today. There are discrepancies in chronicling his ancestry which exemplify the ambiguity and complexity of the caste and ethnic system in Nepal. One writer states that Shah's claims to Indian Rajput ancestry are "highly tenuous," and implies that he is of Magar descent [an ethnic group in Nepal] (Shaha 1970:48), while another writes that his references "agree wholly as to the Rajput ancestry of the Shah family (Regmi 1961:14). One can understand the difficulty that ordinary Nepalese, who are mostly illiterate, have in tracing their ancestry, when even kings whose family trees are recorded do not have exact information on their predecessors.

Gorkha at this time was a principality not far from Kathmandu.

The aboriginal tribes there were very strong, and were oppressing the Brahmans and Chhetris of the area, trying to make them conform to the tribes' customs. The Brahmans and Chhetris conspired, with Magar help, to overthrow the tribal kings and put Dravya Shah, who was a prince of the neighboring area of Lamjung, on the Gorkha throne. The plot succeeded and in 1558 Dravya Shah was crowned king of Gorkha (Shaha 1970:50). The central location of Gorkha, the wide support of Shah's reign, and his tolerance of different religions were the foundation for the strength of the Gorkhali nation, which eventually enabled the Gorkhali people to be the uniters of Nepal.

Another king of Gorkha, Prithivinarayan Shah, was a ninth-generation descendant of Dravya Shah. He was the Gorkhali who united the 46 Himalayan principalities into the Nepali nation in 1768 (Shaha 1970:59). Not only was he a great warrior, but he was also a great ruler who understood that all the castes and tribes of Nepal had to work together to maintain the country as a unified place. Prithivinarayan was able to consolidate the country because he gained the confidence of the people. His most famous quote is, "It is with much travail that I have acquired this kingdom. It is a common garden for all castes (of people). Let everyone realize this" (Shaha 1970:67).

The Shah kings ruled Nepal until 1846 when, due to factionalism within the royal family, Jang Bahadur Rana was able to seize power. He became Prime Minister and set up the system of hereditary Rana Prime Ministers who actually ran the country until 1951. The Shah kings had no real power and served merely as figureheads (Shaha 1978:61).

The Rana oligarchy kept the country closed to outside influence while ruling the country with a strong hand. Only certain members of the family were allowed to run the government; no one else was allowed the slightest power (Shaha 1978:25). The ranas were not interested in educating the Nepalese people; before 1950 there were only 11 secondary schools in Nepal (UNESCO Bulletin 1972:140), and the literacy rate was 10 percent for males and one percent for

females (Blackwell 1969:178). They were also not interested in raising Nepal's standard of living; prior to 1951, 97 percent of the people existed on subsistence agriculture (Blackwell 1969:178).

By closing off the country and forbidding foreigners entry, the Ranas hoped to maintain control and negate the influence of a world suffering from "social unrest and ferment" (Hagen 1961:107). They succeeded for 105 years with the support of the British Imperial Authority in India (Muni 1973:5). By 1950, however, India had gained independence, China had marched into Tibet, and such changes in Nepal's two giant neighbors, in addition to her own internal dissatisfaction, caused political upheaval.

The Nepali Congress Party was the most important political party to oppose the Rana regime. It was organized in 1946 and based in India, since the Ranas forbade political activity within Nepal (Muni 1973:6). The then king, Tribhuvan, was known to sympathize with the Nepali Congress, and Muni states that it was "not just incidental" that the king escaped to India the day the Nepali Congress Party began armed revolt against the Ranas in November, 1950.

By February, 1951, the Ranas and the Nepali Congress party, under pressure from India and King Tribhuvan, accepted a plan for an interim coalition government, which provided for the restoration of the king, amnesty for insurgents, the inclusion of popular representatives in the Cabinet and the holding of elections to a constituent assembly by 1952 on the basis of universal adult suffrage (Shaha 1978: 115).

The Ranas seemed to think that they could rule the country as before, as long as they paid homage to the king. The members of the Nepali Congress party did not appreciate this view and in November 1951, all the members holding office in the coalition government resigned. The same month the king announced the formation of a new government without any reference to the Rana system (Muni 1973:11).

For the next eight years, the only visibly consistent aspect of government in Nepal was the monarchy. Cabinets and prime ministers

from different political parties came and went. India wavered in its attitude toward Nepal, sometimes supporting the king, and sometimes the political parties, making it difficult to tell whether she favored stability or democracy in the kingdom.. The Nepali people became disillusioned and apathetic toward democracy (Shaha 1978:115). All of this resulted in an increase of absolute power for the monarch.

King Tribhuvan died in 1955 and was succeeded by his son, King Mahendra. Mahendra did not allow elections for the constituent assembly to take place as ordered by his father. Instead, the political parties were forced to agree to a new constitution. Under this 1959 "Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal," the king retained supreme executive power and extensive discretionary and emergency powers, thus changing the concept of popular sovereignty which was the spirit of Tribhuvan's 1951 act (Shaha 1978:116).

The first general election was held in 1959 under the new constitution. The Nepali Congress party won 73 out of 109 seats in the lower House of Parliament, which gave it a comfortable working majority. In May of that year an elected government was formed with B. P. Koirala as Prime Minister (Shaha 1978:117).

Nineteen months later King Mahendra, exercising his emergency powers on the basis of preserving "unity, national integrity and sovereignty," dissolved the government and put Koirala and other government members in prison (Shaha 1978:117). He did this mainly because he saw his own position of strength weakening with the policies of the new government, especially when Koirala announced he was unhappy with the king's powerful position in the Constitution (Muni 1973:18). It is also important to note that even with this new, progressive government, Nepal was still largely a very traditional country and the drastic changes undertaken by the new government met with skepticism, if not opposition, by a great number of the people (Muni 1973:18). Some did not disagree so much with what the new government was doing, but rather with the speed with which it was being done,

In December of 1962, King Mahendra introduced yet another

constitution, which organized representation according to the Panchayat (Sanskrit for community) system (Malla 1975:71). This system has a pyramid structure. Supposedly it is based on democracy at the grass roots level (Malla 1975:72). The base of the system is the village and town panchayats; these are representative councils elected by the people of each town and village. Members of the village panchayats elect one person from each respective group to serve in the district assembly. Town panchayat members choose one-third of their members to sit on this assembly. The district assembly elects its own district panchayat. There are 75 district panchayats in Nepal, whose members then elect delegates to the zonal assemblies, of which there are 14 in Nepal. These zonal assemblies serve as an electoral college and select 90 of the 119 members of the National Panchayat or National Legislature (Malla 1975:73).

University graduates directly elect four members to the National Panchayat. Mass organizations, which were organized to compensate for the lack of political parties, elect the remaining 15 members of the national assembly. There are mass organizations for farmers, workers, women, veterans, and young people (Malla 1975:73).

The king has more power than this entire national assembly. Though the government ministers must be members of the Panchayat, they are chosen by the king and are loyal to him, and since the functioning of the government is largely dependent on royal directive, the palace officials and advisers to the king really have more power than government officials. This impedes the process of government. Another impediment is that officials are frequently removed from office and others are appointed, causing a lack of continuity in the ministries (Malla 1975:74).

On May 2, 1980, elections were held in Nepal to choose between the Panchayat system or a government composed of different political parties. The Panchayat system won. The consequences of this outcome remain to be seen.

A Short Ethnography of Selected Castes and Ethnic  
Groups of Nepal, Relevant to My Informant

This ethnography is included in this thesis to give the reader some understanding of the ethnic diversity of Nepal, and some idea as to the cultural background of my informant.

One can divide the groups of Nepal into two racial and linguistic categories: Tibeto-Nepalese, speaking Tibeto-Burmese languages, and Indo-Nepalese, speaking Indo-Aryan languages. Sub-groups of these two categories exist, and can be classified according to the following table (Hagen 1961:75):

TIBETO-NEPALESE RACES		INDO-NEPALESE RACES	
Tibetan groups	Ancient Nepalese groups	Nepalese groups	Indian groups
Bhotiyas Sherpas Thakals	Newars Thamangs Gurungs Mangars Sunwars	Rais Limbus Buras Rukhas Tharus	Brahmans (or Brahmins) Ksatriyas (incl. Gurkhas*) Khas Chetris Thakurs
			Indian* Garhwais Kumaons
* In the strict sense.			

This table is better taken as a useful generalization rather than a precise categorization.

The main characteristics which distinguish groups from one another are religion, custom, and language. The four groups most relevant to my informant are the Brahmans, Chhetris, Newars, and Tamangs, so these are the four profiled below.

#### Brahmans and Chhetris

The Brahman caste is the highest in the Hindu religion. Traditionally



it is the priestly caste. When the Brahmans first came to Nepal from India, they tried to impose their standards and religious beliefs on the indigenous people. Even though the Brahmans were in turn influenced by the native people, they maintained their superiority by imposing the Indian caste system on whole ethnic groups, for instance the Newars of the Kathmandu Valley. The Brahmans gave the Newars the rank of Kshatriya, thus bestowing a great honor upon them while at the same time maintaining their superiority. This, however, was not approved by bona fide Kshatriyas, so the Newars were given the new name 'Khas' (Hagen 1961:87).

Another version of this assimilation is given by D. Bista in *People of Nepal*. He states that the Khas were a hill tribe in the western districts of Nepal on whom the Brahmans delegated the Kshatriya status. Children of Brahman-Khas unions were known as Khatri and given "Chhetri" status. Khatri Chhetri is a corruption of the Hindu form Kshatriya-Kshatri. The Khas and Khatri both have Kshatriya rank which is the warrior caste and next highest after the Brahmans. They became the military order for the King of Nepal. Kshatriyas are now known as Chhetris.

The members of the Khas class living in Gorkha developed their own language, related to Hindi. It became known as Gorkhali or Nepali and is now the official language of Nepal.

Chhetri men traditionally join the military service. Other than that, the main occupations of Brahmans and Chhetris both are farming and government service. Some, however, renounce their worldly lives, and live on offerings from other people, who are then blessed for their generosity. Those who have renounced the world spend their days in meditation. They have given up their caste status, so their children are, in effect, without caste. These children are called Sanyeshi and can take up any profession they like (Bista 1967:5).

Marriage among the Brahman and Chhetri classes is usually monogamous, though polygyny does occur. In polygynous marriages, wives can be found from almost any ethnic group. The number of wives

can range from five or six to several dozen (Bista 1967:5). Brahman girls used to be married at age 10 or 11; Chhetris after they were full grown. Early marriage today is generally practiced only by the lower classes. Upper-class Brahman and Chhetri families now marry later than before. Marriage is a great concern to the girl's father because the family loses face if the girl isn't a virgin when she gets married. Virginity doesn't matter with boys (Bista 1967:6).

Marriage is important in Brahman and Chhetri circles, not just socially or economically, but spiritually as well. An astrologer is consulted to determine if two people are proper for each other, and he chooses the appropriate astrological time for the marriage ceremony to take place. Divorce is discouraged by this spiritual aspect; the couple is told that they are destined to be together from their previous lives (Bista 1967:9).

A man's most important duty is to bring home a wife and have a son. In Hinduism, it is the son who sees his parents' bodies safely through the journey across the land of the dead to heaven (swarga) after they have died. If a couple has no son, they will not make it to swarga, and will take the form of an evil spirit causing trouble for those still living (Bista 1967:9).

A woman receives her full caste status after marriage. An unmarried girl can't offer certain kinds of food to her parents that she cooked herself. It seems to be a kind of relief to the parents when a daughter gets married. The parents make merit (punya) by giving away their daughter to a suitable man and they don't have to worry about dying without having taken care of her.

Once a daughter is married, the parents still have social obligations to her. She and her husband are invited to all family festivals and ceremonies and are given food and presents of money and other items when they leave for home (Bista 1967:9).

When a new bride moves to her husband's family's house, she is dominated by her mother-in-law. This continues until she has a baby or wins her husband to her side (Bista 1967:9).

Besides marriage, there are several other important occasions for Brahmans and Chhetris. The first important ceremony is the name-giving ceremony. This occurs the eleventh day after birth. Up until this time both mother and baby are considered untouchable. It is important that the time of birth be recorded exactly so the astrologer can pick a name that is suitable for the baby. It is also important that the father be at this ceremony, especially if the mother is not married. His presence confirms biological parentage, and if he is not there both mother and baby become untouchables (Bista 1967:12).

The second important ceremony is the weaning ceremony which takes place when a child is around five months old. The parents' relatives come and give food and other presents to the baby (Bista 1967:13).

When a boy is five or seven years old, there is a ceremony in which his head is shaved, leaving only a top-knot in back. This indicates that he is a Hindu. Only a boy's mother's brother can officiate at this ceremony, but if there is no brother a cousin can substitute (Bista 1967:13). The receiving of the sacred thread ceremony occurs when Brahman boys are seven or nine and when Chhetri boys are 13 or 15 or older. After this ceremony the boy takes on new caste responsibilities. For instance, he can now eat with his elders, something forbidden before (Bista 1967:13).

When a girl has her first menstrual period, she is taken to another house and must stay there two weeks, during which time she is considered polluted and untouchable and must not be seen by her brothers, father, father's brothers, or male cousins. She is not allowed to touch any food or water not meant for her. During her second period this must be repeated for seven days, and for four days during subsequent periods. After the second time she can be seen by male relatives, but cannot touch any male who has received the sacred thread (Bista 1967:13).

Though there is no actual ceremony, some people give their daughters a set of adult clothes (sari and blouse) when the girls are

9 or 10. The girl can wear it when she wants to. In rural area young girls will wear adult clothes, but in the city they usually wait till they are 16 or 17 (Bista 1967:14).

Hinduism has numerous religious festivals, which Brahmans and Chhetris observe. Feasting and worshipping the gods Shiva, Vishnu, Rama, Krishna, along with thousands of others, are two main activities of these ceremonies.

The most important festival is dashain, or durga puja, observed for two weeks in October. Hindus worship the goddess Durga, feast, and have a good time. Each person pays respect to his or her senior relative. This relative then puts a colored tika mark on the younger person's forehead. This occurs within the immediate family and the extended kin group (Bista 1967:10).

Tihar is another big festival that occurs two weeks after the end of dashain. It is also known as the festival of lights because each family puts lights outside their house for the last few days of the festival. They worship different gods and animals, and on the last day the women worship their brothers and offer them gifts of food. This is supposed to protect the brothers against evil (Bista 1967:10).

Pilgrimages to temples are important; the farther away the temple the more important they are. The "char dham" are the four places of pilgrimage located at the four corners of India. They are Jagannath at Ruri, Ramesworam in Madras state, Dwarkanath in Gujarat, and Badrinath in Himachal. Pashupatinath, in Kathmandu, is also an important temple, as is Vishwonath, in Benaras (Bista 1967:10).

Mourning is another rite important to Brahmans and Chhetris. Their dead are cremated by the side of a river. Relatives save a small piece of bone, and the rest of the ashes are thrown into the river. The relatives bury the bone in the middle of the river or, if they can afford it, they take it to Benaras in India and cast it into the Ganges, which is a holy river.

The mourning period is 13 days for near relations. During this time they must not eat salt, oil, or meat. Men shave their

heads, don't wear the red tika, and don't attend any ceremonies where there is song or dance. The family observes ritual pollution; that is, they cannot offer food or water to anyone not also in mourning and they can't make offerings to a god or go to a temple (Bista 1967: 11).

At the end of the mourning period there is a ceremony conducted by the deceased's son. This is the shraddha ceremony. Brahman priests may not officiate at caste funerals other than for Brahmans or Chhetris. A sister's son or daughter's husband takes his place (Bista 1967:11).

### Newars

The Newars were the original inhabitants of the Kathmandu Valley. Some people feel they migrated here from other areas, but Cristoph von Fürer-Haimendorf feels that "the bulk of the Newar people had been settled in the Nepal [Kathmandu] Valley since prehistoric times" (Bista 1967:16). In that time they developed a rich cultural heritage. Their mythology is rich, their artisans are skilled, and their agricultural practices are "far ahead of almost all the other ethnic groups" (Hagen 1961:80).

The Newars can grow many varieties of fruits and vegetables in the valley, which has a sub-tropical climate. Other groups don't grow as wide a variety of fruits and vegetables. Newars use artificial irrigation to water their crops, and thus can get two harvests a year, even though they still till the land by hand (Hagen 1961:89).

The Newari language is Tibeto-Burmese, with its own script. However, it uses Dev Nagri script now, the same script that Nepali and Hindi are written in. There are about six Newari dialects (Bista 1967:15).

The Newars can be divided into two religious groups: the Hindus and the Buddhists. The Newars were predominantly Buddhists before the Indians arrived in Kathmandu, bringing Hinduism; now Buddhist Newars

are in the minority.

There is no set marriage ceremony; it depends on the religion and the clan. However, there are general observances. Marriage is usually patrilocal and monogamous. Marriages are usually arranged, although it is becoming more common for people to choose their own spouses. Newars must choose a spouse from the same caste (within the Newar caste) but from a different descent group. They do not look at marriage as being particularly sacred, like the Brahmans and Chhetris do. Divorce causes no shame (Bista 1967:20).

The Newars consult an astrologer, as do the Brahmans and Chhetris, to make sure the marriage is acceptable astrologically, and to pick the right date for the ceremony. Milk, molasses, and cardamom are sent to the girl's mother to symbolically pay for suckling her daughter. There are feasts for the relatives and gifts for the couple. Rituals go on for several days.

Having the Newars split into two religious groups, one might think there would be festivals celebrated exclusively by one group or the other, but this is not the case. The Hindus celebrate Buddhist festivals, and Buddhists join in Hindu celebrations, which means everyone has more festivals to enjoy throughout the year.

In addition to celebrating dashain and tihar, as do most Nepalese, Newars also celebrate indra jatra, a festival to worship Indra, the god of rain. It is the biggest festival in Kathmandu and lasts for eight days. People get dressed up, do religious dances, and carry a little girl picked to be a "living goddess" through the streets.

The families of people who have died during the year celebrate gai jatra. They send cows, or boys if they can't afford cows, around the streets of Kathmandu. This is supposed to help the dead get to heaven.

Newars are the traditional merchants and tradesmen of Nepal. Though their original home is Kathmandu, their villages now occur along important trade routes. Pokhara and other district centers were

once these Newar trade villages, and have developed into the most important towns in the country (Hagen 1961:81).

As with the Brahmans and Chhetris, Newari dead are cremated beside a river, except for Jogis (tailor caste) who are buried. The ceremonies and pollution rituals also follow those of the Brahman and Chhetri (Bista 1967:27).

### Tamangs

The Tamangs believe they came from Tibet. They used to be called Bhote, which means Tibetan. It is now a derogatory term. Tamang were horse traders; 'ta' in Tibetan means horse and 'mang' means trader; hence their name (Bista 1967:48).

The Tamang are divided vertically into clans. Except for brother clans (those clans whose ancestors were brothers), all clans can intermarry with any other clan. Divorce and illegitimate children are both accepted by Tamangs, but marriage or sexual relations between members of the same clan are forbidden. Cross-cousin marriage is considered the best (Bista 1967:50).

The Tamang marriage ceremony is relatively simple compared to other groups. There are three kinds of marriage: arrangement, capture, and mutual agreement. Arranged marriages involve the parents picking appropriate partners for their children. Capture marriage is where the boy kidnaps the girl he wants to marry and keeps her for three days. At the end of this time they either decide to get married or the girl goes back to her parents' house.

Mutual agreement is the most common type of marriage. The boy asks the girl's parents for their consent to the marriage. If they agree, the ceremony takes place. If they don't, the couple can elope. If they do elope, they cannot return to the girl's parents' house until the parents accept the marriage.

The Tamangs are Buddhist, but still observe the name-giving ceremony and festival of dashain, as do the Hindus. They practice

animal sacrifice, and have a special priest--a bompo--to officiate at these ceremonies. Sacrificing animals is supposed to drive away spirits (Bista 1967:55).

Members of the priestly class of the Tamangs are called 'lama'. Only lamas can conduct the Tamang funeral ceremony. Tamangs cremate their dead on a hilltop. People in the village bring firewood, incense, rice and drinks to the cremation site. A week or two after the death there is the funeral ceremony, after which the family of the deceased feeds the rest of the village. Between one and six months after a death, the family holds an even bigger feast. The villagers contribute a bit of food and money, but the family still bears most of the cost (Bista 1967:56).

#### Social Change in Nepal Since 1951

Since the Rana oligarchy fell in 1951, Nepal has achieved some major developments. Before 1950, the mileage of all-weather roads was 300 kilometers, the installed power was but 6,280 kilowatts, and the areas irrigated by modern facilities totaled only 14,700 hectares. By 1970, mileage of roads had increased to 1,256 kilometers, installed power was 45,318 kilowatts, and irrigated area was up to 181,000 hectares (Rana 1974:651).

Nepal is, nevertheless, still a land of immense poverty. While statistics of birth, infant mortality, life expectancy, per capita income, literacy, and subsistence existence are not always positive indicators of the poverty level of a nation, the statistics which follow do generally describe Nepal's tremendous development problems.

"The degree of underdevelopment can be gleaned from Nepal's (estimated) infant mortality rate of 17.5 percent (compared to India's 12.9%), life expectancy of 40-50 years, its per capita income of \$76 per year, and its literacy rate of 10 percent among men and four percent among women. About 95 percent of the people live on farms on a



bare subsistence level" (Rana 1974:654, Kane 1978). Nepal has the lowest per capita power consumption in the world, but its birth rate is relatively high--4.4 percent compared to India's 3.4 percent (Kane 1978).

As Myron Weiner states, "in few countries in the developing world are the internal forces for change so limited. Only three percent of the country live in urban areas" (compared to 21% in India; Kane 1978). Hardly a tenth of the population is literate and only 32 percent of children of primary school age attend school. Mass communication is almost nonexistent. The largest circulating newspaper reaches only 10,000 subscribers, about equal to the total number of college graduates. The number of radio sets is small (and unrecorded) and all broadcasts are in Nepali, the country's official language but one not easily understood by some minority communities.

Nepal has a small industrial base. The number of large factories can be counted by hand--three sugar mills, three jute mills, a few cigarette factories, a steel rolling mill, a brick and tile factory and a few stainless steel and nylon yard factories. In short, "the factors at work elsewhere to accelerate social change--urbanization, industrialization, education, mass communications, and transportation--are barely evident in Nepal except in the Kathmandu Valley and in portions of the Terai [plain]" (Weiner, 1973:619).

Still, an elite exists amid this almost universal poverty. There has always been an elite in Nepal, but prior to 1951 it consisted mainly of people of high (Brahman, Chhetri, and Newar) caste. Louis Hayes distinguishes between "traditional" and "emerging" elites (1975:616). These traditional elites, by virtue of their caste, held the important positions in the government, the economy, and high status occupations (lawyers, for example), and were the only people allowed the privilege of (who could afford) education.

The elite that has been emerging since 1951, with the advent of foreign aid, industrialization, and modernization, is upwardly socially mobile, especially into the new occupations as they become

available. Caste is still related to marriage and commensality, and there tends to be a relationship between caste and respect, wealth, and power, though the exact correlation between caste and social status is now imperfect. Caste is no longer the dependent variable upon which all other high status variables rest; rather, it "is used as an independent variable, but not in place of social class" (Duberman and Azumi 1975:1015). This is an important social difference of the post-revolution era. Before 1951, the correlation between high caste and prestige was virtually one-to-one.

With the advent of foreign aid and modernization, educational opportunities have increased and are now available for more people than ever before. This is especially true for women. Even after 1951, the literacy rate for women was about 10 percent lower than for men, and at least one report of the percentage of girls enrolled in primary schools in the Gandaki area was a very low 13 percent (Clason 1975/76:81). Clason writes that "in the late 1960's, the Government of Nepal had initiated a comprehensive educational reform which focused on expanding educational opportunities and making the content of education relevant to the development needs of the country. Thus this educational reform program in Nepal was aimed at a campaign to remove the barriers impeding the progress of women by increasing the number of women in the teaching profession" (1975/76:81).

Teaching at the university level seems to be the highest occupation a woman can attain, along with that of medical doctor. Both of these professions carry a great deal of status. Elementary school teachers also have high status. The educational reform program involved in trying to train women as primary teachers was important not only in the number of women it actually trained, but also for long-term purposes in that ". . . in many cases the teaching profession is one of the few alternative role models to which a village girl is ever exposed" (Clason 1975/76:83).

Thus, the Nepali government was indeed trying to make mass education available, and at the same time raise the status of women.

The people implementing educational reform had much working against them, for in Nepal "education for girls was viewed with suspicion and considered immoral, useless, and irrelevant by most villagers" (Clason 1975/76:82). The target figure of 40 percent enrollment for females was not reached, but by 1973 the 13 percent figure in the Gandaki zone has risen to 24 percent, a significant improvement (Clason 1975/76:83).

Though these figures vary from report to report, and must all be taken with some degree of skepticism, the general finding is that while improvement is slowly being made, those people, and especially those women who have any education at all, are still in the minority. This means that people who go to college form a very small, new elite group, not only in the country as a whole, but even among people with minimal education.

There is also a pecking order among the college-educated. "Those educated in either the U.S. or England have a much higher status than those receiving the M.A.'s and Ph.D.'s from India. Those educated at Tribhuvan [University, Kathmandu] have the lowest status" (Hayes 1976:754). It can be assumed that these elites are the same as those in Edward Cronin's observation that "Kathmandu is an extremely small world where only a few thousand people make all the important decisions" (1979:219).

In addition to the above evidence that education among Nepal's emerging elite is a more important means of achieving prestige than caste, Louis Hayes states that "the college degree is one of the few achievable avenues for personal advancement and elite status. Ascriptive criteria are still important, of course, but are coming to operate more and more in association with education. That is, in the absence of education, even family and caste connections are not sufficient for obtaining social position. Education provides the skills necessary as political and economic development occur" (1976:763).

This section gives evidence to support the idea that Nepal is a model of a society experiencing social conflict and change. Evidence

is also given supporting the thesis, on a general, social level, that education has replaced caste as the most important factor in obtaining prestigious occupations associated with wealth and power in Nepal. The next chapter will deal with the same patterns from a more individual perspective.

### CHAPTER III

#### LIFE HISTORY

##### Introduction

The data in the following life history give evidence in support of arguments presented earlier in this thesis. The life history shows how the processes of cultural change described above have affected an individual in Nepalese culture. Modern and traditional values overlap to the extent that it is difficult to separate the two. After a brief background sketch, the chapter approaches this mixture of traditional and contemporary values from three perspectives: Those of (1) Caste; (2) Ceremonies and Traditions; and (3) Education. Both traditional and contemporary values will be discussed as they relate to each category.

My informant's pseudonym is Junu. Junu is a member of the emerging elite. On the one hand, she comes from a religious family and is of mixed caste. On the other, she is an educated, professional woman. Thus she appears to be experiencing, on a personal level, the social conflict occurring between the traditional elite and the emerging elite in Nepal.

As a member of the emerging elite, she belongs to a new social group which no longer considers high caste the only criterion for upward social mobility. Instead, since caste cannot be changed, and education is now open to all castes, members of the new elite can obtain their prestigious occupations on the basis of education alone without high caste status.

This does not imply that caste is no longer important in and for achieving prestigious occupations, nor does it imply that caste is not socially important. In addition to giving evidence that occupations associated with wealth and power are not limited to the high caste any longer, the life history also provides data suggesting,

nevertheless, that caste is still an important factor in determining who gets an education and thus who obtains prestigious occupations.

### Background

Junu was born in 1949 in the village of Kalampong. This village is located in the Darjeeling district of India, two hours (by jeep) from the Nepalese border. According to Junu, although Darjeeling is under Indian administration, 90 to 95 percent of its population is Nepalese.

Three of Junu's grandparents were born in India, but her paternal grandfather, a Chhetri, came from a village in eastern Nepal. He migrated to Darjeeling, bought some land, and married a woman who belonged to the Sunuhar ethnic group. These grandparents had little education.

Junu's maternal grandfather was a Brahman. He could read and write English. He married a Tamang woman. This grandfather was well-respected by the British, and was looked up to by the people in his village. Junu's grandparents all settled in Kalampong and her parents grew up there.

Though her parents are actually mixed caste, they are called Chhetris because both of their fathers were high caste.

*It's hard when people ask [me what caste I am] 'cause I'm all mixed up. I give them my father's caste. We call ourselves Chhetri because my grandfather was Chhetri. He married Tamang. But my father becomes Chhetri you know. He doesn't go to Tamang. . . . Because my grandmother will be taking all the duties and rituals that my grandfather performed as a Chhetri. And my father will learn all those things from his father.*

Junu's father married her mother, and about 10 years later also married her mother's sister, whom Junu calls her step-mother. Her father was gone a lot when she was growing up, acting as secretary to

an aunt who lives in Kathmandu. This aunt was at one time the wife of a Rana Prime Minister of Nepal. Junu's mother and step-mother tended the farm, which is about 12 acres, very large for that area. They also raised 12 children, including an adopted daughter.

Education was very important in Junu's family. All the children received at least elementary and part of a high school education. The ones who wanted to continue their studies did. This is quite an accomplishment considering the scarcity of money and the hardship of buying clothes and textbooks for 12 children.

The children's education was facilitated by living in India. The school system there was more developed under the British influence. There were more schools, and thus more educational opportunities available. This made it easier for Junu and her siblings to obtain an education. Enough emphasis was placed on education in their family, however, to make one believe they would have gone to school in Nepal as well.

Junu's father has the role of social worker in their village. He is well-respected and people admire his family. Junu said:

*People in our village said the children in our family were really disciplined. We never fought with each other, and there were so many of us. People would admire us. I think my parents are really happy now [that we are all grown and educated]. People say they are really lucky. But I think it is we children who are lucky.*

Junu went through school in Kalampong at the head of her class. She got her B.A. in Liberal Arts from a college in Kalampong, then went on to get her M.A. in Nepalese Literature from Tribhuvan University in Kathmandu. She was teaching at the college in Kalampong when she married Akash and moved to Kathmandu where she also taught at the University. Akash is a Newar Brahman. He has lived in different areas of Nepal, because his father's job as a Civil Service official required moving around the country. Akash studied in Darjeeling, in England, and at Harvard, and worked for His Majesty's Government of

Nepal in Development Planning.

Currently, Junu and Akash attend Oregon State University. She is working on her second M.A., in Family Resource Management, and he is working toward a Ph.D. in Agricultural Economics. They have a four-year-old daughter, Menuka.

### Caste

Caste seems to be treated differently by the Nepalese in Darjeeling and the Nepalese in Kathmandu. Apparently, caste distinctions are less enforced in Darjeeling. This finding agrees with Lewis Coser's proposition that "outside conflict will strengthen the internal cohesion of the group" (Coser 1956:88). Being cultural foreigners in India, the Nepalese put aside caste differences in order to form a united front toward the Indians.

Junu's following statement supports Coser's proposition:

*I think the society in Kathmandu is less free. It's more caste conscious and class conscious, and wealth conscious. It's not like that in Kalampong. I think the main reason it's like that is in Nepal everybody's Nepalese so you have to distinguish yourself, saying I'm Chhetri and I'm Newar and I'm Tamang. But in Kalampong, it's in India and we, all the castes say we are Nepalese.*

For the same reason, however, Nepalese culture is embraced wholeheartedly by the Nepalese living in Darjeeling. So while there are regional differences described above, the culture remains united, even across borders.

For background, I asked Junu to tell me about the caste system in Nepalese culture. She said:

*Actually there are 4 castes: Brahman, Chhetri, Baishnev, and Sudra. Baishnav are merchants and farmers, Sudra are untouchables. In Nepal, since there are so many ethnic groups, they put Brahman and Chhetri above, and all ethnic*



*groups are considered Baishnav; Newar, Gurung, Tamang, they're all the same place in the caste system, same level. But they won't intermarry with each other. Tamang won't marry with Gurung. Tamang will consider Tamang to be higher to Gurung, and Gurung will consider Gurung to be higher to Tamang, so they won't intermarry. . . .*

*There are untouchables in Nepal but they are shoemakers and goldsmiths and blacksmiths. They're not in any ethnic group at all. The Newars have their own hierarchy, Newar Brahmins and so on.*

Excerpts from the taped interviews reveal evidence that in Nepalese culture caste is no longer as important as it used to be. For example, low and mixed caste people now have the opportunity to get an education--something denied them before 1951. However, there is also evidence that caste is still as important as ever in other aspects of Nepalese life. In this section of the thesis, evidence will first be given supporting changing attitudes toward caste. Following that will be evidence showing traditional attitudes toward caste still held today.

The change apparent in the following conversation is that people no longer ask a person's caste immediately upon meeting them. This is an indication that caste has lost some of its importance, at least overtly, in Nepalese society.

JVM (Interviewer): *In Nepal, do people ask you what your caste is when they meet you?*

Junu: *Some people do it right away.*

JVM: *Is it rude?*

Junu: *Now it is. But usually people do ask after awhile. It's not rude then.*

Junu's and her mother's feelings on being served food are also an indication of changing attitudes toward caste. In the following instance, caste is not as important to Junu as it is to her mother, an indication of lessening caste rigidity.

*Like, for me it's okay to go out and eat anything, anywhere, you know, given by anybody. But my mother, she would never do that. She wouldn't eat pork, or beef, or go to all friends' houses like I do. Like if they were Christian or untouchables, she wouldn't just go to their houses and eat like that.*

*And before, people would go to town and go to a restaurant but the restaurant would never hire low caste people. Because if the customers knew that the worker was low caste, they wouldn't go there to eat. But now they would hire anybody, and nobody cares if he is low caste. Before they would have asked what caste; it was okay to ask.*

Judging from the next statement, Junu's mother sensed a change in culture that her children would have to face after the opening of the country in 1951. Rather than forcing them to conform to her values, Junu's mother realized that their society would be different than the one in which she was raised.

However, it would be hard to imagine Junu and her siblings being raised without any caste consciousness. Perhaps some caste values have become more covert with modernization, through those values don't disappear completely.

*Maybe my grandmother taught my mother that she couldn't do certain things but my mother never taught me not to go to those people's houses. She knows I do and she doesn't care. She knows things would be different from now on. Her children have to live in future, to survive and get along in society. She would never teach us not to do that [eat with different castes].*

The following comments demonstrate some aspects of the interplay between changing and traditional attitudes toward caste. Junu states that she feels caste is just a concept, that there is nothing a person cannot do because of his or her caste. This seems to concur with her experiences in life; even the older generation of Akash's grandparents had no prejudice toward her on the basis of caste. Her problems with Akash's sister-in-law sound like one isolated incident, not characteristic of Nepalese society today.

Junu feels intellectually that people are no better or worse on the basis of their caste. She fits into her husband's family and is accepted professionally, and these matters are more important in her world than the fact that she is of mixed caste. They seem to be more important to other people too, since she reports no real ill feeling on that basis from anyone except her husband's sister-in-law. Other statements she makes during the course of the conversation lead to the conclusion that caste is still an important factor in Nepalese culture.

*I felt really bad about my caste in Akash's family. . . . It's Akash's brother's wife. Because in the education field I'm not below her, she wants to show me down sometimes, and it's the caste only. . . . She's as educated as I am; I think it's her mother. She was really nice to me before her mother came to stay with us. But after that she used to say that I didn't have caste. . . .*

*She meant it. So I told her. Her uncle is a very wealthy man, he is a doctor, and he is my aunt's [the wife of a former Prime Minister, with very high status] family doctor. So I told my husband's sister-in-law, 'Okay, I don't have caste, but then why does your uncle go and bow in front of my aunt?' She said, 'Well, I don't care for him.'*

*But that's the only thing that ever happened with anybody. Even Akash's grandmother, she treated me so well. Now she's about 90. The first time we went to meet her she called me close to her and made me sit right next to her and said, 'Oh, you're so nice.' . . .*

*Akash's mother's father came to visit us at Akash's father's place. I was inside there, and my father-in-law called me into the living room and said, 'This is my daughter-in-law.' And I said 'Nameste' [hello] to him. He said, 'Oh, she is very pretty and she looks just like one of our daughters. People had said something weird about her [about her caste].'*

*I felt so embarrassed. I didn't feel bad because he said a good thing in front of me. He was straightforward. Afterward, we went to their place and visited them and they really liked me. . . .*

*I had thought that maybe I would feel a little bit different when I went to some ceremonies in Akash's family. But there was this ceremony for his grandmother, who was 88 years, 8 months, and 8 days. I was supposed to go there and I thought maybe they would separate me away in some of the rituals, but my mother-in-law took me there and it was just*

*in my mind 'cause I had dealt with my sister-in-law.*

*It was the first time in my life that I bowed my head to the feet of someone. I had never done that before because my father used to say that in front of God everybody's the same. Nobody is supposed to bow to anybody's feet. It's okay to bow your head; it shows respect.*

*But over there everybody was touching Grandmother's feet with their heads, so I did it. I felt so bad. I had never done that before. I didn't have to do this to my parents and I'm doing it to someone else. But I'm glad that I did it. It showed that I am like everybody else.*

When I asked Junu if there was anything she couldn't do religiously because of her mixed caste, she said:

*No. You know, in public places, you can do anything; it doesn't matter. The people wouldn't even ask you what caste you are. They wouldn't know in public places.*

The only difference she sees in her life if she were a pure Chhetri would be that her sister-in-law wouldn't tease her.

Summing up her feelings of the caste system, Junu stated:

*It's like this. Caste is just a concept you know, that we are this. People don't think themselves to be in a position lesser than other people. There are many other criteria besides caste that can bring people up, like money and education.*

Several of Junu's statements show how important caste still is in her culture. The first is that she felt bad about her caste in Akash's family. If caste wasn't important, she wouldn't have felt bad that she was mixed caste. Another indication is her problem with Akash's sister-in-law. The sister-in-law wouldn't have been able to make fun of her if caste no longer was important. Junu's retort to this woman would make no sense if there were no caste distinctions. As it is, however, Junu was able to give an effective retort by saying that her uncle was being deferential to a member of Junu's own family, a woman with high social status.

Junu was somewhat surprised at her acceptance by the rest of Akash's family, an indication that perhaps she felt her caste would cause problems. Caste consciousness does seem to be, as she says, "in her mind," thus underscoring its importance.

By bowing to Akash's grandmother's feet, she shows that she is "like everyone else." This is significant because of her earlier insecure feelings that her caste might cause problems.

In Junu's family, caste has an interesting status in choosing a spouse. As long as the intended is not an untouchable, another caste is acceptable. So, apparently caste is not a determining factor among the upper castes themselves. However, it becomes significant if untouchables are involved. Though caste is lessening in importance, it is still a significant aspect of some marriages.

*If a daughter falls in love with someone from another caste, and it's not untouchable, then people say okay, not bad. Lots of things count, whether they have money or not, and what kind of social status they have besides caste. . . .*

*My father asked me what caste Akash was, but that's not unusual. Newar, part Newar, okay. My father knew he was not from the untouchables, and since he was a good educated man, that, my father cared for education, and his behavior.*

As Junu says, caste is just a concept, and there are other criteria that can bring people up, like money and education. However, the evidence above supports the argument that, although high caste is no longer mandatory for achieving education and wealth, it is still an important social factor in Nepalese culture.

### Ceremonies and Traditions

The ceremonies and traditions of Nepal have been a part of Nepalese culture since long before 1951. Because these traditions remained virtually unchanged before modernization began, and are showing evidence of change since modernization, it can be argued that

modernization is having an influence on the ceremonies and traditions of Nepal.

This, in turn, affects the emerging elite of the country. Data from Junu indicate an overlapping of traditional and contemporary values; for example, many menstruation rituals have been discarded because they can't be observed when going to school.

This does not indicate cultural assimilation necessarily. Rather, it indicates that Nepalese culture can adapt to outside influences, yet continue to maintain its own cultural integrity. The evidence given in this section supports the argument that Nepal is a society undergoing change and modernization. It also shows how one member of the emerging elite and her family adapt to this change process.

### Polygyny

One of the major changes that has taken place in Nepal since 1951 is the attitude toward polygyny. There is an obvious legal and cultural change that has occurred regarding this form of marriage. Not only is polygyny now against the law, but even people who practice polygyny, such as Junu's parents, discourage their children from practicing it. The king also set a precedent by marrying only one woman. This is an abrupt change, in a single generation, of a long-accepted and widely practiced custom which coincided with the arrival of modernization in Nepal.

Before modernization, polygyny served Nepalese society well. Subsistence cultures that practice polygyny tend to have large families. Many children are needed to work the land and provide for parents in their old age. In a society such as Nepal's, having many children is the only way to insure that enough survive to adulthood to help their parents.

In a modern industrial society, however, smaller families are more desirable. With fewer people to depend on, people look to goods

provided by industry to fulfill their needs. Modernization and industrialization are affecting Nepal in this manner. The replacement of polygyny with monogamy is one manifestation of this change.

Junu feels that modernization and education caused the change in both the culture and the legal system. She states in her narrative the changes in government, royal precedent, law, and cultural values toward women that led to its abolishment.

*I don't know [how my mom and step-mom feel about polygyny compared to how I feel]. . . . And I have never asked my mother how they felt. Never. . . . Maybe it was hard with my mom at the first. . . .*

*[It would not be okay with me if Akash had another wife! No. No way! No. . . . I think [the difference between my mom and me] depends on two things you know. It's one the time. . . . Now even you're not legally allowed to have two wives. . . . I think because the wealthy people, they can have many wives. Sometimes a young girl is forced to marry with a man who could have as many wives as he wishes. It's because it can ruin somebody else's life.*

*The other is the quality of my mother. Like, her own thinking. . . . Like, time changed. People got exposed to Western cultures, too, and many things happen in between. . . . And people started to give, give more emphasis to women's status, or something like that. . . . And even the thinking of people has changed. . . .*

*Education of both men and women is the main reason people [changed to having only one wife]. . . .*

*[Women in Nepal are better off now] comparing to before. Looking at woman as a person you know. As a companion rather than just a wife. I know things are like that but I don't know how to change. I can feel how it changed but I can't explain. . . .*

**JVM:** *If Nepal hadn't been opened up, if the Ranas were still in power, do you think that there would still be people having two wives?*

**Junu:** *Yeah. More than two, 'cause the Ranas themselves had 50, 60, 70, 80, even 300 wives. Why Nepalese law would let people marry two is that the Ranas had done like that and people who are rich, they can do as their leaders do, you know.*

**JVM:** *Did King Tribhuvan make it illegal?*

*Junu: In Nepalese custom king should have two wives. He should marry two at once 'cause he can never be a widower. It's bad for king to be widower. So King Tribhuvan married two wives, same time. But his son Mahendra didn't do that. So that was a change.*

*It's hard for me to answer questions like how do you feel. I know I don't like it [polygyny] but I don't know how my mom felt 'cause we never asked her those questions, never. I wish I had. . . .*

*JVM: Would your mom have wanted you to share a husband?*

*Junu: No. Even my father or step-mother doesn't want that.*

*JVM: So it was okay for them, but something has happened and neither you nor I can put our finger on it.*

*Junu: Things have changed.*

We can see from this that change is a difficult concept to discuss. As Junu says, "I can feel how it changed, but I can't explain it." These cultural changes seem easier to live through than to discuss. Or perhaps it is the entire culture and not necessarily just the change that is hard to explain. Many times, when I asked, "Why do you do that?", Junu said, "I don't know. We just do. We feel comfortable doing that."

This is the kind of answer one would expect in United States culture when someone is asked how they know where to stand in an elevator. Standing in the "right" place is the unconscious act of a person socialized in our culture. Junu, socialized in Nepalese culture, unconsciously knows the appropriate, and inappropriate, behavior for her society, though it is difficult for her to verbalize this knowledge.

### Marriage

Marriage is the biggest ceremony in Nepalese life. There are several non-traditional aspects to Junu's marriage which occur for different reasons. One is that she and her husband did not consult



their horoscopes to determine whether or not they were astrologically suited to each other. They felt it to be a waste of time since they were going to get married anyway. This contrasts nicely with the fact that tradition did prevail in setting the wedding date, which was determined astrologically; another example of how one culture can adapt to another and yet maintain its own cultural identity.

A non-traditional criterion for Junu's father was also met: her groom was "an educated man," as stated in the section on caste. It was important that his educated daughter marry an educated man, not only because she would probably be happier, but also because she would be less restricted in pursuing her career goals.

Another non-traditional aspect of Junu and Akash's wedding ceremony was that only Akash and his father formed the wedding party of the groom, a result of the physical distance between the houses of the bride and groom. This is perhaps an indirect result of Western influence in Nepal. Before its arrival the chances of meeting and marrying someone more than a village or two away were slim. There was little need or benefit from moving around, for instance in migrating to the city. Presently, people migrate for better jobs or education. In fact, Junu and Akash met at the University in Kathmandu. This physical distance is also the reason Junu stayed in her parents' house several days after the tika ceremony, contrary to tradition. Normally she would have gone to her husband's house, but because he lived in Kathmandu, she stayed with her parents.

JVM: *What was your wedding like?*

Junu: *Oh, not very traditional. In my sisters' cases, their horoscopes were sown, and the stars were matched. But not in my case. . . . There was no point. Even if the stars didn't match, we would get married anyway. . . . I got dressed up, but not much. I thought I was too old.*

*Akash and his father and my father had been corresponding and they decided the holy or auspicious moment. We had two priests to assist. We had three days worshipping for the whole family, for our stars.*

(Junu, continued)

*If there is any bad star that's going to give you bad effect then you worship that star. We have that every year. It is a good time to do any ceremony.*

*We had three days of worship and on the last day was our wedding. Akash and his father came two days before our wedding, from Nepal. They stayed in my sister and brother-in-law's house.*

*They can stay over there because my sister is not really a member of my family. It's not that, but she's outside. Once a daughter gets married, it's not really outside a family, but we go with the husband's, we take their caste and we take their surname. So he could stay there. He couldn't stay with my brothers and come to get me married.*

*. . . He and his father stayed in my brother-in-law's house, and my brother-in-law's mother, she came from Darjeeling, and his brothers came.*

*On the wedding day they all come, it's like a wedding procession. There are specially more men. My mother said don't look at them [in the procession] . . . I don't know what they did.*

*My father worshipped Akash before he got into the house. First there is a curtain between the groom and the bride's family. Then the priest would do something, and the curtain is pulled, and they get to know each other.*

*Ours was not really traditional. They came in and they took me out from my room. Ours was done in an open space so all the guests and the village people and our relatives could see what's going on, outside.*

*They made me put garland on him. He put jewelry and beads, special beads, on me and we were taken into the worshipping room, and over there, there were two priests. They did all this ritual and they made us do things to God, put things in places.*

*Then the real thing is you put this red stuff here [part down middle of head]; he's made to do that three times. I'm kind of blindfolded, and he does that, and none of my family can look at that. Tradition. It's said that you can't. I think you just don't feel like looking at it. After that's done, the wedding's done. That's the most important part.*

*After we finish we go outside and all our friends and relatives come. Actually, in Chhetri families the feet of the daughter are washed by the parents, and they say that they drink water from our feet. . . . They do like*

(Junu, continued)

that [brush mouth with fingers]. It's very important. There's a phrase saying if you want to give your daughter in marriage you say you're going to drink the water washed from her feet. So my father did that.

All our relatives and neighbors put red stuff, tika, right there [forehead], you know, and gave us presents and money. We had three days marriage. The first day we were doing those rituals.

All our friends and neighbors were invited, and there were more than 500 people. We have to invite the whole village. Village people would think me to be like their own sister or daughter, so they do things my own relatives would do, in our marriage.

If it's a daughter's marriage you don't eat meat, so we didn't have any meat. The next day we had a meat party, all my friends from the town and family friends. We can celebrate for long time, but ours was really short.

The third night I was taken to my brother-in-law's house, and I felt really bad. I felt I was leaving my parents. On the night of third day they gave us a party. The whole family party in my brother-in-law's house, and on the fourth day we left.

JVM: How was your marriage different than traditional marriage?

Junu: My sisters' marriages were different than mine. Both of my brothers-in-law came from their own houses. They had their whole marriage procession of their own. In my case there was only Akash and his father, and the whole procession was arranged from my father's side. My sisters' was for the whole night.

I didn't have, outside in open space, ours had little bit, but was inside the house. There was pyre for religious offerings.

JVM: So yours was traditional, just shorter?

Junu: Not much. More modern. The other thing was, they went out of the house in the same traditional way. I didn't do that. Our custom is you get married this night and in the morning you're given farewell from your house. It didn't happen in my case; once we leave from our house we wouldn't be able to come back again, so we stayed there. And there are lots of traditional customs in the house of the groom too that we didn't have. 'Cause Akash's family was so far away.

Except for changes already mentioned, the rest of the wedding ceremony seemed to be a small-scale model of a traditional ceremony. Junu got dressed up, but not too much. There was a ceremony, but it didn't last all night like her sisters' did. There was a pyre for worshipping the gods, but not a huge one. However, the important traditional standards were met: the tika mark was given, the villagers got to see and participate in the wedding, the gods were worshipped, and the parents were happy with the ceremony. Thus, Junu's wedding shows deviation from the strict traditional model while still satisfying all the important traditional criteria.

### Sacred Thread Ceremony

The thread-giving ceremony is still important to Junu's male relatives, but rather than being a symbol of adulthood and its accompanying responsibilities, it has come to be a prelude to the marriage ceremony. Even though religious responsibility is given with the sacred thread, Junu says that her brothers don't perform these duties because they don't believe in that part of the ceremony, only that having the thread proves you're Brahman or Chhetri.

*Junu: My brothers went through the sacred thread ceremony, but not so young. Only before they were married. My parents did that because once you have the sacred thread you have to really follow the duties. You can't eat beef and pork, and you have to do your mantras every morning and every evening, and you have to take your bath.*

*JVM: Do your brothers do that now?*

*Junu: No. I don't think they wear them either. They just had to go through that before they got married. We don't believe in that. Thread proves only that you're Brahman or Chhetri.*

## Menstruation Rituals

The menstruation rituals in Kathmandu and Kalampong are quite different. As Junu states, Kathmandu is more caste conscious than Kalampong. This would appear to be the reason that menstruation is an open subject in Kathmandu; men who wear the sacred thread are worried about being polluted by menstruating women. In Kalampong, traditions of women not handling food and water during menstruation still hold, but traditions pertaining to the pollution of men do not. Menstruating women in Kalampong can pollute food and water, but not people directly.

Later Junu mentions, referring to both the duties associated with the sacred thread and rituals traditionally associated with menstruation, that these rituals are dying out because there is no time to perform them when people have to go to school. This is a definite shifting of priorities. Education is now more important than those rituals.

Nevertheless, it is incorrect to say that religion is no longer as important as education. Rather, the religion has changed, not in its basic tenets, but in the ways in which those tenets are affirmed. It is now entirely possible to be a pious Hindu and strive toward educational and career goals at the same time. This is once again an example of the indigenous Nepalese culture adapting to modernization, while still maintaining its high priority in the lives of the people.

*[I didn't go through the menstruation rituals when I started my period], but my cousin did it, because she was in Kathmandu. She had to go through all this. In Kalampong it's very shameful to let other people know that you're having your period, but in Kathmandu everybody'll know. They say you can't touch this thing and you can't touch that thing and people would ask are you having your period? Which day is it? And it's so bad. I felt so bad the first time I came to Kathmandu and I had to tell my uncle that I was having my period.*

Usually we don't go into the temples, and even in Kalampong we don't cook food and we don't touch many things and we don't go to the worshipping room. You can't touch food or water.

But you never let people know you're having your period. It's really shameful. Even if your brothers ask, they wouldn't know what's wrong. They used to say mommy, why don't you let her do that job. My mother would say no. My brother said I think you are worshipping your daughter and making the sons do it.

My mom would know, but no one else. Especially the men. . . . I think that there are very few now who observe the whole ritual for each period, since it's so impossible. You have to go to school and stuff. . . .

In Kathmandu, you have to tell everybody so people with the sacred thread wouldn't touch you. Touch means you can't sit on same bed. Usually we sit on people's beds 'cause in many cases they don't have living room, with chairs. Or even the carpet, can't sit on same carpet. In many places I don't tell them I have it. I don't feel like it.

### Sari Ceremony and Brother Worship Festival

Junu's following statement is another example of rituals fading out. She also gives evidence to support the argument that education has become more important than these rituals, though not more important than Hinduism itself.

*When I went to college, my sisters made me wear sari. I didn't have ceremony but my sisters did. Before I wore skirts and Indian trousers. . . .*

*Bai tika [brother worship] is big festival in our family. I love this but I've missed it since I got married. It was so fun before all the brothers and sisters got married. At that time the brothers give us presents too.*

*Some of those things, like thread-giving ceremony, and adult clothes, it's kind of fading out, [in Kathmandu too]. . . . In Kathmandu it's given, but it's given in more later years, because that time the boys are going to school, you know, and they can't really observe all these things.*

### Pilgrimage

Further evidence of the abrupt cultural change, between generations, taking place in Nepal is the fact that Junu's parents would like to go on a pilgrimage, but her siblings would not. Though her family is deeply religious, how they observe religious practices differs between the two generations.

JVM: *Did you ever make pilgrimages?*

Junu: *No. The old people believe that if they can do that their lives will be fulfilled.*

JVM: *Do your folks feel like that?*

Junu: *Yeah. Maybe they will go now; they haven't yet.*

JVM: *Do they really care about going?*

Junu: *Yeah. My family is really, you know, religious. Even though they are modern. They know lots of modern things, but they are religious. We worship every night and every morning.*

JVM: *So your mom and dad would want to go on a pilgrimage?*

Junu: *Yeah.*

JVM: *Would your brothers and sisters?*

Junu: *No.*

As Junu states, even though they are religious, the family is also modern. Traditional and modern values seem to meet in Junu's generation and form a culture which is a blend of both, represented by people who worship every night and morning, yet emphasize education and living in a modern world. They combine benefits from both religion and modernization.

### Mourning Ceremony

A religious rite that is still strongly observed in Junu's family is the mourning ceremony. This is not a ceremony that need be

performed continually; therefore, the time involved would not lead to discontinuing its practice, as it has with menstruation rites for example.

*We follow the mourning ceremony. It's really strict in our family still. They don't care if others do it but they really care for our family. 'Cause we believe if we don't give this good mourning ceremony the soul won't lie in peace. If something goes wrong that we do, then the soul will be troubled. We have death anniversary.*

### Changing Values Toward Traditions

In talking about values, Junu makes a point, indirectly, that even though criteria other than caste are needed for high status, those with high caste are usually the ones able to obtain other status indicators. Though today people tend to emulate those with high socio-economic status, they are indirectly emulating Brahmans and Chhetris because they are usually the people able to receive the best education, and thus get the high status jobs associated with wealth and power. The difference is that today it is possible for others to raise themselves into high status positions without having a high caste, though it is still difficult. Before 1951 that opportunity for the lower castes did not exist.

Junu: *But these value kind of things, people learn, people, get their values, adopt their values, from other people. Like now, Chhetris and Brahmans are more educated, they're in upper strata, so other people want to adopt that, so they're losing their traditional values and adopting newer values from upper strata people. . . .*

*Like it was okay [for Tamangs] to have illegitimate child, and divorce, but if the Tamang family is more educated, they would be more like Brahmans and Chhetris. If it's a village Tamang family, uneducated, then they might let the girls go loose, but if the family is educated, the girls don't just go outside like that.*



(Junu, continued)

*These days it's more like socio-economic thing rather than caste you know. Like Brahman and Chhetri, Newar and Tamang too you know. Like, traditional Newar marriage is different than Brahman and Chhetri ceremony, but these days it's getting similar. It's like the upper caste, upper socio-economic people marry this way.*

JVM: *So you're saying that instead of marrying caste they're marrying people from the upper socio-economic areas?*

Junu: *Even the ceremonies goes like that. Ceremony changing too. In traditional Newar marriage the bridegroom doesn't go to the bride's house. Other relatives go to the bride's house and they bring the bride to their house but now with educated people the groom wouldn't like to stay home in his marriage and have somebody else get his bride from her house. So these days even if it's a Newar marriage we always expect to see the groom in the procession.*

JVM: *So it's changing more toward the Brahmins.*

Junu: *Yeah.*

JVM: *Because they're Brahman and Chhetri or because they're upper socio-economic?*

Junu: *I think they're keeping those things which are not acceptable behind.*

JVM: *So socio-economically they're changing?*

Junu: *I think so.*

Another value that is changing is the feeling toward living with the extended family. Junu and Akash want their own house. Then, as Junu says, they may want something else. This appears to be an extension of the feeling that led to the abolition of polygyny. As fewer children are needed to insure that some survive, and people look to the products of industrialization to satisfy their needs, big households become less necessary. People can try to satisfy their own wants and needs, such as building their own house instead of devoting their energies to the whole family group.

Included in this value change are Junu's reasons for not having another child. As an educated woman, she realizes the population problem in Nepal and doesn't want to contribute to it. She also feels another child would slow her down professionally. This, in turn, would inhibit her dreams; for example, it would take much longer to save the money to build a house if she had another baby.

Junu's parents worked hard for her education, and she doesn't want to be constrained in using her education as a tool. Her education has enabled her to secure a professional position which is well-paying and prestigious. Junu's decision not to have another child is further evidence of the importance of occupation among the emerging elite.

*I don't think I can help [village people, hill people who don't have any education and who don't know any English]. . . I do feel they're so ignorant. Well, not ignorant, well, about modern world they are. . . .*

*[I don't think it's too late for Nepal.] How we help is, in many respects we ourselves are helpless. When you're helpless you, maybe you don't even think to help other people. But sometimes you do feel like helping them.*

*We don't know how and I think we all are selfish. We have good salary, okay, but I don't think we are, or, I don't know anybody. Or Akash and me, we think of helping other people. We just want to help ourself first. . . .*

*[We're idealists], but we don't practice it, because we don't have our own house to live in. Maybe when we build a house we'll want something more, I don't know. But if we can build a house and be satisfied with that then it's okay, maybe we can help other people.*

*One thing how we want to help is we've got some books over here. Well, Akash had other ideas about those books but what we want to do before was, compared to other people we have lots of books in Nepal. We wanted to make a kind of library so that other people could come and use those books. We have that kind of ideal compared to our friends.*

*We are really different, Akash and me. When we were working over there we were always buying books and not buying clothes. And Akash's sister said, "Hey you two. Don't you need new clothes? Don't you have to look good in front of other people? You two are book crazy."*

*When I think of my parents' house, they have very few books, they couldn't afford them. Only the textbooks for*

*us. We do feel we are most advantaged. Though we don't have much money, we have education. It's a tool to work. We do feel really lucky. . . .*

*Maybe we don't want to have another baby, 'cause maybe he won't have enough to eat. The things consumed by a new baby could be consumed by somebody else. That's the ideal thinking, that's an excuse. . . .*

*We can't afford to have more kids. Another thing is that since my parents put me in such a position, it's just 'cause of my parents. And if I and Akash, we do well, if we have another kid, then it will be a kind of constraint to my success. If I have a baby, I have to take care of the baby. I have to spend at least 3 or 4 years. I will lag behind. It's not that we don't like the baby; it's that there are other things.*

### Continuing Traditions

The things Junu wants to pass on to her daughter are traditional Nepalese values. Menuka hasn't learned these things because she is being raised in America. Junu knows enough of traditional Nepalese values to act traditionally acceptable, even though she is a modern, professional woman. Her daughter does not. However, once Menuka goes back to Nepal she will learn quickly.

*I would like her to learn things that a Nepalese woman has to learn. Like, there are so many things, you can't tell but there are. It sounds very obscure for Americans. It's different. You can't call your mom or dad by their name, your aunts or uncles or anyone older than you, you can't call them by name. Even if it's younger to you, you call their name but say little brother or little sister, which Menuka doesn't know. She'll learn.*

*And other things; I don't know if I do it myself or not. My mother used to say it's really nice to be soft and calm. Maybe I don't fit over there. Once of my sisters really fits over there. Not me. . . .*

*Over here too I tell Menuka some things, like, a girl doesn't laugh like that, Menuka. . . . Like when she laughs real high, goes wild. Boys are supposed to be really rough and rowdy and girls are not supposed to be like that. It's not really nice. but . . .*

While Junu knows traditional behavior, she doesn't always act accordingly. In addition to calling her husband "equal," she has picked up ways in America that she likes. So she will modify things like wearing pants, wearing them at home, but not in front of Akash's parents. Once again, this is an example of adapting to a foreign culture while maintaining traditional values in another context.

This conflict between traditional and modern behavior is somewhat resolved for Junu because her husband and parents do not adhere to the strict patterns of behavior for women that characterize Nepalese culture in general. Through her family and occupational status she is able to minimize, in her own life, the traditional lower status of Nepalese women.

*Not wearing pants [is going to be hard for me]. Pants are so comfortable. There will be a dress problem.*

*Maybe there will be, I talk with Akash. Even before I came here they didn't like it. I used to call him 'timi' [familiar]. I should have called him 'hazure' or 'tapai' [more honorific]. I call him equal.*

*[He thinks that's okay.] He thinks everything is okay. He's happy about that. Even my mom and dad say, 'Okay, as long as you're happy.' Some of my family even say, 'Oh, you call him by his name?' I call him Akash. That's really not good.*

*[But it's okay between us.] And it's okay for me to wear pants, for Akash. He says, 'Wear 'em.' Doesn't matter. But in Nepal I think I'll wear pants in my home, but I won't wear in front of his parents, but I'll wear in front of my parents.*

### Education

In Junu's grandmother's youth, it was not considered worthwhile to educate women. Since they just got married off and joined another family, parents would not be able to capitalize on their investment with daughters, like they could with sons. Education was not a factor in upward social mobility at that time. In other words, a daughter with an education would not necessarily make a better

"catch" as a bride than a daughter without an education would.

By the time Junu's mother was a young girl, a change had taken place and some girls were sent to school. Still, they didn't need more education than reading and writing. Other cultural values were still much more important than education for women. In Junu's mother's case, being out after dark at a school-related event cost her the rest of her education.

*My mom went to school. That's a great change between my grandmother's time and my mother's time . . . To read and write. Especially in our culture, say, well, daughters don't have to study much. If they can write a letter after they got married and gone to her husband's house. That's what we need. . . .*

*Did I tell you how my mom quit her school? She was studying in class 8, in the same school that I studied, and my step-mother, her own sister, was studying in class 7. They had a concert in the school. It lasted after 7 in the evening, so they came late at home. And their father was so angry that they didn't let my mother and my step-mother go to school from the next day. So if I was in my mother's time I would have to leave my school for such trivial reasons. . . . School wasn't that important.*

Junu, on the other hand, was raised in a household where much emphasis was placed on education. Her parents helped and encouraged her as much as they could academically.

Presently, some rituals, such as those concerning menstruation, have lost their priority as educational pursuits consume more and more time.

Still, old values remain. Junu's parents were willing to send her to college but only where she could be under the watchful eye of male relatives. Even after she had a Master's degree and was teaching college, she still had to tell her parents what time she would be home in the evening, and if it was after dark her brothers would come and get her.

One difference between the past and the present is that instead of restricting women's movement, Junu's family today allows

for such things as coming home late from work. Her relatives act to accommodate the cultural problems that arise from modernization, rather than eliminating its benefits by keeping her at home.

Another interesting note is how the traditional family structure deals with cultural change. The paternal hierarchy still exists, but there are different decisions to be made, such as whether or not to send a daughter away to school, within this traditional structure.

*[My parents wouldn't have kept me out of school for staying out after dark.] . . . They would have scolded me. . . .*

*But when I was working in Kalampong, if I had to be out after dark one of my brothers would come and get me. And I had to tell my parents every day what time I'd be home, and what were my plans. . . .*

*It's circumstances I think, [why I went on to higher school]. Because my parents sent all of us to school, to do good or worse was our own choice or achievement. I was always in top 4 in class. That's one thing that helped me. From 6th to 10th grade I was always first in class. In every exam, so they didn't have to pay my fees. That also kind of helped my parents, well, maybe not much.*

*Well, I think there are two things over there [why I went on to college]. One is my own wish and the other thing's we didn't have college before when my sisters were studying in Kalampong. They didn't want to send especially girls away from home. When I passed my High School, before that we had a college and my brother was going to that college and my parents said why not send your children to college when they can live right at home and go to school. So that happened.*

*But I wanted to study botany. But in the college they had in Kalampong was only arts, no science. In Darjeeling where my other sister was married, my brother-in-law wanted me to stay in his house and go to college in Darjeeling but one of my uncles, he's from Darjeeling too, he came to my parents house and said it's not nice to send your daughters to a place like Darjeeling. They would go more towards fashion and things like that. My father said to me when I passed my High School, they were really really happy. There were few kids passing and was hard too.*

*Now they wanted to send me to college 'cause I was the only daughter studying at the time. My dad and mom said they wanted to talk to me. And my dad said, okay, your uncle says that. What do you think? We're scared to send you away. You forget studying botany. Why don't you study over here whatever you can? I said okay. At that time I never said no.*

*To obey your parents [and to just go to school was more important than studying botany]. . . I don't think I'd ever say no to them. I never thought of that, because they knew that I won't say no. Even then they asked me. They were being nice . . .*

*So I went to college and I took Logic and Economics and Political Science. Logic turned into Psychology and later Philosophy. I did good. After I did my B.A. there was a boy who was above me. I was second. Among girls I was the top in the whole college. Small, 70 or 80 in our batch . . .*

*[I got my M.A.] in Kathmandu. Was about time I finished my B.A. exams. Results take 5 or 6 months, so I was doing nothing. Suddenly my dad got telegram from this aunt of his so he took me over there [to Kathmandu] and we found out that it was time for people to get enrolled in the University. So my uncle took me there and to the principal of the University. My results were not out but I knew I passed so he took me as a provisional student.*

## CHAPTER IV

### CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

#### Conclusions

This thesis deals with one aspect of social change in Nepal, as evidenced in the life history. Contact with the outside world has provided a non-traditional means of achieving access to highly valued occupations among a small elite group of Nepalese. This has resulted in the formation of a new social category, that of an emerging elite, which has achieved high social status through education and occupation rather than having status ascribed them by the traditional criteria of birth and marriage. Social conflict occurs between the traditional elite, trying to maintain their control over society, and this emerging elite, who favor a change in the traditional hierarchy.

Nepal, like India, is a traditional Hindu society undergoing change and social conflict. Conflict in traditional Nepal occurred between the different castes themselves. However, with the introduction of modernization and Western influence, conflict arose between people with traditional views and those who felt they could achieve high status through occupation and education.

Although the traditions of Nepal have existed for centuries, Nepal as a united country did not exist until 1768. The king who united Nepal was able to do so because he gained the respect of the many ethnic peoples of Nepal. In order to keep the country together as an entity, he imposed the Hindu caste system on all the ethnic groups; thus Nepal became a Hindu monarchy while maintaining great ethnic diversity.

In 1846 the Rana family took control of the country. They maintained their control by closing off the country and forbidding



foreigners entry. This lasted until 1951, when power was again restored to the monarchy. Since 1951, Nepal has pursued a policy of modernization, which has had several consequences.

These consequences are manifested in the life history of my informant. Since she was born in 1949, she belongs to the first generation of Nepalese to experience the changes brought on by the impact of modernization. As such, she exemplifies some of the conflicts occurring in Nepal today.

Junu is a member of the emerging elite of Nepal. She comes from a religious family and is of mixed caste, yet she is an educated, professional woman. Thus she experiences, personally, the social conflicts occurring between the traditional elite and the emerging elite in Nepal.

Evidence of this is given in the life history chapter of the thesis. Junu is of mixed caste because her grandfathers were Brahman and Chhetri, while her grandmothers were Tamang and Sunuwar. Although Junu's family is religious, the fact that they worship every night and morning and observe many Hindu rituals, such as the mourning ceremony for the dead, does not necessarily prove this, much as observing Christmas does not make one a Christian. However, Junu says they are religious; she says they believe in what some of the ceremonies stand for, and this is evidence that they are a religious family.

Education is also important in Junu's family. Her parents worked hard to send all of their twelve children to school. They were willing to send all who wished to go to college. Further evidence of the importance of education to Junu's family is that her father wanted her to marry an educated man.

As a member of the emerging elite, Junu belongs to a new social group which no longer considers high caste the only criterion for upward social mobility. Instead, since caste cannot be changed, and education is now open to all castes, members of the new elite can obtain their prestigious occupations on the basis of education alone, without high caste status.

Junu chose to go to college, get a Master's degree, and become a University instructor. This supports the argument that people today can get an education and prestigious occupation on the basis of ability, without ascribed high caste. Before 1951, she would not have been able to get an education, no matter what her ability, because she was of mixed caste.

Other differences are apparent in the pre-1951 and post-1951 eras that lend support to the idea of social change in Nepalese culture. Caste, although still important, appears to be lessening in significance in some aspects of Nepalese life. For instance, Junu's mother will not accept food from low caste people or visit their houses, but Junu will. Also, people no longer ask a person's caste immediately upon meeting them. Though they still ask, it is no longer all-important. Junu states that her grandmother may have passed on traditional caste values to her daughter, but that Junu was not taught as strict a code of behavior as her mother was.

The observance of ceremonies and traditions is also undergoing change. The practice of polygyny has been abolished in a single generation. Junu's father has two wives; people of Junu's generation practice only monogamy. With only one wife, families tend to be smaller and people look to the products of industrialization to fulfill their needs and wants rather than depending on the large extended family. Junu states that education is the main reason people changed to having only one wife, and education was only available to most people after modernization began in 1951.

Marriage is another ritual undergoing change. Junu's marriage ceremony was quite a bit simpler than the traditional ceremony, though it still fulfilled the important religious requirements. Caste was not important in choosing Junu's marriage partner, as long as he was not untouchable. However, it was important that he be an educated man. Junu's and Akash's horoscopes were not consulted to determine if theirs was a good match, the groom's party was made up of only Akash and his father, and Junu stayed in her parents' house several

days after the wedding ceremony, all changes from tradition.

Changes in the sacred thread ceremony and menstruation rituals occur, Junu thinks, because education now takes up a great deal of time that used to be spent performing these rituals. Junu's brothers now perform the sacred thread ceremony only before marriage, rather than as an introduction to manhood. And the women in Junu's family do not avoid men during their periods, as required traditionally. This would be impossible, as Junu says, because they have to go to school. Thus a shift in cultural priorities is evident.

Another shift is the attitude of Junu and her siblings toward pilgrimages, compared to how her parents feel. Her folks want to go on a pilgrimage; Junu states their lives would be fulfilled if they could. However, she says that her siblings don't really care about going on a pilgrimage; apparently pilgrimages hold little religious significance with them. This is another example of value differences between the two generations.

Several other changing values are mentioned in the life history. One is that educated people of various ethnic groups now tend to emulate those with high socio-economic status, rather than follow their own traditions, for instance of marriage. Because they can now receive an education, these people are eligible for prestigious occupations. Since they are upwardly socially mobile, they are taking on the traditions of the prestigious classes as their own. Before education and access to prestigious occupations were available, there was nothing to be gained by this emulation.

Another value that is changing is the attitude toward the extended family. Junu and Akash want to build their own house. This appears to be an extension of the feeling that led to the abolition of polygyny. Included in this value change are Junu's reasons for not having another child. Not only is high population a problem in her country, but having another child would slow her down professionally because she would have to take time out to care for it. These newer attitudes all exhibit a growing away and independence from the

traditional extended family and a leaning toward a more modern, Western attitude.

While Junu and Akash are idealists, Junu is not sure they can actually help their country. Junu doesn't feel the situation in her country is helpless, but she feels somewhat helpless in trying to change conditions herself. She wants to work hard at her profession so she and Akash can get the things they want, but she and Akash also want to help by taking back books and starting a little library so other people can borrow their books. Her attitude toward the future is a combination of Western ambition and Hindu fatalism, an example of coexisting cultural attitudes.

Another example of coexisting traditional and modern attitudes is Junu's attitude toward wearing pants. She likes to wear pants, and plans to wear them in front of Akash and her parents, but not in front of Akash's parents who might be offended by it. In this case she will follow modern styles as long as it doesn't offend anyone. However, in calling her husband by the familiar, she doesn't care if other people mind. It is important enough to be his equal in this sense that she continues the practice even if other people comment on it.

Great changes have taken place in Nepal regarding education. Since 1951, education has not been restricted to the upper castes but has been open to everyone in the country. In Junu's grandmother's youth, it was not considered worthwhile to educate women. By the time Junu's mother was a young girl, a change had taken place and some girls were sent to school, but it was only important for them to learn to read and write. Being out after dark at a school-related event was reason enough to terminate a girl's education.

Junu, on the other hand, was raised in a household where much emphasis was placed on education. Her parents helped and encouraged her as much as they could academically. Education has taken priority over some religious rites such as the sacred thread ceremony and menstruation rituals.

Education has always been the key to prestigious occupations, and thus the power and wealth of society. Now that it is open to all, those who are upwardly socially mobile take advantage of it. Some traditions are sacrificed to make more time for school and studying. People like Junu, members of the emerging elite, get as much education as they can in order to become professors, doctors, lawyers, and other prestigious members of society. They can then not only have power, but can make money to buy material things.

In a traditional society money isn't needed as much as in a modern society because there is very little to buy. However, as industrialization and modernization become more prevalent, and produce consumer goods, people want to make money in order to acquire these things, such as single-family houses and books. Getting a high-paying position will bring in the most money and education is necessary for those occupations; therefore, education becomes important and even replaces some aspects of traditional life.

However, this is not to say that Western influence and modernization are replacing traditional Nepalese values. Much evidence is available in this thesis to determine that traditional values are often stronger than modern values in Nepal today.

Caste, although lessening in importance in some aspects of Nepalese life, is still an important factor in the culture as a whole. Thus, Junu has trouble when people ask her what caste she is because she is mixed. It would be easier for her to be pure caste.

Because caste is still important, Akash's sister-in-law was able to give Junu a hard time about not being pure caste. She would not have been able to tease Junu if the culture did not recognize pure caste as being higher than mixed.

Caste is also important in choosing a spouse, though in a negative way. It no longer matters what caste the intended spouse is, as long as he or she is not an untouchable. Thus, some caste boundaries have broken down while others remain as strong as always.

Although Junu states that her wedding was not very traditional,

this can be taken in the context of not having as big of a wedding as usual and making less of a show of the ceremony. The important traditional criteria were all met; the tika mark was given, the villagers got to see and share in the wedding, the gods were worshipped, and the parents were happy with the ceremony.

The sacred thread ceremony is still important as a prelude to the marriage ceremony. This gives Brahman and Chhetri men full religious responsibility, something still necessary to have in Nepalese culture before one takes a wife.

Some rituals of menstruation are as important today as they were in the past. When Junu and her sisters were menstruating, they were not allowed to touch food or water that was for someone else. Their mother would not allow them to cook or perform other jobs associated with food at that time.

The mourning ceremony is strongly observed in Junu's family. They believe, Junu says, that if they do not give the full mourning ceremony, the soul will not lie in peace and will be troubled. Therefore, the ceremony is performed traditionally.

Although some rituals are losing their priority, old values still remain. Junu's parents were willing to send her to college, but only where she could be near male relatives, and even when she was a college professor she had to tell her parents what time she would be home in the evening. If it was after dark, one of her brothers would get her. This shows the ingrained values of leaving women alone in Nepalese society. It just isn't done, to this day.

The paternal hierarchy still exists in this culture, even though the decisions it has to deal with may be different than in the past. One of the decisions today may be whether or not to send a daughter away to school. The decision is a new one, but it is still the father, in some cases with the mother, who makes the decision, not the daughter.

Thus Nepal, in this thesis, is shown to be a traditional society experiencing social change, brought on by the introduction

of modernization. My informant, Junu, is shown to be a member of the emerging elite of Nepal, an educated woman who has the prestigious occupation of college professor while being of mixed caste.

Caste remains an important factor in Nepalese society today. Before 1951, education was available only to high caste people, and only they could attain prestigious positions, out of which they controlled the power and wealth of their society.

Since 1951, however, education is now open to people of low and mixed caste. In the present, comparatively few low and mixed caste people take advantage of education. The big difference from the past is at least the opportunity is there today. High caste, though still important, is no longer absolutely essential to being educated and achieving prestigious occupations, wealth and power.

Since education is now available to lower and mixed caste people, the benefits of education, such as prestigious occupations, power, and wealth are available to these people as well. Data presented in Junu's life history which show her to be a mixed caste, educated, professional woman who has a prestigious occupation and earns a relatively high salary, amply demonstrates the basic validity of the thesis advanced.

### Implications

This thesis demonstrates the validity of conflict theory (Coser) and the essential complexity of change from the standpoint of cultural participants. While both are important to the overall appreciation of the problem, it appears that the full range of factors can best be understood from the standpoint of the individual as culture is the generalization of individual experiences.

Data analyzed in this research show modernization in Nepal to be a major source of conflict. Important cultural elements are involved, such as family, marriage, ceremonies, and many related values. Thus, conflict in Nepal is readily apparent, not only intergenerationally, but now, between traditionally complementary Hindu castes.

Nepalese with overseas education and experience obtain a special prestige and this appears to allow them to overcome a non-Brahman background.

This thesis focused on education as an important factor of cultural change. It has also shown, however, that other factors are inextricably linked in the cultural change process. Education is indeed important but cannot be considered causal to either conflict or change. The extent of either is not explored in this thesis, but the processes are revealed through one individual's experiences.



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