

Chapter IV

The Social Life of the Workers

In the present chapter, an attempt has been made to show the impact of plantation industry on the social life of the workers and the extent to which the traditional culture has changed in this environment. Here, I have concentrated on the changes that have taken place in the institution of caste, commensal relations, marriage, traditional and modern medical practices, family types and roles, religious practices etc.

THE NEPALI CASTE SYSTEM

The caste system in Nepal had its origin under the influence of Indian caste system. However, it has developed its own characteristic features in course of adaptation with the indigeneous population and diverse culture. The Brahmins locally known as Bahuns were of Indian origin (Dash:1947:20, Kansakar.:1985:1). They had emmigrated to Nepal via western Himalayas during 12th century when the Muslims made their life uneasy in India (Northey and Morris:1976:123). Bista (1980:2) has stated that Brahmins and Rajputs who are said to have come from Kannauj and Chittore first met the Khas, a predominant race of Kuaon hills, Garhwal and western districts of Nepal. Besides, other Bahuns namely Saraswat, Kanya-kubja, Gaud, Mithil and Utkal Bahuns emmigrated to this region from India (Sharma:1982:81-82). Bahuns were of two types, viz., Purbiya and Pachimey. Purbiya means Bahuns who emmigrated from east

of Nepal and Pachimey means who emmigrated from west of Nepal.

Broadly the Bahuns were classified into two hierarchical groups - (a) Upadhaya and (b) Jaisi. Ritually, former held superior position than the later. Later type of Bahuns could not do priestly occupation. However, Jaisis were so because they studied astrology or 'Jyotish' or Joshi which was the errupt form of 'Jyotish' (Sharma:1982:82-83). They were the offsprings of unions of Upadhaya and Kumai men with widows or the descendents of such offsprings.

The early history of Chhetris and Thakuris was obscure. Both the castes claimed their descendents from Khatriya warriors of Indian origin. But the racial characteristics of Chhetris, on the other hand, left no doubt that they had close connection with North Indian population. Most Thakuris, on the other hand, had Mongoloid features and it was likely that they represented a race indigenous to the Nepal hills. There were more than twenty types of Chhetris in Nepal (Bista:1980:5). Even there was a large number of Matwali Chhetris who did not wear the sacred threads in the west and north-west parts of Nepal. The Chhetri was corrupt from of Sanskrit word 'Khatriya' and in Nepal, they were known as Khasas (HMSO:1965:119). This necessitated for the origin of the word 'Khas' which meant 'fallen' caste from Bahuns. It was generally agreed that the Chhetris had one of the most varied origin. There were three probable sources of such origin - (a) Progency of Bahuns with the local women, (b) Converts or descendents from the hill tribes in the process of Sanskritization of the local inhabitants and

(c) Ekharias or descendents of Rajputs and other Khatriyas of the plains who had sought refuge in Nepal and served as 'Military adventurers'.

The term 'Thakuri' refers to 'Thakurs' which was understood to be the ruling chiefs under a common king. Such chiefs were found in plenty till Prithivinarayan Shah consolidated it in 1769. So, anyone could become Thakuri which was generic term describing a group that developed into the highest social and political order out of the selected people from among Khas, Mangars and possibly a few Rajput immigrants from India (Bista:1980:4). There was a group among the Mallas locally known as Thakuris. By the term 'Malla', it was meant for the experts in the warfare. Later on, this term 'Malla' assumed a title which was considered next to Bahun in social status. There were mainly two hierarchical divisions among the Thakuris. The children of a union between a slave girl and a Thakuri was known as Khawas. They adopted kindred of Thakuri but could not marry with them. It was the contentions of Nepali writers that 'Khawas' were considered as one of the clans of Thakuris in Nepal. Thakuris had their military background. They were considered the best recruits in the army.

The Newars were of two types, viz. Shivamargis and Buddhamargis. Corporately, they were known as the descendents of Tibeto-Burman mongoloid group (Hermanns:1954:7, Nepali:1965:27, Northey and Morris: 1976:216, Messerschmidt:1976:1-2, Pradhan: 1978:283-284, Sharma:1982:52, Bista:1980:79). The other castes such

as Rai, Limbu, Yakha, Sherpa, Thami, Tamang, Sunuwar, Bhujel, Yulmus etc. were either Buddhists or Animists in Nepal. Among the Matwalis, Gurungs were next to Mangars who were also mongoloid people emmigrated from the different parts of Tibet. They were first converted into Hindu fold by emmigrants from India in 12th century (Hermanns:1954:13, Chemjong:1966:58).

The Kamis, Damais and Sarkis (occupational castes) seem to be the progeny of Bahuns and Chhetris of the western Nepal but have been relegated for some unsocial behaviour. This system was known as Pani Bara Karnu means to boycott them stating Achhut (untouchables) jats (castes). The Bahuns and Chhetris used to refuse water from their hands (Pradhan:1978:284).

The communities belonging to the eastern Nepal Himalayas and the Terai region played hardly any role in politics of Nepal. They were important to the newly established Gorkhali state solely because of their role as peasants, porters, artisans and tax payers. Contact between the immigrants from India and hill tribes were more intense in the middle region known as Pahar which had remained the matrix of Nepal's history. The people of this zone was known as Paharees or Pahariyas, culturally designated as Nepalis or Gurkhas (Regmi:1971:9, Pradhan:1991:157).

Prior to the unification of Nepal in 1769, there was a separate caste system among the Newars. Jayasthitimalla had with the assistance of Indian Pandits introduced the Newar caste system on the basis of Indian Varna model. The whole Newar population was divided into sixtyfour castes many of which bore the names of

occupation, guilds and tribes. The table No. 25 shows that the Newari caste system was broadly composed of six layers while there was no distinction between Hindu and Buddhist population below the unclean castes. Nepali (1965:149) has, however, clearly admitted the fact that such hierarchy is only tentative that may be disputed from a caste's point of view. For instance, it was believed that the Udhas held highest rank in the valley while Vanras rank below and considered as ascetics.

Table 25

Newari Caste System until 1769

| Sl. No. | | Hindu Newars | Buddhist Newars |
|---------|--------------------|--|---|
| 1. | Priestly Castes | Deva Brahmin | Gubhaju or Bajracharya |
| 2. | High " | Chhatharia Shrestha Panchtharia Shrestha | Vanra or Bare Udhas |
| 3. | Upper Lower Castes | Pahari, Jyapoo | Hale or Guala |
| 4. | Lower Castes | Gathu- Chitrakar or Mamkhoosa Pu(n) or Mali | Cheepa Manandhar- Kow or Ranjitkar Salmi |
| 5. | Unclean Castes | Du(n), Yeeya(n) Bha Kasai Kusle or Jogi | Balami Sanga or Sangal |
| 6. | Untouchable Castes | Pure-Kullu Chyame Hare Haru | - |

*Castes put horizontally have equal ritual status

Source: Nepali:1965:150.

The Newari caste system could not continue after 1769 when Brahmans and Chhetris arrived there from western Nepal. After 1769, a new society emerged on the sub-structure of the Mongoloid and other tribes who were relegated to the status of Sudras (Pradhan: 1991:158). The new caste system was however peculiar in the sense that there was Vaisyas and Sudras besides the existence of the occupational castes like Damais (tailors), Kamis (ironsmiths) and Sarkis (Cobblers) who were regarded as "Untouchables" and hence it was a different from Indian Varna model (Ibid:159).

Hence, prior to 1769, except in case of Newars of Hindus and Buddhists, the basis of hierarchy among the Mongoloid tribes such as Rai, Limbu, Tamang, Gurung, Mangar etc. was more on ethnic, religious and linguistic differentiations. The solitary change brought after 1769 was the creation of horizontal division of the Nepali society based on caste hierarchy.

In the hierarchy, Mangar and Gurung had been given a special status, just below the Thakuri and Chhetri castes. But quite interestingly, even today the internal caste hierarchy of Newars is persisting along with the Nepali caste system. Further, as Rösser (1966:137) says that the existence of Buddhists among the Newars is never an obstacle to the smooth functioning of caste system in Nepal.

To the high caste Hindus, all the Tibeto-Burman speaking groups such as Newars, Rais, Limbus, Mangars, Gurungs, Tamangs, Sherpas etc. fall within the category of Matwali castes, the term

Table 26Caste Hierarchy after 1769

| Sl. No. | Varna | Caste |
|---------|--------------|---|
| 1. | Brahmin | Upadhaya, Kumari, Jaisi, Dev Bhaju (Newar) |
| 2. | Kshatriya | Thakuri, Chhetri, Khatri |
| 3. | Double Order | Mangar, Gurung |
| 4. | Vaisya | Newar High Castes |
| 5. | Shudra | Rai, Limbu, Low caste Newars, Sunuwars, Murmis, Thamis, etc. |
| 6. | Untouchable | Nepali (Kami, Damai and Sarki) and Newar (Chayme, Pore, etc.) |

Source : Nepali : 1965:148.

applied to those who do not wear sacred threads and use liquor. In opposition to the Matwalis, the term 'Tagadhari', means "Those who wear sacred threads" is used (Haimendorf:1966:18). Until the abolishment of slavery in 1926, members of the Matwali castes were liable to be made slaves either by selling them in their childhood or by depriving their freedom as punishment for crime whereas no Brahmin, Thakuri and Chhetri could become as slave unless he had been expelled from his caste on account of a grave offence resulting in permanent pollution.

There was no Caste of true middle status. Brahmin, Thakuri and Chhetri, the twice born among the Parbates rank high above all other communities, while the artisan castes such as Sarkis (shoemakers), Kamis (ironsmiths) and Damais (tailors/musicians) were

untouchables and stand at the bottom of the social scale. The Newar peasants (Jaypus), Gurung, Tamang, Rai, Limbus etc. formed the middle stratum of the Nepali society. There was no untouchables among the tribal groups in Nepal. Sexual intercourses and inter-dining with an untouchable were considered as a grave offence and excommunication was the automatic consequences. Such codes were strictly guarded by the Government patronage.

Despite all these, the caste principles were not strictly adhered to by many castes of Nepal. Only the Gurungs and Mangars adopted the principles of caste system to some extent as they were under the direct influence of Indian emigrants, while the other tribes did not accept the principles (HMSO:1965:62). In spite of the announcement of the Royal Government of Nepal in 1952 about the abolition of discrimination on the basis of caste, religion and language, it continued unaverted for ever.

Caste System in the Plantation

The Nepali caste system of the region under study is quite different from that of the traditional Nepal. However, in certain situations, the distinct social status of a caste can be understood. Such situations are the observance of some customs in relation to marriage and death rituals. The difference between a Rai and a Tamang or a Limbu can be understood in such situations only when they perform their divergent rituals which are borrowed from their traditions and the food habits and food items which they use

compulsorily while practising their rituals as per their prescribed traditions. In the present study, caste is understood as an endogamous, localised and hereditary ritual group. However, my concern in the study is to see the caste composition and commensal relations only in the changing situations among the various castes in the Cinchona plantation. The basis of the classification of the caste hierarchy is very simple as prevailing in the Darjeeling hills today. There are some castes who do not use wine in practising their rituals and some other castes who are to compulsorily use wine in such occasion. Former is known as Tagadhari castes who wear sacred threads and the later is known as Matwalis who do not wear such threads. In other situations, use of wine is an individual phenomenon. A Matwali may not drink wine while a Tagadhari drinks wine.

This is an alternative approach that I have employed in the study of caste system and commensal relations among the various castes in the plantation. Acceptance of food among the Tagadharis and Matwalis is a matter of individual choice. For instance, Jibon Sharma (26 years) was found drunked in the marriage ceremony of Puran Rai, a resident of Mungpoo Cinchona plantation, but Shri N.P. Sharma (86 years), the father of Shri Jibon Sharma, did not take wine and even refused to take meat in the same marriage ceremony. The instance shows that drinking wine depends to a large extent on the personal choice.

Again, referring the question of the problem of identification of the Tagadharis and occupational castes, it can be said that the later group is not Tagadharis and hence they have been conceptualised as Matwalis as they use wine in their ritual ceremonies. The Kamis, Damais and Sarkis might have belonged to the Khas tribes in Nepal when the Rajputs and Brahmins arrived there from India. Their ideology of life and sacrificing of animal blood in some of their rituals were looked down by the Rajputs and Brahmin emigrants from India. Again, they were dissimilar to Gurungs and Mangars (the then dominant tribes of western Nepal) but similar to Chhetri physiogamy. The Kamis, Damais and Sarkis proved that they were the descendents of Thimaha Tagadharis (Chhetris and Thakuris) in Nepal. While the Bahuns do not sacrifice animal blood in practising their rituals both in Nepal and in India. This is an area of continuity of their tradition found mainly among the Jharra Tagadhari Brahmins. While Thimaha Tagadharis sacrifice animal (goat, hen, duck etc.) blood in their rituals. Even if the Kamis, Damais and Sarkis are similar in appearance with the Bahuns and Chhetris due to the impact of Sanskritization process started after the migration of Hindu Bahuns in Nepal, they use wine as part and parcel of food items in the rituals. Without wine their rituals can not be completed.

Immigrating to India, the Kamis, Damais and Sarkis had to change their titles and Gotras to join the Indian army and other employments during the early 19th century. Thus, they adopted Chhetri titles and Gotras after 1857. For instance, the title "Singh" of Chhetris was added by Kami, Damai, Sarki and even by the Lepchas. Similarly, the sub-title "Bahadur" was added to the

castes like Tamang, Rai, Limbu, Newar, Thami, Sunuwar, Sunar, etc. Actually the title "Bahadur" is believed to have been borrowed from Indian Rajputs. Initially, the occupational castes were Animists and Buddhists and later on they were converted into Hindu untouchables. Though Hinduised, their way of performing rituals and Pujas is highly influenced by animistic ethos.

Impact of Hinduism could reach very late in eastern Nepal upto the border areas of Darjeeling district. The inhabitants of these areas were mainly Mongoloids such as Rai, Limbu, Tamang, Gurung, Thami, Mangar, Sherpa, Lepcha etc. The mongoloids did never accept Hinduism and the principles of caste system that was imposed on them. The mongoloid emigrants who came to the plantation were hardly influenced by the Hinduism in Nepal and thus they continued their animistic religious practices. However, such animistic religious practices were latter influenced Buddhism and gradually Hinduism.

The Matwalis did not prefer to accept Hinduism and Brahmanical rites in the plantation. But they accepted the castes like Damais, Kamis and Sarkis into their group so as to make them socially and culturally part and parcel of Matwali group. Socially, like other Matwalis, they also used wine in rituals and ceremonies. Moreover, the concept of untouchability of the past has no meaning today among the Matwalis. Rather, it is found that a Kami, Damai and Sarki feel proud to be such castes.

Caste Hierarchy

The study of Shah (1975:66) clearly shows that despite economic and educational backwardness, the Kshatriyas were still found keen on preserving their traditional caste status. Beteille (1969:59) has taken the status and caste distinctions more or less same, while Berreman's (1967:48) definition unfolds a new dimension in an understanding of caste-cultural distinctions leading to the differential evaluation, rewards and association. Gaige (1975:11) defines caste in the ritual terms of purity and pollution (repulsion, hierarchy and hereditary specialisation). Dumont (1972:57) regards caste in terms of separation, division of labour and hierarchy. He has translated these central features into his model of binary opposition-purity and pollution. Hutton (1935:57) has provided seven criteria-endogamy, rules for commensality, hierarchical grading of castes, pollution, association with traditional occupation, determination of status by birth and prestige accorded to the Brahmins. Beteille (1969:46-47), while studying the Tanjore village, south India, contends that caste system is characterised by segmentation of several orders. In the present study, I have used the caste in ritual sense.

The caste hierarchy in the Nepali society is not as rigid as found in India. However, it is a question of degree than the structural configuration (Hitchcock:1978:112). Discussing the Nepali caste hierarchy, Haimendorf (1966:22) has classified it into three groups, viz. High, Middle and Low castes. The castes like Bahun, Chhetri and Thakuri form high castes, while the

Matwalis such as Rai, Limbu, Tamang, Bhujel, Thami, Gurung, Mangar, Newar, Sherpa, Lepcha etc. occupy the middle stratum and the untouchable castes like Kami, Damai and Sarki are kept at the bottom. Caplan (1970:70-71) has conceptualised a three tier classification of Nepali society into Tagadhari, Matwali and Untouchable castes. The twice born Bahuns, Chhetris and Thakuris comprise the Tagadhari castes while the Mongoloid castes form the Matwali group and the occupational castes form the untouchable group. Haimendorf (1966:18) has, however, classified the Nepali society into Tagadhari and Matwali considering the changing situations in Nepal after 1926. In 1926, the slavery was virtually abolished in Nepal. Similarly, Caplan (1970:70) states that such three tier classification of Nepali society had more meaning till 1963 in Nepal. Further, he asserts that 'each of these castes (Matwali) assign itself a position in the hierarchy not always in accord with the position it is assigned by other groups so that it is generally accepted that drinking castes rank below the twice born group in the ritual hierarchy, now the former are arranged in a matter of some uncertainty' (Ibid). Such uncertainty of Matwalis in the hierarchy is reflected in the present study. However, Tagadhari-Matwali classification of Nepali society appears to have significant meaning here in the plantation society. Yet, there is some cleavages among all the Matwalis and Tagadharis.

The Nepali caste system with distinct occupational hierarchy emerged after 1769, was possible simply by following the instances

already shown by the Newari caste system since Jayasthitimalla (Rosser:1966:85). This is shown in the following table 27.

Table 27

Newari Caste and Occupational Hierarchy upto 1769

| | Caste | Traditional Occupation |
|-----|--------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. | Deo Brahmin | Family Priests |
| 2. | Bhatta Brahmin | Temple Priests |
| 3. | Jha Brahmin | Temple Priests |
| 4. | Gubhaju Brahmin | Family Priests |
| 5. | Bare | Gold and Silver Smiths |
| 6. | Shrestha (Sheshya) | Merchants |
| 7. | Uray (Udhas) | Merchants/Craftmen |
| 8. | Jyapu | Farmers |
| 9. | Kuma | Potters |
| 10. | Saymi | Oilpressers |
| 11. | Khusa | Plaque Bearers |
| 12. | Nau | Barbers |
| 13. | Kau | Blacksmiths |
| 14. | Bha | Funeral Duties |
| 15. | Gathu | Gardeners |
| 16. | Tepe | Cultivators |
| 17. | Pum | Painters |
| 18. | Duhim | Carriers |
| 19. | Balami | Fieldworkers |
| 20. | Pulu | Funeral Torch Bearers |
| 21. | Cipa | Dyers |
| 22. | Jogi | Musicians and Tailors |
| 23. | Nay | Butchers and Musicians |
| 24. | Kulu | Drum makers, fishermen and Sweepers |
| 25. | Pore | Fishermen and Sweepers |
| 26. | Chami | Sweepers |
| 27. | Halahululu | Sweepers |

Source: Rosser:1966:85-86.

The table 27 reveals the fact that the entire Newari society was basically bisegmental in occupational hierarchy. Further, Rosser (Ibid) asserts that mainly the last six Newar castes among them were occupationally subordinates to other higher castes. Such a binary classification of Newari caste hierarchy might have opened conceptual path for forming a general Nepali caste system after 1769 into Tagadharis and Matwalis with distinct occupations. Further, on the basis of this occupational hierarchy, Caplan (1970) and Haimendorf (1966) contend that a peculiar form of occupational hierarchy was established later on in Nepal. This can be evident from the following table 28.

Table 28

Nepali Caste and Traditional Occupation

| Sl. No. | Caste | Traditional Occupation |
|---------|-------------------------------|--|
| 1. | Bahun | Priests |
| 2. | Chhetri | Warriors |
| 3. | Thakuri | Aristocrats |
| 4. | Newars | Businessmen |
| 5. | Rai, Limbu, Yakha, Mangar, | Agriculturists |
| 6. | Thami, Sunuwar Gurung | Shepherds |
| 7. | Tamang | Horse traders/Cavaliers |
| 8. | Bhujel | Beaten rice makers/ phanquin bearers |
| 9. | Jogi | Ascetics |
| 10. | Yolmu | Paper Makers |
| 11. | Sherpa | Porters |
| 12. | Sunar | Goldsmiths |
| 13. | Kami | Ironsmiths |
| 14. | Damai | Tailors/Musicians |
| 15. | Sarki | Cobblers |

The above table 28 requires a bit explanation. So far as the occupational status of the Bahuns was concerned, only the Upadhaya group could practice priesthood and Jaisi group of Bahuns could simply do the works on astrology. Excepting a Bahun who does priestly occupation, all the Bahuns are the plantation workers who do not at all involve in priesthood as the means of their livelihood. Here, the priesthood holds a low social status among the plantation workers.

The Chhetri is said to be a warrior caste. So, they were supposed to join army and police services in Nepal. The traditional occupation of the Chhetris as warriors is to a certain extent continuing today as many of them of this plantation have been found working in army and police department. Mainly they are found in 9th Gurkha Regiment of Indian army. The traditional occupation of the Thakuris as aristocrats is uncommon today in the plantation.

The traditional occupation of the Newars was businessmen. Today except a few families, all are engaged in the various works of the plantation.

The agricultural castes such as Rai, Limbu, Mangar, Thami, Sunuwar etc. are no more agriculturists though they cultivate vegetables and domesticate cattles in the plantation. Traditionally, the Gurungs were shepherds who are today plantation workers. The horse trading as the occupation of the Tamangs is also not found today in the plantation. The Bhujels have totally abandoned their traditional occupation of rice making and planquin bearing or working as slaves. The Jogis were ascetics but today rarely engage themselves

in this occupation. Traditionally, the Sherpas were porters, Yulmus were paper makers, Lepcha were shifting cultivators who are no more cling to their traditional occupation. The Sunar were goldsmiths, Kamis were ironsmiths, Sarkis were cobblers and Damais were tailors/musicians. But today they are plantation workers.

Hence, the Nepali caste system has undergone changes after it has settled down in the Cinchona plantation. The ascriptive criteria of caste characterised by restriction in commensality and hereditary occupation do not affect the plantation life though the institution of caste system continues in a loose form. However, having an industrial set up, the interaction among the plantation workers is affected and it transforms the social life to a considerable extent, commensal relation, marriage type etc.

Table 29

Caste Hierarchy in the Plantation

| | Status | Caste |
|-----------|---------|---|
| Tagadhari | Jharra | Bahun |
| | Thimaha | Chhetri, Thakuri, Bihari |
| Matwali | Setho | Mangar, Gurung, Newar, Tamang, Rai, Limbu, Bhujel, Sunuwar, Thami, Sherpa, Lepcha, Dukpa |
| | Kalo | Kami, Damai, Sarki |

The above table 29 shows that there are two groups, viz., Tagadhari and Matwali. The Tagadhari has been further sub-divided into Jharra and Thimaha. Similarly, the Matwali has sub-divided into Setho and Kalo. There is no Jaisi Bahun in the plantation. In the caste hierarchy, Bahuns are at the top. The caste like Chhetri, Thakuri and Bihari are below the Bahuns as they belong to Kshatriyas. The Thakuris had superior status in the traditional society but here they have been merging with the Chhetris and called themselves as Thakuri-Chhetri or Chhetri-Thakuri. Here both Chhetris and Thakuris are categorised as Thimaha (impure) Tagadharis because they can not wear sacred threads with nine strings. Secondly, to the Jharra (pure) Tagadharis, they are closer to the Matwali ways of life since they sacrifice animal (hen, goat, duck etc.) blood. The Tagadharis have been found to have done certain rituals such as Sradha ceremony in which the ancestors are worshipped with vegetarian food and religious hymns of the Bahuns. This ceremony is done once or twice in a year.

The internal hierarchy in terms of occupational status of Newars as shown by Rosser (1966:86) in Nepal valley is not found among the Newars of the plantation. Rather, they have a corporate title known as "Pradhan" and they employ Bahuns in their rituals. The Newars along with Gurung, Mangar, Tamang, Rai, Limbu, Thami, Lepcha, Sherpa, Bhujel, Sunuwar, Dukpa, etc. have formed a corporate group which is known as Setho Matwali castes. They have been conceptualised as Setho as they belong to Mongoloid group with Tibeto-Burman dialects.

The traditional occupational castes have been conceptualised corporately as Kalo Matwalis. They were also known as tribes even upto 1950 in the region. In this respect, Dash (1947:65) has rightly stated that the Kalo Matwalis (Kami, Damai and Sarki of Darjeeling District) were tribes along with Mangar, Gurung, Rai, Limbu, Sunuwar, Yakha, Gharti, Sherpa, Bhujel, Lepcha, Dukpa etc. though they differed from other tribes in socio-cultural and religious spheres. Now they along with the Setho Matwalis have formed the Matwali category in the plantation. The occupational castes of Nepal are not the occupational castes in the plantation in the traditional sense. They along with other castes are simply the workers of the Cinchona plantation industry at Mungpoo. Another reason for having such a classification is that the Kalo Matwalis perform anti-Brahmanical rites though they celebrate Dasai, Tiwar and other Hindu festivals.

Unlike in Nepal, every caste claims its superiority over the others. Even a Rai claims superiority over other castes like Mangar, Gurung, Newar or Tamang. Similar opinion was raised by the other Matwali castes. But all the Matwalis accepted the fact that Bahun-Chhetri are the highest castes in the plantation.

Above all, there was a confusion among all the castes, especially among the Matwalis about the clear distinction of caste status among themselves. None of the castes understand well about the Varna classification scheme (Wiebe and Marriappen:1979:71). The background behind this was that the Matwalis were the critics of Varna system in Nepal and in the region under the study. Such criticism is still in vogue among the Matwalis which has resulted

into the formation of strong Matwali group leaving the minority Tagadharis on the other of the Nepali society.

Another criteria of the present classification of the Nepali society in the plantation is based on the nature of food items used in the ritual practices. If we classify it from the ritual point of view alone, then it will be an oversimplified classification as each caste has a number of rituals much above the rituals of the other castes. Therefore, I have conceptualised the caste hierarchy based on Tagadhari and Matwali traditions. The former are vegetarians and the later are non-vegetarians though both the groups are predominantly Hindus. The Kalo Matwalis are also greatly influenced by the tribals.

But, on the other hand, the ritual status is a group phenomenon and an individual cannot change the status just by merely changing his occupational environment from the agrarian structure to the plantation industrial structure. This is found more among the Kirantis (Rai and Limbu) who considered themselves as the descendents of great Hindu Lord Shiva though this concept has nothing to do with the Kiranti Christians but they have not either been able to completely forget their respective caste titles.

The rest of the Matwalis are either Buddhists or Animists. Among the Animists, Lepchas have converted themselves into Buddhism and Christianity and left their traditional religion. Even then the Lepchas have not been able to change their caste titles. Similarly, the other castes such as Sherpa, Dukpa, Thami, Tamang (Buddhists) are continuing with their respective caste titles. In this way, the

institution of caste is still persisting among all the castes in the plantation. Only the mechanism of the caste system appears to have been weakly operated. To a Bahun, the Matwalis and untouchables are more or less same in the social parlance of Nepal where the Matwalis and untouchables are considered as Sudhras. To him, this might be reason why Setho and Kalo Matwalis have been aligned together into a corporate group. In other words, they are equated with Sudhras (Setho Matwalis) and Harijan (Kalo Matwalis) of the Indian society though there is no Harijan caste in Nepal, excepting among the Newars such as Chami, Pore and Halahulu (Rosser:1966:86).

After migration of the Tagadhari Nepalis in the plantation during 1940's, the concept of caste Dhuras (lines) has been changing. Today in every Dhura all castes are living together. In spite of their preference for holding Khetland in the respective caste Dhuras, they have to stay in Dhuras which are provided by the management who allot the Khetland considering the interests of the plantation industry.

Caste specificities in the mannerism, occupation and dress as found in Nepal have never been generally observed (Wiebe and Marriappen:1979:72) in the plantation. The traditional dress patterns of the various castes cannot be seen today except in times of some cultural programmes such as Bhanu Jayanti, Deokota Jayanti etc. displayed in the Rabindra Labour Welfare Centre, Mungpoo. The changes in the attitudes have accompanied the other changes that have taken place (Ibid:73). The attitudes towards the plantation

works as the source of livelihood, help the workers not to differentiate a Kami worker from a Bahun worker.

Many claimed that Bahun and Chhetri as priests and landlords were known as Batho Jats (Cunning castes) and the Matwalis as Latho Jats (Innocent castes). But here it is found that 95% of the Matwalis are economically better off than the Tagadharis. Theoretically, it was presumed that the Tagadhirs were the owners of better land and they used to stay in better places connected by roads and other means of transportation in Nepal. But in the plantation, it is observed that Tagadhari castes are staying in large number in Rambhi division (6 km. away from proper Mungpoo Directorate). They are considered as Sukumbashis (recent settlers) while the Matwalis claim themselves as Raithanees (early settlers).

In the leadership structure also, it is the Matwalis who have occupied the upper echelon of the trade union organisations. Hence, there is a negative correlation between the occupation and caste structure in the plantation. The higher castes have occupied the lower occupations in the plantation system. Occupationally, the Kalo Matwalis are in higher posts than the Setho Matwalis and Tagadharis in the Cinchona plantation.

Caste and Commensal Relations

From the traditional point of view, the Nepalis can be divided into two groups, viz. (a) Pani-Chal-Ne-Jats or "castes from which water can be taken" and (b) Pani-Na-Chal-Ne-Jats or "castes

from which water can not be taken". The former castes were known as Chhut and later castes were known as Acchut. The Tagadharis and Setho Matwalis constitute the former category and Kalo Matwalis constitute the later respectively.

The "Pani-Chal-Ne-Jats" and "Pani-Na-Chal-Ne-Jats", however do not carry much meaning among the plantation workers especially among the Setho Matwalis as they have to work together every day in the plantation. The Paniwalas (water suppliers) like Smt. Punam Barailly. Kanchi Kamini, Gore Lohar etc. are Kalo Matwalis who supply drinking water to all the workers irrespective of their caste, creed and sex backgrounds. These workers were untouchables in Nepal, but here it can not be said this. Similarly, there is a Rotiwala (refreshment supplier) who is a Muslim man. Even in the situation of emergency oldmen and women are also found to take refreshment from this Muslim Rotiwala.

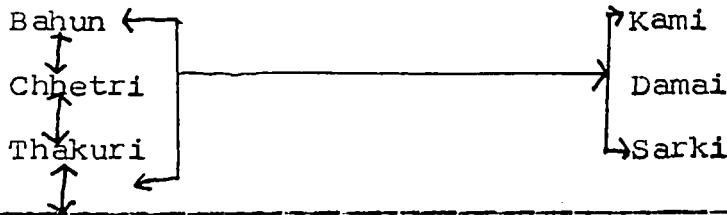
Thus, the concept of untouchability has also undergone a drastic change. However, the following table 30 has been prepared on the basis of traditional type of commensal relations in regard to "Water" in Nepal.

Table 30

Caste Relations Regarding "water" in Traditional Society in Nepal

Pani-Chal-Ne-Jat (Chhut)

Pani-Na-Chal-Ne-Jat (Acchut)



Newar, Rai, Limbu, Yakha, Gurung, Mangar, Tamang, Jogi, Bhujel, Yolmu, Thami, Sunuwar, Sherpa, Lepcha, Dukpa etc.

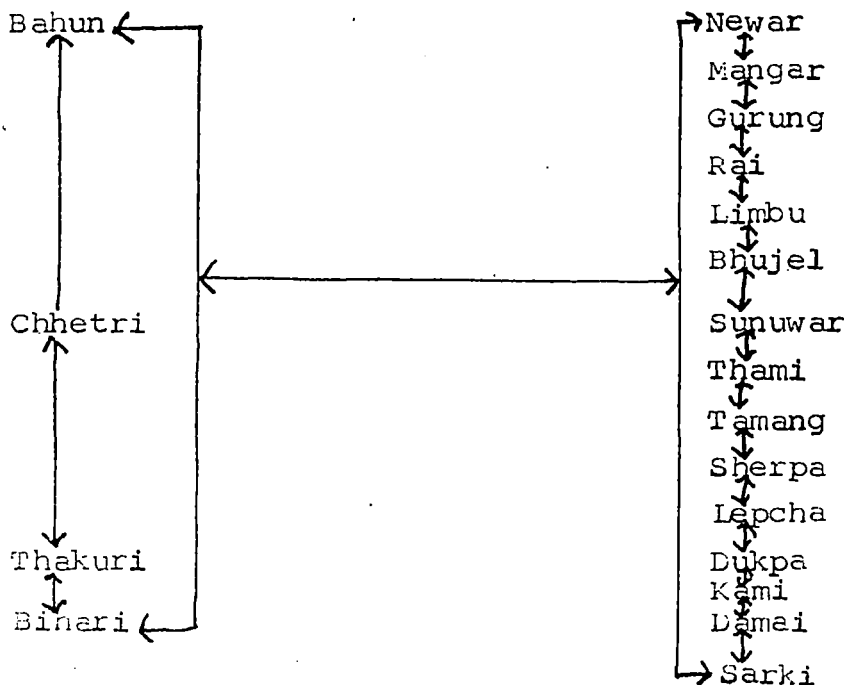
There was no exchange of water between Pani-Chal-Ne-Jats (Chhut) and Pani-Na-Chal-Ne-Jat (Acchut). According to the system, the Tagadhari and Matwalis (Sudhras) could exchange water from each other.

Table 31

Caste Relations Regarding "Water" in the Plantation

Tagadhari (Batho Jats)

Matwalis (Lato Jats)



The commensal relations between the Tagadharis and the Matwalis in respect of "water" is not restricted in the plantation. It was observed that a Bahun lady used to receive help from a Kamini (ironsmith) while taking drinking water from the same tap which was provided by the management. The instance proved that the commensal relation is not restricted between the Tagadharis and Kalo Matwalis. Again, it is observed that the acceptance of Puccka food and water from Kalo and Setho Matwalis is not prohibited to Bahuns and Chhetris in the plantation. This is a changed situation from that of Nepal. Only the Jharra Tagadharis who do priestly occupation, do not take water *and* puccka food from the Kalo Matwalis. But the acceptance of puccka food (made of boiled water and salt) from Kalo Matwalis depends on the age, occupation and educational factors. No Bahun could accept such foods from the untouchable castes (now Kalo Matwalis). But now it is rather an ideal picture. In reality, it is not so in the plantation.

Thus, in the plantation, though there is a relaxation for water and puccka foods but so far as the kaccha food is concerned, there is some continuity of purity and pollution. No Kalo Matwali (Untouchable) can distribute cooked rice, dal etc. to the Tagadharis and Setho Matwalis in times of observing the rituals such as marriage and death ceremonies. Hence the traditional concept of purity and pollution in relation to puccka food is not found in the plantation while some continuities are observed in regard to kaccha foods mainly among the Tagadharis. A Chhetri is purer than a Rai but within the Chhetris, Jharra Chhetri is purer than the Thimaha Chhetri like Roka, Pandey, Giri etc. But Chhetri is less

pure than Bahun. The concept of commensality and its rules vary from plantation to plantation. For instance, a separate dining arrangement had been done for the untouchable castes (Kalo Matwalis) and Setho Matwalis in a marriage ceremony held in the house of Dhanapati Sharma (65 years) in Rambhi division while in Mungpoo and Resep divisions no such arrangement were found on such occasions.

The older people usually do not visit others' house except in formal occasions. Even if they go, they are found to be conscious about the caste background of the hosts. While among the young people such consciousness were not found in visiting others' houses. Shri Kharanandha Sharma has a daughter-in-law who is a Newar. The daughter-in-law along with her husband Shri Parsuram Sharma are staying in the same house but with a separate kitchen for Shri Kharanandha Sharma and his wife, Smt. Laxmi Sharma (Pradhan). The Newar lady is found supplying puccka food, tea and water to her father-in-law and mother-in-law. This is the very reason why separate kitchen has been made for Kharanandha Sharma and his wife. A Bahun Girl is kept in the house to supply Kuccha food to the father-in-law and the mother-in-law. While such commensal relations are laxily observed among the Matwalis. Shri Santabir Rai has only a Tamang daughter-in-law at home and his son is in army at Goa. Shri Rai and his wife, Smt. Lacchi Raini have been served by their daughter-in-law for years together including cooking foods, worshipping family idols every morning and evening.

The binary classification of Nepali society into Pani-Chal-Ne-Jats and Pani-Na-Chal-Ne Jats has very fastly converting into Thulo Jats (higher castes) and Sano Jats (lower castes) in the plantation. But here, the purity-pollution classification of Dumont's binary model (1972:81-82) can be partially supported as Sano Jats and Thulo Jats. But it is not the bipolar division exclusively based on the purity-pollution model alone as even among the Tagadhari Bahuns, there are two groups, viz., Upadhaya and Jaisi. Former feel purer than the later. Similarly, Thakuris feel purer than the Chhetris and vice-versa. Corporately, the Tagadharis feel that the Matwalis are Sano Jats. But interestingly the Tagadharis are accepted as Thulo Jats by all the Matwali castes in the plantation.

Similarly, among the Matwalis, Newars feel that they are Thulo Jats. While Mangar claims that they are Thulo Jats among the Matwalis because they practice the similar type of rituals which are performed by Bahuns and Chhetris. They observe thirteen days mourn in case of death of a family member similar to those of the Bahuns and the Chhetris. Similar idea has also been shared by other Matwali castes (Kalo and Setho) in the plantation.

Maintenance of strict commensal rules is somewhat embarrassing and inconvenient too. For instance, in a ritual ceremony held at Harkaman Chhetri's house in Resep division, people like Debi Bahadur Barailly (Kami), Kumar Thapa (Chhetri), Rabi Rai, Pasang Tamang, Harka Barailly. M.M. Thakuri and Shyam Dakhal (Bahun) took Kuccha food at the same table. No separate sitting arrangement was made for the Tagadharis and Matwalis.

Only a separate Shed had been made for those who wanted to drink wine. Here, I saw excepting Shyam Dakhal all of them went to the Shed and took Jnar (local wine). This shows that even the Chhetris and Thakuris have been accustomed to drink Jnar in the various occasions. According to Thapa and Thakuri (Thimaha Tagadharis), the Bahuns also take Jnar though they are found somewhat conscious of their caste status and therefore, they do not come forward to drink wine openly. To them, the concept of Rashiloo (enjoyable) in celebrating ceremonies, Jnar or wine is wanted by all people irrespective of caste backgrounds. Otherwise, they feel Khaloo (Monotonous) in such occasions.

However, the concept of purity-pollution is reflected to some extent mainly among the Tagadharis only. If a Bahun dies only his kins can touch the deceased's body. In such occasion, no Matwali and Thimaha Tagadharis can touch the dead body while it is inside the house and no snack and tea can be supplied by the members of the deceased family and kins to the attendants. The same is also found in case of other Matwali castes till the dead body is inside the house. But once the dead body is taken outside the house, there is no such restriction. Even a Kami carries the Bahun's dead body to the crematorium.

Finally, it can be said that to accommodate all the castes and tribes in observing rituals and ceremonies without making separate dining arrangement which requires sufficient time, money and energy, only paccka foods such as Shell Roti, vegetables, tea, snack, cold drinks etc. are prepared today. Simply the immediate

kins are dined inside the house if the space for sitting arrangement is limited in the courtyard. Similarly, all the invitees can not be dined together at a time inside the house, as the size of the household is quite small.

From the above contention, it reveals the fact that traditional type of commensal relation is no more in vogue except in certain special situations. Due to this reason, the whole Tagadhari or Brahmanical rites have been in contrast to the Matwalisation process. To avoid the overwhelming Matwali liquor culture, very recently a Pranami Dharma Temple, a sect of Hindu religion, has been established at Mungpoo by Bahuns, Chhetris, a few Mangars and Gurungs. They claim themselves as the followers of Lord Krishna. Locally, they are known as Sadhus who are not supposed to take Jnar, meat and other intoxicant liquor but do not distinguish between Bahuns and Matwalis including Kalo in their socio-economic relations. For instance, marriages between Kamis and Bahuns belonging to the Pranami sect take place.

FAMILY

Traditionally, the peasants and landless agricultural workers had joint families in Nepal and Sikkim. Thus, the family was patriarchal which was consisted of a man, his wife or wives, unmarried children, married sons with their wives and children (Haimendorf:1966:42). Thus, normally, the family used to be of joint type consisting of large number of members. In the present analysis, the term 'family' denotes a group of persons who live

together in the same house whether related or not. The family is therefore understood in terms of the definition of the Plantation Labour Act, 1951 which states that a family is consisting of worker's wife, or wives, dependents, father, mother, father-in-law or mother-in-law etc. The plantation workers, except a few, do not have their cultivable land and own house. Whichever land they are found to cultivate are possessed by the plantation. The workers are not allowed to build private houses on this land. The plantation according to its principle provides small residential quarters to its workers. This quarters can accommodate only nuclear family. In reality, the workers sometimes are found to live with more members. Taking this reality into account, the present study has planned to classify the family into nuclear and joint type. The nuclear family denotes a family composed of the parents and unmarried children. Even if a boy or girl of a family who gets a regular job in the plantation, she or he is not provided with any separate house and khetland till he or she is married. But on the moment she or he is married, a separate house is provided.

The joint family denotes a family consisting of parents of a couple, unmarried brothers, sisters, father-in-law, mother-in-law, married sons, daughters-in-laws, grandsons and grand daughters. However, no married daughters unless divorced is found in the households of the workers in the plantation. It is simply on the ground that unlike the traditional system, both sons and daughters are treated as equal partners of the ancestral property in the legal sense of the term even after their marriage. And the divorced daughters are provided with the share of the property of

Table 33
Caste and Family Type

| Status | Sl. No. | Caste | Nuclear | % | Joint | % | Total | % |
|--------|---------|---------|---------|------|-------|------|-------|-------|
| T | 1. | Bahun | 82 | 64.6 | 45 | 35.4 | 127 | 100.0 |
| A | 2. | Chhetri | 73 | 59.3 | 50 | 40.7 | 123 | 100.0 |
| G | 3. | Thakuri | 1 | 50.0 | 1 | 50.0 | 2 | 100.0 |
| A | 4. | Bihari | 1 | 50.0 | 1 | 50.0 | 2 | 100.0 |
| D | | | | | | | | |
| H | | | | | | | | |
| A | | | | | | | | |
| R | | | | | | | | |
| I | | | | | | | | |
| M | 5. | Newar | 28 | 62.2 | 17 | 37.8 | 45 | 100.0 |
| A | 6. | Mangar | 15 | 71.4 | 6 | 28.6 | 21 | 100.0 |
| T | 7. | Gurung | 11 | 64.7 | 6 | 35.3 | 17 | 100.0 |
| W | 8. | Rai | 200 | 64.1 | 112 | 35.9 | 312 | 100.0 |
| A | 9. | Limbu | 94 | 71.2 | 38 | 28.8 | 132 | 100.0 |
| L | 10. | Bhujel | 7 | 87.5 | 1 | 12.5 | 8 | 100.0 |
| I | 11. | Sunuwar | 1 | 33.3 | 2 | 66.7 | 3 | 100.0 |
| | 12. | Thami | 2 | 66.7 | 1 | 33.3 | 3 | 100.0 |

Contd..

The table No. 33 indicates that except Sunuwar, all other castes of both Tagadhari and Matwali groups have 50.0% of the nuclear families. The change in the type of families in the plantation from the traditional joint family to nuclear family is common for both the Tagadharis and Matwalis. The case of Sunuwar family composition do not carry any meaning as there are only three such households of which one is nuclear and two are joint type. On the whole, such figure does not carry any significant meaning. It shows that individually all the castes from the Tagadharis and Matwalis have been adapted and adjusted to the plantation system. Jayaraman (1975:128) is correct since he has stated that under this arrangement, each family finds it more convenient to have a separate establishment.

The table No. 34 exhibits that more than 50.8% of the families of the plantation workers have an average of 6 members. The size of their families having 9 members is a general pattern. The reason for having 6 members on the average is due to the accommodation facilities provided by the management. In the traditional society before coming to the Cinchona plantation, the size of the family was much bigger. But since the second half of fifties of the present century, the surplus population of the plantation from every Dhura was ousted by the management under the system of Hatta Bahira. The process continued even upto the late sixties of the present century. In the process, only the required number of families were kept at Mungpoo and the management provided the housing facilities as per the provisions of the Plantation Labour Act, 1951.

Table 34
Caste and Family Size

| Group | Status | Caste | Singe Member | 2-3 Members | 4-6 Members | 7-9 Members | 10+ | Total |
|-------|---------|---------|-----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|------------|-------|
| T | Jharra | Bahun | 1 (0.9%) | 12 (9.4%) | 60 (47.2%) | 41 (32.3%) | 13 (10.2%) | 127 |
| A | Thimaha | Chhetri | - | 21 (17.1%) | 56 (45.5%) | 31 (25.2%) | 15 (12.2%) | 123 |
| G | | Thakuri | - | - | - | 2 (100.0%) | - | 2 |
| A | | Bihari | - | - | 1 (50.0%) | 1 (50.0%) | - | 2 |
| D | | | | | | | | |
| H | | | | | | | | |
| A | | | | | | | | |
| R | | | | | | | | |
| I | | | | | | | | |
| M | Setho | Newar | 1 (2.2%) | 4 (5.9%) | 26 (57.8%) | 10 (22.2%) | 4 (6.9%) | 45 |
| A | | Kangar | - | 6 (28.6%) | 10 (47.6%) | 4 (19.0%) | 1 (4.8%) | 21 |
| T | | Gurung | - | 2 (11.8%) | 12 (70.6%) | 1 (5.9%) | 2 (11.8%) | 17 |
| W | | Rai | 3 (1.0%) | 39 (12.5%) | 146 (46.8%) | 96 (30.8%) | 28 (9.0%) | 112 |
| A | | Limbu | 2 (1.5%) | 22 (16.7%) | 72 (54.5%) | 31 (23.5%) | 5 (3.8%) | 132 |
| L | | Bhujel | - | 1 (12.5%) | 6 (75.0%) | 1 (12.5%) | - | 8 |
| I | | Sunuwar | 1 (33.3%) | - | 2 (56.7%) | - | - | 3 |
| S | | Thami | - | - | 2 (56.7%) | 1 (33.3%) | - | 3 |
| | | Tamang | - | 12 (13.6%) | 55 (62.5%) | 16 (18.2%) | 5 (5.7%) | 88 |
| | | Sherpa | 2 (6.1%) | 5 (15.2%) | 16 (48.5%) | 10 (30.0%) | - | 33 |
| | | Lepcha | 3 (3.7%) | 13 (15.9%) | 35 (42.7%) | 19 (23.2%) | 12 (19.6%) | 82 |
| | | Dukpa | - | 4 (22.2%) | 10 (55.6%) | 3 (16.7%) | 1 (5.6%) | 18 |
| | Kalo | Kami | - | 5 (13.2%) | 23 (60.5%) | 8 (21.1%) | 2 (5.3%) | 38 |
| | | Damai | 1 (6.2%) | 1 (5.2%) | 12 (75.0%) | 1 (6.2%) | 1 (6.2%) | 16 |
| | | Sharki | - | - | 1 (100.0%) | - | 1 | 1 |
| | Total | | 14 (1.3%) | 147 (13.7%) | 544 (50.8%) | 277 (25.9%) | 89 (8.0%) | 1071 |

Thus, the present trend is towards the medium size families ranging its strength from seven to nine members.

Another reason for the increase of family size during the two decades is due to the introduction of casual system of labour employment. According to this system, families comprising of four to six members is considered to be a standard unit. If his/her household is increased by one more member in the next year, an additional employment is expected next year from the plantation though it may be of a casual type. In the table No. 34, it is seen that the percentage of 4 to 6 and 7 to 9 member households is very high among all the castes. But quite interestingly, the percentage of families having ten and above is very low, i.e. 8.3% only.

The family life of the workers is centred around the plantation. Right in the early morning, male, female and kids get up. Females prepare breakfast for the family members and after breakfast they go for their respective works. There is no strict compartmentalised division of the roles among the family members as of the past in the plantation. The household works are consisting of cultivation of Khetland, rearing of cattle stocks, looking after the small kids and preparation of foods etc. are done by all the members of the families irrespective of sex and age. Such roles were highly compartmentalised in the traditional society.

It is also revealed from the table No. 34 that the families having 4 to 6 members are monogamous type. Hence, the monogamy is the common feature of the plantation society. The polygamous families with more than two wives are not found among the plantation workers

though it was very common in traditional society. Such households consist of 7 to 10 members. Here, such families consist of two or more married sons, their wives and children. The percentage of monogamous families is 89.8% while the percentage of polygamous family is 10.2%.

Excepting two families among the Chhetris, all are monogamous type. While all the households among the Thakuris are of joint type. The status of the Biharis hailing from Darbhanga District of Bihar has been compared to be a Tagadhari caste as they are Brahmins and they are working as the technical hands (Masons) in the plantation. The two Bihari families belong to joint type. Though they are Brahmins in Bihar, they are given the status of Thimaha Tagadharis due to the reason that their sub-title "Jha" has the status of Chhetri in the Nepali society.

Similarly, the percentages of nuclear and joint families among the Newars are 62.2% and 37.8% respectively. In the same way, the percentages of nuclear and joint families among the Mangars are 71.4% and 28.6% respectively. The percentage of nuclear families among the Gurungs is 64.7% whereas the 35.3% of the families among them are of joint type. Again, the percentage of nuclear families among Rais is 64.1% and the joint is 35.9%. In case of Limbus, the percentage of nuclear families is 71.2% and joint family is 28.8%. In the same way, the percentage of nuclear families is 33.3% among the Sunuwars 63.6% among the Tamangs, 75.8% among the Sherpas, 69.5% among the Lepchas, 61.1% among the Dukpas, 60.5% among the Kamis, 62.5% among Damais and 100.0% among the Sarkis in the plantation.

The percentage of nuclear families is 87.5% among the Bhujels and 66.7% among the Thamis. The percentage of joint families among Bahuns is 35.4%, 40.7% among Chhetris, 50.0% among the Biharis, 37.8% among Newars, 35.9% among Rais, 28.8% among the Limbus, 66.7% among the Sunuwars, 33.3% among Thamis, 36.4% among the Tamangs, 37.5% among the Kamis and 24.2% among the Sherpas in the plantation.

Changing Roles in Family

The plantation society is patrilocal society in which the authority of male members predominate. The male authority found in Nepal was somewhat different from that of the Cinchona plantation. The eldest male member was to be the head of the family who was responsible for making final decisions which were binding on the part of other members of the family. Normally, the nature of decision was related to the matters like allocating land, crops, sharing of ancestral property, performing worships or arranging marriages (Berreman:1972:166).

The nature of decision making process is different in case of the plantation where a good number of earning members are females. Thus, whatever the decision is to be taken, it is discussed by husband and wife first. However, it is observed that when an old man gets retired from the plantation job and one of his sons is given appointment to his position by the plantation, he is often ignored in the decision making process. After the death of the head, his widow wife is treated as the head of the family ideally as the actual authority along with eldest male earning member of the family. It means that the functional role of the family in regard to the authority has been changed considerably.

Traditionally, daughters were the liabilities to their fathers and mothers. At the time of marriage of a daughter, Daijoo (Dowry) was to be given to groom depending on the economic status of the family. Such concept of Daijoo is no more found as obligatory on the part of the parents today in the plantation.

In the traditional system, the young brothers had to obey the eldest male member of the family. But if there was any elder sister in the family, he had to respect his elder sister. While under the present situation, though such system is nominally followed it has no obligatory support from the family itself. Even the youngest son of a family can have such authority if he is an earning member.

The economic role of the male workers is equated with those of the female workers. The percentage of male workers is 13.1% while the percentage of female workers is 14.4%. Thus, the female workers have considerably higher economic role in so far as the earning of the families is concerned.

With the breakdown of kin-based joint families, the nuclear families have emerged as independent self-supporting entities (Bhadra:1983:222). Under such changes, besides the plantation works, the domestic responsibilities such as cooking foods, rearing cattlestocks, looking after the kids, clearing homes, washing cloths and trousers, collecting cattle fodders and fire woods, cultivation, marketing, controlling and disciplining kids etc. are equally shared by both males and females. As a matter of fact, in many cases, males contribute a small part of their incomes to the family purse while females contribute more.

In the past, the mobility of women was very restricted. Now, there is no such restriction for female workers from involving in the various social activities of the plantation. In other words, they are as mobile as male counterpart. They talk freely with other males and females and exchange jokes and gossips. In this way, they can freely participate in social gathering and important occasions organised by certain caste samajs and the plantation itself. In this way, females are not treated as sub-ordinates to the males as existed in the traditional society before emmigrating to the plantation.

However, so far as the role of family members is concerned, it is a bit different in certain joint families of the workers. Here, a bride comes in the family after being critically appraised by the in-groups. A daughter-in-law, no matter whether she is a worker in the plantation has to prove her calibre in the household works. She is normally for years together kept at the bottom in the rank of the family. She is ignored of the household property till her mother-in-law dies. The relationship with her husband remains for years together a formal one and she should be obedient to her husband, mother-in-law, husband's brothers and sisters if there is any in the family. Even she cannot smoke and freely laugh in front of other family members. Her fate in this regard is hardly realised by any member of the family. There is every logic therefore for a woman to tear while leaving her natal home. Such a scene continues till she gives birth to a child either male or female. If she gives birth to a son, it is much appreciated as the male child is considered to be the incarnation of Lord Kuber (god of

wealth) and if a girl child is born, then she is compared with goddess Laxmi. Her social status rises with the coming of the younger sister-in-law by which her authority automatically rises having been well experienced in the household works and oral tradition which treat her as superior in social ranking. The younger brother is known as Dewar who is found to have very intimate relationship with her in the household. Whenever her own brothers, mother or father or any relatives visit her husband's home, she feels relaxed. Whenever she goes to her natal home known as Maitighar, she enjoys with old friends and foes of natal village or locality. The husband's house is known as Karma Ghar. Her commitments toward her husband's home is ideal having manifold responsibilities while her commitments to her natal home is emotional (Bennet:1978:134). This is the typical picture mainly of a Tagadhari household woman although the same is noticed among some Matwali families mainly among the Mangars and Gurungs to some extent.

But during these days, the extent of such a picture of female closeness within the four walls of household among the Tagadharis has been slowly eroding in the Cinchona plantation due to their exposure to the world outside their homes in the plantation works or at Bajars and community as a whole. In occasions like marriage ceremonies, rituals and other festive occasions they have been allowed from their households to freely participate at par with the male members of the plantation. Thus, slowly along with other Matwali women, they have also been found to have talking, gossiping, laughing and exchanging their views.

Traditionally, in case of death of husband, the widow women had to wear white trousers. They were not supposed to wear bangles which had to be broken. All these formalities are not maintained by the widows today in the plantation. Rather, if a lady becomes widow in early age, she can freely marry another man of her choice. In spite of such changes in general, the relationship between husband and wife is different in the Tagadhari and Matwali groups in the plantation today. Among the Matwali castes, a wife calls the name of her husband but among the Tagadharis hardly a woman calls her husband's name. Among the Tagadharis, men never take their meals along with their wives at the same table and female members also hesitate to do so. Further, if a Tagadhari male is late in coming to his home for lunch or dinner, her wife is to wait without taking any meal till her husband comes and takes meal. While today, no matter whether it is a Tagadhari or Matwali woman, the house wife does not wait till her husband comes home for meals. Simply she distributes personally the meals to her husband which is generally expected by the man folks in their families.

Another important aspect of change in the society is that after marriage, son moves from his parental home and establishes a new family with his wife and children (Bhadra:1983:224). Immediately after marriage, sons, if employed in the plantation, go out to their own quarter provided by the management. Such thing takes place mainly among the young plantation workers who have little education and want to lead an independent family life.

The emerging expectations of women are to be free from traditional type of control of their mother-in-laws, husband's brothers,

female affines and elaborate kin bonds of the families. Thus, the traditional meaning of family as basic unit to sustain the values of social system has been transformed through the new family unit mainly run by the young husband and wives in an independent manner (Ibid).

Finally, in the economic front, responsibilities of both males and females are more or less equal. If the husband is a worker in the plantation or a Government servant outside the plantation, the entire household responsibilities are to be carried over by the wife. And if a female is a plantation worker having unemployed husband, the entire household responsibilities are to be carried over by the husband at least during the hours when she remains outside the home for duties.

MARRIAGE

In general, the marital rules are however, strictly adhered to than the commensal relations. This might be the reason why Karve (1965:5) has stressed that caste basically is an endogamous group. The principle of endogamy is also stressed by many other writers. For instance, Berreman (1960:120) and Sinha (1967:94) characterise the caste system as a hierarchy of endogamous divisions. Atal (1968:240-242) identified intra-caste marriage as the pivotal of the caste system, while Mendelbum (1970:33) suggests that intra-Jati marriage is virtually a categorical imperative. In his study, "Aspects of Caste in South India, Ceylon and North-West Pakistan" Leach (1962:7) observes that 'the kinship peculiarity of caste system does not lie in the internal structuring of kinship, but in

the total absence of kinship as a factor in the extra-caste systematic organisation. .. kinship relations are 'exclusively internal'. Caplan (1970:40) writes "hypergamy may be seen as a feature of the caste system, no less permanent than isogamy and marriages across caste boundaries need to be regarded as deviations from an ideal form". Further, Caplan (Ibid:41) stressed that inter-caste marriages do no violation to the status hierarchy in the communities (Nepali) in the backward eastern hills of Belaspur Bazar of Nepal.

Furer Haimendorf (1964:102) has given the demographic factors of new arrivals from various other regions to conclude unions with women of different castes. While Caplan (1970:49-50) writes that the Brahmins, Thakuris and Chhetris of the countryside were reluctant to create marriage alliances with settlers in the Belaspur Bazar, claiming twice-born status with both because of their uncertainty about the latter's caste credentials and relative poverty of immigrants. While where descendents of migrants have been less than successful economically or politically, marriage choices have been correspondingly more restricted (Ibid:51). Initially after migrating to the plantation, the Tagadharis had the stand which Haimendorf (1964:102) suggested as the tradition of exchange marriages by negotiations, while after staying here in the plantation, the factors such as economic and political, as suggested by Caplan (1970:50) became the pivotal factors for inter-caste marriages. Today such inter-caste marriages in the plantation is mainly isogamous type as there is hardly any instance excepting two Chhetri marriages of hypergamous or polyandrous type.

The marriage by individual choice rather than sacrament is most popular among the plantation workers. Even if a marriage takes place within the same caste, the boy and girl prefer each other first due to the social contact in the plantation. There is no consensual union by the couple who live together without being married. Marriage among the three religious groups such as Hindu, Buddhist and Christian is very common. Excepting the marriages taken place within the Jharra Tagadharis, the concept of endogamy is found to be very vague among the workers in the plantation. While most of the marriages taken place in the plantation is monogamous type. Above all, due to the increasing popularity of Matwali type of marriages by elopement on the one hand, and economic hardship in performing traditional type of marriages on the other, the marriages are taken place within the plantation enclave only. By going so, they can afford with the minimum expenditure within the financial capacity of the families of the workers. The following table No. 35 gives an idea of number of marriages both inter-caste and intra-caste among the Tagadhari and Matwali groups in the plantation.

Table 35
Caste and Marriage

| Sl. No. | Caste | Inter-caste | % | Intra caste | % |
|---------|------------------|-------------|------|-------------|------|
| 1. | Tagadharis (350) | 59 | 16.9 | 292 | 83.1 |
| 2. | Matwalis (1115) | 336 | 30.1 | 779 | 69.9 |
| Total | | 395 | 27.0 | 1071 | 73.0 |

The above table shows that the percentage of intercaste marriage is very low among the Tagadharis (16.9%) such as Bahun, Chhetri and Thakuri. The percentage of such marriages is quite high among the Matwali castes (30.1%). Whereas the percentage of intra-caste marriages is much higher (83.1%) among the Tagadharis and it is only 69.9% among the Matwalis. It is also evident that the intra-caste marriages in the loose form is continuing in the plantation. But the percentage of intercaste marriages which is seen from the table shows that a few changes have taken place among the castes in the Cinchona plantation compared to their place of origin where hardly any caste could do intercaste marriages. The table No. 36 depicts the caste and marriage among the plantation workers.

The percentage of intercaste marriage among the Bahuns is very low, i.e., 8.3% only because the Bahuns is considered to be the Jharra Tagadhari caste here whereas such marriages are 23.9% and 66.7% among the Chhetris and Thakuris respectively. The simple reason for increase of intercaste marriages among the Tagadharis may be due to the impact of Matwali culture, education, poor economic condition and impact of Christianity.

It is revealed from the data regarding the extent of inter-caste marriages that in the earlier days such marriage was not as high as it is observed today. Ever since 1940's, the plantation society was undergoing a rapid process of Sanskritization under the influence of Tagadharis. But during the last two decades, the

Table 36
Caste and Marriage

| Status | Sl. No. | Caste | Inter-caste | % | Intra-caste | % | Total | % | |
|---------------------------------|-------------|---------|-------------|-------|-------------|------|-------|-------|-------|
| <u>Jharia</u> <u>Thimaha</u> | 1. | Bahun | 14 | 83. | 155 | 91.7 | 169 | 100.0 | |
| | 2. | Chhetri | 42 | 23.9 | 134 | 76.1 | 176 | 100.0 | |
| | 3. | Thakuri | 2 | 66.7 | 1 | 33.3 | 3 | 100.0 | |
| | 4. | Bihari | 1 | 50.0 | 1 | 50.0 | 2 | 100.0 | |
| <u>Setho</u> | 5. | Newar | 9 | 13.8 | 56 | 86.2 | 65 | 100.0 | |
| | 6. | Magar | 13 | 61.9 | 8 | 38.1 | 21 | 100.0 | |
| | 7. | Gurung | 115 | 41.2 | 10 | 88.8 | 17 | 100.0 | |
| | 8. | Rai | 75 | 26.2 | 324 | 73.8 | 439 | 100.0 | |
| | 9. | Lambu | 2 | 42.6 | 102 | 57.4 | 177 | 100.0 | |
| | 10. | Bhujel | 3 | 28.6 | 5 | 71.4 | 7 | 100.0 | |
| | 11. | Sunuwar | 3 | 60.0 | 2 | 40.0 | 5 | 100.0 | |
| | 12. | Themi | 1 | 25.0 | 3 | 75.0 | 4 | 100.0 | |
| | 13. | Temang | 42 | 37.8 | 69 | 62.2 | 111 | 100.0 | |
| | 14. | Sherpa | 10 | 18.2 | 45 | 81.8 | 55 | 100.0 | |
| | 15. | Lepcha | 37 | 33.0 | 75 | 67.0 | 112 | 100.0 | |
| | 16. | Dukpa | 9 | 32.1 | 19 | 67.9 | 28 | 100.0 | |
| | 17. | Kami | 9 | 19.1 | 38 | 80.9 | 47 | 100.0 | |
| | 18. | Damai | 3 | 11.1 | 24 | 88.9 | 27 | 100.0 | |
| | 19. | Serki | 1 | 100.0 | - | - | 1 | 100.0 | |
| | <u>Kalo</u> | 5. | Newar | 9 | 13.8 | 56 | 86.2 | 65 | 100.0 |
| | | 6. | Magar | 13 | 61.9 | 8 | 38.1 | 21 | 100.0 |
| | | 7. | Gurung | 115 | 41.2 | 10 | 88.8 | 17 | 100.0 |
| | | 8. | Rai | 75 | 26.2 | 324 | 73.8 | 439 | 100.0 |
| 9. | | Lambu | 2 | 42.6 | 102 | 57.4 | 177 | 100.0 | |
| 10. | | Bhujel | 3 | 28.6 | 5 | 71.4 | 7 | 100.0 | |
| 11. | | Sunuwar | 3 | 60.0 | 2 | 40.0 | 5 | 100.0 | |
| 12. | | Themi | 1 | 25.0 | 3 | 75.0 | 4 | 100.0 | |
| 13. | | Temang | 42 | 37.8 | 69 | 62.2 | 111 | 100.0 | |
| 14. | | Sherpa | 10 | 18.2 | 45 | 81.8 | 55 | 100.0 | |
| 15. | | Lepcha | 37 | 33.0 | 75 | 67.0 | 112 | 100.0 | |
| 16. | | Dukpa | 9 | 32.1 | 19 | 67.9 | 28 | 100.0 | |
| 17. | | Kami | 9 | 19.1 | 38 | 80.9 | 47 | 100.0 | |
| 18. | | Damai | 3 | 11.1 | 24 | 88.9 | 27 | 100.0 | |
| 19. | | Serki | 1 | 100.0 | - | - | 1 | 100.0 | |

process of tribalisation or Matwalisation is very noticeable. In this regard, marriage as a social institution, has also been slowly adapting the Matwali type in which the priority for elopement than the negotiation is most predominant. The intercaste marriage among the Matwalis is more easy and less expensive and the duration of marriage ceremony is quite short which continues for one or two days at the most. The intracaste marriage involves heavy financial expenditure and human energy for preparation. This is more so in case of an ideal Hindu marriage pattern. This is one of the reasons why they prefer intercaste marriages in the plantation. While the intercaste marriage was beyond the imagination of the people in the traditional society.

The incidence in giving marriages to the sons and the daughters of a Tagadhari family to the lower caste such as Matwalis including Kalo does not arise as 91.7% of Jharra Tagadharis answered in negative. They told that Kami, Damai and Sarki are untouchable castes (~~Pane-Na-Chal-Ne-Jats~~) with whom their sons and daughters can not be given in marriage. If a Bahun boy or girl marries Kami, Damai or Sarki, he or she will not be accepted in the family. But unlike in Nepal, they cannot be declared as untouchables. More than eighty percent of the Matwali respondents told that nothing will happen if their children are married to Kami, Damai or Sarki, the untouchables. To the Matwalis, the caste like Kami, Damai and Sarki are untouchables for the Tagadharis only.

Similar responses were received from the Tagadharis also in regard to the Lepcha, Bhuta, Sherpa, Dukpa and Nepali Christians. They told that such castes are Pitalee Varas (condemned vessels).

In fact, it is noticed that though elopement between the Tagadharis and Matwalis takes place, no caste such as Kami, Damai and Sarki, Lepcha, Bhutia etc. dare to come to the Tagadharis for unfolding negotiated marriages with their sons and daughters. This is the point where the tradition of caste endogamy is still persisting in regard to marriages in the plantation. It is quite interestingly noted that among the educated Tagadharis the question of inter-caste marriage is mostly favoured provided the girls are educated government servants and have good social status. For instance, N.B. Chhetri a teacher of Saraswati Higher Secondary school of Mungpoo belonging to Thimaha Tagadhari group, has married to a Moktan (Tamang) girl who is also a teacher in a primary school of Mungpoo Cinchona plantation. Similarly, as shown in the table No. 36, a total of 8.3% of the Tagadharis have their wives from other castes mainly from the Matwali castes. Again, a total of 23.9% of the Chhetris and 66.7% of Thakuris are married to the Matwali castes mainly from the Setho Matwalis. The percentage of intercaste marriage is very high among the Matwalis. This comes to 61.9% for Mangars, 60.0% for Sunuwar castes. Again, most of the Limbus and Rais have married among themselves and such marriages are for them as intracaste marriages.

On the other hand, the percentage of intercaste marriage is very high among the Buddhist castes such as Tamangs (37.5%), Sherpas (18.2%), Lepchas (33.0%), Thamis (25.0%) and Dukpas (32.1%). Similar is the case with the Christians. It is seen that families comprising of four Chhetris, one Newar, seven Rais, one Limbu, one Tamang, one Sherpa, fourteen Lepchas and one Kami have done intercaste

marriages among the Christians only.

Similarly, the intercaste marriage among Kamis and Damais is very low. It comes to 19.1% for Kami and 11.1% for Damai castes in the plantation.

The percentage of intracaste marriage among the Jharra Tagadharis is 91.7% while the percentage of the same is 76.1% among the Thimaha Tagadharis. It is also observed from the table No. 37 that 86.2% of Newas, 58.8% of Gurungs, 73.8% of Rais, 57.4% of Limbus, 71.4% of Bhujels, 75.0% of Thamis, 62.5% of Tamangs, 81.8% of Sherpas, 67.0% of Lepchas, 67.9% of Dukpas, 80.9% of Kamis and 88.9% of Damais have practiced the intracaste marriage.

Thus, on the one hand, there is upward mobility among the Matwalis through marriage with the Tagadharis but on the other hand, they are keen to rejuvenate their traditional caste system. On the whole, it is enquired that the intercaste marriage by elopement is on the increase among the Tagadharis and Matwalis. Secondly, since the plantation is an isolated society from Darjeeling Sadar Sub-Divisional town (33 Km.), most of the marriages have taken place within the plantation itself. The concept of exogamy as existed in the traditional society has little relevance to the plantation society. Here in this case, even a Rai can marry a Tamang or Limbu or Lepcha or Dukpa girl. The preference for marrying Kami, Damai and Sarki castes are not so much on the progress especially among the Tagadharis.

The marriage by elopement known as Chori Bibha or Gandharva Bibaha leads to buycott the new couple by the Tagadharis. Even such pairs are not allowed to share the ancestral property and are not allowed to observe the death rituals (Kriya) of diseased mother or father or any other blood relative. Even in some cases, such sister-in-laws are not allowed to cook foods in the hearths and are refrain from entering into the room where ancestral gods and goddess along with Hindu gods and goddesses are worshipped.

The Kanyadan (giving alm of girl) is found to have been done only in case of Tagadhari castes and it is known as Tagadhari Hindu marriage. The offsprings of such marriages among the Tagadharis is known as Jharra and the offsprings of high caste and low caste union is called as Thimaha. For instance, if a Jharra Bahun marries a Chhetri girl, his offsprings are designated as Khatri (lower category of Chhetri). Similarly, if a Bahun marries a Bahun widow, his offsprings become Jaisis (Thimaha Tagadharis). But these days witnessed more or less different practice. The roles of endogamy are not strictly adhered to but are also not completely violated either among the Tagadharis as it is found among the Matwali castes in the plantation.

Traditionally, a Tagadhari used to maintain a gap of four generations from mother's side and eight generations from father's side before marrying a girl. But since the plantation is consisting of families emmigrated from various parts of Nepal, Sikkim, North-East India and Burma, such genealogical link is not possible to

trace out. Thus, only the intracaste marriages within the same Gotra is restricted among the Nepali castes. On the other hand, the concept of endogamy and exogamy is hardly found to have been affecting the marriage regulations of the Matwali castes. The Sattoo Bibaha (marriage by bride exchange) among the Tagadharis as found in Nepal is not at all found in the plantation. Again, there were types of marriages known as Jat Bibaha (marriage within the same caste), Ajat Bibha (marriage with other lower castes) and Kujat Bibaha (marriage with untouchable castes) in Nepal but here in the plantation, there is only the concept of Thulo Jat Bibaha (marriage with high castes) and Sano Jat Bibaha (marriage with lower castes) among all the castes.

In the traditional society, there were a system of hypergamy among the Bahuns. Such principle, however is not found today in the plantation. In such a system, if an Upadhaya (priestly caste) would marry a Jaisi jat, his descendents would become Chhetri and if a Bahun would marry a Matwali his offsprings would be Khatri-Chhetri. The castes like Kami, Damai and Sarki were known as Pathaki-Chutaki (social criminals) castes or untouchables in Nepal (Bista:1980: 5-6). Such system is not found in the plantation today. The concept of Jat Dandha (penalty for breach of endogamy) as existed in Nepal is no more found here today.

RELIGIOUS PRACTICES

Religion has an important role to play in restoring unity among the various castes of a society. It brings the diverse castes

and tribes into a common social environment with the participation of individuals and groups.

Traditionally, excepting Bahuns, Chhetris and Thakuris, all other Nepali castes and tribes were neither purely Hindus nor Buddhists but the followers of folk religion commonly known as animism with full of tribal rituals and festivals. In such rituals and festivals, hardly there could have been intercaste or inter-tribal participations due to their separate caste and tribal habitats in Nepal. Now, such rituals and festivals are celebrated in such a manner that all the workers irrespective of caste or tribal background participate actively. In this way, they observe a number of festivals in every year. Some of these are observed by the families individually while others are celebrated as part and parcel of working force of the plantation. Latter type is a mixture of their own and that of India.

Prior to 1940's, each caste Dhura had its own dialect and accustomed to its own traditional rituals and festivals. With the emmigration of the Tegadharis, a consolidation of different castes and tribes took place by which the castes and tribes combined together to form a single Nepali speaking community which accepted Hindu as the predominant religion. This could help to accommodate the diverse rituals and festivals among the castes and tribes through their participations. However, the basic procedure of performing the rituals and festivals remained predominantly Matwali and tribal in character involving animal sacrifices and use of liquor.

Table 37
Caste and Religion

| Status | Caste | Total House-hold | Hindu | % | Christian | % | Buddhist | % | |
|-------------------|--------------|------------------|------------|-------------|-----------|------------|------------|-------------|---|
| T A G A D H A R I | Jharra | 127 | 124 | 97.6 | 3 | 2.4 | - | - | |
| | Chhetri | 123 | 119 | 96.7 | 4 | 3.3 | - | - | |
| | Thakuri | 2 | 2 | 100.0 | - | - | - | - | |
| | Bihari | 2 | 2 | 100.0 | - | - | - | - | |
| M A T W A L I S | Newar | 45 | 42 | 93.3 | 1 | 2.2 | 2 | 4.4 | |
| | Menger | 21 | 16 | 76.2 | 5 | 23.8 | - | - | |
| | Gurung | 17 | 15 | 88.2 | 2 | 11.8 | - | - | |
| | Raj | 312 | 305 | 97.8 | 7 | 2.2 | - | - | |
| | Limbū | 132 | 130 | 98.5 | 1 | 0.8 | 1 | 0.8 | |
| | Bhujel | 8 | 4 | 50.0 | 3 | 37.5 | 1 | 12.5 | |
| | Sunwar | 3 | 3 | 100.0 | - | - | - | - | |
| | Thami | 3 | 1 | 33.3 | - | - | 2 | 66.7 | |
| | Tamang | 88 | 13 | 14.8 | 1 | 1.1 | 74 | 84.1 | |
| | Sherpa | 33 | - | - | 1 | 3.0 | 32 | 97.0 | |
| | Lepcha | 82 | - | - | 14 | 17.1 | 68 | 82.9 | |
| | Dukpa | 18 | - | - | - | - | 18 | 100.0 | |
| | Kalo | Kami | 38 | 37 | 97.4 | 1 | 2.6 | - | - |
| | | Damai | 16 | 14 | 87.5 | 2 | 12.5 | - | - |
| | | Sarki | 1 | 1 | 100.0 | - | - | - | - |
| | Total | 1071 | 828 | 77.3 | 45 | 4.2 | 198 | 18.5 | |

With this background, let us first see the religious practices of Cinchona plantation workers at Mungpoo.

The table No. 37 indicates that Hinduism is the predominant religion of the workers. The percentage of Christians and Buddhists is 4.2% and 18.5% respectively. The conversion into Christianity emerged as a new phenomenon among the workers which was not there in the traditional society. Interestingly, Thamis and Tamangs have also started converting themselves into Hindu religion while many Tagadharis are being converted into Christian religion. The distribution of Hindu households among the Tagadharis is much higher than the Matwalis. However, the impact of Christianity is on the increase among all castes and tribes. The percentage of Buddhists is very high among Tamangs (84.13), Thamis (66.7%), Sherpa (97.0%), Lepcha (82.9%) and Dukpa (100.0%). So, a continuity is observed on Buddhist religious faith among these castes. The conversion into Christianity is due to poverty, unemployment and illiteracy, while the other social factor like low social status (Pataki/Chutaki) has nothing to do with such phenomenon in the plantation.

In fact, it is very hard to dwell on the authenticity and thoroughness in studying the clumsy rituals and festivals that are observed by the various Nepali castes and tribes. However, for the sake of analytical convenience, the important rituals and festivals have been categorised on the basis of Tagadhari and Matwali traditions having distinct food items used in celebrating the rituals and festivals and the participation of individuals and groups. By doing so, I have tried to draw the interactional pattern among the groups.

Table 38
Traditional Rituals/Festivals of Tegedharis

| Sl. No. | Month | Ritual/Festival | Food items use | People Participated |
|---------|--------------|--|-----------------------|--|
| 1. | Jan-Feb | Swastani Brata | Fruits, Vegetables | Tegedharis only |
| 2. | April-May | Lagoo | Rice, Shell Roti | " |
| 3. | Sept. - Oct. | Kul Puja, Tij Brata, Sora Serad | " | " |
| 4. | Nov-Dec. | Tulasi Brata, Kuber Puja, Debi Puja, Goth Puja, Nwagi | " | " |
| 5. | Any month | Shradha, Nwaran Yakadashi, Upanayan Ceremony Marriage, Puranas, Chinta, Death Rituals and others | " " " " " | Kins only " " " All Castes |

The table No. 38 may be briefly discussed. It is revealed from the table that Tagadharis do not use meat and wine in observing rituals and festivals. Only in some cases, a few Chhetris use animals' blood in observing Kul Puja (ancestors worships), Bhimsen Puja and Chinta to please the Jhankris.

Very interestingly, while observing family rituals such as marriage, death, Puranas etc., the Tagadharis invite all the castes and tribes while such an intercaste participation was not allowed in the traditional society. Bahuns are invited as in Nepal, for performing the rituals.

Table 39

Traditional Rituals/Festivals of Matwalis

| Sl. No. | Month | Ritual/Festivals | Food Items | People Participated |
|---------|-----------|---|--|---------------------|
| 1. | Sept-Oct. | Kul Puja, Bhimsen Puja | Two Hens, wine, fruits, vegetables | Kins only |
| 2. | Any Month | Chinta, Moch Marne Puja, Death Ceremony, Marriage, Others | Two hens, a Pig, fruits, vegetables, rice. | All Castes |

It is revealed from the above table No. 39 that animals' blood along with wine (Jhar) are used in performing these rituals and festivals. Unlike in Nepal, all the castes and tribes are invited in death, marriage and Puja ceremonies by the Matwalis. But in performing such rituals and festivals they first invite their own priests. For instance, Limbus invite Phedengma, Rais

invite Bigwa, Buddhists invite Buddhist Lamas, and Lepchas invite Bongthing. Bahuns are latter on invited to do such rituals in Hindu way.

The traditional rituals and festivals are mainly centred around the families of a caste in Nepal while here some of the ceremonies such as marriage and death are participated by almost all the castes of plantation. The main reason behind such a change is due to the common habitation in the plantation industry which has converted the previous Caste Dhuras into labour lines for all castes. Such a common dwelling has stimulated the workers' participation in all other rituals and festivals some of which are of their own and rest the Indian in nature.

Table 40
Rituals/Festivals of Nepali Castes

| Sl. No. | Month | RITUALS FESTIVALS OBSERVED | |
|---------|------------|---|---|
| | | Community Level | Plantation level |
| 1. | Feb-March | Sivaratri, Maghe SAGRANTI | Shree Panchami, Saraswati Puja, Fagua |
| 2. | April-May | Chaitre Dasai, Ukali, Bhumi Puja, Gaon Puja, Buddha Purnima, Damang | Ram Nawami |
| 3. | June-July | Asar SAGRANTI, Bhanu Jyanti | Nag Panchami, Kusai Ausi, Krishna Astami, Biswekarma Puja, Rikhi Panchami (Rakhi) |
| 4. | Aug.-Sept. | Jamare Ausi, Saunee SAGRANTI | - |
| 5. | Oct-Nov. | Phool Pati, Nauratha, Dasai, Kag Riwar, Kakur Tiwar, Gai Tiwar, Bhai Tika, Deorali Puja | Durga Puja, Kali Puja |
| 6. | Dec-Jan. | - | Christmas, Losar |
| 7. | Any Month | Satyanarayan Puja | Ausi, SAGRANTI, Purnima etc. |

The table No. 40 may be discussed elaborately. The community festivals are celebrated by all the castes and tribes in the plantation. In fact, most of the community festivals were brought here by the Tagadharis though the festivals like Dasai, Tiwar, Gaon Puja, Chaite Dasai, Maghee SAGRANTI etc. were common among all castes and tribes in Nepal.

The sivarathri, Maghee SAGRANTI, Chaite Dasai, Ukali Puja, Gaon Puja and Dameng are observed in the beginning of the year to please the gods like Siva, Debi etc. so that they can live with peace and prosperity throughout the year. Unlike in Nepal, all the Hindu and Buddhist Matwalis also observe Satyanarayan Puja here. In reality, Satyanarayan Puja, Dasai, Tiwar, Bhanu Jayanti, Deokota Jayanti, Gaon Puja, Deorali Puja etc are the occasions in which all the people irrespective of caste, religion, sex, age etc. participate freely. While in the traditional society, such festivals were observed within their respective caste hamlets only. Celebrating rituals and festivals like Asar SAGRANTI, Jamaree Ausi, Sawnee SAGRANTI, the participation is in individual family level only. Excepting Dasai, Tiwar, Bhanu Jayanti, Deokota Jayanti, Christmas and Buddha Purnima, rest of the festivals are done for one to two hours at a stretch. Unlike in the traditional society, they cannot devote the whole day in celebrating such festivals. While Dasai, Tiwar, Christmas, Buddha Purnima besides Republic Day, Bhanu Jayanti and Independence Day are the festivals of not only Nepalis but they are celebrated by Bengalis, Biharis and Marwaris also for a week or so.

In festivals which the Neaplis observe at the plantation level are more an Indian type. Among the festivals, Losar, Fagua, Durga Puja, Kali Puja, Christmas, etc. are very popularly celebrated by all the castes and tribes. Very interestingly, it is also observed that in such festivals, only Bahuns are invited to exercise the Pujas. In these festivals and pujas, fruits, vegetables, rice, tea, snacks etc. are used. No wine or meat is allowed as part of festival foods.

At the interactional level, Dasai among others seems to have a great significance among the workers partly due to the industrial legacy of the past and partly due to the implication of Nepali culture (Sanskar). This is a festival which does not make any difference between a Bahun and Kami or Sarki. Upto 1950's, during Dasai festival all the workers had to visit to Sardar's house to receive Tika (coloured rice mark at the forehead) from the Sardar who was considered to be the employer, benefactor and guardian of the workers. Today all the respectable persons including old men and women are to be honoured during the Dasai festival by receiving Tika, which is the mark of blessings for the people. While in Nepal, such system is restricted within a particular caste only. No Bahun can receive Tika from a Kami, Damai or Sarki elders which is there in the plantation as a common practice.

Such commonness in celebrating Dasai is not only found among the Hindus but Buddhists and Christians also. Similarly, in celebrating Losar (Buddhist festival), and Christmas all Hindus attend, if they are invited. As Hindu and Buddhist, Christians too invite

their own religious priests such as Padri or Father to do a formal religious ceremony, and Buddhists invite Lamas. The Christian ceremony lasts for a few hours only. This may be one of the reasons why a good number of workers are converted into Christianity. Simultaneously, it is also observed that all the castes and tribes of all religions visit Mahakal Dara (Darjeeling) to worship Mahakal Baba who is considered as the custodian of Hindu and Buddhist religions in Darjeeling hills. In this way, the traditional concept of Bhakal (promise) to visit some temples or monasteries is still in vogue among all the workers.

Thus, the religious life of the workers has two facets: Family centred and community centred (Kar:1981:157). Of the two, latter holds more popularity than the former since there is absolute participation of people in such festivals which are also recognised by the plantation industry. Secondly, there is no financial involvement of individual families since these festivals are known as Sarwaganik Pujas duly conducted by the people living in the Cinchona plantation industry.

It is apparent from the above discussion that the rituals and festivals of the Nepalis are the admixture of animism and Hinduism. And in the process, the Matwalis appear to be more animistic than the Tagadharis who were the carriers of Hindu Brahmanical tradition. However, it is also revealed from the above discussion that a sort of cultural approximation between tribalism and Hinduism (Srivastava:1966:165-173) in respect of accommodating various traditional processes among the Tagadharis and Matwalis is emerging in the plantation.

HEALTH PRACTICES

The health practices of the workers have two facets: concept of diseases and measures for treatment. Since the plantation workers had peasant background at their place of origin, they had an ample knowledge of use of various herbal plants to cure the patients. Besides this, they had a deep confidence over the secrets of exorcism duly practiced by Shaman (Macdonald:1976:310). By disease, they used to believe the misfortunes caused by some supernatural beings or demons who were said to be satisfied by sacrificing some animals through the secret Mantras (prayer of incantations) of Jhankris (Berreman:1972). The use of herbal medicines for various diseases continued to a certain extent even after migration to the Cinchona plantation. But due to deforestation after 1950, such medicinal plants have been going to be extinct and thereby their use and knowledge gradually have started to decline. Along with the herbal medicines, the various Nepali castes and tribes had their respective Shaman or Ojha who with their magical power could cure the patients.

The table No. 41 shows that Tagadharis (Bahun, Chhetri and Thakuri) had their Ojhas who were mainly Indian Rajputs in Nepal. The Ojhas could not sacrifice animals and use wine in curing diseases rather they used to utter some Hindu religious Mantras (hymes). While other Jhankris of various castes and tribes had to use wine and sacrifice animals. It is apparent from this contention that decisions, suggestions and solutions of the Jhankris were considered to be the only means to get rid of diseases in the traditional society. The employment of such Jhankris was more popular among the

Table 41
Caste and Traditional Shaman

| Sl. No. | Caste | Shaman |
|---------|---------|------------------|
| 1. | Bahun | |
| 2. | Chhetri | Ojha |
| 3. | Thakuri | |
| 4. | Newar | Gubhaju |
| 5. | Sunuwar | Puinbo or Ngami |
| 6. | Lepcha | Bongthing |
| 7. | Rai | Phedangma, Bijwa |
| 8. | Limbu | |
| 9. | Tamang | |
| 10. | Gurung | Pajyu or Khepre |
| 11. | Sherpa | |
| 12. | Thami | |
| 13. | Mangar | |
| 14. | Kami | |
| 15. | Damai | Dhami/Jhankri |
| 16. | Sarki | |

Matwalis than Tagadharis though latter on the latter group also started to employ the Matwali Jhankris if Ojhas were not readily available.

With their immigration to the Cinchona plantation, the various Shaman were corporately redesignated as 'Jhankris'. It means that Dhami/Jhakri, Phedengma, Bijwa and Bongthing who are simply called Jhakris today and the employment of them are not

restricted to any caste group as it is found in Nepal and Sikkim. For instance, Kancha Kami (Jhankri) of the plantation is invited by all castes and tribes to evade some misfortunes in the family.

The Jhankris, as in Nepal, were only the means to cure patients in the plantation till 1950. With the incorporation of provisions regarding health and hygiene in the Plantation Labour Act, 1951, the concept of disease and treatment has also started to change in the plantation. Free medical services extended to the workers helped them to think that the emergence of diseases is not due to the misfortunes alone or due to the attack of some demons but due to some other natural reasons.

In spite of changes in the attitudes of the workers toward disease and treatment, the use of Jhankri is found to a great extent among all castes and tribes today. Moreover, it is also seen that every caste try to get respective caste Jhankri first before inviting other Jhankris and doctors. Taking a patient to a doctor is normally the last resort for them. However, such a process varies to some extent between the Tagadharis and Matwalis.

Table 42
Caste and Option for Jhankri

| Sl. No. | Caste | First Option | Second Option | Third Option |
|---------|---------|-----------------|---------------|---------------|
| 1. | Bahun | Doctor | Dhami/Jhankri | Bijwa |
| 2. | Chhetri | Dhami/Jhankri | Doctor | Bijwa |
| 3. | Thakuri | Dhami/ " | Bijwa | Doctor |
| 4. | Newar | Gubhaju | Doctor | Dhami/Jhankri |
| 5. | Rai | Bijwa | Phedengma | Doctor |
| 6. | Limbu | Phedengma | Bijwa | Doctor |
| 7. | Magar | Dhami/Jhankri | Doctor | Bijwa |
| 8. | Gurung | Pajyu | Dhami/Jhankri | Doctor |
| 9. | Tamang | Pajyu | Dhami/Jhankri | Doctor |
| 10. | Thami | Pajyu | Dhami/Jhankri | Doctor |
| 11. | Sherpa | Pajyu | Dhami/Jhankri | Doctor |
| 12. | Lepcha | Bongthing | Doctor | Dhami/Jhankri |
| 13. | Kami | Dhami/Jhankri | Bijwa | Doctor |
| 14. | Damai | Dhami/Jhankri | Bijwa | Doctor |
| 15. | Sarki | Dhami/Jhankri | Bijwa | Doctor |
| 16. | Sunwar | Puinbo or Ngami | Dhami/Jhankri | Doctor |

The table 42 may be briefly discussed. Excepting Dhamis/Jhankris, no other traditional type of Jhankris are available today in the Kalimpong and Nepal to merely conduct marriage and death ceremonies. In other normal situations, only Dhami/Jhankris who are locally known as Jhankris are invited. The rest of other traditional type of Jhankri such as Phedengma, Bongthing, etc are not found today.

However, the Bahuns are found to have given much priority to the doctors whenever any family member becomes sick as there is no Ojha. But the Chhetris and Thakuris have been found much interested to invite Jhankris first than doctors. Again, Bahuns promise to visit some pilgrimage and observe Pujas if the patients are recovered, rather than conducting ceremonial proceedings (Chinta) through Jhankris.

Similarly, the Matwalis have first preference to Jhankri and then to doctors, and finally to the Hindu Pujas. Dakman Rai had to spend Rs. 15,000/- after Jhankris, Bijwas, Phedengmas and others for curing diabetic problem of his son. After seven years of doing so, finally on 16.10.1990, he went to consult a doctor of the sadar hospital, Darjeeling. Even on that step as taken by Mr. Rai, his wife who had a strong faith on Jhankris was found confronting with him for taking his son to Darjeeling. Even after consulting the doctor, a Jhankri was again invited to do other rituals. Shri Dakman Rai was an educated upper divisional clerk. Similarly, the following case studies shall highlight the degree of preference for Jhankri and other traditional medicines and exorcism that is very popularly continuing mainly among the Matwalis of the Plantation.

Case I

Shri Dhan Kumar Gurung (52 years) with B.A. degree is working as a supervisory staff in the plantation. It was in the year 1987 when his wife was very sick suffering from kidney trouble for which he consulted Khahila Bhujel, a Jhankri who told him that a next door neighbour was the reason as there was a Bokshi (female witch) in the family. So, to cure his wife, he had to observe a ritual to appease the Bokshi. He had to spend Rs. 8,000/- within three years. Finally, in January, 1992 he told the problem to the Director of the Cinchona plantation who suggested him to consult the plantation doctor. After consulting the doctor, he took the patient to Calcutta for kidney operation. After undergoing the operation, his wife was recovered. Yet after her recovery, he was asked by his Jhankri to do a ritual and accordingly he did it.

Case II

Shri Karna Bahadur Mangar (35 years) educated upto class IX standard is a Daffadar in the plantation. In June, 1990, his daughter had been suffering from Jaundice. He told that first he invited a Bijwa to chant Mantra (Pha-Phoo) to transfer the disease in a vessel of milk. But when I was conducting field work his daughter died. I asked him whether he had consulted any doctor, he told that he did not do so as nobody told him to consult doctors for the treatment of the disease.

Case III

Shri Harka Bahadur Tamang (46 years) read upto to class IX standard is a Gangman in the Cinchona plantation. In 1986, his younger brother was fallen sick of blood dysentery. Here he met Shri Pahalman Rarailly (Kami) who told him to consult Kalee Chhetri, a Jhankri. Accordingly, Shri Tamang consulted the Jhankri who suggested him to observe a Chinta mentioning the reason that Gaon (plantation) gods are annoyed to him. So, the misfortune had come to Shri Tamang's family. To appease the gods, he offered two hens. But after being observed the rituals with the sacrifice of two hens, the patient was not recovered. In the meantime a Christian Nepali of the plantation suggested him to consult a doctor immediately and the patient was recovered.

Case IV

Shri Ram Bahadur Subba (51 years) possesses I.A. degree, who is a typist in the plantation. His mother, Smt. Devika Subba suffered from some gynaecological trouble. In spite of several suggestions of the people, he was found to bring a Limbu Phedengma for performing rituals. After spending two years, he consulted the plantation doctor in January 1991. The doctor suggested for operation which was done in the Darjeeling Hospital and she was cured.

Through the provisions of West Bengal Plantation Labour Rules, 1956, the Cinchona plantation workers are provided with supply of drinking water, hospital, etc. But it was observed that the majority of the plantation workers do not take bath everyday.

Even their cloths and trousers are cleaned once or twice a week. In spite of supply of drinking water by the management the workers are found to take spring water for their consumption.

Except a few Brahmin priests, all workers do not use water after attending latrines and urinals. Almost 65% of the plantation workers go to Jhoras (streams) for attending latrines and urinals. Papers are used for cleaning after attending the urinals and latrines. It was also observed that there was no latrine facilities in the plantation for the workers.

According to a survey, almost 50.0% of the income of each worker is spend after intoxicant liquors (Sanyasi:1990:7). In most of the Matwali houses of the plantation, Bhattis (liquor hearths) are made to prepare Jner and Rakshi. Another aspect of health is the birth and death rates of the workers. The percentage of child birth is very high among the Tagadharis (65.0%) while it is only 53.0% among the Matwalis. On the other hand, the percentage of couples undergoing family planning operations is very high among the Tagadharis (35.0%) while the same is only 14.0% among the Matwalis. Similarly, since the last five years, death toll among the Matwalis is only 12.0% while it is 15.0% among the Tagadharis in the plantation (Mungpoo Hospital Record; 1992).