

## **Chapter-8**

# **MAJOR FINDINGS, CONCLUDING REMARKS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

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### 8.1: Major Findings:

From foregoing discussion it can be summarized that anthropological studies on Dhimal is very limited or literally absent in some specific cases of anthropological interest. Among literature the essays of Hodgson's is of great important; though lack of empirical data and enumeration of population instead of survey are some of the drawback of his studies. Later pre-independence monographs mainly are of extracts from Hodgson's work and all of them identified Dhimals as Tribes, Aboriginal Tribes and so on with shifting cultivator and nature worshipper. Risley first explore the losing identity and numbers of Dhimal because of acculturation and absorption into Rajbansi caste groups. Grierson classified Dhimal language as Pronominalized Himalayan language in the main Tibeto-Burman family.

The Government records in the form of census enumerated Dhimals from as early as first census of 1872 to 1931 which indicates 873 as highest and 505 as lowest. No enumeration of Dhimal population after 1941 (and onwards) may be attributed for non-inclusion of Dhimal as Scheduled Tribe category as per Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe list order 1950. However 1951 census identified 124 people as Dhimal language speaker; though it can't help them to include in the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe (modification) order 1956. Afterwards we have some enumeration based on recall; hence the reliability of the data is questionable. Even Maitra's figure 1074 (of 2000) is much higher than present survey of 2003 (900 souls).

The sex ratio is of gender biased in all age groups, with 108.33 as overall sex ratio. On the other hand age structure identified them as young population. The broad base population pyramid is type 2 expanding stage, which supposed to be the effect of high birth rate and fall of death rate.

Fertility rates are as higher as 3.0678 as TFR, 30 as CDR and 116.38 as GFR. On the other hand CDR and IMR were calculated as 7.78 and 74.07 respectively. Migration is another severe issue and mainly because of marriage to and from Nepal. Some migration as a part of push factor (because of economy) may also been noticed.

Other socio-economic aspects are also poor with nearly 40% people as illiterate, land holding as 2 Bigha (median) per family, many indebted families with a loan of Rs. 5000.00 as median, half of the household have to rely on well or even river water, 17.42 years as mean age at marriage for women and so on. The health status of adult is also poor. The health of children is more severe than adult. It is noticed that a bulk portion of children are stunted, wasted and overall undernourished as per classifications.

Regarding physical feature they are of medium statured, Metriocormic, short armed, long legged, narrow shouldered and broad pelvic people. No specific classification may be found in case of hand; however foot is of broad (brachypod). Regarding head length they are of medium to long, regarding head breadth medium to narrow, and as per cephalic index Mesocephalic to Brachycephalic. Facial heights are of very low but no class is prominent in facial index; the same is true for morphological upper facial index, Jugo-mandibular index also. However as per Jugo-frontal index they are of very broad group. Nose is wide and broad with below medium to short nasal height, above medium nasal breadth; hence Mesorhinae (towards Chamaerhinae) in nature.

Skin colour is of dark brown; black and straight hair with medium texture and single occipital hair whorl mainly clockwise in nature. They are also characterized by scanty beard and moustaches and absence of Hypertrichosis of ear. Eyes (opening) are medium to narrow, dark in colour, less oblique but have epicanthic eye fold, and many of them are external in nature. Nasion depressions are shallow, profile concave or straight, nostrils are mainly oval in shape. Membranous lip sizes are medium with almost no eversion. In few cases alveolar Prognathism may have found.

Regarding hand clasping and arm folding both the traits are found almost equally; however, in case of handedness they are of right handed people.

ABO blood group polymorphism shows that more than half of the population are of B blood group (51.98%), followed by O (21.78%), A (15.35%) and AB (10.89%). However, as per allele frequencies, O allele ( $r$ ) are highest (0.4677) followed by B allele or  $q$  (0.391) and A allele or  $p$  (0.1413). On the other hand Rh (D) blood group exhibit a definite feature having all people with Rh (D) <sup>+</sup> blood group, hence frequency of 'd' allele is 0. The same trend is found in case of colour blindness; all the people have normal colour vision, hence, frequency of colour blind allele in the population is zero. In respect of PTC taste ability, majority of them (85%) are taster with an allele frequency of 0.61.

Finger print is characterized by more Whorls (52.65%) followed by Loops (45.25%), which is again more Ulnar types than Radial. Hence, the Pattern Intensity Index is high (15.05). The other index (Furuhata's index 116.49, Dankmeijer's index 4.1, and Poll's index 4.78) also identified the population with more Whorls than Loops and very few Arches. About 30.39% hands are Monomorphic, with more Whorls than Loops. Almost half (49.02%) of them are having symmetrical pattern on their homologous fingers. The Total Finger Ridge Count of the population stands for 162.18.

The palm is characterized by more patterns on IV interdigital areas followed by III interdigital and Hypothenar areas. Main Line Formula 7.5.5 is more common (52.94%) followed by 9.7.5 (25.49%) and 11.9.7 (13.73%). Main Line D terminates more on region 7, whereas Main Line C terminates more on ulnar side of the palm. The mean Main Line Index is 7.38. Axial triradii mainly is of single by count and  $t$  by position followed by  $t'$ . The  $atd$  angle varies greatly with a mean of  $42.29^{\circ}$ .

Regarding social-cultural aspects they have changed rapidly, though in some cases they try to preserve their uniqueness. Their traditional dwelling house changed with some modifications; though even now-a-days, may found with mud finishing and coloured with mud. Traditional household utensils disappear rapidly, though some clay utensils and utensils made of bamboo, wood and grass, specially fishing and hunting implements may found in sporadic cases. The daily dress pattern of the population has been changed a lot; however in some occasions they used to wear traditional dress with

ornaments. Women preserve traditional culture more by wearing cotton cloth *bonha* and *daka bonha* than men, who rarely used *dhoti* and *askot* even at occasions.

They prefer meat and fish over vegetables, consume less milk or milk products and even less or no oil and turmeric for food preparation. The traditional fermented liquor *Yu* made of rice or millet, even now-a-day, formed major drinks during ceremony or daily life, but with some added ingredients or procedures or other form of intoxicants as well.

They have shifted from traditional axe dependent shifting cultivation to settled agriculture with plough, which supposed to collect from nearby market. Hunting is losing its importance and became a ceremonial one, though they used to catch fishes by means of home made traps or nets. In some cases collection of fuel and other kinds of woods, fruits and vegetables may also have seen.

The present study documented the name of fifteen exogamous patrilineal clans sub-clans, which supposed to be derived from folktales and practices of the groups and can marry any member of any clan other <sup>than</sup> their own.

Families are of mostly complete nuclear in nature followed by patrilineal joint families i.e. comprised of parents with unmarried children; in some cases it includes married son's family also. On the other hand, they are monogamous, patrilocal, patrilineal and patriarchal. Lineage is patrilineal and kinship terminology is of classificatory type, though descriptive may also have seen. The post of Traditional village council's Head is not hereditary, but elder men of the village collectively decide the office bearers of the council; these are *Jatiya Pradhan* or head of council and *Landha* or messenger. However, the decision has to be taken by all members of the council. The highest punishment is of excommunicated from society or social boycott.

Life cycle, specially related ceremonies, has changed little over time. Birth, as per Dhimal, is a natural phenomenon, therefore, until any complication no *Ojha* or medicine man supposed to call to attend the mother. Otherwise it is the duty of village womenfolk to look after the mother and baby.

They follow clan exogamy and group endogamy, however; recently in many cases they breach the second one after marrying with Rajbansi, Nepali and other neighbouring communities. In such cases, social sanction may avail after some sort of

punishment and penalty. They supposed to find mates within the block, but another trend of marrying outside country (Nepal) is also noticed.

*Magi Behou* or marriage by negotiation is more common followed by *Chori Behou* or marriage by mutual consent and elopement. Other forms of marriage viz. *Supari Behou* or marriage by capture, *Jabardasti Behou* or marriage by force and *Jari Behou* or marrying others wife are no more practiced by Dhimal society. In all cases ten rites of marriage has to perform by bride side, which is nothing but cash or kind payments (including liquor *Yu*) to important persons of groom's house and village, as a token of honour. *Chuman* or bride price supposed to be presented to groom's family by bridegroom.

Death is another natural phenomenon to them and usually buries the corps except some special cases; though they have no fixed burial grounds. All members of family, kins, villagers and friends used to attend funeral party (except women) and obsequial ceremony. The pollution period lasts for four days; however, may extend eleven to thirteen days, specially after the influence of Hinduism. An obsequial ceremony supposed to be held after pollution period is over or when they are in a position to afford the expenses.

The 'religion of nature' has shifted towards Hindu Gods and Goddesses. Their own deities, as suggested by them, are of three types: household deity or *Sakodir*, ancestral deity or *Jouragalai* and village deity or *Gramdir*. The other form may be categorized as Gods and Goddesses assimilated from Hindu religion. Every village must have a *Gram than* or worship place, where they used to pay homage to deities. However every household has a specific place on main house where they worship deities and ancestors regularly. Priest or *Dhami* is not required in such cases except for some village worship and ceremonies. The post again is not hereditary; any follower of *Dhami* can act as a *Dhami* after the demise of former one. The *Ojha* or exorcist, on the other hand, called when someone became ill due to evil spirit. They have a rich tradition of festivals, all of which are related with different phases of cultivation.

However, in many cases Hinduization among the Dhimals is prominent, which is a historical phenomenon and has been a process to assimilate as a part of Hindu method of tribal absorption. Overall, the study reveals that the Dhimals bears the biological and cultural attributes which have a close affinities with other Indo-Mongoloid or Kiranti communities of North Bengal.

### Changing Scenario:

The study finds a clear cut changing scenario of Dhimal social-cultural life, which is more prominent in material culture than others. However, influence of Hindu religious practices including adoption of gods and goddesses may not be overruled. Their economy has changed a lot: from axe dependent shifting cultivation to plough dependent settled agriculture. This transformation is due to interaction with dominant neighbours specially Rajbansis and others. Even, documents suggest a clear indication towards assimilation within Rajbansi caste group. The adoption of 'Mallick' surname instead of Dhimal for entire community of North Bengal as well as adoption of social and religious practices and Brahmin as a priest suggests a mark advancement towards Hinduism. The process may be called detribalization. However, in recent times, reverse movement by reviving their own social, religious practices as well as non-recognition and sharp replacement of Brahmin priest by their own 'Dhami' may be regarded as a process of retribalization for the sake of Scheduled tribe status.

The changing scenario may also attributed to morpho-genetic features also. The reason supposed to be unipolar- intermarriage with Rajbansi and Nepali communities of neighbouring areas. Instead of small numbers, the influence of genetic drift may not act so drastically as they (Dhimal of North Bengal) along with their numerically dominant Nepali counterpart constitute a biological population by marrying with each other. However, lack of historical data (more specifically no scientific data) in the form of morpho-genetic characters can't permit us to identify and calculate magnitude of changes.

The same is also true for socio-demographic profile of Dhimals of the reference area. The only historical data we have is basically population figures and sometimes with male-female distribution. However, all of these are insufficient to draw a concrete conclusion and sometimes confusing or misleading because of improper methodology.

## 8.2: Concluding Remarks:

About first objective, the study has documented a wide range of folk history to understand origin and development of the society. However, lack of historical data and/or supporting documents make it difficult to conclude the same. The first identified historical source (by Hodgson) is an ethnographical note; hence, only ethnographical data may be compared. Within this limited information (mostly oral), a close affinity supposed to appear with Limbu and other Kirati people of the region, which needs more scientific surveys including historical and/or genetical investigations.

About second objective of the study, it can be stated that the age-sex structure of the population exhibits a type 2 expanding stage of demographic transition, which in turn narrates high birth rate and fall of death rates. For this census figures and some recent studies may be excluded for scientific comparison because of lack of reliability and enumeration by recall respectively. The population pyramid along with fertility-mortality-migration rates and ratios rejects the present notion that they are decreasing, rather it suggests an increasing population growth. Even fertility rates are higher than national or state level; and mortality also shows a decreasing trend. Regarding other part of ~~second~~ objective it may be noted that in respect of socio-economic aspects, specially literacy, landholding, indebtedness etc they are in adverse condition and need urgent attention. The same is true for health status of children or even adults in some extent. Undernourishment, stunting, wasting are common because of poor economic and living conditions. Even now-a-days major portions of the population have no access to pure drinking water; half of the households have to rely on well or even river water.

The third objective is peculiar in the sense that, probably it is the first time to exhibit morphological and genetic characters of Dhimal in large extent and also scientifically. As stated, the morphological features of Dhimal with medium stature, short arm, narrow shoulder, Mesocephalic to Brachycephalic head, Mesorrhinae to Chamaerhinae nose, straight wave hair, scanty beard and moustaches, shallow nose depression and characteristically epicanthic eye fold definitely categorized them under mongoloid strain; however some deviation may be <sup>noted</sup> because of admixture with



others. Again dark brown skin colour is supposed to be the effect of tropical sun. The admixture with Rajbansis is not only a recent past but historical also.

The genetic markers, unlike other characters, are the product of known hereditary mechanism and non adaptive too. Regarding ABO blood group, A allele tends to be more frequent in most of the Tibeto-Burman and/ or mongoloid people except Bhutan and Tibet (the exception is similar to Dhimal findings). The frequency of D allele in Rh (D) blood group is highest among Dhimals (1.00) which is also seen among population with mongoloid affinities from Himalayan region. The colour blindness trait may be considered as relaxed selection as low rates of colour blindness is prevailing in primitive communities specially hunters, food gatherers and semi settled primitive agriculturist population. Among the population of Mongoloid affinities also have low frequency of Colour blindness; and no sample of Dhimals found to be colour blind during the survey. The frequency of taster allele in respect of PTC is quite highest among Mongoloid population which is also seen among reference Dhimal population.

Among Mongoloid population the frequency of Whorl are quite high and arches quite low, which is also evident from present population. Which in turn exhibited by high Pattern Intensity and Furuata's Index as well as low Dankmeijer's and Poll's Index. Like other Mongoloid population they have much higher TFRC, higher pattern on IV interdigital areas than others as well as preponderance of 7.5.5 main line formulae over other types.

The fourth objective is an elaborative one and difficult to conclude in few pages. The socio-cultural aspects of the population have already discussed which exhibit a wide range of change over time. Their material culture have changed a lot, whether in the field of agriculture (shifting from shifting cultivation to settled cultivation), hunting to ceremonial hunting, fishing to occasional fishing and a wide range of changes within households. Clan became less known to family members, specially younger generation, family tends to be more nuclear, and many of the kinship term became obsolete and even disappeared. However, regarding marriage they supposed to follow clan exogamy strictly; and if they breach the taboo of group endogamy by marrying Rajbansi or others, a fine is to be paid to the society to maintain their membership. They are very keen to follow their traditional marriage customs specially ten rites and bride price even today. Death and its customs are other events which they used to follow by way of

traditional customs except some Hindu influence. However their region is a marked modification from religion of nature to some of the Hindu Gods and Goddesses and customs also. Though, they used to offer homage to traditional village, ancestral or household deities with some festivals, which are again related with different sphere of cultivation. The presences of their own Priest, exorcist and traditional non hereditary but selected village council with participation of all elder men are some of the traditional features which may work in some cases.

The last objective is to find out and examine the present identity of Dhimals of the region. Pre-Independence censuses specially before 1941 have been identified them as Tribes, Aboriginal Tribes and so on. It is 1941 census and afterwards that supposed to lost trace of the group. Hence, they can't find themselves in the list of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe List Order 1950 or modification order 1956. The rest history of Dhimal throughout later part of twentieth century is deceptive from all sphere of life. However, the Dhimal themselves may also accused beside Government negligence, as literature narrates a marked stepping towards Hinduism. The adoption of Mallick or Moulik surname instead of Dhimal may consider as another step towards the same. On the other hand, there was a clear indication that they have been losing their identity by absorption into Rajbansi caste of Hindu religion. Therefore, faulty declaration of census slip may not be overruled.

The last two decades of twentieth century is the time of struggle for reestablish identity or go back to identity by acknowledging their tradition. Hence once nature worshipper turned Hinduism supposed to find way out towards nature worshipping for the sake of abandon status of tribe (more specifically Scheduled Tribe), which became a ladder of social and economic upliftment. After a long movement within (to comeback to their own tradition) and outside (to compel Government to re-designate them as Tribe or specifically Scheduled Tribe) they have categorized as Other Backward Classes of West Bengal. However, they are in continuous movement for achieving the status of Scheduled Tribe.

The marked advancement towards Hinduism, marrying outside group and giving up many of the traditional cultural traits may the reason behind non-inclusion as a Scheduled Tribe. However, many of the today's Scheduled Tribe may not fit under the definition of Tribe in true sense except as a part of Scheduled Tribe List 1950 or later on

modification. On the other hand the culture and society of Dhimal have not changed so drastically that can warrant them outside the list. The literature (and also field work in some cases) suggests their dwelling as hill clad or forest areas, isolation or semi-isolation from wider communities, economic self sufficiency, backward technology, lack of division of labour, mechanical solidarity, egalitarian values, barter system, having own political system, sense of belongingness to other members, kin groups with representative in a number of social groups, as well as own religious faith as animism with magic and witch-craft and so on which at the point of time can be classified them as Tribe in true sense. The poor socio-economic and other related factors along with health may find it possible to include within such scheduled. Even many of the Scheduled Tribe, as a whole or part, may exhibit better socio-economic and health status than Dhimals.

Considering the prevalence and change in Dhimal society and culture it may be suggested that the said community is under the process of social and cultural transformation. Their identity changes reveals that at present they bear both the tribal and non-tribal characters. Thus they may be regarded as marginal community located in between tribal and Hindu societies.

### **8.3: Recommendations:**

After going through all the major findings of the study, it is my humble request to different authority to take immediate measure in favour of this diminutive community.

1. First of all the claim of identity of Dhimals in respect of Tribal status should be evaluated by Government, as literature review and findings of this study suggests tribal status (which their Nepali counterpart enjoyed). On the other hand, present OBC status may not help them to uplift socio-economic condition. For this to confer the Scheduled Tribe status is also recommended as per previous studies as well as present field work.

2. Secondly, urgent intervention from Government and NGO's may be required to enhance socio-economic and educational status of this diminutive group. With this a

strong measure of health facilities including sanitation, water supply, proper nutrition, medical facilities as well as awareness are also recommended. In all aspect of socio-economic and educational attainment, gender differences should be minimized and ameliorated for the sake of balanced growth.

3. Thirdly, the reference population as a whole should bring up their traditional culture including material culture, language and other contents of social structure and social organization; and with the help of Governmental and non-Governmental organizations should preserve the same in perspective of modernity. It is worth mentioning that, as a process of re-tribalization they have already started to do so.

4. Fourthly, Government should extend his hand to build up infrastructure and other basic amenities within or near to the reference villages. For this, infrastructure to preserve their cultural traits as well as audio-visual documentation is also recommended.

5. Fifthly, people voice should be incorporated in all spheres of developmental or other activities. Their participation is foremost; hence, without their active support and engagements all the developmental work may not be sustained.

6. Last but not the least, further research is to be proposed to find out the history and affinities of Dhimals after comparing ~~their~~ biological and cultural traits with Limbu, Toto and other indigenous communities of this and adjacent areas as well as <sup>with</sup> Dhimals of Nepal.