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Changing Ways of Marrying:

A Study of the Dhimal Marriage Ritual of Damak, Nepal

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Master of Philosophy in Indigenous Studies

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DEDICATED TO ALL DHIMALS

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ABSTRACT

This thesis, entitled “Changing ways of marrying: A study of the Dhimal marriage ritual of Damak, Nepal” focuses on changes in the marriage patterns of Dhimal indigenous people. Dhimal represent one of the oldest indigenous groups of Nepal, residing in the easternmost lowland since time immemorial. For the study, the choice was made for Damak municipality, which is inhabited mainly by the Dhimal and it is regarded as the fastest growing city of eastern Nepal.

The main issue revealed by the study is the massive impacts of modernization, westernization, and urbanization on Dhimal indigenous people of Damak, processes that are expeditiously breaking up age-old tradition and customs. The government’s developmental plans and assimilation projects in the name of ‘one nation’ and ‘one language’ also erode the traditional culture. Further, there are some inevitable factors of political and economic nature, as well as migration, urbanization, education, mass media etc. These factors are also responsible for the cultural changes, in general, and marriage patterns, in particular.

Marriage is an important social institution of the Dhimal society and thus integral part of its traditions. It is a valuable ritual among them because it brings community together. Until and unless the community provides moral support, a Dhimal marriage does not get validity. Therefore, for Dhimal people, marriage is not just about the two persons and the two families; it is also about their community. The rituals are a way of celebrating community and reinforce ethnic identity as much as a way of bonding the two people and families. But with the passage of time, the ritualistic forms and ritualists parts of their marriage have changed with the influence of modernization and globalization. Since Dhimal marriage is directly related to the community, the impact on marriage rituals entails an impact Dhimal traditions, culture and ethnic identity, indeed what makes them a distinct community. Thus, any negative impacts occurring in marriage mean breaking the identity and unity among the Dhimal people. That is what I am interested to show with this study.

The leading research questions target the past and present social customs, norms and values of the traditional Dhimal community specifically as they relate to customs associated with marrying. What are the observable changes that have occurred in their marriage system now? And how are these linked to the social and cultural relationships and practices that are characteristic of Dhimal society? These questions are addressed throughout the whole thesis based on qualitative field work data collected in Damak Municipality in Nepal in June 2014. Several tools and techniques are used in order to answer the questions in this study. Modernization and ritual theories have been employed to analyse the findings.

(Key Words: Community making practice, Dhimal People, Dhimal Caste Development Centre, Impact, Marriage Rituals, Responsible factors for Dhimal’s changes, Modernization, tradition, culture)

GLOSSARY

<i>Adivasi-Janajati:</i>	Indigenous/Minority peoples in Nepal.
<i>Askot:</i>	Half-coat
<i>Banchagele system:</i>	The system of visiting wife's house for the first time after marriage.
<i>Bismala:</i>	Traditional ornament of Dhimal women
<i>Bhoto:</i>	Vest
<i>Cheutai Dhari:</i>	Loin cloth
<i>Chichiri:</i>	Steam rice
<i>Cholo:</i>	Blouse
<i>Dhami:</i>	Priest
<i>Gosmala:</i>	Dhimal traditional ornament
<i>Kalli:</i>	Anklet
<i>Kirat:</i>	Ethnic groups
<i>Maghi Bibaha:</i>	Arranged marriage
<i>Majhi:</i>	Village chief
<i>Mela:</i>	Carnival
<i>Ojha:</i>	Witch doctor
<i>Puja:</i>	Worship
<i>Rits:</i>	Payments
<i>Sale:</i>	Ring-shaped bread
<i>Supari</i>	<i>Bibaha:</i> Marriage by offering a betel nut
<i>Tepana:</i>	Towel

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

1.1 FOCUS OF THE STUDY

The present study focuses on the cultural aspects of the Dhimal indigenous community of Nepal, a community that has its own distinct identity and way of life. Among the different cultural aspects, this study mainly analyses the nature of the changes in the marriage patterns of the Dhimal of Nepal. Marriage as an institution has a very important place in their community. It is a locally implanted cultural practice by which Dhimal socially manage their community and their sense of collective peoplehood. By involving groups of the same ethnicity through unique rituals marriage also reinforces ethnic identity and builds community. The Dhimal community, with its traditional ritual practices, became threatened after the 1950s, when the state introduced projects of modernization and development. The access to modern technology, education, roads, transportation, and the promotion of the dominant “Nepali culture”, stirred a cultural and social change in Dhimal. The present study focuses on the nature of change in general and marriage patterns in particular, and on the consequences of the changes which have occurred due to modernization.

1.2 BACKGROUND

Nepal is a small landlocked country with rich ethnic diversity. Despite its small size, Nepal is a multi-ethnic nation with diverse languages, religions and varied cultural traditions. Tony Hagen has called Nepal the “ethnic turn table of Asia” (Hagen 1961:51). This small country of some 54,000 square miles, houses an amazing amalgamation of peoples, languages, cultures and religions. According to the report of Central Bureau of Statistics, 2011, Nepal consists of 125 ethnic groups out of which 59 are identified as indigenous. The Nepal government identified the 59 indigenous nationalities (*Adivasi-Janajati*) of Nepal by enacting a law in different ecological regions: 18 are from the mountainous region, 24 from the hills, 7 from the inner Terai¹ and 10 from Terai. According to Article 2(a) of the National Foundation for Development of Indigenous Nationalities Act, 2002, “indigenous nationalities means a tribe or community listed in the schedule as having its own mother language and traditional rites and

¹ The Terai of Nepal is a lowland tropical and subtropical belt of flat, alluvial land expanding along the Nepal-India border that is also called a homeland of different indigenous communities of Nepal since time immemorial.

customs, distinct cultural identity, distinct social structure and written or unwritten history" (HMG-N 2002:170).

Among the 59 indigenous groups of Nepal, Dhimal is categorized under the marginalized indigenous groups in the country.² Dhimal, also call '*Dhimali*' is one of the oldest indigenous groups of the eastern Terai with its own unique language, dress preferences and culture. They speak a Tibeto-Burman language (Hodgson 1849). The census published by Central Bureau of Statistics in 2011 recorded a total number of 26,298 Dhimal, which constitutes 0.099 percentage of the total population. Jhapa and Morang are the main districts where the Dhimal people used to live since time immemorial. Within these two districts, they have been distinctly separated by the Kankai Mai River. The Dhimal who live east of the Knakai River are known as the eastern Dhimal and those to the west as the western Dhimal. Thus, they separated their areas, making Kankai River the border (Gurung, 2005:21). Nowadays, they are living in different parts of Nepal where they have more opportunities. According to informants, apart from Nepal, some of them live in Asam, Darjeling and other parts of India. There are mainly two dialects found in their community: eastern and western. The Dhimals who live east of the Kanlai Mai River speak the eastern dialect which is highly influenced by the Rajbanshi speech, whereas west of Kankai Mai River they speak the western dialect which has close contact with Tharu (Regmi, 1991:45).

Traditional societies are changing day by day and engage in obtaining and hiring the cultural practices, perceptions and beliefs from modern societies. These cultural expressions can also involve marriage rituals and their equivalent situation among societies (Bal, 2000 Qtd on Shahzad et al.; 2015:394). Globalization in the name of modernization and development forces many indigenous societies to change their culture, beliefs, values, and rituals. Nepalese indigenous communities are not spared from such impact and are changing their ways of life, traditional values system in adopting the cultural traits of the modern world. Dhimal, one of the distinct indigenous communities of Nepal, is now undergoing such transformation. They are dropping many of their renowned cultural traits and accepting and borrowing some others' cultural traits. The cultural change related to Dhimal's marriage rituals, which is the main focus of this study, is a case in point.

Marriage is an important social institution that has been crucial to Nepalese indigenous communities throughout history. Nepal has more than one hundred ethnic/caste groups, which

² <http://www.nefin.org.np/list/Categorization-of-Indigenous-People-based-on-development-/5/95/6>

differ in their marriage patterns, rituals and customs (Bista, 1972, Subedi 1998). Marriage represents the actual identification of every group and their lifestyle for subsistence and existence. The Dhimal marriage system is unique in the Terai region, which also makes them different as a group from other indigenous groups of Nepal. It is one of the most important socially embedded practices and socially encompassing events for them (Regmi 2007:126). Marriage is an important ritual of the Dhimal community because it is a social and cultural activity that reveals a group of people organizing and involving themselves with their own communal relationships. Therefore, marriage rituals are a medium through which their cultural performance creates a sense of unification and togetherness. There is a rule that marriage within the same clan up to three generations is strictly prohibited in Dhimal society. To marry within the same clan is referred to as 'breaking the bones' (ibid, 2007:126). Different types of marriage were prevalent in the past in Dhimal society, such as *Maghi Bibaha*, *Supari Bibaha*, marriage by force, marriage by elopement. Among them *Maghi Bibaha* is important because it can preserve the unique tradition of Dhimal society.

Throughout the ages various cultural changes have emerged within the Terai area of eastern Nepal. As a result, different indigenous communities who live in this area slowly and gradually adopt to new cultures consciously and unconsciously. In fact, 1950s is the period of political change which established democracy in Nepal. After 1950s, due to the spread of the western education system, modern information technologies, new economic opportunities, the opening of the East-West Highway and the migration of Hindu high caste people³ into an area of Nepal from the hills had tremendous impact on the traditional socio-cultural system of Dhimal indigenous people (ibid: 163). This is the period when the state led projects of modernization and development that influenced the traditional marriage ceremony, ritual of Nepalese indigenous communities, and Dhimal were not spared from such an impact. Dhimal marriage is influenced much from such development as young generations prefer the modern marriage system under the influence of modern culture. They gradually begin to forget their traditional marriage system and start to adopt new trends of marriage as a result of the influence of modernization. The acceptance of new trends of marriage systems breaks the unique socio-cultural identity, since marriage is an important institution in Dhimal society as it connects individuals, families and community in a way that also helps to maintain a distinct identity as

³ Hindu high caste people refers to *Brahmans (Bahuns)* and *Kshatriyas (Thakuris and Chhetris)*. In 1854, "*Muluki Ain*" civil code was introduced by the Rana Prime Minister Janga Bahadur Rana that creates hierarchy of major indigenous communities of Nepal.

an important festive occasion where their customs and values are celebrated through an intricate set of rituals.

The present study of Dhimal marriage practice is an attempt to investigate the changes that has taken place in terms of marriage in the past and the present, as well as its old practice and continuity, also in the community as a whole.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

According to Stuart Kirsch, indigenous people “who frequently have special ties to their lands and place, the theme of loss has echoes throughout the indigenous world, often in association with damages to and/or displacement from their land” (Kirsch, 2001:167). Historically, the indigenous people enjoyed territorial autonomy that consisted of their distinct identities, languages, cultures, traditions. They had their own political and social institutions that were guided by their own philosophies and ideologies, as they existed as small states at the time. But Nepal provides an example of internal colonization where the king of Gorkha, Prithivi Naayan shah conquered different kingdoms and principalities and indigenous peoples in 1769 and dispossessed indigenous communities through their traditional control over territories (Lawati, 2007:63). The conquest project systematically excluded minorities and their languages, cultures, traditions and religions and forcefully promoted Hindu culture that was the national culture in the early 19th century. The society’s dominant Hindu culture always creates barriers toward indigenous cultures and attempts to assimilate different indigenous groups living in Nepal.

Similarly, until the late 1950s, malaria was prevalent in the lowlands of current Jhapa and Morang districts. It threatened the people who wished to settle in the Tarai. Because of the life threatening disease of malaria, the hill people⁴ did not dare to colonize it for land reclamation (Rai, 2013:83-87). But Dhimal survived there when outsiders feared this particular place to settle. Because of the presence of the widespread malaria disease, outsiders did not dare to exploit the Tarai areas. To some extent, malaria played a significant role in Tarai to preserve Dhimal territory and customary ways of life from outside interventions. But with the eradication of malaria, it became the most suitable destination of in-migrants moving from the hill since the 1960s (Gurung, 1989). Slowly and gradually, the people of hill came into the Terai and dispossessed Dhimal from their own territory and forced them to adopt Hindu culture.

⁴ Hill is situated in the south of the mountain regions of Nepal, is mostly between 700 to 3000 metres altitude where mostly high caste Hindu people, also called *Brahmin and Chettri*, used to live since long time ago.

Moreover, the government also favoured Hindu culture because Nepal was a Hindu state during that time. The government's repetitive assimilative policies of Hinduization accelerated the cultural marginalization of Dhimal.

After 1950s, Dhimal local social world became increasingly multi-ethnic. The government of Nepal imposed deliberate assimilative cultural policies in the name of modernization. The Nepali state, through development and national integration, deliberately imposed a policy of 'one language, one nation and one culture and one dress' based on the cultural symbols of the ruling Hindu high caste hill groups to assimilate the indigenous groups living in the Terai since ancient time. The Nepali state encouraged hill Hindu high caste people to settle in the Terai region so that they could assimilate the Terai people into 'Nepali nationalism' (Rai, 2013:53). Because of the influence of Hinduization and modernization, Dhimal people began to adopt new marriage trends and adopt some of the Hindu ways of marriage. The use of *swayamvar*⁵, ring exchanging program between the bride and the groom, decoration of the entrance gate etc. are good examples. Moreover, after the 1950s, they have got access to modern things that directly and indirectly impact the traditional marriage system. Due to the rapid development of transportations, communications and urbanizations, these people also have come in touch with the outer world beyond their cultural boundaries. Mostly, the young generation is attracted to modern culture and gradually forgets their traditional marriage practice.

1.4 OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

Marriage is an integral institution of the Dhimal society and thus an important part of the tradition (Dhimal, 2011:92). Similarly, marriage is a mechanism by means of which the community is constructed. Hence, this study deals with the changing ways of marrying of the Dhimal indigenous group of eastern Nepal.

The overall objective of this study is to explore the impact of modernization on the marriage system of Dhimal indigenous people and how the change within this system impacts their community as a whole. Moreover, with regard to the marriage system specifically, the objectives are to:

- a. provide brief account of the marriage system in its historical background;
- b. document the changes of the marriage system among Dhimals;

⁵ *Swayamvara* is a ring and garland exchange ceremony between the bride and the groom.

- c. asses and ascertain the factors of change of the marriage patterns and Dhimal society as a whole.

As to the Dhimal community: the specific objectives are to:

- a. explore how changes in the marriage system reflect larger cultural and social changes in the community;
- b. explore how changes in the marriage system affect communal relations and practices in society;
- c. discuss what future one may imagine for Dhimal culture in a situation where traditional institutions are losing their significance as a force of social and cultural integration.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The case-study is an empirical analysis of the marriage system of Dhimal indigenous people as a whole, looking at their past and present traditions. The following specific research questions are adequately considered to fulfil the objective of the study:

- a. What were the social customs, norms and values of the traditional Dhimal marriage system?
- b. What are the observable changes in the marriage system now?
- c. What are the main factors of change in the Dhimal culture including marriage system?

1.6 LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

Every research project has its limitations. Likewise, there are certain limitations to this research, and I don't claim to have fulfilment all of its objectives. The limitation of this study are as follows:

- I have a limited amount of time and fieldwork experience. Thus, there may be some shortcomings in the data collection and the analysis.
- The study is based on the Dhimal indigenous group of the Damak Municipality. It may not be equally applicable to other groups of social setting, and I don't claim that the study represents the whole nation as different ethnic groups have different customary system, including marriage practices.
- This study is confined only to the marriage patterns of the Dhimal people of Damak and its results are limited within this scope.
- This study is an attempt of an anthropological inquiry. Although it is limited empirically to the continuity and change of marriage rituals, the study has a focus that is beyond

the marriage system per se due to the role that marriage has as a social institution in Dhimal society.

1.7 OBSTACLES AND CHALLENGES IN DATA COLLECTION

My one-month field trip was not completed without some challenges and obstacles. Though the area of my research project was near to my home, the people, their way of behaving with outsiders, their tradition and culture, all were not so much familiar to me. At the beginning of my fieldwork, I was unable to make interviews with my informants. The informants suggested me that I had to have permission from their organization (Dhimal caste Development Centre) to conduct interviews. Another challenge was to make interviews with female interviewees as the Dhimal society is male-dominated society, and it was really challenging to conduct interviews especially with old female members. The female members of Dhimal community feel hesitation to talk with an outsider like me. During my fieldwork, I could manage to make 2 interviews with old women among 15 informants. The major challenge that I faced was season weather. It was the rainy season when I was in Damak Municipality to collect data for my project. The rainy season was suitable time for Dhimal people for the plantation. So, all the villagers were in the fields and it was really challenging to interview them during that time. Most of the interview were taken in evening time because it was rest time to them.

Besides that, I had faced the translation problem as the interviews were made in Nepali language and it was really hard to translate whole interviews into English because certain terms were not available in English. If I try to translate the sentences literally, the meaning of the sentences might come out differently than expected.

1.8 MYSELF AS A RESEACHER

The fieldwork I did for my thesis provided me with a golden opportunity to observe Dhimal peoples, their society and their cultural practices. Moreover, it gave me an opportunity to find out about the Dhimal culture in general and marriage system in particular in the Damak municipality by protecting indigenous culture from academic point of view. Though I was an outsider and faced some difficulties during my fieldwork, I still got help because the area of my fieldwork was near to my home. I also knew some Dhimal people who helped me to create a good environment to introduce myself with the active members of the Dhimal community. I hope that my one-month fieldwork in Damak has helped me to gain knowledge about the Dhimal people, their traditions and culture. Moreover, it helped me to know the continuity and change of the marriage rituals of Dhimal.

My one-month field work in my home country was full of mixed experiences and lessons learned. I chose my field site in my own country thinking I could get in touch with people and places and that I could utilize my time effectively. But it was not so easy in my case. I felt helpless at the beginning because most of the informants were uninterested in giving me the data that I needed for my research project. When I reached my hometown Damak, I met some of my Dhimal friends and discussed my project. They gave me some names about my informants who could give information about my research project. After collecting the names, I contacted some people and informed them that I was interested in meeting with them. They agreed to meet me and I started to visit their houses and informed them about myself and my purpose to be there. They were interested in my project but clearly informed me that until and unless I got permission from the Dhimal Caste Development Centre, they could not give any data. After listening to them, I once again met my Dhimal friends and visited the Dhimal Caste Development Centre, located in the Morang District. Luckily, I had got an opportunity to meet Mr. Kedar Dhimal, a general secretary of the Dhimal Caste Development Centre Nepal. We talked a lot about my project and finally he was interested and ready to help me. I then requested him to give me an authorized written paper that would help me to collect data from my informants. He was ready to give me the paper and gave me some important phone numbers as well. He also invited me to take part in the '*Dhangdhane mela*'⁶ which was going to take place soon in the Dhimal Caste Development Centre. Then, I returned back to my home with a lot of hope.

The next day, I made a call to Mr. Tilak Dhimal who was ready to discuss my project. While talking, he gave me a lot of information regarding my project. Moreover, he told me the historical background of the marriage system that was really interesting to me. I also got an opportunity to meet one of the local Dhimal journalists who assisted me in getting materials about my project. Luckily, while discussing with her, there came an old Dhimal man who informed me that if I was interested to see a Dhimal wedding I could go there. I was really excited to observe a Dhimal's wedding and asked the old man of the address. After collecting the address, I returned back home and made myself ready for the wedding. The wedding area was one and half hour away from my home and I was planning how to reach it.

⁶ *Dhnagdhange mela* also known as *Jatri* festival is the most popular in Dhimal indigenous community. It falls in June and July according to English calendar. Almost all Dhimal actively participate. During the festival, they worship dead spirits, ancestors, and so on as deities to protect them from natural calamities, disease, and drought to keep them safe and happy.

After a few minutes, a bus and a car stopped near to my house with the member of the wedding procession. It stopped near to my house because there is a shop there. Some members of the wedding ceremony were buying things. Luckily, I got an opportunity to talk to one of the old members of the procession and asked what caste the marriage was and where they were going. He sincerely replied that they were going to Kharkhare, a Dhimal village and that it was a Dhimal marriage. Fortunately, the old man's information was similar to another old man whom I met in the journalist's house in the morning. Moreover, the place where the wedding ceremony was going to be held also matched. Then, I told the old man that I was interested in watching their wedding and wanted to go with them there. He granted me to go to the bride's house easily though I was less hopeful. Then, I entered into the bus and explained my purpose to go to the wedding ceremony to the old man. I also got permission from him to take some photos from the ceremony that was really valuable to my project. The whole day, I watched the wedding ceremony and returned back home. It was a great achievement for my project.

My next target was to go to Dhimals' *Dhabgdhange mela* from where I could get valuable information regarding my project. I had visited the carnival at the Dhimal Caste Development Centre twice before because most of the active members were present there during that period. I met some social and political activists there where Mr. Kedar Dhimal, a general secretary of Dhimal Caste Development Centre played an admirable role managing meetings with them. I got an opportunity to discuss the Dhimal traditional marriage system and how modernization was impacting their marriage system these days. On the day of the *Dhangdhange mela*, I also met almost all the chief persons of the community of different Dhimal areas and talked to some of them regarding my project. I requested the chief person of the Damak area to provide me with his mobile number so that I could contact and meet him in his own home and to talk to him about my project with the help of my Dhimal friends. He was ready to give me his mobile number and after some days I contacted to him. I was invited in his house where I spent 2 hours and collected important information about the marriage system. During my homestay period, I took 15 interviews. After completing the primary data collection in my home town, I came to Kathamandu, the capital city of Nepal. Then, I visited the library of Tribhuvan University where I collected some important documents regarding my project. Similarly, I visited the National Foundation for Development of Indigenous Nationalities and collected useful articles, journal and books relevant to my project.

Being an outsider to the Dhimal community, I faced some difficulties to collect important information regarding my interest. For example, some respondents tried to skip information

thinking that all this information were not needed to describe to the outsider. But it felt easy to discuss with the elderly men because they were eager to tell about their past stories thinking that it was essential to document their tradition and culture. The important thing was that I was from the same area, and that helped me to some extent to immerse myself in the Dhimal community in order to study their culture and more specifically to understand their traditional and modern marriage practices. The one month long fieldwork gave me a golden opportunity to build rapport into the Dhimal community.

1.9 ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

The thesis is divided into seven chapters. The introductory first chapter includes the background, statement of problems, objectives and research questions and discussions of my fieldwork including my role as a researcher. The second chapter contains the methodology including approach of the study, the setting, nature and sources of data, data collection tools and techniques and the research ethics. The third chapter presents theoretical discussions to find out the changes in the traditional marriage system and the community as a whole. The fourth chapter describes the Dhimal people, including their history and origin and their cultural aspects of the study area. Analysis and interpretation of the data is presented in chapter five and six, while conclusion is given in chapter seven.

CHAPTER II: METHODOLOGY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

To find out how Dhimal marriage changes, this chapter describes the research methods employed to collect the data required for the present study. More specifically, this section contains a brief description of the approach to the study, the selection of the study area, data collection tools and technique and the research ethics.

2.2 APPROACH OF THE STUDY

The ethnographic study was conducted for this study and an attempt was made to observe the culture and marriage system of the Dhimal and its changing patterns with the help of various data collection tools and techniques. The fieldwork was conducted from 6th June to 15th July in Nepal. The purpose of the fieldwork was to explore the impact of modernization in the traditional marriage system and its effect on society.

This study applies qualitative research method because it is a suitable method for researching people, institutions and their emotions, behaviour and lived experiences. According to Patton (2000), “qualitative research method adopts a naturalistic approach which attempts to understand a phenomenon in content specific settings where the researcher becomes incapable to manipulate the real phenomenon”. An honest effort was made to find informants who had real experiences with the Dhimal marriage system and its changing patterns.

2.3 THE SETTING



Fig. 1 Map of Damak Municipality

Source: <http://nhcf-nepal.blogspot.no/2015/06/new-horizons-christian-fellowship-damak.html>

(Accessed on April 28, 2016)

The area of this study is Damak, which is situated in the district of Jhapa in east Nepal.⁷ It consists of 19 wards with 75.13 km² total area and it is 100 meters above the sea level. It is the second largest city of Jhapa district situated between the Ratuwa River in the east and the Mawa River in the west with 75,743 total population.⁸ It was a small village mainly inhabited by the Dhimal ethnic group before the 1960s. After the eradication of the deadly disease malaria since the 1960s, the hill Hindu caste people rapidly migrated to this area. It was covered by a dense forest until 1972 but the construction of the Mahendra highway in 1972 changed the place into a growing trade and transport centre (Rijal, 1981). The population of this city has been increasing rapidly after the eradication of malaria in the Terai and the completion of the Mahendra highway. It was declared as a municipality in 1982. After that Damak became the fastest growing business hub and trading centre of Eastern Terai. Because of this, most of the agricultural land changed into residential areas, industries and markets (Dahal, 1995:76). Similarly, the modern information technologies and the western culture entered into the city, which heavily impacted the traditional culture of Damak people. The fastest growing urbanization also killed the natural beauty of the city. Because of this, Dhimal and other ethnic groups who used to live there since time immemorial were displaced from their own territory and forced to follow cultural traits of Hindu people.

Damak consists of several places such as Khakhare, Adiyamal, Bhangbari, Setumari, Dhukurpani, Dhardhare, Tarabari, Baraghare, Golatar, Dapgachi, etc. And in these places, we find the Dhimal settlement. Besides Dhimal there are some ethnic groups living in this like Marwaris, Newars, Bhujel, Majhi, etc.

2.4 SELECTION OF THE STUDY AREA

This research was conducted in Damak Municipality, a growing city of eastern Nepal. The actual reason behind the selection of this study area are mentioned below:

- I myself am an inhabitant of the study area so I am closely aware of their tradition and culture. Being an inhabitant of this area, I am to some extent familiar with how the Dhimal community's traditional socio-cultural patterns have been changing

⁷ <http://mydamak.blogspot.no/2010/08/introduction.html>

⁸ <http://www.liveradio.me/saptarangi-fm-101-6mhz-nepal/>

dramatically, how modernization has impacted their way of life, what their problems are, etc. Moreover, it is more convenient to take interviews with the respondents.

- It is the place where the Dhimal used to live since time immemorial. They have their own culture but due to the negligence of the government, it is losing its unique socio-cultural patterns. Thus, I have tried to expose their problems and awake them to preserve their cultural patterns.
- At present, modernization has caused a lot of the traditional socio-cultural patterns of the study area to suffer. Among the socio-cultural practices, marriage is the one that has been impacted by modernization. Some research has been done in this area, but nobody has done research on the marriage system specifically. Therefore, I think that Dhimal indigenous cultural changes and changes in marriage patterns need to be better understood.
- These reasons, as mentioned above, were taken into consideration to study the changes on marriage system in which attempts have been made to find some of the new trends on marriage system of the study area.

2.5 NATURE AND SOURCES OF DATA

Descriptive as well as exploratory research designs were adopted. Both primary and secondary data were used to fulfil the objectives of the study. Various data collection techniques and tools were implemented in order to collect primary and secondary data. The primary data were collected through the interviews, discussions and participation observation from the field work of one month. In addition to this primary data, other relevant secondary data and information was also collected for the purpose of the study.

2.6 DATA COLLECTION TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES

Qualitative methodology was implemented to fulfil the objective of the research. What is the traditional norms and values of marriage system, what are the observable changes in the marriage system now, what are the causing factors for such change, what impact does modernization have on the traditional marriage system of Dhimal society? And how do the changes taking place in society with regard to marriage as an institution that is filled with rituals, meaning and identity impact their society as a whole. These queries are the central points of the study.

Interviews

Moser and Calton (1971:271) describe interview as “a conversation between interviewer and respondent with the purpose of eliciting certain information from the respondent”. To take interview with informants is one of the most widely accepted methods in research that helps to find out the answers of research questions. It has a significant role mostly in qualitative research because it is conducted with a limited number of informants and the questions are designed less formally which gives the informants the opportunity to delve further into specific issues (Silverman: 2005).

Different sorts of interview processes such as structured, unstructured, snowball, and semi-structured exist in the methods of data collection. Among them, I am interested to select semi-structured interview because it is a primary source of data collection. Moreover, the reason for selecting such an interview is that I could get the valuable information is necessary for my findings. Semi-structured interview is open and more flexible towards the informants which provides an opportunity for the informants to contribute their ideas and views about the subject matter. It is also an informal conversation between the researcher and the participants with open-ended questions. To get an insight into Dhimal marriage system and its changes following the process of modernization, I, as a researcher, have mostly used, “why” “what” and “how” questions during fieldwork.

The semi-structured interviews were conducted with selected respondents to find out the continuity and change system of the Dhimal community. This type of interviews carries the list of questions regarding the topic to be covered. Before applying this method in my fieldwork, I prepared some questions according to my research goals. I managed to conduct 15 interviews. The interviews were taken with active members of the Dhimal indigenous community, both male and female in order to elicit their perception of the traditional as well as modern marriage practices and its impacts on the whole society. Mostly, I interviewed old people during my fieldwork because they were the people who could tell their stories from past to present. I also interviewed two young people to compare the traditional and modern marriage system of the Dhimal.

Participant observation

Participant observation was used to study the cultural behaviour, settlements patterns, agricultural practices, dress patterns, daily family life and their daily present ritual and customs. Marriage is a part of the Dhimal culture, which was observed closely. Similarly, ‘*Dhangdhange*

Mela’ was the greatest carnival of the community which was observed in the Dhimal Caste Development Centre, Morang. During the carnival, the traditional dresses and cultural programs were observed. Besides that, settlements patterns and daily family life was observed during the fieldwork.

Focus Group Discussion

Focus group discussion is a method which is arranged to analyse a specific set of topics. Such a discussion is focused because ‘it involves some kind of collective activity’ (Kitzinger 2005: 56). This is a method where the interviewer gets information through different informants; this helps get closer to the data. With the help of group discussions, I explored the perceptions of marriage, its significance in Dhimal society in order to understand how and why the traditional marriage system has changed due to modernization.

When I reached the study area, it was the beginning of the rainy season and the Dhimal people were planning to plant paddy. However, I got an opportunity to take part in the big carnival called ‘*Dhangdhange Mela*’ which was organized in the Dhimal Caste Development Centre, Morang district. The regular visit to the office provided an opportunity to meet the active members of the community. The regular visit to the office also made it easier to apply this method successfully. Discussions were conducted in the Dhimal Caste Development Centre with active members of the community. During discussions, I got an opportunity to discuss about marriage system and how the modernization force impacted their social institution with people who actively involved in the organization in order to revive their traditional identity.

During discussions, I raised some questions such as how the traditional marriage was celebrated, what the significance of marriage in Dhimal community was, how the marriage system changed due to modernization and how it affected the whole community, if there was any influence of Hindu culture in the marriage system etc. These questions were discussed and attempted to be answered. During discussion, most of the members accepted that modernization is impacting the traditional marriage practices of the community. As a result, the unique socio-cultural practice of the community is in danger. But one of the members of the discussion explained that modernization has not only brought negative impact but positive impact too. It helps to make people aware of their past tradition and culture.

Secondary Data

Secondary data analysis can be defined as second-hand data that was collected by others (Cnossen 1997). Some journals, articles, books written by national and international anthropologists were very useful for the study. Among them, '*On the Aborigines of the sub Himal's*' by Hodgson Brain provides important history of Dhimal indigenous people. *The Dhimals: It's Cultural Patterns and Economic Change*' written by Dr. Rishikeshab Raj Regmi presents some valuable information regarding Dhimal culture. '*People of Nepal*' by Dor Bahadur Bista contains important information about different indigenous communities of Nepal. '*Introduction of Dhimal Caste*' by Som Dhimal provides important information about Dhimal history. The statistical data needed for the study was collected from Central Bureau of Statistics, Kathmandu. The valuable documents regarding Indigenous people of Nepal were obtained from Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities. Besides that, some other valuable documents were collected from the University Library of the Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu.

2.7 RESEARCH ETHICS

Ethics play an important role in research because it helps to set up the moral standard for the conduct of research. It can be described as a 'method, procedure or perspective for deciding how to act and for analysing complex problems and issues'.⁹ Ethics generally talks about the rights and duties of the researcher. To seek the truth, respect the human values of society and respect the social duties and responsibilities, research ethics must be ensued. If the researcher ignores the research ethics, it ruins the value and nobility of the research. Moreover, the implication of ethics on doing research on indigenous issues is urgent because historically indigenous people have been the focus of improper and disrespectful treatment by the non-indigenous researchers (Kuokkanen, 2000). As a researcher, I was aware of ethical issues while conducting research on the Dhimal community.

Before interviewing, I went to the Dhimal Caste Development Centre and met some leaders to give information about my background and objectives of the research. After listening to me, they agreed to give me a letter pad that was helpful to show my informants as a proof. Research subjects should be protected from "physical, mental and psychological harm (Chilisa, 2012:86). During the data collection period, I valued research ethics and tried to follow it.

⁹ Resnik, David "What is Ethics in Research and why is it Important?" accessed on March 7, 2016 at <http://www.niehs.nih.gov/research/resources/bioethics/whatis/>

Before taking interviews with my informants, I gave them information about my background and objectives of the research. I took informants as partners and not just subject because such sense of partnership between the researcher and the participants promotes moving ahead together for mutual interest that tributes the ethical space of each party. The informants were given opportunities to reserve themselves from participating without being exposed to pressure. During interviews, I agreed to protect the identities of the informants respecting their anonymity. Therefore, the name of the informants were replaced with pseudonyms.

I got an opportunity to observe a Dhimal wedding during my fieldwork. When I attended a wedding, I got a permission from both the bride's and groom's party. I also took some photos after getting permission from them. I also informed my informants about who provided the funding for the research.

2.8 SUMMARY

This chapter described the methodological framework of the study. The fieldwork was conducted in Damak municipality, Nepal. In order to highlight the changing ways of Dhimal marriage, a qualitative method was applied. The field work was carried out from 6th June to 15th July. I interviewed 15 people to find out changes of the Dhimal community and marriage system. In addition to interviews, participation observation and group discussions were also applied as a method of data collection. Finally, it focused on how ethical standard were maintained during data collection period.

CHAPTER III: THEORETICAL DISCUSSIONS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The main purpose of this section is to introduce the theoretical framework which will be applied to analyse the key characteristics and processes of Dhimal culture, and in particular the marriage system as an important social and cultural institution. “A theory is an organized body of concepts and principles intended to explain a particular phenomenon” (Leedy and Ormrod, 2005:4). For this study, I use modernization and ritual theories to understand the phenomenon of the marriage system. I have applied modernization theory in order to find out the changes in traditional marriage system and the community as a whole. Similarly, ritual theory is applied to explore the traditional rituals.

3.2 MODERNIZATION THEORY

Modernization is not only a process of economic change but also changes in “traditional attitudes values, and institutions” (Andersen and Taylor, 2010:217 Qtd. on Drews, 2013:15). The changes of traditional attitudes, values and institutions act negatively in terms of groups’ identity, their traditional culture, norms and values and institutions. Modernization is a driving factor which leads to changes in culture, such as changes in norms and values, beliefs, attitudes, dress, language, etc. Such changes erode some aspects of traditional cultural practices of the communities. Traditional culture represents customs, language, dress, beliefs, and rituals, etc. which are the noticeable factor that determine the unique identity of any group. These factors are crucial especially in the context of indigenous communities because such factors empower them to be distinct from other communities. The most important thing is that traditional culture, the norms and the values are the essential elements of any traditional society and act as its identity. But when the modernization acts its role over traditional cultures of indigenous communities, then certainly it will negatively impact the distinct identity and also break the social and cultural integration of the communities. Though modernization is making human life easier, it plays a negative role over traditional culture and assists to erode the sacred tradition of different communities of the society. We can find several examples where, in the name of modernization, many traditional societies suffered and still suffer from the loss of their tradition, beliefs, rituals, norms and values that finally play a contribute to the loss of their ethnic identity. Thus, modernization is a responsible factor for the loss of the sacred traditions and culture of the indigenous communities of the world.

“At a more abstract level modernization means, for short, emancipation and adaptability”

(Østerud, 1993:37). The influence and adoption of western culture, modern information technologies and foreign employment play important role to substitute traditional culture for modern ones. Specially, the young generations are attracted to modern cultures and life styles and forget their tradition, culture, language, values and beliefs. They are attracted towards western dresses, music, dances, cinemas, etc. and neglecting their own tradition and culture. Because of the adoption of western culture, young generations are interested to learn English language are neglect their mother tongue. Due to the rapid expansion of the English, both in public and private schools, indigenous languages are in danger. The child starts to learn English from the beginning of his/her school instead of learning his/her own language. Even the parents are not interested to teach native language to their children believing that it does not provide social, economic and political opportunities to them. So, the small child begins to learn Nepali and English from the beginning.

The modernization theory is dominated mostly by western thinking from the enlightenment of the 1600s and 1700s to the present (Thorton, 2005; Qtd. on Mitchell, 2009:11). Western thinking also termed westernization is the process to follow the socio-cultural system (ideas, values, and habits) of Europe and America. Especially, the third world countries are highly influenced by the western culture because the west generally represents the developed, modern, urbanized and industrialized sphere, whereas the rest represents the opposite. This thought is especially relevant to South Asian countries where modernization is seen as westernization (Shrestha, 2003:3-4). Nepal is a developing country where people knowingly or unknowingly experience the impact of modernization. For example, people are changing their traditional norms and values, languages, life style, occupation, personality, etc. The current scenario shows that mostly young generations are attracted by western culture through western language, technology, media, music, movie, dress, and foods. Because of the influence of western culture, especially the young generation forgets their tradition and adopt western way of life. However, it is not totally reasonable to apply westernization as equivalent to modernization. According to Naofusa “westernization would mean that a certain indigenous cultural element of the traditional East is replaced by the penetrating Western element, and the functional role of the former is taken over by the latter while modernization, on the other hand, basically means to remould a cultural system into a new mode” (Noafusa, 1983). Hence, it can be said that westernization can be indicated as modernization; rather it can be termed just as the part of modernization.

It can be said that modernization is connected to progress in science and technologies, which make human life easier and humans more capable. “Even if modernization is necessary to improve human life, it will be indispensable for Eastern nations to maintain their traditional cultures too. Traditional cultures need neither to reject modernization nor to be absorbed in the streams of modernization. Instead, these two have to be harmonized and complemented by each other” (Naofusa, 1983).

Despite its small size, Nepal is a country of cultural diversity comprising of distinct groups – ethnic, racial, religious – with unique heritages, norms and values, languages, and lifestyles. Its diversity is only possible if the country seriously intends to let flourish the indigenous qualities of the different ethnic groups in the nation. But the influence of mainstream cultures (Hindu culture and western culture) is creating barriers for preserving indigenous qualities. The traditional societies of Nepal have been losing their grip in community solidarity ever since the so-called ‘territorial unification’ of the country started in 1769. The main after-effects of the 'territorial unification' was that all the indigenous communities faced challenges to perform their tradition, culture, norms and values, languages and traditional knowledge (Bhattachan, 2008: 18-20). The modernization of Nepal accelerated after 1950s, when the long autocracy of Rana rule was thrown by the people's movements of Nepal in 1950 and established democracy (Yang, 2007). After the establishment of democracy, the door to foreign relations and aid were opened that assisted Nepal to enter into the modern world.

In this modern world, mostly western culture is directly and indirectly affecting Dhimal tradition and culture. People are busy to copy other languages, religion, culture, including, as we shall see, marriage rituals thinking that western culture is better than them. They encounter diverse cultures and take part in different ritual ceremonies. From such activities, Dhimal learn new things and try to compare their tradition and culture with others. This kind of activities encourage to apply something new in their tradition and culture. This changes their ritual activities and leads them to following others ideas, values, and habits. Moreover, such changes reflect larger social and cultural changes in the community.

Marriage is an integral institution of the Dhimal society because it creates communal relations and practice in society. But it is under the shadow of modernization where the traditional marriage rituals are challenged. The new marriage system encourages the loss of their tradition, which again contributes to the loss of their distinct Dhimal identity.

3.3 RITUAL THEORY

This section aims to include the introduction of a ritual, its significance and the relationship between ritual and meaning. Ritual can be described “as a category of human experience, coming to see it a more basic than beliefs and integral to the social dimensions of religion” (Bell, 1992; 15). The role of ritual is to tie society and culture together. Traditional indigenous societies have different sorts of rituals, which play an important role in their society as something people share and have in common. People continuously practice the rituals as their ancestors used to practice them before.

In the modern world People stop to perform some of the important rituals. They have changed some of the important rituals and have replaced them by other rituals. Although modern people have changed some of the important rituals, in traditional societies, rituals still have a significant role. Moreover, they have great importance in indigenous communities because the latter have unique tradition and culture, different from other dominant communities of the society. Rituals help maintaining social order in the indigenous communities. According to Paul (2009: 82), “rituals are multi-layered transactions in which speech and behaviour are socially prescribed”. Rituals help unify people inside the community. “Rituals give visible expression to the deep cultural norms that order the way people think, feel, and evaluate their worlds. They give public expression to the moral orders that people believe was defined by the ancestors, or instituted by the culture’s heroes when they taught people to be civilized and human” (ibid). Different communities have different kinds of rituals, which they perform in different social ceremonies. Rituals are also the source of faiths, attitudes, values, perceptions, and feelings of different communities where the people grow up and survive.

Ritual is taken as “Behaviour marked by prescribed rules” (Paden, 1988:94). Mostly, it is done through prescribed rules, which remain in the society since time immemorial in different communities. Different communities have different types of behaviour, movements, rituals and sacrament, and it is done through prescribed rules. Every types of behaviour, movements, rites and sacraments has its own importance in ritual practice. “The language of ritual is action itself. Ritual does what words alone cannot” (Paden, 1998:98). In Dhimal’s culture, ritual is performed through different carnivals, feasts and festivals. The implication of its rituals is situated in its performances. It is at the time of carnivals, feasts and festivals that the rituals become visible. The performance of ritual is apparent and clear and its action gives more meanings than words. There are series of rituals associated with all the events of life of life-cycle, for instance birth, marriage and death.

3.4 MARRIAGE AS A RITUAL

This research is based on the marriage system. Therefore, the main interest is on Dhimal marriage rituals where the researcher is focusing on tradition and its role in marriage rituals. Marriage is not only the union between two persons, and families. It is community making practice in Dhimal culture. Modernization and dominant culture have been impacting the traditional marriage ritual but still during marriage ceremonies, different rituals are performed. For example, marriage *rit*,¹⁰ exchange of home-made beer between the bride's and the groom's party, purification, sacrifice, songs, and feasts are important rituals which are performed in marriage ceremonies. Similarly, a chicken sacrifice before and after procession is a must in wedding to protect from the 'sins'. Furthermore, the presence of *Majhi*, and other representatives from the beginning to the end of the wedding ceremony is another important ritual in Dhimal community.

3.5 SUMMARY

This chapter presented theories to highlight the changes of the Dhimal society and marriage system of Dhimal. Modernization theory was used in order to find out how the modern knowledge displaces traditional knowledge. Similarly, it also focused on how the modernization process shaped the traditional ways of living in the Dhimal indigenous community. In addition, ritual theory was applied to show its significance in the traditional societies and more specifically to analyse the Dhimal marriage rituals.

¹⁰ Marriage *rit* is an important customary practice in the Dhimal society, since marriage is not approved socially and culturally with such *rit*. In every visit, the groom's party must present a pot of beer, two bottles homemade wine, about 200gms betel nuts, 4 packets of tobacco and a match box to the bride's father. Presence of the village chief is essential during the period of such *rit*. There are ten types of marriage *rits* popular in the Dhimal society which I will describe in details in another chapter.

CHAPTER IV: HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL BACKGROUND OF DHIMAL PEOPLE

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter shortly describes Nepal and the Dhimal people. It also presents the social and cultural world including their life passage rituals, such as birth, marriage, and death. Among the life passage rituals, marriage rituals will be described in the next chapter in details. Finally, it presents the modernization process of Dhimal in general.

4.2 NEPAL

Nepal is a beautiful country situated between two giants of South Asia: Tibet, the autonomous region of China in the north and India to the east, west and south. Economically, it is one of the least developed countries of the world. Geographically, almost all the country is in south East Asia between 26⁰22' and 30⁰27' north latitudes, and 80⁰4' and 88⁰12' east longitudes. The total area covered by the country is 147,181 km² and extends approximately 145-241km north to south and 850km west to east.¹¹ A total of 83% of the area of the country is covered with hills and mountains. The northern part of the country is covered by high mountains where 8 out of 14 8000-peaks of the world stand including the summit of the world Mount Everest (8,848m) whereas other parts represent continually lower steps to the lowland plains. Although the country just occupies 0.1% of the total area of the earth, it is rich in huge geographical diversity, bio-diversity and socio-cultural diversity (Shrestha and Gupta, 1993:3). Topographically, the country is divided into three regions: the Himalaya, the Hills and the Terai. Within these regions, there are settlements of diverse ethnic groups characterized by their own languages, culture and customs, as well as tradition. Nepal is the second richest country in the world and richest country of South Asia in water resources. There are more than 6000 thousands rivers in Nepal; Koshi, Gandaki and Karnali are the major rivers of Nepal, which flow from north to south.¹²

4.3 THE DHIMAL – AN INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY OF NEPAL

Some scholarly books and articles as well as Dhimal oral stories show that they are the brothers of Rai and Limbu. Moreover, their physical features signify that they are Mongoloid people. Bista (1972) and Diwas (1982) described them as the Kirati group of the Mongoloid race. They

¹¹ http://web.gps.caltech.edu/~avouac/nepal_trip/geography.htm

¹² <http://www.telegraphnepal.com/national/2014-05-23/water-resources-of-nepal>

are worshippers of nature who believe on supernatural powers. To govern the society, they have developed their own social institutions, and the headman of the institution, called the *Deonia*, helps to maintain peace, harmony, and effectively solve internal troubles (Regmi, 2007:100).

The Dhimal were nomadic people at the beginning who used to hunt and gather animals for their daily life. After there was scarcity of land to hunt animals, they began to settle in specific areas (Gautam 1994:176). But due to their changed situation, they are involved in farming and fishing now. Economically, they are not strong so most of them do labour jobs for their livelihood. (Dhimal, Som 2011:120). According to the informants of this thesis, the original settlement of the Dhimal is located in northern Morang, called Rajarani of Morang District.

4.4 ORIGIN

There is no consensus among the concerned people about the origin of Dhimal. There are several legends as to the origin so it is not easy for anybody to determine their real origin. The most frequently told legend is about two Kirat brothers who went on a pilgrimage to Varanasi. On the way home, the older brother walked faster than the younger brother, cutting banana and trees as he went. The younger brother became lost as the trees grew back and decided to remain on the plains, becoming the father of the Dhimal people. The older brother continued walking until he reached the mountains and founded the group known today as the Limbu people (Regmi 1991:56). To this day the people of the hills often refer to the Dhimals as “Limbu of the plains.”

According to Tulashi Diwash (1978) ‘Dhi’ stands for the ‘banks of the river’ and ‘Malo’ stands for ‘lost’. Hence, the name “Dhimal” comes from the word “*Dhimalo*”. They are called “*Haiko*” by the Meche, “*Dhamal*” by the Rajbanshi and “Limbu of Terai” by the mountain people (Regmi, 1991:55). Mainly, they live in different places of two districts: Jhapa and Morang of eastern Nepal. However, nowadays they are found migrated to neighbouring districts, such as Ilam, Sunsari, Kathmandu and Banke (Dhimal, 2011:2).

As mentioned, there are many stories about the origin of Dhimal. One of the popular stories about their origin is that they are the brothers of Limbu: another indigenous group of a hilly area of eastern Nepal, of the Hang clan with father Tagera and mother Dingding. Since the eastern Nepal was attacked by Muslim rulers in the past, one brother remained in the hill and another settled in Terai, i.e. Dhimal (Bista, 2007:98). Other tales claim that the two brothers of the Hang clan settled in different places in the course of cultivation and migration.

Dhimals are called ‘*Dhemal*’ by the people of neighbouring society in Terai, such as Rajbanshi, Tharu, where “*dhe*” means ‘separated’ and “*mal*” means ‘terai’. It means they are the people who separated with their brothers and migrated to Terai (Diwas, 1978). The chairman of Dhimal development centre Mr. Ram Bahadur Dhimal also claims that the word Dhimal means the people migrated to Terai from the west.

4.5 POPULATION

The national census of 1952 recorded 5671 members of Dhimal. In the national census of 1961 taken on the basis of mother tongue the total population recorded as 8,188 including 3529 in Jhapa and 4,659 in Morang district. But the national census in 1971 didn’t record the Dhimal population separately (Regmi, 1991: 30). The national census of Nepal in 1991 recorded 16,781 Dhimal population, which corresponded to 0.09% of the total population. The national census taken in 2001 recorded 19,537 Dhimals. According to the latest national census of 2011, Dhimal’s population comprises 26,298. But they do not agree with this data and claim that their population is around 50000.¹³

4.6 CULTURAL PRACTICE AND TRADITION

The Dhimal culture is the main culture of the eastern plain region of Nepal. In comparison to other communities of the study area, they have kept up their cultural entity differently. But the gradual introduction of modernization after 1950 impacted their socio-cultural practices gradually. Because of modern technology, associated with economic development, urbanization generated a process of change in the social intuitions of the Dhimal society living in the Damak Municipality.

Festivals and Worshipping

The Dhimal believe deeply in supernatural powers, so that they don’t worship any idols. They have a strong belief that by worshipping their ancestral deities, they can discard all evils and miseries of life. (Dhimal, 2011:33). They clearly attempt to follow the beliefs and practices that their forefathers observed and prescribed to appease all types of supernatural powers.

Supernatural power is taken as an impersonal force in the society because they fully believe that health, wealth, beauty, good harvests, miseries, misfortunes and death are the result of

¹³ I am informed by the Dhimal activists during fieldwork.

either the grace or dissatisfaction of supernatural powers (Regmi, 2007:140). Their religious practices and beliefs are formed in abstract form. They are not ready to accept scientific or logical discussions.

There are many feasts, carnivals and festivals in the society which help them to unite in the socio-cultural and religious life. People of all age groups actively participate and contribute whatever they can do during feasts, carnivals and festivals. The Dhimal worship and celebrate the following feasts and festivals which are shortly described below:

Sirijat Puja

This worship starts from May-June and ends in June-July and is held in most of the Dhimal settlements. This is a community worship. Therefore, on these occasions, each family contribute as much as it can, according to their social rank and economic status (ibid: 72). Different birds and animals, such as chickens, ducks, pigs, and male goats, are sacrificed to their deities. In addition to these, horses and elephants made of mud are sacrificed to their deities. During the time of '*Sirijat*', the Dhimal women are not allowed to participate. They, however, get the consecrated food in their house.

Dhang Dhang Mela

This is the greatest festival in the Dhimal society. As *Sirijat*, it begins from May-June and ends in June-July. It is also held in most of the settlements (ibid: 72) The date of this carnival is only fixed in consultation with the neighbouring villages, in order to avoid repetition of same carnival in any other village on that day, so that they can gather more people. It is notified by the beating of a traditional Dhimal drum.

During the carnival, young girls wear their traditional dresses in a bright fashionable manner and involve actively. This carnival provides an opportunity for the young boys and girls of diverse villages to meet together. It is customary in Dhimal society since time immemorial because young boys select brides during the period. In addition to this, it creates a good atmosphere to develop common beliefs and helps to transmit their sacred traditions to younger generations.

Besides *Sirijatri* and *Dhandhng*, there are some festivals such as *Purba* worship, *Nwangi* worship, *Sansari* worship, etc., which have their own importance in Dhimal society. All these festivals and carnivals play a vital role to keep them distinct from other ethnic groups of Nepal.

4.7 COSTUMES, ORNAMENTS, AND FOOD

Dress plays an important role for the ethnic groups because it represents the identity of the particular group. As other ethnic groups, Dhimals have their own unique dress, which is a power marker of Dhimal indigenous identity. Women wear 'Bona' which is called 'Petani' in Nepali. It is a single piece of black woven plain cloth with red or white stripes on the border. It is a piece of cloth 5 to 6 feet long that women wrap from their chest to below their knees. Such dress is usually worn during feasts and festivals and marriage ceremonies (Shephard, 2010: 16). Similarly, male use *Cheutai Dhari*, *Tepana*, *Bhoto* and *Askot* on most occasions. Most of them are using modern clothes except for feasts and festivals due to the impact of modernization. In my field investigation, I observed that especially young boys wear modern dresses.

Dhimal women are fond of ornaments and wear different ornaments during different fairs and festivals and marriage ceremonies. The most common ornaments are *Takamala*,¹⁴ *Kalli*, ear rings, etc.; most of them are made of silver.

Dhimal have their own traditional food items which distinguish them from other indigenous communities of Nepal. The main food items are *Chichiri*, *Bhakka* and *Babiya*,¹⁵ etc. (Diwas, 1972:73).

4.8 SOCIAL SYSTEM

The social system of Dhimal is distinct from other indigenous communities of Nepal. To preserve socio-cultural identity, they have established a different social structure and organization that is helpful to maintain and promote their own traditional norms and values. Dhimal society has accepted a *Majhi*, a *Dhami* and an *Ojha* and their role in their society.

- **Majhi:** In every traditional village, there is a village headman who is appointed for the protection and development of the village. In Dhimal society, the *Majhi* is respected as the village chief. The main duty of *Majhi* is to solve the social problems that occurs in the village. He also has to play a role in preserving the tradition and culture. To become the *Majhi* in a village, the person should be intellectual, honourable, respected and rich. If the *Majhi* dies, his eldest son will be chosen as the new *Majhi* of the village (Regmi, 2007:103)
- **Dhami:** *Dhami* represents a religious leader or a priest who is needed mostly in

¹⁴ *Takamala* is the most common ornament made up from silver coins. It is gradually disappearing nowadays.

¹⁵ *Babiya* is a kind of food made of rice flour mixed with water and cooked by vaporizing.

community rituals, feasts and festivals. The duty of the priest is to protect the village from external and internal supernatural threats: evil spirits, diseases and starvation, etc. As *Majhi*, after the death of *Dhami* his eldest son will be selected as the new *Dhami* in the Dhimal society (Regmi, 2007:103).

- ***Ojha***: *Ojha* is also called witch doctor who drives out the evil spirit through his power of the enchantment of spells. There are many *Ojhas* in the Dhimal society. The most important work of the *Ojha* is to cure ill people. During treatment, sometimes he would prescribe and distribute medicine made of forest herbs and roots (ibid: 106).

All these respected peoples' presence is a must during the marriage and other important ceremonies.

4.9 LIFE PASSAGE RITUALS

There are several rituals performed in Dhimal community beginning from before the birth to even after death. They have numerous rituals associated with all the main events of life cycle with its three important stages: birth, marriage and death. These are presented below:

Birth

The life cycle of every individual begins with birth in every human society. The birth ritual in the Dhimal society begins on the day after a child's birth. They have their own interpretation of the pain faced by a woman at the time of delivery of a baby. They believe that if a son is born, the mother suffers a lot more than when a daughter is born. During delivery, the neighbouring women usually come to assist a woman. The women who come to assist delivery have to awake a woman during delivery. If the pain is intense, a midwife is called to assist a woman. Nowadays, Dhimal women are taken to hospital if necessary (ibid: 116).

After birth, the mother is given time to rest for a week and is fed with fried pulses and rice. This food is provided to mother to get necessary nutrition. But they believe that if the mother is given green vegetables she may suffer from common cold. Pig, fish and chicken are especially given to make her strong and healthy. The brother of a mother is also sent to her house to provide necessary help (Ibid.117).

According to informants, the name giving ritual is held on the 3rd or 7th day after the umbilical cord falls off. The mother has to take a bath with hot water on this day. She is not allowed to take a bath outside either in a river or pond, out of fear for haunted spirits or ghosts. The stones and ashes which she uses to make her body warm and to get rid of the pain are packed in a

cloth and thrown outside of a house. Then, the house is cleaned and smeared with cow dung. After that the name of the baby is given. Generally, the name of a baby is fixed by the grandfather and grandmother of the father of a baby in Dhimal society.

Marriage

The title of my thesis is related on marriage so the detail information of the marriage ritual is described in the next chapter.

Death

Different communities follow different rituals after the death of a person. In Dhimal society, when somebody dies, one first invites the priest and then informs relatives and neighbours. They cut a bamboo for carrying a dead body and measure a dead person's length so that they can fix a corpse properly. They do it to take the corpse to the cemetery putting on the '*Manchauli*'¹⁶ (Dhimal, 2011:97). This is tying with a colourful thread. The priest sprinkles soil dust over the dead body. Then, the corpse is ready to take to the cemetery. The priest walks in front of the people of the funeral procession. The family members must bring a chicken, boiled rice and homemade wine with the dead body during funeral procession.

After reaching the cemetery, the sons put a coin on the particular area and the corpse is put there. Then, the sons of the deceased start to dig a ditch in the north-south direction. The sons worship the corpse with coloured rice and flowers. Now it's time to put the corpse into the ditch and fill with soil first by sons and then by the funeral procession.

Generally, the Dhimal bury the dead, however people start to burn the bodies nowadays. They burn them because there is a scarcity of jungle near them, and it is hard to get right place to bury (ibid: 97). There are some minor differences between married and unmarried burying rituals. For example: if the dead is an unmarried boy or girl, a banana or flower is planted on the grave; this is not necessary for married ones. The priest worships after the corpse is buried or burnt, offers wine, leaves, and the small chicken in the name of the dead person. Finally, every member of the family and the related lineage members take a bath and return home.

In Dhimal culture, the eldest son has to observe the mourning and perform funeral rites. Along with the eldest son, all the sons have to shave their hair and take a bath. After taking a bath, they touch knife, oil and fire put in front of the door and get purified by sprinkling the water

¹⁶ Bamboo which is used to carry a dead person.

touched by a silver coin. The members of the family and related lineage members are seen as polluted because their family member is dead. Until the purification ritual is performed, they all have to observe mourning. During the polluted period, they can't eat food cooked in oil and salt. This generally takes place on the fourth day of death. If the dead's age is below 6, it can finish on the second day.

The last day is called the purification day where the neighbours and relatives are invited and purified by sprinkling the water touched by a silver coin or strip. Then a variety of food is served to the neighbours and relatives who have participated in the funeral procession. Finally, the priest is given a gift and completes the purification process.

4.10 MODERNIZATION PROCESS

The main after-effects of the 'territorial unification' were that Nepal entered into modernity. Because of the territorial unification project of King Prithivi Narayan Shah indigenous people were totally displaced from their territories. They were also discouraged to follow their traditions, culture, norms and values, languages and traditional knowledge openly and freely because of the state's 'Hinduization' and 'Nepalization' policy (Pyakurel, 2012:138-55). The hill culture, also called Hindu culture, created tremendous pressure to assimilate other groups in the area into their culture due to the pervasive process of assimilation and integration policy of the Hindu state. Because of the regular integration of the hill culture, Dhimal people were and are influenced and have gradually accepted some of the rituals of Hindu culture. Similarly, the influence of western culture, modern information technologies, and foreign employment play important role in substituting traditional Dhimal culture for the modern one. Especially, the young people are attracted to modern culture and life style and tend to forget their unique culture, language, values and beliefs. They start employing western dress, music, dance, and cinema instead of preserving their own culture.

Besides, the modern national education policy of Nepal encourages mainstream Nepali language which has been dominant over indigenous and minority languages. Watters & Rai, (2005:59) are of the view that "in an educational environment that does not value the diversity of languages and the contribution that ethnic and linguistic diversity makes to the well-being of the nation, speakers of minority languages will continue to be marginalized and minority languages will continue to die". Nepali is considered the official language which is needed to every indigenous people of Nepal to get good opportunities in different sectors in the society. Therefore, young Dhimal people see Nepali language as an opportunity in Nepal, while their

language is considered a language of no opportunity. Similarly, young people are attracted towards the English language because English is a key to get good job, business, and further education opportunities in Nepal as well as in foreign countries. Because of the government policy, the schools also started English classes that encourages small children to learn English. In my fieldwork, I observed that Dhimal parents send their children to private boarding schools and encourage them to learn English with the belief that English language will help them to acquire social and economic benefits. That is why young people feel rewarded to learn Nepali and English languages instead of their own language. Moreover, the use of Nepali and English languages is reinforced through television, radio, cinema, newspaper, private business, etc. This problem is not only faced by Dhimal people but the process of language loss throughout most of human history (Hele et al; 1992:1-42). An example is the Sami people of Norway where the government of Norway forcefully introduced the Norwegian language in every sector as an important tool for Norwegianization (Minde, 2005). The Norwegianization policy was introduced with great force from 1880 to 1950. The Sami children were forced to speak, read and write Norwegian instead of their Sami language during that period. Teachers were the frontline agents whose duty was to encourage children to learn Norwegian and stop using their mother tongue. The teachers who were able to teach Norwegian to the Sami children quickly got a good salary.

Damak itself is a municipality, so Dhimal people have a good access to electricity. Every house has electricity. People of the research area informed me that almost all houses also have television, DVD and so on. Some rich people also have access to Nepali, Indian and English channels. People are busy to watch those channels, and mostly young people are attracted to Indian and western channels. Slowly and gradually, Nepalese, Indian and English culture is overtaking their traditional culture. Similarly, modern information technologies, such as mobile phones, internet, and newspapers, also are flourishing with Western culture. During my fieldwork, I found that each and every young Dhimal I met had a mobile phone in their hands. They connect internet to the mobile phone and keep themselves busy to watch western products that transform their lives. My observation also gives me insight into the impact on the community.

Dhimal are now using modern methods of farming, which have directly and indirectly influenced their traditional ways of farming. The use of modern machinery for ploughing, harvesting, etc. has replaced the traditional methods of ploughing, spraying, irrigating and harvesting. The use of chemical fertilizers is increasing, which leads to degradation of the most

common farmland. Because of the influence of the modern methods of farming, the traditional culture and life styles has changed.

4.11 SUMMARY

The chapter highlighted the historical, social and cultural aspects of the Dhimal including their important rituals found in the community, such as life passage rituals related to birth, death and marriage. In the historical background, the chapter included their origin, and population. Similarly, the cultural aspects touched on the festivals and worshipping of the community. It also comprised their costumes, ornaments, food system. Further, it carried the importance of *Majhi*, *Dhami*, and *Ojha* in the Dhimal society. Finally, it shortly presented the modernization process in Dhimal.

CHAPTER V: THE CONTINUITY AND CHANGING MARRIAGE SYSTEM OF DHIMAL

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In Nepal, different ethnic groups of people have different kinds of sacred rituals. Here indigenous people, especially Dhimal, are enriched with traditionally colourful rituals. The ritualistic parts of Dhimal marriage is the main focus and of this chapter. With the passage of time, the traditional ritualistic parts of marriage have been changing and adopting some new traits of other cultures. They are practiced with some new forms of marriage now. Because of this activity, Dhimal's traditional culture and ethnic identity is in crisis. The changing marriage rituals of the Dhimal and the influence of modernization is also analysed in this chapter. The chapter also focuses on presenting and analysing the data collected during fieldwork including the informants' views towards the impacts of modernization on marriage rituals. Analysis of the data indicates that modernization plays a vital role to change the most of the marriage rituals. In addition, Hindu culture also plays a role in changing Dhimal marriage system.

5.2 DHIMAL MARRIAGE

Marriage is a commonly practiced system that is implanted through citizenly acts, cultural and traditional ceremonies of the society (Daraz et al; 2014:91). "Marriage is not a temporary contract which indicates company for some time but it is the strong union of life indomitable in spirit in readiness to brave the vicissitudes of life" (Majupurias, 2009:8-10). Marriage is thus a long-lived contract for a man and a woman. Marriage not only unites two individuals but also joins the two families (Koirala, 2013:31). It is more than this in indigenous communities because it not only joins two individuals and families in one but joins two communities as well. Nepal is a country with over a hundred religio-ethnic and caste groups, which differ in their marriage patterns, customs and rituals. It has been a part of every indigenous community's tradition and culture since the beginning of time.

Like in other communities of the world, marriage is an important social institution that has been crucial to Dhimal society and is under the governance of socio-cultural norms. When a boy and a girl marry, they need to be committed for a life long journey on the same avenue, whether they experience enjoyment or sorrow. They also have to be responsible towards their family and community because marriage is a community making practice in Dhimal society (Rai, 2013:192). In their society, the involvement of the community is needed from the beginning to the end of the marriage, for example, *Majhi*, *Dhami* and the village elders.

Therefore, marriage is an important tool for the Dhimal society because the success of the marriage ritual depends on the community's prestige. It is an important social and cultural institution, which is organized as a social event for performance of traditional rituals, reinforcing ethnic identity and unifying the community. But in accordance with the change of time, the traditional ritualistic part of marriage has been changed and has been assimilated into modern culture and the surrounding Hindu culture.

5.3 TYPES OF MARRIAGE

There are different kinds of marriage practice in the Dhimal society, such as *Supari Bibaha* (marriage by offering a betel nut), marriage by force, *Maghi Bibaha* (arranged marriage), marriage by elopement and love marriage. Among them, the popular marriage system of Dhimal is arranged marriage which I am going describe in details in this chapter. Marriage by offering betel nut and marriage by force are not in existence after 1950s in Dhimal community.

Types of marriage	Approx. existence date
Supari Bibaha	until 1950s
Marriage by force	until 1950s
Maghi Bibaha	1950s to today
Marriage by elopement	historically exist
Love marriage	increasingly practiced after 1990s

Table: 1 shows the types of Dhimal marriage and approximately existence date.

Supari Bibaha

Supari Bibaha was prevalent in the past in Dhimal community. In this type of marriage, when a boy likes a girl he takes permission from his parents. Then, with the help of friends, he goes to girl's house and informs girl's parents about their purpose to come there. A young man offers a betel nut in the hand of the girl of his choice. If she accepts it, he can take her from her house and after some days they will be allowed to marry each other after performing some social rites. In case she disagrees to accept betel nut from the boy, the boy forcefully puts betel nut in her hand and captures her with the help of his friends. But this system of marriage has been totally abolished by Chief persons of the community after 1950's.

Marriage by force

Marriage by force was to some extent similar to marriage by offering betel nut and was prevalent before 1950. In this marriage, if a boy likes a girl, he tries to get permission from the girl's parents. If the girl's parents disagree then the boy forcefully captures the girl with the help of his friends from the weekly markets and carnivals or on the way when she is returning from the markets. The boy flees with the girl to an unknown place and hides her till she is agreed to marry him. According to key informants, in such cases, the father of the girl would call the villagers and village chief persons to decide about his daughter. Then, the chief persons ask the girl whether she agrees or not to marry the boy. If the girl accepts him as a husband, the boy can marry her socially and ritually. If she disagrees to accept him as a husband, she can go back to her natal house as a virgin girl and the boy is punished in front of village chief persons. The girl's parents accept both the condition of the girl either her agreement or disagreement to marry the boy. This type of marriage is totally abolished nowadays in Dhimal society because it is considered an illegal practice.

All of my informants informed me that the above types of marriage were prevalent in the past. But those marriages really created chaos among the Dhimal because young people started to do whatever they like in the society. Because of their unnecessary activities, the girl and the family faced a lot of trouble. That is why, in around 1952, the chiefs of the different Dhimal villages had a meeting and decided to introduce a strong rule that marriage by offering a nut and marriage by force were totally banned till the date. After that, the arranged marriage was introduced in the community and had got wide recognition. Most of the informants told me that it helps to flourish and preserve the traditional culture.

Maghi Bibaha (Arranged Marriage)

According to the old informants of the study area, arranged marriage has been formally started from 65 years before. In the Dhimal society, the traditional institution of marriage is the arranged marriage. There are different types of marriage practices prevalent in Damak Municipality but the most common practice is arranged marriage. Almost all informants of the study area agreed about that. Arranged marriage is important for them because it can preserve the unique tradition of Dhimal society. When the sons and daughters have matured, it is the duty of the parents to arrange a marriage for them. The marriage proposal takes place mostly

from the male side through a “*Lami*”¹⁷. Firstly, the parents look for a suitable bride for their son and send a mediator to request the daughter of the house. Then, the mediator informs about the bridegroom and his family background. The mediator presents a proposal for marriage. The community seniors, *Majhi*, are engaged from the beginning of the marriage proposal to the final negotiation. The presence of elders and *Majhi* is important in the society because it provides moral community support of the marriage.

Before asking for a girl's hand a boy's parents must collect information about the girl from a mediator about whether she is from the same clan or not, because a marriage within a same clan up to three generations is strictly prohibited. If everything is in order, then only a boy's parents can go to the bride's house to ask her hand for their son. The boy at first goes with his father to the bride's house, then with his mother, and finally with the relatives. At the third or final visit, the date of the marriage is fixed. In every visit, the boy's parents must bring two bottles of homemade wine, about 200gr betel nuts, 4 packets of tobacco and a match-box to the girl's father and inform the girl's parents that they are there to ask for their daughter's hand. Then, the girl's father calls his daughter in front of all so that the boy's parents can see their potential future daughter-in-law. After that, the bride's father asks his daughter and his wife about their opinion of the marriage. If the girl remains silent they understand that she agrees to marry and the girl's father accepts gifts brought by the bridegroom's parents. One Dhimal informant stated: “No marriage is finally settled till the request for marriage is made by the groom's parents.” The marriage should not be settled on the first visit. It is just called the opening way. After accepting the groom's proposal, the bride's father informs the groom's parents to visit again after a month. In the traditional custom, the boy has to stay in the bride's house for about a month and help the bride's family. This is done in order to find out whether the groom is acceptable as son-in-law or not. This custom has been abolished in the society at present.

On the third or final visit, there is an introductory program between the bridegroom's father and the bride, which is called ‘*Bihai Behani*’.¹⁸ The bridegroom's father must present two bottles of wine, two bottles of house made rice beer, 7 nuts and 7 rupees¹⁹ to the bride's father in this introduction program. The groom's father also has to present a bottle of ale and a sum

¹⁷ *Lami* means the mediator who is familiar with both sides. *Lami* occupies an important position and plays an active role in the Dhimal marriage system from the beginning to the end of the marriage.

¹⁸ *Bihai Behani* is a formal introductory program between the bride and the groom's father.

¹⁹ The rupees is the currency of Nepal

of 2 rupees called '*Dudoli*'.²⁰ In addition, one bottle of wine and 5 rupees must be presented to '*Mukhiya*' (the village chief). After that, the groom's father bows his head to the '*Samdhi*'²¹ three times. Thereafter, the bride's party has to provide homemade beer to the groom's party, called '*Bedangi*', and offer delicious food to them. Eventually, on the same day, the groom's party presents two bottles of wine to the bride's party, and then they can finally decide on the date of marriage.

Arranged Marriage Ceremony

After the date of marriage is fixed, invitations, a betel nut or card, are sent by an agency of men three days before the marriage. A bottle of wine is presented to all the invitees. If the marriage ceremony is held in the invitees' village, instead of wine, a pot of water can be given to the invitees. The relatives arrive with rice, firewood, and vegetables two days before the marriage ceremony. The male and female helpers are called '*Tolba Dharni*'. On the day of the wedding, Dharni gives sanctified mustard oil to all the members of '*Barati*'²² to smear on their face, hands and feet. Similarly, a holy lamp is inflamed with oil before the beginning of the procession. *Majhi* does it before the members of procession are fed with meat, rice, and liquor, so that there will not occur any evil event on their way to the bride's village. It is done for the happy and safe journey of the procession during the wedding ceremony.

Bullock-cart was used for taking the members of the procession to the bride's house. If the marriage was between poor families, they would prefer to walk in this ceremony. Nowadays, most of them prefer car and bus during the procession because they believe that such means of transport make easier to take the procession and also give prestige. The members of the procession must reach the bride's house before sunset. They drink liquor when they approach the bride's house, before entering it. This process is called '*Damata Amkagora*' by the Dhimal. When they approach the bride's house, the bridegroom's side presents two bottles of wine to the young boys of the bride's village as customary. Otherwise, they can't go forward to the bride's house. After that, the older people of the bride's side stop the procession to exchange two bottles of wine and payment of 8 rupees. By this time, the bridegroom's party offer Hookah to the elders of the bride's village. Meanwhile, when the procession is approaching the main

²⁰ *Dudoli* is a gift paid to the mother of the bride in obligation for her breastfeeding and maternal love and care.

²¹ It is a new relation establish between both the bride's and the groom's father after their children marriage.

²² '*Barati*' represents the members of the procession who visit to the bride's home with the groom.

entrance of the bride's house, the young girls of the bride's village stop them. They are customarily paid 10 rupees; then only the procession is permitted to enter the house.

According to Paden William (1988:94) ritual is "behaviour marked by prescribed rules". There are some prescribed rules in Dhimal marriage, which must be followed during wedding ceremonies. In their society, 'marriage *rits*' are taken to be an indispensable customary rule (Regmi, 2007:131). The families of bride and groom must follow 'marriage *rits*' in order to make the wedding ceremony socially and culturally meaningful. As soon as the members of the procession enter the bride's house, a pot of house made beer and two bottles of wine need to be presented to the bride's party. Then, the other valuable *rits* are prepared. During the period of preparing these *rits*, presence from the village chiefs, village elders and the bride's father is essential. The materials that are presented during the *rits* are kept on a banana leaf.

Some other Dhimal customary *rits* during marriage are described as follows:

- ***Kantaka***: *Kantaka* is also known as Chumauni and is one of the most valuable *rits* in the Dhimal society. During this *rit*, an oil lamp is lit on a banana leaf so that both parties can pledge the exchange process. Two bottles of local wine and 2 rupees are presented to the bride's father by the groom's party. During this period, the groom's party utters loudly "We have given the *rits* to the bride's father". Then they distribute the local wine to the members of the bride's party.
- ***Dhankasoiri***: This *rit* is presented to the youths of the bride's village where 5 rupees and seven chestnuts are given by the groom's party. Similarly, both parties exchange two bottles of homemade liquor. This *rit* is done to beg excuse of the bride's village, as the bridegroom is going to take her away from the village after wedding.
- ***Dudouli***: This *rit* is to be presented to the bride's mother in charge of her breastfeeding, maternal love and care. 2 rupees are paid for the '*rit*'.
- ***Panchali***: This *rit* is presented to the village elders and respected persons who come to the wedding ceremony. This is done in honour and bless from them. A total of 5 rupees are paid from them.
- ***Dhami***: *Dhami* is a religious leader or priest who is a very important person in the Dhimal social organization. So, to show respect, the groom's party must pay him 1 rupee and a bottle of wine as marriage payment.

- **Majhi:** *Majhi* is a headman of the village and a respectable person in Dhimal society. He is also paid the same way as the *Dhami*. During the *rit*, both bride's and bridegroom's parents join and salute him and they have a glass of wine with each other.
- **Village girls:** The groom's party has to pay 10 rupees to the groups standing on the main entrance of the bride's house. The reason behind the girls' standing is to welcome the bride's party.

After the groom's party has presented the *rits* described above, the groom is taken to the wedding '*Mandap*'.²³ This is prepared for '*Swayamvara*'. Two chairs and a table are needed for the bride and groom in *mandap*. After arriving the groom sits on the chair and after a few minutes the bride's comes out from her house and sits near to groom. Then, she circles the *Mandap* three times in the left direction. After that the bride and groom exchange rings and garlands.

After this ritual is over, the groom's party provides alcohol to the villages and relatives of the bride's party. Similarly, the bride's party also does the same to the members of the groom's procession. After that delicious food is provided first to the members of the procession and then to the villagers and the relatives of the bride's side by the bride's family.

When the feeding ceremony is over in the bride house, the family, relatives and the villagers of the bride's side start to bless both the bride and the groom. At first, the parents of the bride put '*Tika*'²⁴ to the couple and bless them. The relatives and the villagers also do the same and present gifts to the newly married couple. After that, the bride party again presents a pot of beer and a bottle of homemade alcohol to the groom's party. The groom's party also present homemade alcohol to the *Majhi* and the villagers and return back to their own village with the bride. Then, the bride parents present money, clothes, etc. to the person who played a vital role to make the wedding successful from the beginning to the end.

Furthermore, the newly married couple is taken to the village shrine where a chicken is sacrificed for the happy and prosperous life of the new couple. These rituals are performed by both sides, so that the newly married couple can stay happy and safe. After that the newly married couple is handed over a reel of thread. Both of them catch it and encircle the shrine seven times so that they can live happily after the wedding. The couple is also presented a

²³ *Mandap* is the place which is made by bamboo decorated with colourful papers, threads, balloons, etc. It is made to do *Swayamvara* program in the Dhimal society.

²⁴ '*Tika*' is prepared from the mixture of rice, curd and the red colour that is put on the forehead of the bride and the groom during marriage ceremony.

bottle of rice-beer and a bottle of wine, as a token of final farewell. This is the time for bride to leave of her house and go to her new house with her husband.

Welcoming process of the Bride

When the groom and the procession return back to home with the new bride, the village representatives (*Majhi*, *Dhami*, and *Ojha*), the village elders, and the other villagers from the Dhimal village are ready to welcome the new bride. The role of village representatives is important to 'approve' the marriage socially. The village representatives and the villagers await the new bride and groom in the courtyard of the groom's home. In this ritual, the chief of the village, the senior male member of the groom's kin and the village elders sit on the ground in a circle. This shows that marriage is a community practice in the Dhimal society. The village representatives, relatives, and elders put '*Tika*' to the new couple and bless them. They also present gifts to the couple. During this time, they sacrifice a chicken and a few drops of the chicken's blood are put into a dish with water. The people who sit on the courtyard throw some drops of water behind themselves in order to avoid the 'sins' of eating the wedding food. On the same day, the bride serves food to the village representatives, and kinsmen prepares rice and lentils on a banana leaf. The acceptance of food served by the bride symbolizes the formal acceptance of the bride in the new family and community in their culture.

Celebration after marriage

After the wedding day, friends and relatives of both sides go for fishing in small groups. They prepare curry from the collected fishes and enjoy it with alcohol. Similarly, the next day the female members and the relatives go fishing. This day is special in the Dhimal society because all the female kinsmen are engaged in the feast.

Banchagele system

The bride lives for a month in her husband's house and assimilates herself in the new family and community. Then, the new couple sets up their journey to the girl's natal house. This system is known as '*Banchagele*' in the Dhimal society. The visit to the wife's natal house is an important ritual in the society because it creates an opportunity to the new groom to be familiar with his wife's family, relatives and the village. He must present a bottle of wine and a loaf to related members of his parents-in-law.

Marriage by elopement

This type of marriage is usually performed by the Dhimals who have poor economic background. Sometimes, if the boy's party is unable to pay 'rits' to the girl's parents, the girl is sent to the boy's house by the parents in case of marriage by consent by both the boy's and the girl's parties. When they are economically well off, they do marriage according to the rules. I am informed by all the informants that such marriages are very limited in number in their society but still happen today.

Love Marriage

Although arranged marriage is highly popular in Nepal, love marriage is also increasing day by day (Ghimire et. al. 2001 Qtd. On Scott T. Yabiku, 2002:15). Mostly, young generations prefer such a marriage nowadays. Dhimal young people start to choose their own spouses in Dhimal community, sometimes to their parent's disagreement. Those boys and girls, when they fall in love with each other, may escape from the house for some days.

Love marriage is taken as easily within the Dhimal community as arranged marriage. Young Dhimal believe that love marriage within the same community is more stable than other types of marriage because they start love through the feasts and festivals which provides an opportunity to exercise freedom of choice in the selection of the boy and the girl from both sides. 'Jatri festival' also called '*Dhangdhange mela*' is a festival which creates good environment for the young Dhimal boys and girls to get together. Most of the marriageable boys and girls usually fall in love during the '*Dhangdhange mela*' and sometimes they flee from markets and festivals. After the agreements between two families, the boy is allowed to get his wife in his house. The two families complete their marriage within a short period of time.

But the old age Dhimal have their own view on love marriage. They believe that love marriage will collapse the traditional marriage system and culture because many customary practices are not performed as arranged marriage. Moreover, they believe that after love marriage, the son tries to live separately with his wife and does not care about his parents much.

5.4 DHIMAL MARRIAGE SYSTEM IN THE CONTEXT OF CHANGE

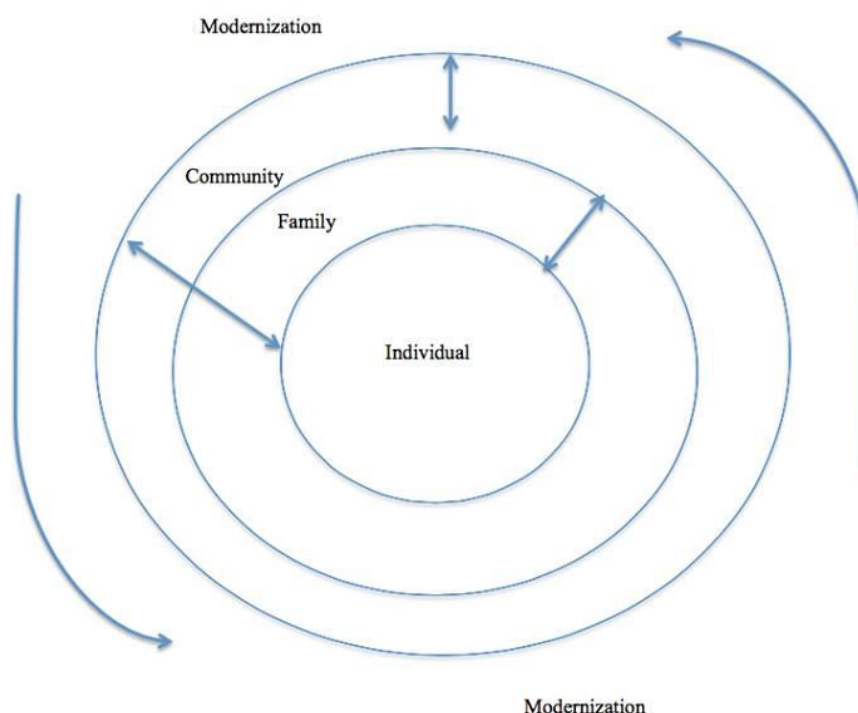


Figure 2 shows that marriage is a central feature of the Dhimal society, which reflects their traditional culture. It is not just about the two people and the two families; it is also about the community. The rituals performed in the marriage are a way of celebrating the community and reinforce ethnic identity as much as a way of bonding the two people and families. According to this culture, different rituals should be performed to complete a Dhimal marriage, which help them to keep unique from other indigenous communities. Here modernization is a complex process, which has played a vital role to change the traditional marriage rituals of Dhimal. Such change in the marriage rituals reflect larger cultural and social changes in the Dhimal community.

Due to the influence of modern culture, surrounding Hindu culture, and to some extent Christianity, many Dhimal stop to follow some of the important traditional rituals. In my field investigation, most of the respondents informed me that long ago arranged marriage was not more popular than marriage by offering nut and marriage by force. But today marriages by force or betel nut are not existent among Dhimal community. The most popular forms of marriage among the Dhimal in Damak municipality are arranged marriage followed by love marriage. In my research area, the most famous type of marriage is arranged marriage. This

type of marriage is normally arranged by the parents with the help of a mediator. The mediator may be a friend or a relative of any of the two parties.

As I already mentioned in chapter two, in this study, I had interviewed fifteen informants. Among them eleven old male, two female, a young male and a female informants in order to find out Dhimial marriage rituals, its changes and how changes in the marriage system reflect larger cultural and social changes in the community. The informants have been kept anonymous for their security. I would use pseudonyms for the security of my informants. All of the informants agree that there have been a lot of changes in the Dhimial marriage system today. Under the influence of modernization, changes in marriage rituals have occurred, which are described briefly as below.

Change in Marriage procedures

Almost all informants informed me that some of the marriage procedures have changed in Dhimial marriage under the influence of modern culture. In the beginning, if the boy and girl liked each other at carnivals and festivals, they used to elope after taking the permission from their parents. They remained outside for some months. On the day of '*Laxmi Puja*,'²⁵ they were called by their parents and formally accepted them as a married couple. But when the arranged marriage system began it got a great significance in the Dhimial society and marriages by elopement decreased in number. Young people do not wait for *Laxmi puja* in these days. They do marriages in different months under the influence of modern and Hindu culture.

In the past, the girl's parents used to search the boy for their daughter. But this system was changed and the boy's parents started to search for a girl for their son. This is a common practice in arranged marriage in the Dhimial society. When the son and the daughter are matured, the boy's parents search a girl through '*Lami*'. When everything is okay then before the marriage day the boy and the girl meet each other and do meeting in different places. They try to understand each other before the marriage. This change attributed to the influence of modern culture. The son and daughter who are matured get chance to choose their soulmates. Parents don't like to force their son and daughter into marriage.

In the past, when a boy was accepted as a son-in-law, he used to live in a girl's house for a

²⁵ *Laxmi puja* is the festival celebrated by both Hindu and Dhimial ethnic groups. For Dhimial it is the best day to call their son and daughter at home who eloped and married each other with or without parents' consent. Dhimial used to call their children on that day and accepted their husband and wife formally. It generally falls in October and November according to the English calendar.

month. He had to help his father-in-law in different agricultural task. If the boy did a good job during this period, he would get an opportunity to make the girl his bride. This culture was prevalent in the past to find out how strong the groom was. This has totally changed these days.

The wedding ceremony was celebrated for 3 days in the past. On the first day, relatives and the friends of the bride and the groom used to collect wood. They cut the wood in different pieces so that they could cook food. The same day, they prepared a gate to welcome guests and members of procession. Marriage used to be conducted on the second day, while the feasts for the friends and relatives took place on the final day. In present day, the wedding ceremony is completed within a single day.

The groom along with the members of the procession used to walk or use bullock-carts to the bride's house and reached at night. They used to spend a night in the bride's house. The wedding ceremony proceeded in the bride's house next day in the morning. Now, the groom's party use modern vehicles to go to the bride's house and complete the wedding ceremony on the same day.

Change in music

Dhimal traditional music has a very long history and represents the sacred culture of their society. They use different music and musical instruments during marriage ceremonies such as 'Dhol', 'Ghoghomogho', 'Nagiri', 'Serenza', etc. The performance of this music and musical instruments gives a noble feeling, emotions, and sounds. These have existed in Dhimal culture for a long time. But they have almost been forgotten and people do not use this music during the marriage ceremonies nowadays. I raise this issue during the focused group discussion in Dhimal Caste Development Centre where participant Dil Bahadur, age 51, says:

"Because of the impacts of modernization, there are a lot of changes in Dhimal marriage rituals, for example in traditional music, leading to using much more Nepali, Hindi and western music instead of Dhimal traditional music and musical instruments."

The performance of traditional music in marriage ceremonies carry specific meaning, which exists in Dhimal ritual values. But the traditional music and musical instruments are replaced by modern electronic music and musical instruments. Because of the young generation's attraction towards electronic music, the use of traditional musical instruments is disappearing

day by day in the marriages. The use of *Dhol*, '*Ghohmogho*', '*Nagiri*', 'and *Serenza*' is an important ritual but its value is declining.

My informant further adds that the use of modern Nepali, Hindi and Western music and electronic musical instruments could help modernize Dhimal marriage ritual. Modernization is clearly visible through modern means of digital technology. Mostly, the young generations are attracted towards modern western and Hindi songs and music during the marriage ceremony. They dance to modern songs instead of their traditional songs in marriages. This is because of the impacts of different factors such as globalization and modern means of media and technology. They have access of modern technology, internet, TV channels, etc. where they see different western products and gradually start to adopt the western fashion and ways of living. Østerud describes it is an abstract level of adaptability (Østerud, 1993:37).

Change in attitudes of expenses of marriage

“Modernization is a term that refers to the process of change through which traditional societies attempt to adapt themselves culturally, economically and politically to the requirements of the contemporary world” (Bright, 2000:155-156). Modernization has forced Dhimal people to accept traits from outside and change their tradition and values. They are forced to change their original way of living and follow contemporary society in order to maintain their position in the society. The people from the surrounding Hindu community spend a lot of money in the marriage ceremonies because they are socially, economically and politically powerful. Moreover, they are already influenced by the modern culture where people compete with each other to spend money unnecessarily in the name of decoration, feasts, transportation, ornaments, furniture, electronic items, etc. Dhimal people are forced to spend money on the marriages, otherwise other people make fun of them. With the influence of modern Hindu culture, they are ready to adopt such bad culture. The majority of Dhimal people favour monetary expenses during organizing and observing a marriage as to spend more money is taken as the social prestige. Khim Bahadur, age 55, shares: “*In this modern era, we compete to spend more money in the marriage ceremonies. We did not have such a system in the past*”.

While giving interview he remembered his past days and informed me that his parents spent less money to complete his marriage. He just wore traditional dresses and took the members of the procession on foot to the bride's house. No music was hired because they used their own traditional music and musical instruments. The bride party provided him just a bed, a bedsheet and a pillow. He adds that when he gave his daughter's hand to the boy from another village,

he spent a lot of money to his daughter's marriage. He further explains that he arranged a ring and neckwear made of gold, watch, shoes, dresses, furniture items, TV, etc. for the groom that made him poorer. Though it was really hard to manage such things, he arranged them. He was compelled to do that to save his prestige in the society. Otherwise, his own community members and the villagers from the Hindu community would mock him and his family members.

Modernization generally encourages people to compete for success. In the case of Dhimal marriage, it creates negative impacts where people compete each other for spending more money randomly. The groom's party also spend a lot of money for transportation, music and ornaments. Poor people even sell their land to collect money for marriage.

Changes of dress

Cloth represents the prominent features of Dhimal indigenous group. They have their own unique cultural dress, clothing style and characteristics, which represent their cultural ideas and beliefs with vivid colours and diverse styles. When modernization was introduced in Nepalese society after 1950s, it impacted the traditional dresses of Dhimal. The groom prefer modern suits whereas the bride prefer sari and blouse²⁶ instead of their traditional dresses such as 'Bona' and 'Petani.' About the ethnic dress, Dhanmaya, age 59, says:

"We have our own traditional dress which makes us different from other indigenous people of the world. Moreover, it becomes a distinct logo of our ethnic identity. We have special clothes for males and females. Male usually wear Tepana, Askot and Ganji, whereas females wear Bohna also called Petani in Nepali. These dresses are especially used in marriage ceremonies, feasts and festivals in Dhimal society. With the growing influence of modernization and Hinduization of their local social worlds, we have started to wear modern dresses in wedding ceremonies. The bride and groom have special traditional dresses in wedding day like Bohna and cholo for bride and turban, kurta/shirt and suruwal for groom. In these days, some of the young generations have been using suits, sari and blouse as a wedding dress."

With the establishment of Dhimal Caste Development Centre in 1990s, Dhimal community leaders play an active role to preserve and promote their traditional clothes as 'wedding

²⁶ Sari and Blouse are the dresses usually worn by Hindu women during feasts and festivals.

dresses'. So, the marriage ritual is an important tool that helps to create the consciousness about the ethnic dress in younger generations as well. Regarding this issue, Dhak Bahadur, age 27, says:

“Because of the active role played by their social organization, young people now use their traditional dresses in the wedding and it has become a widely practiced norm in our community. In comparison to males, females use their cultural dress, ‘Bohna’, in a modified way in different feasts and festivals as well. The use of ‘Bohna’ is taken as a symbol of ethnic identity and a fashion object nowadays in our community.”

Modernization has not only negative aspects. Sarala, age 25, a member of Dhimal activists further explains the positive aspects of modernization,

“Young generations are positive to wearing their traditional dresses during festivals and marriage ceremonies in these days. The situation has somehow changed after 1990s and after the establishment of social organization. The organization of the Dhimal creates an environment to make younger generations preserve and promote their own dress during ceremonies. The organization is holding seminars, meetings and conducts awareness programs to revitalize their ethnic dresses. But still we have to do a lot to preserve their ethnic dress in the future.”

The informant hopes that the situation will improve in future and each and every person will wear ethnic dresses that help preserve and promote their tradition.

I got an opportunity to take part in a Dhimal marriage where I observed that the bride, the groom, and some old people put their traditional dresses where younger generations were in modern dresses such as jeans, T-shirts, etc. They were attracted to the western life style, which could be seen through their dresses in the wedding ceremony. In comparison to male members, the female looked more conscious towards the tradition and wore their ethnic dress in the wedding ceremony. Further, I am also informed by the informants that still some of the young people do not obey it properly.

Party to selection

Parents used to play an active role in the selection of life partners for their children in the past. Nowadays, parents do not play an active role in the selection of life partners of their children

in Dhimal society. The sons and daughters also can select their future husbands or wives. Nevertheless, the parents still play a role. Manmaya, age 47, a housewife explained her marriage proposal:

“I married a man from Kharkhare. When I was 18 years old we were unknown to each other and never saw each other before marriage. One of my relatives from my husband’s village formally proposed to my parents about our marriage. My parents collected information about my husband’s background and I was ready to give my hand to him. After some days we married.

*But my son liked a girl from another village and requested us to marry with the girl whom he liked much. My husband asked his friends to find out about the girl’s clan and finally we agreed to accept her as our daughter-in-law”.*²⁷

Changes on selection of the bride and groom

Child marriage is a serious problem in South Asia, as child marriage rates in South Asia are the second highest in the world, after West Africa. According to Nepal’s Demographic and Health Survey (Ministry of Health and Population Nepal, New ERA and ICF International Inc. 2011, 41 % Nepalese women at the age of 20-24 were married before they were 18.²⁸ This shows that child marriage is a serious problem in Nepal. Mostly uneducated families suffer from this problem. In the case of Dhimal, there was also a child marriage system in the past. While selecting bride and groom, only the land and wealth of the families were considered. When daughters reached 15-16, parents used to search for rich boys to marry their daughters. Especially, the girls’ family prioritized it so that their daughter could live happily with her husband without doing much labour. They were unaware of the importance of education and did not care about it. The age gap between bride and groom was not a concern because they focused on land and wealth. But at present, child marriage has almost disappeared from Dhimal community because of education. Dhimal informants clearly rejected that they have such an evil system now. Most of them are educated and do not want to continue practicing this bad system. There is no so much age gap between the bride and the groom nowadays. I took an interview with two young Dhimal, and both of them answered that they like late marriage

²⁷ This is the part of a case study taken in July, 2014 which shortly represents a marriage proposal of a Dhimal woman living in Damak municipality. This case also shows that in Dhimal marriage sons and daughters are free to select their future husband and wives in these days.

²⁸ <file:///C:/Users/Bruker/Desktop/child%20marriage%20in%20Nepal.pdf>

because they want to complete their study and find a good job then only think about marriage. Both the bride and the groom party gave high priority to the education and good job. Young generations focus on good education and job instead of land and wealth. This is the positive impact brought by modernization.

Changes on ornaments

In my field investigation, I was told that Dhimal people mostly used ornaments made of silver during marriage in the past. The bride used to wear ‘*Takamala*’ as a garland made of silver. Similarly, *Kalli*, *Gosmala*, *Bismala*, etc. were prevalent in the past. But both the bride and the groom prefer gold as an ornament nowadays. The bride and the groom exchange chains and rings, etc. The fashion of exchanging ornaments made from gold is common at present. Such fashion is responsible for substituting the traditional ornaments and acceptance of modern expensive ornaments.

Changes in transportation

Transportation is a key element in modernizing Dhimal people in Damak municipality. The adoption of modern means of transportation such as buses, cars, motorcycles in day to day life threatens the continuity of their traditional livelihoods and culture. They used to prefer to walk on foot for taking the members of procession to the bride’s house in the past. Some rich Dhimal also used to take a bullock-cart for taking the members of procession to the bride’s house. But this culture has almost disappeared at present. Rich and poor, there is no matter, everybody uses modern means of transportation for taking the members of the procession to the bride’s house. The car is hired for the bride and the groom and decorated with colourful papers and flowers. Santa Bahadur, age 65, says:

“I got married 37 years ago and now I have 2 sons and a daughter. I remembered my marriage day where the members of the procession walked on foot to the bride’s house. They sang and danced with traditional songs and music while walking. There was a facility of bus at that time but I didn’t care because to walk on foot with songs and danced was really enjoyable. Moreover, it helps to preserve the traditional culture.

One of my friends who got married to a girl from Morang district used bullock-carts for taking the procession to the bride’s house because it was far away from our village. Walking and using bullock-carts as a means of transportation were

popular at that time. But the situation has totally changed nowadays. When one of my sons got married, he insisted to hire a bus and a car and I could not reject him because modern means of transportation has replaced the traditional vehicles and there is a competition of hiring bus and car during wedding ceremonies in Dhimal society. Young generations use modern means of transportation during wedding ceremonies believing that they are the instrument to measure social prestige in the society. This belief is strongly developed among the Dhimal resulting in the loss of traditional culture.”

Thus, those who do not use modern means of transportation during wedding ceremonies will not get respect in the society. Because of the impact of modernization, Dhimal are compelled to use modern means of transportation otherwise they will be made fun of by the neighbours. The competition in hiring buses and cars is high during wedding ceremonies which are compelling poor people to borrow money from others. Dhak Bahadur, age 27, further shares his ideas:

“I am a Dhimal and love my Dhimal culture. This is the age of science and technology and we must follow modern means of transportation to make our life comfortable. In my marriage, I took a bus and a car to my wife’s house because everybody from my village used them. I could not be unique in the name of preserving culture. The place where I live is surrounded by my community as well as Hindu community. I have many Hindu castes friends in the village and almost all of them hired modern means of transportation for their marriages. If I took my friends as members of procession to my wife’s house on foot, they would make fun out of me and my relatives as well. Therefore, I did not do this. Moreover, personally, I am interested to utilize modern vehicles because they are made for us.”

The respondents view as well as my observation help me to analyse that Dhimal prefer to use modern means of transportation instead of their traditional vehicles in the marriages.

Changes on food items during feast

According to Mintz, (1996:7) “For us humans, eating is never a ‘purely biological activity’ ...The foods eaten have histories associated with the pasts of those who eat them; the techniques employed to find, process, prepare, serve, and consume foods are all culturally variable, with histories of their own. Nor is the food simply eaten; its consumption is always

conditioned by meaning. These meanings are symbolic...they also have histories.” The types of food that one eats, how that food is introduced and for what occasion it is used of has important connection to the ethnic communities. In the case of Dhimal, food played a vital role in every social and cultural activities. The rapid urbanization of Damak paved the way for the modernization of Dhimal’s food system. With adoption of imported foods into the marriage ceremonies, their traditional foods are in danger today. About the impacts of food Sukra Bahadur, age 63, says:

No ceremonial functions such as birth, marriage and death are completed without a presentation of food. Because of the rapid expansion of urbanization, transportation facility, the influence of western and Hindu culture, and the increasing modernization have changed the traditional lifestyles and food habits of Dhimal people. They used to use rice, pulse and pork as a food in the marriage ceremonies in the past. The expansion of urbanization enables them to buy new food items and introduce them in the marriage ceremonies, which marks the turning point for the modernization of the food system. He further adds that people are also influenced with the food of Hindu culture. They start to prepare food items such as sweets, biryani, different varieties of curry, curd, fruits, etc. in the wedding ceremonies.

When I got an opportunity to join in the Dhimal marriage feast during my fieldwork, I was informed that not only food items but also the traditional dishes are in danger at present. They accustomed leafs of a ‘*Pilhafa*’²⁹ during the food serving time. Dhimal used to keep rice, meat and pulse on those leafs just as a plate. They also used to sit on the banana leafs and enjoy their food during marriages and other ceremonies. Such rituals of using banana leafs and leafs of the *pilhafa* tree are disappearing nowadays. Instead of bananas leafs, people use modern plastic chairs for sitting and silver and plastic plates and glasses for eating during feasts and marriages ceremonies. Mostly, young generations are attracted to such modern products that help to displace their traditional rituals. They feel uneasy to use traditional methods because they have seen the modern marriage system in their surrounding or different places where they visit for different purposes such as study and job opportunities.

In the case of Dhimal, the positive impact of modernization is that they stop to drink homemade beer randomly in the marriage ceremonies. They drink alcohol in the marriages because it is

²⁹ *Pilhafa* is kind of a tree found in the jungle wetland.

their traditional culture but with limit. Young generations are conscious that if they drink alcohol randomly, they will perform bad activities. They are also conscious about their health and drink little so that they do not lose the control. This is the positive impact of modernization brought by modern education system.

Attraction on inter-caste marriages

Inter-caste marriage means a marriage between a girl and a boy of different ethnicities and castes. In the past, there was no inter-caste marriage system in Dhimal society because the parents used to create pressure to marry with the same community. Inter-caste marriage is strictly prohibited and punished to this caste in a long time back, but this system also has been increasing gradually these days (Gurung, B.P, 2005:26). With more globalization and educational opportunities there is a great change in the views of the Dhimal youths on caste behaviour. Dhimal youths have more contact with other castes and ethnic groups in schools, colleges, and work places. Thus, when blending with different castes and ethnic groups some Dhimal youths enter into inter-caste marriages. But in my field investigation, I was told and also found that this system is practiced in less extent.

In short, I was informed that today if both the man and woman are wealthy, educated, and live in the city as an outcome, marriage rituals are performed to some extent in a different way in the Dhimal society. In my field investigation, I was told that highly educated men or women are quite free from the traditional ritualistic influences, especially if the parents are illiterate. An old female informant informed me that this type of marriage creates individual relationship and affects social relations and cultural integrations within the community.

Impacts of Hindu culture

Hindu culture also plays a vital role in changing the traditional marriage system of Dhimal. In my field observation, I established that most of the Dhimal settlements are surrounded by Hindu caste people so that their culture directly and indirectly influences them. Moreover, the country also assists to flourish Hindu culture that has compelled them to change their traits and accept some of the traits of Hindu rituals. They start to prepare gates on the entrance of the house made of coconut leaves during marriages to welcome the groom's party. Exchanging rings, garlands made of sacred evergreen grass between the bride and the groom are other impacts of Hindu culture. About the impacts of Hindu culture on Dhimal marriage, Dal Bahadur, age 56, puts his ideas:

“When I got married to my wife, I just went to bride’s house with my relatives and friends without taking rings, garlands and neckwear made of gold for the bride. I was given a chair to sit and after some time the bride came near to me and sat on another chair. There was no swayamvar system where the bride sat on the sofa with decorated stage, and bride and groom exchanged rings and garlands with each other. But when I arranged my daughter’s marriage, my sons and the villagers prepared a gate full of decoration. They also prepared a stage that is decorated with colourful threads, papers and balloons. They fixed two chairs on the stage where the bride and the groom sat and exchanged rings, garlands and ornaments. My sons also arranged furniture and electronic items to their sister. In fact, I didn’t like it but I couldn’t stop that because new generations were totally influenced with surrounding Hindu culture. In this way, our traditional rituals are disappearing day by day with the influence of Hindu culture.”

New generations are to some extent attracted to western and Hindu culture because of the globalized and modernized world. They are creating new concepts of Dhimal marriage rituals and perceive them in a way that varies from the older generations.

5.5 SUMMARY

This chapter focused the traditional marriage system of Dhimal, including marriage types. The types of marriages, such as marriage by offering a betel nut, marriage by force, marriage by elopement, love marriage, and inter-caste marriage, were described briefly. The main focus fell on the arranged marriage because it is their traditional marriage system. Further, it reflected the impact of modernization on their marriage rituals. This was mainly based on the data collected from my fieldwork and an analysis of the informants’ views as a means of introducing my findings in relation theories.

CHAPTER VI: FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO CULTURAL CHANGE

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Culture always changes through times. This indicated that cultural change is in fact complex. When we analyse the change of a culture, it has extensive cause and effects (Islam, 2008:58). It is clear that Dhimal lifestyle and traditional culture are changing nowadays under the influence of internal and external forces. When Dhimal society changes, it discards many things from their traditional culture and accepts new traits from other cultures. This chapter presents some of the responsible factors that change the Dhimal culture and their marriage system. According to the research findings, their lifestyle, tradition and more especially marriage rituals have been changing with the influence of internal and external forces. This provides evidence that there are many responsible factors for Dhimal cultural changes, such as economy, political, interaction with hill immigrants, education system, globalization and westernization, urbanization, information and technology, Christianity, etc.

6.2 POLITICAL FACTORS

The revolution of 1951 abolished the 104-years old Rana regime and established democracy in Nepal. Rana Rule in Nepal remained very active for 104 years (1846-1950).³⁰ This autocratic system forced and of course inspired people to get untied and act against such a system in order to find a new identity as citizen in a real sense. The political change of 1951 marked the point of departure, as Nepal replaced its old policy of isolation and entered into international communities valuing development and modernization in all aspects of socio-economic life. The country entered the international arena and got international donors for the development and modernization of Nepal, which impacted the traditional life style of different ethnic groups. According to one informant, Dhimal who live in Damak municipality have their lifestyle changed after 1951, too, because of the impact of modernization in Nepal. Different developmental activities, such as roads, transportation, schools, and markets were developed and changed the traditional lifestyle.

But in 1960, the Panchayat political system was established in Nepal. It is a party-less system that remained in force till 1990s. The system replaced political parties and declared them illegal by King Mahendra. King Mahendra, the founder of the Panchayat regime, legally defined Nepal into a Hindu state and helped flourish the Hindu religion as a national religion.³¹ As a

³⁰ http://www.nepalresearch.com/publications/keshabprasad_bhattarai_2006_04.pdf

³¹ <http://www.uni-bielefeld.de/midea/pdf/harticle1.pdf>

result, the indigenous communities in Nepal were forced to adopt Hindu religion and Hindu culture, which finally changed the sacred culture of Nepalese indigenous communities.³² In my field investigation, I found that Hindu people migrated to Dhimal area after 1950 in Damak harshly impacted the traditional life style of Dhimal. They partially kept their own cultural practices, but also adopted some values of the Hindu religion and culture in their way of life. The government also made a policy that encouraged Hindu high-caste people (also called *Brahmin and Chettri*) to migrate in Dhimal area so that the locals would assimilate with Hindu caste people and gradually adopt their culture, which is recognized as a national culture. According to informants, the government's repetitive assimilation policy forcefully changed the norms, values and sacred culture of the Dhimal indigenous people in Damak. Similarly, the system promoted the Nepali language as a national language (which acquired the status of official language since 1930), which, too, assisted the change in their culture. Even the education system and the mass media with the Nepali as the medium assisted to the loss of their language and promoted the Nepali language.

The 1990 people's movement, a multi-party movement in Nepal, eliminated once again the panchayat system.³³ This movement established constitutional democracy in the country. The establishment of a democracy in Nepal in 1990 pushed Nepal into the universal democratization process. The country got a direct link to other countries of the world. Because of this, the Nepalese people became exposed to the outside world, which brought significant changes in people lifestyle and their rituals and culture. The government has encouraged the process of globalization of Nepalese society after 1990. "The fever of 'globalization and modernization' has caught up Nepalese policy makers, planners, political leaders, intellectuals, academia, media people, and layman alike" (Bhattachan, 2005:80-102). The modernization supports the 'the west is the best' psyche, which contributes to the destruction of Dhimal culture after 1990s. According to informants, modernization has become an entrance to western education, western media, information technologies, imposing foreign cultural values and leading to cultural encroachment over Nepal and Dhimal indigenous community after 1990. Dhimal who live in the city areas are most strongly impacted from such western values. The young generations are strongly influenced by western media, fashions, and cultures that aid to change the rituals. Similarly, one of the members of the focus group discussion informs me

³² <http://www.accountingin.com/accounting-historians-journal/volume-36-number-1/nepalese-governmental-accounting-development-in-the-1950s-and-early-1960s-an-attempt-to-institutionalize-expenditure-accounting/>

³³ http://members.worldebooklibrary.org/articles/1990_People's_Movement#cite_note-1

that they are economically poor and are compelled to seek economic opportunities in foreign lands to improve their economic status. When the young people are in foreign lands gradually they become familiar with other cultures and try to copy them, which finally helps to trigger cultural changes of the Dhimal. Thus, the political factor is the main factor that brought a lot of changes in their culture and marriage rites, and rituals is not spared from it.

6.3 ECONOMIC FACTORS

Before the eradication of the malaria in 1960s, Dhimal were rich because they were landlords at that time. But after 1960s, malaria was eradicated from their area and a large number of hill people migrated to their area (Regmi 2007:161). The immigrants were recognized as Hindu high-caste people. The government of Nepal favoured them to settle in Dhimal area after 1950s. The government wanted to promote hill culture in the Terai, so that Dhimal traditional culture would disappear. Slowly and gradually, hill people with the help of the state captured their fertile land and made them landless. Because of this, Dhimal became gradually poorer. According to field investigation, I observed that the people who migrated from the hill have extravagant marriages, and the Dhimal who have seen Hindu marriages try to closely imitate their culture as a prestige. Sukra Bahadur, further shares the experience about the economic factor which forces to change the marriage system:

“Before hill people came to the Dhimal area, there was no extravagant attitude regarding marriage in their community. Because of the extravagance attitudes of new immigrant hill people, Dhimal also start to follow. Nowadays, Dhimal people spend more money on marriage as a prestige, which makes them poorer. Mostly the new generations are following some of the hill people culture and forget their tradition. We start to give gold, furniture, electronical equipment to the groom party and have expenses on marriage ceremonies.”

Further, globalization and the democratic movements in Nepal since 1990 have driven many Nepalese young people to migrate abroad for employment (Thieme and Wyss, 2005:60). According to my field investigation, many Dhimal youths have been rapidly moving to Gulf countries³⁴ for good economic opportunities after 1990. Since the political unrest and the lack of opportunities, many of them are in Gulf countries and struggling to make their future bright. They earn money and send it to their family back home. Because of the money their family

³⁴ Gulf countries include United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman etc.

members can buy different goods such as TV, mobile phone, other fashionable things and start to use them. Gradually, they are influenced by the modern things and start adopting modern way of life. This may also be the cause for changing culture. When they have money they try to buy different things such as fruticulture, gold, electronic items and give them to bride and groom as a dowry in the wedding ceremonies.

6.4 EDUCATION

Education is a ladder of modern society to reach an improved wellbeing of its citizens. In this modern world, it has played a crucial role in developing careers and gaining economic opportunities. To develop their career and economic opportunities in every sector, people are attracted to the mainstream language of the country. Moreover, people are attracted towards western type of languages, i.e., English, believing that it has become instrumental in creating opportunities among multilingual indigenous communities.

Language is an important tool that reflects culture of each and every indigenous community. Moreover, it reflects the identity of the particular group. But the dominant language of the country and internationally recognized languages, such as English, forcefully encourage indigenous people to accept them. Otherwise, they will be deprived from different opportunities created nationally and internationally. The trend of not using mother tongue is increasing among the young indigenous people because of the dominant role of Nepali and English education and the communications industry (Khati, 2013:77-78). According to my field investigation, I found that Dhimal are forced to learn the dominant Nepali language to fight for the different posts created by the government. They are also forced to learn English language in order to get economic opportunities. The trend of using Nepali and English languages becomes more widely spread among young people to get opportunities in every sector resulting in the loss of mother language, too. The academic courses are also designed to promote Nepali and English languages. Shakti Bahadur, age 48, who present during a focus group discussion says:

“As a teacher, I am not satisfied when I use English to explain ideas in the class. I am Dhimal and love my own language. Language is an integral part of my culture. But English and Nepali languages slightly displaced the language because our children nowadays start their basic education with Nepali and English Language. There are some Dhimal students in different classes, and most of them are happy to learn Nepali and English in the class.

I think this is because of the government policy. The government of Nepal tries to flourish Nepali and English languages instead of local languages. The education policy also helps to discourage the use of their local language. Even the parents now encourage their children to learn Nepali and English languages so that they can get social, economic and political opportunities provided from the nation”.

In my study area, many young Dhimal move to city areas to get higher education because education is the key to make better future and employment. In the new places, they contact people from different background and are gradually influence by their lifestyle. Because of the impact of education, young generations adopt modern culture and start follow the modern marriage system.

6.5 INTERACTION WITH HILL IMMIGRANTS

When people live together they influence each other and as a result copy each other’s way of life. Dhimal have been obviously influenced by the hill immigrant’s Hindu people after the 1950s (Regmi, 2007:63). Jhapa and Morang were their ancestral territories until the early 20th century. These two districts were considered the most malaria-infected and dangerous districts till the early 20th century. Therefore, hill people feared to migrate to the Terai because of the deadly disease malaria (Rai, 2013:93). However, the malaria was eradicated in the early 1950s, and the attitude of the hill people towards settling in the Terai changed completely. Hence they became interested to migrate there because of the fertile land. Similarly, the state also encouraged hill people to migrate to the Terai so that the Dhimal would be assimilated with hill people and follow their rituals and culture, becoming marginalized politically, culturally and economically. Moreover, the opening of the east-west highway, infrastructural developments, such as roads, schools, markets, industries, electricity, hospitals, after 1950s encouraged hill people to migrate in the Terai. This developmental activity has led to disposing the Dhimal from their ancestral territories and becoming assimilated with hill Hindu people, following their culture knowingly and unknowingly.

According to my field investigation, the Dhimal area of Damak was fully covered by forest. Dhimal used to hunt animals and survive with the things that they collected from the forest. There were no hill immigrant’s people in that area. Later on, after the eradication of malaria, hill Hindu people migrated to Damak and the forestland declined. Then, Dhimal became forced to change their hunting profession and started farming.

One of the informants informed me that Damak is no purely Dhimal village nowadays. Hill people settle everywhere alongside Dhimal. Because of the day-to-day contact with hill migrated people, they have been much more influenced and changed in their language, behaviour, food habits, and even some of the marriage rituals. In my field research area, Dhimal language is spoken only in household affairs, and Nepali is commonly used for all other purposes. Nir Bhadur, age 78, shares the experience on the impacts of hill immigrant's culture on Dhimal marriage:

“A few decades ago, there was no Swayamvar system in the Dhimal marriage ritual and the bride and the groom didn't exchange rings during marriage ceremonies. Moreover, there was no system of giving gifts to the groom's party by the bride's party. Nowadays, swayambar, exchanging and the presentation of gifts as a dowry is common in marriage. The beginning of Swayambar, exchanging rings and the gifts are the hill immigrant's culture and the Dhimal are influenced by their culture. I remember my marriage, which was done without Swayambar. Even I hadn't seen the gold rings. Nowadays, our sons and daughters must use those things in the marriages. They have seen the marriages of surrounding culture and just try to imitate it blindly. In this way, they forget their rituals and culture.”

The new immigrants' culture also called Hindu culture has played a main role in the undergoing changes of the Dhimal and their marriage system.

6.6 GLOBALIZATION AND WESTERNIZATION

“Globalization is the intensification of worldwide social relation which links distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring miles away and vice versa” (Giddens, 1990: 64). Globalization affects the traditional rituals, norms and values of one locality because this modern world is interconnected. Through the spreading of mass media and internet, one change in one culture and other activities directly affects other cultures.

As a result of globalization in every sector, it is really difficult to preserve indigenous cultures and identity all over the world. According to Beyer, (1994:2) globalization makes “social communication links [to be] worldwide and increasingly dense. On perhaps the more obvious level, this means that people, cultures, societies and civilizations previously more or less isolated from one another are now in regular and almost unavoidable contact.” Because of the

modern means of communication and technology, traditional communities are affected badly in this modern world. Due to this, the traditional myths, rites and rituals, and expressions of different indigenous communities of the world are disappearing day by day.

If we focus on the case of Dhimal traditional culture, young people are strongly interested to follow western life style and way of living. They are interested in western fashion because in this globalized world they have access to television. Most of the young people are in different countries of the world for job and send money home and their family members to buy TV. They have access to different western and Hindi channels, which encourage them to adopt western fashion and life style. The younger generations think that their way of living is traditional and not fashionable so that they try to imitate modern fashion and lifestyle, and western channels play a major role to change the mind of young people. Hira Bahadur, age 62 informed me that:

“Damak is a growing city of Jhapa district so there is Electricity. Because of the electricity people buy TV, DVD and watch and listen to western and Hindi channels and try to copy them. Many young people keep themselves busy to watch western programs. I could not get chance to watch what I want if my son and daughter are at home. The remote of the TV is under their control. Moreover, young Dhimal regularly watch Nepali, Hindi, and western movies which helps to forget their tradition and culture and encourage them to adopt western fashion and way of life.”

6.7 URBANIZATION

Urbanization relates to increasingly large number of people occupying in small areas. They are basically engaged in agricultural activities, which rely on development of industrialization, infrastructure within cities and towns. Thus, urbanization has been perceived as an indicator of modernization (Sharma and Maithani, 1998:1). The political change of 1951 played a vital role in the urban growth in Nepal. The country was unlocked to the outside world, and the different developmental activities and foreign aid started within the nation resulted in a dramatic change in the urban centres in Nepal (Basyal & Khanal, 2001).

After the declaration of municipality in 1982, Damak became the business hub and trading centre of eastern Nepal,³⁵ where agricultural land changed into residential building and

³⁵ http://binod-khanal.blogspot.no/2012_05_01_archive.html

commercial industries. In my study area, Dhimal life style is impacted harshly by urbanization. My research area is an urban area in the sense of urban facilities and one can feel the wave of urbanization in Damak. According to my informants, it was a small village where Dhimal used to live since time immemorial. But after the eradication of malaria in 1950s from the Terai and the construction of the east-west highway in 1972, a large scale migration of hill people took place to search new economic opportunities. The expansion of state bureaucracy and the physical infrastructure also contributed to the urbanization in Damak. Because of this, there are significant changes in the life style of Dhimal. They are compelled to adopt urban culture and urban style of living which resulted in the decline of their unique culture. Bal Bahadur, age 51, says:

“Because of the urbanization, we adopt urban way of marriage; for example, hire people to prepare different food items instead of our traditional items. We decorate the house and an entrance gate in a modern way. We also hire sound system from the market that replaces the traditional music.”

6.8 TECHNOLOGY, INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION

Technology has become an integral part of human life in this modern world. During the last 20 years, technology has been changing society and many aspects of daily life (Lachheb, 2013:18). Because of the influence of modern means of technology and communication, people’s lives, their self-identities, culture and tradition have been changing dramatically. Mostly, western means of information and communication have affected much the indigenous people around the world. Western technology and communication is spreading throughout indigenous people of the world. The Dhimal culture is one of the richest and oldest cultures of Nepal. However, now western means of communication kick in, e.g., festivals, music, dress, movies, and food habits.

In my field area, the rapid expansion of mass media, information technologies, internet, television programs, computer, etc., begins to exert great influence on the mind-set of the Dhimal. Western and Hindi television programs, music, food items, dresses, etc., have penetrated their culture day by day. English, Nepali and Hindi movies and music are very popular among the young generations and has shown influence on their society. Almost all people have TV; mobile and internet facilities come up rapidly, and their influence on people is very powerful. These technologies have brought a big change in the attitudes. Such technologies have been dominating over the pious Dhimal civilization by demolishing their

values and life-style. Young people are interested to use modern Nepali, Hindi and English music instead of their own in the marriages.

6.9 INFLUENCE OF CHRISTIANITY

Some of the Dhimal families in my research area are now Christian. Christianity has influenced and changed their culture to a smaller extent (Dhimal, 2011:116). Some churches were established in the Dhimal living areas after 1990 and supported Dhimal financially. For this matter, Dil Bahadur further share his ideas:

“Christianity doesn’t allow to follow Dhimal cultural practices. It lures uneducated people for new beliefs that isolate them from the traditional beliefs. Christianity comes with western norms and values and tries to modify their socio-cultural values including marriage rituals and so on”.

Now, some of the Dhimal who follow Christianity don’t practice their traditional marriage system such as exchanging marriage *rits*, wearing traditional dresses etc. Traditional marriage is done at the bride and the groom’s house with the community actively involved in the ceremony, whereas the Dhimal who are Christian marry in church according to Christian tradition.

6.10 SUMMARY

This chapter presented the responsible factors for the Dhimal cultural changes and their marriage rituals. Political and economic factors are seen as responsible for their cultural changes. Apart from these, integration with hill immigrants, education, globalization and westernization, urbanization, information technologies, and Christianity were some of the other inevitable factors for Dhimal cultural changes in general and marriage patterns in particular.

CHAPTER VII: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This study based on ethnographic research design is an attempt to investigate the Dhimal cultural changes, observed through marriage rituals. Dhimal peoples' perceptions, thoughts, beliefs, daily lifestyles, rites and ritual are changing due the impact of modernization. The study has employed qualitative methodology in the form of fieldwork, semi-structured interviews, participation observation and focus group discussion to collect the primary data for this study. Many secondary sources of information have been used through reading books, articles and searching the internet.

Marriage is an important institution and ritual among the Dhimal due to the integrative role that marriage plays in this community. The marriage rituals among the Dhimal are connected with their social values and kinship system and many other communal factors, which are crucial for the sustainability of their traditional culture. Marriage is not an individual phenomenon, something that only involves the bride and the groom. Rather it is social and cultural phenomenon, where the couple, their families and the village are closely tied with each other. The newly married couple have to be responsible not only before their families but also before the community because marriage in Dhimal society is a community-making practice. Likewise, the community is both a witness to the marriage and an active participant in the marriage rituals. In the marriage ceremony, the three parties, the couple, the family and the community are confirming each other.

Because of the modernization and globalization process which has also reached Nepal, the Dhimal have changed some of their traditional marriage rituals and their perception of marriage, community and culture. Consequently, their identity is getting transformed for instance in the encounter with other cultures religions, through the global media and new technology. Nowadays, traditional concepts about the meaning and significance of marriage rituals therefore have changed. People 'forget' to practice some of the traditional marriage rituals. By this the communal relations and practices in Dhimal society are affected. So, impacts of modernization are central factors to the change of marriage rituals, and with them also Dhimal culture and community. Thus, this study focuses on the impacts of modernization on Dhimal society, illustrated by the changes in the customary practices of marriage rituals. The marriage system and the changes occurring within it must therefore be understood in a larger context. Thus, in this thesis, I have also focused on some the important characteristics of Dhimal society: history, settlement patterns, life passage rituals, social system, and their traditions and culture.

Because of the changed political and economic situation of the country as a whole, Dhimal people are compelled to change their rituals and modernize their culture. Similarly, the interaction with Hindu people migrated from the hill and the state policy pressured them to change their cultural patterns and practice. Today, most of the Dhimal areas are surrounded by hill Hindu people, which influences Dhimal to change some of their marriage rituals. For example, the use of entrance gate, decoration of the house with colourful papers, wedding stage, *swayamvara*, and ring exchange program between the bride and the groom, etc. are influences from surrounding Hindu caste people. Some modern concepts of marriage have occurred in the study area because of the modern and state-led education system in the country. To some extent, the influence of Christianity makes them to follow a modern way of marriage as Christian have distinct tradition than Dhimal. Moreover, the fast growing urbanization and the flourishing of new technology, information and communication lead the traditional society into modern society that have an impact on Dhimal culture including marriage rituals.

I argue that cultural identity is a must for the recognition of any indigenous community of the world. With globalization, they face several challenges that make it difficult to preserve their tradition and culture. When the government of Nepal introduced the policy of one language and one religion, the indigenous culture of Nepal faces several problems. In the name of one language and religion the government forcefully tried to assimilate indigenous people by introducing introduced a so called “Hinduization” and “Nepalization” process. Though, indigenous people are uninterested to accept it, the state power and the modernity forces are strong, shaping each and every sphere of life, including marriage rituals of the Dhimal.

According to the data that I obtained from the fieldwork, there is now a vast difference between older and younger generations in the perception of marriage rituals. Old generations are really worried about the survival of Dhimal culture and want to keep their traditional marriage rituals alive, whereas the young generation claims that in the name of saving culture it is not good to follow all rituals from the past. This happens because they are impacted by modern culture. Further, they argued that they can follow some modern rituals that make married life easier and more comfortable. For example, they appreciate the use of modern vehicles, food items, decoration of the house in a new way, making a gate at the entrance of the house, etc. during marriage ceremonies. However, they do not neglect their norms and values totally and still have love and respect for their culture. The study also shows that young Dhimal are attracted to modern marriage rituals. However, some traditional aspects of marriage rituals are still in existence and the young generations also are in favour to continue them, such as involvement

of the village chief and old people of the community, putting vermilion powder, marriage *rits* for the bride's family, sacrifice of a chicken and a few drops of the chicken's blood being put into a dish with water and so on.

Although some rituals are changed, Dhimal are still able to maintain a distinct cultural identity under their traditional feasts and festivals and rituals, which brings them closer to each other as a community. The role they play in different festivals and rituals are solid in maintaining their cultural activity and identity. Besides, the Dhimal cultural organization is encouraging young people to speak their language and to wear their traditional clothing. Different awareness programmes are meant to save their cultural identity. The Dhimal organization emphasises the importance of their communal cultural practices, such as the marriage ritual, as spaces of cultural reform and preservation.

Modernization brought the western societies from 'traditional' to 'modern,' which led them from rural and agricultural society to urban and industrial society (Nash 1979: 69). This enabled western societies to live an easier life. It also enabled them to form developed societies. Moreover, it directed the societies into democratic, economic growth and capitalism. In the traditional societies modernizations gives new dimensions. This may be positive from the social point of view but in terms of the traditional culture, the above-mentioned impacts of modernization can play a negative role. They may cause 'serious friction and tension' (Nofusa, 1983). The traditional cultures of the traditional societies are facing the risk of declining and disappearing. Modernization and globalization pose an irreparable danger to the loss of identity of indigenous people like the Dhimal.

Culture is changing through times so it cannot be denied that traditions do change. In case of Dhimals, their traditional beliefs, perceptions, rituals are also influenced by such changes. It is not completely possible to avoid the process of modernization in a society. Therefore, I believe, it is better for any society to find a solution harmonizing 'tradition' and 'modern' in a proper way in order to ensure the well-being of the society. But it cannot be neglected that each and every society has its own cultural identity and it is necessary to preserve and keep it alive. The best way to protect and preserve the culture is to detect the middle path of revitalizing their cultural elements. The older generations have the responsibility to pass their rituals and culture to the younger generations so that younger generations revitalize them. It can be said that revitalization is one of the best productions of modernization. So, modernization facilitates the people to understand and appreciate the various aspects of traditional cultures these days. For

example, Dhimal have already refused some of the bad cultures prevalent in the past, such as marriage by offering a betel nut, marriage by force, the practice of child marriage, etc. They are also in the process of revitalization of the traditional ethnic dresses and some valuable cultures. Modernization is facilitating the people to become aware about the traditional dresses to preserve their ethnic identity. These are the positive impacts brought by modernization

Traditional culture is valuable for any community. Moreover, it is especially important to indigenous communities to maintain their distinct identity because they often find themselves in a minority position. In fact, modernization plays a vital role to substitute the traditional culture of the different communities but it is an unavoidable factor for the society. Therefore, such communities should harmonize ‘tradition’ and ‘modernization’ and utilize the modernization factor in order to revitalize and preserve their culture. The same process should be applied in case of marriage system of the Dhimals so that the distinct identity of Dhimal can be preserved in the future.

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APPENDIX A: CATEGORIZATION OF INDIGENOUS NATIONALITIES OF NEPAL

ENDANGERED GROUPS

1. Kusunda
2. BankaAriya
3. Raute
4. Surel
5. Hayau
6. Raji
7. Kisan
8. Lepcha
9. Meche
10. Kuswadya

HIGHLY MARGINALIZED GROUPS

1. Majhi
2. Siyar
3. Shingsha
4. Thudam
5. Dhanuk
6. Chepang
7. Santhal
8. Jhagad
9. Thami
10. Bote
11. Danuwar
12. Baramu

MARGINALIZED GROUPS

1. Sunuwar
2. Tharu
3. Tamang
4. Bhujel
5. Kumal
6. Rajbanshi
7. Ganggai
8. Dhimal
9. Bhote
10. Darai
11. Tajpuriya
12. Pahari
13. Topkegola
14. Dolpo
15. Fri
16. Mugal
17. Larke
18. Lohpa
19. Dura
20. Walung

DISADVANTAGED GROUPS

1. Chhairotan
2. Tanbe
3. Tingaunle
4. Baragaunle Thakali
5. Marphali Thakali
6. Gurung
7. Magar
8. Rai
9. Limbu
10. Sherpa
11. Yakkha
12. Chhantyal
13. Jirel
14. Byansi
15. Yolmo

ADVANCED GROUPS

1. Newar
2. Thakali

Sources: <http://www.nefin.org.np/> Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities (NEFIN) Accessed date: 2nd January, 2016

APPENDIX B: PICTURES FROM THE FIELDWORK



Picture 1: A wedding Home.



Picture 2: The bride and the groom in the Dhimal wedding ceremony.

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Picture 3: Dhimel girls with cultural dresses.



Picture 4: An outsider participates in the Dhimel wedding.



Picture 5: an old Dhimal couple



Picture 6: Young Dhimal girls ready to dance in the cultural program at Jatri festival organized by Dhimal Caste Development Centre.



Picture 7: Worshipping the statue of Elephant during Jatri festival.



Picture 8: Dhimal home-stay village situated in Damak