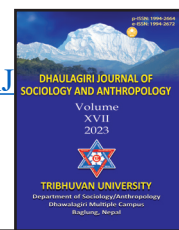


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## Dhaulagiri Journal of Sociology and Anthropology

### Interview with Professor Dilli Ram Dahal

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An eminent anthropologist, Professor Dilli Ram Dahal (10 March, 1946) was born in eastern Nepal. He was educated in Nepal, India, and the USA. He has contributed over 100 national and international journal articles and a dozen books. He has participated in several national and international seminars and conferences and supervised M.A., MPhil, and PhD theses. Prof. David Holmberg, an Anthropologist at Cornell University, had said, "He (Prof. Dahal) speaks English like a flowing stream". Though he has retired from his formal job, he is still an active reader, teacher, and writer. One never gets bored listening to him as he shares his field experience vividly. It motivates young anthropologists. He has served at the Center for Nepal and Asian Studies (CNAS), one of the research centers of Tribhuvan University. He never missed opportunities to educate young students at the Central Department of Sociology and Anthropology and the Central Department of Anthropology at Tribhuvan University in Kirtipur. He also worked at University of Michigan, USA. He has done fieldwork in different ecological regions (Mountain, Hill, and Tarai) and among different caste and ethnic groups (Rai, Tamang, Byanshi, Dhimal, Madhesi, Dalits, and Brahmin/Chhetris) of Nepal and the USA. We thank Prof. Dahal for sharing his life and some of his anthropological understanding with us without hesitation.

**Question 1: Please provide us the date of birth, place, parents and family, school life, college, university education, and number of children, etc. Family Life and Education**

Answer 1: Personal narratives are sometimes easy and sometimes difficult to write because of the inbuilt ethnocentric perspective of a person in a given culture. Sometimes, there is an overemphasis or bias in a subject, and sometimes, important narration of life is missed because of loss and decline of memory in late life. Let me begin with my ethnographic note, which depicts not only

my academic journey as an anthropologist but also my childhood, family life, desires and goals, personal well-being, and satisfaction in my everyday life.

I was born in a middle-class Brahmin family in Shantinagar, Jhapa, in 1946. My parents were farmers; my mother was illiterate, whereas my father could read and write Nepali. I was the third child, with two elder sisters, one younger brother, and two younger sisters. My parents might have been happy not only because I was born as the male child after the birth of my two elder sisters but also because I was the only white child with grey hair in my family. My village folks used to call me "Gora"



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(white man). I was raised and socialized by my maternal grandmother in my childhood.

I married a Brahmin girl, a botanist by profession, at 27, with whom I have shared my happy married life over the last 47 years. We have two daughters; one became a medical doctor, and the other an engineer. Both of them have settled in the USA with their families. It is a sad story for many parents in Nepal who sent their children abroad for a good education. Many of them have settled permanently in the United States of America, Australia, and European countries for a better future. The dislocation of our daughters and the associated emotions and stress are examples of how our older cultural models still play important roles in keeping us happy/unhappy in our everyday lives. We, the old couple, have settled in Kathmandu from our choice. We are morally bound to live in Nepal as this is not only our place of birth but also where we grew up by playing and fighting with our inmates and where we struggled hard to make a comfortable living. Our hearts and minds are always with Nepal as this country keeps our unforgettable memories fresh throughout our lives.

I went to a primary school in my village in Shantinagar. Then I moved to Bhadrapur High School, Jhapa, where I completed the School Leaving Certificate Examination, staying at my elder sister's house. Then I went to India (Kathmandu was very far from Jhapa in those days) for higher education and got Pre-university and B.Sc degree with botany, zoology, and chemistry as major subjects from Kohima Science College, Nagaland under Guwahati University. I wanted to become a medical doctor, but my luck pushed me further, and life and dreams condensed to form a disconcerting picture of my career. The Government of Nepal selected me to pursue an M.A. in Anthropology under the Colombo Plan, a subject I had no idea about at that time and was unsure whether it was a "worthy goal" of my life. In 1972, I got an M.A. in Anthropology from Karnatak University, Dharwar, India.

In 1978, I was selected by the United States Education Foundation in Nepal to pursue an M.A. and PhD in Anthropology under the East–West Center Program in Honolulu, from the University of Hawaii. I got my M.A. and PhD in Anthropology (including the Certificate in Population Studies) from the in May 1983. I was selected further for the post-doctoral research program under the Fulbright Grant at the University of Michigan (UM), Ann Arbor, in 1994-95. My mentor was my old colleague and Professor Tom Fricke, with whom I shared a room at the Population Institute of the East-West Center, Hawaii while writing our PhD thesis in Anthropology together.

**Question 2: What factors or who influenced you to study Anthropology? What was your imagination to be an anthropologist?**

Answer 2: Nobody influenced me to study Anthropology. The Government of Nepal selected me to study

Anthropology under the Colombo Plan scheme in India. The Indian Cooperation Mission in Kathmandu offered me two universities to study Anthropology: Karnatak and Lucknow. I joined Karnatak University, thinking it would be easier to learn Anthropology in English. Later, I knew it was my wrong decision because most of the Heads of Departments of Anthropology in Indian universities were the products of Lucknow University, Uttar Pradesh. I joined the Anthropology Department at Karnatak with an open mind. My only imagination then was that I would get an M.A. degree, which would eventually help me secure a good job in Kathmandu or elsewhere within Nepal.

**Question 3: You worked more than 35 years at the Center for Nepal and Asian Studies (CNAS), one of the research centers of Tribhuvan University (TU). At the same time, you taught at the combined Central Department of Sociology/Anthropology and later in the separate Anthropology Department. Why you did not choose to work at the Central Department of Sociology and Anthropology as a full-time faculty? What were the opportunities and challenges in teaching, research, and academic growth of these subjects during the initial phase?**

Answer 3: I joined the Institute of Nepal and Asian Studies (INAS), which later became the Center for Nepal and Asian Studies (CNAS) and not in the teaching Department of Sociology/Anthropology at Tribhuvan University (TU), Kirtipur. There were two major interrelated reasons why I worked at CNAS throughout my career.

First, there was no teaching department of Sociology /Anthropology at TU up to 1981, and I had little choice for the job as an anthropologist in Kathmandu. I got my first job as an anthropologist at the Royal Nepal Academy (Now Nepal Academy), Kathmandu. I did my first ethnographic fieldwork on the Dhimal people of Jhapa District, Eastern Nepal. It was rare for Nepali anthropologists to conduct ethnographic studies in Nepal in those days. Nepal was ethnographically explored by western researchers trained in anthropology and sociology (students and professors). My first ethnographic fieldwork on Dhimal people was very important in shaping my career as an anthropologist because it opened my horizon to change myself regarding sharing food and interacting with people of "other" cultures. The Royal Nepal Academy was also pleased to produce my ethnographic work on the Dhimal people as a book in the Nepali language (Dahal, 1979).

After working almost a year at the Royal Nepal Academy, I joined INAS, TU, as an assistant lecturer in 1973. Then, the Dean of the Institute and the British Professor working at INAS decided that the best strategy would be to send recently hired anthropologists like me to do village ethnographic studies of a relatively simple nature. In choosing a group for my fieldwork, I selected one

such group: the Athpahariya Rai of Dhankuta District. The study aimed to produce data on these people's ethnography and recent social change. I stayed in Athpahariya Rai's house for more than six months in Chuliban village, Dhankuta, ate food with them in their kitchens and was able to collect a lot of pertinent ethnographic materials, which helped to publish a few articles and one book on Athaphariya Rais (Dahal, 1985).

While at INAS, a teamwork of three anthropologists (Navin Rai, A. Manzardo, and myself) was formed to do migration studies in Nepal, applying anthropological tools and techniques. The migration from the Hills to the Tarai was a burning issue in Nepal in those days. We aimed to present a study on migration issues in Darchula District and its "dyadic" paired district of Kanchanpur, which received most of the out migrants from Darchula. Based on anthropological fieldwork, the migration study was carried out in both areas, staying in both districts for more than three months (Darchula and Kanchanpur). The research outcome was a few articles and one book (Dahal et al., 1977).

CNAS played a crucial role in shaping my career as an anthropologist, where I worked for almost 36 years doing different kinds of academic and applied research. I became an Assistant Lecturer, Lecturer, Reader, and Professor of Anthropology at TU but stayed at CNAS till my retirement from TU. However, after opening the teaching department of Sociology/Anthropology at TU in 1981, I joined the department. I started teaching classes part-time after completing my PhD in Anthropology in 1983.

Second, the other important reason I worked at CNAS was an attractive salary. At CNAS, I was paid my regular salary with my position within the University rules and an additional fifty percent allowance from my basic salary working as the team leader of CNAS' research projects. In the middle of my career, CNAS also received many research grants from various national/international agencies, where I played a crucial role and was rewarded with a handsome remuneration in addition to my regular salary. This helped me financially and in producing research articles and books based on these various kinds of academic and applied research. I am proud to say that I have more than 100 articles published in multiple national and international journals (single author and coauthored) and 11 books in Nepali and English language (single author and coauthored) to my credit today. These publications helped me promote my academic career till my retirement. In addition, I hired a lot of fresh anthropologists/sociologists who had Master's degrees in Anthropology and Sociology, such as Binod Pokhrel, Surendra Mishra, Dambar Chemjong, and a few others who worked with me in many of my research projects at CNAS. Furthermore, I supervised M.A., MPhil, and PhD students in Anthropology and Sociology while working at CNAS. Ten students have already obtained a PhD in Anthropology and Sociology under my supervision from TU.

To sum up, there was less challenge but more

opportunities for an anthropologist like me in terms of doing research and teaching at TU in those days. It was due to a lack of qualified human resources in Anthropology and Sociology. Some of us also played key roles in enhancing the quality and dignity of Anthropology and Sociology within Nepal and elsewhere.

**Question 4: You did an M.A. from Karnatak University in India and a PhD from the University of Hawaii, USA. What types of theory and research trends were at the time of your study, and what you found different at present? What exciting experience did you get as a student of Anthropology, and what were the similarities and differences of the teaching-learning environment in these universities?**

Answer 4: When I was doing my M.A. in Anthropology at Karnatak University, eight papers were offered, including one on a thesis based on fieldwork. As thesis writing was mandatory, I did one month of fieldwork in Hebasuru village of Karnatak State, nearly 40 kilometers from Dharwar. The course included three major papers in Anthropology: Physical, Archaeological, and Socio-cultural; one paper on Indian culture and civilization; and two more papers on the analysis of anthropological monographs about India (such as Hindus of the Himalayas, Berreman, 1972). I was the only foreigner in the class. Two Roman Catholic Christian Fathers in my class were also keen to know about Nepal. The head, who had a PhD degree in Anthropology from Harvard University was the most encouraging professor, who focused more on class discussions among students than a lecture per se. It was the annual examination system, and a student must finish courses, including the thesis, in two years. I had some interesting experiences about the people and culture of Dharwar District. While interacting with students of Anthropology, I told them, "I am a Hindu Brahmin." However, they were surprised to see me eating meat in our daily meals. Most of the high-caste Hindus, particularly Brahmins and Lingayats of this area, were vegetarians. I was unmarried then and stayed in the university hostel for two years, freely without any restriction. I now consider it "my best student life" at Karnatak University, where I enjoyed with my Nepali and Indian friends.

While studying Anthropology at the University of Hawaii, Honolulu, it was the semester system, and a semester used to last 3.0 to 3.5 months. Within one semester, a regular student of Anthropology must take a minimum of 9 credits, including one core paper in Anthropology. There were four major core papers in Anthropology -Physical, Archaeological, Social/Cultural, and Linguistic Anthropology. The rest of the papers were optional. The Department of Anthropology used to offer 20-30 optional papers in one semester, and a student was free to choose two to three courses of their choice. As a graduate student in Anthropology funded by the East-West Center,

Population Institute, I had very little choice in selecting papers. The Population Institute had its requirements, which were funded under their program to complete an M.A./PhD degree at the University of Hawaii. The East-West Center had five Institutes to conduct their research programs in the Pacific, the USA, and Asia. I had to take five papers in Population Studies offered by the University of Hawaii, and the Certificate Examination of Population Studies must be passed to continue my grant as a PhD student in Anthropology. It was also mandatory to choose one co-supervisor from the Population Institute who was teaching at least one population paper at the University of Hawaii. A student in the Department of Anthropology had to complete a minimum of 33 credit hours to obtain an M.A., and some more credits were required for the PhD program in Anthropology. My PhD grant was limited to four years. So, in one semester, I had to select one core paper from Anthropology, one core paper from Population Studies, and one optional paper in Anthropology.

The University of Hawaii's environment was different than that of Karnatak University. It was an open environment; the famous Waikiki and Alameda beach area was hardly 6-8 kilometers from our Manoa hostel complex. I stayed two years in the hostel managed by the Population Institute (Hale Manoa), came back to Nepal for one year to do my anthropological fieldwork and the rest one and half-year I stayed with my family (wife and young daughter) in a rented apartment in Honolulu.

Let me tell you about one interesting experience while doing my first-semester class in Anthropology at the University of Hawaii. I took one undergraduate paper, "Ethnographic Field Techniques" in Anthropology, as I thought this paper would be easier for me to get an "A" grade because I had already carried out a lot of ethnographic fieldwork in Nepal. But in the first lecture itself, the professor told me to go to the Waikiki beach (a famous tourist beach area in Honolulu) to observe the people the whole day there and had to make a presentation in the next class about what I had seen and observed there. I am sorry to say here that I had to drop this paper on Anthropology for two reasons: i) I had never seen a lot of young girls/women only wearing bikinis and men with shorts in my life. I had a "cultural shock" after going to the Waikiki beach for the first time, and ii) I had no idea how to talk with these young girls and boys at the beach area, who they were and, what they were here for, and so on. In addition, student life in American universities such as the University of Hawaii, was not an easy place for foreign students like me for several reasons: i) I had to cook food and wash utensils (a married Brahmin boy in Nepal hardly cooks his food and wash utensils), ii) The scholarship was limited per month and it was not possible to visit restaurants frequently for foods, and iii) I had to remain as a "forced bachelor" for two years because I was already married by that time and my morality did not allow me to roam freely with young girls in the free

environment of Honolulu. Nevertheless, with my hard work, I was able to finish all my course requirements in the Department of Anthropology and Population Studies within two years. In other words, I finished 44 credit hours in Anthropology, including Population studies, passed the comprehensive M.A. and PhD programs in Anthropology and Population Studies, and came to Nepal to do my fieldwork in Anthropology for a period of one year. Eventually, I obtained a PhD degree in Anthropology from the University of Hawaii, in 1983.

Teaching methods were logically different in the two universities. In Karnatak University, a student had to complete all the required eight papers in the given time period, and the method of teaching was lectures throughout, with an annual system of examination. The papers were intensive, with limited readings, term papers, and seminar presentations. In the University of Hawaii, a student in an M.A. and PhD program, had to complete all the required papers; it was an open-discussion classes with open-book examination and easy to discuss with professors if one needed to be clarified in the class. In one of the papers, such as Ethnology (an advanced paper for a graduate course in Anthropology), a student could write answers to only two questions for the whole day long, sitting at any place of convenience and opening the relevant books to answer questions. In other words, each paper used to be extensive with heavy reading lists. A student who does not know how to read fast and what to learn from a book or an article will have a hard time completing the required papers in a short period. A student must appear in the mid-term and final examination, present a seminar in the class on the given topic, and be required to submit term papers as well, depending upon the professor.

Technically, there is very little difference today in the contents of what we had learned in the past in terms of theory and methods in Anthropology. But in the name of specialization of the discipline, we are now dismembering the subject into small units with our own interests and choices. Now, so-called "Post Modernism" has become a new approach in Anthropology interpreting "social facts" of our everyday life.

**Question 5: You have been working on ethnographic study of various people of Nepal such as Rai, Tamang, Byanshi, Dhimal, Madhesi, Dalits, Brahmin/Chhetri and so on. As each cultural group has their unique social-economic-cultural practices, what sorts of similarities and differences did you find among the people of different ecological regions?**

Answer 5: There are a lot of differences in terms of culture, language, and religion among all these groups. I label some of them as the Hindu-origin caste groups (such as Brahmin/Chhetri, Madhesi, and Dalit) and some others as Adibasi/Janajati (indigenous groups/nationalities) groups (such as Byanshi, Dhimal, Tamang, Rai). The caste-origin

Hindu groups have some distinct social structure and cultural features, whether they live in the Mountain, Hill, or Tarai: i) hierarchical structure, ii) hereditary basis of the membership, iii) endogamy, iv) mostly Hindus in their religious values, and v) purity and pollution, which govern the day-to-day life of people based on Hindu religious principles. Each Adibasi/Janajati group, wherever they live, has its mother tongue, religious values, and traditional culture and does not fall under the conventional fourfold Hindu model. The ecological zone plays an important role in the symbolic and material culture of these groups (see Table 1).

**Table 1: Specific Cultural Traits of Hindu caste vs Adibasi/ Janajati groups of Nepal**

Economic system	Agriculture with animal husbandry, sometimes trade, labor migrants within the country and abroad; military jobs preferred	Agriculture, animal husbandry, white collar jobs
Staple Food	Corn, millet, and rice, prefer liquor as a social drink	Mostly rice, corn, and wheat; liquor is strictly prohibited except for Dalits

(Adapted and Modified from Gellner. 1991)

Socio-cultural Traits	Adibasi/ Janajati group	Caste Group
Traditional Settlement	Mostly settled in the Mountain and Hill regions, many of them have also settled in the Tarai.	Mostly settled in the Hill and Tarai regions.
Division	Horizontal	Hierarchical, Vertical
Language	Tibeto-Burman	Indo- European
Origin and History	Native (claimed)	Migrated mostly from India in different periods.
Social organization	Clan system	Caste system
Religion	Kirat, Buddhism and Animism	Mostly Hindu
Marriage system	Hypo-gamous or isogamous (ideal)	Hyper-gamous (ideal)
Marriage with mother's brother's daughter	Permitted in certain groups	Not at all permitted; considered incestuous relationship
Remarriage of widows	Permitted	Not Permitted
Marriage practice	Bride price or bride service	Dowry system
Divorce	Allowed	Not allowed
Family system	Nuclear (preferred)	Extended or Joint (ideal)
Status of women	High	Medium or low
Societal nature	Open -society	Close -society

**Question 6: You have broadly assessed and written several papers on the contribution of foreign anthropologists/scholars in Nepal in developing Nepali anthropology. Similarly, you have also collaborated research with foreign anthropologists, as you are one of the leading and influential native anthropologists. Did you influence them or did they influence you? How do you assess the overall influences of foreign anthropologists in Nepal? Have you thought what would have been the anthropological research in Nepal without foreigner anthropologists?**

Answer 6: As a researcher and teacher at CNAS, TU, my job was reading and writing reviews, articles, books and reports published on Nepal by native and foreign anthropologists.

My background in Anthropology from the respective universities taught me a lot of anthropological theories and methods to judge the quality of any publication. My anthropological background was further sharpened during my post-doctoral research at the Institute of Social Research (ISR), University of Michigan (UM), Ann Arbor. Some of my colleagues, such as Tom Fricke, James Fisher, David Holmberg, and a few others, helped me to understand theories and methods on the ethnography of the USA and Europe in general and Nepal in particular. I also collected some ethnographic data from American communities (both from the urban and rural areas; see below) with the financial help of ISR, UM. In other words, my background in Anthropology was influenced and sharpened by the schools where I got my degree and by my foreign colleagues in Anthropology as teachers and researchers who conducted research in Nepal. There is a clear domination of Anglo-American tradition regarding theory and method in Nepali Anthropology. So, I must admit that I was influenced by their teachings and writings throughout my career in Anthropology.

Theoretically, these ethnographic studies on Nepal provided excellent materials for understanding the social structure of Nepali society and the caste system as a whole. Beyond ethnographic dimensions, much of these

literatures suggested purity and pollution were the bases for a hierarchical system in Nepali society (Bennet, 1976). Furthermore, there is some good literature on population and resources (Macfarlane, 1976; Fricke, 1986 and Levine, 1989), Social structure, economy and change (Furer-Haimendorf, 1975; Fisher, 1985), and Conflict studies (Caplan, 1970).

A department of Anthropology at TU without substantial Nepali ethnographic materials would have been weak in justifying the Nepali society and culture today. These literature have filled up to some extent the ethnographic map of Nepal. With the help of these foreign anthropologists, some Nepali anthropologists also had easy access to go to the American and European universities to get an M.A. and PhD in Anthropology and Sociology.

At the same time, there are several weaknesses or limitations in anthropological research and writings by western anthropologists. Firstly, these studies targeted either the Himalayan or the mid-hill groups of Nepal, neglecting research on the Tarai people, where more than 50 percent of the Nepali population lives. In other words, Nepal Tarai was ethnographically blank up to a few years ago. At present, there is still little data from Nepali materials to elaborate on the interrelationships among population growth, use of natural resources, extensive use of marginal lands for agriculture, the deteriorating mountain ecosystem system, loss of soils, landslides, and so on.

**Question 7: You are a well-qualified anthropologist with a clear understanding of the issue and a vocal person as well. But, as far as we know, you did not get any appointment from the government. Your several contemporary Nepali anthropologists and sociologists were appointed in various responsibilities. How do you see this in the context of valuing researchers in Nepal?**

Answer 7: I did not have high ambitions in my life except to become a full professor at TU. Let me share with you other reasons why I did not aspire for any attractive position in the Government of Nepal or TU per se.

First, I was happy in my academic career while doing research at CNAS because everybody working there encouraged me in my academic research work and teaching. CNAS provided me with a separate room with a facility of desktop computers to carry out my day-to-day work at CNAS. This kind of facility was only available for some faculty members at the Department of Anthropology/ Sociology, TU. Most of my colleagues in the Department of Anthropology and Sociology frequently visited my room at CNAS for general discussions about Anthropology per se and for friendly gossip and a cup of tea. CNAS had a cafeteria that served tea and snacks in the room. I became a confirmed Assistant Lecturer and Lecturer of Anthropology within three years of my tenure at CNAS, TU. In the meantime, I also got a leave of absence (with full pay for three years and another one and

a half -years without pay) from CNAS to complete a PhD degree in Anthropology (August 1978 to May 1983) from the University of Hawaii. In addition, I also got a one-year sabbatical leave to go to the UM for the Post-doctoral Fulbright Program in 1994-95. In other words, CNAS always encouraged me to pursue a better career, and I was happy while working at CNAS throughout my tenure.

Second, in Nepal, flattery and nepotism play very important roles in obtaining a good administrative / academic position. Because of my nature, I never went to any concerned authority of TU or the leader of any political party in Nepal for a better position as I was not an aspirant. It was because I was already a Professor of Anthropology at CNAS. In my interview for Professor of Anthropology at TU, I was given a choice by the TU Selection Committee whether I would like to join full-time at CNAS or the Department of Anthropology. I selected CNAS as I knew well that I could teach Anthropology on a part-time basis while working at CNAS. I am a vocal person, and authorities of TU have always had a fear that I could do more harm to their position than they could benefit from me. In my lifetime till today, I am not inclined to any political party, and I am a free person to vote for whom I consider a good person in their action and behavior. In Nepal, academic degrees or merit do not play a major role in obtaining a good position in the bureaucratic structure of the government or even at TU. Most of the vice chancellors of TU have been hired by political parties of Nepal up to today.

**Question 8: You also taught and conducted research in the U.S.A. Please share with us about teaching and research experiences in the USA.**

Answer 8: I did not teach Anthropology in the USA. I gave seminar presentations on Nepal at Cornell and Columbia Universities, New York and participated in several weekly seminars organized by the Institute of Social Research (ISR), UM. I also participated in "Anthropological Demography Conference" at Brown University to sharpen my understandings between demography and anthropology. In most of the cases I did the research work throughout my stay at the UM.

In 1994-95, I was funded by the US Educational Foundation in Nepal for six months for the post- doctoral research program in the UM. Later, this post-doctoral program was extended for one more year by the UM to complete our joint research work on Nepal, which Tom Fricke and I who have been working together on Nepali research topics since 1980s and have remained close collaborators on later projects such as the Tamang Family Research Project (TFRP) since 1987.

As I had the basic degree in Population Studies, I was hired as an anthropological demographer by the ISR, UM. Our empirical data were largely the result of field research in Nepal in two widely separated communities, Tipling

VDC in Dhading District and the Budhanilkantha area of the Kathmandu Valley. We collected data on family structure, demography, economy and kinship relations among Tamang. A mixed method approach was adopted, incorporating surveys with variables specific to local practices and more classic participant observation, long discursive interviews and archival materials where they exist. Life course theory was used as the theoretical model, which suggests that changes in experiences at early age of the life course will lead changes at later stages of life as well. Increasing monetized economy is the indicator of the movement away from the pre-transition economy. Living away from parents before marriage is an indicator of circumstances, allowing greater autonomy in personal behavior. In brief, monetized economy with changing labor patterns have changed family and demographic structure of the Tamang populations. We have a number of publications together from the findings of this project in journals both in Nepal and the USA. I am glad to say that some of our articles are published in America's prestigious journals in Anthropology such as *Human Ecology* (Fricke, Arland and Dahal, 1990) and *Ethnology* (Dahal, Fricke and Arland, 1993) and *Contributions to Nepalese Studies*, a leading TU journal of Nepal (Dahal and Fricke, 1998).

Where the basis of our relationship has in the past focused on mutual interests in Nepali society and culture, in 2000, Dr. Tom Fricke of the UM, invited me to join in his American Project to understand the American families and their work. Fricke received a big grant from the Sloan Center to establish a center, "Center for Ethnography for Every Day Life" (CELL), focusing on social and cultural change among "Middle Class American Families". The program was housed with the newly established Center for the Ethnography of Everyday Life, a part of the Institute for Social Research at UM. The CELL's mandate was to explore contemporary transformations in work and family life among the middleclass American families by using the tools of anthropologists. The Center was also involved in training and research to both the pre-doctoral and post-doctoral research fellows.

No doubt, a lot of Nepali students, teachers and "others" go to the USA every year do three things: a) go to the respective school, complete the degree and return home, b) involve in the collaborating research on Nepal with the professors, and c) look a job either legally or illegally and try to stay in the country as far as possible. Rarely, Nepali scholars are involved in understanding the American family, society and culture. For an anthropologist of a developing country like Nepal, it is indeed a difficult task to do fieldwork in the developed countries like the USA for two reasons: a) financial constraints, and b) proper affiliation with the respective university and getting clearance letter for research from the Internal Review Board (IRB) of the respective university. It is rare for ethnographers from developing countries to be invited to the USA to pose their questions on American culture and

their lives.

I joined CELL on October 1, 2000 to take up one year position as a Senior Research Fellow. I was privileged for doing ethnographic work to understand the working families in two settings: i) the autoworkers of the Ford Plant of the Southeast Michigan, an urban setting, and ii) the farming families of North Dakota, a rural setting and economically backward area of the USA at that time. The director advised me to join a research team composed of six persons preparing with CELL funding to carry out a research project on industrial workers in Southeast Michigan. The initial goal of this large project was to understand basic questions about work, career, and satisfaction among auto workers and their families. It also hoped to explore how autoworkers prepare their children, directly and indirectly, for careers both within and beyond the auto industry.

Almost from the very start, my enthusiasm for jumping into data collection in the American setting ran into frustration. Our research project took a long time to obtain clearance from both the University of Michigan's Internal Review Board (IRB) and the Plant Management of Union Local (UAW 849). This process took almost six months for clearance. I was given only one year sabbatical leave by my home Institution and thus it was not possible to carry out a detailed ethnography on autoworkers and their families as planned before.

In the Ford Plant, I collected oral histories of 12 retiree autoworkers. The story of one autoworker's life history covered almost 30 pages, who worked in the Ford Plant of Southeast Michigan between 1959 and 2001. The interview of one retiree autoworker was designed for almost 90 minutes for which a sum of USD 45.0 (Note: USD 30.0 per hour) was paid to each autoworker for their valuable time.

One of the retiree autoworkers narrated me what he meant by work. "In the past, autoworkers like him, who were often the sons of immigrants or recent migrants to the city from rural areas, worked very hard because they desired a new life and the betterment of their family. But with recent changes in American society, he shared his sense of decline in these values. Now, a lot of young folks don't like to work. This is because parents have already given them too much."

Another retiree gave a very elaborate narrative of his family life. "He married for the first time with his high school sweetheart when he was 25. He had twin sons, now 35 years old, from this wife. His first was a homemaker, and sometimes she also worked as a part-time sheriff. Both sons had a learning disability because of their premature births. The couple divorced nearly after 15 years of marriage, and he remarried another woman, who had a 26-year-old daughter from her first husband. Now both live together happily as this second wife was educated and worked in the local school".

While working with the farm families of North Dakota,

I selected Richardton town of Stark County. The population size of this town was 650 (2000) and the average farm size of a farmer was around 1005 acres (one acre=8 ropani). The Germans from Russia, the original settlers of this county, came there nearly 100 years ago. The following percentage of crops were cultivated in the area by farmers: 50 percent wheat, 25 percent legumes, and 25 percent oils (crambe, sunflower, and canola). I stayed with a farm family's house who owned 3196 acres of land (including the rented land), 204 animals (100 cows, 100 calves, and 4 bulls), and a lot of machinery for farming. It was interesting to note that the family fed all the milk of cows to calves for two reasons: i) it needed special instruments to preserve milk at home and to be carried out hygienically to the market every day to sell, and ii) the calves grew faster because of enough milk fed to them and thus provided more cash income than selling milk in a short period. I used to pay USD 25.0 per day for accommodation, breakfast, and dinner. This farmland was cultivated by the couple using the heavy machinery. The son, who was in the undergraduate program at the nearby college, helped his parents during vacations. He was paid cash for his service to prevent him from going to other people's farms for earning. The farmer said he was barely meeting his domestic needs from his farm income, including the animal husbandry. The American farm families are considered poor compared to the white-collar workers. Because of this, many American young boys and girls did not like to work in the agriculture farms.

My ethnographic fieldwork, however, was limited while studying the American farm families about a month or so in North Dakota and little more than three months (off and on) with the autoworkers of the Ford Plant in Ypsilanti, Southeast Michigan.

I encountered several problems while conducting ethnographic research in the USA. The first problem was the structural problem, the IRB in the American universities. The IRB is a committee formed by the university to carefully check a research project involving human subjects. The overall goal of a researcher is to make sure that the human beings they study are treated with dignity and respect in every question and are not harmed by any means in their everyday life.

The other problem was the ethnographic research in the urban setting like that of the Southeast Michigan among the auto plant workers. It raised several issues of contextualization to come up with a manageable research unit in temporal and spatial terms. I ended up choosing a methodology which was less ethnographic and more on the order of detailed case studies of available autoworkers. My interviews were confined to retired autoworkers and places mutually agreed upon by both parties in advance. Because of such constraints, there was little opportunity for me to talk with other family members, to have their experiences about work, look at their houses, or/and to develop a first-hand understanding of closely observed family life.

Doing ethnography with farm families was also equally

complex and difficult for me. In my project site, individual farm families were very scattered; families used to live 5-10 miles (8 to 16 kilometers) apart and it was not possible to visit farm houses without driving a car. It was necessary to seek approval from the family before visiting their houses. This was simply because they were busy people and had very little time for long discussions. Moreover, Americans were very reluctant to provide their personal information, such as the amount of land owned and cash income because they were very sensitive about their property and personal life. I could hardly find a family together except during dinner. To talk with the grown-up children, I needed separate permission whether they wanted to speak with me or not.

**Question 9: Many foreign anthropologists come to Nepal as a tourist and collaborate with the non-governmental organizations rather with the university's academic faculty. How do you assess this practice and the quality of their work?**

Answer 9: Many anthropologists such as James Fisher, Alexander Macdonald, Lionel Caplan, C. von Furer Haimendork, Michel Allen, David Holmberg, Tom Fricke and others have worked as visiting professors and researchers in Nepal. Because of the Cornell- Nepal program at Kirtipur, many young Nepali anthropologists such as Om Gurung, Mukta Lama, and Dambar Chemjong got an opportunity to do their PhDs in Anthropology in the famous Cornell University. Many of these anthropology professors wrote books on the Nepal Himalaya and added valuable literature to enrich Nepali Anthropology in general and ethnography in particular. Some of their monographs and articles are prescribed as a text in an M.A. and MPhil classes in Anthropology at TU.

Some anthropologists, who came to Nepal in a tourist visa and extended their time to stay in Nepal, worked in Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and International Non-Government Organizations (I-NGOs) in Nepal. I believe they do this for two reasons: i) Many NGOs/INGOS and bilateral agencies hired foreign anthropologists for their inbuilt position of senior anthropologists to work in Nepal's hydropower, water supply and development projects and were paid a handsome salary in the American dollars, ii) English language also played a key role where a project report to be submitted by the NGOs /INGOS to the concerned funding authorities must be written in English language. This is in-built structural constraints of the Government of Nepal to hire foreign anthropologists to work in bilateral projects funded by the Asian Development Bank, World Bank, DFID and others. I observed this while I was working in many of the hydropower projects as a Social Safeguard Specialist and a specialist in some of the social and economic development projects in Nepal. I have, however, a little idea how many of them as anthropologists violated rules of the Government of Nepal, while staying



in a tourist visa.

**Question 10: Sociology and Anthropology were established as a joint department in 1981. How do you remark on the growth, development, and challenges of anthropology after 2015 in TU?**

Answer 10: Considering the growth of anthropology over time in teaching and research, it is noteworthy. Anthropology in Nepal was started by western scholars in the form of research more than a century ago, and published several monographs and articles which became a major source of readings on the ethnic /caste groups of Nepal since 1811 (Kirkpatrick, 1811; Hamilton, 1819 and Hodgson, 1874). Academic anthropology in research and teaching were started after 1950, when Nepal was opened to the outside world for visits and research. Many general ethnographic studies were carried out by most ethnographers of the west, particularly anthropologists from the USA, UK, Germany, Japan and few other countries systematically explored Nepal in various fields and published a number of articles, reports, and books, mostly in English and sometimes in their own languages. After 1990, there is also a substantial growth of Anthropology by Nepali scholars. Professor Dor Bahadur Bista made a landmark entry in Nepali Anthropology, publishing popular books such as "People of Nepal" (1967) and "Fatalism and Development" (1990). Other popular research trend in the post -1990 periods is to deal with various issues of caste/ethnicity and related issues on development of changes in Nepali society and culture. Many of these books and articles by Nepali Anthropologists are also well placed on anthropological tradition in Nepal. After 2015, not only a separate department of Sociology and Anthropology was created within TU but also Nepali anthropologists have already done serious ethnographic research in the name of preparing "Ethnographic Atlas of Nepal" and published 22 books on the ethnography of various ethnic/caste groups of Nepal (CDSA, 2014). Today, Anthropology and Sociology have become attractive disciplines among students who opt for social science degree at TU. This deserves special credit to many Anthropology and Sociology teachers who have been working very hard over the last one decade at TU.

**Question 11: The curriculum of anthropology at TU has been revised several times. You are actively engaged to finalize various papers from the beginning of the course to date. What are the strengths and missing contents in the anthropology curriculum of MA, MPhil/PhD courses in Nepal?**

Answer 11: Professors Dor Bahadur Bista and Chaitanya Mishra initiated to merge Department of Sociology/Anthropology at TU, Kirtipur in 1981, though they were the fulltime faculties at CNAS. Considering the available

resources and limited trained manpower in Anthropology and Sociology in those days, the combined department was a good idea. Out of eight papers, a student had to choose either "Population Studies" or "Ecological Anthropology", and depending upon the subject chosen, a student was awarded a degree of Sociology or Anthropology at TU. As I had taken five papers on Population Studies at the University of Hawaii, I was considered a suitable Sociology teacher though I had the basic PhD in Anthropology. A trained student of Sociology and Anthropology knows that there are fundamental differences between these two disciplines in terms of history, methods and contents. I believe it hindered the full-fledged growth of Anthropology and Sociology per se as a separate discipline at TU. The course was revised and up dated in 1999, which included 9 papers, where a student of Sociology got an opportunity to be specialized choosing the course "Model of Society" and a student became Anthropologist if he had selected a paper on "Model of Culture" though objectives of these papers were to impart updated knowledge of the theories and methods of Sociology and Anthropology. After 2015, the Department of Anthropology and Sociology got separated along with the teachers of the combined department and started teaching separately MPhil and PhD classes in Anthropology and Sociology at TU.

Regarding the missing contents, I feel that the concept of four-field anthropology has yet to be materialized fully in the form of research and teaching in Anthropology Department, TU. The Anthropology of Nepal, by and large, is a single field Anthropology up to today, i. e. Socio-Cultural Anthropology. The four major fields in Anthropology are: Physical/Biological Anthropology, Archaeological Anthropology, Socio-cultural Anthropology and Linguistic Anthropology. Physical or Biological Anthropology, with its theory and practical programs, must be taught at the department of Anthropology at TU enabling easy identification of the racial composition of diverse Nepal's population with its blood group and genetic properties. One Nepali anthropologist recently claimed that Nepali ethnic/ caste groups are "a mixed race" historically and demands serious genetic research among populations to properly identify them (Nepal, 2022).

When I was studying an M.A. in Anthropology at the Karnatak University, they were offering choices to students to choose either Physical or Sociocultural Anthropology as one of their major fields. Depending upon the nature of courses chosen, a student used to get either an M.Sc. (Physical Anthropology) or M.A. (Socio-cultural) in Anthropology. For example, Dr. Rishi Keshav Regmi, who studied at Karnatak University had an M.Sc. degree in Anthropology as he specializes in Physical Anthropology. I got an M.A. degree in Anthropology from the same university as I had Socio-cultural Anthropology as my major. Dr. Navin Rai had an M.Sc. degree in Anthropology from Panjab University, Chandigarh, India.

It is good to trace the roots of Anthropology and its scope in the country like Nepal, where more than 125

ethnic /caste groups lives. A departure from Sociology was good in the sense that there has to be much gained over and over focusing Anthropology as a discipline in Nepal.

**Question 12: Looking at your deep engagement in anthropological works almost your whole life, what theoretical and methodological contributions have you made to Anthropology in general and Nepal in specific?**

Answer 12: I don't know how much I have contributed theories in Anthropology. Without an anthropological theory, no PhD thesis is accepted and not an article becomes sound without a proper theory. But theory is one of the least understood terms for the students of social science. According to Newman (2003), "social theory is defined is a system of interconnected abstractions or ideas that condenses and organizes knowledge about the social world" (p.42).

In my PhD thesis in Anthropology from the University of Hawaii, I challenged the Malthusian theory of population growth, who advocated that population growth brings negative consequences to the people, community and country as a whole. I applied the neo-Malthusian model of Ester Boserup (1965) and Brookfield (1972) to analyze the complex relationship between resources and population. When I analyzed the longitudinal data of the population growth and local resources over the last 20 years in the hill village of Ilam District, it was clear that there was population growth in the area but local people had developed several coping strategies to adapt in the changing situation. Among these changes were: i) intensification of agriculture, ii) adoption of cash crops, iii) increased use of marginal lands, iv) the development of other resources of income (trade, army service, white collar jobs, and wage labor, v) out- migration, and vi) various kinds of fertility control. In other words, the people living there were prosperous than before despite significant population growth in the area. I advocated a different theoretical notion on the term "tribe" or "tribal" which was often used by western scholars and popular in the writings of Indian anthropology and administration is virtually obsolete in the context of Nepal (Dahal, 1979). I suggested the term "ethnic group" for Adibasi/Janajati (indigenous/nationalities). Undoubtedly, the term "tribe" or "tribal" still provides a space in characterizing the indigenous group/nationalities, a redefined notion of place and locality. I brought the Substantivists vs. Formalist theories of Economic Anthropology while analyzing the economy of primitive and peasant societies such as the Athpahariya Rais of Dhankuta District. I argued that the Substantivists and Formalists theories are complimentary rather than in opposition (Dahal, 1981). In Dor Bahadur Lecture Series organized by the Department of Anthropology, Kirtipur, I addressed the theoretical notions of fatalism and development advocated by Prof. Bista and argued that there is little link between Brahmanism and

development /underdevelopment in the context of Nepal. I also discussed the theoretical concept of social inclusion/exclusion which I thought was inadequate in capturing development/underdevelopment issues for many ethnic/caste groups of Nepal in question (Dahal, 2018).

Regarding methodology, I have also written several articles. In one of my articles (2002) I have argued that: a) though a variety of research methods are used in collecting data in social science in Nepal, the outputs in research in social science are weak in their contents. This is because of limited knowledge in theory and using the "proper scientific methods" in social science, and b) considering the caste/ ethnic and geographical diversity and different levels of socioeconomic development of people, "mixed method "approach (using both the quantitative and qualitative techniques) is the most appropriate research method in social science in Nepal. I have learned this method seriously while I was doing the post-doctoral research at the ISR, UM. I also challenged Lionel Caplan' (1970) views theoretically and methodologically in explaining the interdependence between the Brahmins and Limbus of East Nepal (see Himal May 1996 and its rejoinder issues in Himal July and August 1996).

To sum up, I put several theoretical strands together to explain various economic, social and political issues in Nepal.

**Question 13: Social sciences are the least preferred subjects in Nepal and the political leadership and bureaucrats rarely acknowledge the importance of social sciences. What do you think about the future of social science in general and anthropology in particular? What are your suggestions for the betterment of social sciences in Nepal?**

Answer 13: Your statement about social science is partially true. No doubt, our guidance to our siblings since their childhood is to pursue their career in natural science either to become a medical doctor or an engineer. There was a deep faith among parents that only a bright boy or girl could go to the medical field or engineering. Such expectations of parents seems natural for two simple reasons: i) doctors and engineers make money quickly compared to other professions (such as the teachers of schools and colleges), ii) a medical doctor or an engineer is considered the most eligible male or female candidate for seeking a good bride or bridegroom, and iii) parents and society feel proud saying that his son or daughter is a medical doctor or an engineer. Thus, a middle-class family today spends 5-6 million Nepali rupees for their son or daughter to become a medical doctor. It was believed that only academically dull boy or girl pursue their career in social sciences. These days, such thinking has changed allowing their siblings to choose disciplines of their choice.

There is also confusion among scholars regarding disciplines that come under the scope of social sciences. If some scholars include economics, political science,

sociology, anthropology, psychology and geography as “social science”, others include history and demography (population studies) as well. Philosophy is still a new discipline in Nepal.

Social science research is not new phenomenon in Nepal. The pioneer in economics was Mahesh Chandra Regmi who collected official data on the land tenure and taxation system in Nepal in the chronological order and published more than ten books on the state of economy, land tenure and taxation system in Nepal (Regmi, 1963). He is acclaimed a reputed scholar internationally and without reading his books no social science research is completed even today. Up to few years ago, the Vice Chairman of the National Planning Commission was always a geographer in Nepal. Anthropology has become a popular discipline in Nepal. Being a rural country, Nepal has tremendous scope of Anthropology even today for research. In brief, the post-1990 trend in research in social science was extensive focusing on subjects such as democracy, development /underdevelopment, monarchy, religion, political party, federalism, state restructuring, nationalism, caste/ethnicity, inclusion/exclusion, conflict and peace. In other words, social science disciplines have become very useful in understanding the society, culture, economy, and politics of Nepal.

My suggestions for the betterment of social science in Nepal are several. In anthropology, theorizing many of the ethnographic works in Nepal is essential or theoretically informed ethnography is desirable. The proliferation of non- governmental sector as a role model for development and instruments of empowering Dalits, women and Adibasi/janajati needs to be scrutinized and modified for strengthening the process of democratization and minimizing the level of poverty of the concerned groups. Despite all government propaganda of corruption free administrative structures in Nepal, it is on the rise. I believe the social science disciplines can come forward to mitigate all these various problems and issues.

To conclude, I must say that I am very happy being an anthropologist. Given the many unanticipated events (such as health issues, loss of souls of our close relatives and so on) in my daily life, my retirement is not correlated “without working”. I taught almost a decade to MPhil. and PhD students in Anthropology at TU after my formal retirement. To make retirement meaningful, productive and enjoyable, Anthropology provides me illuminating lenses of personhood in my everyday life even today.

**Question 14: You have been reading the publication of the Dhaulagiri Journal of Sociology and Anthropology. What are the specific suggestions to the editorial Team? How shall we continue this journal? What area should we focus on, and how can we develop higher quality and visibility of the published paper?**

Answer 14: The Dhaulagiri Journal of Sociology and

Anthropology is covering wide subjects, encouraging young scholars of Anthropology and Sociology to publish their research findings. The editorial board deserves special thanks for their tireless work. However, I feel that there is always some room to improve the quality of the journal, which are as follows: i) It should include more and more articles on ethnography of Nepal, with their strengths and weaknesses, ii) It should provide space to many PhD thesis of Anthropology and Sociology submitted in different universities in an article form or if it is not possible, abstract of the thesis should be included so that readers know the type of thesis and its contents in general, iii) Current academic debates on contemporary socioeconomic and political issues, including the cross-cultural study should be included, and iv) More and more reviews of books published on Nepali Anthropology and Sociology should get enough space in your journal,

Publishing a standard journal is a tiring job in terms of time and money. Make it sustainable for the long run, either looking for a good donor or charge it moderately to students and teachers interested in Anthropology and Sociology in Nepal and elsewhere.

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