

## **Rapid Cultural Change: A Case Study of Polyandry Marriage System among the Gurung Community from Upper Mustang, Nepal**

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### **Abstract**

Nepal is multi ethnic, multi lingual and multi cultural country. In Upper Mustang polyandry is practiced by Loba communities. However, the condition of polyandry is dying out at present. The young are not in favor of this system. Socio-economic, political, seasonal migration, tourism and developmental factors have played crucial role in this regards. From conservation perspective polyandry played crucial role to manage local resources and in population dynamics in the past. This paper is based on field survey carried out in two different time periods (1998 and 2008) in order to compare or understand changing pattern of polyandry. In last couple of years, polyandry system has changed very rapidly in Loba communities of Upper Mustang. Rising community awareness, multiple economic opportunities, improve communication, foreign employment, modern education, open tourism, road access and other visual and in visual forces has lead society from close to open and more wider side or increase the horizon of young generation. Polyandry system is directly affected.

**Keywords:** Polyandry, Natural Resources management, Upper Mustang, Loba, ACAP

### **1. Introduction**

Polyandry culture was practiced among the Gurung ethnic people of Upper Mustang. In polyandry a woman marries simultaneously more than one legal husband in her life or more than one men share a woman as wife. This is one of the marriage system adopted in the Nepalese society mostly in Himalayan region. The marriage system is not practiced by many communities in the world and not practiced in many other communities of Nepal. It is contrasting practice to monogamy societies, unique and unusual for many people of the modern society. The history of polyandry system is still unknown but according to religious literature in ancient time Pandav had adapted Draupati as common wife in Mahabharat period. In this paper I have explored current status of existing polyandry in Upper Mustang.

Literally, a single woman sharing multiple men as husbands at a time is known as polyandry. Polyandry is two types that are fraternal and non fraternal. In fraternal polyandry, all the brothers in one generation share woman as a wife. In non-fraternal polyandry, a group of like-minded men from different households get married with a single woman. In Nepalese context fraternal polyandry marriage system is still found in Himalayan region of Nepal. Today, it is verge of extinct culture because it is persist as a very delicate and fragile cultural form in Himalayan regions of Nepal especially in Humla, Dolpa, Mustang, Gorkha, Dhading, Okhaldunga, Samkhuwashava, Taplejung and other mountain districts or close to Tibetan border of Nepal (THT, 2008, Sharma, 2007, TKP, 2005). It is contrasting cultural practice to monogamy societies, unique and unusual for many people of the modern society. It is rare cultural practices and assumes a specific concentration in the Himalayan areas of South Asia also found in Africa, Oceania and Native America too (Schwimmer, 2003).

Many people believed that the polyandry culture diffused from Tibet in Upper Mustang since the ancient time. It is one of the best ways to maintain limited parental properties right within the same clan, maintain population with the region. Indirectly it has great contribution on conservation of scare natural resources of the

region. In this regard there is no proper documentation of procedure, changes in last decade or current status and trend, major threats, sexual conflicts among the polyandrous, its impact to society or perception of society and outsiders, and role of women in household as well as sexual management., This paper tries to document the traditional procedure, and social approval of polyandry system,. Similarly to demonstrate and highlights the current status and social perception about polyandry system, trace out driving forces of adaptation of polyandry system, assessing women's right on children and properties and to explore any root cause of conflict among the stakeholders.

## 2. Methods and materials

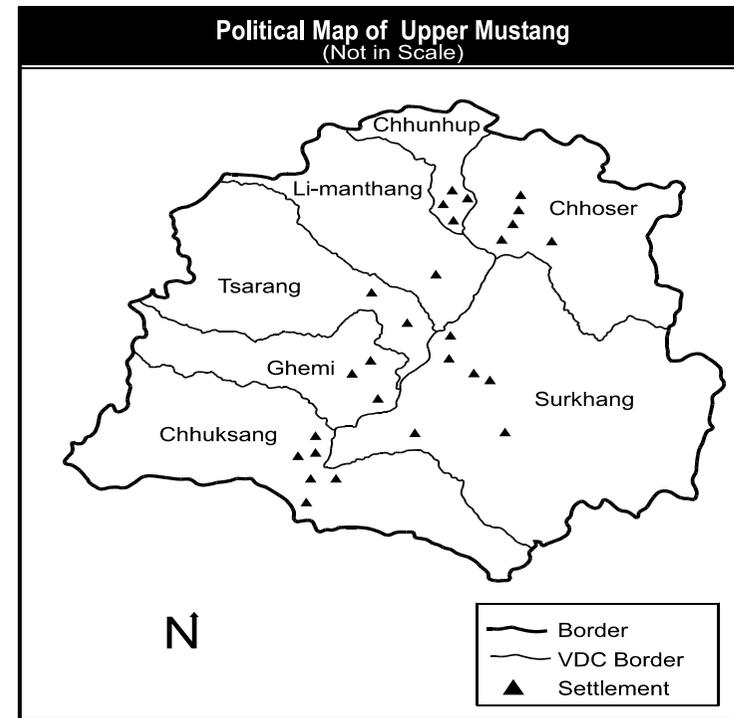
I have used both on primary and secondary data. Collection of primary data on cultural practices, cultural resources as well as environmental through field survey and interviews with structured questionnaires and checklists was done. Accidental sampling was applied for interviews and other related researches. The major sources of secondary was from district office, ministries, donor agencies NGO (I)s publications and other electronic sources.

## 3. Study area

This study was conducted in Mustang, one of the most remote districts of Nepal. It is situated north of the Mt. Annapurna, Central Himalayan, which is the world famous trekking route in Nepal. Geographically, Mustang is situated 2000 m to 8,167m elevations above the sea level. A study shows that almost 84% of the area is more than 30° slopes and very less area is plain along the bank of Kali Gandaki River. There are more than 20 minor rivers and rivulets are recorded within the entire Mustang. These rivers are deeply flowing and joint with major river Kaligandaki. Beside rivers popular ritual sites such as Damodar Kunda, Muktinath spring, Dhomba, Sekong, Titi lakes are found as major wetlands of the district (DDC, Mustang, 2002).

Entire Mustang is rain shadow district because it is located in inner Himalayan region of the country. Climate of the entire district is cold temperate, alpine and tundra types. This is cold desert because

Figure 1: Map of Upper Mustang



scarce rainfall and low temperature is main characteristic of the district.

Maximum temperature is recorded 26° C in summer and minimum is -9° C in winter (DMH/NG, 2006). Alpine and tundra type of climate reflects the respective vegetation types. Good pastureland has provided opportunity for livestock herding. Pines species is the dominant tree species and *Caragana* sp. is dominant ground species (Blamont, 1996).

Nepal is land of natural and cultural diversity. It is also land of multilingual, multi nationalities and multi ethnic country. In Mustang, 14,981 (Male 6,801 and Female 8,180) people inhabit along the banks of the river Kali Gandaki and male female ratio is 120.28. This is the highest male female ration of the country. The average family size is 4.62 and population growth rate is very slow

that is recorded 0.47% per annum (CBS, 2058). The ethnic composition is diverse. Gurung and Thakali are the main ethnic inhabitants. Gurung constitute 59%, Thakali 25%, Dalits castes such as Kami/Damai 8%, Magar 3%, Bista 3% and other 2% of total ethnic groups inhabit in Mustang. Mustang is having 3.9/Sq. Km population density which is one of lowest in Nepal. Population density is. Buddhism is major religion (90%) of the district where Hindu is in second position (9%) and the rest are Muslim, Christian (DDC, Mustang, 2002).

Mustang covers 3,573 Sq. km. (2.42 %) of total area of the country. The entire district has been politically divided into 16 Village Development Committees (VDCs) for carrying out administrative and development activities. An average literacy rate of the region is 53.74 % where male is 67.3% and female is 55.47% (CBS 2001). Traditionally entire district is divided into three regions lower Mustang or *Thak Sat Say* or Thak Khola (Thakali is dominant ethnic group), middle part is known as *Baragaon* and Upper Mustang or *Lo Chho Din* or Loba Kingdom where Gurung is dominant ethnic group (DDC Mustang, 2002).

Upper Mustang covers 2,563 sq. km which is further divided into barren land (1,435.13 sq. km.), (1,066.27 sq. km.) grazing land, shrub land (15 sq. km.) and water bodies (12.78 sq. km). And, agriculture land has only 32.74 sq. km. (ACAP, 1998). The entire Upper Mustang found small to bigger sizes 28 scattered settlements along the banks of the Kali Gandaki River. Within the Upper Mustang region approx. 6,119 people are living into 1,065 households. Average family size is 5.7 (DDC Mustang, 2002). Upper Mustang lies within the trans-Himalayan region of the country. In Upper Mustang the climate is cold desert. The climate is very harsh and unique. In winter it is dry, windy, low temperature below the zero Degree Celsius, strong northern blizzard, snow, high radiation, some time brown and some time white color. In summer windy and little rain but calm and the entire region seems like greenery blanket. An average annual rainfall is around 160 mm in Lo-manthang is last seventeen years (Blamont, 1996).

#### 4. Economy

Naturally economy is depended on natural resources. Rangeland, forest, agriculture lands, water, fragile agriculture lands are determining the economy of the settlements. Depending on the natural resources Upper Mustang economy is based on traditional practices for examples livestock, subsistence agriculture, winter migration for trade and tourism as well as foreign employment. Newly emerging tourism business and foreign employment also has contributed in local economy. In agriculture buckwheat, barley, rye, wheat, potatoes, peas and mustard are the main crops produced. Similarly cow, goat, sheep, yak, Jhokpa, horse, mule and donkey are the major livestock species which support their economy in some extent. After introduction of tourism in Upper Mustang in 1992 AD tourism is flourishing in the region. Tourism opens the opportunities to operate teashops, lodges, hotels, groceries, camping grounds, horses and mule services for tourist. In addition, handicrafts production also support for their economy. Tourism has contributes on their local economy (Sapkota, 2007). Foreign employment also attractive alternative income also sources for young generation of Upper Mustang. Korea, Japan, U.S.A, German, UK and other European countries are major destinations for foreign employment (Personal communication with Gyanendra Bista in May, 2008).

Winter migration is increasing annually. During the winter, all ages of people mostly young people from Upper Mustang migrate to the Indian cities such as Gurkhapur, Lucknow, New Delhi, Calcutta, Madras, Gohati, and Ludhiana and other places for sweater trade. On average, two-third of total population of Upper Mustang involved in winter migration. They are away from homes for winter trade as well as to avoid the cold and harsh climate. Usually, they spend about a quarter of the year trading in India and Southern parts of Annapurna massif mainly Myagdi, Parbat, Baglung, Kaski, Shyangja districts. In addition Kathmandu, Pokhara and Butwal cities are their destinations during winter season (Blamont, 1996). Tourism and foreign employment are newly immerging incomes sources for local people. After opening of control tourism people are involved in hotel, restaurant, tea stall, guide, porters business. Nowadays people from Upper Mustang also employee in foreign

countries like Japan, Korea, USA, UK, Australia and other developed countries.

In average 37 animal head per family is reported. For livestock grazing land is shortage that is 0.026 Sq. km. per animal in average. These economic constraints might be the main factor for adaptation of the polyandry system in the resource scare areas. This polyandry system studied in Upper Mustang that well adapted in Lobas societies since few centuries ago.

Table 1: Number of livestock, per household ownership and per livestock foraging ground in Upper Mustang

Livestock	No.	Livestock/ HH	Livestock/ Head	Foraging land/ Livestock
Goat	30190	27	5	0.037
Sheep	4968	4.5	0.81	0.22
Cow	2714	2.4	0.44	0.41
Yak	1076	0.95	0.18	1.04
Jhokpa	659	0.58	0.12	1.69
Horse	1287	1.14	0.21	0.86
Mule	368	0.31	0.06	3.12
Donkey	378	0.33	0.06	2.95
Total	41640	37	6.8	0.026

Source: District Veterinary Office 1997 and Jomsom and Mustang District profile 1997

Number of sheep and goats are dominating in Upper Mustang. Similarly, high valued livestock like Yak, Jhokpa are in small number. Transportation animals like horse, mule and donkey have relatively small number.

Land use system in Upper Mustang is entirely different than rest of the country. The total area is divided into five zones e.g. barren land, grazing land, shrub land, water bodies and agriculture land.

Table 2: Land type and utilization by area in Upper Mustang

Land types	Area in sq Km.	Percentage
Barren Land	1435.13	55.99
Grazing Land	1066.27	41.6
Shrub Land	15.84	0.5

Water bodies	12.78	0.4
Agriculture Land	32.74	1.4
Total area	2562.76	100

Source: Resources Nepal, 1998.

The largest portion (55.99%) is useless area that is called barren land. The barren lands are mainly covered by rocks, glaciers lakes and snow peaks. The second largest area is covered by grazing land or pastureland. The least area of coverage is water bodies and second least is shrub land. The agricultural land is very small area. Soil quality is poor, very few lands has irrigation facility, water scarcity for irrigation and high porosity of soil has resulted poor fertility that are main problems for agriculture farming. Normally, long winter and short summer has resulted single crop's production.

### 5. Polyandry

Polyandry as a marriage system is traditionally adapted as a tool for reducing the further fragmentation of inheriting property specially, livestock, fragile land and grazing land or forest of the family. In mountain society natural resources such as soil or land, water and grazing land are prime factors to sustain human live. It is one of the tools for economy development in mountain region. In mountain regions people are living in very fragile mountain environment and protect their inhabitant intact through adaptation of various cultural practices. Today the cultural practices are facing various challenges from modern technologies and economic development and result various negative impacts on their local culture. Similar, threat observed in polyandry system of Upper Mustang. The study is carried out to find the current status of polyandry cultural practices in Upper Mustang. Availability of natural resources (water, soil and forest etc.) at local level has determined the local culture and continued the traditional practices. Today, the natural resources are depleting in local level due to extensive use with modern knowledge, skill and technique. It has result various threats impose to cultural practices.

Polyandry marriage system of Upper Mustang is also facing similar threat today. Polyandry practice is very hard to find out the in society for outsider or casual visitors but someone who studies systematically and closely in the community finds out. People believe and also said that it is Tibetan culture that is adapted by Upper Mustang. It is more or less true because the society is very similar to Tibetan culture and society.

Loba communities are also adapting more or less similar procedure of marriage system as other Nepalese communities.. Normally, parent seek appropriate marriage partners for their sons. In normal practice the parents have to decide before seeking a girl for their sons whether they would follow polyandry system or not. After deciding major question parent asked a potential girl from her parent. They consult astrologist or local Lama. They also believe and practice marriage following traditional horoscope. In general, potential parents are seeking equal economic status and prestigious families to establish marital relationship for their child. Regarding to ceremony, it is also common as other society does for wedding arrangement in Nepal. In the case of having younger sons in the potential bride side they to assure adaptation of polyandry system or not at the time of wedding decided to the girl's side. After confirmation of potential partners for wedding, both side parents are agreed to some properties sharing and finalization of wedding procedure to celebrate wedding ceremonies. For social approval the wedding ceremony is celebrated with huge function. During the celebration, traditional music with energetic dance and offering local drink, delicious food are offering to participants who are invited relatives to all villagers.

**5.1 Current status and social perception of polyandry**

Polyandry system is adapted as a culture in the Loba's society since long time. In this context it is determined by traditional believe and practice, remoteness, economic status, level of awareness of people and other many unseen factors. Therefore, polyandrous families are unequally distributed in the various settlements of Upper Mustang.

In 1998 survey showed that 93% of settlements (28 settlements) have adapted polyandry practice. The number of polyandrous

family varies in different settlements. Chhoser VDC holds the largest number of polyandrous marriage system that is 27% of total population/household. Similarly, Lo-Manthang holds the least that is 7% only. In 2008 survey shows that dramatic change is seen.

Table 3: VDC and ward wise total number of household and polyandrous households in Upper Mustang

Ward	Village Development Committee						
	Chhoser	Chhunhup	Lo-Manthang	Surkhang	Tsarang	Ghemi	Chhksang
1	23/3	19/3	17/5	15/0	20/3	11/4	18/5
2	18/5/	29/2	22/0	13/0	14/2	11/2	19/5
3	17/3	19/2	13/2	9/3	17/6	16/0	20/0
4	16/2	19/1	18/0	15/1	10/2	20/4	16/0
5	21/5	18/1	20/2	10/3	11/0	17/2	26/0
6	15/3	18/3	15/0	9/2	13/1	18/1	29/1
7	19/5	21/1	13/1	13/1	11/2	24/0	13/2
8	20/5	21/1	11/3	11/3	16/1	26/3	16/2
9	16/5	32/1	18/3	18/3	12/1	27/4	12/2
<b>Total</b>	<b>165/36</b>	<b>196/15</b>	<b>147/16</b>	<b>113/16</b>	<b>124/18</b>	<b>170/20</b>	<b>169/17</b>

Source: Field Survey in April, 1998.

According to survey, only 4.99% people are adapting the polyandry practice. Chhuksang have no household adopting this marriage system but Tsarang and Ghemi VDCs are holding higher number of polyandrous family. The changes seen in society could be the impacts awareness and more economic opportunities open for the people. For detailed information, here is some settlement characters in brief why and what could be the factor the determined the distribution of polyandrous in the Upper Mustang.

Table 4: VDC and ward wise total number of household and polyandrous households in Upper Mustang

Ward	Village Development Committee						
	Chhoser	Chhunhup	Lo-Manthang	Surkhang	Tsarang	Ghemi	Chhksang
1	21/1	19/1	18/1	13/0	20/2	11/1	18/0
2	18/3/	27/0	21/1	16/0	13/3	11/1	19/0
3	16/1	22/1	12/0	11/1	18/4	16/2	23/0
4	16/1	21/0	19/0	15/3	12/1	20/1	15/0

5	19/0	17/1	20/0	11/2	11/0	18/0	31/0
6	15/1	18/0	14/0	8/2	12/1	17/0	29/0
7	19/2	19/0	13/2	13/0	12/1	19/1	14/0
8	21/1	23/0	28/2	11/2	15/0	24/4	14/0
9	17/0	23/1	27/0	17/0	12/0	25/2	12/0
<b>Total</b>	<b>162/10</b>	<b>189/04</b>	<b>172/06</b>	<b>115/10</b>	<b>125/12</b>	<b>162/12</b>	<b>175/0</b>

Source: Field survey June 2008 and household survey in 2005 by ACAP.

Table 3 and Table 4 clearly show that polyandrous households have been decreasing in all VDCs between 1998 (12.73%) and 2005/2008 (4.9%). There reasons are many: preference of monogamous marriage, changing livelihood of people, similar type of work and activities of the males in the village and outside, transportation facilities and relatively easy access to different places and possibility of coming back to home within few days' exposure of males and females in the outside world, change attitude of males and females towards marriage.

## 5.2 Role of women in polyandry

Women has vital role in a polyandrous family to maintain harmonious environment in family especially among the husbands. A story from Nyamdo was realistic and practical too about the role of women in polyandry family. Thirty years ago there was women called Mrs. Doma Gurung with six husbands in home. Most of the time she had 2-3 husbands at home. She plays major role to maintain the equal relation, love and affection among the husbands. Normally she read the psychology of the husbands and provides sexual service for them. Sometimes she provided the sexual services for three or four husbands in a single night. Nowadays such cases are not reported because in polyandry families one husband stays always at home with wife all around the year. It provides sexual security for women and protection of family properties and more secure for child's future. In polyandry family women has greater role than men however man has equally important role maintenance the good family relation among the brothers and husbands. Following are important cases that reported or collected during the field trip of the study.

In the most of the cases in monogamous societies or families women have major role to maintain the relation of spouse too but in polyandry system women must be cleaver and to have ability to maintain the relation among the husbands because women are corner stone of the family. A good example of women's role found in Dhye (3835m) a settlement of Surkhang VDC. Sixteen families are in Dhye and only three families have adapted polyandry system. During the research the team lodged with polyandry family in Dhye. In the family there are only five members. The oldest member is father his name is Mr. S. T. Gurung (54) Mr. S. Gurung has two sons Mr. P. D. Gurung (37), Mr. T. D. Gurung (33) and sons in law Ms Gurung (36) the youngest one is their daughter 3 year old. Ms. L. Gurung is nice looks and quite educated, cleaner compare to those other women of the village. She speaks fluency Nepali language. In the course of conversation we found that she is a night school teacher in the village. We talked about polyandry system in Mustang. She smiled and replied yes we do adapted polyandry practice. It was very common in the past time but gradually it is disappearing and it is verge of extinct. In the course of conversation she said that I have two husbands, elder husband is herder and younger one is traditional herbal practitioner or *Amchi*. In the beginning I fall in love with Mr. P. Gurung as time passed on we have a kid. When a process of our wedding arrangement was finalized my father in law had requested to marry with younger son too. Easily I accepted the request. I am mentally prepared for it before wedding process is proceeded on because it is our culture and we can't avoid it. It has raised our social status too. Normally, the younger husband calls me Bhauju (Brother in Law) in front of people but we are spouse in reality. She added that she has 3 years kid daughter from elder husband. I treat equally both of them, she replied. I asked one more question to Ms L. Gurung about practical difficulties such as some time you may have both husband at home, how do you fell and treat them? She holds her kid from the floor and replied I never experienced this type of circumstance so I do not have a good answer for you. At last, I added one more question before we go to bed. The question was how do you think about polyandry system and do you fell uneasy to in front of society? She easily answered it. It was one of the common practiced in our society so I would not think so negative toward the practiced we

adapted. This is one of the good family women deal both of the husband equally and make life harmony. She is efficient women and manages her family very well. She is night school teacher and secretary for mother group of Dhye.

### 5.3 Status of women and right on children and properties in community

Women status in polyandry family depends on the individual capacity of the women in general. There is no social restriction because society is open and friendly. If, she is efficient and clever women she can holds good position in the society. A case from Upper Dakmar Mrs. K. Gurung is chairman of the local mother group. She leads the women group for various social and ritual activities. In family, the house is running in her command. The house is good and center for villagers and a kind of meeting place. Similar example is found in Dhye where Mrs. L. Gurung is night teacher and secretary for local mother group. Both families are run smoothly and harmoniously. If woman is not efficient the family falls in the conflict. A case reported from Yara village of Surkang VDC show that women role was weak in the family. She can not manage the family affair and she hasn't good position in society. Therefore, status of women is depended on individual capacity of women not imposed by others. Regarding the child and properties right, woman has equals right on children and family properties. Generally, all children equally respect all fathers but wife will decide the father of particular children.

### 5.4 Number of husband in polyandrous family

In upper Mustang there are 1084 HH among them 138 families are polyandrous. Among them 128 women or polyandrous families have two husbands and six women or polyandrous families have three husbands and one family has four husbands. The range of husbands is 2-4 but t2 is most common practiced in the societies. In totally 12.73% of families adapted polyandry system in Upper Mustang however some report shows 11% in Mustang (Blomont, 1998). On the other side there is another system of marriage in which women brings her husband in parental home is called Makpa in Mustang. It is of the common marital practice found in the Loba

society. The son in law or Makpa get married with all sisters of her home if parent accept. This is why people control their properties in a same clan as far as possible.

### 5.5 Root causes of conflict among the stakeholders.

Polyandry marriage system has faces many conflicts. The root causes of conflicts are human psychology or selfishness or self cantered thinking or personal interest. Personal interest determines the psychology of individual. The psychology of women, polyandrous or stakeholders and society are major root causes of conflict. If one of the stakeholders developed negative attitude toward the other or irrational sexual relation among the polyandrous is main root cause of conflicts. The conflict is naturally cantered on sexual intercourse's routine among the polyandrous.

**Irrational sexual relationship:** Sexual relation is biological need of the living being. It is main roots cause of conflict among the many living being and in human being also. Irrational routine of sexual relation is major route cause of conflict in polyandrous family. Rational sexual relation is depended on wise attitude of women or wife and elder brothers' attitude to other brothers. Wise woman play vital role to sustain polyandry practice. She can effectively manage the conflict among the polyandrous stakeholders. If women role is weaker in the family then it is hard to manage the conflicts. Similarly elder brother has effective role to maintain polyandrous harmony relationship. Women and elders brother has to play important role to reduce the conflicts among the polyandrous.

**Irrational role of elder brothers:** Elder brother role is one of the most important factors for harmonious relationship among the brothers. A case study shows that from Surkhang VDC, women should strong and elder brother also understandable. In the polyandry family women should be smart as well as good command, skilled management for household chores. If not there could be a lot problems may to face spouses. An interesting case is reported from Yara (3550m) village. It is one of the settlements of Surkhang VDC where twenty- four families are living with singe

crop harvesting practice. In addition herding and winter migration are other main sources of income of the settlement. In this village only three families had adapted polyandry system. One of them is Mr. Gurung family and namely First husband is (61), Second one is (50) and Third one is (47) adapted the polyandry system and married with women of (43) in few years ago. According to traditional practice normally elder brothers or first husband reserve the right for copulation in the first night of wedding. Then so on each day for each person. As time passed on they have baby daughter who is six years old at present. Traditionally, middle son of the family is become a Lama and middle daughter also should be nun. The first son of the family has to hold the parental family affair and the rest have to live under the elder brother household ruling. In this system, Mr. Gurung's family, the middle son became Lama. However, middle son entered or registered his name in local monastery but he reserved the wedding right because his follower of Ngyingapa sect of Buddhism. Thus, in his family three members are potential husbands for a bride. In his family the youngest brother in animal herding in the alpine pasture. Occasionally, he comes to home for logistic support. In this family first husband or elder brother suppressed his other brothers' right on wife sharing. The two younger brothers resisted their sexual felling since long time. One night in 1997 second husband backed from monastery in home. After dinner all family went to bed and second husband could not suppress his feeling and anger. Thus, he makes a plan for disturbance of elder brother relation with wife. He made a scheme couple of hours ago. The scheme was pour a bucket of water from the hole where his elder brother and wife a bed having sexual practice as usual of previous days. Mid time of same night he did what he thought. In this case both brothers were angry and quarrel each other. There was a big fight between the brothers. The issue filed in the VDC office and called a village meeting to solve the issue. The village meeting makes sexual routine (one night for each brother) for three brothers if they broke the routine all of them will have heavy punishment. All of them were agreed and do accordingly. This is a kind of sexual exploitation from brother is found in the polyandry societies. It is one of the social outrages against the sexual exploitation. In this case, wife played weaker role for maintenance for lack of effective role in the family.

**Irrational role of women:** Woman plays vital role to sustain polyandry system and she is also center of conflict. Irrational role of women break the harmonious relationship among the brothers. A case is recorded from Upper Dakmar, Ghami VDC. This is a small settlement with twenty-six families and only three families have adapted polyandry system. Among the polyandry families Mrs. K. Gurung (57) is one of the example women who maintains harmonic environment in the family. She is wise and one of the active member of society and Chairman of local Mother Group too. She has two husbands one is Mr. K. Gurung (65) and another Mr. W. Gurung (51) Mr. K. Gurung is always in home for agriculture farming and younger husband in businessmen most of the time he is out from home. He goes to Jomsom, Pokhara, Kathmandu and sometime in India for business. When he returned from the business the elder brothers provide opportunity to him for sexual relation with wife. Sometime, if she has not allowed to sleeps him thus she has to listen complains and various threats from Mr. W. Gurung the younger husband. She said, he is young and he might be various plan in their minds but traditionally we could not separate because younger husband has to leave all parental properties to elder brother that is not possible. Properties could be one of the major factors that polyandry system brings in the practice. At this time wife should be wise, polite and have to deal accordingly. She also added that she has to resist her feeling be an understandable and compromised with Mr. W. Gurung for his better future. Therefore, women role plays important role to maintain household harmony and sustainable polyandry practice.

**Similar profession:** Similar profession of the polyandrous is sources of conflict. Similar profession creates the problems of time management among the stakeholders. Both male partners are interested to establish sexual relation at a time and create the conflict. Therefore, same profession or jobs in the village is obstacle for polyandrous if one brother is not understandable then fighting is started or psychological wars starts. An interesting case recorded from Lower Dakmar settlements of Ghami VDC. In this settlement altogether twenty seven families are living among them only four families adapted polyandry and Ms. Y, Gurung (49) get married and have four children (Two Sons and two daughters). Both brothers are good carpenters of the village, farming too and

live together most of the time. During the past period N. C. Gurung (37) does not get opportunities for sexual relation with wife because normally elder possess the right. Then, Mr. N.C Gurung tried to find out the new girl. End of the same year N.C. succeeded his aim find a girl called Ms. D. Gurung. In the evening of 21<sup>st</sup> June 1998 both brothers returned in the home from community work. They had Chhang (Local brewer alcohol) in the work that is normal for communal as well as private work. On the way to returning they had great quarrel each other. In the high tension Mr. N. C. Gurung hit Elder brother Mr. M. Gurung with a knife that is always hold on a back of the general people in Mustang. Mr, M. Gurung had 3 cm depth knife wound on his abdomen. After the accident Ms. Gurung complained to local Mukhiya that is stronger than VDC local regulation implementation and immediately called a village meeting by Mukhiya. Based on traditional norms and values the meeting had decided a punishment to Mr. N. C. Gurung. They punished NRs 6,000/ as a cash penalty, he has to leave first wife and all parental properties too, but have to share two children. In the same professional brother could not sustain the polyandry system if elder brother is not understandable. This is a kind of social outburst after long- term depression of culture in an individual freedom of sexual behaviour.

### 5.6 Driving forces to erode the polyandry marriage system.

Culture is dynamic process. It is modified according to available resources and knowledge. Therefore, Loba society has drive towards modernization. Existing and available resources such as awareness arising (various sources such as media, education, people interaction with outsiders), alternative incomes sources, open society are major driving forces to erode the polyandry system in Upper Mustang. Major forces are briefly mentioned below in different levels.

**Awareness level increased dramatically:** Before 1990 Upper Mustang is closed from rest of the world. Traditionally, people could migrant in local level for winter trade but out side hardly reach in Upper Mustang. After restoration of multiparty democracy in 1990, again opening of control tourism in 1992, gravel road open in 2000 had added to increase awareness level for local

people. In the same year government of Nepal has approved to operate various development and conservation programs through Upper Mustang Development and Conservation Project, a wing of Annapurna Conservation Area Project (UMDCP/ACAP) in Upper Mustang. The project has great contribution to increase awareness level in various aspects of the society. Control tourism in Upper Mustang also contributes to increase awareness level. Tourism develops link among people from different parts of the world. Link has provided various opportunities. It has also helped to increase awareness level.

**Alternative income sources:** Traditionally, people from Upper Mustang are adapting agriculture, livestock herding and winter trades as subsistence income sources of household economy. Government and Non Government organizations (ACAP, Care Nepal, MDO, etc) have contribute to build local capacity to run alternative business that is related with tourism. After opening of tourism people do tourism related business such as hotels, lodges, restaurants, guides, groceries, tea stalls, porters, etc. In addition, tourism business also enhances the local economy and also develops local people capacity to fit for foreign employment. As a result young generation reached in Korea, Japan, USA, UK, Germany, Singapore, Europe and Australia. These destinations are good ruminant countries of the world for Nepalese communities. As a result alternative income sources are developed and ultimately impacts are seen in culture especially in polyandry system.

**Open society:** After restoration of multiparty democracy and Upper Mustang is opened for control tourism in 1992, the society get chance to interact with outsider. A record showed that every year around 1000 western tourists trekking in Upper Mustang. Tourism business added to increase awareness level for local people. In addition increases of NGOs workers and researchers movement in the Upper Mustang also increases interaction with the local people. The openness of society has great contribution to increase awareness level in various aspects of the society. The open society also contributes to reduce polyandrous number because if one does not like to adapt polyandry practices he has alternative destination to survive outside of village. A case of Mr. R. Gurung from Tsaile, Chhuksang VDC right now who lives in

Pokhara and Mr. T. S. Gurung Tinkar, Chunhup VDC, who works in Korea and planning to settle in Pokhara are two good evidences.

In addition, from 2000 gravel road is operating in Upper Mustang between Lo-manthang and Chinese borders in Tibet Autonomous Region also increase to access to contact with foreign people. Ultimately people movement in the regions is also increased. The cumulative impacts of different factors have been increasing awareness of people. It increases the openness of the society. Openness of society has increase awareness level among people as a result increment of the confident level and encourages to faces the new challenges of live. These developmental programs also provide different economic opportunities to local people and gradually reducing their dependency on traditional profession for sustaining life.

**Age gap or differences:** Some of the cases age gap appeared very big between youngest husband and wife. It has brought negative emotional attachment between them. As a result psychological attachment is reduced and inadequate and no proper union of family is reported. Marriage without psychological attachment is not effective and sustainable. Therefore, it has eroded culture practices specially polyandry system. A case study in Upper Dakmar, Lo-mangthang and Dhey settlements shows that youngest husband has psychological problem with wife and no psychological attachment is established because of age gap of them. Normally, thinking is different between different age gap spouses thus it has resulted high chance of non polyandrous practices.

**Changing life style:** Drastic change in life style is observed in Upper Mustang. About 40 year ago Mustang was center for salt trade. It is closed after opening of Siddharth Highway from Butwal to Pokhara. In addition changing in life style is observed in many aspects of life. Nowadays in Upper Mustang readymade food is easily available rather than traditional food made from wheat, rye and barley and animal products such as milk, curds and ghee. Similarly, people love to use modern cloths rather than their traditionally homemade or woolen items made from Yak and sheep wool. In domestic treatment cases, they are using modern medicine

rather than traditional medicine. Basic learning system of life is modern rather than traditional schooling. Many government schools are established in each settlement and less attention is paid to monastery schooling or Lama Schooling. Modern media are widely available such as internet, telephones, radio, television and other means and their life style is changing very fast.

Raising awareness has increased the confidence level of people and develops new ideas for sustainable life system. Similarly alternative income sources have raise encouragement of individual and openness of society has provide more opportunity to contact with outside world and invite assistance for various aspects of life. Modernization of society has played very strong role to change the life style of the young people. Alternative income source has encourage to young generation is shifting from compound to nuclear family life.

### **5.7 Current trend of polyandry system**

Polyandry system is a culture and it is dynamic. Cultural erosion is continues process. The cultural has gradually changed with course of time but the change is accelerated since last couple of years. Internal and external forces play vital roles for cultural changes. External factors such as outside visitors, radio, FM radio, television, news papers, and other informal sources that assist to increase awareness and are main external forces to erode the local culture and other associate activities. The internal forces are increase education, awareness, weak social association, diversified the economic opportunity.

Various factors are playing an active role for reduction of the polyandry system in Lobas communities. Mustang gate opens for outsider and Lobas themselves went to winter trade in the southern part of Annapurna range and reach up to major cities of India such as Gorakhpur, Gohati, New Delhi, Ludhiyana for winter trades. In additional new generation is found rational than old generation and take a risk against the violation of traditional norm and values of the society. Modern education could play vital role on it. It was closed for long years and isolated from the global economic and social environment but not it is close contact with outside world.

Awareness among the young generation, appearing ego-centric societies and global economic influence could be main factors for declination of cultural including polyandry system in Mustang. The changes of attitude and behaviour of young Lobas towards polyandry marriage can be observed from table 6 and 7.

Table 5: Age wise of polyandrous family in Upper Mustang

VDC	Age Group					Total
	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61 Above	
Chhoser	0	4	11	11	10	36
Chhunhup	0	2	6	4	3	15
Lo-manthang	0	2	4	2	8	16
Surkhang	0	5	4	4	3	16
Tsrang	0	2	9	4	3	18
Ghemi	0	3	6	5	6	20
Chhuksang	0	2	3	7	5	17
Total	0	20	43	37	38	138

Source: Field Survey in 1998

Upper Mustang constitutes seven VDCs and the people of aged 41-50 have highest number of polyandrous family. Next one is 61 and above age group. No individual of age 21-30 practiced polyandry. This means no young have been adopting it. The change in a decade is shown in table 6.

Table 6: Age structure of polyandrous family in Upper Mustang

VDC	Age Group					Total
	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61 Above	
Chhoser	1	1	4	4	0	10
Chhunhup	0	0	1	3	0	4
Lo-manthang	0	0	0	4	2	6
Surkhang	0	3	3	4	0	10
Tsrang	0	2	4	3	3	12
Ghemi	0	3	2	7	0	12
Chhuksang	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	1	9	14	25	5	54

Source: Field Survey in May 2008

The change is observed the dominating age group is 51-60 which constitutes 46.29%. In totality 4.9% households practice polyandry. According to table 5 & 6 the youngest generation has not adapted polyandry system. It indicates that within next ten year no one is going to adapt polyandry. The trend is gradually declining.

There are many cases found in the society who violet the traditional norms and value. Similar case is reported from Thinker village of Chhunhup VDC is mentioned here for reference. In Thinker there are forty-eight families are living with livestock herding winter trade and subsistence farming. In this village only three families are adapted polyandry system. These were a process of introduction of a new polyandry family in the society but unfortunately it was not succeeded. The potential new polyandrous was Mr. T. P. Gurung (41). They (Mr. T.P. Gurung and Mrs. T. A. Gurung) are living together since couple of year ago. Live together before wedding is common practice in the Lobas society but that is not found in other societies of Nepal. When Mr. Tashi Phijo Gurung got informal married with Ms. T. A. Gurung at time that their parent had made commitment for polyandry system with girls' side. Based on previous commitment the parent asked to Mr. T. S. Gurung for adaptation of polyandry system and organized formal wedding ceremony in Sept. 1997. At that time, Mr. T. S. Gurung had refused to adapt polyandry system. He broke the social norms and values. He could punish by society.

Probably, punishment could be deprived from parental properties rights and social isolation. During the field survey, I asked to him? Why you do not accept the polyandry system? He said there is age difference between me and potential wife. Psychologically I cannot treat her as wife because I was too young compare to her and I could treat her as a mother. In addition, we are in beginning of 21<sup>st</sup> century the practice is not acceptable for me. I had job in Annapurna Conservation Area Project, however the job could not support my life but I want to stand against the unfair traditional practice that I do not like. I can stand without my parental properties. Right now he is in Korea for work. It is one of the Cultural Revolution or deterioration that obviously is observing in

young generation. Similar cases are observed among the young generation in various families of the Lobas communities.

### 5.8. Role of polyandry in natural resource conservation

Natural resources and cultural practices have close relation in society. In other words the natural resources determine the cultural practices of societies. Indirectly, cultural practices have plays significant role to conserve the natural resources or vice versa. Human life is entirely depended on soil, water, air and plants or natural resources. Therefore, conservation of natural resources from individual to community levels is observed during the field study in Upper Mustang.

Demographic view point polyandry practices directly assist to reduce the population size. It is very simple mathematic. In a family if there are three brothers, after maturity each of them got marriage, and if polyandry practice is not adapted number of family member will dramatically increase into six members and after few years definitely they will have children and population will increase intensively. Large number of human population will put heavy pressured to natural resources to meet daily basic need. Therefore, indirectly, polyandry system contributes in natural resources conservation.

In family level, intensive take care of natural resources mainly focusing on soil or land, water, and agriculture pasture land by family members. The scarce natural resources will take care by man. Furthermore each of the family member are intensively involve in proper take care of crop field to increase the production of crops, such as improvement of irrigation canal, preparation of crop fields, seeds, manure use, and after germination of the crops family are actively participate in management of water harvesting, weeding, fencing to protect from damage or crop riding from wild to domestic animal and insects.

In community level, management of water harvesting system in field, pasture management and conservation of existing forest are major sectors. In Upper Mustang, water is one of the valuable natural resources. Water for irrigation is very scarce and precious

natural resource for farmers. Therefore, they have developed traditional water harvesting system is very effective management. It is one of the best examples of effective natural resources management. Similar practices also observed in pasture land management. Each and every settlement has own norms and values to operate effective pastureland management. Among the different settlements have owns' traditional border to partition and rational use of pastureland. Furthermore each family has traditional ownership system of areas to use pastureland. It has help to manage effective pastureland. Study show that seasonal movement or nomadic livestock herding is observed in each settlement. According to study animal herds are found in three major camps such as summer, winter and autumn and spring camps in a year. During the summer season (May to September), starts growing on the high altitude range and good vegetation is observed the better grazing for animal herds. This season is also known as *Yarcha* in local term. *Yarcha* follow the other camps or autumn camp. The winter camp is also known as *Gunja* in local term. It is hardest period of livestock herds due to lack of fodder. The severe cold and blizzard are the main natural constraints that add further hardship to the animals as well as men. When winter gradually disappears, the nomads slowly start moving up to the winter-spring camps (January to March). When the winter is over, the surrounding environment begins to warm up and snow start to melt, giving way the dry.

Fuel wood, agriculture waste, cow dung and goat pallets are main traditional sources of energy. Increasing number of people needed more energy and ultimately depends upon the fuel wood, agriculture waste or animal pallets. In winter season people need more fuel wood to heat house and other household uses. Therefore, lesser population uses less quantity of fuel. Ultimately, lesser pressure goes to natural resources.

### 5.9 Causes of polyandry system adaptation

Polyandry is generally found in areas where difficult physical environments or high populations impose extreme pressures on agricultural systems (Schwimmer, 2003). The statement is matching in case of Upper Mustang. In Upper Mustang harsh

climatic and geographically difficult location is found. It is kind of survival strategy to cope with climatic and geographical difficulties. Therefore, in Upper Mustang polyandry becomes one of the survival strategies that later on became culture. Limited agriculture land, huge pasture areas, few man power and available manpower is expensive, poor economy; limited thinking of people, limited communication, less number of women in society are main driving factors of polyandry system.

A study shows family security, resources management, demography, cultural and economic factors are major causes to adapt polyandry in the society. Family members and properties security is one of the primary jobs to sustain the life. Therefore, one male is always in a home and take care of family especially wife, children and household properties. These primary duties are main responsibility of him. He is also responsible to take the social responsibility.

Resources management is main constrain to adapt polyandry system. Limited sources mainly land resources and pastureland is two major natural resources in Upper Mustang. People believed and proved that the polyandry system protect from further fragmentation of limited but precious crop land. At present an average each family holds 0.03 sq. Km of crop land and 0.37 sq. km for per livestock head. If the number of people increases in society and it will put more pressure on crop land therefore ultimate pressure goes to land use practice. Reduction of human pressure in natural resources people has to adapt polyandry system.

Demography is another important factor for determination of polyandry. Culturally, middle daughter is not allowed to marry and she became nun (Anne). She has to go to nunnery. It helps to reduce number of female in society though they have such provision for male son too. According to their culture middle son of the parent has be Lama or priest and has to go for monastery. The nunnery and monastery systems indirectly, help to reduce population sizes. In addition, adaptation of polyandry also reduces the population size too. Polyandry system will reduce the potential female child bearing frequency. Therefore chance of new born baby is reduced. Ultimately it has reduced the population sizes and

chances of female number. It has encouraged adapting polyandry system as cultural practices. Economic is another element of polyandry adaptation. Normally people do not want to deteriorate their household economy and life style intentionally. In Nepalese culture, earning cash and traditional properties also save for future use and his future generation as well as maintain their well being status in society for ever. This is very strongly adapted trend. Therefore, people force to adapt polyandry system to maintain socio economic status in society.

Cultural practices are another binding factor of polyandry system. In villages, traditional village leaders or Mukhiya want to keep the cultural practices intact and rule for long run in particular villages. They want to keep the society within their grip in the name of culture conservation. The traditional forces such as Mukhiya, Lama and other traditional leaders are main key person to conserve the culture. In the response of cultural practice people force to adapt polyandry system. A sect of school also said that arrangement of bride or wife is very hard to find and expensive for medium class people of the society. In wedding process, on behave of man, has to invest huge amount of money to bring wife in home therefore to reduce the financial burden many families of the society who has many brothers they has to adapt polyandry practices to sustain their family economy intact.

Geographical remoteness and inaccessibility of people with other community is factors of polyandry adaptation. A case study from Chhoser VDC of Upper Mustang proves the statement. In Upper Mustang geographical remoteness settlements are holding more polyandrous family rather than other societies. Among the seven Village Development Committees (VDC) Chhoser is the most remote VDC. Chhoser is closed to Tibetan boarder and it is one of the most northern settlements of Upper Mustang. There are more than five scattered settlements and all of them are located 3,800m elevation from sea level in average. Major portion of the Chhoser is west facing thus less sun radiation is observed. It is located on the bank of snow feed river called Mustang Khola. In 1988, there was glacier -lake out beak and major portion of cultivated land were washed away only boulders and sand are left. All settlements are not equally accessible to human being for example Samjung

village. This is one of the isolated village or settlement of Chhoser and located approximately 3980 m elevation from the sea level. It is also located bank of river called Dunu Khola. Though the settlement is agriculture based the soil is very poor for agriculture practice. High porosity and poor soil fertility, irrigation constraints, alpine climate have reduce agriculture production in Samjung. The settlement is highly confined in limited geographical barrier as well as less communication with other societies or close societies thus language barrier could not permit for winter trade. This is one of the most illiterate societies. These constrain cumulate and become major barrier for people to contact with outsider, however a primary school is established since long time in the village for literacy increment but poor return is achieved. Good rangeland is another supportive factor for people. Therefore people prefer intensive animal herding practices. It is really the most remote and backward societies or village of the Mustang District.

Comparing to other settlements of the Chhoser from Samjung, the rest of the settlements are good Nepali language speakers and comparatively better movement with other societies. In Chhoser animal herding, agriculture and winter traders are main source of household economy. Geological structure provided an opportunity to live in cave for Chhoser people. Thus, consider numbers of household or large number of families are still lived in caves and traditional practices are strictly adapted till today. In 2039, one only high school is established in Chhoser but number of student is not good enough. In plays vital in awareness rising among the populace. No tourism activities are allowed due to boarder vicinity and thus very less people are contact with outside world. Thus, most of the people are backward and very less people having advance thinking. Awareness, language barrier, economic status and outside contact opportunity might play significant roles for advance of the society. These opportunities are not accessible for people from Chhoser settlement because it is one of the remote areas or VDC of the country, thus Chhoser holds the highest portion of polyandry families.

In contrast, Lo-manthang is geographically or environmentally located at good position such as plain area and comparatively bigger settlement and center for human commercial activities and

traditional capital city of the Loba's Kingdom. People are comparatively more educated than other settlement and good cropland with irrigation facilities consequently good production too.

## 6. Discussion

Many anthropologists have their own view about polyandry marriage system. An argument says that family security is main cause of polyandry adaptation by societies in mountain region. Polyandry is a cultural response to a prolonged absence of males in the family--a phenomenon observed commonly in all polyandrous societies (Gough 1959, Prince Peter 1955).

Researchers state that economic is main factors of polyandry adaptation. People adapted polyandry to ensure on agricultural land. Some have argued that polyandry system prevent further division of land intact within household (Westermarck, 1922, Ghosh, 1987, Berreman 1987, Majumdar 1963). Some argument says that polyandry is necessary to keep the property of very poor from dropping below the subsistence level (Peter, 1955). Some claimed the adaptation of polyandry is outcomes of the labor division in households or among the brothers (Raha, et.al., 1987). Some source claims that it is self-sufficient mechanism because among the brothers they establish the "corporate group" and maintaining complementary and supplementary role within the family or societies (Chandra, 1987). Levin (1998), claims that it is a mechanism of resource conservation where resources scarcity exists for limiting population. Another argument says that to reduce the bride price, people have adapted polyandry marriage system as culture. These arguments are matching in Upper Mustang societies. If any brother of polyandrous family has deregulate polyandry system he has to left the parental properties or no right to claim and society also punish him. Some of the cases he should leave the settlement or left the society for ever. The states are proved by a case from Lower Dakmar and Tinkar of Upper Mustang.

Sociologist said that social security is cause of polyandry adaptation. The prolonged absence of men from their homes,

necessitated by the demands of their profession may also lead to polyandry in some societies to ensure protection and support for their wives by their kinsmen (Singh, 1988). Polyandry is perceived, therefore, as a security measure for the rest of the family members because it keeps multiple males in the family so that at least one could stay at home (Berreman 1962, Kapadia 1955). Similar observation is found in Upper Mustang too. One male is always in a home and the rest of the husbands are engaged in respective income generating activities like animal husbandry in high land pasture or other alternative business.

Demographic argument says that the polyandry practice is outcome of high sex ratio (Westermarck 1922, Berreman, 1987, Ajjappan, 1987 Majumdar). This argument is more or less proved in Upper Mustang where male and female ratio (120.28) is one of the highest in the country (CBS, 2005). Specifically in Upper Mustang out of seven VDCs only one VDC has higher female population and the rest have higher male population. Similarly less number of female populations found in Nyimba village of Humla because passively allowing a greater mortality rate among female infants and young children. Girls are fed less and are less likely to receive medical attention (Levine, 1988). Another argument says that polyandry mechanism of population control. Polyandrous did not raise the birth rate per household. Similar observation also found in Tre-ba of Central Tibet, Musuos household of Xinman in Yunnan province of China, Limi village of Humla in Nepal, the Kerala of India, among Kandyan Singhalese of Sri Lanka, polyandry may not increase the fertility of individual wives. The unmarried women reduce the chances of fertility (Johnsen NE.).

Remoteness or geographical inaccessibility is one of the causes to adapt polyandry as a survival strategy. In global context polyandry practices are more recorded in Tibetan Plateau where harsh climate and geographical or topographic difficulty exist. In many cases of Tibetan region the harsh climate and difficult geographical location has force to adapt polyandry system. It proves by Upper Mustang. In comparison more polyandrous families are found in Chhoser VDC (27%) where more harsh climate and geographically difficult areas where all resources are limited compare to less number

(13%) of polyandry found in Lo-manthang and Tsarang VDC is comparatively good geographical position.

Globalization of economic and modern scientific technological development has greater impact on traditional culture. The technology especially in media sector plays active role to erode the traditional cultural practices. In other hands fast changing of life style, alternative ways of income sources, raising awareness of local people, openness of society, role of polyandrous plays vital role to sustain the polyandry system in the society. Modernization and control tourism plays vital role to erode the polyandry marriage system of Upper Mustang (Sapkota, 2007).

Population growth and natural resources utilization are closely related issues. A study shows that polyandry culture has played significant role to reduce population control and ultimately it conserve the natural resources. Similar case also found in Nyimba village of Humla by Levine (1998). According to her argument it is a mechanism of resource conservation where resources scarcity exists for limiting population.

Government of Nepal has program and policies for various cultural practices and ritual of different ethnic groups and nationalities but no concrete policies and programs are formulated by government of Nepal. Polyandry system play vital role in natural resources conservation but less attention is paid by national planners. An integrated plans and program are necessary for conservation of polyandry and their contribution in natural resources conservation. Regarding the financial status of polyandry family in Upper Mustang they are well off compares to other families of the villages. It is due to sound management of household resources. Financial modern and post modern women right workers are silent about right of polyandrous women by many men.

## 7. Conclusion

Polyandry system is adapted in Himalayan region or Tibetan border of Nepal mainly in Humla, Dolpa, Mustang, Gorkha, Dhading, Okhaldunga, Samkhuwashava, Taplejung and other Himalayan districts of Nepal. Upper Mustang especially, in

Gurung ethnic group of the Lobas societies have adapted polyandry system. It is practiced and adapted for maintenance of limited parental properties right in the same clan and conservation of scarce natural resources of the region. In these system women has greater role for maintenance of harmonies in the family members especially among the husbands. Various events are reported in the societies who broke the traditional norms and value due to modernization. Polyandry is a culture that is dynamic process too. But the process of erosion is accelerated from the societies some through the internal and external factors. Diversification of economic opportunities has been brought the change in life style. Ultimately change in cultural practices. Culture should support the life of people but not for sake of culture. Like other Hindu culture should support the life of people but not for sake of culture. Like other Hindu culture of Nepalese societies the polyandry system also affected by modernization. Polyandry families are dramatically reduced from 12 % to 5% in Upper Mustang within a decade. It is very dangerous sign to conservation view points. The polyandry practice is good for conservation of natural resources scarce areas. If appropriate measures are not applied

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