

Geography of Anthropology, World Milieu, and Class: A Contextual Study of Nepal

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Abstract

The present world is experiencing different kinds of new phenomena, such as neoliberalism and its impact globally, which have deeply affected human society. This article aims to explore the geography of anthropology in the changing context of neoliberal globalization, viz-a-viz. Nepal and the world. The article investigates why anthropology is appropriate to study classes in a neo-liberal context, how neo-liberalism affects the social life of humans, and how the classes are formed. It argues that anthropology, through its origin, focused on the study of others' cultures, while its contemporary extent has expanded to the study of human society, various development paradigms, and its effects on men that include the study of class and culture in a globalized world shaped by neoliberalism. Methodologically, this article is based on a textual review of relevant literature in anthropology, blending with the essence of globalization and neoliberalism, while the ethnographic insights from central Nepal, as well as the author's own experiences, are also reflected. The findings suggest that neoliberal globalization has a profound impact on human societies, transforming traditional agrarian structures into proletarianization, often driven by dependence on remittance economies and overseas employment. Ultimately, the article highlights anthropology's role in understanding the complex and shifting dynamics of class in the contemporary globalized world.

Keywords: anthropology, class, globalization, neoliberalism, proletarianization

Introduction

The notion "social class" or "class" is only a group of people who occupy a standard position in the production system. For the term "class", Weber (1964) views "any group of persons occupying the same class status" (p. 424); and Marxist point of view is "a group of people sharing common relations to labor and the means of

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production" (MIA, 1999). Therefore, "class" is a group of individuals who occupy a definite position within the production system which has observed also in Nepali society as a universal phenomenon.

However, globalization can be seen as the latest stage in the evolution of capitalism (Lewellen, 2002) while its ancestor was globalism, which has occurred as "globalism (even more than globalization) was a fact of life since at least 1500 for the whole world" (Frank, 1998, p. 340). According to Wallerstein (2004), our modern world-system emerged as a capitalist world economy, at least from the sixteenth century. Although globalization is not a new phenomenon, it has become an ideological tool for the worldwide expansion of capitalists' business and a "neoliberal political project" (Mathieu, 2010, p. 356).

The present world is increasingly globalized, driven by the spread of neoliberal capitalism. Neo-liberalism, according to Harvey (2005), is a theory of political economic practices rather than a 'complete' political ideology. In the face of the enormous power of neo-liberalism, Nepal could not remain static; instead, it introduced a new system during the active monarchical system and a closed economy. After the democratic change in 1990, the first elected government led by GP Koirala, neo-liberalism was adopted as a socio-economic policy (Pokhrel, 2024). In practicing neoliberalism, it involved much 'creative destruction' not only of the existing institutional framework and power, but also of ways of life and thought, the division of labor, attachment to the land, and habits of the heart (Harvey, 2005).

During the last few decades, the mode of production of Nepali society has been changing, and within these changes, many dynamics such as family structure, social mobility, production relations, occupation, and ultimately changed the class structure. Due to the practices of neo-liberalism in the domestically changed context, many dynamics have changed along with the traditional understanding of class (Pokharel, 2025). As the country falls upon market capitalism, classes are formed differently and are fluid even today.

On the one side, Nepali society has transformed from feudalism into capitalism, and on the other side, due to the globalization of neo-liberalism and capitalism, the mode of production is inefficient to understand the class dynamics of the capitalist world system domestic as the world has become a single system (Mishra, 2024). Thus, in this context, the category of classes which the prominent scholars such as Blaikie et al.,

(1980), Mikesell (1999), Mishra (2007) have analysed a couple of decades ago, have decontextualized.

There are many perspectives and subjects in analysing classes. Economists analyse class through the economic lenses; political scientists analyse through the lenses of power. Anthropology is the holistic study of humans and their cultures through the analysis of kinship, slash-and-burn horticulture, warfare, and other aspects, until the last century (Eriksen, 2004). Anthropology is also the study of "humans and their cultures", and its scope in changing paradigms is the study of "class and culture in globalization" (Friedman, 2000, p. 648). In the current globalized neoliberal context, "humans and societies are interacting and moving in a complex of global networks" (Hoffman et al., 2006, p. 9). Thus, the episteme of anthropology is also applicable to analyse the effects of new world phenomena like neo-liberalism.

Thus, this article, entitled "Geography of Anthropology, World Milieu, and Class: A contextual study of Nepal," focuses on why anthropology is appropriate to study classes in a neo-liberal context, how neo-liberalism affects the social life of human collectives, and how classes are forming in the last couple of decades.

Objectives

Based on the above-mentioned research questions, the study focuses on the objectives specifically,

- i. to analyze the geography of anthropology in a neoliberal context,
- ii. to show the effects of neo-liberalism in the social life of human society, and
- iii. to show the class formation process in neo-liberal globalization.

Methodology

Research design, according to Brewer (2005), is the strategic plan of the project that sets out the broad structure of the research. This article is written depending on the literature written by Marxist thinkers, anthropologists, and from many other fields, especially through the Marxist, neo-Marxist, and anthropological perspectives. Textual analysis is a method of research that analyses the origin, development, and present context and scope of anthropology. Visual, written, or spoken messages serve as

indicators for understanding various means of communication in this approach (Hawkins, 2017, cf. Luitel, 2023).

In preparing this article, I have reviewed articles written in the context of neo-liberalism, globalization, anthropological theories, as well as Marxist political economy. I specifically reviewed the scholarly works such as those of Marx, Harvey, Friedman, Comaroff, Mishra, etc. and drew on their idea. The study engaged textual and discourse analysis for identifying the world system, mode of production, economic globalization, neo-liberalism, and class context. Reviewed stuff was coded as per the theme and categorically interpreted in the texts. In categorization, the historical materialist framework was employed with respect to the context of the world milieu and Nepal.

The article integrates issues systematically from the broad to the local level. The researcher acknowledges each scholar whose work is cited in preparing the research article, following the referencing style of the journal standards. It is the analysis based not on a west-centric but grounded in the Nepali context.

Along with the scholarly works, this research article analyses some ethnographic data comprised of the case studies and life experiences of people taken by the researcher from different parts of central Nepal, which show how neo-liberalism is affecting the social life of human collectives and how the classes are forming in the last couple of decades.

Result and Discussion

Anthropology: Its Geography in Present Neoliberal Globalization

Anthropology is the study of humans and their cultures, tracing their origins (Friedman, 2000). Anthropology is the holistic study of humans and their cultures, although it was utilized for the study of 'the others' culture as the anthropologists went about their fieldwork in remote areas and returned with fascinating, but often arcane analyses of kinship, slash and burn horticulture, or warfare among 'the others' until the last century (Eriksen, 2004).

Since anthropology is a social science that focuses on men, "the anthropologist studies for the most part primitive societies" (Evans-Pritchard, 1954, p. v) and studies the societies, not only of the other but also of our own. Thus, an anthropologist, however, "is seeking to investigate in particular societies, the nature of religion, aesthetics, law, and

modes of thought and the basic characteristics and functions of the family and of economic and political institutions" (p. vi). Thus, anthropology is the study of new phenomena brought about by financial and technological development.

Although anthropology emerged with colonialism to understand other cultures, with the changes in the world's characteristics, the paradigm of anthropology has also been changing. Thus, its contemporary extent has expanded to study human society, various development paradigms, and their effects on men that include the study of class and culture in a globalized world shaped by neoliberalism.

However, neoliberalism is one of the new socio-economic practices of the last couple of decades, and the task of anthropology is also to find out the effects and impacts of this new phenomenon, neoliberal globalized capitalism. In Friedman's (2000) words:

Changing paradigms of anthropology are the history and context of globalization and its aspects in the new world; ethnography of globalization; cultural production due to globalization; concepts of localism, nationalism, and transnationality; concepts of ethnicization, identity politics, and minority issues; class and culture in globalization; and so on. (p. 648)

The trajectory of anthropology is inextricably linked to other cultures, but it has been enhanced by the study of a new paradigm, shaped by new ideas, concepts, modernization, culture, technology, and the worldwide expansion of neoliberalism and globalization. Friedman (2000) characterizes the present context as "a multicultural diasporic and hybrid world of globalized capitalism" and argues "a global systemic anthropology should aim at understanding both the world and the cultural identities and derivative discourses that are generated by the structures of that world"(p. 648). Thus, anthropology is a social science discipline, particularly one that is "well poised to grapple with the anxieties about globalization" (Rankin, 2004, p. 41). Beforehand, at the basic understanding, "economic anthropology is the description and analysis of economic life, using an anthropological perspective" (Carrier, 2005, p. 1). Aspects of anthropological perspective approaches according to Carrier (2005), "people's individual and collective lives, which is to say their lives and societies, in terms of how these aspects relate to one another in an interconnected, ... such as religious belief, consumption, household organization, productive activities or the like" (pp. 1-2). Thus, class status can also be located within neoliberal globalized capitalism from the anthropological perspective. Further, anthropology is such a social science discipline that has studied poor and lower

class, minority and indigenous groups, and geo-politically remote and peripheral since its beginning. Lewellen (2002) argues:

Neoliberalism favors the rich, and, since anthropologists usually study the poor or lower middle classes, a near consensus has emerged that neoliberal adjustments undercut domestic production prices, cause unemployment, create sweatshops that utilize underpaid child and female labor, disrupt families, disempower peasants, and encourage environmental despoliation. (p. 19)

Lewellen (2002) argues that anthropologists study the poor or lower middle classes whereas "neo-liberalism favors the rich" (p. 19) due to the neo-liberal adjustments and its phenomena, it has directly affected the poor and middle class through various aspects, like: utilization of underpaid female and child labor which cause unemployment, undercut subsidy cause disempower peasant, and artisans and so on.

Mathieu (2010) identifies that the study of "neoliberal expansion" within anthropology is effectively addressed through three distinct but related modes of understanding: the culturalist approach, the systemic approach, and the approach through governmentality (p. 352). This means the anthropology of neoliberalism can be understood by examining its embedding in culture, economic and political systems, and regulatory practices. For example, the culturalist approach investigates how neoliberalism shapes different cultures and forms class relations in society; the systematic approach studies how it has changed and affected state affairs and broader systems; and the approach through governmentality perceives its influence on policymaking, governing systems, and transparency.

Among the anthropologists, there are at least three common anthropological understandings, those Mathieu (2010) argues are, first, alter globalization activists, within political debates, second, researchers distinguish theoretical neoliberalism from practical neoliberalism, and third, the anthropologists' objectives are to explain the production and global spread of what are called neoliberal practices and representations. Among the three paradigms, this sub-topic aims to analyze, very briefly, how social classes are represented in the global spread of neoliberal practices.

From the above descriptions, it is evident that neo-liberalism has brought gigantic changes in the socio-economic practices in every corner of the world. All phenomena have their own perspective, philosophy, and ideology, while neo-liberalism cannot be an exception of it. According to Putnam (2010), "ideology is not just a set of ideas that

articulate particular goals or expectations, but also act as 'received consciousness'

proposed by dominant classes – seen in development backed by various theoretical incarnations" (pp. 4-5). From this view, neo-liberalism is the ideology backed by elite classes in the four corners of the world, and it is not only the ideology, but it can be understood as a project intentionally seeking to restore the elite and dismantle the working class (Harvey 2005, cf. Mathieu, 2010, 357). Mathieu (2010) argues:

Whether neoliberalism is analyzed as a depoliticized form of capitalism that seeks to be scientific and does not fulfil its promises, as an ideology that serves the dominant group or as the most recent mode of governmentality, neoliberalism appears as the common denominator in the production of inequalities in our contemporary societies. (p. 360)

In this way, neo-liberalism should be understood as an ideology devoted to serving the dominant group and as other academicians and anthropologists have as well, and as the common denominator in the production of inequalities. Neo-liberalism has proletarianized the peasants in the rural hinterland (Pokhrel, 2018). During the era, however, characterized by Comaroff as "neoliberal capitalism, of capitalism in its millennial manifestation" (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2000, p. 298) as "in the second coming of capitalism" (p. 298), the characteristics of capitalism are changed in many ways. In this context, in relation to class and ideology of neo-liberalism, what Harvey (2005) argues is "neoliberal theory and rhetoric has also all along primarily functioned as a mask for practices that are all about the maintenance, reconstitution, and restoration of elite class power" (p. 188). He further argues "the whole history of embedded liberalism and the subsequent turn to neo-liberalization indicates the crucial role played by class struggle in either checking or restoring elite class power" (p. 201). Remarkably, the result of economic globalization is that urban slums are growing throughout Third World countries (Eriksen, 2010).

Based on the arguments of various academicians, it can be concluded that neoliberalism, as an economic form of globalization, is not a theory designed to emancipate the lower class; rather, it is an ideology that serves the interests of the elite. It also demonstrates that the geography of anthropology in the present context is rooted in studying the effects of those phenomena within the human collective.

Origin of Neo-liberalism

Neoliberalism, a term introduced in the mid-20th century, is not only a revival of classical liberalism but also shares some historical roots and basic vocabulary with liberalism in general. It is not secluded from the conservative-libertarian tradition, though it is considered an entirely new paradigm for economic theory and policy-making. Philosophically, it is associated with John Locke, Adam Smith, Alexis de Tocqueville, and Friedrich von Hayek, while, politically, it is associated with Thatcher, Reagan, Deng, and Pinochet, who introduced it since the early 1980s in their respective countries (Harvey, 2005). It is a theory of political economic practices that proposes human advancement by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills through an institutionalization of strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade.

However, neoliberal capitalism has been implemented and is spreading to every corner of the world, which has "increased polarization between classes" (Friedman, 2000, p. 452). In this context, Harvey (2005) states,

...all of this occurred in decades when working-class institutions were in decline and when many progressives were increasingly persuaded that class was a meaningless or at least long defunct category. In this, progressives of all stripes seem to have caved in to neoliberal thinking since it is one of the primary fictions of neoliberalism that class is a fictional category that exists only in the imagination of socialists and crypto-communists. (p. 202)

However, in the true sense, class is a phenomenon that has existed in societies for not a hundred, but a thousand years, the aftermath of primitive communal society and the origin of slavery. In the present context, "the lower classes are highly racialized and the increasing feminization of poverty has been a notable feature of neo-liberalization" (p. 202). During this era, conceptually, it has been in practice "to magnify class differences but to undercut class consciousness" (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2000, p. 298), while "social consciousness reflects social being" (Lenin, 1972; Beteille, 2007, p. 34), which is the teaching of Marx. In neoliberal capitalism, class consciousness for their emancipation has been reduced as it has arisen desire and expectations, within the existing structure, which is not possible as the state is the manifestation of class; the bourgeoisie has been

controlling the superstructure in the capitalist mode of production. As the thinking of men is changed, popular movements are also been bifurcated (Harvey, 2005).

Harvey analyzes that there are movements around what he calls "expanded reproduction" in which the exploitation of wage labor and conditions defining the social wage are the central issues, on the one hand, and on the other, there are movements against accumulation by dispossession (p. 203). Harvey (2005) concludes:

These include resistance to classic forms of primitive accumulation (such as displacement of peasant populations from the land); to the brutal withdrawal of the state from all social obligations (except surveillance and policing); to practices destructive of cultures, histories, and environments; and to the 'confiscatory' deflations and inflations wrought by the contemporary forms of finance capital in alliance with the state. (p. 203)

Formerly, capitalists in Europe accumulated capital through the so-called primitive accumulation (Marx, 1990) through the abduction of peasants' land and displacement of them during the 14th to 16th centuries. The state had to protect the citizens, but from the brutal withdrawal of the state from all social obligations, the neo-liberal state has converted the middle class into proletarians. Here, it is to be understood that there were two processes involved in primitive accumulation, earlier, i.e., "proletarianization, . . . and creation of a system of overseas colonies..." (Pettersen, 2009, p. 128). Proletarianization of large section of human collective by the formation of free wage workers who were systematically denied access to land and compelled them to survive on their labor power; and "colonization" yielded through "plunder, taxes, and surplus goods" produced by various forms of forced labor as servants and slaves and even labor-tax obligations (p. 128) which had been occurring until decolonization, especially after the Second World War. Neoliberalism has been a dominant socio-economic practice since the collapse of the then-Soviet Union, when socialist power had become defensive.

Penetration of Neo-liberalism in Nepal

Nepal had a protectionist policy during the unification, under the reign of Prithvi Narayan Shah (Liechty, 2010). It remained closed to the external world, though European goods were not banned for the elite class during the Shah and Rana regime (p. 67). After the Sugauli Treaty, the border remained closed and cross-border activity was restricted until 1885, though it was not so strict (Mishra, 2024). With the recruitment of Nepali

youth for the British army, direct from Nepal, the "open border system was re-established" (Sharma & Thapa, 2013, p. 4)

Even until the 1980s, there were just two commercial banks and one development bank for financial activities; those were all owned by the government. Lohani, who was nominated as the finance minister in 1983, reminds us that he had recognized neo-liberalism in the financial sector, especially the banking sector. He claims, "As a Finance Minister, I started a giant campaign of financial liberalization in Nepal" (Lohani, 2074, p. 9). It is obvious that financial liberalization was a foundation of neo-liberalism. He claims that he had amended a new banking act and invited foreign investors in the condition of "three in one" (33% each for foreign investors, Nepali promoters, and Nepali citizens) system to promote the banking system in Nepal. After 1983, neoliberal policy was being implemented slowly, a trend that had already been established in the global arena.

Neoliberalism was introduced in 1985 under the name of the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP), during the period of direct rule by the King. In the meantime, a democratic movement led to the introduction of multiparty democracy in Nepal, coinciding with the country's introduction of neoliberalism. After the democratic movement of 1990, the first elected Nepali Congress (GP Koirala led) government took liberal democracy as the state's principle, since then "neo-liberal ideology got wide ground to play in Nepal" (Putnam, 2010, p. 8). Naturally, it favors a more efficient private sector and a smaller government role in delivering goods and services to the public as the neoliberal policy was adopted in full. Then, after the establishment of neoliberalism as the "overall development mantra" (Uprety, 2021, p. 117), it has remained a political-economic practice. Then the government of Nepal took the initiative to privatize the state-owned industries and corporations. In the process of privatization, the large-scale industries, such as Bhrikuti Paper Mills, Basnbari Leatherage Company, and Harisiddhi Bricks and Tile Factory, were privatized in the first phase, the early 1990s. During the privatization process, 29 enterprises were privatized. Despite the disappointing performances, there were 62 such enterprises during the 1970s and 80s.

Nepal became a member of those institutions that regulate global finance and trade, the IMF in 1961, and the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2004. As a member of these institutions and adopting neoliberalism as its political-economic practices, Nepal became a market for goods and cheap labor for the international capitalist class (Liechty,

2010). This shows that due to the neoliberal economic policy, state-owned industries were privatized. Even after the privatization, the individual owner also could not handle the industry, and eventually it shot-off.

In 2022, there were 53 banks and financial institutions (BFIs) and 57 micro-finance companies (NRB, 2022), while there were very few BFIs until the 1990s. Those BFIs mobilize a huge amount of capital, and their major investments have been utilized in import-export (especially for imports) and trade, which has contributed to the economic activities that have developed mercantilism in Nepal. Though growing the economy, indigenous industrial capital, as well as the indigenous culture, have been destroyed.

In the age of neoliberal globalization, domestic socio-economic relations have been dominated by global capitalism. Now, neoliberalism refers to the socio-economic policies and political practices that preserve and promote individual freedom, limit government intervention, and accept globalization within the current World System.

Neoliberalism has affected many aspects of Nepali society, including family structure, ways of life, culture, agriculture, economic relations, and ultimately, the class structure. In the peasantry, rural farmers have sold out their oxen power and hired others' (rich or middle peasants') tractors in order to plough, reaper, and thresher, or use a harvester and other agricultural tools. How ways of life are changed, in the rural hinterland, there is an instance as a septuagenarian informant from Chitwan states, which is as follows:

The rate of tractor plowing is very high; fertilizers are very expensive; insecticides are much expensive; similarly, labor power is expensive and even difficult to find. Hence, everything is expensive to cultivate but the selling price of our crop has not been raised. In totality, farming is not profitable now.

He adds:

During the winter season, some Newar merchants used to come from Kathmandu valley, they used to make clay pots and sell them around the villages which we used to exchange with paddy as we did not have sufficient cash money. We only used to buy "clothes, salt, and kerosene". We used to cultivate paddy/rice, wheat, pulse, vegetables, mustard, chilly, and other things. But now, we have to buy everything including vegetables. We have to pay money for everything.

This is a short clip of experience; peasants have been frustrated in their farming. In the meantime, the government legalized foreign employment. Then, the large number of Nepali youths went abroad as migrant workers to the international capitalist class. As a result, the society faced a scarcity of young manpower. Their family members who are staying at home, most of them also left to their farming if they have not left they hire farm labor in order to work at their fields. A septuagenarian peasant living Chitwan says his experience as follows:

We don't find *Khetala* (farm Now) in the village as there are very few youths in village, among them some are meson and some meson helper. We take Madhesi labor for our field, if they do not come, it will be difficult to harvest our crop. They take job in contract basis; to earn more money they work very fast. If we give them daily wages, they work slowly and they cheat in work; so we give them a contract then they finish a full day work in a half day. They earn more money than other.

I also used to work myself but now our sons do not work in the field. They studied new education, they are doing another job, and they earn some money from their job. They do not like to work in the cattle shed and in the field.

From long before, richer people (especially, feudal or rich peasants in the villages) used to exploit the poor through wresting their labor power or through the *Kut* (land tax), but after the implementation of neo-liberalism, the richer people again exploited the poor through their agricultural tools. Another informant from a lower-class peasant background states his experience as follows:

Earlier, when we worked for landlords, the remuneration of farm labor was very few, less than our livelihood. The landowners used to wrest our sweat; now, we have left oxen power and plough ourselves, then we have to hire a tractor and other tools from which they wrest us, taking a high price for those tools.

In this way, neo-liberalism was deeply rooted in Nepali society, not in the trading but in the farming. As a result, class formation and reformation have become rapid and acute now.

Neoliberal Capitalism and Class in Nepal

"Society" refers to human collective action, while the term "class" designates a specific group within human society that is identifiable within a system of classification (Milner, 1999, p. 1), a universal phenomenon. According to Dahrendorf (1959), "class as

is even today confined to the two strata of entrepreneurs and workers. Neither the nobility nor the professions nor the older groups of craftsmen and peasants are called classes" (p. 6). As Weber (1964) views class as it any group of persons holding the same class status, thus it is related to power that is analyzed through their market position. Marxists view that "class" emerges and changes in society as the changes in the socio-economic condition, thus the class can be known as a group of individuals sharing common relations to labor and the means of production (MIA, 1999). In essence, class is understood as a dynamic historical phenomenon rooted in changing economic relations, particularly those tied to the attainment or non-attainment of productive means of production. Class structure has increasingly been influenced by global capitalist forces, which are constantly evolving and reshaping.

Class division is a long-standing phenomenon; social classes have been producing and reproducing themselves through the possession or dispossession of property, and through the modes of production occurring within society, especially the phenomena entailed by inbound modes of production. In the stage of neo-liberal capitalism, "transnational flows of capital and labor have replicated 'internal' class divisions on an international scale" (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2000, p. 303).

There is no encounter between the bourgeois and proletariat in the workplace in this neoliberal globalized capitalism; "the poor are no longer at the gates; bosses live in enclaved communities a world away, beyond political or legal reach" (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2000, pp. 303-4). Where is the real owner (new bourgeoisie or transnational capitalist)? Neither the workers nor the state knows, but the manager and workers appear in the workplace; the capitalist watches through the various means of surveillance and governs through the new technology. Writers say, "Capital and its workforce become more and more remote from each other: frequent fliers and frequent fliers seldom meet on the global highways they travel—in contrapuntal rhythm. Here is the harsh underside of the culture of neoliberalism" (p. 304).

However, various demands related to race and gender are easily addressed with logical solutions within the context of social and political frameworks. Nevertheless, the fundamental issue remains unsettled, and it may not be resolved within the socio-economic practices of neoliberal capitalism. Thus, it is the question of "class, finally, that remains more intractable and more fundamental" (Harvey, 2005, p. 301). Condition of

the working class in England in the middle of the 19th century, what Engels observed, Marx (1990) quotes,

The home, too, will be where shelter can be cheapest bought, in quarters where commonly there is the least fruit of sanitary supervision, the least drainage, the least scavenging, the least suppression of public nuisances, the least or worst water supply, and, if in town, the least light and air. (p. 811)

The condition of the working class has changed moderately, but it has not changed to a revolutionary extent; the social hierarchy is not changed. "Lived reality, then, is that social class is a multiply refracted gestalt" (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2000, p. 306). Thus, in spite of complexity, the analysis of class structure is the task of anthropology and anthropologists.

After the establishment of democracy in 1990, Nepali society became open to the international labor market as well. The government legalized the manpower agencies that recruit people as labor in the world capitalist market, while neoliberal policy had already been adopted. Peasants faced losses in their farming, but on the other hand, they had an alternative option to go abroad and sell their labor power. Not only lower-class or middle peasants, but also those from the former *Jimidar* (now middle peasants) class, have gone abroad as overseas workers (Pokhrel, 2018). A case study taken from a middle peasant household of Chitwan in 2022 is presented here:

My family had 2 hectares of land, but I divided that into two parts for my two sons when they separated. They both have their own tractor for plowing and carrying the materials. But due to the lack of manpower, my younger son's tractor has been garaged at his home. He has no one to drive his tractor; he takes a driver on contract just for some days for cultivation during cultivation.

For many years, the *Adhiya* (sharecropping) system was prevalent, but now it has due to low profits in farming. The rising costs of fertilizers and pesticides have driven many young people—both men and women—to seek different kinds of work, resulting in a shortage of agricultural labor.

Consequently, this labor scarcity is negatively impacting farming today. Up until about 30 years ago, the labor exchange system was prevalent, but it has disappeared, as everyone now requires money to survive.

We have two sources of money; the first one is remittance, and the second is selling grain. But in comparison of expenses, income is less; the source of

money from the selling of grain has been low. We have had the same rate to sell our paddy for a decade, but the rate of expense has increased significantly. Now, if my son sends money, then we pay for the tractor driver, farm labor, and fertilizers; otherwise, we cannot pay those expenses.

The account embedded within the self-story teller's statement "if my son sends money, then we manage our farming" means that remittance is the source to manage their overhead expenditure. Farmer cannot grow crops without remittance, which shows how Nepal's socio-economic life is penetrated by neo-liberalism. Remarkably, for the foundation of capitalist mode of production Mandel (1990) views:

They lie, first of all, in the separation of the producers from their means of production. Subsequently, it is the establishment of these means of production as a monopoly in the hands of a single social class, the bourgeoisie. And finally, it is the appearance of another social class that has been separated from its means of production and therefore has no other resources for its subsistence than the sale of its labor-power to the class that has monopolized the means of production. (pp. 19-20)

The theory replicates in the Nepali society that the peasants are being detached from their means of production, as they have sold their oxen power and left plowing, and are going to search for a job in the international capitalist market. Ultimately, Nepal has become the supplier of cheap labor to the international capitalists. Not only the lower class but also the middle class have been isolated from their means of production. Thus, "agriculture-based families have been proletarianizing due to the neoliberal market economy for 30 years" (Roka, 2018). Although they have land in their homeland, a new class is formed that relies on wages from global capitalists due to the neoliberal practices in society (Pokhrel, 2024).

Many issues have been settled; for example, in Nepal, the inclusion of women and minority groups has been incorporated into the state's mainstream. However, class relations have not been resolved even today, despite many political changes that have occurred and concluded at a logical point. However, an existing global phenomenon that "relations among labor, place, and social reproduction—and, with them, the terms of class conflict itself—have been thoroughly unsettled for now" (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2000, p. 303). Class division has not settled, as it has been a globalized phenomenon during neoliberal globalized capitalism; it cannot be seen without a broad perspective and

global context, as well as internal conditions. Comaroff and Comaroff (2000) further argue,

While the contours of the global proletariat are ghostly at best—and while middle classes seem everywhere to be facing a loss of socioeconomic security, their center ground ever shakier, a transnational capitalist class is taking more and more tangible shape. The statement visualizes how one can imagine the condition of the global proletariat. (p. 303).

This condition contradicts in some cases in Nepal. Manmohan led the CPN (UML) government in 1995, had firstly provided "elderly allowance," and it is continuing today in extended form as "social security". The government of Nepal has announced the social security allowance under the following provisions:

The number of incapacitated and helpless people in society is found to have been increasing because of the reasons including poverty, unemployment, economic inequality, natural disasters, and social conflict. Children, elderly citizens, single women, endangered indigenous people, ethnic people and the people with disabilities have been provided social security allowance. (DIB, 2076 BS, p. 252)

It is assumed that this type of social security was the first of its kind, even in South Asia. The government distributed land ownership certificates to at least 50,000 tenant farmers and unsystematic settlers, a practice followed by other governments. The Government of Nepal has been providing at least one parcel of land to build a house for landless people and issuing land ownership certificates to those who used to plow but did not have ownership of their land.

Peasantry has been transmuting into a capitalist character, and that has been passing through dependence upon the remittance economy. Agriculture-based families have been either depeasantizing or deagrarianizing due to neoliberalism, globalization, and overseas employment, which ultimately tends to proletarianize.

Remarkably, "depeasantization" is the process of switching off people from traditional peasantry through the dissatisfaction in their income due to the emergence of capitalist peasantry (Lenin, 1972). There are several cases of depeasantization seen in the rural hinterland. Similarly, deagrarianizing is a reorientation of economic activity, occupational adjustment, and spatial realignment of human settlement away from agrarian patterns (Bryceson, 1996). There have been changes in livelihood, work activities, and/or even the residence of the population from the rural hinterlands.

Numerous cases illustrate a decline in rural populations' engagement in agriculture as they transitioned to the secondary and tertiary sectors (Upreti, 2021). Some due to overseas employment, which ultimately tends to proletarianization. Though the characteristics of the working class are different than in 19th-century Europe, a large number of people have been passing to the state of proletarianization.

Conclusion

Anthropology studies focused on men "most part primitive societies" (Evans-Pritchard, 1954) its changing paradigm is history and context of globalization, and its aspect of class and culture (Friedman, 2000). Thus, to study the economic life of men, class and culture of Nepali society anthropology is an appropriate social science field in the context of neo-liberal globalization.

However, the neo-liberalism adopted in Nepali society profoundly disrupted and dismantled many phenomena, such as labor out-migration, foreign education, information technology, family structure, rural life, social institutions, economic structure, and social and cultural values. As a result, it has been reshaping social life as well as the class characteristics.

Once neo-liberalism occupied the position of socio-economic practices, it shaped the former class structure into a new. Class was shaped through the domestic mode of production; however, due to neoliberal globalization and world capitalist relations, as well as Nepal's position in the capitalist world system, it is forming in relation to the world's mode of production.

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