

An Ethnographic Study of Rana Tharu of Nepal

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ABSTRACT

The research paper is based on the Rana Tharu of sudurpaschim province of Nepal. Rana Tharus are one of the indigenous and ethnic groups in Kailali and Kanchanpur district of Sudurpaschim province of Nepal. The objective of this study is to find out the Socio- cultural life of Rana Tharu of Sudurpaschim Nepal. For this purpose, Rana Tharu community village of Kanchanpur district was selected as a study area. In this research the qualitative research tools and techniques are employed. The Bhalmansha, Chakar, Kurma are the part of social structure of Rana Tharu. The clarity of division of work among these institutions has enabled to maintain and establish unique ethnic identity for Rana Tharus. The various festivals and ceremonies practiced and followed by Rana Tharu functions to reinforce and strengthen cooperation, harmony and social solidarity. The Rana tharu community live in large family in the past decades but now days practice in nuclear family. In Rana Tharu women have a good position in their community. Women spend more time on their home, cooking and cleaning house. Man work hard and they do work outside of house. Various social-cultural institutions, traditions and practices followed by Rana Tharu which has developed social solidarity and cooperation among Rana Tharu. This community lives in warm climate of the terai region of Sudurpaschim which is very good for agriculture.

Keywords: Rana Tharu, Family, lineage, livelihood, gender role

INTRODUCTION

Nepal is the country with vast diversity in caste/ethnicity, religion, Language and culture. According to 2021 census, there are 142 caste/ethnic groups and 124 mother languages spoken in Nepal (CBS: 2021). The social system or structure of Nepal is based on the unity and diversity that integrates various caste, ethnic, religious, linguistic, and cultural groups. Each and every ethnic group has its own language, arts, norms and values, morals, belief, society, culture and economic institution considered as primary identity of ethnic group.

The Rana Tharu of Sudurpaschim Terai are an endogamous population that straddle the border between Nepal's Kailali and Kanchanpur district and adjacent district of Lakhimpur Khiri of Uttar Pradesh and Uddham Singhnagar district of Uttarakhand, India (Gunratne:2002). Rana Tharus are the oldest indigenous ethnic people of this Sudurpaschim terai region of Nepal India border. In Nepal the Rana Tharu is more in west of Kailali District and south-east side of Kanchanpur living in large and dense settlements/villages. The total population of Rana Tharu according to national census 2021 is 83308 out of 41001 men and 42307 women which are constituted 0.29 percent of the total population of Nepal (CBS, 2021). The status of the Rana Tharu caste ethnic covers the rank out of 142 caste in Nepal. Their population composition in terai region seems 21816 Kailali and 60277 Kanchanpur districts. They are socially, politically, and economically backward in every respect. They have different language, social structure, folk story, norms and values, living style, food, dress house structure, and socio-economic condition from other ethnic groups. Rana Tharu leader's, elders are fighting for their own identity. Rana Tharus claim that themselves that they are different from other Tharus. Government of Nepal recognition Rana Tharus are separate ethnic group.

The language spoken by the Rana Tharu people is the Rana Tharu language. Rana Tharu is the language spoken by 77766 people in Nepal as recorded in the recent census (CBS, 2021). The Rana Tharu language speakers live in mostly Geta, Chaumala, Malakheti, Shrepur, Belapur, Urmi, Gadriya, Ghuiyaghat, beli, Rajipur and Dhangadhi of Kailali district. Likewise Belaure, Dekhatbhuli, Pipladi, Kasraul, Kalwapur, Bansah, Jhilimila, Dubah, Laljhadi, Kalkatta, jai, Kalagaudi, Bagphata, Jhalari, Daiji, Krishnapur, Beldadi, Bhamdatta, Punarbash, Suda village of Kanchanpur district.

Indigenous groups are socio economically disadvantaged than other groups in society. Tharu, one of ethnic minorities in the country is indigenous of Terai. Tharu's are scattered all along the southern foot of the hill and the Himalayas. Tharu's are considered the oldest groups of people to inhabit the Terai of Nepal including Uttar Pradesh and Uttara Khand Tterai of India. And they usually live closer to the heavily forested areas (Bista, 1980, Grung 1996). Tharu's are innocent, shy, having indigenous background and relatively timid settled in the Teri region and they are basically agriculture peasant. Government authority in the past and still to lesser degree is out maneuvered by the surrounding non-Tharu has exploited them. They are often in debt since the grain the produce is frequently used to brew alcoholic drinks. More clever persons from the hills will lend them money to purchase food and they continue to compound the interest. Eventually, the Hillman acquires the Tharus land and the Tharus are relegated to landless status (Pyakuryal, 1982).

Tharus, in the early days were not interested in owning the land, due to the absence of cash. They were most interested in cultivating barren or virgin land for which they did not have to pay revenues for a certain period. Later they again moved on in search for such new land. Tharus who had private registered land sold the land whenever possible at a cheap price and moved for the west (Bardiya, Kailali) to cultivate new land for the same reason (Rajaure 1977). The west most endogamous sub group of Tharus is the that of the Rana Tharu, who occupy Lands from Nainital Terai in western Uttar Pradesh to Kailali in Nepal (Gunratne:2002).

Rana Tharus are those people who have been almost isolated and neglected by the government. The neglected segment of society is facing many problems and becoming poorer and poorer day by day. The migrated person from hill (*pahadiyas*) highly influencing the life style of Rana Tharus. The Rana Tharu communities are affected by transportation, education, migration and modernization and seem many changes in their social cultural and economic life. Under these circumstances to know their real present situation there is an urgent need to study social cultural and economic life of Tharus in a sociological perspective. We hope that this present ethnographic study will help further detail research on the whole aspects of the Rana Tharu communities of Far Western Nepal.

RESEARCH METHODS

This paper is based on the first hand data collected primarily from ethnographic field work conducted among the Rana Tharu of Kailali Kanchanpur Districts of Sudurpaschim Nepal. In this study various village of Kailali and Kanchanpur were selected for the study where majority of the Rana Tharu are lived. The economic condition of Tharu is miserable in comparison to other caste/ethnic group of Sudurpaschim. In this study select the study site of Rana Tharu village where tradition, norms and value are in more practice more than other village. The old village is natural type where obtain real image about the social-cultural and economic condition of Rana Tharu. The primary data were collected through the basic tools used to collect the data were key informant interview, interview schedule, participant observation, focus group discussion and case study oral history. The observation used to techniques was used to observe the day to day life of Rana Tharu people of Nepal, their material culture, various rituals. Focus group discussion used to collect data on the socio-cultural and economic life of Rana Tharu peoples. Key informant interviews were conducted with Rana Tharu elders to gather data on their history, culture, and economy. The necessary secondary data were collected from published books, reports, journals, official documents reports and relevant literatures. In order to check the reliability of the collected information and data, an attempt was made to cross check the information by asking some question to other respondent and observation. A descriptive research design was applied in order to analyze and interpret the qualitative data collected from the Rana Tharu village of Kailali and Kanchanpur. This research design tends to describe the socio-cultural and economic life of the Rana Tharu.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Origin and History of Rana Tharu

Nepal is multi-linguistic, multi-religious and multi racial/ethnic country. Among them Tharu is a major one. It is not proved that when and from where ancestor of Tharu came in this area. Different scholars have give different opinions about it. Some scholars say that Tharu's ancestors were Rajput of India. Rajputs were defeated by Muslim invasion and Rajput women run away with their servants into the forest areas for refuge. After sometimes these Rajput women cohabited with servants and local people and gave the birth of new cult known as Tharu (Bista, 1967). Some Rana Tharu women used to push dinner plate toward their husbands by foot considering them as the descendents of Rajput blood and their husband as the servant hence higher status than their husbands (Gautam and Thapa Magar, 1984). But this custom was prevalent among Rana Tharu only. So, it is not universally applicable.

Some Say that the Rana Tharu came from the *Thar* Desert of Rajasthan, India. So, later they were named Thruwa. Whatever the scholars say about the origin, all try to prove that Tharu are migrant people but there is no evidence of about it if they were migrants why they choose such malarial, forested and unhealthy land in spite of choosing more suitable and healthy land. The theory of descendents of Rajput women and their servants is not also applicable to all the Tharu of Nepal. Whatever different scholars say about the origin, it is not easy to prove that who came from where in prehistoric period. And there is no doubt that Tharu are the indigenous people of Nepal as well as Kanchanpur district.

The Rana Tharus are laborious, honest, sincere, simple-minded and most of them are illiterate people. They live in joint extended family up to 4-5 generations together. They are one of the more underdeveloped groups of Nepal. Their history is the story of stream deprivation, enormous hardship and class exploitation. Other claver groups take advantage of their simple nature. They feel content with their own society and circumstances. This has kept them almost isolated within their own localities and made a group relatively unknown to outsiders. Because of their superstitious, backwardness and timidity, they are physically and socially isolated from development activities and cultural contact.

Social system of Rana Tharu

The social system of Rana Tharu community is made up of specific type of social institutions. *Padhana*, *Bhalmansha*, *Bharra*, *Chakar Kurma*, and Clan are major social units which work for the function of the social system of this ethnic group. Because of these functioning units, there is unity in their social structure. Rana Tharu society has reached to the present state. These units are responsible for the maintenance and the function of social system of Rana Tharu society.

Padhana is the chief person of the Rana Tharu village of more than hundred to two hundred peoples among families in the village. Padhana is selected on the base of leadership, cooperation, capacity, social behavior, healthy, sound linguist, good public relation and helpful behavior, which can speak out fluently and boldly for them and can establish his superiority, can manage and mobilize others in the village and an intelligent person. Selection of Jamindar and under whom one should work, where to go, what to do, etc are look after by *Padhana*. The house of *Padhana* is public place for gathering where people discuss about peace and dignity of society with one another. Pardhan is the political and social representative or leader of the village. He does not get any kind of wages. As *Padhana* is respected and dignified rank in Rana Tharus community. He honored in major cultural ceremony and festival

Bhalmansha is very famous position high rank leader in every Rana Tharu village. He is the assistant of *Padhana*. *Bhalmansha* functions according to the order of *Padhana*. *Bhalmansha* is the second social and political leader of village after *Padhana*. He is elected from *kichhari*, a village meeting on *Aashadi* festival, where each household is represented by one male member. If the villagers are not satisfied with the service of the *Bhalmansha* they reject him and re-election, is done to elect new one. The seat of *Bhalmansha* is provided to one who can command and can gain the respect and confidence of the villagers. To make roads of the village, to settled debates, issues and quarrels to make living arrangement of guest, officials, which have come

from outside, to be the representative of villagers, to send news in the village etc are the works of *Bhalmansha*.

Bharra post assigned to person with spiritual power in the Rana Tharu. In support of spiritual peace, power and order in the village his duties are utilized. There is belief that *Bharra* protects from disease, for the happiness and peace of the village. *Bharra* lights prayer sticks on first Monday of every months. The worship of *Bhuiya* on *Ashadi* is done by *Bharra*. *Bharra* is appointed by the assembly of Society *kichhari* which gathered in the day of *Asadi*. If the work of *Bharra* is not satisfactory and if he is unable to maintain peace and order in the village, than he has to resign or gets dethroned. On the other hand, if his work is regarded satisfactory than *Bharra* continues for next tenure. *Bharra* gets about 20 to 30 kg food grains every year from each family as his wage.

In the Rana Tharu community *Chakar* gives the information or messages from *Bhalmansha* to every house of the village. The management of guests in the village, to arrange materials for the marriage, distributes materials in the marriage; arrangements of things in the *Asadi* are done by *Chakar*. Likewise, *Chakar* and *Chakarnia* wash the cooking pots and vessels. There is a tradition of giving rice marriage for their services. *Chakar* gets every year's rice as wages from every family.

Kurma and Clan

Kurma is the very important social institution in Rana Tharu community. The word *Kurma* means members belonging to same patrilineage. The household is segment of a patrilineal descent group. *Kurma* worship the same lineage deities. The *kurma* household run the farm together and the brother of the patrilineage own land jointly. When new household is established a new branch of *kurma* is also created (Grung and Kittelsen: 1996). In different works like agriculture, Marriage, death and *Ghada* ritual *Kurma* have important role. The day after the marriage during dancing and singing *Kurma* brings rice from their house in *Dalwa* and throw in the dance pot and enjoy a lot. People which have more *kurma* bring more house rice and throw it while dancing. During marriage they write their relationship with him/ her in paper and tie it shirt. During *Ghada pooja* all the *kurma* do worship and they also help at the time of agriculture. When their relatives are in difficult *kurma* helps them in different ways.

Rana Tharu believes his/her ancestor as Maharana Partap. Many years ago Rana Tharu had different caste but now day's they write as Rana Thruwa. Rana Tharu living in kailali kanchanpur as their caste and they believe Rajasthan as their origin place. Some Rana consider themselves as a upper class and other as lower class. Inside Rana Tharu group there are also different sub group as a castes /clan like, Khadka, Mahatmya, Shausa, Thakuri, Rauta, Ghadria, Khapta, Rao, Baththa, Ghangra, Jugiya, Chhepka etc.

In all the different caste of Rana, marriage is not allowed. From outside we can see no difference among them but inside there is huge difference and they have feeling of small and big or upper and lower class. The caste *Badayak* eat buffalo so they are taken as so lower class. In total because of this Rana Tharu identity the social stratification and difference among inside Rana Tharu have been decreased. All Rana Tharu *Barahaman* is *Panchhada*. The used to give bed, clothes, dhoti etc to *Panchhada* on the occasion of *Ghada* ritual.

Family structure

Rana Tharu lives in joint family in traditional society but now day's they live in nuclear family. Up to their four generations they live in a family. There are 12/13 to 20/30 members live in one family. Head of the family is senior male / female or elder brother or His wife. He/She divides Labour/work of the family member. If family is large, than head of the family divides the work amongst every person or member of family On the monthly basis. Among these divided one month based some works are Kithchen cooking, goat grazing, caw-ox grazing, and other domestic work. These works rotate every month among them in rotation system. Everyone does his part of work that is given to them. Someone go fishing, someone go for hunting, others go gathering vegetable in forest. Therefore there is fun and pleasant/enjoyment in the large family. Different kinds of fruits can be eaten and more importantly it is easy to work. There is not burden of work in a single person. Every kinds of problems are solved collectively so it is easy to handle and cope with problems without any difficulty.

In large family, who cooks food wakeup early in the morning at 4 am and prepare food in the evening starts to cook food at 2-3 pm.

In the large family one does not get desired and balanced diet but as they eat together it does not seem bad. It looks always good as the leader of Rana community tells. It looks always good as they are busy in farming and animal husbandry and they always seem to enjoy their hard work and labour. The festivals and rituals that come time and again give liveliness and happiness to them. In past pahadi community along with population growth, increased due to community forestry concept, forest are almost closed, there is unemployment in their community. Among the family members some work same alcoholic and sit worthless, etc large/ joint family is segregated or collapsed and nuclear family created with in duration of last ten- fifteen years. In the beginning there was not thinking of doing work and less. Head of family had responsibility to run family. When everyone used to do their part of work, he/she used to be free and it was pleasant as said by Rana Tharu Aguwa (old person/ leader). They say that in small family though one can eat good and balanced diet but the enjoyment, fun and happiness that used to happen in large family. Does not seem to happen in small family. In large family, as daughter in law start to come in next generation, they used to handle the kitchen and mother in law only give instruction.

Family is the basic and universal social structure. The family is a group defined as an institution for the procreation and upbringing of persons, united by the ties of marriage, blood and adoption constituting a single household, interacting with each other in their respective social roles of husband and wife, son and daughter and brother and sister etc. There are two types of family in the Rana Tharu community. There are different reasons behind disintegration of joint family system leads home for idles, encourages, litigation, leads to quarrel, privacy define, uncontrolled procreation. So they separate after they got married.

Kinship

Kinship is also a special type of social institution in Rana Tharu community. It plays an important and useful role in the society. The various needs of the society are not only met but also act as an effective element in the process of socialization of a person. It was very attractive and influential in traditional and modern society to conduct social, economic, political and cultural function (Gautam, 2067). Kinship is the relationship on the basis of blood and marital. A person is bound in various relationships from birth to death. Kinship system bound the people as a network of relationship. Different types of kin terms use among the Rana Tharu of Kailali and Kanchanpur. Among them consanguine and affinal relationship are the most common. Some terms of consanguine kin group are, Dauba (father), Aai (Mother), Dado/Nana (Grandfather), Dadi/Nani (Grandmother), Didi/Lalo (sister), Bhaiya (Brother), Mama/Mami (Maternal uncle/Aunt), Kakku/Kaki (Uncle/Aunt), Mausi (Mother's Sister), Phuwa (Father's sister), Lauda (Son), Laudiya (Daughter), Loga (Husband), Baiyer (Wife) etc. Similarly some terms for an affinal kin groups are, Buba (Father in law), Mai (Mother in law), Jeth/Dewara/Bade (Brother in law), Jiji/Nand (Sister in law), Damada (Son in law), Bahuriya (Daughter in law), Bhada (Brother's son) etc.

Festival

The identity of any society is given by its festivals. Rana Tharu community also has important festivals its own community. They celebrate with many festivals throughout the year. Festivals have significant value people's life. Festivals entertain people, build social solidarity and strengthens the bond among family members. The main festivals celebrated by Rana Tharu people are Charai, Ashadi, Teej, Astami /Jarmaastami (Krishna Astami), Dewari, Hori (Holi).

Ashadi festival is celebrated during *Ashad month Sukalpakhya* and this called *Ashadi*. This festival is also celebrated among Rana Tharu with great importance. During this festival different social and religious leaders or the post like *Bhalmansha*, *Bharra*, and *Chakar* are renewed or reelected. Along with this day the '*Bhuiya*' god is also worshipped. This festival is celebrated for the security wellbeing of the society and as well as for the satisfactory and sufficient agriculture in the village. During this festival only the god and goddesses are worshipped to prevent the *kurma* and village from different diseases and natural disaster. For this *Chakar* informs all the villagers about celebration and collects flour, oil and some money from every household and

one male member are gathered at *Bhalmansha's* house. They themselves prepare Ashadi to worship their god and after elect the *Bhalmansha*, *Bharra*, *Chakar*.

Teej Festival is celebrated in the month of *Shrawn in Shuklapkshya*. It is women's festival, which is celebrated on Sunday and Monday or Tuesday. In this Festival there are costume, teenagers made *dola* (swing) and play themselves. Before one week of *Teej* they used to gather on the place of *dola* (swing) and sang song and enjoy on *dola*. This process is for five –six days till *Teej*. *Chakarniya* used to inform all villagers for talking about how to celebrate *Teej*. In this Festival married sister, daughters return maternal house and have take fast. Mainly fast is for blessing long life of brothers and cousins but those sisters who have not brother and cousins they did not take fast. On this festival *Puri*, *Pakauda*, *gulgula*, *pitaula* etc are notable varieties of food which were cooking on this day. In the evening time after 4-5 'o' clock, sisters (women) who have fast used to went in the side of the river with worshipped material like *siruaahi*, *poori*, *chanaula*, water, sugar, milk, etc. In the side of river married and unmarried women both took Urai grass, then they made bump brass unmarried make five and married seven simultaneously. They gather all materials related to worship and offer to god. After that they put those offered materials silver, bangle or garland and put of the mid of the river which is called to effuse the *dola*. In this process women worship long life like that same bank of the river as their brothers, nephews and so on to worship with Ganga Maiya. After that they exchange their food item with each other and ate on the side of the same river, and complete their fast. In this time they cut leaf plate of Shrawan and effuse on the river and it also indicate the leaf plate of Shrawan. At the returning time boys interrupted them and beg for food.

Astami festival lies on *Krishanapachchhe of Bhadra month*. This Day is celebrated as the birthday of god Krishana. In Rana society this festival is celebrated by all people or family member. They also do fasting as they believe that their wish will fulfilled if they take fast. Different people have different reason for fasting i.e. some of them take fast for the happiness, welfare of these family member, those who don't have son they pray for son and who don't have child they pray for child. During day time they prepare *dola* for Krishana those who are fasting should not eat and drink anything and during night at around 7/8 p.m. they keep cucumber on *dola* as the symbol of god Krishana. They also make the small ping or *dola* where they keep god Krihana. On the backside wall from *dola* of Krishana they make the drawing of Kirshana and near the *dola* they do *pooja* but only those who have taken fast can do this puja. During puja they fire mango wood. This is called '*Hum*'. All villagers come there and the *dola* slowly moved and money kept on there and as take blessing. People who have taken fast distribute '*Khajuriya*' as parshad. During this festival there is like '*Mela*' in the house and people cook *Khajuriya* in large amount and distribute to all villager. In this festival relative come from far way and they prepare different types of delicious food. During whole the night they per different activities like singing *Krishana* song, dancing, playing dhola. In the morning they perform naming ceremony of *Krishana*. In this day they prepare *Khajuriya*, rice, dal, vegetables, and all the people eat together. In the evening time they distribute *Khajuriya* as a *parshad* to whole villager. During this festival all the people of every house gets assembled at the venue where *pooja* of Krishna is organized and the takes blessing from there. This festival also helps to induce harmony cooperation unity among them.

Holi is the biggest festival of Rana Tharu community. This Festival celebrates from *Fagu purnima* to *chaitra purnima* is called *jinda* (live) Holi. The Holi played after eight days is called '*Bhari*' (Death) Holi. *Jinda* Holi played at night and the house owner gives those sweets and other dishes. This holi is played before burring holika so it is called as a *jinda* (live) Holi and these types of Holi played without colours. At the day of *phagu purnima* all the Rana Tharus play holi with colors by singing and dancing. At evening male member carry different things like *Guitha* and other things to burn Holika. After the Holika is burnt it is believed that there is end of Holika and the Holi played after this is called *Bhari* Holi. The Holi played by women holding each other hands is called *Thanwa holi*. Similarly the Holi played between man and women is called '*laukauwa holi*'. Holi festival of the Rana Tharu community is regarded as the medium for Socialization, social relationship, social participation and transmission of culture from one generation to other (Bista: 2073). This festival also played to forget all the quarrels and inhumanity among the people. It brings peace, humanity and understanding among the people. All the community people together play Holi by singing different songs and do lots of fun the young children and youth to sing songs and play Holi from their old family members. Different dishes are prepared for those people who play Holi and sweets and drinking are offered to them. The old people who cannot play Holi enjoy themselves by watching others celebrate Holi.

Charai festival is celebrated in the Rana Tharu community in twice of the year. Once in *Baishakh Sukalpakhya* in which the newly married bride called invited to her parental home after marriage for *Charai*. There is major role of newly married women. Next *Charai* is celebrating after eighth day of holi of first Sunday in which all women's of the house goes to river or *Bagiya* together to celebrate second *Charai* festival. They offer the sweet food brought by their wives to the goddess. After the puja, the women eating foods with their children and enjoy themselves by singing song.

Dress and Ornaments

Rana Tharu has unique dress. Female Rana Tharu wears the specific *ghagriya*, *fatue*, *angiya* and black *uniya* around the head. Females sew and knit their cloths themselves. In these cloths, different types of dots were given or filled also the round glass was put in the clothes. For sewing the clothes, it takes around 5-7 days. The clothes of women consist of different colours, pieces of glass, which made the clothes colorful and artful. Male wears dhoti, kurta *ftue*, *jhangiya* and *gamchha*, etc. In past, the wooden sandals were used for feet instead of slippers. Nowadays, the Rana Tharu female wear Shari, blouse, *petikot*, dhoti, kurta salwar and male wear pant shirt etc. Male and female wear their traditional dress on their special occasions and festival. Rana Tharu female put *kathaula*, *bala* in their hand and *lag* and *ghunghat* in head, *phuli* in nose and *kundal* in ears etc.

Food Habits

Rana Tharu are the food loving people. Most of Rana Tharu eat rice two times a day. Rice is the staple food of the Tharu. Most of the Tharu are non-vegetarians. They consume more fish, meat and alcohol (*jaad* and *raksi*) than vegetables, bread and milk and other item made by milk. The kinds meat they eat consist of chicken, pork, pigeons, sparrow, rat, rabbit, he-goat etc. They take not breakfast. Rana Tharu eat morning lunch and evening dinner in a day all of content rice.

Religion and Deities

Most of Rana Tharu people of this community are follower of Hindu Religion. Nowadays some of families also follow Christian and Bahai religion. The rate of adopting Christianity is rising up. The holy books of Hindu were translated in their own Language. When they get trouble or when they need something desperately, they pray and request God/Goddess for relief or for the wanted thing. Rana Tharu have their *Kul devata* (Ancestral Deity) installed in their family house (Bista:1967). At home, they worship *Kuldevata* God of their clan. They believe that worshipping of *Kuldevata* will help them to lead a prosperous and healthy life. They worship *Budebabu* (Shiva), *Parvati*, *Durga* etc as their mighty gods and keep them inside the house. Similarly Outside the house *Kali*, *Nagaryahi* and the gods of sheds are *Gudhani gudhana* etc. established. In the south of the Rana tharu village established *Bhueya* gods which is a common god for the villagers. Every Monday of month, the almighty god is given *pooja* and *vet*. In Rana Tharu village, the temple of *Sidhhanath* and *Baijhanath* exists in which place the followers used to sit. Now days, the Rana Tharu were against the violence related to the killing of animal for religious tasks and used coconut and other things instead the animal, for presenting the god.

Rites de passage

Birth ceremony

Rana Tharu society runs their life cycle rituals on the basis of their culture and traditions. The birthday ritual of the Rana Tharu community is an important ceremony. In this society, there is facilitation of '*dhai aama*' to help the pregnant women, and after the delivery up to the sixth day of delivery i.e. *chaiti*. In *chaiti*, the name of children is given by *Fupu*. In this day, villagers were given party and the children is gifted by new clothes. Also, the children's *Fupa* used to fire the gun in the past time. There is a custom of hiding the dress and naming the newly born baby by his aunt. There is also a tradition of taking money while returning the dress of child by his aunt. There is a custom of giving name to the newly born babies by their aunt in Rana Tharu community. In case of birth of a boy, boy's uncle is called for firing gunshot on the sixth day of birth (*chhaiti*). It is believed that firing of gunshot makes the boy strong and extrovertly clever (Bista and Bista, 2022)

Marriage ceremony

Marriage is one of the important religious as well as cultural aspects along with other different cultural aspect in Rana-Tharu community (Bist & Bist, 2021). In past, in Rana, Tharu culture usually the engagement used to be done during the pregnancy period of mother and the marriage was arranged during that period. But at present, most of the boy and girl do marriage by eloping after get loved. Some of marriage is done by arranging. Women were more responsible in kitchen during marriage. The complete management of marriage is performed by Vinaju. After the marriage, father in law collect the expenses amount bill and return the money to son in law. After the marriage, the vinaju i.e. son-in-law starts the party and their demand is fulfill by the father-in-law i.e. youngest son is celebrated more happily and expensively. This ceremony it known as 'Gulta' in Rana Tharu community. In this occasion, the sister and vinaju get over the roof of the house and happily throw sweets, chocolates, plates, bowls, biscuits, alcohol bottle cigarettes, etc down on the land for the people who are sitting on the floor outside the home. After the completion of the marriage, the responsible persons who have worked in the marriage were paid accordingly. Mainly the engagement was done in Chaitra, Baishakh and Jestha and the marriage in Mangsir, Poush and Magh month. The date of marriage is fixed the day of engagement. All arrangement were done before the marriage by the helpers.

Death ceremony

In the death or funeral ceremony of Rana Tharu, some of them perform digging and some of them burn the body. The Kurmas of the dead person bald their head i.e. Kapal Kathne. After returning from funeral, a reception is given to the villagers. This is also called as 'Small Shradhya' i.e. Ghada is performed. Ghada ceremony is only done either in Sunday or Wednesday and is only done either in Ashoj or Kartik month. In this Ghada ceremony, the statue of dead persons is made, feed the food, wear the clothes and family members used to cry sitting around the statue. In their ceremony, if the dead person was boy then the he-goat was cut and if a dead person was girl then she-goat was cut and all the relatives were feed the meat. Whole night of this day was celebrated by singing songs and in morning the statue was taken in oxen card i.e. Dallav to float in the river and the relatives and females pretends the statue as a fresh dead body and cry not to take the statue away from them. And this Ghada ceremony was performed are time for one person only.

Gender role

Women's position in Rana Tharu Community

In Rana society the status of women is quite good. Rana Tharu women give more time to kitchen work, cleaning and decorating their house as well as own cosmetics and the also make their clothes. They give food from kitchen to other male family member. In the day of marriage and after festival kitchen work is only done by women. Women used to come and go out of the kitchen and they also eat there but man can't eat in the area of kitchen. They should only eat outside the kitchen. Women carry out the food from kitchen for the man.

In the house also some work like feeding animal, are done by man after work they bringing the wood from forest, cutting of agricultural crop and bringing it to home were doing by man of Rana society In Rana Tharu society women can easily take their husband name but man used to feel difficult to call their women by name. They used to ask other to tell their wife's name. if somebody ask them their wife name.

The women of Rana Tharu society wear expensive clothes than man. Clothe of women like Angiya and Ghagiya are made from different types of clothes and it takes long time to make these clothes while man used to wear simple clothes. In Rana Tharu family women are more powerful in taking the decision for family. Women are sitting in house while Man are working in field. They cut the grass for their animal and feed their animal. This is common in Rana Tharu society where women are sitting with each other and talk about everything while men are working hard. Women of Rana Tharuwa society doesn't shy to talk to anybody. The status of women is like 'maharani' as it is shown by their behavior. The place of women in Rana Tharuwa society is high.

Rana Tharu women used to do only inside work is going to decreased. The man of Rana Tharu society used to say that in our society only man do outside work but due to connection with other pahadi people women also they know that women also should do the work outside house and now day's women help in many works than before. They say that only man do works and women sit like 'Queen' but pahadi have taught to let the women do the work. While ploughing the land they come home to drink water because women didn't do this also but now day's women do outside as well as inside work. From this also we can conclude that the status of women is high in Rana Tharu society. Many years before women are superior to male/man but due to the modernization, globalization, and connection with pahadi and other society the women power was controlled by man and the used to drink alcohol and women used to do the all work in nuclear family. Women also have more roles in the marriage of their daughter and sons but there is no such important role of father. During washing feet of daughter, starting to marriage rituals to end of the rituals mother and other women have main role.

Work distribution in families

It is found that in the families of Rana Tharu, each member of household has his\her own responsibility for running a family life. In the most of the houses, man is the head of household. The head of household has the main role in decision making. In this community men do hard and heavy work, like land, construction house, carrying heavy load etc. Women work, like preparing meal, caring children and animal caring. Women also do collecting firewood and harvesting and planting crops. Children after the age of 7/8 they assist their mother in household work. The work distribution and working hours of men and women and children in Rana Tharu community is shown below in the table.

Table-1 Work distribution in Family

Family member	Work distribution
Men	To plough the land in farming season, Daily wage labor etc
Women	House and shed cleaning, preparing meal and feeding animals-morning etc
Children	Grazing animals on holiday and bring water for cooking
Old people	Grazing animal

Source: Field survey, 2024

Economic system of Rana Tharu

The economic system of the Rana Tharu community is subsistent type. Agriculture and labour works are the main occupation of Tharu people of this area. Livestock farming can't be done in professional way because of fodder unavailability. They tame few cattle for manure purpose. So the economy of this community is not strong.

Rana Tharu of this community are adopting agriculture as their main occupation since the time immemorial. For them agriculture is important both for subsistence and market economy. Agriculture is important in the same way to all economic strata. Generally, they are always engaged in their agricultural works. Now days Man and woman both equally participate in the farm work. Here, agriculture involves the production of food grains, cash crops and various kinds of vegetables. In other words, agriculture is highly labour consuming activities particularly in the traditional agrarian community like Rana Tharu. From the study it is found that most populations are involved in agriculture. Because of the agricultural occupation land is the most important among the Rana Tharu for livelihood.

The occupational pattern indicates that majority of Rana Tharu household depended on agriculture. Therefore, the size of farming land and land ownership are the main indicators of economics status of Tharu. The possession of land is greatly valued, among the Rana Tharu of Kalwapur. It is valued not simply as a factor of income and security. On the other land it is an index of social status and prestige. In this village, out of all household have their own land.

The animals tamed in those houses were cows, oxen, buffalo, goat, pigs and .Tharu people were self dependent in the production of Duck and chicken. But they are getting problem in poultry farming, chicken are attacked by a kind of strong disease which kills them. They have not consulted any veterinarian about this disease.

Wage labor and Service Holding

Some of Rana Tharu people of the study area depended on wage labour for their livelihood. In the off-season of agriculture, they go to find work at construction site and horticulture area of India. Rana Tharu men work as carpenter and mason at construction site. Some people from this community were found engaged in different kinds of government jobs like police, teacher, clerk and peon.

Fishing, hunting and making handcraft

One of the subsidiary professions of Rana Tharu is fishing. Children and women all catch fish. Mainly fish is consumed at home but sometimes they also sell. Rana Tharu had different type of net of catch fish. Beside this, Rana Tharu hunt animals and birds.

Rana Tharu produces and makes all the things of their needs. They are self dependent. Making handcrafts is also one of the sectors for household production. The Rana Tharu makes several types of basket, mats, nets, and traps. Women weave different pattern of picture of flower and animals in basket and mats. They make handcraft for their domestic use or present in different occasion and also sell in the local market. Dalwa is the famous handcraft of Rana Tharu women.

CONCLUSION

Rana Tharu is one of the indigenous peoples of Kailali and Kanchanpur districts of Sudurpaschim Nepal. They are very rich in their traditional socio-cultural and livelihood. However, the migration of other area has had negative bearing on their traditional social, culture, political and livelihood system. Rana Tharu socio- cultural and political- economy is also fast being transformed due to the arrivals of different social groups from the hill and other part of terai Nepal. They have different social system and culture. Although they under Tharu society of Nepal but they have own language, history, festival, social structure, norms and values and practices. Padhana, Bharra, chakar and Kurma are important units of Rana Tharu Social System. These all units have their own specialty in Rana Tharu society. Different festival they celebrate, their food habit, practices and history of origin have recognized them as one of the special ethnic group. Social institutions head of Rana Tharu's selected by the *kachari* meeting by democratic processes. The status of women has been found better among in their society. Traditional society had the practices of female being limited to kitchen, house and own decoration. Male used to work outside the home; they have being involved in agricultural work. Rana Tharu culture has been influenced by present modern global society. Many cultural tradition and practice are on the verge of extinction so efforts should be taken for their preservation and protection. Rana Tharu social norms and values and culture has been changing situation. Rana Tharu adopt diversification in their livelihood. Now day's man and women work agricultural and paid work together.

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