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**Ethnicity, Class and Caste: Categories of
Group Relations and Personal Identities in Sunauli,
a village in southern Nepal**

by

Premalata Ghimire

March 1988

**Submitted to the Faculty of Bryn Mawr College
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

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Group Relations and Personal Identities in Sunauli,
a village in southern Nepal**

ABSTRACT

The Satar of Sunauli are divided into three categories: the Sapha Hod, the Bidin Hod and the Christian Satar. This dissertation, based on two periods of field work in southern Nepal, focuses on the Sapha Hod category of the Satar ethnic group and examines the ethnicity of the Sapha Hod in a complex ethnic, caste and class system. The Sapha Hod incorporate certain culturally valued caste rituals in their daily behavior but deny the caste influence and view the borrowed elements as belonging to their own traditional socio-cultural system. Such practice of rituals, belonging to two different cultures, has affected the ethnicity of the Sapha Hod. Instead of defining themselves according to their own cultural norms, the Sapha Hod define themselves situationally, depending on their needs and life-strategies when participating in different contexts - secular and ritual; exclusive and inclusive. As such, ethnicity claimed by the Sapha Hod differs from the way members of their larger ethnic group define it. In this way, ethnicity becomes a device for the Sapha Hod to claim a higher ritual status within their larger egalitarian Satar group and, at the same time, it appears as a means to compete with their

caste neighbors in order to obtain equal socio-political statuses and advantages within the nation.

This thesis pays particular attention to the symbolic expressions of this ethnicity in various Satar rituals and festivals as well as in everyday behavior. It shows how these rituals, in turn, help maintain the multiple and overlapping identities of the Sapha Hod. Conclusions emerging from the discussion contribute to studies of normative versus contextual identities, culture change and Satar ethnography.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

INTRODUCTION:

This dissertation is a study of the Satar of southern Nepal with the aim of presenting an indepth study of the processes of maintaining, creating and switching ethnic and other identities by a particular category of the Satar, the Sapha Hod, in a complex ethnic, caste and class system. The Satar of Sunauli are divided into three ritual categories: the Bidin Hod, the Sapha Hod and the Christian Satar.

Bidin Hod literally means Hindu Satar. The Bidin Hod believe that there are only two Jaat (types/kinds of people) on this earth - Hindu and Muslim - and all those who are not Hindu are either Muslim or like Muslim. Accordingly, they think of the Christians and the Christian Satar as "like Muslim". And since the Bidin Hod do not view themselves as Muslim, they define themselves as Hindu.

In spite of calling themselves Hindu, the Bidin Hod do not consider themselves as a part of the caste society. As such, they do not practise the Hindu rituals of the caste people. Instead they follow their traditional Satar rituals. They worship Bonga (deities/spirits) and make

offerings to them. Here I shall call them Bidin Hod because this is the way my informants wish to be labeled. They prefer this particular category of the Hindu Satar especially to distinguish themselves from the Muslim.

The second Satar category is that of the Sapha Hod. Literally it means "clean" or "pure" Satar. The Sapha Hod also, like the Bidin Hod, view themselves within the wide category of the Hindu and use this label to distinguish themselves from the Muslim. Further, they also do not consider themselves as a part of the caste society. But, unlike the Bidin Hod, the Sapha Hod combine and practise the rituals of both the Satar and the upper caste people. They incorporate Hindu ritual elements in their everyday behavior. They also think of these elements as traditionally belonging to their own ethnic group. And because of these, the Sapha Hod of Sunauli distinguish themselves from the Bidin Hod who claim to be Hindu but do not practise Hinduism as handed down to them by their ancestors.

The third ritual category of the Satar consists of the Christian Satar. They do not agree with the Bidin Hod and Sapha Hod's classification of people into two Jaat - Hindu and Muslim. They believe in many Jaat, Christian being one of them. Accordingly, they consider themselves as separate from Hindu and Muslim.

The Christian Satar of Sunauli are Pentecostals. They

meet every Sunday with the Satar of five or six villages for their church meetings. They also meet on Good Friday, Christmas day and New Year. The Christian Satar of Sunauli or other villages do not participate in any rituals of the Sapha Hod and the Bidin Hod.

In spite of the religious differences, the Satar of Sunauli live together with different caste groups in and around Sunauli. They (Satar) also express their shared ethnicity by calling themselves Hod (human beings/Satar), claiming to be descended from a common male ancestor, speaking Satari language which they call Hod Rod, and by dressing similarly. These cultural factors signal their exclusion from the caste groups and reveal the distinctiveness of their ethnic group. But within their own ethnic group, the Bidin Hod, the Sapha Hod and the Christian Satar use their own ethnic charters and maintain a certain degree of social distance from each other.

In a multi-ethnic/caste/class society, like Nepal, continuous interaction occurs between the different ethnic groups and caste groups. Since the caste dominates the social system of Nepal, caste symbols and rituals are often borrowed by the ethnic groups in the process of such interaction. My study examines one particular case of such borrowing. I focus on the Sapha Hod, and examine some of the ways in which they borrow a few key symbols of the caste society and use them to define their ritual status in hierarchical terms within their larger ethnic group. I

also demonstrate that despite such borrowing, the Sapha Hod deny the caste influence and see some Hindu (caste) elements as belonging to their own "traditional" Satar culture. Ethnicity claimed by the Sapha Hod, therefore, significantly differs from the way members of their larger ethnic group (i.e. the Satar) define it.

Since the Sapha Hod use the symbols of both their traditional culture and the caste culture, the identity they seek does not necessarily refer to an isolated and/or normative group which requires its members to follow a fixed set of beliefs and rituals. This identity rather refers to a multi-ethnic group context and the relations between these groups. And especially because of this, as my observation shows, instead of following their cultural norms and defining themselves according to these norms the same way in all situations, the Sapha Hod define themselves situationally - depending on their needs, choices and life-strategies (by which I mean those strategies which the individuals use to achieve their immediate and/or long term life goals) as they participate in different contexts e.g. social, religious, political, regional, economic, and ethnic. Ethnicity developed this way becomes a device for the Sapha Hod to create a type of hierarchy, similar to the caste hierarchy, within their own egalitarian group especially to claim their own ritual status as higher than those of the Bidin Hod and the Christian Satar within their larger group. Such

identification also functions to enable them to compete with their caste neighbors to obtain equal socio-political advantages within the nation.

In this study, I pay particular attention to the symbolic expressions of this ethnicity in various Satar rituals and festivals as well as in everyday behavior. I show how these rituals, in turn, help maintain the multiple and overlapping identities of the Sapha Hod: their cultural identity as Hod, their ritual identity as Sapha Hod, their religious identity as Hindu, and their other political, regional and economic identities.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

South Asia is a diverse region having complex tribal/ethnic, caste and class systems. Among these, Sunauli includes both an ethnic group and various caste groups. Each of these groups are further divided into class categories of rich and poor which make the social system of Sunauli even more complex. To demonstrate this complexity, I start my discussion by examining certain analytic categories pertinent to my thesis.

ETHNICITY AND ETHNIC GROUPS:

A fair amount of work has been done to date on ethnicity and ethnic groups. Various criteria have been suggested as being salient in determining markers for ethnicity¹ (see next page). For the purpose of this thesis, I examine ethnicity as a cultural construct. It refers to

culture as ideology, and its values rest on shared cultural norms which are recognized by the members of an ethnic group and by those of other social groups as well (Keyes 1976; Cohen 1978). Such sharing of norms provides a basis for people to identify one another mutually as being the same kind of person. Such sharing of cultural values also distinguishes the members of one ethnic group from those of other ethnic groups.

For the purpose of this thesis, I study the Satar as belonging to an ethnic group. I define an ethnic group as a cultural group members of which share fundamental cultural values, such as a common mythical ancestor, religion, language, and dress (Cohen 1978; Cohen 1981; Keyes 1976; Narroll 1964). It must be borne in mind that although an ethnic group is a cultural group, a cultural group may not necessarily be an ethnic group (Cohen 1978: 379-403). I distinguish an ethnic group from other sorts of cultural group, such as tribal groups, Tiwi

1. Berreman (1975) examines how one uses the social categories of class, occupation, region and caste as one's identity or ethnic marker in the culturally complex pluralistic society of India. Obeyesekere (1975) discusses ethnicity as a complex issue involving political conflict and religion and demonstrates how, in Sri Lanka, religion appears as crucial and as the only distinguishing feature separating groups, which otherwise share a common cultural tradition. In a diachronic approach to the understanding of ethnicity of the minority groups of Britain, the Ballards (1977: 21-56) demonstrate that political manoeuvres play a significant role in making the ethnicity of the Sikh factory workers in Leeds more salient and meaningful.

(Goodale /1971/1981) or Nuer (Evans-Pritchard /1940/1982), primarily because a tribal group can exist by itself, whereas an ethnic group cannot. As Cohen (1978) and Bennett (1975: 3-10) suggest, the concept of ethnicity expresses a shift from an isolated group context to a multi-group context. It refers to relations among groups and interactions among their members. Ethnicity, thus, refers to a multi-ethnic interactive context and, therefore, has no existence apart from interethnic relations. Only when studied in the context of other groups, do the behavior, values and beliefs of the members of a particular cultural group become meaningful. This cultural group then becomes an ethnic group primarily because its members view themselves in relation to these other groups and as parts of larger wholes. As such, ethnic groups cannot be studied as isolates. They can be studied only in relation to other cultural groups, in interaction with these groups, as Barth (1969) demonstrates in his study of the Swat Pathan. As I demonstrate in this thesis, it is through interaction with other groups that a cultural group acquires its meaning and significance as an ethnic group.

It is in this sense that I have characterized the Satar (who are referred to as "aboriginal", "tribal", or "scheduled tribe"¹ in Indian literature (Dube 1977;

1. The political implications of these terms will be discussed later in this chapter.

Ghurye 1963; Fuchs 1973)) as comprising an ethnic group. As members of an ethnic group, the Satar live amidst other cultural groups, in this case the caste groups, while still maintaining their cultural identity. This is evident from the way they call themselves Hod (human beings) and distinguish themselves from all the caste people whom they refer to as Diku and Mundo. Diku literally means outlaws (chapter III), but in today's context this ethnic category represents the Indians and the Indian language speaking people of Nepal, such as Bengali, Marwadi, Punjabi and Maithil people. The other social category Mundo literally means mountain dwellers. This category includes all the Nepali speaking caste people and all the ethnic groups of Nepal whose members may or may not speak Nepali as their mother tongue, such as the Sherpa, Tharu, Limbu, Rai, Tamang, Newar, Dhimal and Magar. The constant interaction among the members of these three cultural groups, Hod, Mundo and Diku, had made the Satar more aware of their cultural differences, and their ethnicity more obvious to the observer.

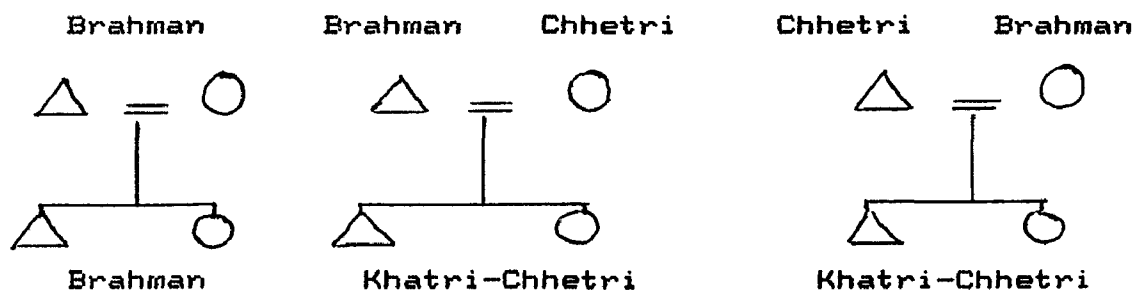
CONCEPT OF CASTE:

CASTE AS A SOCIAL GROUP: In the context of Sunauli, the concept of caste refers both to a social group and to a system of social relations. Like ethnic groups, caste groups are also culture-bearing units. A caste group resembles an ethnic group in many ways. For example, the members of a caste group share the myth of common origin,

socio-religious values based on the ritual criterion of Saptha/non-Saptha (purity and pollution), and the rules of commensality. Further, each caste group is an endogamous group, members of which share a common name which becomes their caste identity. According to my caste informants, membership in a caste group is given at birth and is determined by the ritual status of both parents. For example, a child of a Brahman father and a Brahman mother is a Brahman, while a child of a Brahman father/mother and a Chhetri mother/father is a Khatri-Chhetri, which, in itself, is a separate caste group (Figure # 1).

Figure # 1

Determinants of an individual's ritual status



The caste people of Sunauli recognized seven subcastes within each of their caste groups. During both periods of my field work in Sunauli, Nunia was the only caste group which had two subcastes - Rajbhar and Chauhan. Each of these subcastes shared a single name, similar ritual, dietary and commensal rules, and practised endogamy, as Mayer (1960) and Beck (1972) also found in their studies of the Indian subcaste groups of central and

southern region of India.

These caste people recognized both caste and subcaste groups - caste as a wider group and subcaste as a narrower one. An individual could identify himself by his caste name which, in this case was Nunia, or by his subcaste name of Rajbhar or Chauhan. The choice of one over the other was situational. Most of my Nunia informants used both these names to identify themselves - caste name in the wider contexts of town while interacting with Nepali or non-Maithil people, and the subcaste names in the narrow contexts of the village and weekly markets. Through these two inclusive and exclusive identities, the Chauhan and Rajbhar Nunia of Sunauli distinguished their subgroups from each other and also from the other caste people with whom they lived.

CASTE AS AN OCCUPATIONAL GROUP: A caste can also be defined as an occupational group (Bailey 1968; Barth 1960; Berreman 1960; Kroeber 1948; Leach 1960) but in Sunauli this particular attribute is not very prominent. Durkheim's model (/1893/1965) of organic solidarity, which sees increased specialization of individuals as the key to social solidarity, is not applicable to the caste groups of Sunauli because not all caste groups are occupational groups here. While the caste people of Sunauli did agree that they had distinct traditional occupations of their own, my caste informants below age

thirty were ignorant about these occupations. During both periods of my field work, only three men and one woman practised their caste occupations, in addition to agricultural work or wage labor (see chapter IV). Among all the eleven caste groups of Sunauli only the Mohali caste group could be defined as an occupational group in the real sense of the term, because all of them (men/women) depended entirely upon their occupation of basket-making for subsistence.

In addition to these, the concept of caste also refers to a system of social relations. As a system the distinguishing feature of caste is hierarchy. For example, as a system caste divides societies into a number of relatively self-contained and segregated units the relationship between which is determined in a hierarchical order. The criterion of such ordering is the ritual criterion of purity-pollution (Dumont /1966/1980; Gough 1960) which my informants referred to as Saptha/non-Saptha (pure/impure). The caste people of Sunauli viewed themselves as a part of such system and defined their relationship with the members of other caste groups in a hierarchical order. As a result, one caste group was never perceived as equal to an other caste group; it was either higher or lower.

Hierarchy, thus, is the distinguishing feature of the caste system. And it is hierarchy which separates a caste group from an ethnic group. But it is also because of the

hierarchical nature of the caste system, a caste group, like an ethnic group, cannot be studied as a social isolate. For the ritual status of its members to be meaningful, a caste group needs to be with other caste groups of unequal ritual statuses.

Despite the similarities between ethnic groups and caste groups, these two analytical concepts remain separate. First, in contrast to the concept of ethnicity, the concept of caste is primarily ritual. Second, unlike the members of an ethnic group, as I noted in Sunauli, the members of a caste group lack a sense of solidarity among themselves. Further, an ethnic group may not be necessarily an occupational group. A caste group, in contrast, could also be an occupational group, as mentioned earlier. Although occupational identity does not necessarily refer to one's caste identity today, my informants of four caste groups of Sunauli did practise their traditional occupations, which also served to mark their caste/occupational identities (see chapter IV).

The socio-political organization of the ethnic groups of Nepal also differs from that of the caste groups. The ethnic groups of Nepal have a distinct social system of their own which is different from the caste system in Nepal (see Bista /1967/1976; Haimendorf 1957). Though both caste and ethnic groups are endogamous, ethnic groups follow an egalitarian ideology (see next page),

whereas caste groups belong to a hierarchical system based on the ritual criterion of purity and pollution. Last, but not least, a difference between these two groups lies in the quality of interpersonal relations. Members of caste groups believe, as Mandelbaum (1970) points out in his study of change and continuity in the caste society of India, that their relations with others in their group must be arranged in an order of dominance and deference. Members of ethnic groups, in contrast, tend to see their society as held together by kinship bonds and do not insist on hierarchical ordering. As a result of this, the members of an ethnic group tend to live with or closer to the other members of their group. The caste people, in contrast, prefer their village to have a culturally heterogeneous population which includes not only other caste people, but other ethnic groups as well.

A caste view of society incorporates ethnic groups by giving them a proper place in the caste hierarchy according to the dietary practices and/or occupations of the members of these groups. It is the concept of such inclusiveness or incorporation which has led the caste people of Sunauli to view the Satar as belonging to their caste system, and to rank them as "untouchable" because of their particular dietary practices of eating field-mice, pork, and beef

1. The Sherpa of Nepal, however, have a hierarchical socio-religious (Buddhist) system within their ethnic group (see Ortner 1978).

and their use of alcohol in all their rituals. My data indicate that from the Satar point of view the status which has been given to them by the caste people may or may not have any significance. Thus, in spite of living together with the caste people, they often retain their own cultural values and identity with a strong sense of pride.

CONCEPT OF CLASS:

The social system of Sunauli involves continuous interaction between members of different cultural groups with different beliefs and values. The emerging class categories, both within the caste groups and the ethnic groups, make this system even more complex.

By definition class is an economic category (Banks 1960; Warner 1949; Weber /1953/1964). Unlike the concept of ethnicity, which is cultural, the concept of class is non-cultural, based primarily on economic factors (Robbins 1975). During both periods of my field work, I noted a class structure among the Satar and the caste people of Sunauli, with a few wealthy people at top and many poor people at bottom. The Satar and the caste people were also very much aware of such differences which they labeled as Dhani/Garib (rich/poor). They, both rich and poor, often viewed their relationship to each other in terms of Malik/Nokar (master/servant), and expected each other to behave accordingly. Wealthy Satar and caste men

of Sunauli appeared as Malik who hired their poor neighbors for agricultural or other household work on wages and expected these poor people to work for them as needed. The poor Satar and caste people worked for their Malik as tenants for agricultural work or for wages. They also expected their Malik to provide them with more and more work so that they did not have to go outside of Sunauli to earn a living.

The native categories discussed so far indicate that both the Satar and caste people of Sunauli viewed economic statuses as separate from ritual statuses. In contrast to the economic categories, which they labeled as Dhani/Garib, they labeled the ritual categories as Sapha/non-Sapha. They viewed these two categories as separate and unrelated, and believed that one's wealth did not necessarily change one's non-Sapha status into a Sapha status. My wealthy informants also agreed to this so far as the ritual statuses of other wealthy people in Sunauli were concerned; but they, the rich, thought of themselves as having a higher ritual status within their own caste group and also in relation to other groups.

Although economic factors cannot be overlooked in defining the native categories of Dhani/Garib (rich/poor), there is a problem in the analytic concept of class in the context of Sunauli. This is primarily because cultural and ritual factors also play a key role in defining an individual's social status in this context. This was

evident in the case of a Sapha Hod man where his loss of wealth did not change his previous higher social status. The villagers still considered him their Malik, respected him and feared him. This indicated that economic measures of class were not its only measures in Sunauli. It was ancestry and a particular code of behavior (manners) which appeared as primary in defining a person's social status.

In addition, classes of Sunauli are also determined by ritual criteria. The three categories, the Sapha Hod, the Bidin Hod and the Christian Satar, are viewed by the Satar as having two dimensions - ritual and economic. The ritual dimension is emphasized by the Sapha Hod who are also rich, and the economic dimension by the Bidin Hod and the Christian Satar who are also poor. These two dimensions could be interpreted in the Weberian and Marxist style of viewing a social system. If one were to adopt the Marxist approach, the classes in Sunauli may be seen to be divided into two - the landlords who control the means of production and the landless people who contribute

1. The devaluation of wealth in defining a class is not unique to Sunauli. An economic definition of class is problematic in the American context as well, as West (1961) and Warner (1963) illustrate in their studies of Plainville, USA and Yankee city. They present the cultural criteria of manners (ways of behaving properly) and ancestry (inherited biological make-up) for separating one class from another. Economic factors, though important, are secondary to manners. To be rich in Yankee city and Plainville did not alone make one a member of an upper class. It was descent and a proper code of behavior that marked the boundaries of upper class and distinguished it from other classes.

their labor. Though such approach provides an insight into the economic life of Sunauli, my observation shows that class as an economic category does not always influence the behavior of the Satar and caste people. Rather it is certain shared cultural values, to follow Weber (/1930/1976), that guide their behavior.

In the context of Sunauli, one such norm is embedded in the concept of Sapha/non-Sapha (pure/impure). Although these concepts belong to the caste system (Dumont /1966/1980; Gough 1960), the Satar also share it and view themselves, as I show in chapter IV, as a part of a wider caste society. Sharing of such ideology has tied them to the people of their vicinity and has made their interpersonal relationships meaningful to each other. The theme of this cultural ideology is so pervasive and dominant among them that the same Bidin Hod who define their relationship with the Sapha Hod in economic terms, define their relationships with the Christian Satar and their caste neighbors in cultural terms of Sapha/non-Sapha.

Because of this aspect of the Satar categories, I define the categories, the Sapha Hod, Bidin Hod and Christian Satar, as ritual categories because the members of each category share in common some "culturally relevant attributes" (Keesing 1975: 9-10). These cultural attributes consist of certain religious beliefs and practices.

Often when social categories are characterized with religious values, they are labeled differently. For example, Bodding (1922) calls the Sapha Hod category a sect. In the context of Nepal and India, a sect means a religious group members of which worship a certain god, follow a guru or a religious teacher, and have a formal association (Abrahams 1921; Maring 1979). Bodding's use of the term sect characterizes the above features. He (1922) describes the Sapha Hod as worshipping Ramchando, having a guru and a formal association which required them to meet every Saturday (see chapter III). In the context of Sunauli, however, the Sapha Hod category cannot be called a sect. The Sapha Hod of Sunauli neither have a guru nor any formal association. Further, they worship many deities, including Ramchando. These Sapha Hod, therefore, do not constitute a religious group as described by Bodding (1922).

For the above reasons, I call the Satar categories - the Sapha Hod, Bidin Hod and the Christian Satar - ritual categories. As ritual categories, they are more like the Weberian "status group" which is associated with prestige, with the "social estimation of honor" in contrast to the concept of class which is primarily concerned with the "production and acquisition of goods" and economic power (Weber /1953/1964: 180). The status of the individuals belonging to these ritual categories depends primarily upon factors of behavior which are

linked with a particular corpus of beliefs concerning purity and pollution - the core feature of the South Asian cultural system.

COMPLEXITY OF THE SOCIAL SYSTEM:

So far I have illustrated how analytic concepts of class, caste and ethnicity correspond to the native concepts of Dhani/Garib, Sapaha/non-Sapaha, Hod/Mundo and Hod/Diku. These analytic and native categories indicate the heterogeneous population of Sunauli with several different orders, such as ritual, ethnic and economic. Participants themselves were often aware of these different orders existing in their society. For example, in certain contexts, they (men and women) defined themselves as Hod (human beings) and thought of themselves as different from the Diku (Indian language-speaking caste people). In some other contexts, they interacted with each other and with the caste people as Dhani/Garib (rich/poor) and viewed their relationship with each other in terms of Malik/Nokar (master/servant or patron-client), irrespective of their ethnicities. In other contexts, they defined themselves along a ritual order of Sapaha/non-Sapaha both within their group and between groups. My caste informants also thought similarly.

The flexible boundaries of the class categories and the caste and ethnic groups make the social system of Sunauli even more complex. As the members of these groups

and categories frequently interact with each other, the boundaries of these units cross each other. Ritual boundaries often blur the ethnic and class boundaries. Ethnic boundaries frequently overlap with class boundaries. Wealthy people of both the caste and the Satar groups behave similarly. They often look alike by their dress and manners. This distinguishes them from their poor neighbors who display both ethnic similarities and differences. Ethnic similarities at one economic level and ethnic differences at another level seem to be an important feature of the social system of Sunauli today. Although the fluidity of boundaries allows individuals to choose one or the other form of identity depending on the contexts and their life-strategies, it makes it hard for the analyst to describe where one boundary line ends and the other one begins. To assume boundaries are fixed is perhaps both a cultural and analytical bias, as I discuss later in this chapter.

PROCESS OF INTERACTION:

The interaction among the members of these different units, especially between ethnic groups and caste groups, have long drawn the attention of anthropologists and sociologists. Their studies mostly examine the processes involved in such interaction. There seem to be three main processes or patterns resulting from ethnic-caste interactions. One of them may be called acculturation. This is a process in which one group borrows ritual and

behavior from a dominant other. Often such borrowing could also be studied as a two-way process. Hallowell (/1957/1980) has demonstrated this by analyzing the impact of American Indian culture on American culture and Troisi (1978) has examined the possibility of similar influence of the Santal culture on the Hindu culture. However, as will be described below, much of the literature, to date, has examined borrowing only as a one way process in which tribal groups or lower caste groups borrow rituals from the upper caste groups or the dominant groups.

The second interactive process, which follows the above, may be called "total assimilation" or "total absorption" in which individuals entirely lose their ethnic identity by merging into the caste hierarchy, for example as described for the Bhumiĵ and Tharu of India and Nepal (Mandelbaum 1970).

The third interactive process is the one in which an ethnic group resists borrowing anything from the caste culture and maintains its own cultural identity, as discussed for example, for the Konyak Naga of Assam, India (Haimendorf 1969).

The first two processes have attracted most of the anthropologists interested in studying socio-cultural change and the dynamic characteristics of maintaining a system of caste hierarchy. Authors have described and

analyzed the system of power relations between caste and class, and the political strategies adopted by a particular caste or ethnic group as a means to "upward mobility" within the caste system. For South Asia, Srinivas (1962, 1966) has introduced the term "Sanskritization" to refer to that process of borrowing in which a lower caste or a non-Hindu group borrows the beliefs and manners of higher caste people in an attempt to raise its economic, political and social status in the caste hierarchy of a given area. Among some of the scholars who have examined this concept in the context of Nepal are Hitchcock (/1966/1980) and Jones (1976) who respectively discuss this concept in their studies of the Magars and the Limbus. Bailey (1968) examines Sanskritization and upward mobility among the Distiller caste of Orissa, India, as does Bista (1971) in his study of the Thakali of Western Nepal. Rosser (1966) discusses the complexity of this process among the Newars of Kathmandu, Rowe (1968) among the Nunia caste of north India, Harper (/1961/1968) among the untouchable Holeru of south India, and Inder (1976) illustrates it in his study of marriage and rank in Bengal, India.

Although the cultural factors in defining these social groups and the interaction between them are examined in these studies, the primary concern of the studies lies in demonstrating how, in the process of interaction, the members of these groups retain their own cultural identity

or replace it with the identity of the dominant group. As the emphasis of these studies is on "groups" rather than on "categories", they do not examine how, in the process of interaction, heterogeneous units could emerge within a social group and divide its members into different ethnic categories.

In contrast to these studies, my study shows that in the process of ethnic-caste interaction heterogeneous categories have emerged within the egalitarian Satar group. Each category is based on one of three distinct belief systems: Christianity, Hinduism, or the traditional Satar religion. In this thesis, by paying attention to a particular Hinduized Satar category, the Sapha Hod, I show how they reinforce their ritual identity by claiming to be ritually higher than the rest of the Satar. I further demonstrate how they keep social distance from other Satar by maintaining the boundaries of their ritual category and, at the same time, retain their ethnicity to distinguish themselves from the caste people.

ETHNICITY OF THE SATAR AND MY APPROACH:

The Satar have been widely studied by foreign and Indian scholars. In India, they are known as the Santal. A study of Troisi's (1976) bibliographic work on the Santal (next page) shows that most of the studies done by foreign scholars, especially the missionaries and the British government officials, were done before India became

independent in 1947, while most of the studies done by Indian scholars were carried out after the independence. A few of these works are written by Santal themselves.

These studies have also focused on the cultural aspects of ethnicity, as I do, but their emphasis is primarily on studying the Satar as an "isolated" group, members of which follow a particular set of cultural practices. Needless to say, much of the literature is concerned with the continuity of Satar identity. This is apparent from the literature written by missionaries and government officials during and after the British rule in India (1818-1947) (see Archer 1974; Biswas 1956; Bodding 1935 and 1942; Chattopadhyay 1947; Culshaw 1942, 1949; Dalton /1872/1973; Gausdel 1960; Man 1867; Mukherjea 1943; Risley 1886; and Roy 1946).

Such a normative presentation of the Satar is also implicit in those studies which examine the Satar in interaction with other groups (see Agrawal 1977; Biswas 1956; Mahapatra 1986; Majumdar 1956; Mukherjee 1960; Orans 1959, 1965; and Prasad 1972, 1974). These studies, while they examine the changing or unchanging cultural tradition of the Santal, typically treat any unchanged

1. Troisi's (1976) annotated bibliography on the Santal has been an invaluable research tool for the students interested in Satar/Santal culture. In this work, Troisi includes more than five hundred books and articles written on the Santal, and gives a summary of each work by dividing them under twelve topics.

social unit as a uniform cultural group and any changing social unit as one which is in the process of "dying out" or being "absorbed". These studies have not examined how change can create diversity and social categories within a group and lead the members of the categories to acquire a new individual identity, in addition to their older ones.

The trend towards studying the Satar as a uniform and unchanged unit is also apparent in those studies which examine particular aspects of the Satar culture. For example, Kochar (1970) describes the Santal village of Kuapara in India as a case of cultural persistence while examining important aspects of Santal social organization. Somers (1976) examines the institution of headmanship in demonstrating the continuity of the Santal tradition, and Troisi (1978), while examining the social function of religion in Santal society, shows that the religious practices illustrate a continuity of cultural traditions and, therefore, cultural identity among the Satar. Kochar (1970) and Troisi (1978) raise the issues of Santal identity and give a brief description of their ritual categories, but they are more concerned with cultural persistence than change. The studies done on the Satar of Nepal also follow the above pattern of studying the Satar as sharing a set of cultural norms (Bista /1967/1976; Shrestha 1964-65, 1971).

The trend towards hierarchy which I observed among the

Satar of Sunauli challenges the tradition of studying Satar as a uniform group. By focusing on individuals, their interests in the pursuit of certain goals, and their conflicts with members of their larger group regarding these interests, I will clarify the reasons for the diversity to be observed among the Satar.

The importance of one's 'cultural' or 'normative' identification cannot be denied. But my study of the Satar shows that not all members of their ethnic group used such identification. They all claimed shared ancestry, but only the Bidin Hod used the 'normative' ethnic identification which required them to behave the same way in all situations. The Sapha Hod and the Christian Satar did not necessarily use such identification. These two abandoned some of the cultural forms that have traditionally characterized their group. Between these two categories, the Christian Satar defined themselves as Hod on the basis of their shared ancestry, but did not practise any of their traditional rituals. Christian rituals characterized all their life-cycle ceremonies and festivals. Both the Bidin Hod and the Christian Satar considered Hindu rituals, including the ones practised by the Sapha Hod, as belonging to the caste society. The Sapha Hod differed both from the Christian Satar and the Bidin Hod in their formal/informal rituals. They combined both caste and Satar rituals. Since the Sapha Hod believed that they did not belong to the caste system and

were not a part of the caste society, they viewed the caste rituals practised by them as belonging to their own ethnic group, as handed down to them by their ancestors. They never thought of these rituals being borrowed from the caste society. As such, the criteria for the ethnic group membership defined by the Sapha Hod themselves were significantly different from the way in which the members of their larger group defined the Satar.

I show that the members of each of these categories regarded their own category as more Sapha (pure) than the other two categories. However, among them, the Sapha Hod were more concerned with maintaining the purity of their category. They, therefore, maintained a greater degree of social distance from the other categories. In this process of interaction, two problems emerge, as I discuss below. Both problems are related to the ethnicity of the Satar, and especially in understanding the ethnicity of the Sapha Hod.

The first problem is related to the process of interaction and acculturation. As already mentioned, the concept of "Sanskritization" has been used widely by the Indianists to describe and analyze a one-way process of acculturation leading to 'upward mobility' within the caste system. To repeat once again, Srinivas (1962) uses the term "Sanskritization" to refer to that process of borrowing in which a lower caste or non-Hindu group imitates and adopts the beliefs and rituals of a higher

caste/s in an attempt to raise its economic, political and social status in the caste hierarchy of a given area.

My research shows that Sanskritization may not always lead the non-Hindu in 'moving up' within the caste system. I show that Sanskritization can also be used as a strategy by a group of people to move up within their group and, thereby, to create hierarchy within their own egalitarian ethnic group. I demonstrate that an egalitarian group can be divided into hierarchical categories when such a group interacts with a dominant group having a non-egalitarian ideology. I illustrate that one such emerging category among the Satar, the Sapha Hod, seems to be influenced by caste hierarchy. But instead of merging into this hierarchy and losing their ethnicity, the Sapha Hod create a different sort of hierarchy within themselves by combining certain crucial cultural forms of both their ethnic group and caste groups. In this process, the ritual category that they represent appears as an intermediate category which combines both the hierarchical values of the caste society and egalitarian values of their ethnic group.

My experience with the Satar indicates that in the process of combining the values of two cultures the traditional cultural forms belonging to their group may not be perpetuated over time, contrary to what Barth (1969) finds in his study of the Swat Pathan. They may change. They are often manipulated and readjusted

according to the demands of the new situations. Thus ethnicity can be developed, displayed, manipulated, or ignored in accordance with the demands of particular situations. Following this line, I examine how among the Satar of Sunauli old cultural symbols are changed, manipulated, reinterpreted, and internalized to meet the demands of new socio-cultural and political environments. I also illustrate the historical processes of such new or "invented tradition" of the Hinduized Satar (Sapha Hod). Then I explain how and why traditional symbols, together with the symbols of the dominant society, are used to construct a new tradition and a new identity (see Hobsbawm (1983: 1-14) for his theoretical approach to the study of creating traditions and their symbolic complexes).

The existing ritual categories of the Satar call for a study of the nature of group-boundaries. Caste groups and other cultural groups are often presented in anthropological literature as having fixed boundaries. But groups in reality are never so fixed and bounded as Barth hypothesizes. Leach (1954) illustrates this in his study of the Kachin (Gumsa, Gumlao) and Shan in Burma while examining the cultural differences within a social unit. In a much later study, Levy (1973/1975/) demonstrates how different cultural forms are used by individuals of a group in different ways in their pursuit of particular goals. In this process, the criteria by which a group defines itself become different from the way in which the members of the

larger society define that group. It is we, the outsiders, who think of a group as bounded when it serves our theoretical purposes and when we ascribe certain artificial boundaries to such groups. But the individual members of a group may not see their group as having such fixed boundaries. While the members are aware of the distinction between "we/them" because of different languages, styles of speech, dress and other distinct and crucial cultural forms practised in these groups, they also keep expanding or contracting their social boundaries depending on different strategies and situations. Members of these groups look at these boundaries not as being static or fixed, but as being flexible enough to provide room for movement in and out, and to play up or express different aspects of their identity.

This flexibility of the boundaries, as I will demonstrate in this thesis, allows the participants to look for new and/or multiple identities, based on language, region, religion, ethnicity or caste favorable for them according to their assessment of different situations. By identifying oneself with a particular category or a group, one acknowledges one's self as a part of that group or category for a certain time and for certain purposes. Once the goal is achieved one may use another identity in other contexts. In such a process of identifying oneself, one does not necessarily give up one's previous identities. Rather, one keeps adding onto them in what Cohen (1978)

calls, "a series of nesting dichotomies". This series define the various units, from a smaller to a larger one and vice versa, to which an individual affiliates at different points in time. These units appear to the participants as having flexible and overlapping boundaries which allow them to move back and forth.

By focusing on the social units and multiple identities of the Satar and caste people, my study of Sunauli examines the continuous interaction between them. Through this study, I illustrate how the participants view ethnicity as one of many life-strategies to achieve their individual goals. Other symbols used in such achievement may be non-ethnic. I demonstrate how ethnic and non-ethnic symbols are used by the Sapha Hod in different contexts to define their behavior and life-strategies and to display their power and prestige. I further examine how individuals adjust to new situations by reorganizing their traditional ideology or, as Geertz (/1964/1979) points out (while examining the dynamics of religious change in Bali), develop a new ideology using traditional symbols. Thus I explain how the Satar search for a new (individual) identity in a dominant caste society without losing their cultural identity, and how they organize their structured system of power relations and their strategies in making these relations meaningful. I also examine the nature of the boundaries created by this ethnic group and its ritual categories, taking into account

the flexibilities of boundaries, and the life-strategies which individuals adopt in their manipulation of significant cultural symbols in the process of structuring, maintaining, and changing their world.

OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS

I have divided this thesis into four parts. Part I includes three chapters (I, II and III) which respectively deal with the theoretical background, field methods and the Satar people.

In chapter I, I have defined the concepts pertinent to my thesis, which are ethnicity, tribe, caste, class and sect. In this chapter, I examine the process of interaction among the members of the Satar and caste groups and illustrate how the emerging economic categories within each group affect the ethnicity of the Sapha Hod and make the social system of Sunauli more complex.

In chapter II, I describe the two periods of my field work among the Satar of southern Nepal and the qualitative and quantitative methods applied in understanding the problems related to the ethnicity of the Sapha Hod. In this chapter, I also outline the frustrations and anxieties related to my field work, my bias and preconceived notions about the caste people, and a description of my Satar key informants.

In chapter III, I present two phases of the Satar history. In the first phase, I illustrate the history of

the Satar during the British rule in India (1818 - 1947), their unpleasant encounters with the Hindus of India and internal division (Bidin Hod, Sapha Hod and the Christian Satar) within the Satar group as a result of such encounters. In the second phase of the Satar history, I describe the Satar's migration to Nepal and the Sapha Hod's coming to power in Sunauli.

In part II of this thesis, I present those data that deal with the Satar and caste people of Sunauli in relation to their cultural and individual identities. This part includes three chapters, IV, V and VI.

In chapter IV, I describe the location of the village, its physical features, ethnic groups and class categories.

In chapter V, I present the persistence of the cultural identity of the Satar and examine the significance of marriage forms in maintaining such an identity among them.

In chapter VI, I demonstrate the individual identity of the Sapha Hod. I show how the Sapha Hod combine the rituals of two cultures - Satar and caste - in their everyday behavior and how such religious syncretism has enabled the Sapha Hod to claim a higher ritual status within their larger ethnic group.

In part III of this dissertation, I analyze the data presented in part II. In the three chapters (VII, VIII and IX) of this part, I deal with the symbols and

contexts of ethnic/class/caste differentiation and illustrate how the Sapha Hod expand and narrow the range of their identities.

In chapter VII, I examine verbal and visual symbols, such as language and household designs and the symbols and rituals concerning rice-beer and hospitality which relate to the ethnic, ritual and class identities of the Sapha Hod and function in enhancing their social status.

In chapter VIII and IX, I describe and discuss in greater depth a few of the secular and ritual contexts which demonstrate the Sapha Hod's manipulation of their cultural, ritual and secular identities in these contexts. I show how these identities overlap and reflect the complex and flexible nature of the Satar social system.

In part IV, the conclusion, I summarize the data and discussions of this dissertation.

CHAPTER II

FIELD WORK AND METHODOLOGY

FIRST FIELD WORK: GETTING STARTED

The early 1970s was the time in Nepal when intellectuals started showing interest in anthropology. This interest was caused partly because of the New Education plan of His Majesty's Government of Nepal and partly because of the American and European students and scholars coming to Nepal to study the caste and ethnic groups of the country. As a result of these factors, in 1975, anthropology was introduced in the department of Culture and History at Tribhuvan university, Kathmandu, which I had joined in 1971, and I was "asked" by my departmental chairman to teach this course. My previous degrees were not in anthropology, therefore, my teaching included only a descriptive study of the ethnic groups of Nepal with a focus mainly on their socio-cultural institutions. After teaching anthropology for two semesters, I wanted to do some study of my own among an ethnic group of southern Nepal. And it was during 1978-79 that I conducted my first field work which was supported by a grant provided by Tribhuvan University. This field work was carried out among the Satar of southern Nepal for fourteen months with an actual stay in the village of eleven months.

I was interested in Satar culture for two principal

reasons. First, the Satar are from the southern part of Nepal where I was born. Very little study had been done on the Satar till 1978. The hot and humid climate of southern Nepal did not attract the foreign anthropologists. Nepali and Indian anthropologists were interested in other social groups of Nepal (Acharya 1972; Diwas 1966; Nepali 1965; Rajauria 1975; Upreti 1976). As a result, only a few general works had been published on the Satar (Bista /1967/1976; Shrestha 1964/65, 1971; Mechidekhi Mahakalisamma 1975).

Second, although the Satar belong to an ethnic group, they are considered 'untouchable' by the upper caste people. The concept of untouchability had interested me from the beginning especially because this concept has a negative connotation for the upper caste people of Nepal. The untouchables are considered by the upper caste people as having the lowest ritual status either because of their diet, which included certain type of meat, such as field-mouse and/or beef, or because of their occupations. Some such occupational groups, who are viewed as untouchables, are leather-workers, oil-pressers, barbers, scavengers and tailors. These untouchables are often thought to be poor and dirty also. In addition, their behavior is defined as very disgraceful and of a "lower type". Myself, belonging to the Brahman caste group, I was very much aware of how the upper caste people viewed the untouchables. But now, I was interested in the other side of the story. I wanted

to know whether the notion of untouchability meant anything to the untouchables themselves, and how the Satar, as untouchables, defined themselves and viewed themselves in the caste hierarchy.

Being a Hindu myself and belonging to an upper caste group, I chose not to study the Hindu untouchables because of many similarities, especially the concepts of Karma Dharma and purity/pollution, shared by my caste group and the Hindu untouchables. I found the Satar, an ethnic group, living in the outskirts of my hometown Biratnagar, very different from the caste people, having a distinct cultural tradition of their own. I knew there were many more Satar living further southeast, but because of family circumstances, I decided to study those Satar living near my hometown.

I had a firm picture in my mind that anthropology was the study of only those people who practised their traditional rituals. As such, my search was for a traditional Satar village. In addition, I wanted the village to have good drinking water facilities such as handpumps, and about thirty to forty households so that I could easily interact with all the members of the village. Language was my third major concern. I could speak Nepali and Hindi and understand Bengali and Maithili, but I knew nothing of Satari. Therefore, I wanted at least 50% of the Satar of the village to be

bilingual, speaking one of the above languages besides their own language.

Once I decided what I wanted to do and where I wanted to do it, I let my family (my parents) know about my plan. It was very important for me to convince my parents about my study both for the moral support and also because they knew many Satar, in and around Biratnagar, who could help me choose a village. Although my parents approved of my study, they discouraged me from living with the Satar all by myself, leaving my husband and two children behind me. They asked me to carry out my field work in a nearby sub-district Panchali which is a half an hour's rickshaw-ride from their house. Further, they told me to study the Satar of Panchali while living with them (e.g. my parents). They wanted me to conduct my study by visiting the Satar every day and by asking them to come to me to give me more information.

Panchali did have a sizeable population of the Satar with twenty households. It also had good drinking water facilities and many Satar were also multilingual. But the problem was that Panchali was a semi-modern sub-district. It had electricity and had easy access by transportation from Biratnagar. The Satar of Panchali wanted to be known more as the "town-people" than as villagers. I found it hard to fit these characteristics into my concept of a "traditional" Satar village. Further, studying the

Panchali Satar meant living with my parents which I did not want. I could see that I could not do much research in that situation, so I decided not to go to Panchali and continued my search for a traditional Satar village in the surrounding rural areas of Biratnagar.

To live in any rural area for a few weeks or months is not unusual for any Nepali male or female especially because almost 95% of the people of Nepal are agriculturists. People living in a town may also own land in the rural area. A few of these land-owning people, known as Jimidar or landlords in Nepal live in town and employ villagers, living near by, to work on their land. Twice a year the landlords come to the villages with or without their family members to collect their land products and give the villagers their share of land product. During these visits they generally stay in the villages from one to four weeks depending on the size of land they own. Thus, they know about the rural areas and do not think it as unusual to live there for few days. However, landlords draw such a sharp line between

1. According to Regmi (1976) the Nepali term Jimidar "is obviously derived from the Arabic term Jimmadarr, or functionary, whereas the Indian term Zamindar is of Persian origin and means a landowner." The Indian word Zamindar was used to denote "landlords with inheritable and transferable rights". The Jimidars of Nepal, however, were not given ownership rights in their lands under their jurisdiction. They did attain the status of a landlord but, unlike the Zamindar of India who paid taxes from their own income, the Jimidar of Nepal collected taxes from the people and transmitted these to the district revenue office.

themselves (the rich class) and the villagers (the poor class) that even after knowing the villagers all their life they do not encourage any of their own family members, particularly the women, to live among the villagers all by themselves. Therefore, as I was a member of a family owning land in and around Biratnagar I was not encouraged by my own family to live among these villagers.

Once I convinced my family of the worthy educational goal this field work represented, they approved of my "going wild", but they also made it clear that they would not let me live in "just any village". Fortunately for me, they owned some land in and around Sunauli. That was my only chance, so I immediately went to meet the villagers there. I found that Sunauli had four handpumps, which meant good drinking water facilities. All of the twenty Satar whom I met that day were multilinguals who could converse well in Maithili and also could understand Nepali and Hindi. Besides, Sunauli "appeared" very traditional with its particular design of Satar houses and the dress of men and women. I was very happy to see the village. I also felt very good when I found that Sunauli had both caste people and Satar who comprised two different linguistic groups - Maithili and Satari.

ADJUSTING TO THE NEW PLACE:

Having finally achieved my family's consent, I started my anthropological adventure, in January 1978, which no

other Nepali woman had done in her own country. The villagers of Sunauli had seen some young men and women coming to Sunauli and other villages, for a week or so, to collect data required by various Governmental agencies. But they had never seen a married female coming to live with them all by herself. They thought I had fought with my husband and had come home to live with my parents, but because my parents did not approve this, I had come to live with them instead. But once they met my children and husband, who visited me for a few days, they were no longer suspicious of my motives and accepted the explanation that I was there to study their culture. But now they wanted to know why I wanted to study them (the Satar) and not my own or other caste people.

I explained to the Satar that I wanted to learn their language and their socio-cultural life in order to write a book about them. There were some big questions from some young and old men - "why? to get promoted in your job?" "To make more money?", "Will we have any monetary advantage from your work?", "Will we have enough food to eat once your book is published and our king reads it?" I was startled because I had not expected these types of questions from them. I took a moment and told them very calmly that 'my work was not necessarily for any of those purposes. Of course, that it was related to my teaching job, and getting promoted could not be denied. My goal was to let others know about the distinct cultural

tradition of the Satar and, how they live with the caste people who are very different from them'. Most of the Satar then seemed pleased and assured about my study. Next day I saw many faces of Satar women and children who told me that they were happy to "learn" that I wanted to study them because they were Sapha (cleaner) and better than the Diku.

I had a one room house in my host Baba S' household compound. This house had been a store room for keeping paddy and wheat before I moved there. This house was actually owned by the Nepal Government. It was built as a granary before the Government introduced land-reform policy in 1964 (Regmi 1976). This granary was known as Dharam bhakhari (religious granary). As Baba S and Baba T (Baba S' father's second brother) owned plenty of land in Sunauli and also were the most influential individuals in Sunauli, this granary had been built next to their courtyard. Each villager, both land-owners and those working on wage labor, brought a certain quantity of paddy or wheat twice a year to store in this granary. These stored grains were distributed by my host Baba S and his uncle Baba T among the villagers during different festivals and also in famine. This granary has not been used as a "religious granary" for the last 30 years ever since the former system of land-ownership disappeared and the land-reform policy was introduced in Nepal. However, the Government did not take back the granary house, so it

remained where it was and Baba S used it as the granary of his household. And since this house did not belong to him, I was asked not to pay any rent, despite my initial insistence. So I did not.

My house was one long windowless room, measuring ten by twenty feet. It was built three or four feet above the ground supported by twenty logs. Its walls were made of wood planks. This house had a tin roof with nothing to insulate me from the heat. It used to become quite warm in the afternoons, and was very cold at night during Winter. During Summer afternoons, the house was so hot it was almost impossible for me to stay inside. Before I moved into that house, with the approval of Baba S, my parents added a small bathroom, on one end of this room, with a seven foot tall brick wall on three sides. No roof was added to this bathroom so that I could get enough light in my windowless room, coming through the door between the bathroom and my room, for me to work. I enjoyed my small "attached" bathroom. The big Kadam tree, next to this room, provided me with proper shade and cool air during Summer. During hot afternoons, I sat in my bathroom for hours writing my notes or reconciling my census data.

The front part of my house had a six foot wide by twenty foot long veranda with a big stove at one end of it. Gogo M (Baba S' wife) or Su (Baba S' daughter) cooked lunch or dinner here for their household members. Towards the end of my field work when Su and her husband G

maintained a separate household of their own by having a separate kitchen for themselves and their four children, while still residing in Baba S' household compound, they cooked their meal on this stove. They used this veranda as a kitchen and as a place to spend their entire afternoon. I had four kerosene stoves which often did not work. So my maid S made a clay stove next to the big stove of the veranda. She enjoyed cooking our meal in the clay stove and I continued making tea on my kerosene stove, since she did not know how to make tea and I did not know how to use a clay stove.

This veranda was also used for other purposes. It was the place for me to meet my male informants, to get together with G for his English and my Satari lessons and sometimes to help out his children with their homework. It was also a sleeping place at night for one or two male members of Baba S' household. By sleeping here they could take care of the cattle tied in the cattle shed located next to this veranda.

The cattle-shed of Baba S was at one end of my house. It took me a few days, I do not remember exactly how many, to get used to the smell of the cow-dung. Baba S had two female buffaloes, four male buffaloes and two oxen. Milk from the female buffaloes was used in the household and also sold in the village. I also bought milk from him for two months. The male buffaloes and oxen were used to plough

his fields. The manure of the cattle was stored in one place, behind my house, by the female members of the household and later used as fertilizer in the field. The women of the household also used a good quantity of this manure to make fuel by mixing it with the husk of paddy or wheat. Many times this mixture was wrapped around four or five long dried jute plants to make the fuel more effective.

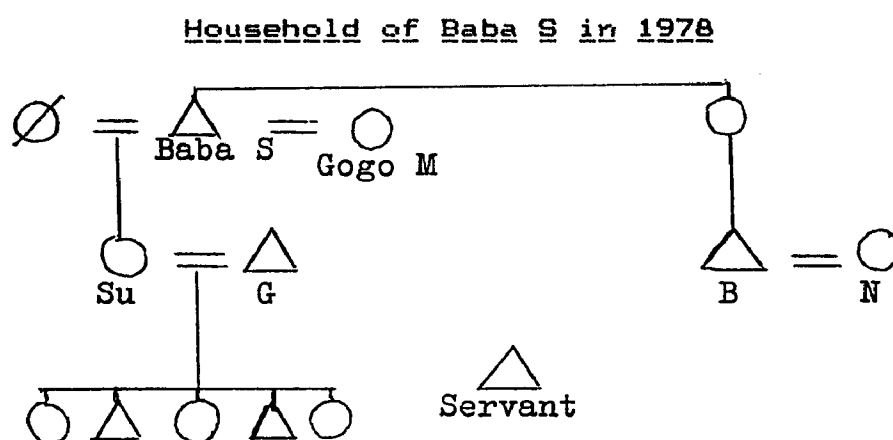
There are not many jungles in Nepal today but Satar's love of hunting has not gone away. Still today they love to keep dogs, train them, and take them while going out to hunt. Almost every Satar household had one or two dogs during 1978-79. They were very quiet during the day time, or may be they never barked loud enough to get my attention during that time, but they made more than a few of my nights very miserable. Many nights I found myself awake, helpless to stop their barking, and wishing I knew some witchcraft rituals to stop them, and finally doing nothing but counting their barks and trying to find a soothing or interesting rhythm in them. However, this effort was always a total failure.

MY INFORMANTS:

I had a very intimate and close relationship with the Satar families of Baba S and Baba T. The elders of these two families called me "Morang Kudi" (elder daughter) and considered me as one of their kin. Both Baba S and Baba T were Sapha Hod and were also the richest individuals in

the village. During my stay there in 1978-79, Baba S' family included his wife (Gogo M), who was his fifth, his daughter Su, her husband G, their two sons and three daughters, also Baba S' sister's son B and his wife N, and a servant, a twelve year old boy from the neighborhood (Figure # 2). His uncle Baba T's household was next to

Figure # 2

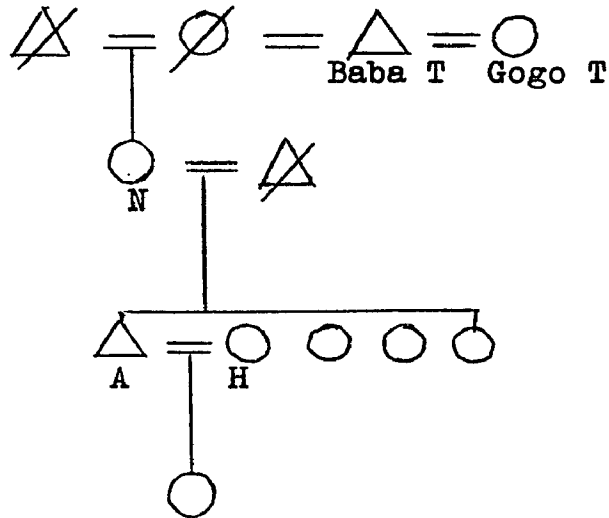


Baba S' household and it included Baba T's wife Gogo T, also M who was a widow and was his ex-wife's daughter from her ex-husband, M's son A, his wife H, and their two months old daughter, and M's three other daughters (Figure # 3). Two of these daughters got married in 1979 while I was out of Sunauli.

Several members of these two households became my key informants. They were Baba S, his son-in-law G, Baba T and his wife Gogo T. My other key informants were from different classes and different ritual categories. During this field work, I had more male informants than female

Figure # 3

Baba T's household in 1978



informants because in the beginning of my field work, the Satar women always resisted and avoided answering me. Sometimes it was even harder for me to collect my census data from them because they thought, as Gogo T and Gogo M told me, that I was going to reveal their secrets to the other members of the village.

GOGO T: Gogo T was different from other women. She belonged to an upper class household. She was beautiful and was fifty years old in 1978. She was fat and wore her sari in Satar style most of the time. All this combined made her look very graceful and charming, and also indicated her distinct upper class status. Gogo T had had two husbands at different points in time. Both of them were dead before she came to live with Baba T after he paid the bride-price for her to her brothers. She brought

her daughter A from her first husband and her son I from her second husband along with her, raised them and married them off from her new household. Both were living in different villages when I was in Sunauli in 1978-79.

I never saw Gogo T doing what a Satar woman, of any class category, should do, such as cooking, cleaning, or sweeping the floor, during either period of my field work (1978-79 or 1985). During each of these periods she had different kinsmen in her household working for her. Besides these, Gogo T also had a different personality from most Satar women. She was jolly, friendly, affectionate, capable of showing concern whenever needed, and also very bossy. In addition to this, I was her "grand daughter", a relationship that allowed warm and informal behavior. During my second week in Sunauli, while I was telling some stories to G's children in mixed Maithili and Nepali, Gogo T came and joined us. She thoroughly enjoyed those stories and asked me to narrate more of them. I agreed on the condition that she would also tell me stories in return. She agreed and we had great times exchanging stories twice a week. We also spent time playing with riddles.

Gogo T was a wife of a Sapha Hod, but I found her participating in both Sapha Hod and Bidin Hod rituals. She never liked to talk about her household. She was a woman of great prestige and did not want the secrets of her

household to be a public affair. Villagers respected her and many village women, both caste and Satar, confided in her many of their secrets. They came running to her whenever they needed any help. And Gogo T was always there for them. Gogo T never liked to talk about these things. However, she loved to take me around with her, introducing me as her "grand daughter", and expected the Satar to treat me as her "grand daughter", and also expected me to behave as one. She made this very clear in two name-giving ceremonies in 1978-79 where I was greeted as her kin and I had to behave accordingly. The best way to gather information from Gogo T, which I learned after almost my five month's stay in Sunauli, was by being with her and listening to her rather than asking her questions.

BABA T: My second key informant was Baba T, an eighty year old man. Baba T was a Sapha Hod who practised the rituals of both his ethnic group and the upper caste groups, especially of the Brahmins. He wore "dhoti" (loin cloth) and "kurta" (long shirt) all the time during the Winter and only "dhoti" during Summer. Baba T had two sons who had died in their teens. He had no children of his own from Gogo T who was his third wife. He had raised M, who was the daughter of his ex-wife from her ex-husband, as his own daughter and also M's three daughters and son as his grand children, all of whom were living in his household during 1978-79 (Figure # 3). Baba T died in 1981, after I left the village.

Baba T owned 15 bigha (1.5 bigha = 1 hectare) of land and had a two story house. He was a very generous and affectionate person. He also knew how to deal with people and how to make them work for him. In Baba T two human qualities, the power to dominate people and the love of taking care of them, lived side by side. He was very religious and pious. During 1978-79, I observed him worshipping "Mahadeo" (Mahadeva of Hindu pantheon) every morning after bathing in the pond, sponsoring Puja (worship) six times a year, and helping his Satar and caste friends on various occasions.

Baba T was also a man of great knowledge. He was an "Ojha" (witch-doctor). During 1978-79, one Brahman family of the neighboring village often invited Baba T to cure their sick cattle. Once he also treated one of the female members of this family. Baba T avoided talking to me about shamanism and the Bonga (spirits), but he constantly made me aware of the distinct tradition of the Satar by telling me stories of his life and experience and letting me participate in and/or observe all the rituals and ceremonies. Villagers, both the Satar and caste people in and out of Sunauli, respected him for the depth of his knowledge about shamanism, caste society and the Satar socio-cultural system.

BABA S: I was very close to Baba S also. Unlike the other Satar who did not know their birthdates, Baba S knew his birthdate and was proud of this knowledge. He was 55

years old in 1978. He was about five feet and three inches tall and fat. He was also a Sapha Hod like Baba T, and he wore Dhoti and a long shirt all the time, both during Summer and Winter.

Baba S was also a man of great knowledge and loved to share his knowledge with me. Unlike Baba T, he had a dominating personality. He expressed it through various rituals of eating, dressing up, walking with the people, and talking to them. To me he looked more like a Nepali landlord who created a sharp distinction between the rich and poor. Baba S was keen to hear about my daily activity. I could not question him because I feared him and also respected him, but I never gave up trying to be closer to him. It was his family conflicts, his relationship with his son-in-law G, that brought us closer towards the fourth week of my stay in Sunauli. According to him, G did not help him in his household work, i.e. agriculture. Baba S asked me very succinctly if I could talk to his son-in-law about this. I did try my best to bridge the gap between these two but it never worked out, and towards the end of this round of field work, G and his wife Su moved to a new house in Sunauli with their children to start a new household of their own.

Baba S was the wealthiest man in the village during 1978-79. He owned 20 bigha (13.3 hectares) of land and was also a money-lender to the people, both Satar and caste, of

his village. His wealth, generosity, informal education, contact with the Nepali upper caste people in Biratnagar and Kathmandu, his knowledge of Nepali language, his caste like manners - all these made him a man of prestige and power. He did not have any designated status in the Satar political organization - but no meeting was ever completed without his presence. Both of my field work periods would not have been possible without Baba S' help. For me to know him alone was to know the power and politics of Sunauli and the complexity of class, ethnic, and caste systems of Nepal.

G: My fourth key informant was G, twenty-five years old son-in-law of Baba S. G's parents lived in India. He was married to Baba S' daughter Su, whose mother was Baba S' fourth wife. Baba S had no other children, so G was living with him as a Ghardi Jawaee ("son-in-law at home". For details see chapter V). In lieu of bride-price G was performing bride-services.

G was from a poor family. He enjoyed living with his wife's father and step-mother, but he did not like to plough the field and graze the cattle. Su had education up to the fifth grade which was offered at the local school. G also wanted to study, so Baba S sent him to a nearby school in town where he studied up to 9th grade. This education did not bring him back wanting to assist Baba S in his agricultural work. G wanted to be like Baba S who did not do any heavy agricultural work either. He did

not see any need of doing this heavy work by himself when there was plenty of money to hire the laborers for this. G was willing to advise the servants and guide them in their work instead of "doing their job". This brought about a conflict of wills between Baba S and himself and he started spending most of his time, outside of his father-in-law's household, with his friends. During my first six or seven weeks in Sunauli, I never saw him and "heard" that he was only home in either the early morning or late at night.

One day G came to me and asked me if I could teach him English. I agreed because it was one of the ways to know him. So I asked him to meet me in my veranda after lunch or an hour before dinner. We met four times a week before dinner. G was a fast learner. He was also very organized and calm. Slowly I learned the tremendous knowledge that G possessed about the Satar whom he always preferred to call by the Indian term Santal. He had read books on them, in addition to learning experientially. G was open-minded and had the ability to see through the surface of things. He identified himself as a Bidin Hod and did not like the Sapha Hod rituals of his father-in-law. However, this was not the main cause of conflict existing between them.

R: The above mentioned four key informants were from rich households. My next informant R, a twenty-eight year old man, was from a poor household. He was a Pentecostal.

R was appointed by the missionaries, living in Darjeeling, India, to work in and around Sunauli and was paid for his job. He had a separate house in his household compound to hold the church meetings for the Christian Satar while I was in Sunauli during 1978-79. R's wife was dead and he had a son from this wife. He wanted to give this son higher education. R defined the relationship between us as brother and sister and used the English word "sister" while addressing me. He helped me collect the census data from the neighboring villages, translate some of the Satari songs, and correct my language. Since R was a Christian and his religious beliefs demanded from him and other Pentecostals to give up their traditional beliefs and rituals (see chapter III for details), R did not believe in Bonga (Satar spirits and deities) and witchcraft. He volunteered to help me know more about them. As such, I gathered most of my information about the spirits and witchcraft from him. With R's help, I also participated in a few church meetings and in the gatherings during Good Friday and Christmas which helped me understand the beliefs and practices of the Christian Satar.

U: My other key informant was U, my "father's" sister's husband, a 35 year old Bidin Hod. He was also from a poor household. He did not own any land or cattle, so he worked for wages throughout the year. U and I called each other "Kumang", which is a term of address both for father's sister's husband and wife's brother's daughter, and

defines a joking relationship. U was in India during the first eight months of my fieldwork in 1978-79 leaving his wife and six children behind him, returning in November, 1978. His wife never told me the reason behind this, but I did come to know the details of U's "exile" from several caste people and Satar who told me that a few months before I went to live with them U's daughter eloped with a man of Mohali caste who also lived in Sunauli. U had to sell his cattle and other household property to pay the penalty for his daughter's deviant behavior for violating the rules of group endogamy (see chapter V). It was a matter of great shame for him so, even after paying the penalty, he ran away to India "to save his face".

U and I never talked about the above incident. He had a tremendous store of knowledge about the Satar way of life and loved to talk while working. His narrations depicted the poverty of the Satar and their struggle and will to survive. He was a valuable resource for my work, but the problem with U was that he drank most of the time and tried to take advantage of our "Kumang" relationship. I let the villagers know about this and continued learning from him while maintaining a certain distance between us.

S: S was my twelve year old maid. She was from a poor Bidin Hod household. S had a lovely smile and was never tired of talking. She called me "Didi" or "Dee" (elder sister) since I was her "Nana" ("father's sister). We communicated in "pidgin" Maithili for a few

weeks. Then we started talking in Satari. At night, we both used to sit down together learning Satari. S enjoyed being my "Guru". Later her father, C, requested that I teach his daughter both Nepali and English. This I did not want to do, because of the time it would take from research, but since C was my "brother" I could not say "no". Once or twice a week, C used to drop by at night or during the afternoon to check how S was doing with her study. This made S take more interest in her study and work harder.

S lived in my household. She cooked for both of us, washed dishes and clothes, fetched water from handpumps and well, cleaned my house in addition to collecting manure for fuel. She also spent a few hours playing with her friends during late afternoons and an hour studying at night. Having S as my cook was one of the most wonderful things that happened during my field work. Her childish manners did not let her keep any secrets from me, her alertness and curiosity brought to me the "secret" news of the neighborhood, and her adolescence taught me a lot about premarital Satar life. She was not only an excellent cook but also a great companion and a good informant - someone from whom you could always learn without ever getting bored.

METHODOLOGY AND AIM OF THE RESEARCH:

My goal in this first period of field work was to do a

holistic study of the Satar. My primary methodology was participant observation. By living with the Satar, I could spend time with women, men and children, could chat with the young boys in the cattle-shed after their lunch, and also could listen to the drums and flutes at night. Such living enabled me to experience their socio-cultural life by observing and participating in their various life-cycle rituals and ceremonies. This also enabled me to examine how various rules were met, how there were differences between what people said "they should do" and what "they actually did do", and above all, how the people reacted to unexpected events. It was also by living with the Satar that I could establish a good rapport with many of them among whom some became my key informants.

During this time, I also collected census data, filled out genealogy and kinship charts, distributed some questionnaires on the status of women, which I had received from Lynn Bennett, who was then working on a project on the status of women in Nepal, and wrote down most of the things that I observed happening around me. As I had never received any theoretical or methodological background in anthropology, every so often I realized that I was incapable of doing anything but "pure" description, and as a result grew very frustrated. But now, when I look back at these data I know how useful they really are.

During the second month of my field work, I noticed some conflicts and other signs of tension between

the Satar of Sunauli and the surrounding villages. No one had told me about this but once I learned about it, through my cook S, I was told by Baba S not to visit other villages. However, during my fifth month in the village, I started moving around more in these other Satar villages. I found this to be perfectly safe. It was then that I realized that the village I was living in was not a "traditional" Satar village. The Satar of surrounding villages described Sunauli as some sort of an outcast village mainly because Sunauli did not have, and still does not have, a Majhi-than, a raised mud platform in front of the headman's house which one ethnographer has described as symbolizing the "spirit of headman or headmanship in general" (Troisi 1978). This new information upset me a lot and I flew back to Kathmandu where I consulted Lynn Bennett. Lynn was very happy to know that I had found something new, i.e. cultural differences, among the Satar which had not been described before. She helped me to look at the positive aspect of this discovery and encouraged me to go back and continue my study in the same village, which I did.

As already mentioned, in this field work of 1978-79 I studied only the Satar. Sunauli also had thirty households of caste people among which eight were households of the Mohali caste and two were households of the Teli caste within the Satar section of Sunauli, as is shown in map #3 (chapter IV). I could have studied these

Mohali and Teli, if not the other caste people, but being myself a caste member, I had a certain bias. I considered them as dirty and lower type peoples. Such attitude inhibited me from associating with them or even wanting to know them. Though I knew from my early childhood that the Satar, Chamar, Mohali and Teli were considered ¹untouchable. I did not have any stigma against the Satar because I thought of them as belonging to an ethnic group with a distinct tradition of their own. As such, I accepted the food cooked by the Satar from the day I started living with them, while it took me almost five to six months to drink tea in a Mohali household for the reasons given below.

Among the caste people I tried the most to avoid the Mohali (basket maker), because I mistakenly thought that they were Doom (toilet cleaners) whom I had seen during my early childhood carrying human manure for disposal. Both Doom and Mohali make baskets, but unlike the Doom, as my Mohali informants told me and as I also observed, the Mohali neither clean toilets nor raise pigs. I became convinced of this statement and could overcome my bias

1. Interestingly enough it was only during my second field work that I learned from my Brahman informants of the neighboring villages that all the castes of Sunauli, with the exception of the Halwai caste, were considered untouchable by the upper caste people. Their criterion of grading caste groups as touchable versus untouchable was based on the ritual concept of purity/pollution, which I discuss in chapter IV.

towards them only towards the fifth month of my stay in the village. My attitude towards the Chamar, however, remained the same. Since I did not want to study the caste people, I did not want to be closer to them, particularly the Chamar.

The feelings between the caste people and me were mutual. Unlike the Satar, the caste people, including the Mohali and the Chamar, did not extend their kinship ties to me. Instead they defined my relationship with them in economic terms (upper class/lower class), called me Malkain (mistress), and always treated me with a deference and respect, which did not make me feel very comfortable. Among these caste people only two elderly caste men called me nani (meaning "young or little girl" in Nepali. This term is used by one's parents or elders to call their female children or youngsters). These men often affectionately scolded me for wasting my time in studying the "uncivilized" people and acting against my Dharma by living with them and eating the food cooked by them. Despite the affectionate term of address of the above two caste people, I was never close to them during this period of my fieldwork. I mostly found these men telling me "what to do" rather than "how things were". As such, I also avoided them.

During this period of my field work, then, I concentrated only on the Satar. My goal was to study them as a group, maintaining and perpetuating their traditional

culture and identity. But the more I stayed in the field, observed their interaction with other Satar within their ethnic group and with the caste people, the less interested I became in studying them as an isolated and homogeneous group. Satar's constant interaction within their group and between groups, their various ways of defining themselves in different contexts changed my interest in studying them as a normative group. Now I wanted to learn how they viewed themselves as members of the wider caste society, as members of their own ethnic group, and also how they struggled to maintain their group and individual identities within and outside of their ethnic group. And to get the answers to these questions I carried out my second period of field work in 1985.

SECOND FIELD WORK:

The second period of my field work in Sunauli was conducted during December 1984 - April 1985, almost five years after my first field work. During these five years, I came to study at Bryn Mawr College to complete my graduate degree in anthropology. My stay with the Satar was shorter this time, because by this time I had been able to formulate specific questions relevant to this dissertation.

SIGNIFICANT CHANGE IN THE VILLAGE:

There were some minor changes and one major change in Sunauli over the five years period. Among the minor changes, three households were abandoned by their members

as they decided to live and work in Biratnagar. One Satar woman and five men had died. Two of these men were R and Baba T who had been my key informants during my first field work.

The major change that had taken place was the shift of the Satar population from the village to Biratnagar. During my previous field work, three out of six Satar households, (all of which belonged to the Sapha Hod), owned enough land to provide work for all the Satar of Sunauli. Baba S had twenty bigha, Baba T had eleven bigha, and Baba T's patrikin J had fifteen bigha. J was then an alcoholic, so his wife had some Satar working on their land on 50/50 contract. Baba T and Baba S also hired other Satar to work on their land both for wages and on a 50/50 contract. The land of these three households alone was enough to provide work for all the Satar of Sunauli and keep their entire population in the village during 1978-79. As a result, during my previous field work, no Satar of lower class, with or without land, went to work in Biratnagar with the exception of a few men who went there for two to three weeks during the jute season (May-July) and one woman who preferred to live in while working in a rice mill, because she found it harder to live in Sunauli after her elopement with a Mohali caste man.

During my second field work, I found Baba S a man without land. He had been accused of using the grains of the "religious granary" for his own household. The

case was filed against him by his sister's son B (who was living with Baba S during my previous field work) when Baba S refused to give him his share of land which was under Baba S' name, while he had given eight bigha land to his daughter Su. Baba S fought the case but lost it. B got his land from him, and Baba S was asked to pay Rs. 50,000.00 (\$2,777.00 in 1985) as penalty for using the grains of "religious granary". At this point, his father's third brother's son M, who was living in a different village and was also a Christian (see Chapter IV, Figure # 9), helped him out by paying off the penalty in exchange for putting the rest of Baba S' land and the big house in his name. In addition, M requested that Baba S continue living in the same house, where I found him when I returned in 1985. Baba S had lost all his interest in land and did not hire any Satar to work the land which was once his. His kin-servants, servants and Gogo M did all the agricultural work for him.

Baba T, another former key informant, had died. As he had no children from Gogo T, he gave all his land to M, with the condition that M could claim his ownership only after Gogo T's death. After Baba T's death, Gogo T did not go to live with her son or with another man, in which case she would have lost her right to Baba T's land/property. During this second period of field work, Gogo T had full control of her eleven bigha land. However, in contrast to her late husband, she did not hire many

Satar to work on her land. She trusted U, so hired only his family.

The third rich Satar, J, had changed for the better. He had completely stopped drinking and had started working on his land. In addition, his sons had grown up and were helping him in his work. He also had two servants. Because of this, there was no need for him to hire villagers on a 50/50 contract to assist him in agricultural work.

Such changes had directly affected my poor informants. As there were no jobs for them in Sunauli, these cattleless and landless Satar of Sunauli had started going to Biratnagar to find wage work. In 1985, it was common for one or two members, either male or female, of each non-cattle owning household, to stay in Biratnagar for almost nine months a year. They came to visit their kinsmen in Sunauli two to three times a month. Such a situation made it harder for me to collect my census data and conduct my ranking task, in addition to making the village look very empty most of the time.

Such population drift from Sunauli to Biratnagar also made it harder for me in finding a cook. There were no girls above the age of eleven or twelve in the village. They had all gone to Biratnagar to work with their parents or sisters. Since I lived in the same "granary" house where I lived before, Gogo M offered me her help to take care

of my dishes, room, and water and asked me if I could at least cook for myself. I agreed to it, and to my great surprise I found her moving to my room to sleep at night. I tried to tell her that it was not necessary but Baba S said that it was his responsibility to protect me, so he had asked Gogo M to sleep in my room. I was very thankful to him for that. Gogo M and I enjoyed each other's company a lot.

VILLAGERS' CONCERN AND CURIOSITY:

My Satar and caste friends gave me a very warm welcome. But they were also very curious about my reasons for coming back. I told them that this time I was there to study both the Satar and the caste people, how they interact with each other and help each other. A few young caste men were amazed that the "American Government" could give me money to study such an "ordinary thing". Once when I convinced them about the legitimate research reasons for my return, they volunteered to help me out with some of my research problems. Later, they provided me with a great deal of information about their neighbors Satar and themselves.

Villagers, both the Satar and caste people, both men and women, were also very curious about America. Almost every day I had to talk to them about this country. At one point I started wondering whether I was there to study them or tell them about the U.S. Different individuals asked

me different types of questions. One Seventy-five year old caste man N, who owned the biggest store in Sunauli, was mainly interested in learning the price of food, clothes, and utensils. Another caste man, who was fifty-five years old, was curious about family life in the U.S. Caste women, both young and old, wanted to know about the sexual life of men and women and about the night life in America. I was startled by these questions. Gogo T's problem was with the roundness of the earth. It was almost impossible for her to conceive that even though the Americans lived on the other side of the earth they still walked on their feet and not on their heads. All of them wanted to see the American coins that I had in Sunauli with me, and hold them in their hands for few seconds. Both the Satar and caste men were eager to know about transportation, education and medical facilities in the States. Among the villagers, the Satar men and the Mohali, who made baskets, wanted to come with me to the States, provided I bought their tickets and let them stay in my "house" here, so they could work hard, make money, and go back home to "live like a king".

METHODOLOGY:

My primary methodology, again, was participant observation. Contrary to my previous field work, my second field work was for a short period of four months. Therefore, I focused more exclusively recording behavior pertinent to my study both among the caste people

and the Satar. I started my field work by taking new census. The Satar thought that I had lost my previous data so I needed to do it again. I told them that I had not lost the previous data, but that I needed an up to date record of all of them. During my previous field work, I had not collected census data from the caste groups. This I did this time. And since my 1985 census data includes both ethnic groups of Sunauli, I have used this census material here in this thesis.

To start with gathering census data was an easier and faster way to get to know the people once again, so I walked around the village for almost two and half months with my census forms. My Satar and caste informants considered each of my questions to be of great importance and spent hours talking about their marriages, education, trips to different places, experience of working with the caste people, and many other things which were highly significant to my study. It was during this time that I also came to know about the Satar and caste people's attitude towards each other, in addition to their boundary maintenance behavior, shifting roles and identities.

While taking the census data and spending considerable time with each individual I also came closer to most of the Satar men who had previously treated me with deference and also tried to avoid me many times during my previous field work. During my second field work, these men confided many of their worries to me. My visits to each

household, this time, cut across the caste and class boundaries. I was warmly welcomed by the Satar and also by the caste people. I realized I had changed my attitude towards the caste people. I could now spend hours with the Mohali and the Chamar. Because of my close contact with the caste people this time, three elderly caste men (Mohali, Kiyat and Halwai) also became my key informants.

My second formal method was to administer a "self-ranking" task to Satar and caste people. The purpose of this ranking task was to determine the influence of caste hierarchy among the Satar. For this, I needed to know how the Satar ranked themselves in the caste hierarchy, and how the members of each Satar category ranked themselves within their larger ethnic group and between the ethnic and caste groups. This ranking task was also aimed to find out the criteria used in ranking and in the maintenance of boundaries of each category or group, and also the gender and class variables, in the ranking by various groups.

I followed Silverman's (1966) model in conducting the ranking task. First, I discussed the different ritual categories of the Satar group and the caste groups with six elderly Satar and two caste men. These men belonged to different ritual and class categories within their larger Satar and caste groups. I could not include women in this discussion because they were very reluctant to

talk about this topic at this stage. Then, I wrote down the names of these categories and the names of the caste groups on separate cards, and asked my informants to sort them in a "ranking order" from "higher" to "lower". At the end of each task, I asked open ended questions (Pelto and Pelto /1970/1979) to each informant about his criteria of ranking the Satar and the caste groups of Sunauli. Each talked about the importance of political, economic, ritual and educational factors in influencing an individual's status, but all unanimously agreed about the ritual criterion of Sapha/non-Sapha (pure/impure) as playing the key role in grading the Satar and the caste groups as higher and lower.

My informants, especially a few rich Satar (the Sapha Hod and the Bidin Hod) and caste men were, in turn, curious about how I ranked them. Each of them, at different points in time, asked me to rank the Satar, their ritual categories, and the various caste groups of Sunauli in a ritual order. To their great disappointment and my embarrassment, I could rank only four castes in the following order -

Halwai (higher ritual order)

Teli

Chamar and Mohali (lower ritual order).

I did not know where to put the Satar and the rest of the caste groups. All my four informants agreed about the

ritual status of the Mohali and the Chamar. One Satar informant, a Sapha Hod, thought of his ritual status higher than that of the Halwai. The other Satar informant, a Bidin Hod, considered himself lower than the Halwai but higher than the rest. Only my third informant, a Halwai himself, agreed with my ranking. According to him, the Satar were equal to the Mohali and Chamar in their ritual status. The fourth informant laughed at my ignorance, since I had not included his caste in my ranking. He considered the ritual status of his Kiyat caste group as equal to that of the Halwai caste group and as higher than the rest. Also he thought that the Satar, especially the Sapha Hod, had a higher ritual status than the Mohali and the Chamar.

Now when I ponder on my ranking task, I think it was good that I did not know how to rank the caste groups and the Satar of Sunauli. Otherwise, my ranking might have influenced their ranking since I belonged to the Brahman caste group.

I wanted to administer this task among all the men and women eight years old and above. so I hired two assistants from Sunauli for this. Both were 18 years old high-school students and belonged to the upper class. Y was a Sapha Hod and T belonged to the Gangai caste group. Now that I was quite clear about the range of specific responses for my ranking task, I wrote down the criteria of ranking in the following order - economic, political, ritual, occupational

(government or any office job), and educational¹, and asked my informants to choose one or more from them. The purpose of such closed question was both to save time and get accurate answers. Further, I asked my assistants to work only with the literate members of my village and in the surrounding villages, because I knew the illiterate villagers would not be able to work with the cards, and might find the whole task quite confusing. Y did not mind conducting this test with either sex, except with his father. T was shy and did not feel comfortable working with women, so he worked only with the male members of the caste groups.

By dividing the work among the three of us, I administered the ranking task in my village to 100% of the population, age eight and above. In the surrounding Satar villages, I asked Y to conduct the task only among the adults, both male and female. I followed up this ranking task by interviewing all the informants of Sunauli, eight years old and above, concerning their criteria used in ranking as well as in maintaining the boundaries of their own social groups.

In the beginning young caste men (between the age of 15 and 30) discouraged me in my ranking task. They kept

1. See Barber 1968; Berreman 1965; Damle 1968 for multiple dimensions of ranking within the caste system.

telling me that all villagers were of equal status, and that they did not believe in the caste system. However, later this situation changed. Young men of both ethnic groups were interested in my ranking task. Caste men were more concerned about it than the Satar. I often heard them telling each other that they really did not care about the caste hierarchy, but that they must know about their own ritual status "just for the sake of their marriage and descendants".

Women also participated in my ranking task. Most of the Satar women showed their ignorance in ranking the caste groups. They labeled all castes as Diku and ranked them as higher or lower than their own ethnic group. Among the Satar women, only the women of the Sapha Hod households ranked themselves as higher than the other Satar, putting the Bidin Hod in the middle of the ritual hierarchy, and the Christian Satar in the lowest ritual order of the untouchable. These women used the criterion of ritual purity and impurity in ranking themselves. Though the women of the Bidin Hod households agreed with the untouchable status of the Christian Satar, they disagreed with the Sapha Hod about their own status. These Bidin Hod women considered their ritual status as equal to the Sapha Hod status. Further, these women used two different criteria for ranking themselves within their ethnic group - the ritual criterion of the caste system to rank the Christian Satar as lower in status, and the economic

criterion of wealth to rank themselves as lower than the Sapha Hod. Unlike these Satar women, however, the caste women were able to rank more caste groups. These women, like all the caste men and children, ranked the caste groups only along the ritual criterion of purity and impurity. The caste women knew very little about the ritual categories of the Satar. They ranked all Satar as untouchable.

It was while conducting this ranking task that, as already mentioned, I learned from my Nepali Brahman informants of the neighboring villages that all the caste groups of Sunauli, except for the Halwai caste, were considered untouchable, with different degrees of untouchability. For example, from some a Brahman could accept raw food, from some others only fried food, and from the rest not even water. This information was new to me. I cross-checked this information with my own informants. The results were interesting. The members of each caste group ranked themselves as higher than the members of other caste groups. Though none of my informants admitted that their ritual status belonged to the untouchable category, they advised me not to accept any food, boiled or fried, from the other caste groups or the Satar, since they considered these other caste groups and the Satar as untouchables. The women and men of the Sapha Hod households, in turn, regarded all caste groups as of lower ritual status. That Sunauli was a community of

untouchables was new information to me, but this did not affect my smooth and intimate relationship with my caste informants.

This ranking task also enabled me to see how the Satar, especially the Sapha Hod, denied being a part of the caste system, but revealed in their own stratification the values of caste system. They denied being untouchable but designated the Christian Satar as untouchable. Though the Bidin Hod and the Christian Satar did not agree with the ranking of the Sapha Hod in relation to their own ritual status, they both revealed an implicit consensus with the values of caste hierarchy by considering the Mohali and the Chamar as untouchable and, therefore, much lower in ritual status. As already mentioned, these Satar, especially the Bidin Hod, also thought of the economic criterion of wealth as a factor in creating hierarchy between them and the Sapha Hod.

A third formal method of this field work included a sequence of photographs that I took, depicting selected social interactions and events occurring among and between Satar and caste groups and individuals. I presented these photographs in a sequence and asked my informants to interpret them. From this, I expected to gather data on the status of particular groups (Satar or caste groups) and/or individuals involved in the pictured interactions.

I could not conduct the above test because the

villagers were more concerned with the full portraits of individuals than with the contents of the photographs. Besides, every time I displayed the photographs in front of an individual, a crowd of ten or twelve men and women used to gather around me to show their photos to the ones present there. To my utter frustration, I could not get the information that I had hoped to get through these photographs. Time was a big factor limiting this test. I spent almost two and half months taking these photographs. By the time I had them for my test it was time for me to leave the village. If I had extended my stay in Sunauli for two more months I might have been able to conduct this test - because by that time the villagers might have been tired of looking at these pictures only to see themselves and their friends.

One of the objectives of my second field work was to study the interaction between the Satar and the caste people of my village and among the Satar of the surrounding villages. During the period of my first field work, as mentioned before, there were conflicts between the Satar of Sunauli and those in the surrounding villages. The relationship among them was very tense because of some previous fight caused by various factors, among which one was the competition in participating in local level politics. But during this second period, I found that the villagers did not even want to be reminded of those unfriendly encounters.

The two most influential men of power in two villages had died in the five year interval. With their death, some of the young men, including those who participated in creating fights before, realized their loss of strength as a Satar group. They saw an immediate need for solidarity among all the Satar as a prerequisite for full participation in the Nepal Government's national integration program. While I was in the village in 1985, these Satar had two public meetings which were attended by the members of almost 20 villages. One of the important aspects of the meeting was the selection of what languages to use. A few of the Maithili-speaking people suggested Hindi first and then Nepali. The Satar, however, wanted to have Nepali first and then Satari. I was asked for an advice. I knew that almost 90% of the Satar of Sunauli and the surrounding villages could not understand Nepali very well, so I suggested they use only Satari. However, I asked them to prepare a synopsis of the meeting in Nepali in order to let the Nepal Government know about their problems. The Satar were more than happy to hear my suggestion, and I was also happy to get a translator, free of charge, in the meeting ground.

The situation, thus, had changed. Now these Satar were more conscious of maintaining their group unity and ethnic identity with a distinct linguistic and cultural tradition of their own. But at the same time, I noted a certain tension among the Satar that was caused by the

continued existence of their three ritual categories: the Sapha Hod, the Bidin Hod, and the Christian Satar. Since the religious ideology of these ritual categories were different from each other, the Satar were also covertly concerned in maintaining their individual identities as Sapha Hod, Bidin Hod, or Christian Satar. The situation seemed more complex when their ritual identities often overlapped with their class identities (rich and poor).

The above situation brought about some changes in my study plans. Therefore, during my second field work, I concentrated more on the Satar with their ritual categories and on the caste people of Sunauli. And since the Sapha Hod manipulated their identities more than the others, I paid more attention to them.

In this thesis, then, drawing from the data of both periods of field work, I intend to examine the shifting patterns of identities of the Sapha Hod. I will demonstrate how they switch their roles, and contract and expand the range of their identities. I will further show how the Sapha Hod maintain their individual identities to distinguish themselves from other Satar of their larger ethnic group and, at the same time, retain their ethnicity to separate themselves from the caste people.

CHAPTER III

THE SATAR AND SANTAL PEOPLES

SANTAL OF INDIA:

The Santal of India are the largest of the Indian tribes with a population over three and a half million people (Troisi 1978). They are also known as "Saontar" (O'Malley 1910:99), "Soontar" (Shore 1975), and "Satar" (Bista /1967/1976). The Satar of Sunauli think of these names as given to them by outsiders. Despite such variations in their names, they call themselves "Hod" (human beings), and view themselves as belonging to one cultural system irrespective of their regional and political differences, as Indian or Nepali citizens. As Hod they speak one language which they call Hod rod (the language of human beings)¹, practise clan exogamy and group endogamy, and share various socio-cultural values.

In India the Santal are mostly concentrated in Santal Pargana, Bihar, where they live with various caste people and interact with them. However, this interaction has not always been smooth and peaceful for the Santal of India. Many studies show that the Hindus exploit the Santal as servants and wage laborers, or force them into free (slave) labor, by taking over all their land and

1. The Santali language belongs to the Munda group of languages of the Austric family (Das 1958; Fuchs 1973; Grierson 1906).

property. This has caused great resentment and anger among the Santal who till then had lived as nomads and pursued an independent life. In order to regain their autonomy, they organized various revolutionary activities against the Hindus who, by then, were being called Diku (outlaws)¹ by the Santal (Datta 1940; Fuchs 1965, 1973; Sinha 1961).

Among the various revolutionary activities of the Santal, the rebellions of 1855-57 and 1871-75 were the major ones, the second one also being known as the Kharwar movement. Sinha (1961) examines the causes of these two movements among the Santal. Datta (1940) illustrates the causes of the first rebellion, its gradual development, and the attempts made by the ruling authorities to meet the situation. Fuchs (1965) calls these rebellions messianic movements in which new prophets keep emerging from time to time to make the Santal aware of their distinct tradition and inspire them to return to their original culture and religion. Jay (1964) gives a short description of these unrests and labels them as revitalization movements.

Among the studies done on the Santal unrest, Bodding's studies of 1921 and 1922 are most pertinent to my thesis. In these studies he examines the Kharwar movement and its

1. Today the term Diku has lost its original connotation. Now it is used by the Satar as an ethnic label to refer to the caste people of India and to those caste people of Nepal who speak Indian languages, such as Hindi, Maithili, Bengali and Punjabi.

impact on the Santal belief system. He calls the Sapha Hod category a sect. According to him, the origin of the Sapha Hod sect, whose members practised Hindu rituals, goes back to the late nineteenth century when the Kharwar movement went underground and within the next few decades split into three distinct sects - the Sapha Hod, the Samra, and the Babajiu. Babajiu was the name of the sect which represented the original group. Bodding (1922) mentions that all the sects accepted Ramchando (Ramachandra of the Hindu pantheon)¹ as their main god and worshipped Him, but each sect had different gurus. Despite these distinctions, according to Bodding (1922), the members of these various sects used to behave in the same way at least in the beginning. Later their gurus introduced different ritual practices which eventually made these sects very distinct from each other. The Samra became exorcists and practised fowl sacrifice, while worshipping Ramchando, while the Babajiu and the Sapha Hod continued worshipping the same god but offering Him flowers and sweets, like the caste people did.

Among these sects, as Bodding points out, the Sapha Hod were highly Hinduized. They neither kept fowl or pigs

1. Ramachandra is a Hindu god who is offered vegetarian food by the caste people. These people think of this god as an archer. My Satar informants, especially the Sapha Hod, viewed Rama as their own god who was also an archer and hunter. According to these Sapha Hod, the Satar inherited the art of and love for hunting from Ramachandra.

nor ate them. They also abandoned their traditional practices of drinking rice-beer, eating the flesh of dead bullocks, and eating in the houses of the Santals who did not belong to the same sect. Some of these Sapha Hod, as Bodding (1921) further demonstrates, followed the rituals of the higher caste people and even stopped ploughing their land, and began cremating their dead instead of burying them. They also did not practise animal sacrifice while worshipping Ramchando. Rather, they worshipped this god with flowers and sweets when they met at their guru's place every Saturday morning.

At the time internal changes were taking place within the Santal group, some external changes affecting the political/economic status of the group were also being made by the British government of India. In 1874, to calm down the revolutionary activities of the Santal, the British government specified an area for the Santal and declared it as a "scheduled district" or "backward tract", which is known as Santal Pargana. This area lies in Bihar State of India, and a majority of the Santal are still concentrated there today. The British government also classified the Santal as a "scheduled tribe", and kept them as isolated units (Fuchs 1973; Ghurye 1963), along with many other tribal people of India. The label "scheduled tribe" has several political and economic implications, as do such labels as "aboriginal" or "primitive" tribe, Adivasi (the original inhabitants of India), or "backward" and

1

"exploited" people (Fuchs 1973) .

Unlike the policy of the then British government of India, the policy of the present Indian government has been to bring the Santal into the main stream so that they could interact and compete with the rest of the Indian population, while still designating them as "scheduled tribe". To succeed in this plan, the Indian government has extended educational and political opportunities to the Santal and other such "scheduled tribes" (Fuchs 1973; Ghurye 1963). Following this plan, a certain number of seats are reserved for these people in schools, colleges, offices and also in local and national legislatures. The implementation of such a plan has encouraged the Santal to interact with the wider world, dominated by the caste people, in various ways and to compete with the caste people at educational, economic and political levels.

SURVIVAL STRATEGIES: HINDUISM VS. CHRISTIANITY

In examining the past relationship between the Santal and the caste people, it is not surprising to note why

1. Fuchs (1973: 24-25) distinguishes between "scheduled tribe" and "scheduled caste". According to him, "for a caste to be 'scheduled', it has to be economically and culturally backward, exploited by the people of superior culture and treated as socially inferior" (Fuchs 1973:24-25). Further, although these "scheduled" caste people share many aspects of Hinduism, they are often kept apart and treated by the upper caste people as untouchable. In contrast, as Fuchs points out, the "scheduled tribes", though "often backward and exploited, are rarely socially degraded" (1973: 24-25). Unlike the "scheduled" caste people, most of these tribal people have a distinct tradition of their own of which they are very proud of.

some Santal, like the Christian Satar, chose to practise Christian rituals. The Christian missionaries had carried out their missionary works among the Santal ever since 1838 - starting with the American Free Baptist mission, and followed up by various European missionaries. However, the main Christian missionary activity among the Santal of Santal Pargana started only after the Santal rebellion of 1855-1857 (Troisi 1978). The British missionaries came closer to the Santal because of the exploitation of the latter by the Hindus during the British rule in India. Their sympathy and help encouraged many Santal to convert to Christianity. In addition, the missionaries also provided educational and medical facilities for them which brought them to close contacts on daily basis.

Although Christianity helped the Satar to improve their present conditions, it also demanded a complete change of their religious ideology and required a total change in their way of life, such as abandoning drinking and dancing, premarital sexual activities, and marriages by elopement and capture. Such historical speculations are primarily based on my own field experience with the Christian Satar of Sunauli who are Pentecostals and other Christian Satar of neighboring villages who are Lutheran and Catholics. Observing my Christian informants' formal and non-formal rituals also helped me to understand that Christianity meant that these Satar had to give up their faith in the Qjha (shaman) and the Bonga (spirits/deities). My

Christian Satar informants identified Bonga with evil and never participated in any rituals performed by their Bidin Hod and Sapha Hod kinsmen. Christianity also prohibited them from drinking rice-beer which is one of the most important parts of their ethnic rituals, discussed later in chapter VII.

The social implications of all this were, and still are, great for a Santal. It meant the convert's complete isolation from his kinsfolk and from his tribal socio-cultural milieu. The worship of different Bonga, especially the clan, household and ancestral Bonga, during life cycle rituals and socio-religious festivals serve to strengthen the bond between one's living and dead kinsmen. By not participating in such worship, a Christian Satar moves away from his kinship network.

Missionaries used modern medicine, education, and better economic prospects as a means to conversion. My observation shows that, today, the Christian Satar of Sunauli and neighboring villages have equated Christianity with better education and economic prosperity. They are using Christianity itself as a means to achieve their educational and economic goals. Their conversion has given them free access to education in missionary schools which opens up possibilities for them to find jobs at higher levels. Further, the conversion has brought to them a sense of superiority over the other Satar. I found my

Christian informants explaining their new religion as belonging to the "civilized people" of the western world and, therefore, of a "high quality".

Despite these factors, Christianity has not been able to attract many Satar of Sunauli and its vicinity. One of the reasons for this is that Christianity asks these Satar to maintain a rigid boundary for their group. It does not allow them to expand or contract or cross this boundary at any level. The Satar, who have been living in a multi-caste/ethnic/tribal society for a long time, find it very hard to live within such a bounded unit as is created by Christianity. Their traditional culture and its various forms constitute the central part of their social life. Their village is the nexus of their socio-cultural and interpersonal activities. It is only by constantly participating in these activities that they share, maintain and strengthen their common bond. To accept an ideology which requires breaking or weakening the interpersonal relationships created by these bonds discourages the Satar from permanently moving across their group boundary, becoming Christians, and being treated as outcasts.

It is interesting to note that while some Satar have converted to Christianity, some other Satar, like the Sapha Hod, have been practising the Hindu rituals instead of continuing their own traditional rituals or practising the Christian rituals. The Sapha Hod also change their

religious ideology, but not so abruptly as their Christian friends do. It is primarily because the boundaries drawn by Hinduism are never so rigid as those by Christianity. Hinduism of Sunauli allows a great range of flexibility in its religious practices by combining both the Vedic traditional elements and local elements which I explain in chapter IV. Hinduism also divides individuals into various caste groups and allows different forms of religious practices in relation to their castes. It also allows the non-Hindu, like the Satar/Santal, to participate in these rituals provided that they choose to behave as members of one of the caste groups, in this particular case, as untouchables.

Secondly, Hinduism includes different forms of worship such as nature worship, worship of semi-divine or divine objects or human beings. It stresses polytheism at the surface level and monotheism at the deeper level. Its multitude of religious texts, written at different points in time, emphasize various forms of worship which differ from one caste or class to another and also from one region to the other. Such features of Hinduism allows the non-Hindus, like the Santal/Satar, to practise Hindu rituals without giving up their traditional religious practices.

In addition, the Hindu community has been the dominant community of Nepal and India. People belonging to

different ethnic groups have been living with the Hindus and have been interacting with them for a long time. Despite their distinct traditions, these people share a similar way of life with the Hindus. Though they are considered as outsiders by the Hindus, the caste system allows them to enter this system from the "untouchable" bottom level¹. Such situation enables them both to maintain their tribal/ethnic identities and, at the same time, abide by the rules of the caste system in order to interact with the Hindus.

As a result, I speculate, despite their exploitation by the caste people, some Santal adopted many of the socio-religious rituals of the caste people. Being a Christian, a Santal had a better opportunity to be educated, but it was possible only at the risk of being completely cut off from his cultural heritage. The adoption of Hindu rituals did not however require from him a complete change of his world view. He could practise Hindu rituals without giving up his traditional tribal rituals. To adopt Hindu rituals also meant to develop social contact with the

1. Although occupation does play an important role in designating certain caste groups, such as of scavengers, basket makers, tailors, and butchers, as untouchable, the criterion of occupation may not appear as primary while incorporating certain ethnic groups into the caste system. Dietary practices of an ethnic group could also be important in labeling them as untouchable. The Satar provide us with an example of how dietary practices of beef-eating in India (in Nepal they do not eat beef since killing a cow is against the law in this "Hindu kingdom") and field-mice eating in both India and Nepal have encouraged the upper caste people to call them untouchable.

members of the dominant group. Such contact bestowed on the individual greater social prestige and/or better economic opportunities by enabling him to participate in the local and national level political process, and to seek educational and employment opportunities outside his village boundaries. In my opinion, these positive factors encouraged the Santal to live with the caste people and to adopt their Hindu rituals. But those who adopted these rituals did not completely give up their own traditional rituals. Rather, they combined the key symbols of both cultures and created a new tradition of their own. Although, such tradition showed their affiliation with both cultures, caste and Satar, it also distinguished them from the members of both these cultures. As my study of the Satar shows, the Sapha Hod of Sunauli continue such a new tradition and claim it to be their ancient Satar tradition.

INDIA-NEPAL MIGRATION:

It was towards the late nineteenth century, according to the Satar of Sunauli, that the Satar migrated from India to Nepal. As mentioned earlier, in India they are to be found primarily in the provinces of Bihar and Bengal. The province of Bihar borders on Nepal which allows both the Nepali and Indians to move back and forth across the border.

According to my Satar informants, one of the reasons for their migration was the scarcity of land and food in

India towards the end of the nineteenth century. The other reason was their love for a nomadic life and hunting in the jungles of Nepal. Their migration was also encouraged by the government of Nepal. At that time the low lying land of southern Nepal, known as Tarai, was covered with forests. The government had employed a few Nepali individuals as Jimindar to cultivate that land (Regmi 1976: 109-110). The Nepali of the regions, who moved down from the mountains to the plains of south, needed laborers to clear these forests for farming. They found the newly migrant Satar to be expert in this job, so they were hired. The Nepali not only gave them jobs but also allowed them to live where they (Satar) wished in the region. Some Nepali landlords granted land to the migrant Satar, and others allowed the Satar to cultivate larger areas of land for a minimal fee. Some of the Satar of this second category also acted as managers by looking after the land of other landlords which were adjacent to their own villages. Later these Satar, with the approval of their Nepali landlords, got legal ownership of the land that they were cultivating, and were themselves regarded as landlords within their own villages even though they owned only fifteen to twenty bigha (1.5 bigha = 1 hectare). In contrast, the Nepali landlords in the region owned, as my investigation shows, up to a maximum of 1,600 to 2,000 bigha per person. In Sunauli, three Sapha Hod and five caste people became landlords this way.

In Nepal, the Satar are found in Morang and Jhapa Districts which border on India. According to the census of 1973, there were 23,853 Satar settled along this southeastern border of Nepal (Department of Publicity 1975). Migration has not brought significant change in Satar social organization. A comparative study of the literature on the Santal and Satar, and my own field experience with the Satar of Sunauli, illustrate this. Among them, as among the Santal, descent remains patrilineal and residence, in most cases, is patrilocal with the bride and groom living with the groom's family after their marriage. There are twelve Paris, which I gloss as patriclans, members of which assume a common patrilineal descent from an apical ancestor, but do not know the exact genealogical links that connect them to this apical ancestor (Keesing 1975). Among both the Santal and the Satar, there is neither any clan hierarchy nor any organization of clans into larger metric (see Archer 1974; Bodding 1935; Bista 1967; Chowdhari 1952; Gausdel 1942, 1960; Shrestha 1964-65, 1971; Kochar 1970; Somers 1976; and Troisi 1978).

Despite living in different regions and having different nationalities (Indian and Nepali), the Satar and Santal see themselves as being the same people. They call themselves Hod (human beings) irrespective of their nationality and, up to the present, maintain a very close relationship among themselves both by inter-marriage and

through frequently visiting each other across the Nepal-
1
India border .

As in India, the Satar of Sunauli are found living amidst the caste people (see map # 3). These Satar distinguish between the Nepali and Indian caste people by using different ethnic labels for them. As mentioned in chapter I, the Satar call Indians and Indian language speaking people of Nepal, such as Bengali, Marwadi and Maithil people, Diku, whereas they call the Nepali people Mundo (mountain dwellers). Their Mundo category includes all the Nepali speaking caste people and all the ethnic groups of Nepal whose members may or may not speak Nepali as their mother tongue, such as the Sherpa, Tharu, Limbu, Rai, Tamang, Newar, Dhimal and Magar.

The SAPHA HOD OF SUNAULI:

According to my key informants (Baba T, Baba S and R) the migrating Satar, who chose to settle in Sunauli around 1880, were Sapha Hod and Bidin Hod. There were no Christian Satar among them, neither were there any other Satar in Sunauli. There were only four or five caste families living at one end of Sunauli, which was at the

1. One difference that I found to be of some significance was political. Unlike the Indian government, the Nepal government has not classified her people into "scheduled" and "non-scheduled" categories. The constitution of Nepal treats all the ethnic groups and caste groups on equal basis providing equal opportunities for them, at least in theory.

time mainly a big field some of which was being cultivated. The migrant Satar built their houses in a row starting from the end of the land farthest away from those houses of the caste families. My informants did not remember the exact number of the Satar houses during that time. They told me it was somewhere between ten and fifteen.

According to R, my (now deceased) Christian informant of 1978-79, the Satar at that time did not have much interaction with the caste people, with the result that there was not much conflict and tension between them either. However, he added, the Satar did have conflicts within themselves, due to their different religious ideologies. These conflicts grew and created more tension among them, R explained, because the Bidin Hod wanted proper shrines to propitiate their various Bonga (spirits) through rituals. They demanded a Jaher Than (shrine of goddess Jaher) in the outskirts of their village, and one Majhi Than (a raised mud platform where the spirit of the first headman and/or the spirit of the headmanship in general is believed to reside) inside the village, in front of the headman's household. The other group of the Satar, the Sapha Hod, did not want these shrines because, although they made offerings to both the Bonga and the Hindu deities, they primarily worshipped the Hindu deities, which did not necessarily require any shrine. Their emphasis was to worship both the spirits and the

Hindu deities in Vishnu Baba's courtyard. As a result of such conflicts, the village was divided into two independent political units. R's father's father Z became the Majhi (headman) of one unit and built Majhi Than and Jaher Than, and Vishnu Baba's brother N became the headman of the other unit which had neither of those shrines. Each unit then was characterized by its own political organization (see chapter VIII), and by having a regional identity of its own.

It was during this early settlement period, as I learned from Baba T, R and other older male informants, that a Mohali caste family from India came to Sunauli looking for a job and a place to settle down. Baba T's father Vishnu Baba, the most influential man of his time, allowed this Mohali family to live at his end of the village. The Mohali households came to mark the boundary between the two Satar villages of Z's and N's.

According to the above mentioned informants, a few years after this partition of the village, the Satar of both sections were attacked by cholera. Many died during this epidemic, and most of those who died were Bidin Hod and were from Z's section. This casualty caused such terror that the rest of the Bidin Hod were anxious to leave the village right away. Vishnu Baba, the leader of the rival group, then emerged as a charismatic leader and offered to lead them out of this catastrophe. He asked the

Satar of Z's section to follow their "ancient" religious rituals, i.e. the tradition of the Sapha Hod, in order to get rid of the deadly disease. The Satar listened to him, and a miracle happened; the cholera disappeared. Z's position was threatened. He was frightened, but instead of acknowledging the Sapha Hod rituals of Vishnu Baba, he fled to India with his wife and son. In India Z died as a Bidin Hod but his son and son's wife converted themselves to Christianity, and came back to live in Sunauli with their children. Later their children were also baptized as Christians. But in the meantime, following the charisma of Vishnu Baba, the dominance and power of the Sapha Hod was firmly established in Sunauli. Immediately after Z left Sunauli, the two independent sections of Sunauli were unified, the two shrines of Z's section were removed, and the political unit of Vishnu Baba's section came to represent the entire village.

CHAPTER IV

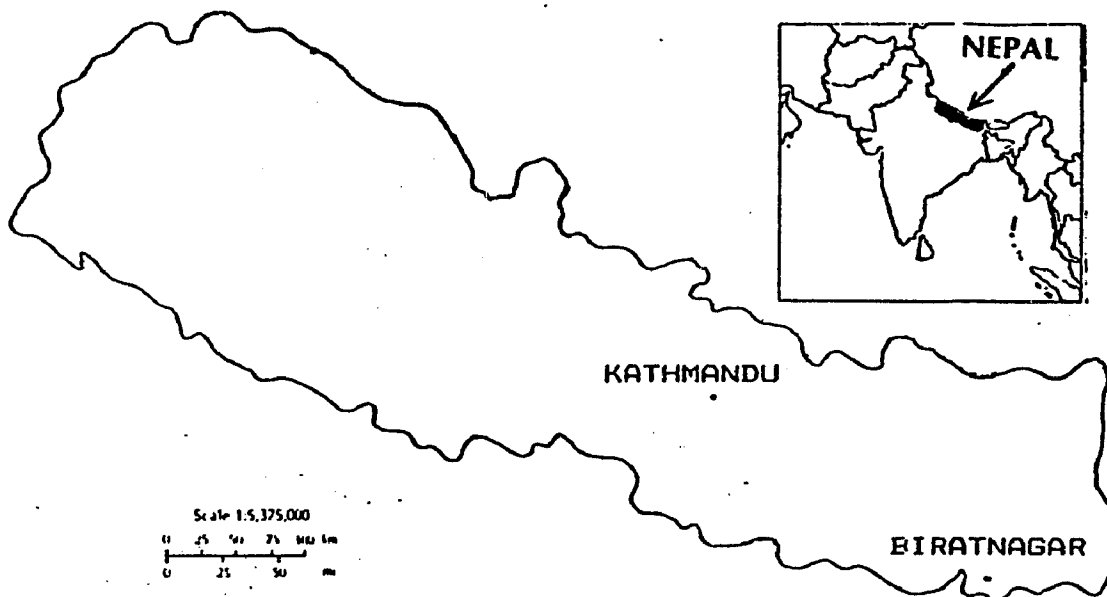
THE VILLAGE AND ITS PEOPLE

LOCATION:

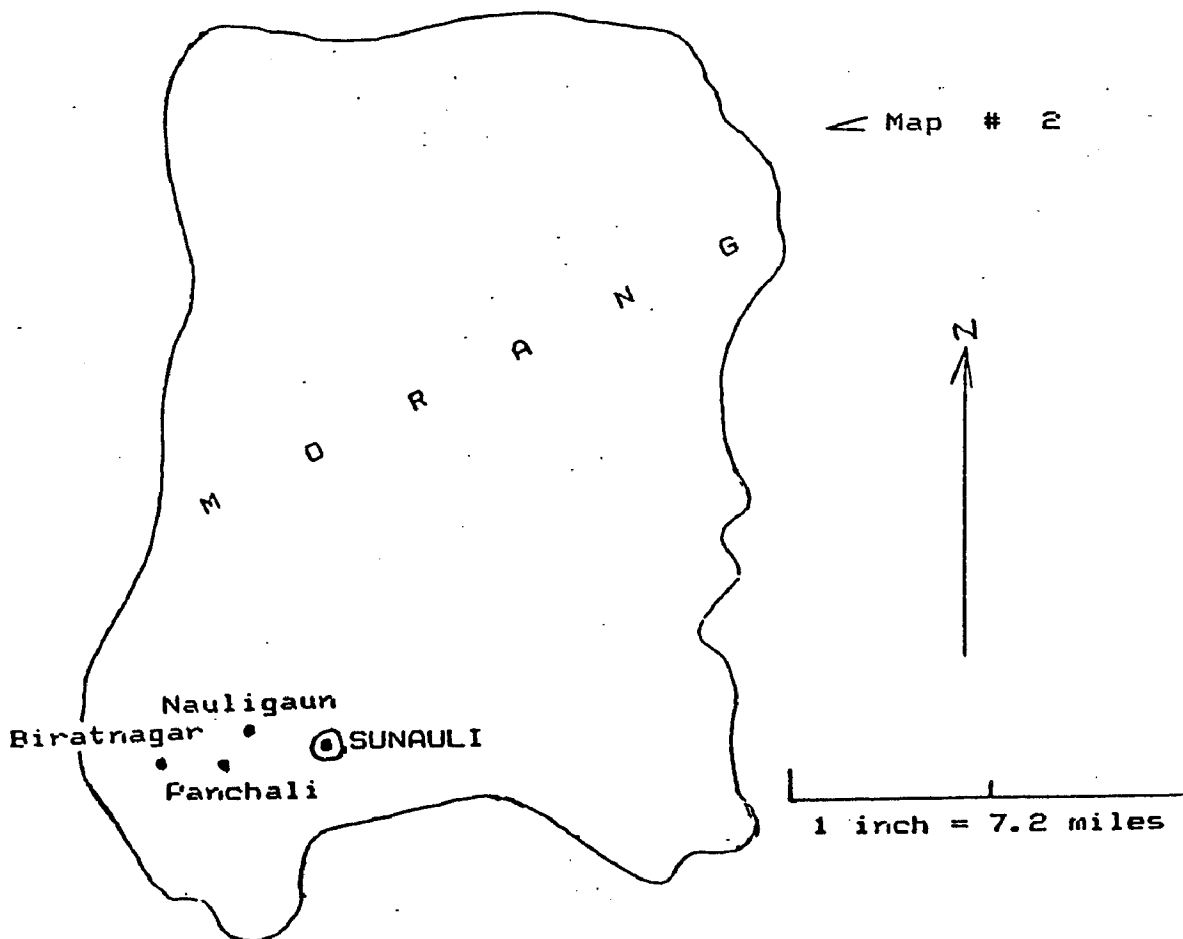
Sunauli is situated about six miles east of the industrial town of Biratnagar in southern Nepal which is in Morang District and which forms a border with the Bihar State of northern India (map # 1 and 2). As this town is close to India almost half of its population consists of Indians, especially Marwadi, Bengali, and Kayastha, who are second or third generation in Nepal, and work as businessmen, teachers, and own several drug stores. The other half of its population is Nepali. These Indians and Nepali practise different religions. Most of them are Hindu, and others are Jains and Buddhists. Biratnagar has a minority of Muslims and Bahais also.

Biratnagar is well known in Nepal for its various factories and excellent rice, wheat, lentils, and jute. Biratnagar has several high schools and colleges, one court, one hospital, private medical practitioners, and many offices representing the Government of Nepal. It also has two movie theaters which are always crowded. During 1985, several families had videos and were running a good business renting video movies. The court, hospital and movie halls of Biratnagar are often visited by the people of its surrounding rural areas, including

Map # 1



Map # 2



Sunauli. The two big weekly markets, which are held twice a week on Wednesday and Saturday, also attract the rural population.

The main public transportation in Biratnagar is by rickshaw. Few individuals own a jeep or car. There are buses which run only in the outskirts of Biratnagar. Bullock or ox-drawn carts are frequently seen on the main roads competing with the cars and rickshaws.

Sunauli is in Sirsani Panchayat sub-division of Morang District. The shortest way to get to Sunauli from Biratnagar is to take a rickshaw or a bus to Panchali, a subdivision of Morang District which is about two miles from Biratnagar and then walk from there to the village. Sunauli is about four miles from Panchali and the river Seti lies in between with no bridge. The other way to reach Sunauli, which is longer but which the villagers use mostly during the rainy season, is to go by a bus or a rickshaw to Nauligaun, which is about one and half a miles from Panchali, and walk from there to Sunauli, a distance of about three miles. The same river Seti that is between Panchali and Sunauli is also between Nauligaun and Sunauli, but this side of Seti has a bridge which makes it lot easier to commute between the village and town especially during monsoon. Despite the bus facilities, I observed during both periods of my field work that the villagers mostly walked to Biratnagar when going there for shopping or working. However, they mostly used

buffalo or ox-carts when taking grains for processing in the factories located in Nauligaun and Panchali.

Sunauli is also situated very close to the Nepal-India border. As is mentioned above, the closest bus stop in Biratnagar is about four miles from Sunauli. One can take this bus to the central bus terminal in Biratnagar and from there another bus to the Nepal-India border. This journey takes about four hours in all. But the villagers of Sunauli generally prefer to take the foot path which leads along the fields to get to the border. This takes only about one and half hours, and saves them time as well as money. From the Indian side of the border they can find trains or buses to their destinations.

India attracts the Nepali, Satar and Maithil people of Sunauli and Biratnagar for various reasons, such as pilgrimage, education and business. I found people frequently going to India to pay homage to their gods and goddesses. Several Christian Satar children of Sunauli and its neighboring villages were studying in the missionary schools of Darjeeling, India in 1985. I also saw some caste people leaving Sunauli for a few days to serve their Indian Jajman (patrons) and some salesmen coming to Sunauli from India to sell clothing and medicine.

The Sirsani Panchayat subdivision of Morang District has eight villages among which Sunauli is one. In 1985, these villages were populated either by a majority of

Satar or caste groups. Villages with mixed population had the Satar houses on one side and the caste houses on the other side. The three neighboring villages of Sunauli, having a Satar majority, had this segregated pattern of settlement. Similar to the above villages, Sunauli also had two ethnically and culturally diverse groups of Satar and caste people who also spoke entirely different languages. In contrast to these other villages, Sunauli appeared unusual in the balance of its population which is presented in the following figure.

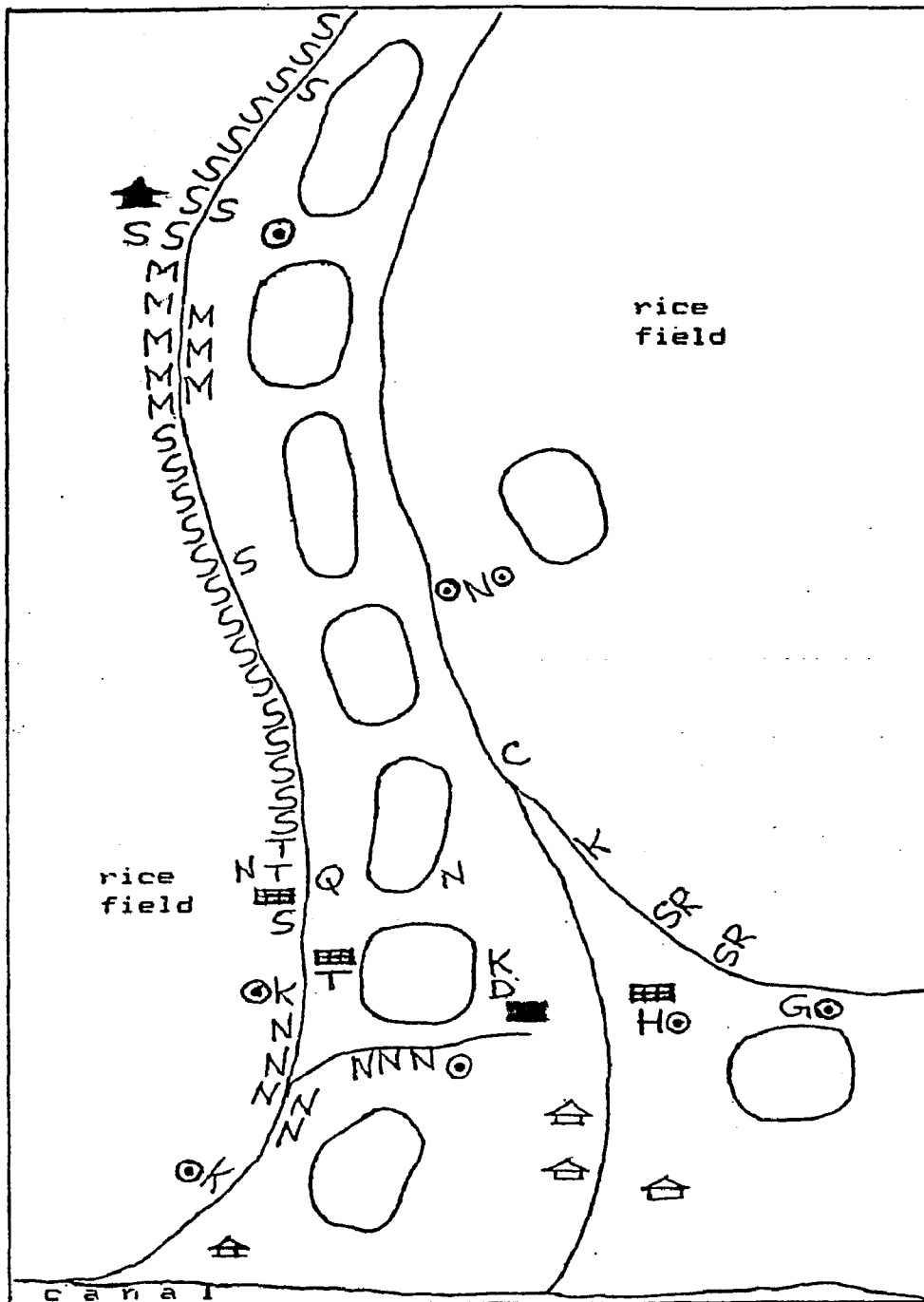
Figure # 4

Ethnic population of the Satar villages

<u>villages</u>	<u>Satar</u>		<u>Caste</u>	
	<u>population</u>	<u>households</u>	<u>population</u>	<u>households</u>
Birta	45	8	7	2
Kadmaha	47	8	4	1
Kashipur	61	12	8	4
Sunauli	170	27	176	33

As in the neighboring villages, most Sunauli households belonging to the caste people were located towards one end, i.e. the southern end of the village. The households owned by the Satar stretched towards its northern end (see map # 3). However, unlike other Satar villages, some caste people of Sunauli lived amidst the Satar. These were the

N



- | | | |
|-------------|------------------------------|------------------------|
| KEY: | | |
| | = ponds/ditches | Measurement: |
| | = well/handpump | Length: .5 mile |
| | = store | Width: .33 mile |
| | = tea stall | S = Satar |
| | = Hindu shrine | SR = Sonar |
| | = Satar shrine | T = Teli |
| C | = Chamar | |
| | D = Dhanuk | |
| | G = Gangai | |
| | H = Halwai | |
| | K = Kevarat, Kurmi and Kiyat | |
| | M = Mohali | |
| | N = Nunia | |
| | Q = unknown caste | |

Mohali people of eight households and the Teli of two households. Unlike other caste people of Sunauli, these Mohali and Teli shared the well and ponds owned by the Satar.

CLIMATE AND THE LAY-OUT:

Sunauli has topographical features typical of southern Nepal. It has flat land which is very fertile. It is at an altitude of barely more than 250 feet above the sea level. The climate of Sunauli is of the tropical monsoon type which is very hot and humid during Summer (May through August). During Summer the temperature may reach to the maximum of 120⁰ F. The monsoon season lasts for almost three months starting in June. The river Seti gets flooded during this time making it almost impossible for the villagers of Sunauli and surrounding villages to go to town via Panchali. The Winter months (November - January), however, are very pleasant in Sunauli with a maximum of 70⁰ F and minimum of 40⁰ F.

Sunauli has plenty of wide and open space around it. Half a mile from the village to the west is the Seti river which is big and floods during the monsoon season. During both periods of my field work, the lands between the river and Sunauli were owned by individuals of different villages. These lands were both irrigated and non-irrigated. The crops grown here mainly consisted of rice, wheat, maize, tobacco, mustard and different types of

lentils. Rice was grown twice a year. Occasionally, rice-fields were also used for maize. During the periods of my stay in Sunauli, a water canal ran through the middle of this land all the way to the southern end of Sunauli and formed the boundary line between Sunauli and other villages which belonged to a different subdivision of Morang District called Minghu Panchayat.

The eastern side of the village had a long path along which were three man-made ponds and four big ditches (see map # 3). Two of these ponds were owned by individuals and the other by the local government. These ponds and ditches provided the villagers with a constant supply of fish for almost six months a year starting from the monsoon season. The ponds were used by villagers for various purposes, such as bathing, cleaning dishes, washing clothes, bathing cattle, and fishing.

Running parallel to the ponds was a path lined with many banana, mango, bamboo and some flowering trees. In 1985, there were ten households of the caste people located on this side of the ponds. Behind these households, there were two private ponds owned by two caste people of Sunauli. There was also land on this side of the village. Some of this land belonged to the caste people of Sunauli and some to other individuals living in other villages.

The Satar households and the rest of the caste households of Sunauli were on the other (western) side of

these ponds and ditches. All these households were connected by footpaths. These paths paralleled the ponds and ditches. During my 1978-79 field work, Sunauli had three paths in between the three ponds, each wide enough for bull-carts to pass. By 1985, these had become narrower having only enough space for men and cattle but not for carts. The constant need of the villagers to get better clay and mud from the ponds to plaster and rebuild their mud houses had pushed them to cut the edges of the ponds. Although, clay and mud were easily available this way, this had resulted in the narrowing of these paths.

Sunauli had good water facilities with one well and six hand pumps. Two handpumps were owned by the Sirsani Panchayat and the rest were owned by the wealthy people of Sunauli. The well belonged to Baba T and the handpumps to the caste people. Most of the Satar got drinking water from the well. Among the caste people, only the Mohali came to the well for this purpose, since they lived close to the well. The rest of the Satar and the other caste people got water from the two hand pumps, owned by the Sirsani Panchayat, because they lived close by these pumps. The other five hand pumps were in the inner courtyards of the caste individuals, so the villagers did not go there unless the other two handpumps were broken. During both periods of my field work, the well and two handpumps were crowded by the village women, every morning and late afternoon, when they came to get water for

drinking and cooking. As they came here during early in the morning, before the men went to the tea stall, they became my primary source of village gossip which included the events occurring since the early afternoon.

Sunauli had one tea stall where men gathered around almost every morning and three stores. One store was owned by a man of the Halwai caste and the other two by Teli castemen. These stores carried only a few items which were frequently needed by the villagers. These were mustard and kerosine oil, soap, matches, rice, lentils, jaggery and some candies. As most of the villagers frequently went to weekly markets in Panchali, Nauli Gaun or Biratnagar they bought most of these necessary items there. As a result, the village stores did not have a good market, and such business added very little to one's household income.

Sunauli did not have any school, post office, or hospital. These institutional facilities were in Chenna, a village of Minghu Panchayat about a quarter of a mile away. All the villagers of Sunauli used the services provided by these institutions in Minghu Panchayat. The local doctor in the hospital, a young Nepali Brahman who also helped me collect some census data in the neighboring villages during 1978-79, was frequently consulted by the villagers for their various sicknesses. They went to the hospital in Biratnagar only when the medicine provided by the local doctor did not work. School children wanting to continue their study after finishing the middle school of

the village also had to go to Panchali or Biratnagar.

The village of Minghu Panchayat also had a fertilizer store owned by the Nepal Government, and a police station. There was also one hand-mill here for processing rice and wheat. In addition, this village had an open but small area for weekly market which was held twice a week, five tea-stalls, three tailors, and one blacksmith. Villagers of Sunauli came here to get their services when needed.

Sunauli had four shrines - two belonging to the Hindu goddesses Kali, one to Durga and one belonging to Vishnu Baba, the founder of the Satar section of Sunauli. Of the first three shrines, Kali and Durga were worshipped once every year in two shrines by the caste people and also by the Satar. New images of these goddesses were made once a year, Durga in October and Kali in March, and were kept in these shrines for certain days of rituals. The caste people of Sunauli, especially men, worshipped these goddesses during this period. Once the worship days were over, they discarded these images in the river or in the ponds. Therefore, these shrines remained empty of images and people for the rest of the year. During the ritual period, the Sapha Hod men spent most of their time here with the caste people. A few Bidin Hod also stopped by these shrines for few minutes. Also during the ritual period, small fairs were held around these shrines.

The third shrine of Sunauli, belonging to Kali, was

symbolized by a bamboo pole. This pole marked the boundary of Sunauli in its southern side. Only caste women worshipped this Kali and they worshipped Her only when they faced calamities like sickness and death.

Sunauli also had a Hindu temple of God Rama and His consort Sita. This temple was mostly visited by the caste people.

The Satar of Sunauli had only one shrine. It was the shrine of Vishnu Baba. It had about six inch raised mud platform in one corner of the shrine and a trident of Mahadeo (god Shiva of the Hindu pantheon) in the middle of this platform. Unlike the temple and the other two shrines of the caste people, the shrine of Vishnu Baba was attended exclusively by the Satar on certain festive occasions.

As mentioned in chapter three, the most striking physical feature of the Satar section of Sunauli was that it neither had a Majhi Than nor a Jaher Than. During both periods of my field work, all the surrounding Satar villages had these two shrines - a Majhi Than and a Jaher Than. Majhi Than was always inside the village while Jaher Than was always outside the village. In these villages, various Satar deities and spirits were worshipped at these shrines and offerings were made to them on different occasions. In Sunauli, in contrast, all the worship was performed in the courtyard of Baba T, Vishnu Baba's second son who was himself dead.

ETHNIC GROUPS:

As mentioned earlier, Sunauli is much bigger than other neighboring Satar villages in its number of households and population. It has sixty households, twenty-seven belonging to the Satar and thirty-three belonging to the caste people, with a total population of 346 people. I am defining as a household, a unit which includes members of one or more generations who share the same kitchen. Such a unit may consist of one or more nuclear families (see Kolenda /1968/1970 for family types in India). One household compound can have more than one household in residence in which case the members of these different households cook in different kitchens. While I was in Sunauli during 1978-79, three household compounds contained two households each. However, during 1985, each household compound had but one household in residence. Further, one household can have more than one house, such as a granary, a kitchen house, and a sleeping house. The number of houses in a household depends on the economic status of the household head.

CASTE PEOPLE: Among the 346 people of Sunauli, 176 were caste people. The following figure # 5 explains the distribution of the caste population by gender and households.

As this figure shows, among all the caste groups the Nunia caste group was numerically dominant in 1985. And

Figure # 5

Distribution of the Caste population
by gender and household

<u>castes</u>	<u>households</u>	<u>female</u>	<u>male</u>	<u>total</u>
Nunia (Chauhan & Rajbhar)	11	27	25	52
Mohali	8	20	16	36
Kiyat	2	9	8	17
Teli	3	4	10	14
Kevarat	1	7	6	13
Sonar	2	6	6	12
Gangai	1	4	6	10
Chamar	1	6	3	9
Halwai	1	3	5	8
Dhanuk	1	1	1	2
Kurmi	1	1	1	2
?	1	0	1	1
<hr/>				
	33	88	88	176

among all the caste groups in Sunauli, only Nunia were divided into two sub-castes - Rajbhar Nunia and Chauhan Nunia. These Nunia were distributed into eleven households - Rajbhar Nunia in ten with twenty-one males and twenty-three females, and Chauhan Nunia in one household with four males and four females. Some Rajbhar Nunia were related to each other by blood. Members of

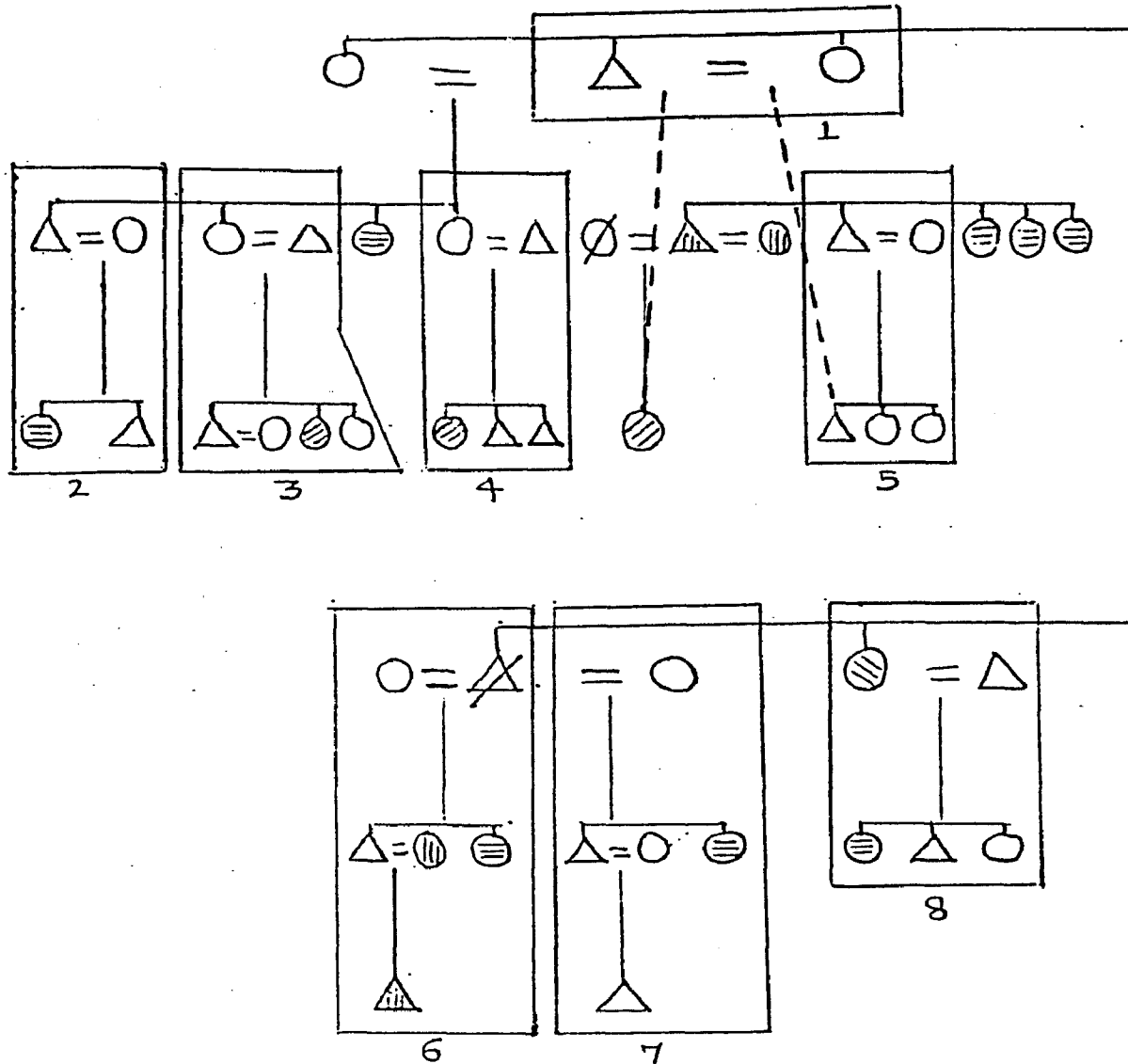
three of these households owned land and cattle, so they did not work for wages. The rest depended on wage labor for subsistence.

The second in order of population size was the Mohali caste. Mohalis were basket-makers and were distributed into eight households. The members of these households were related by both blood and marriage to the sixty year old founder of the Mohali community in Sunauli as is shown in figure # 6. In this figure, numbers one to eight represent the numbers of the Mohali households in Sunauli. The couple of household number one had their two grandchildren (a boy and a girl) living with them. Since the Mohali included their married daughters/sisters (but not the children and husbands of these married daughters/sisters) as "absent" members of their household/family, I have included their married daughters/sisters in this figure.

The Teli caste was distributed into three households out of which members of two households were consanguineal relatives. Two Teli families owned stores, and the male head of the third family worked as a cook on various ceremonial occasions for his patrons (Jajman) who lived in different villages. During 1985, Sunauli had one household of the Halwai caste. The household head, a man who was seventy-five in 1985, owned the biggest store in the village. He also owned some land, so no members of his

Figure # 6

The Mchali households in Sunauli



KEY:

- O = female
- Δ = male
- O/Δ = deceased female/male
- ⊗ = married and living in a different village
- ⊙ = married but not yet living with spouse
- ⊚ = relative (classificatory sister)
- ⊗/Δ = living in a different village

family needed to work for wages. Two households of Sunar caste belonged to brothers, one of whom practised his traditional occupation of gold-smithery while the other worked for wages in and out of the village. Sunauli had only one household of Kurmi caste and one of Chamar caste. The members of both of these households worked for wages. The Chamar household male also practiced his traditional occupation of leather-working and his wife worked as a midwife. She was called on by both the Satar and caste people whenever her services were needed. One household belonged to the unnamed caste. The only member of this household was a blind man who was a part time beggar. There was one household belonging to the Gangai caste which owned the largest amount of land in Sunauli. The two households of the Kiyat caste were not related by kinship. One had its own land to live on and the other sold milk in Biratnagar. The Dhanuk caste, which had only one household, had a tea stall, and the only household of Kevarat caste owned land. Among all the caste people of Sunauli, the members of the Chauhan Nunia, Gangai, Kevarat and one Kiyat caste households did not work for wages. They hired other caste members of their own or other villages to work for them for wages.

The distribution of caste population in Sunauli touches a theoretical issue of "dominant caste" raised by Srinivas (1955, 1959, 1976) in his study of the Indian villages. Srinivas (1955) calls that caste group as dominant when

it is higher in ritual status, numerically big, and economically and politically powerful. In a later work (1959), carried out in Ramapura, India, he adds non-traditional education, modern occupation, and physical force to the above demographic, economic and political features of a caste which may influence it to be a dominant one.

The possibility of a single caste group emerging as dominant is not applicable in the context of Sunauli. Here, as I illustrated above, certain caste groups did appear powerful economically, and certain others numerically, but none of these appeared powerful politically. Further, in Sunauli, each caste group was numerically small, with the exception of the Nunia and the Mohali. Numerically, the Mohali comprised a larger group, but they had a low ritual status. The Nunia caste group was second in order of having a large population but the members of this caste group were divided into two subcastes and lacked solidarity among themselves. Although certain caste groups, such as the Gangai, Kevarat and Chauhan Nunia owned most of the land and wealth in the village, and some of their members were also exposed to non-traditional education and modern occupation, these groups were numerically weak. As mentioned above, each of these caste groups were limited to one household and, therefore, could not emerge as dominant. However, certain individuals of both Satar and caste groups did emerge as dominant in

Sunauli. I illustrate this in chapter VIII (see Dommen 1970 for dominant caste group versus dominant individual).

In spite of belonging to different caste groups, the caste people of Sunauli shared many things in common. The members of each of these caste groups thought of themselves as being descended from the same male ancestor. They all spoke the Maithili language which belongs to the Indo-European language family, shared a similar diet which included rice, bread, lentils and vegetables, in addition to fish and certain kind of meat. As I illustrate later in this chapter, these caste people also participated in similar economic activities of farming and wage-earning. These caste people also dressed similarly. Their age and gender were reflected in their dress. For example, all older men (between age thirty-five and above) wore long shirts and Dhoti. Younger men (between the age 10 - 35) wore western style pants and shirts while going to town or weekly markets. While in the village, they wore shirts and Lungi (a two yard long material which is sewn at one end and wrapped around the waist covering the ankles). These younger men often wrapped their Dhoti as Lungi.

Women's dress showed less variation and depended primarily on their marital status. The caste women, above the age of twelve or thirteen wore sari and blouse. All the married-in women of this age group also observed Parda (veiling, meaning they covered their heads with one end

of their sari while in and out of their households). Girls below age twelve or thirteen wore western style dress.

More important than sharing of these features was their group identity as Hindu. According to my caste informants, there were only two Jaat (types or kinds of people) in this world - Hindu and Muslim. All those who were not Hindu were Muslims or like Muslims and, therefore, untouchable. This label "Hindu" appeared as the most important criterion of group identity for the caste people and tied them to other Hindu of Nepal and India. As Hindu, they shared the cultural ideology of Saptha/non-Saptha (pure/impure) and Dharma, Karma and rebirth. As Hindu, they also believed in multitude of gods, in heaven and hell, witches, shamans and spirits.

Such practice of Hinduism of my caste informants relates to a theoretical debate of "great" and "little" traditions. Marriott (1955) applies Redfield's (1955) concept of "great community" and "little community" in the context of Hinduism of village India and distinguishes two parallel types of religious practices: "Great Tradition" and "Little Tradition". By the former Marriott means Sanskritic tradition springing from the Vedic and Puranic literature, and by the latter he means those religious practices which are not rooted in the Vedic and Sanskrit texts, and are the products of a particular locality. Marriott (1955) views these two

traditions as different from and independent of each other. Srinivas (1962) also, in his study of the Coorgs, separates the religions of India into Sanskritic and non-Sanskritic.

Such typology is not very useful in understanding the religious practices of Sunauli. Here both traditional and local elements are fused together in such a coherent way that it is not helpful to draw a specific line between them indicating where one ends and the other one starts.

Hinduism of Sunauli displays a great range of diversity. It includes most of those Sanskritic elements which have great time depth - starting from the Vedic age. It also includes various local practices which do not have their origin in these ancient Hindu texts. But what is significant about the Hinduism of Sunauli is that it allows an individual to justify his identity as Hindu by following any of the above practices. Such syncretism of various elements discourages an analyst to view the religion of Sunauli in terms of two different traditions. My observation indicates that the religious practices of the caste people, viewed as a whole, talk forcefully about the diversity and flexibility of Hinduism. These also help us understand why adoption of Hinduism appears as crucial for a Satar when he/she wants to become a Sapha Hod.

According to my caste informants, an individual born into a caste family received two identities upon his

birth, caste and Hindu, which were interrelated and inseparable. For them, to be a Hindu was to be born in a caste family and to be a caste member was to be a Hindu. As members of each of these groups, they shared in common certain values, beliefs and behaviors with other Hindu caste people.

These caste people thought of Hinduism as all-pervasive. They viewed all their social relationships as interwoven with religious ideas, categories and acts. I observed, their religion was a way of life to them. As one of my elderly caste informants put it, "to be a Hindu one has to do nothing but to follow one's Dharma (duty). Dharma, such as Putra Dharma (duty of a son), Pitri Dharma (duty of a father), Jaat Dharma (duty of one's caste), Manava Dharma (duty of a human being), and Hindu Dharma (duty of religion) are so much an interwoven whole of the villagers' life that most of my caste informants, both men and women, thought of following their Dharma as more important to call themselves Hindu, than to recite sacred Hindu texts.

Belonging to this socio-religious system of Hinduism, the caste people of Sunauli viewed their society as being divided into a number of self-contained and completely segregated units arranged in an immutable hierarchical order, with untouchables at bottom to the Brahmans at top. My caste informants agreed that no two castes were of equal ritual status. One was either Saptha or non-Saptha

than the other.

The data acquired from my ranking task are pertinent here because they help understand the ranking of the ritual categories of the Satar within their larger ethnic group which I examine later in this chapter. As mentioned earlier, the purpose of this ranking task was to learn how much the caste hierarchy influenced the Satar in defining themselves within and between groups.

In this ranking task, conducted during 1985, I noted that the higher the ritual status of a caste group was, the more tendency its members had to rank the caste groups in the extreme form of Sapha/Achhoot (Maithili classification - meaning pure/untouchable) or Pani Chalne/Pani Nachalne Jaat (Nepali classification - meaning those caste groups from whom water can or cannot be accepted) (see Hamilton 1819; Haimendorf 1966; Gray 1983; Jones and Jones 1976 on untouchables of Nepal). In contrast, the lower one's ritual status was, more tendency one showed to rank other caste groups in the milder form of Sapha/non-Sapha (pure/impure or higher/lower) and not necessarily as Sapha/Achhoot or Pani Chalne/Pani Nachalne Jaat. I illustrate and discuss this below.

My seven Brahman informants, residing in the neighboring villages of Sunauli, ranked all the caste groups of Nepal into three hierarchical categories. The first one was Mathillo Jaat which included upper caste

people, especially Brahman and Chhetri, who were Hindu. The second in order was Pani chalne Jaat which referred to those caste people from whom water could be accepted, meaning touchables. These people could be Hindu or Buddhist. These Brahmans called some people of this category Matwali because they (Matwali) used alcoholic beverage in their formal/informal rituals. The third category consisted of Pani nachalne Jaat. It included those people from whom water could not be accepted, meaning untouchable. These people could be Hindu, Buddhist or non-Hindu. Haimendorf (1966) and Levine (1987) also present such hierarchical categories in their studies of the Chhetri caste group and other ethnic groups of Nepal.

During both periods of my field work, there were no Matwali in or around Sunauli. The above Brahman informants defined themselves as belonging to the Mathillo Jaat. They marked all the caste groups of Sunauli, except the Halwai caste group (sweets-maker), and the Satar as Pani Nachalne Jaat. The elderly women of these Brahman households did not drink water touched by these other caste people. These Brahman men and women considered the ritual status of the Halwai caste group as Pani Chalne and accepted water and fried food from its members.

The caste people of Sunauli were least influenced by the ranking procedure of their Brahman neighbors. They

accepted the ritual status of the outside Brahman as highest in ritual hierarchy, but they did not accept these Brahmans' views in ranking them (the caste people of Sunauli) as untouchable. The data of my ranking task indicate that most of the caste people of Sunauli (71%) defined their status as Pani chalne or Sapha and followed the extreme ranking pattern of the above Brahmans. And therefore, they ranked the caste groups of Sunauli as Sapha/Achhoot (Figure # 7). They included the Satar, Mohali and Chamar in their Achhoot category.

Among the Satar, Mohali and the Chamar, the Satar did not agree with the other caste people about their status as lower in the caste hierarchy, but the Mohali and the Chamar did. The members of both these caste groups considered their own caste group as higher than each other's. The Mohali and the Chamar of Sunauli, however, did not identify each other as Achhoot. Rather, they used a milder form of ranking in terms of Sapha/non-Sapha.

These data indicate how much the caste people applied the criterion of Sapha/non-Sapha to define their social relationship to each other in hierarchical terms. They viewed each caste as separate from the other and considered their goal was to maintain the purity of their own caste group. Two ways in which it was done in Sunauli was by observing the rules of commensality (by not sharing certain boiled or fried food with other caste people) and by

Figure # 7

Caste people (excluding the Mchali)
 ranking caste groups
 as Achhoot/non-Sapha/equal

Population by gender and class (age 8 and above)	Sapha/ Achhoot (N = 66)	Sapha/ non-Sapha (N = 9)	equal (N = 1)	no respond (N = 17)
Total population (N = 93)	71%	10%	1%	18%
Female (N = 44)	73%	0%	0%	27%
Male (N = 49)	70%	18%	2%	10%
Upper class (N = 27)	74%	15%	7%	4%
Female (N = 12)	83%	0%	0%	17%
Male (N = 15)	67%	13%	7%	13%
Lower class (N = 66)	70%	11%	0%	19%
Female (N = 32)	78%	0%	0%	22%
Male (N = 34)	71%	21%	0%	8%

practising endogamy. Endogamy was also practised by the members of two subcastes of the Nunia caste group. Members of each of these subcaste groups married among themselves, not with other members of their larger caste group. Such marriage practices enabled them to remain Sapha by not mixing their blood and semen with the members of other caste groups (see Inden 1976 and Marriott 1976 for Hindu views about bodily substance). This practice also separated them from these other caste groups. This separateness was then symbolized and acted out through various rules of commensality.

THE SATAR

The Satar comprised almost half of the population of Sunauli. Of 346 people of Sunauli, 170 were Satar who were distributed into twenty-seven households. In 1985, they were divided into nine patrilineal clans. The distribution of their population according to clans and gender is presented in figure # 8. I could not find out the clan of one woman who was out of the village for most of the time. According to my Satar informants she had to be from one of these nine clans.

The Satar expressed their shared cultural identity in various ways. The cultural principle that they used to define their membership in their ethnic group was based on descent, i.e. they thought of themselves as being descended from the same male ancestor. Such sharing of ancestry

Figure # 8

Distribution of the Satar population
by gender and clan

<u>clans</u>	<u>female</u>	<u>male</u>	<u>total</u>
Marndi	23	18	41
Soren	16	16	32
Murmu	15	8	23
Tudu	10	11	21
Hemram	9	9	18
Hansdak	6	13	19
Baske	4	4	8
Kisku	4	2	6
Paunri	0	1	1
?	1	0	1
	88	82	170

appeared as the most important criterion for defining their cultural identity. In addition, their Satari language and the design of their household-compounds with covered veranda expressed their shared ethnicity (see chapter

VII). Their dress appeared as the other visual marker of their cultural identity. In clothing ritual, gender and age differences were made apparent. Most of the younger and older Christian Satar and the Bidin Hod men wore Lungi and shirts. A few younger men also wore pants instead of Lungi while in the village or in town irrespective of their ritual categories. The elderly Sapha Hod men did not wear pants or Lungi. They wore Dhoti and a long shirt while in the village or in town.

The Satar women were far more distinctive than the Satar men. The Satar women's three piece dress of a blouse, Lungi and a Panchi (a two yard long piece of cloth wrapped around the waist covering the upper part of the body and the left shoulder) sharply distinguished them from their caste neighbors. However, not all women wore this dress all the time. The elderly Sapha Hod women and the Christian women dressed differently. Between these two, the Sapha Hod women mostly wore a sari and a blouse. The Christian Satar women wore both forms of dress - sari while going to town and Lungi and Panchi while in the village. Unlike the Maithil women, the Satar women did not practise Parda.

These distinct cultural attributes distinguished the Satar from the caste people. As such, even when the Satar lived amidst the caste people and interacted with them every day, these two groups, Satar and caste, remained

separate and did not form one larger social group.

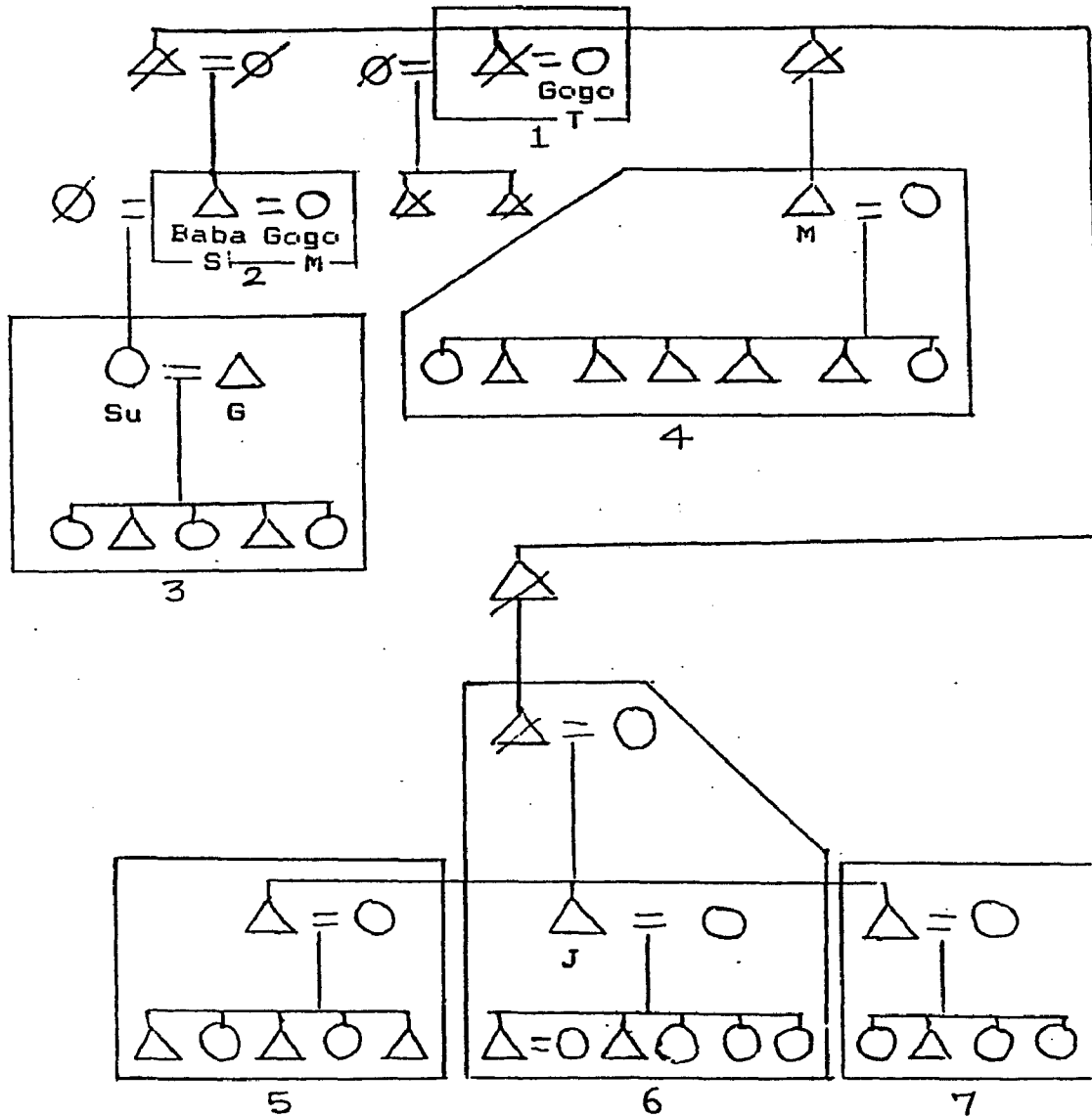
During 1985, these Satar of Sunauli were distributed into twenty-seven households. Twenty-four of these households were built in a row with the remaining three households located across the path (see map # 3). The long row was broken by eight Mohali households and two Teli households. A third Teli household was at the southern end of the line of Satar households. Three Satar households, in addition to the twenty-seven households, were empty during 1985 because their owners preferred to live and work in Biratnagar throughout the year. As such, I did not include these empty households in my census of 1985.

Twenty-two of these twenty-seven households belonged to the Bidin Hod and two to the Christian Satar related through sisters. The Sapha Hod were distributed in three households. They were the lineal and collateral descendants of Vishnu Baba as shown in the figure # 9. In this figure, households 1, 2, and 6 were of the Sapha Hod of Sunauli. The female head of household 3 called herself a Sapha Hod, but her husband called himself a Bidin Hod. Households 4, 5 and 7 were in a different village, eight miles from Sunauli. Among these households, the members of number 7 were Sapha Hod and the rest (number 4 and 5) were Christian Satar.

Both in 1978-79 and 1985, some of these households housed individuals belonging to different ritual

Figure # 9

Sapha Hod households in Sunauli and other villages



KEY:

○ = female

△ = male

○/△ = deceased female/male

The members of households 1, 2, 6 and 7 were Sapha Hod. The households numbering 1, 2, 3 and 6 were in Sunauli, and the rest in other villages. The female head of household 3 claimed to be a Sapha Hod but the male head of this household claimed to be a Bidin Hod. The members of household 4 and 5 had converted to Christianity.

categories. For example, in 1985, the three households of the Sapha Hod housed both the Sapha Hod and the Bidin Hod, and the two households of the Christian Satar housed both the Christian Satar and the Bidin Hod. The households owned by the Bidin Hod had only Bidin Hod in residence. The population and the number of these households are presented in figure # 10.

Figure # 10

Population of the Satar Ritual categories

<u>ritual categories</u>	<u>households</u>	<u>population</u>
Bidin Hod	22	151
Sapha Hod	3	11
Christian Satar	2	8

total	27	170

The surrounding Satar villages did not have such diversity within their ethnic group. For example, in 1985, these other villages had only two households of the Christian Satar and the rest belonging to the Bidin Hod. These villages did not have any Sapha Hod households, nor did they have more than six households of the caste people.

RITUAL CATEGORIES

As mentioned above, the Satar of Sunauli divided themselves into three ritual categories - the Bidin Hod, the Sapha Hod and the Christian Satar.

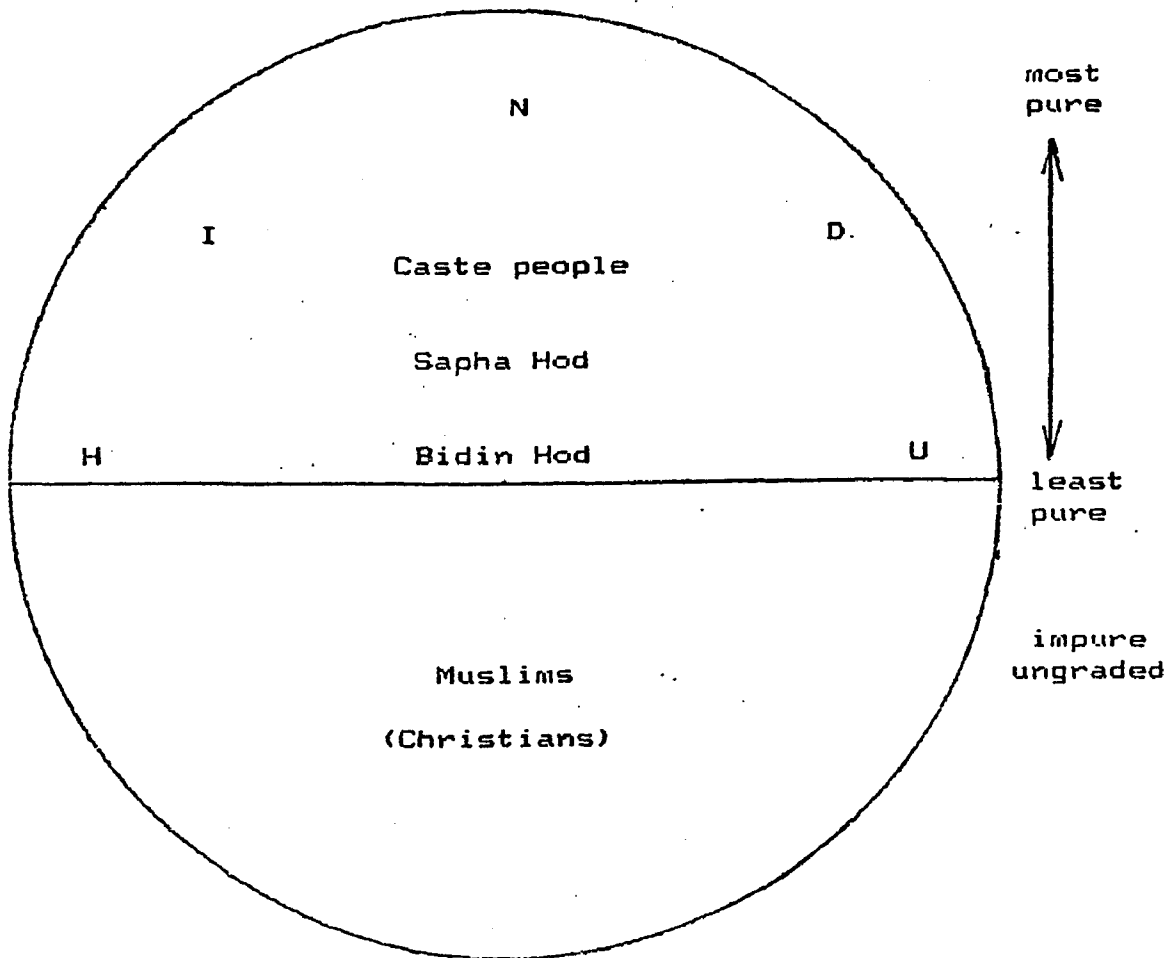
The Bidin Hod literally means Hindu Satar. To repeat again, the Bidin Hod shared the view of their caste neighbors that there were only two Jaat (kinds of people) on this earth - Hindu and Muslim - and all those who were not Muslim were either Muslim or like Muslim (Figure # 11). And since they did not think of themselves as Muslim, they defined themselves as Hindu.

Although the Bidin Hod called themselves Hindu, they did not consider themselves as a part of the caste society. Therefore, they did not practise the Hindu rituals of the caste people. Instead, they followed their traditional Satar rituals. They worshipped Bonga (deities/spirits) and made offerings to them. Since Sunauli did not have any proper shrine for their Bonga, the Bidin Hod propitiated their Bonga in their homes and in a Sapha Hod household.

The second ritual category among the Satar consisted of the Sapha Hod. Literally it means "clean" or "pure" Satar. The Sapha Hod shared the view of the Bidin Hod in their (Satar) not being a part of the caste society and yet being Hindu. They also used the label Hindu to distinguish themselves from the Muslim. Beyond this, they differed from the Bidin Hod. They incorporated some Hindu ritual elements of the caste people in their everyday behavior and believed these elements as traditionally belonging to their own ethnic group. This distinguished them from the Bidin Hod who called themselves Hindu but did not practise

Figure # 11

World-view of the Satar and the caste people



Hinduism as handed down to them by their ancestors. Also because of the incorporation of the Hindu ritual elements, the Sapha Hod viewed the Satar in hierarchical terms. As is shown in figure # 11, within their ethnic group, the Sapha Hod placed themselves at the top of the hierarchy and the Christian Satar at the bottom of it. They thought of the Christians and the Christian Satar as Muslims and viewed them as untouchables (see Gaborieu 1972: 84-105 for the ritual status of Muslims in Nepal).

In Sunauli the Sapha Hod did not have any religious office which required their gatherings on any particular days such as Bodding (1922) found among the Santal of India. Further, unlike the Sapha Hod of India, the Sapha Hod of Sunauli ploughed their own fields and buried their dead as opposed to cremating them.

The third ritual category of the Satar was of the Christian Satar. They called themselves Kristan Hod and did not participate in any rituals of the Sapha Hod and/or the Bidin Hod. The Christian Satar of Sunauli were Pentecostals. They distinguished themselves from the Lutheran and Catholic Satar of the neighboring villages. The Christian Satar of Sunauli met every Sunday with the Satar of nearby villages for their church meetings. They also met on Good Friday, Christmas day and New year. The Pentecostals of these villages celebrated these festivals together.

Among the three ritual categories, the Bidin Hod and

the Sapha Hod identified themselves as Hindu, shared many things in common and, therefore, were closer to each other than each was to the Christian Satar. As Hindu, more than 80% of the Bidin Hod and the Sapha Hod ranked themselves as higher than the Christian Satar (Figure # 12). My caste informants, who identified themselves as Hindu, also recognized the differences among these categories of the Satar. The data of my ranking task shows that among those who responded to my questions, almost 50% of my caste informants recognized the diversity among the Satar. They, however, were more aware of the religious categories of the Hindu versus the Christian Satar, than with the ritual categories of the Sapha Hod and the Bidin Hod. They defined the non-Christian Satar of Sunauli (the Sapha Hod and the Bidin Hod) as Hindu Satar.

Although the Sapha Hod and the caste people defined themselves and each other as Hindu, this label "Hindu" had different meanings for them. For the caste people, to be a Hindu meant to be a caste member. For the Satar, it was not necessary to be a caste member in order to be a Hindu. The Satar, thus, did not see any correlation between being a Hindu and being a member of the caste society.

When looked at from the analyst's point of view, these differences of opinion did not seem to have created much tension between the Sapha Hod, the Bidin Hod and the caste people. As Hindu, the members of both groups often

Figure # 12

Satar ranking themselves within their ethnic group

<u>Population by gender and class (age 8 and above)</u>	<u>Hindu Satar higher than Christian Satar (N = 120)</u>	<u>Hindu Satar lower than Christian Satar (N = 9)</u>	<u>No respond (N = 10)</u>
Total population (N = 139)	86%	7%	7%
Female (N = 74)	85%	10%	5%
Male (N = 65)	89%	3%	8%
Upper class (N = 18)	77%	6%	17%
Female (N = 10)	90%	10%	0%
Male (N = 8)	75%	0%	25%
Lower class (N = 121)	81%	10%	9%
Female (N = 65)	78%	12%	10%
Male (N = 56)	88%	5%	7%

overlooked their cultural identities while interacting with each other or while participating in certain contexts, such as pilgrimage or village festivals.

But when looked at from inside, the status difference between the Satar and the caste people was quite obvious in the way they kept social distance from each other especially in the commensal contexts. While accepting the Satar as Hindu, the caste people also thought of the Satar as belonging to a lower ritual status than the caste people. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, my caste informants of 1985 placed all the Satar at the bottom of their ritual hierarchy and designated them as Achhoot. By designating the Satar as Achhoot, my caste informants viewed the Satar and themselves as Hindu and belonging to the same social system, but having different ritual statuses within it. This helped them to define their relationship with the Satar more positively as Hindu.

It must be borne in mind that, in this context, for a Satar to be a Hindu does not necessarily mean to follow the Hindu rituals as practised by the caste people who are Hindu. A Satar, a Bidin Hod or a Sapha Hod, wants to identify himself as a Hindu mainly to distinguish himself from a Muslim or a Christian. Such identity enables him to maintain a greater degree of social distance from the members of these two religious groups. It also helps him to view himself sharing certain cultural values with the people of different caste groups, who are also the dominant

groups in Nepal.

Because of such strategic use of their Hindu identity, my Satar informants did not see any correlation between being a Hindu and being a member of a caste group. They defined themselves as Hindu especially to distinguish themselves from the Muslim. Therefore, to them, it was not necessary to be a caste member in order to be a Hindu. They denied viewing themselves as being a part of the caste society at any level. During my informal interviews with them, they repeatedly expressed their ignorance about the caste groups and their relationship with them in terms of each other's ritual status. The data gathered through the ranking task, however, point in another direction. In this task, most of the Satar ranked Brahman having the highest ritual status in the caste hierarchy. Further, of 139 Satar, 44% could rank more than four castes of Sunauli and 49% could rank at least the caste groups of the Teli, Mohali and Chamar (Figure # 13). These 49% of the individuals labeled the rest of the caste people as Diku and could not rank them at all. As this figure illustrates, class difference was significant in such ranking. Upper class people, both male and female, could rank more than four caste groups of Sunauli. Because of their contact and continuous interaction with the caste people of the vicinity and Biratnagar, the upper class people were more aware of the ritual differences existing between the caste groups of Sunauli. Gender difference

Figure # 13

Satar ranking the caste groups of Sunauli

<u>Population by gender and class (age 8 and above)</u>	<u>ranking more than four caste groups (N = 61)</u>	<u>ranking less than four caste groups (N = 68)</u>	<u>no respond (N = 10)</u>
Total population (N = 139)	44%	49%	7%
Female (N = 74)	31%	62%	7%
Male (N = 65)	57%	33%	10%
Upper class (N = 18)	61%	11%	28%
Female (N = 10)	50%	50%	0%
Male (N = 8)	75%	25%	0%
Lower class (N = 121)	40%	47%	13%
Female (N = 65)	26%	65%	9%
Male (N = 56)	59%	30%	11%

also appeared significant in such ranking. More men than women could rank more than four caste groups of Sunauli. Although this is a significant point, its discussion is not covered in this thesis. Further research is needed to examine the gender identities of the Satar and the caste people.

In addition to this, my Satar informants also ranked their ethnic group with the caste groups of Sunauli whom the Satar called Diku. Among these informants, 70% of the men and women of both class categories ranked their ethnic group as higher than all the caste groups of Sunauli. 23% of individuals ranked themselves as higher than the Mohali and the Chamar but lower than the rest of the caste groups (Figure # 14).

These data illustrate that most of the Satar of Sunauli, despite their verbal denial of being in the caste system, viewed the caste system as all-pervasive and encompassing. Such viewing of the caste system influenced their behavior not only in ranking themselves with their caste neighbors, but also with the members of their own ethnic group. Constant interaction with the caste people, both in and out of Sunauli, and the tension and conflicts emerging from such interaction, also provide a base for some Satar, like the Sapha Hod, to view the caste system as the dominant social system of Nepal. This has led these Sapha Hod to incorporate some caste values with their

Figure # 14

Satar ranking themselves with
the Diku

<u>Population by gender and class (age 8 and above)</u>	<u>higher than Diku (N = 97)</u>	<u>lower than Diku (N = 32)</u>	<u>no respond (N = 10)</u>
Total population (N = 139)	70%	23%	7%
Female (N = 74)	70%	24%	6%
Male (N = 65)	69%	22%	9%
Upper class (N = 18)	67%	28%	5%
Female (N = 10)	70%	30%	0%
Male (N = 8)	62%	0%	38%
Lower class (N = 121)	68%	22%	10%
Female (N = 65)	69%	23%	8%
Male (N = 56)	70%	19%	11%

values and, thus, distinguish themselves both from their Satar and caste neighbors.

ECONOMY AND CLASS CATEGORIES:

During both periods of 1978-79 and 1985, the economy of the villagers of Sunauli, both Satar and caste people, was primarily based on plough cultivation and wage labor. Fewer than half were cultivators among whom some owned land while others worked on contract. According to my census data of 1985, of twenty-seven households of the Satar and thirty-three of the caste people, only six Satar and twelve caste households owned land. The landholdings of these villagers were very small compared to what is allowed for private ownership by the Nepali Government. The Government allows 25 bigha (about 17 hectares) per adult male or per unmarried female above the age of thirty-five (Regmi 1976). In Sunauli, in 1985, the largest landholding was sixteen Bigha, as shown in figure # 15. This figure shows the monetary value of land and cattle holdings of each of the caste and Satar households in Sunauli. These figures were obtained while collecting property ownership data among the Satar and caste people.

While gathering these data, I also learned how much people valued the possession of land and cattle. During both periods of my field work, villagers, who owned cattle and land and those who did not, talked about agriculture as the most prestigious way of earning one's livelihood.

Figure # 15

Land and cattle ownership
of the Satar and the caste people

<u>Individuals</u>	<u>Size of land and its value in cash</u>		<u>No. of cattle and and their value in cash</u>		<u>Total in cash</u>
	<u>bigha</u>	<u>value</u>	<u>no.</u>	<u>value</u>	
Gangai	16	240,000	8	8,000	248,000
Nunia (C)	14	220,000	8	8,000	228,000
Sapha Hod	14	220,000	4	4,000	224,000
Kevarat	11	155,000	7	7,000	162,000
Sapha Hod	11	155,000	0		155,000
Bidin Hod	8	120,000	3	3,000	123,000
Halwai	4	60,000	7	7,000	67,000
Kiyat	3	45,000	10	10,000	55,000
Bidin Hod	3	45,000	2	2,000	47,000
Mohali	2 1/2	37,500	0		37,500
Nunia (C)	1	15,000	4	4,000	19,000
Bidin Hod	1	15,000	3	3,000	18,000
Nunia (R)	13K	9,750	5	5,000	14,750
Teli	16K	12,000	2	2,000	14,000
Nunia (R)	12K	8,600	4	4,000	12,600
Dhanuk	13K	9,750	2	2,000	11,750
Chamar	1K	750	2	2,000	2,750
Bidin Hod	1K	750	0		750

 This figure gives an average value of land and cattle. Measurement of land is: 20 kattha (3,645 sq. ft.) = 1 bigha (72,900 sq. ft.) and 1.5 bigha = 1 hectare. In 1985, the exchange rate was Rs. 18.65 for \$ 1.00. (R) and (C) following Nunia indicates Rajbhar and Chauhan Nunia.

Individuals having cattle could work in the village while still living with their families. According to them, one's freedom is very limited while working in offices or on wage labor. One has to leave home for these jobs and, in addition, one is constantly watched by one's boss, whereas in agriculture, they say, "one is one's own master" and enjoys the maximum freedom. As such, though agriculture requires hard work, with not always good results, for the villagers, as Srinivas (1976) points out, it appears to be not only a means of earning a livelihood, but also "a way of life".

Since agriculture was considered to be the most prestigious form of livelihood, as well as the best way of living, cattle had great cultural value in Sunauli. Among the villagers of Sunauli, as among the Nuer (Evans-Pritchard /1940/1982), mere possession of cattle gave the utmost satisfaction and happiness to a man. The Satar and caste people talked of old days when everyone owned cattle and was respected by everyone else. A man without a cow or cattle was considered poor, helpless, dependent on others for wages, and without any prestige. Because of these various implications, a Satar or a caste individual dreamed of owning cattle. If he had one or two, he wanted to add more. During both periods of my field work, I noted that the larger the number of cattle one had, the greater one's prestige was. And the prestige acquired this way, from the possession of cattle, was highly desired and

valued both by the Satar and the caste people.

I observed, it was also the land and cattle-holdings which had created a great deal of economic differences within the Satar and the caste groups of Sunauli. In addition, wage labor (its presence or absence) functioned as another criterion in making these differences more obvious both to the locals and the analyst. On the basis of these criteria - land and cattle-holdings and wage labor - the population of Sunauli could be seen as being divided into two classes - upper and lower - as shown in the following figure # 16. In this figure, individuals with

Figure # 16

Division of upper and lower class

<u>lower class</u>	Rs. 750 - 37,000
<u>upper class</u>	Rs. 47,000 - and up.

a property value of Rs. 47,000 and up are placed in the upper class category because they never worked for wages. Instead, they hired labor to work on their land. Individuals having a property value of Rs. 37,000 and below are placed in the lower class category because they worked for wages, part-time or full-time. These individuals and their landless friends viewed their non-wage earning neighbors as Dhani (rich) and often referred to them as Malik (patron/master).

In the above two figures (15 and 16) I have not included the property value of a Sapha Hod (Baba S). In 1978-79, Baba S owned fourteen bigha land, but in 1985, he did not own any. Although his patri-kin, who now owned Baba S' land, had allowed Baba S to cultivate the land and use the produce for himself (see chapter II), the villagers considered Baba S as a man without land. Baba S also thought similarly of himself. Such loss of wealth, however, had not brought any change in the villagers' attitude towards Baba S' status. They did not view Baba S by what he owned or did not own. They respected Baba S for what he was by birth. Therefore, they still considered him as their Malik, feared him, and counted on his help in all possible ways.

During both periods of my field work, only a few Satar and the caste people (20%) belonged to the upper class. The following figure # 17 shows the ethnic population of Sunauli by gender and class. In this figure, I have included Baba S as a member of upper class because of his higher social status.

My upper class informants had large amount of land holdings and also many cattle to plough these lands. They had acquired these lands in one of the three different ways - by inheritance, by purchase and by default, in return for non-payment of money loaned to other individuals of the village. During 1985, three Sapha Hod households and two

Figure # 17

Ethnic population of Sunauli by gender and class

<u>ethnic group</u>	<u>gender</u>	<u>upper class</u> (n = 69)	<u>lower class</u> (n = 277)	<u>total</u> (n = 346)
Satar	female	13	75	88
	male	9	73	82
Caste	female	24	64	88
	male	23	65	88

Bidin Hod households belonged to upper class. Among the caste people, the households of Chauhan Nunia, Gangai, Kevarat, Halwai and one household of Kiyat caste belonged to this class category.

There were certain factors which were correlated with the status of the upper class people. Literacy was one of them. According to my census material of 1985, the literacy rate was higher among the wealthy people (see chapter VIII). They also had a good command of Nepali which is the national language of Nepal and the language spoken by the upper caste Nepali people. Most of these rich people had good contacts with caste people of Biratnagar and were more familiar with the statuses of different caste groups. Members of the upper class, especially the Sapha Hod, had also accepted certain caste values and, as figures # 13 and 14 show, they were more aware of ritual

status differences. Furthermore, the upper class people of Sunauli, both Satar and caste, also followed diet, dress and several other rituals and behavior of upper caste Nepali people. These rituals and behavior distinguished them from their poor neighbors and also, at the same time, blurred the ethnic differences existing between the Satar and the caste people.

The lower class people were divided into four categories - land/cattle-owners, cattle-owners, cattle-less and self-employed people. The landholdings of most of the land/cattle-owners were very small. This pushed them to work for wages. The cattle owners worked on others' land and shared half of the land products. They were known as Adhiyar (a Nepali and a Maithili term meaning individuals having half share on the land product). They worked for wages only for a month or two before the harvest. During 1985, two of thirty-three male household heads of different castes and six of twenty-seven Satar household heads (males) worked as Adhiyar in Sunauli. The self-employed category included the Mohali, one Kiyat caste family and the tea stall owner. The Mohali made baskets for their subsistence. The Kiyat caste family owned a few milking cattle. This family also bought milk from the two rich households of Sunauli and sold this milk and the milk of its own cattle in Panchali and Biratnagar. The other self-employed family of Sunauli was of the tea-stall owner. These three did not work for wages.

Daily wage labor was the primary source of income for those in Sunauli, who had neither land nor cattle. Their wage labor included various odd jobs, such as cutting and thrashing the wheat, rice or other products of land, building houses, plastering floors and walls of these houses, digging ponds, and taking grain for processing in the factories of Panchali or Nauligaun. Villagers, both men and women, worked for wages both in and out of Sunauli in 1985. The poor Satar preferred to work within the village, but as there was not enough work for all in Sunauli during 1985, all unmarried women above the age of fourteen, most of the married women who had older people in their households to take care of their children and their households, all young, and most of the adult men went to work in Biratnagar where they stayed almost nine months a year, visiting Sunauli once or twice a month. During this time, the individuals staying in the poor households were only children and older people of both sexes.

One or two members of each of these households worked for wages almost throughout the year - nine months in Biratnagar and then in Sunauli while visiting their families for two or three months. In Sunauli, they worked for other Satar on a daily wage basis repairing and rebuilding thatch roofs. Though men and women worked together, both in and out of Sunauli, men were paid more than the women for all types of wage labor. In both places, men were paid the standard rates of Rs. 12.00 (.32

cents) a day while women got only Rs. 10.00.

In spite of their working as Adhiyar or for wages, most of the villagers were frequently in debt. The interest rate on loans was very high during the period of second fieldwork. As most of the villagers did not have any money in banks they had to take loans from individuals. The interest rates for these loans were 50% in the village and from 30% to 50% in Biratnagar. Because of this high rate, most of the poor people villagers ended up paying only the interest, for generation after generation, never being able to repay the original amount of loan.

Despite the class differences both within the Satar and the caste groups, class was not a basis for social solidarity in Sunauli, nor did it influence these people in constituting separate communities of rich and poor. Here ethnicity determined the choice of residence - a characteristic that Beteille (1965) also demonstrates in his study of a Tanjore village in India. In Sunauli, the Satar and caste people lived separately as members of different social groups, the landowners did not. This is apparent from the spacial arrangement of the households belonging to these people (see map # 3). As the map illustrates, the Satar lived with other Satar irrespective of the class differences within their ethnic group.

Ethnicity also determined economic relations. All

the upper class Satar informants hired only the Satar of lower class to work for them in their households or on their land. Similarly, the upper class caste people hired the lower class people, belonging either to their own or other castes. The lower class people of each ethnic group also hired individuals belonging to their own group while building or rebuilding their houses. The Satar and the caste people of Sunauli, therefore, did not work for each other. The Satar worked only for the Satar and the caste people only for the caste people. Outside Sunauli, the Satar, however, did work for the Nepali speaking caste people whom they distinguished as Mundo.

This is not to say that their ethnicity governed all their behavior. For both the Satar and the caste people, the principles of class, ethnicity, and caste ordered their relations differently in different contexts. Their social system provided them with enough room for manipulation and change of these relations. And especially because of this, their economic, ethnic and ritual differences often overlapped with each other. Such crossing and overlapping of the boundaries of the Satar and caste groups allowed the Satar to view themselves as a part of a wider social network. Such viewing enabled them to define themselves in a coherent and meaningful way - by maintaining their ethnic differences at some times and ignoring these differences at some other times. I discuss this in the following two chapters.

CHAPTER V

MARRIAGE AND THE CULTURAL IDENTITY OF THE SATAR

This chapter deals with the persistence of the cultural identity of the Satar. It illustrates how the Satar, irrespective of their ritual differences, maintain their group boundaries and define their cultural identity. Although ethnic boundaries are fluid, at a given point in most societies ethnic divisions appear fixed and clear cut. In chapter IV, I described a few verbal and visual forms like language and dress which marked ethnicity and distinguished the Satar group from the caste group. In this chapter, I examine the significance of Satar marriage forms in solidifying the group identity of the Satar and heightening the cultural differences between the Satar and the caste groups. I illustrate how they function as the most effective cultural mechanism in maintaining and perpetuating the distinctiveness and the boundedness of the Satar as a group.

I start my discussion with clan exogamy and various forms of marriage which are an intricate part of the boundary-maintenance behavior of the Satar. Then I integrate these with group endogamy to show how even in contact situations the Satar do not cross the boundaries of their ethnic groups.

CLAN-EXOGRAMY: Among the Satar, clan exogamy¹ regulates marriages within their ethnic group. It persuades the Satar to remain within their group and maintains their distinct cultural identity even in interactive contexts.

A Satar's clan identity has far reaching implications. It is through clan identity that a Satar, a male or a female, is accepted as a member of his/her father's group. In the absence of clan identity, status is not validated and a Satar does not acquire the ethnic group membership, he/she cannot get married within the ethnic group and cannot have proper funeral rites. In such a case, the person is not offered food after his/her death by his/her descendants and, therefore, ceases to be their (descendants') Hapramko Bonga (ancestral Bonga). A Satar virtually ceases to be a Satar in the absence of clan identity.

Clan identity is equally important for both men and women. The Satar women continue their natal clan identity even after they have married. Among the various Bonga (spirits/deities) that the Satar believe in (see chapter VI), some Bonga are of their villages, households and their

1. The Satar are divided into nine patrilineal clans in Sunauli. Members of each clan think of themselves as being descended from one male ancestor and consider each other as consanguines with whom they cannot marry. All Satar clans are, therefore, exogamous.

clans. During the marriage ceremony, while a Satar woman changes the Bonga of her father's household into those of her husband's household and the Bonga of her village into those of her husband's village, she never changes her own ancestral or clan Bonga. While collecting my census data, I learned that all married women used the names of their fathers' clans after their proper names. They believed that those who shared the same clan names were either siblings or a father and his children, never a husband and a wife or a mother and her children.

My data further show that by keeping her father's clan, a Satar woman maintains her natal identity even after she is married and/or a bride-price is paid for her. While the bride-price extends her husband's right over her sexual, domestic and reproductive services, the continuation of the natal identity symbolizes her relatedness (identity) with her ancestral Bonga. This natal identity is symbolically acknowledged by a married woman when she visits her natal home during the two big festivals of Soharai and Baha. During these festivals, she brings with her some rice-beer and puffed-rice or flattened rice to offer to her clan Bonga residing in this natal household. This food, especially the rice-beer, is first offered to her father's ancestral Bonga and then distributed among her hosts and guests. This ritual, which was observed both in the Bidin Hod and the Sapha Hod households, symbolized the autonomy that a Satar woman

displayed vis a vis her husband's group in addition to her continued membership in her natal household.

Clan identity also validates a Satar's social and ethnic status. In the Satar social system, everyone should have a clan name in order to be a member of the Satar group. Failure to have a clan name for the child means failure to legitimize one's child which means exclusion from the group. In cases of unknown paternity or known paternity in which the biological father does not acknowledge his paternity, fathers are "bought" from within the Satar group to give their clan names to the unborn children to legitimize the social and ethnic status of these children. As I examine later in this chapter, failure to do so results in the exclusion from the group of the individuals involved: parents, guardian of parents and the child when it is born.

The prescribed rules of clan exogamy and group endogamy allowed the Satar of Sunauli to practise various forms of marriage with different rituals while maintaining their own cultural identity. Differences between the Satar and the caste people were articulated mainly in these different forms of marriages. The caste people of Sunauli and Biratnagar practised only one form of marriage which may be called "arranged" marriage. My census material indicates that among the caste people, one hundred percent of the marriages of the women and one hundred percent of the first marriages of men were

arranged by their parents or guardians without the consent of either of the spouses. Dowry was an integral part of arranged marriage. Further, the caste people did not practise elopement and divorce and allowed remarriages only for those women who were childless and widows or deserted by their husbands. Although the Satar of Sunauli shared the norms of endogamy and practised one hundred percent of endogamous marriages, unlike the caste people, the Satar practised many different forms of marriages. These forms indicated how a Satar union could be validated even with a minimum of ritual. They further illustrate the degree of autonomy a Satar, a man or a woman, displayed in selecting his or her spouses - a practice highly despised by their caste neighbors. Although some of these forms were more prestigious than others and varied according to the economic and/or ritual status of the Satar, all of them were of equal importance in bestowing the married status on a couple.

I could not attend any of the Satar marriages held in Sunauli during 1978-79, and there were no marriage ceremonies during my stay with them in 1985. Towards the end of 1979, I attended one marriage, Daudo Bapla¹, which was held in a Bidin Hod household of Panchali, about four

1. In Satari language, Bapla means a marriage union. All the underlined terms of this chapter are Satari unless specified otherwise.

miles from Sunauli. Most of the information about marriage rituals, presented in the following pages, is obtained from my male and female informants and from my participation in the Daudo Bapla held in Panchali.

MARRIAGE FORMS AND RITUALS: Satar marriage forms are associated with different marriage rituals. Although most of the forms require bride-price (Pon), bride-price is also a marriage ritual, Baha Sohan, which I describe later in this chapter. Including Baha Sohan, the Satar divide their marriage forms into ten categories, which are as follows:

1. Daudo Bapla (marriage by sitting in a basket)
2. Tharia Bapla (marriage by sitting on a plate)
3. Baha Sohan Bapla (by paying the bride-price)
4. Itut Bapla (by forcefully applying vermillion powder on a girl's head)
5. Or Ader Bapla (by capture)
6. Apangir Bapla (by elopement)
7. Nir Bolok Bapla (by forcefully entering the household of a boy)
8. Tunki Dipil Bapla (by taking the bride to the groom's household for wedding)
9. Ghardi Jawaee Bapla (by bringing a son-in-law to live with his parents-in-law)
10. Jawaee Kirirok Bapla (by buying a son-in-law)

The Satar view all the above types of marriages as both forms and rituals. I distinguish their forms from their rituals. For the purpose of this paper, I consider

the Daudo, Tharia and Baha Sohan as both forms and rituals. The rest are forms which require one of the above rituals.

Among these forms, the first eight are common forms of marriage which require virilocal residence and the payment of bride-price. The last two are special forms. They reverse the procedure of the bride-price payment because their use is contingent on marriage union serving a purpose distinct from the eight designed to unite a woman and a man. For example, Ghardi Jawa functions to change the post-marital residence of a couple and Jawae Kirinok bestows social paternity on a child. In the first case, a couple lives as husband and wife with the wife's parents, but in the other case, they may never live together as husband and wife. The distinctiveness of the Ghardi Jawa and Jawae Kirinok is also signalled in the bride-price payment. Bride-price is an intricate part of all the marriage forms, except these two. I explain this later in this chapter.

Having distinguished the forms and rituals of the Satar marriage, I divide the Satar marriages into three broad categories: 1. which requires the Donguo (maiden) status of a girl, 2. which requires the Chadwi (divorced) status of a girl and, 3. which requires either Chadwi or Donguo status of a girl.

1. In Sunauli, the first type of marriage Daudo Bapla required the Donguo status of a girl. In Satari

language Donguo means a girl who has not yet used vermillion powder on her head. The caste people's concept of Kunwari is similar to this concept. But whereas a Kunwari, in Maithil language, is one who has not yet had sexual intercourse with a boy, a Donguo may have. The act of intercourse does not change the social status of a Donguo, but it does change that of a Kunwari. As a result, The Satar consider a girl who elopes with a man for the first or second time a Donguo even if she is having sexual relations with him. If, however, the man puts vermillion powder on the girl's head, this changes her status from a Donguo to a married woman. If she does not live with this man, she is no longer considered a Donguo, but she becomes a Chadwi (a divorced woman). The vermillion powder is the key factor in changing a girl's status from a Donguo to a woman.

The above general statements can be illustrated with two cases. One occurred around 1962 with my female informant M who was then a member of a Sapha Hod household and a Donguo. One afternoon while she was asleep one man F, who liked her very much, put vermillion powder on her head. Immediately after the above incident, M's Donguo status changed into the status of a married woman. Since M never liked F, she refused to be his wife. F paid a heavy penalty for his deviant act and the case was resolved. But the status of M changed from a married woman to that of a Chadwi (divorced woman). And since she was

not a Donguo any more, she was no longer considered eligible for a Daudo Bapla, which is the most prestigious form of marriage ritual for a Donguo.

The other case occurred in 1978 when Gogo M's brother's daughter Q, who was living in India, eloped with a Santal (D) and the couple came to Nepal to live. Gogo M's brother came from India and asked Baba S to help find Q. It took Baba S almost a month and a half to track her down and bring her to his house in Sunauli. Q started living in Baba S' household helping Gogo M in her household chores. With the consent of Q's parents Gogo M and Baba S started making plans for a Daudo Bapla for Q. They still considered her a Donguo, because the man she eloped with had not put vermillion powder on her head. For other reasons, Gogo M and Baba S could never complete their plan of marrying her with Daudo rituals, because after four weeks Q met the same man (D) while cutting grass in the field, and ran away with him again.

Daudo Bapla was the marriage form approved for a Donguo. Daudo literally means a basket. In Daudo Bapla, that I attended in Panchali, the Daudo was made of bamboo and was round in shape. It was one foot deep and two feet in diameter. The most significant part of the Daudo Bapla, which completed the marriage ceremony, took place toward the end of the ceremony when the groom, sitting on the shoulders of one of his male kinsmen, rubbed three handfuls of vermillion powder on the head of the bride,

sitting in a Daudo carried by her male kinsmen.

The Satar considered Daudo Bapla as the most prestigious form of marriage mainly because it required the Donguo status of a girl and parental consent. The couple's consent also played a significant role, but it was the parents' approval and their involvement in all the rituals of this marriage which made this marriage form different from the rest. Such consent of both the couple and the parents and the parental participation in all of the rituals appeared as crucial and defining features of a Daudo marriage and made a union more prestigious.

As a prestigious marriage form/ritual, the bride-price in Daudo Bapla was more than in any of the other marriage forms. It included forty kilograms of pork, a cow and a certain amount of cash. In addition, the groom's family also invited the bride's family for two or three great feasts of rice, meat and rice-beer.

Although both men and women regarded Daudo Bapla as the most prestigious form/ritual of marriage, a man could have as many Daudo Bapla as he could afford to, but a woman could have this only as her first marriage, when she was a Donguo. Figures # 18 and 19, based on my census data of 1985, confirm that none of my female informants had Daudo ritual as their second marriage, while two men had this ritual in their second marriages. One

Figure # 18

TYPES OF CEREMONY FOR WOMEN

NUMBER OF MARRIAGES	Dauḍo	Iharĩa	Or Aderz Araric	Itut Baha Sḳḳay	Ghardi Jawaæ	Church	no answer
1st (n = 52)	29% (15)			7% (4)	56% (29)	4% (2)	2% (1)
2nd (n = 23)		13% (3)			83% (19)		4% (1)
3rd (n = 6)			17% (1)		83% (5)		
4th (n = 1)					100% (1)		
5th (n = 0)							
6th (n = 0)							

NOTE: In this figure, Ghardi Jawaæ ceremony means only a marriage contract which does not include any of the other rituals.

Figure # 19

TYPES OF CEREMONY FOR MEN

NUMBER OF MARRIAGES	Dawdo	Tharia	Or Adier/ Arabaic	Ihut	Baha Sighan Jawaab	Ghardi Jawaab	Church	Do answer
1st (n = 36)	30% (11)	6% (2)		50% (18)	6% (2)	5% (2)	3% (1)	
2nd (n = 15)	13% (2)	13% (2)	7% (1)	67% (10)				
3rd (n = 4)	25% (1)			75% (3)				
4th (n = 2)				100% (2)				
5th (n = 2)		50% (1)			50% (1)			
6th (n = 1)		100% (1)						

NOTE: In this figure, Ghardi Jawaab ceremony means only a marriage contract which does not include any of the other rituals.

of them had this Daudo ritual also in his third marriage when he married a Donguo.

2. The second category of marriage required the Chadwi (divorced) status of a girl and was called Iharia Bapla. Iharia means a plate. In the context of wedding, it means a brass plate - about two inches deep and a foot in diameter. The most important part of a ritual completing a Iharia Bapla occurred when the groom applied vermillion powder to the bride's head while the bride sat on a Iharia.

In Sunauli, the Iharia Bapla was considered the most prestigious marriage for a Chadwi. However only those girls/women who had one or two divorces were eligible for this ritual. Iharia Bapla was less prestigious than Daudo Bapla for two reasons. First, the status of a bride was always Chadwi and second, a couple's consent was given priority over a parental consent in this form of marriage.

As a ritual of lesser prestige, Iharia Bapla required a lesser amount of cash and meat as bride-price. Further, it included only one feast given by the groom's family for the bride's family.

In addition, as in Daudo Bapla, in Iharia Bapla also a man could have as many Iharia ritual as he could afford to, but a woman could participate in this ritual only as "once" or 'twice' divorced.

3. Other marriage forms practised by the Satar of Sunauli were for both a Donguo and or a Chadwi. In Itut, Or Ader or Apangir forms of marriages the involved man paid a moderate amount of bride-price if the girl/woman agreed to marry him. If she did not, he paid a heavy penalty to her parents and to the Pancha (male heads of the Satar political organization) for his deviant act.

Among these marriages, the Satar of Sunauli regarded Itut Bapla as the least prestigious marriage because the male spouse did not even think it necessary to get the consent of the woman he wanted to marry. Further, in case of woman's refusal to marry him, his deviant act severely affected her social status - changing it from a Donguo to a Chadwi.

Another form of marriage practised by the Satar of Sunauli, was Nir Bolok Bapla in which either member of the couple forcefully entered the household of the other, started living there and worked there in order to please the members of that household, including the intended spouse. When the individual finally pleased the concerned party, he or she married with any of the rituals mentioned above, i.e. Daudo, Iharja or a simple payment of bride-price, depending on the Donguo/Chadwi status of the female spouse or the economic status of the concerned parties. I encountered only one case of this form in Sunauli. It was practised by a Bidin Hod girl in 1978, prior to my field work.

Tunki Dipil Bapla is another form of marriage. This marriage form is desired by those parents who have Donguo daughters but are also poor. Unable to meet the expenses of their daughter's marriage, the parents ask the groom to bear those expenses. If the groom agrees, the parents of the bride take the bride-price and their daughter marries in the groom's household. I did not encounter any case of such marriage in Sunauli.

BRIDE-PRICE: In each of the above form of marriage, except Ghardi Jawa and Jawa Kirinok, the Sapha Hod and the Bidin Hod of Sunauli required the payment of Pon (bride-price). None of these marriages were negotiated and considered complete without such payment. As mentioned earlier, the Satar regarded the bride-price payment as a ritual complete in itself. This ritual was called Baha Sohan and it validated the status of a couple as husband and wife, making them eligible to live together and raise their children. Figures # 18 and 19 illustrate that more than 50% of my male and female informants had only this form of marriage ritual. These informants did not perform any of the other rituals once they paid bride-price. They simply started living together as husband and wife.

The amount of bride-price paid among the Satar varied, seeming to depend to a great extent on the economic status of the households involved and the Donguo/Chadwi status of

a girl. The range of bride-price was anywhere from a minimum of Rs. 21 to as much as Rs. 800, in addition to forty kilograms of pork, a cow and two feasts held in honor of the bride's family. A Donguo's parents received both cash and kind in larger amount. A Chadwi's family received lesser amounts on her second marriage than on her first marriage, and if she married the dead husband's brother no bride-price was required. Families of women who had divorced consistently claimed only the minimum amount of bride-price in cash. Jones and Jones (1976) found the same trend among the Limbu of eastern Nepal.

A marriage ritual without a bride-price payment meant different things. First, it meant a change in the post-marital residence. In such a case, it also meant a lower economic status of the groom than that of the bride. The Satar called this residential/marriage form Ghardi Jawae Bapla where a Satar parent, a male or a female, brought a son-in-law (Jawae) to live in his/her household with his wife, a daughter of the household head, and contributed his labor in his in-law's household economy. In other words, this form of marriage required bride-service in lieu of bride-price. Bride-service is a contract between the bride's parents and their son-in-law. The contract is for a minimum period of five years and can be renewed. Upon the termination of the contract, the son-in-law receives a pair of oxen and 160 kilograms of grain (rice and/or wheat). He also receives a small amount of

land and a house if his father-in-law is rich.

Ghardi-Jawae Bapla also controlled the post marital residence of a man in Sunauli. As mentioned in chapter IV, the Satar have an ideal of patrilineal virilocal organization. Therefore, in most cases, post-marital residence follows this rule. But with the couple having only daughter/s, uxori-locality or serial uxori-locality is practised. For example, the first married daughter lives with her husband in her father's household for five years. She may move out after this period if her husband wants to. When the second daughter gets married, she (the second daughter) continues the same type of residence for the next five years, and so on. During both periods of my field work, I noted only one case of serial uxori-locality in Panchali where a rich Bidin Hod father had six daughters. In 1985, he was enjoying the bride-services of his youngest son-in-law who was a Bidin Hod from Sunauli.

During 1978, Sunauli had two Ghardi Jawae. Both these men (G and H) were Bidin Hod and also were from a lower class. G was a Ghardi Jawae from upper class Sapha Hod household and H from a lower class Bidin Hod household. G had this type of marriage with Daudu ritual, since his wife was a Donguo and her father was rich. H, however, became a Ghardi Jawae without any ritual, even though his wife was also a Donguo. In his case, both he and his in-laws were very poor. In 1985, G was no longer

a Ghardi Jawa. He had moved out of his father-in-law's household and had established his own household in Sunauli. H was still a Ghardi Jawa then. In 1985, Sunauli also had another Ghardi Jawa in a Bidin Hod household.

The Satar did not require any payment of bride-price in cases which were for establishing a social paternity for the unborn children. This form was called Jawa Kirinok Bapla where parents of a woman bought a son-in-law for their pregnant daughter when the daughter was unable to name the father of her unborn child, following which the couple started living as husband and wife. Such 'buying" validated the social status of the child. In 1978 and 1985, Sunauli had one case of Jawa Kirinok. Marriage, in this case, was not completed because the couple did not live together.

As mentioned earlier, these various marriage rituals of the Satar are more related to the economic status of the individual household heads than to their ritual categories of Sapha Hod versus Bidin Hod. Since the Sapha Hod of Sunauli are rich, and all the Bidin Hod, except two, are poor, it is often hard to distinguish the dividing line of their class and ritual categories. For example, in both 1978-79 and 1985, all daughters and wives of the Sapha Hod households, except three women who were Chadwi, had the most prestigious form of marriage, Daudo Bapla. One Sapha Hod man arranged the Daudo and Iharia rituals even for his two male kinsmen, who worked in his

household, one in 1978-79 and the other in 1985. These Sapha Hod men preferred to marry their sons and daughters or other male/female relatives, working in their households, at an early age (12 to 16 for girls and 16 to 20 for boys) to avoid any situation arising from their elopement and pregnancy. They were proud of both arranging their children's marriages and giving out and bringing in the Donguo, as their caste neighbors did.

Some Bidin Hod boys and girls also had Daudo rituals in their marriage, but most of them had started living as a couple with only a minimum ritual of bride-price. Since most of the Bidin Hod were poor, they could not afford to have Daudo ritual for their Donguo daughters. Of the two rich Bidin Hod of Sunauli, one had this ritual with the Donguo daughter of a Sapha Hod man. The other Bidin Hod did not have this ritual in either of his marriages, even though both of his wives were Donguo. In these cases, since the girls' parents were poor and could not afford this expensive ritual for them, his marriages were negotiated with only a payment of bride-price.

The payment of bride-price and the diversity of marriage forms and rituals among the Satar clearly reveal the ethnic differences between the Satar and the caste people. In addition, the practice and the shared norms of monogamy among the Satar distinguish them from their caste neighbors. During 1985, two of my caste informants

practised polygynous marriages. They had two wives each who lived with their husbands in their husbands' households. My Satar informants disliked such marriage unions and I did not find any polygynous marriages among them in or around Sunauli. I heard only of one such case among the Satar that occurred around 1950 with a Sapha Hod man. This man married six times, but only once did he live with his two wives at the same time. After the four month period, one of these wives left him for good.

Further, culturally approved frequent divorce and remarriages among the Satar distinguished them from the caste people. While the Satar frequently divorced and remarried, in the caste culture norms governing gender, age and an individual woman's circumstances limited remarriage. Since the caste norms condemned elopement and divorce, most of the remarriages occurred after the death of either of the spouses. Between men and women, men remarried more than women did. Further, men remarried even in their older age (forties or fifties), women did not. The cultural norms dictated remarriage for women only if they were widowed or abandoned between the ages of 10 and 25 and had not yet born a child. If a woman without these characteristics disregarded the cultural norms, she lost her social status and might have lost her ritual status as well. I encountered one such case in Sunauli where a widow P, a Rajbhar Nunia, started living with a man of a different caste leaving her four sons behind her. In this

case, P lost her social status for eloping and leaving her children behind, and also her ritual status for living with a man of a different caste group.

Unlike the caste people, the Satar of Sunauli, both men and women, practised remarriages in cases of both death and divorce. Their age and gender did not affect their remarriages. According to my census data, of fifty-two married Satar women, 56% (29) married once and 44% (23) more than once (Figures # 20 and 21). Of the 44% (23) of women who married for a second time, some went on to marry for a third time and one for a fourth time. Among thirty-six married men, 57% (21) married once and 43% (15) more than once. Of these 43% (15) of men who married twice, two also married third time, and two went on to marry for a fifth and one for a sixth time.

The variety of marriage forms and the flexibility of divorce and remarriages also indicate the choices the Satar have in selecting their spouses. My census materials of 1985 show that none of the marriages among them, except one, was negotiated by the parents without their children's consent (Figures # 22 and 23). A boy and a girl, marrying each other, were expected to make their own decision with or without parental involvement. As this figure illustrates, of all the married Satar men and women only one marriage of a man was arranged by his parents without his consent. While interviewing this man,

Figure # 20

ETHNIC GROUPS	NUMBER OF MARRIAGES AMONG WOMEN					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
SATAR (N = 52)	56% (29)	32% (17)	10% (5)	2% (1)		
CASTE PEOPLE (N = 37)	78% (29)	19% (7)	3% (1)			
MOHALI (N = 17)	70% (12)	18% (3)	12% (2)			

Figure # 21

ETHNIC GROUPS	NUMBER OF MARRIAGES AMONG MEN					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
SATAR (N = 36)	57% (21)	31% (11)	6% (2)		3% (1)	3% (1)
CASTE PEOPLE (N = 37)	70% (26)	19% (8)	5% (2)	3% (1)		
MOHALI (N = 9)	67% (6)	33% (3)				

Figure # 22

<u>FORMS AND NUMBER OF MARRIAGE AMONG WOMEN</u>						
<u>NUMBER OF MARRIAGES</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>C</u>	<u>D</u>	<u>E</u>	<u>F</u>
1st (n = 52)	17% (9)	62% (32)		2% (1)		19% (10)
2nd (n = 23)	43% (10)	43% (10)	9% (2)			5% (1)
3rd (n = 6)	67% (4)	17% (1)		16% (1)		
4th (n = 1)		100% (1)				
5th (n = 0)						
6th (n = 0)						

Figure # 23

<u>FORMS AND NUMBER OF MARRIAGE AMONG MEN</u>						
<u>NUMBER OF MARRIAGES</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>C</u>	<u>D</u>	<u>E</u>	<u>F</u>
1st (n = 36)	17% (6)	58% (21)	3% (1)			22% (8)
2nd (n = 15)	40% (6)	47% (7)	13% (2)			
3rd (n = 4)	50% (2)				25% (1)	25% (1)
4th (n = 2)	50% (1)	50% (1)				
5th (n = 2)	50% (1)	50% (1)				
6th (n = 1)	100% (1)					

- A: own choice, without parent's consent.
- B: own choice, with parent's consent.
- C: capture with girl's consent/knowledge before (elopement).
- D: capture without girl's consent/knowledge before.
- E: arranged without own consent by parents.
- F: arranged with own consent by parents.

I learned that since he had married twice before and these marriages did not work out, his parents decided to help him by selecting a spouse for him. This marriage did not work either because he did not like the woman. He left her within a few weeks and married another woman of his own choice.

Among the Satar, parents generally approved of their children's decision. They also feared that their children would elope if they did not receive parental approval. Although elopement was culturally permitted, it was not desired by the parents especially because it affected the socio-economic status of the parents. One such case of elopement, which happened in a neighboring village in 1985, illustrates the complex situation which can arise when the parents disapprove a child's choice.

In 1985, the headman of a neighboring village had arranged a Daudo Bapla for his Donguo daughter (P). After P gave her consent to marry R, the headman collected a Pon of Rs. 800.00 from R's family. A few months later, P decided to marry another boy (I) from her own village. The headman did not approve of his daughter's decision. When P learned that her father was not going to change his mind about R, she eloped with I. This case became complicated when R and I were married in the court in Biratnagar. The headman of the village, the bride's father, accused one of his servants of helping

his daughter elope, and beat him severely. Then he turned the servant over to the local police. Later he received a note from his daughter saying that she alone was responsible for the elopement, and no one else was to be blamed for her act. The headman became worried when his servant wanted to file a case against him for falsely accusing him of being involved in the elopement. The headman insisted that the case should be settled in the traditional way, and the others agreed. The headman paid Rs. 600.00 to the servant as compensation for accusing him. But this did not finish the case because the headman had previously received bride payment from R's father and this he now had to return. However, the rejected groom's father, following the Satar law, asked for a double amount of Rs. 1600.00 to be returned, as he held the girl's father responsible for the deviant act of his daughter. The headman admitted his mistakes, but told the village court that he did not have that much cash, and pleaded with them to show some mercy on him. But this headman had himself previously collected a double return of bride-price from another Satar family when the girl expected to marry his own son eloped with another Satar. Because of this, the villagers, at first, did not want to show any consideration to him, but later they compromised and fined him Rs. 1200.00 for the bride-price. The village headman paid out Rs. 1800.00 altogether.

This case study brings forth the complexity of a

situation which arises when parents try to arrange marriage of their child against their child's wishes. It shows the intricacy of the bride-price payment resulting from an elopement. This case further illustrates the changing world of the Satar, their participation in two judicial systems - ethnic and national.

In addition to the above practices related to marriage, the Satar also preferred village endogamy which strengthened the closeness and solidarity among them. In 1985, although a majority (55%) of married women came from outside of Sunauli because of issues of clan exogamy, the rest of the married women were born in Sunauli. Some of these women (born in Sunauli) were married to the men of Sunauli and others were married to the men of other villages. These "other" villages, however, were mostly within a distance of three to four miles from Sunauli. The Satar considered this distance to be a walking distance which allowed them to visit their daughters and sisters regularly. These visits, in turn, strengthened their interpersonal ties of kinship and enabled them to view themselves as a part of a larger endogamous unit.

As a result of village endogamy, most of the Satar of Sunauli were related to each other, consanguineally, affinally, or both, and it was with the members of their village that they socialized on many different occasions.

The various forms and rituals of marriage, norms of

divorce and remarriages - all worked as cultural devices to foster the norms of endogamy. The Satar valued the norms of endogamy so much that even in contact situations they followed these norms and did not tolerate violation of these norms at any level - economic or ritual. People acting against these norms were considered Bithlaha (impure/outcast) by the Satar and were forced to leave the village. A Bithlaha is believed to pollute the village Bonga (spirit/deity), the village, and bring disorder in the community. No Bonga are propitiated as long as the village remains Bithlaha. Since all the Satar life-cycle rituals require the propitiation of Bonga, these cannot be performed¹.

As Bithlaha a Satar man or a woman is considered dangerous for the community and is, therefore, not conceived as a member of the ethnic group. He or she is asked by the Pancha (male representatives of the Satar political office. See chapter VIII) to pay a heavy penalty for his/her deviant act. As long as this Bithlaha does not pay the penalty, other Satar stop interacting with him/her and his/her guardians simply by ignoring their presence at all formal/informal socio-religious or political gatherings. Such a situation brings shame to the Individuals acting against the group

1. Sachchidananda (1965) and Somers (1978) also present similar use of the concept of Bithlaha among the Santal of India. In Sunauli, as in India, the Christian Satar do not practise Bithlaha.

norms and forces them to leave the village and stay outside until they pay a proper penalty for their deviant acts. Such a simple but highly valued code of morality helps the Satar to keep their members together and maintain solidarity within their ethnic group. The following two cases illustrate this.

In 1978, a twenty-two year old Satar woman (L) eloped with a Mohali man, lived in India with him for ten months, and then came back to Sunauli to visit her family. This Mohali man was already married and had been living in Sunauli with his second wife, an eight year old daughter from his first wife and his parents. L's family became Bithlaha immediately following her elopement. The Mohali also became Bithlaha as far as the Satar were concerned, though the Mohali themselves did not think so. In order to remove the disorder caused by the elopement, formal political meetings (see chapter VIII) were held by the Satar and quick steps were taken to bring the Bithlaha individuals back into their ethnic group. Both the Mohali and the Satar families were asked to pay a penalty of certain amount of money. In the beginning, the Mohali family refused to abide by the Satar rules. When the members of the Mohali family, however, suffered the consequences of being excluded from all kinds of private and public village activities, they agreed to play by the Satar rules and, like the Satar family, paid a heavy penalty to the village council of the Satar for

their son's breaking the Satar norms of endogamy. The Satar family also paid an equal amount of money for their daughter's deviant act. In addition, since the act was a matter of great shame for them, the male head of that family left Sunauli "to save face" and lived in India for almost five years. As a result of the payment by both parties, Sunauli did not remain Bithlaha any more. In addition, L and the Mohali man were no longer considered as husband and wife by the Satar and the Mohali. So, when they came back to Sunauli, L had to leave her Mohali husband. By 1984, she was married to a Satar from Nauligaun. In the meantime, the Mohali man rejoined his second wife and moved to live with her in her parent's village - ten miles from Sunauli.

The other incident involving a twenty-five year old Satar woman X occurred during 1985. X was married twice and had two children from her second husband. When her second husband left her and the children for good, X started living with her mother and step-father in their household. One day X eloped with a caste man from Biratnagar. After conceiving a child with him, she returned to her parents in Sunauli. Since X had broken the rule of endogamy, she and her parents were considered Bithlaha by the Satar. After X returned to Sunauli, her parents called for a meeting to bring themselves and X back into their ethnic group. A decision was reached in the meeting to resolve X's case and her parents were asked to

pay a penalty for her deviant act within a few weeks. Her parents abided by these rules; they paid a heavy penalty to the village council for her violation of the rule of endogamy. With this payment, the ethnic identity of X was also reconfirmed. There was a small ritual symbolizing this transaction, witnessed by six Satar men who represented different political offices. Two of these men were Sapha Hod and the rest were Bidin Hod. X cooked rice for these men and once they accepted that cooked rice the ritual was completed and X was accepted as a Hod again. No one approached the caste man from Biratnagar because he had already left town to join his family in India.

X's pregnancy complicated this case further. Since X wanted to keep the child the council allowed her to do so on the condition that the child would have a clan identity. In other words, they required a Satar father for the child. X's parents agreed to this and "bought" a father for the child in Rs. 101.00 (\$5.10). This father was about sixty years old and was X's mother's father's relative. His clan was different from X's clan. He gave his clan name to the child, thereby, making it possible for the child to have a legitimate status. The child's clan and ethnic identities were symbolized in the same ritual mentioned above.

DISCUSSION

These cases illustrate that even in contact

situations the Satar shared the norms of endogamy. They viewed the norms of endogamy and clan-exogamy as providing them with a set of standards for proper behavior so that they could remain within their group. Looked at from outside, these cases reveal how these norms control their interaction with the non-Satar and, at the same time, work as mechanisms for maintaining their ethnic boundaries. In addition, these case studies illustrate how rules are made flexible to recruit the children of even a Satar-caste union by acknowledging two types of paternity - cultural and biological. African ethnography has provided cases of such purchased paternity for a long time (Kriege 1974). Such cultural separation of paternity indicates, as Shapiro (1981) demonstrates in the context of woman-marriage, that filiation does not "rest on beliefs about the physical transmission of substance from parent to child. Nor does the filiation tie between a man and his children necessarily involve a man's having some significant set of rights over or obligation to his children" (Shapiro 1981: 8). I noted that becoming a father by "selling" (giving) one's clan name to the child did not mean that this father accepted any further responsibility for that child. Further parental responsibilities may or may not be carried out indirectly by the biological father, the genitor. The pater or the social father who acknowledges his paternity for the time being need not live with the child's mother, need not marry her, and need not extend his rights in the reproductive

capacities or domestic services of the child or the child's mother. Here social paternity does not imply sexual relationship with the mother of the child because the main constituent units are not a man and a woman, but a man and an unborn child. It does not imply an economic relationship with this woman either. The sexual and domestic services of a woman may be enjoyed by different men.

The goal of social paternity among the Satar is to validate the social status of those children who are believed to be the product of the sexual relationship between a man and a woman. A Satar, simply by being a genitor, does not play any role in validating the social status of his children. This is done by a man and a woman through a bond of marriage or simply through the payment of bride-price before the child is born. The genitor who fails to go through these rituals threatens the social status of the child by denying it its paternity and its ethnicity as Hod.

The second point of theoretical interest is related to the marriage rules and the status of X's child, and raises issues of the status of the offspring of mixed unions in the caste societies of Nepal and India. Various studies have examined the effects of hypergamous and hypogamous marriages (within a caste group or between different caste groups) on the caste or ritual status of

the children born from such marriages. Such children may belong to intermediate caste categories/groups, different from both their parents, but depending on the ritual status of either of the parents (Buhler 1886). For example, when the caste status of a man and a woman is only a degree higher or lower and their union is hypergamous, their children are put in an intermediate category. These children, as Tambiah (1973) examines in his theoretical study of the offspring of mixed unions, are "evaluated little differently on the basis of the superiority of the male seed" (1973: 200). If the social distance between two parents is too great, children of hypergamous unions are still given an intermediate status which is higher than their mother's but much lower than their father's (Buhler 1886).

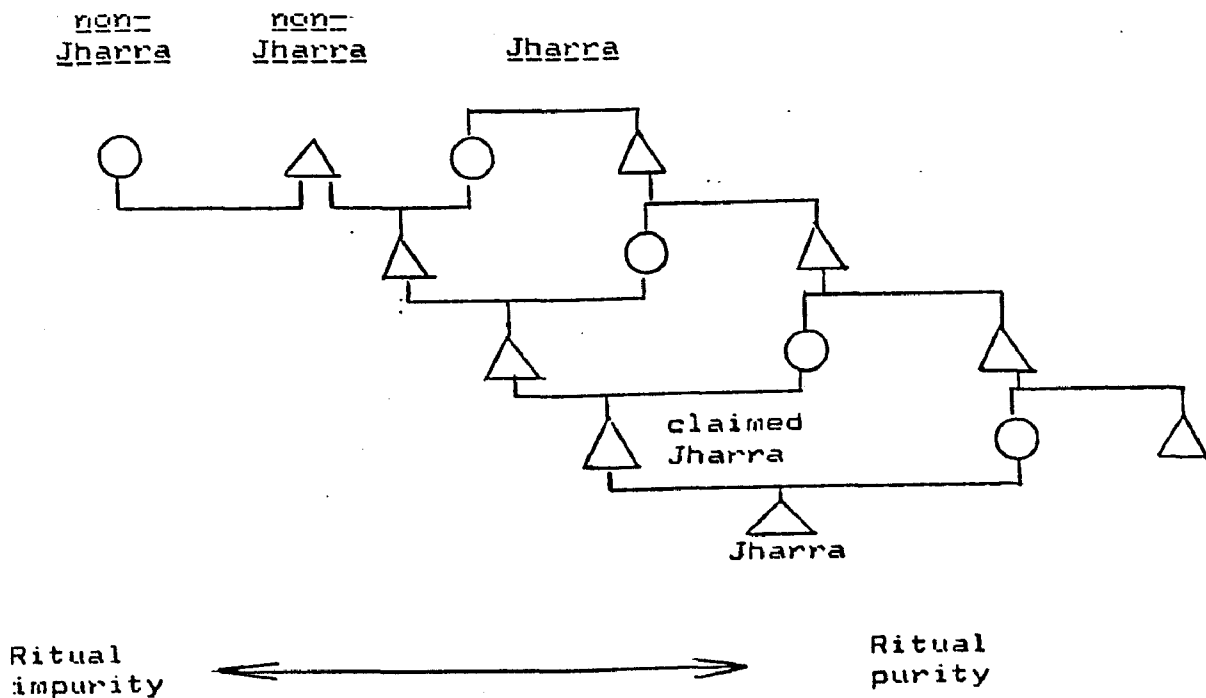
But if the marriage is hypogamous and there is an even greater difference between the caste statuses of a couple, the couple is ostracized and their children are considered to be of the lowest caste. Haimendorf (1966), Gough (1960) and Barth (1960) illustrate similar cases that they encountered in the communities of Nepal, India and Swat.

A few other ethnographic materials, however, indicate upward mobility even with hypogamous unions. Inden's (1976) cultural analysis of marriage and rank in Bengal, India illustrates various cases of culturally approved hypergamous and hypogamous marriages within a caste group

and the social placement of the children born from these unions. Haimendorf (1966) discusses such marriages between the Jharra (pure) and non-Jharra (impure) ritual categories of the Chhetri caste group in Nepal. Levine (1987) also finds hypogamous marriages among the Chhetri and other ethnic groups of Humla, Nepal. These authors further examine how such marriage unions are culturally approved for the upward mobility, especially for men, within the caste system. The process of such upward mobility is illustrated in figure # 24 using the example of the Chhetri of Nepal.

Figure # 24

Hypergamy, Upward Mobility and Ritual Purity



My study of the Satar indicates that cultural groups like the Satar do not change the ritual identity of the children born from inter-caste/ethnic marriages. Neither do they necessarily create an intermediate status for such children. Instead, these groups recruit the children of mixed unions and accept them as members of their own groups.

The Satar view and treatment of these children is not unique in South Asia. The Nayar of India present another case of similar type. As Gough (1959) examines, the Nayar have a positive rule of hypergamy. On the one hand, they acknowledge the supremacy of higher caste by showing the importance of pater (ritual father who is a Nambudiri Brahman) as against the genitor (biological father who is a Nayar), on the other hand, they recruit their offspring through their matrilineal descent rules. Thus, each generation produced by a Nayar woman and a Nambudiri man becomes Nayar and not a separate caste of mixed union.

The Satar and the Nayar share a few things. Although the Nayar have matrilineal organization and the Satar have patrilineal organization, both view marriage in similar ways and recruit the children of mixed unions into their groups. Second, for both of them the mother's ethnic status, as opposed to the father's, functions as primary in recruiting such children. This is where the similarities end. The Satar differ from the Nayar in

several ways. Here I discuss only two broad categories of their differences by drawing the data from the Nayar case (Gough 1959).

The first category is related to the issue of paternity. The Nayar desire an inter-caste union. In such a union, the pater must be an outsider. Such cultural practice allows the Nayar to maintain a logical social link to the larger caste society. The matrilineal organization of the Nayar recruits the children of mixed unions. Unlike the Nayar, the Satar do not prefer an inter-caste/ethnic union. In case such a union does occur, they buy a pater for the child from within their own group. So, a pater is always an insider among the Satar. The patrilineal organization of the Satar allows the pregnant mother to "buy" a Satar pater for her unborn child whereby the child becomes a member of its pater's clan. Such a cultural practice of ritual paternity cuts off the social link between the Satar and the caste people. This practice also works as a mechanism to recruit the child of the mixed union in the Satar group. As a result, this child "becomes" a Satar, and not a separate category of Satar-caste union.

The other difference between the Satar and the Nayar is related to the issue of marriage union itself. In the Nayar case, Nayar/Nambudiri union carries different meanings for the participants. For a Nayar, such union is a "marriage", but for a Nambudiri, it is only a

"concubinage". So, while a Nayar woman considers herself a wife of the concerned Nambudiri after the completion of the Tali-tying ceremony, the Nambudiri man considers her only as his concubine.

The status of the Satar individuals involved in inter-caste/ethnic marriages are also affected, but in a different way. Here it is important to look at such union both from the Satar and the caste people's view points primarily because they view inter-caste/ethnic unions differently. From the caste people's perspective an inter-caste/ethnic union is possible and acceptable. They accept a Satar woman as a wife of a caste man, but assign a lower ritual status to her and the children born from her caste husband. Such grading adds onto the existing hierarchical categories/groups of the caste system and helps sustain the system as a whole.

From the Satar's point of view, however, an inter-caste/ethnic union does not have any validity. If such a relationship does occur, it goes against the shared norms of endogamy and, therefore, it must be broken. If the union is not broken, the concerned individual (male/female) becomes Bithlaha and is expelled from the group and the village. For the Satar, therefore, one is either inside the group or outside. There are no in-between or lower categories created for these individuals and their offspring within the Satar group.

In spite of such forceful sanction of the shared norms of endogamy, there is in fact a mixed group called Hod-Mohali (Satar-Mohali). During both periods of my field work, there were no Hod-Mohali in and around Sunauli. According to the Satar and the Mohali of Sunauli, the Hod-Mohali lived in India, about sixty miles from Sunauli. These Satar and the Mohali considered the members of this social group as the descendants of the Satar and Mohali couples. They defined this group as a caste group and as lower in ritual status than their own. The Satar defined the Hod-Mohali also as an occupational group - their occupation being basketry as was practised by the Mohali. The Mohali thought of basketry as only a part-time job of the Hod-Mohali.

Although the Hod-Mohali group did start out with a Satar and Mohali couple, I was told that like any other caste group, this social group was also endogamous. As such, the Hod-Mohali married neither the Mohali nor the Satar. They married only among themselves. Since both the Satar and the Mohali groups are also endogamous, members of these groups neither married each other nor the Hod-Mohali.

It is hard to talk about an intermediate "caste" group without any ethnographic data from that group itself. But here again, we must think what the Hod-Mohali group means to either of its groups of reference, i.e. The Satar and the Mohali. Although both the Satar and the Mohali

considered the Hod-Mohali as lower in ritual status than their own, the Mohali of Sunauli thought of the Hod-Mohali as a part of the caste society. The Satar did not object to how the Mohali viewed the Hod-Mohali, they themselves did not consider the Hod-Mohali as the Satar, not even "half-Satar". The Hod-Mohali were Bithlaha for the Satar of Sunauli and, as such, were outcasts.

Exclusion of the Satar as Bithlaha and the recruitment of the children of mixed unions into this ethnic group also illustrates how the Satar resist being a part of the caste society. Instead of merging into the caste system by "becoming" caste people, with the help of the children of Satar-caste union, the Satar not only remain within their ethnic boundaries but also recruit their children of mixed unions into their ethnic group. As a result, every generation produced by a Satar or by a Satar and a non-Satar, becomes Satar. Even the breach of endogamy does not permeate the ethnic boundaries of the Satar and the caste groups.

CHAPTER VI

THE INDIVIDUAL IDENTITY OF THE SAPHA HOD

In the previous chapter, I examined some shared norms of the Satar that defined their ethnic boundaries and helped perpetuate their cultural identity. In this chapter, I discuss the ritual identity of the Sapha Hod by focusing on the beliefs and rituals of two categories, the Bidin Hod and the Sapha Hod, and the Sapha Hod's unique way of combining both the Satar and the caste rituals. This discussion will explain how the syncretism of rituals has enabled the Sapha Hod to claim a distinct individual identity and to set themselves in a higher ritual status within the Satar ethnic group.

In this chapter, I demonstrate that due to the Sapha Hod's practice of rituals, that belong to two different cultures, the Sapha Hod emerge as ethnic mediators. As such, the category that they represent seems to the analyst as an intermediate ritual category between the Satar and the caste groups. As members of such intermediate category, the Sapha Hod present a case of boundary-fluidity. To demonstrate this, I examine the Sapha Hod's adoption of a few caste symbols and rituals. Since religious practices separate one ritual category from the other, I start my discussion with the religious beliefs and practices of the Sapha Hod.

GODS AND BONGA:

HINDU DEITIES: As mentioned earlier, the Sapha Hod are Hinduized Satar and, as Hindu, they believe in and worship many Hindu deities like Rama, Shiva and Mahavira. Puja (worship) of such deities, however, is not unique to the Sapha Hod. I also observed the Bidin Hod of Sunauli participating in the worship of those deities whom they called Diku Bonga (deities of the caste people). These deities included goddesses like Kali and Durga who had shrines of their own in Sunauli, and were worshipped once a year by the caste people (see chapter IV). The Satar also visited these shrines during these occasions. Like the caste people, they bought new clothes in Dasain, a socio-religious festival of the Hindus, and made animal sacrifice in honor of the goddess Durga. Although they did not organize worship for these deities in these or other shrines, they visited these shrines every time the caste people organized Puja (worship) for the female deities.

The Sapha Hod moved a step closer to the caste people in this context. They participated in the Puja of some Hindu deities. It must be borne in mind here that although the Sapha Hod worshipped Hindu deities, they considered some of these Hindu deities (like Rama, Shiva and Mahavira) to be their own and some others as belonging to the caste people. They did not necessarily participate in the Puja of the Hindu deities (whom they

thought as their own) when their Puja was organized by the caste people. Since these Sapha Hod thought of these deities to be their own, they worshipped them in their own way during their own different festivals.

As Hindu, the Sapha Hod believed in a multitude of gods, such as Rama, Thakur, Mahadeva and various Bonga. They considered all these gods to be vegetarians and, therefore, always offered them sweets and fruits, and never any blood sacrifice.

Among these gods, they considered Thakur as the creator of the Satar people as is evident from the creation myth of both the Bidin Hod and the Sapha Hod (chapter VII). While these Satar viewed him as a god, they never worshipped him in their households.

The other god who occupied an important place in the Sapha Hod religion was Rama of the Hindu pantheon. Bodding (1921) calls this god Ramachanda. As mentioned in chapter III, the Sapha Hod of Sunauli considered themselves as descendants of Rama. According to them, the Satar inherited the art of hunting with bow and arrow from this God. They, however, neither worshipped Rama nor visited this God in the Rama-Sita temple of Sunauli as their caste friends did. Instead, they remembered Rama once every year on the last day of the five day long Satar festival, Soharai, when Rama's killing of the demon Ravana was acted out in a game. Although my Bidin Hod male

informants did not think of Rama as their god, they did join the games of Soharai made in honor of Rama.

The third god of Hindu pantheon whom both the Sapha Hod and the Bidin Hod thought as their own god was Mahadeo (Mahadeva or Shiva). Like Rama, Mahadeo was also worshipped once a year by the Bidin Hod and the Sapha Hod in the ceremony of Patamela. In one such ceremony, some Satar men who became possessed by Mahadeo, were tied to a bamboo pole, and were swung around in the air six or seven times to prove their faith in Mahadeo (Ghimire 1981). The Patamela festival, that I observed in 1979, was sponsored by one Sapha Hod household of Baba T, and the men who were possessed by Mahadeo were all Bidin Hod men of different age categories (between eight and thirty-five).

Here again, the difference between the Sapha Hod and the Bidin Hod seem more obvious. Although, the Bidin Hod also accepted Mahadeo as one of their own Bonga, daily worship of Mahadeo was a necessary part of only a Sapha Hod man's daily rituals.

In addition to this, the Sapha Hod also incorporated the rituals of Til Sankrant (a Hindu ceremony) into their own. They thought of Til Sankrant as belonging to their own tradition. The Brahman of the neighboring villages and Biratnagar worshipped god Vishnu on this day. But the Sapha Hod worshipped Mahavira on this day. The Mohali of Sunauli also worshipped Mahavira, whom they identified as a

monkey god. But the identity of Mahavira was unknown to my Satar informants except for the fact that he was a God. During both periods of my field work, this ceremony was the only ceremony in which all Sapha Hod adult women and one Bidin Hod woman were also allowed to participate. I also participated in this ceremony on the invitation of Baba T while I was in Sunauli during 1979.

BONGA: Troisi (1978) describes the presence or absence of Bonga (spirits, deities) worship as the feature distinguishing the Sapha Hod and the Bidin Hod. According to him, the Bidin Hod (whom he calls Santal) believe in and propitiate the Bonga, while the Sapha Hod do not. In Sunauli, however, this was not the case. The only Satar who did not share the belief in Bonga were the Christian Satar, not the Sapha Hod. The Sapha Hod of Sunauli, like the Bidin Hod, saw their world as inhabited by a large number of invisible beings whom they called Bonga. Bonga may be spirits, gods, and one's ancestors.

During both periods of my field work, I failed to gather detailed information about the Bonga, both from my male and female informants. It was in the later part of my first field work that I learned the reason behind this failure from one of my Bidin Hod male informants. He

1. Gausdel (1960) records the names of 178 Bonga who are said to be active among the Santal of India. Troisi (1978) divides the Bonga of Pangro, India into ten categories.

secretly told me that I could never get detailed information about the Bonga essentially because I was a female and, therefore, was considered as a "potential witch" by the Satar men. Once I realized this, I stopped asking my informants about the Bonga. The only knowledge that I obtained about them, which is given in the following pages, is from my one Sapha Hod male informant and from my Christian informants who once believed in and propitiated Bonga when they were Bidin Hod. In addition, my observation of some Puja (worship) in Baba T's courtyard and kitchen and few birth and death rituals in the Bidin Hod households enhanced my knowledge about some of the benevolent Bonga.

All Sapha Hod of Sunauli thought of some Bonga as malevolent by nature, and others as benevolent and concerned with Satar's welfare. The malevolent Bonga were mostly the spirits of those men and women who died in accidents or committed suicide. These were driven away by making small or big offerings every time they were thought to have brought misfortunes to someone. Benevolent Bonga were worshipped in all the ceremonies including the life-cycle rituals.

The Sapha Hod of Sunauli considered all village spirits and deities as benevolent Bonga. One of them was Moreko-Turuiko who was offered food in all the public puja of the Sapha Hod. The identity of this Bonga was ambiguous for my Satar informants. Literally "Moreko-

Turuiko" means "the Five-Six" which, according to Bodding (1935), means five brothers and one sister, while Mukherji (1962) thinks it stands for five brothers who are wedded to six sisters. In Sunauli, no one could tell me how many male or female Bonga this name included. According to my Sapha Hod and Christian informants, Moreko-Turuiko represented all those spirits of the dead and gods whose names were mistakenly forgotten while performing rituals and making offerings. Both my Sapha Hod and Bidin Hod informants agreed that the goddesses Jaher Era and Gosain Era were their sisters.

Among other Bonga, with whom the Sapha Hod interacted very intimately at an individual and personal level during life-cycle rituals, were what Troisi (1978) describes as Abge Bonga (subclan spirit), Orak Bonga (household Bonga) and Hapramko Bonga (spirits of ancestors). Neither my Sapha Hod nor Bidin Hod informants (of both 1978 and 1985) were very clear about the particular function of each of these Bonga in a life-cycle ritual. According to my key informants, Abge Bonga and Hapramko Bonga bestowed social parentage and clan status on the newly born baby, while Orak Bonga protected the infant and the other members of the household. My informants considered these three types of Bonga to occupy a very important place in life-cycle rituals. Although, being a female, I was not allowed to watch any of the rituals related to these or other Bonga, I learned from my male informants that both

the Sapha Hod and the Bidin Hod made offering to these Bonga during different rituals held in each household. The consequences of not worshipping these Bonga were far-reaching, and of great social significance which I have discussed in chapter V.

Marang Buru (Bonga of Great Mountain) is another benevolent Bonga who is concerned with the welfare of the Satar. The Sapha Hod and the Bidin Hod of Sunauli always talked about Marang Buru as an affectionate and a clever Bonga, and repeatedly told me the creation myth in which Marang Buru helps in promoting the welfare of the Satar (chapter VII). The Bidin Hod also fondly talked about Marang Buru, but they thought of him as a Bonga who introduced the recipe and the use of rice-beer among the Satar, and taught shamanism and curing to the seven ancestors of the seven Satar clans. They often talked about how their life would have been dull and their rituals incomplete if Marang Buru had not taught them how to make rice-beer. The Sapha Hod, however, ignored Marang Buru's expertise in rice-beer and emphasized how he helped the Satar to survive in a world dominated by Muslims (chapter VII).

Two other Bonga who, according to my Bidin Hod and Sapha Hod informants, were concerned with the welfare of the Satar, were Majhi Bonga and the goddesses, Jaher Era and Gosain Era. About the Majhi Bonga, my informants were

not sure whether it was the spirit of the first headman of the village, or the spirit of the headmanship in general or both. Jaher Era and Gosain Era were the only two affectionate female Bonga. These three Bonga, Jaher Era, Gosain Era and Majhi Bonga, had shrines of their own in the neighboring villages. Majhi Bonga resided in a raised mud platform (Majhi Than), usually located in front of the village headman's house. Jaher Era and Gosain Era resided together in one shrine called Jaher Than. Their shrines were located in the outskirts of all the neighboring Satar villages. Although the Sapha Hod of Sunauli did make offerings to these three Bonga while worshipping them in Baba T's courtyard, together with the Hindu deities, these Bonga did not have any shrine of their own in Sunauli.

RELIGIOUS SYNCRETISM: The Sapha Hod, thus, believed both in the Bonga and the Hindu deities. They combined various Hindu elements with their Satar beliefs and rituals. This fostered quite a few significant differences between the Sapha Hod and the Bidin Hod in perceiving the nature and status of their Bonga. Since the Sapha Hod viewed some Hindu elements as their own, they thought of the Bonga in hierarchical terms. My Sapha Hod informants considered the Hindu deities as higher in rank than the Bonga. And among the Bonga, they considered Chando Bonga (sun and moon) as higher than any other Bonga. My Bidin Hod informants, however, viewed only the

Bonga as their own. Further, they thought of the Bonga as having equal status. According to them and their egalitarianism, Bonga possessed different power and were capable of doing different things, but they were not graded as higher/lower.

Because of the above difference, Bonga occupied only a secondary place in a Puja organized by a Sapha Hod. In a Sapha Hod Puja, as I observed during both periods of my field work, primacy was given to the Hindu deities. Although Bonga were also worshipped in this Puja, a Sapha Hod Puja always started with the worship of Hindu deities. In addition, vegetarianism constituted the core feature of a Sapha Hod's Puja. The Sapha Hod never made any blood sacrifice in their worship of any of their deities, including Bonga. In all their public Puja, they offered only sweets, fruits, milk and water to their Hindu deities and Bonga. In their private rituals, while propitiating their household, clan or ancestor Bonga, they offered rice-beer, in addition to the above items, but never any blood. Similar vegetarian offerings were made to Vishnu Baba in his own shrine. It was especially because of such practice of vegetarianism that none of the Bonga (all of whom required nonvegetarian food) had proper shrines of their own in Sunauli. The only shrine Sunauli had was the shrine of Vishnu Baba, a man who founded the Sapha Hod tradition in Sunauli. The absence of the shrines of the Bonga, i.e. Majhi Bonga, Jaher Era and Gosain Era, and

the presence of Vishnu Baba's shrine in Sunauli were symbolic of both the Sapha Hod attitude towards the Bonga and the power the Sapha Hod displayed in implementing their ideas.

Unlike a Sapha Hod Puja, Bonga occupied the most important place in a Bidin Hod Puja. Non-vegetarianism and blood offerings constituted the core feature of a Bidin Hod Puja. These Bidin Hod viewed the Bonga as living amidst them, and possessing some human qualities of affection, greed and anger. As such, they believed that although the Bonga protected the Satar, they (Bonga) also guarded them jealously and demanded a share of the food consumed by their living kinsmen or other Satar. Since all Bidin Hod of Sunauli were non-vegetarian, they did not want to aggravate their Bonga by not sharing their meat, fish and rice-beer with them. Although I did not see these Bidin Hod making any blood offerings to the Bonga, while propitiating them in the public Puja held in Baba T's courtyard, I learned from their children and wives that they did make offerings of chicken or pigeons while worshipping them in their own households.

I agree with Troisi (1978) that a belief in Bonga is very much rooted in the Bidin Hod culture. My Bidin Hod informants' belief in their Bonga became apparent to me during several informal interviews. In these interviews, several of my Bidin Hod male informants told me that since they were Hod (Satar), they should have shrines for their

Majhi Bonga, Jaher Era and Gosain Era in their village. Most of my female informants (both of Sapha Hod and Bidin Hod households) knew that they did not have a shrine for Jaher Era and Gosain Era, but were shocked to hear from me that they did not have any Majhi Than. Later, these women "corrected" my mistake by telling me that Vishnu Baba shrine was their Majhi Than. Some of them also thought of the sacred bush in Baba T's courtyard as their Majhi Than.

The "knowledge" of these women about their shrines illustrates three things. First, it shows how they, as "potential witches", were prohibited from attending any public or private ritual related to Bonga (which I explain later in this chapter). Secondly, it explains how effective the prohibition was, as they possessed little knowledge about the rituals. Last of all, it indicates how they could not even think it as possible not to have a Majhi Than in a Hod village.

Although these reactions of the women illustrate how deeply rooted the faith of the Bidin Hod was in Bonga, it also shows how the Sapha Hod had not abandoned their belief in Bonga either. They propitiated their benevolent Bonga by offering food and drinks in all their ceremonies and life-cycle rituals. During my various interviews with the Satar during 1985, I learned that for the Sapha Hod, as for the Bidin Hod, to abandon belief in Bonga was to

cease being a satar.

WITCHCRAFT AND SHAMANISM: Religious syncretism is apparent from the various formal/informal rituals of the Sapha Hod. One such ritual includes the Sapha Hod's belief in witchcraft. Like their Bidin Hod and caste neighbors, the Sapha Hod also believed in women as potential witches and suspected women for witchcraft. In addition, they shared a myth with the Bidin Hod about women secretly learning this "destructive" art. There is no difference in the Sapha Hod and Bidin Hod versions of this myth, except for the names of those teachers who taught witchcraft and shamanism to the Satar. According to the Sapha Hod, Bhagwan (an adjective for any male Hindu deity) taught them these destructive and constructive arts and according to the Bidin Hod, their clever and good Bonga Marang Buru did it. The myth is as follows. In the myth, the name in parenthesis is of a Bonga Marang Buru.

Once great God Bhagwan (good Bonga Marang Buru) wished to teach shamanism to the Satar men to cure illness of various kinds. For several days, He taught them about curing and asked them to bring Him offerings on the last day of their lesson. They were told that this last day was going to be very important for them in enhancing and completing their knowledge about cure. When these men came home and talked to their wives about it, their wives became jealous of them. They also feared their husbands becoming more powerful than themselves. To prevent such a situation, all the wives got up at night, bathed, and went to Bhagwan (Marang Buru) in the disguise of men. They also had offerings for Him. Bhagwan (Marang Buru), thinking that they were the actual men, gave them the lesson of that day. Unlike the previous lessons, which were related to curing, these lessons were related to

making people sick or to witchcraft.

Later that day, when men, unaware of their wives' act, went to Bhagwan (Marang Buru) with offerings, Bhagwan (Marang Buru) was surprised. Once He learned the facts, He taught these men the same thing that He taught their wives. In addition, He also gave these men all the secret formula to overcome the killing power of the women.

And, from that day on, all Satar men became potential Qjha (shamans) and all Satar women became potential Dakin (witches).

As the myth goes, all Satar women are potential witches and all Satar men are potential Qjha. This belief was shared both by the Sapha Hod men and women. I observed that despite such a belief, none of my Satar female informants considered themselves as actual witches. But they did believe that certain other women of their ethnic group were witches. Here again, the Christian Satar did not share such a view, because sharing this meant for them believing either in a Hindu deity or in Bonga which their religion did not allow them to do.

These Sapha Hod and the Bidin Hod Satar, like their caste neighbors, suspected children to be the most common victims of witches. Witches were also held responsible for the sudden death of any adult. Although all women were considered to be potential witches, mostly married-in women (daughters-in-law, sisters-in-law) or one's neighbors were accused of witchcraft. I gathered the names of eight witches from my female informants. Six of the accused were Bidin Hod and two others belonged to two different castes. During several informal interviews with these accused women:

in 1978-79, one eighteen year old mother was aware of herself being accused of witchcraft. This accusation was made by a shaman for a prolonged sickness of her husband's mother. She told me that since she thought of herself as innocent, this upset her very much and she moved out of her in-law's household with her husband. After living in her mother's household for a month, she and her husband built a house of their own next to her mother's household in Sunauli. By the second period of my field work, she and her husband had left Sunauli to work in Biratnagar.

Since men believed women to be potential witches, they feared them. And because of their fear, even the Sapha Hod men let their women eat what these men considered as the food of lower ritual value and they themselves did not eat. These men were afraid they might aggravate the witches inside these women if they deprived them of these foods.

The Sapha Hod also believed all Satar men to be potential Qjha (shamans). They shared the views with their Bidin Hod and caste neighbors that although a shaman possessed both constructive and destructive powers of curing and killing, he did not use his destructive power to kill people. He used it only to pacify a witch's attack. Because of such power, a shaman was never accused of witchcraft. Instead, he was both respected and feared by the people and the witches.

In Sunauli, the main job of a shaman was to diagnose sickness and to prescribe remedies. He also detected witchcraft, but he kept the names of witches secret, fearing that witches could do more harm if they knew about the accusation. A shaman could, however, tell the concerned party about the witch - not by giving them her name, but by a very general and often vague description. For example, he could point to the direction the witch lived in or the color of her clothes. This way, by not pin pointing a woman as a witch, a shaman saved himself the danger of an attack by her.

In 1978-79, Sunauli had two Ojha. One was Baba T, a Sapha Hod, and the other was O, a Bidin Hod. Baba T was well known for his work in the neighboring villages. Besides the Satar, the Maithil people of Sunauli and other caste people respected him as a shaman and often called on him to treat their cattle or themselves. He also diagnosed and treated several Satar and caste people of Sunauli. After Baba T's death in 1982, Sunauli had only one Ojha (O) who was very poor and often complained about his slow "business" because not many people came to seek his advice or cure for sickness.

HINDUIZATION OF RITUALS

DHARMA AND KARMA: Although both the Sapha Hod and the Bidin Hod of Sunauli defined themselves as Hindu (chapter IV), it was mainly the Sapha Hod who constantly

tried to act out their beliefs in Hinduism as practised by their caste neighbors. These Sapha Hod accepted Hinduism as a way of life which demanded from its followers the acting out of their beliefs in Dharma (duty) and Karma (a concept related to the causal chain of action and rebirth) in every way possible. They expressed their belief in these concepts through the performance of various pious acts. Some such pious acts were sharing the water of their ponds and wells with their fellow villagers, being hospitable and generous to them, and of helping them in every way possible. The other pious act, which the Sapha Hod regarded as their Dharma, was to organize and participate in the religious activities.

One such pious Dharma was also to go on a pilgrimage. The caste people of Sunauli often went to India on a pilgrimage to visit their gods who live in four different parts of India. They also went to Kathmandu to pay homage to Shiva at the time of Shivaratri (celebrating the wedding of Shiva). Their other sacred place was Janakpur, a town in the southern part of Nepal. There they worshipped god Rama during Ramanavami (the birthday of Rama). In 1985, many Satar and caste people of Sunauli went to Pundari, a village in India four miles from Sunauli, to worship Shiva on Shivaratri. All the caste people believed the Shiva Linga (phallus of Shiva represented by an oval stone) of Pundari to have emerged there all by itself. They considered it as one of the manifestations of Shiva and

went to Pundari to worship this god on that particular day. Among the caste people, older men and women went to pay their homage to Shiva early in the morning without eating any food. They came back home around noon. The younger people of both sex went there during the afternoon mainly to enjoy the fair. Worshipping Shiva was not very important to them.

Among the Satar, these visits were directly related to their ritual statuses. Although both the Sapha Hod and the Bidin Hod went to Pundari, the Bidin Hod were not particular about going to Pundari to worship Shiva. They went there during afternoons mainly to enjoy the fair. The Sapha Hod, however, considered it to be their Dharma to pay homage to Shiva on this particular day. They were more particular about going there early in the morning, after bathing and without eating any food. Like their older caste friends, these Sapha Hod believed that visiting Shiva this way would bring them great rewards in their present and next life.

DIET: Among other Hinduized rituals and symbols, diet appeared to be the most significant symbol among the Satar to indicate their distinct ritual statuses within their group. In a caste society like Nepal, when ethnic groups begin to take on caste traits to merge into the caste system, restriction on diet appears as the core feature of this merging process as Bista (1971) describes for the Thakali of Nepal and Mandelbaum (1970) for the tribal

people of India. These studies suggest the symbolic significance of diet in enhancing people's social status within their own group.

Diet is a statement of an individual's ritual status and caste identity in Sunauli. During both periods of my field work, I observed that the Satar and the caste people of Sunauli adopted the diet of the higher caste people, especially of the Nepali Brahman, in varied forms. Let me briefly describe the diet of the Nepali people. In south, rice and lentils are the staple food for all the caste and ethnic peoples, including the Satar. In the northern part, maize and potato constitute the main diet. The distinction in ritual status becomes crucial especially in the choice of what vegetables and meat one is allowed to have. Higher castes may be either vegetarian or non-vegetarian. The vegetarian higher castes, especially the Brahman, can eat all kinds of vegetables except onion, garlic and mushroom. Some of them also may not eat tomatoes. A Brahman can be a non-vegetarian also. Whether one is or is not a vegetarian does not affect the ritual status of an individual within his own caste or between castes. Furthermore, a single household may have both vegetarian and non-vegetarian members; the elder members are usually vegetarians and the younger members are non-vegetarians. My own observation in the Brahman households of Biratnagar shows that age is correlated with a change in one's diet from non-vegetarian to vegetarian within a

single household. In Sunauli, I found such a shift in diet in the caste household of N. N was the eldest member of his household and was a vegetarian, while his sons, daughters-in-law and their children were non-vegetarians.

As a rule of thumb, the higher one's caste is, the more restricted one's diet is, and the less choice one has in the selection of one's food. For example, the non-vegetarian Nepali Brahman are supposed to eat only a certain kind of meat, such as lamb/goat, deer, pigeon, duck and fish, while the non-vegetarian Chhetri, the second caste group in hierarchy from the top, may eat the above, in addition to the meat of wild boar. The members of these caste groups, especially the Brahman, are also expected to avoid drinking any kind of alcoholic beverage.

The more one moves down in the caste hierarchy, the more one may add different kinds of meat to one's diet, including any meat acceptable to one's higher caste friends. For example, a Newar, Hindu or Buddhist, could eat all the above mentioned meat in addition to buffalo meat and chicken. Further, rice-beer appears as the most important part of their rituals and diet. The members of the untouchable castes, like the Musahar, as I noted in Biratnagar, may eat all the above food and, in addition, field-mouse and chicken. With these diet distinctions in mind, let me now turn to the diet of the caste people and the Satar of Sunauli.

Most of the caste people of Sunauli valued vegetarianism but, as I mentioned earlier, only one caste man was a vegetarian; the rest were non-vegetarian. Although these caste people, with the exception of the Halwai caste people, were considered untouchables by their Nepali Brahman neighbors, most of them followed the non-vegetarian diet of the Nepali Brahman. Thus, they ate duck, pigeons, fish and mutton, but never pork or chicken.

Among the Satar, all my informants were non-vegetarians. Since the Sapha Hod claimed a higher ritual status within their ethnic group, they were supposed to keep a vegetarian kitchen, but they did not. Nevertheless, they distinguished themselves from their Bidin Hod and Christian Satar neighbors by following the diet of the non-vegetarian Brahman, as their caste friends did. For example, my Bidin Hod and Christian Satar informants ate goat, fish, pigeon, duck, pork, field-mouse, mongoose, rabbit and chicken. My Sapha Hod informants, however, included only the first four in their diet. They considered chicken, pig and other animals as non-Sapha (polluting), so did not eat their meat. They neither ate chicken nor kept them in their households. They also did not allow their wives, who were daughters of Bidin Hod and ate chicken, to cook it in their kitchen. Further, these Sapha Hod men neither raised pigs nor ate pork, as the Christian Satar and the Bidin Hod did.

Like other Satar, the Sapha Hod included fish in their diet. Since they owned ponds and exercised their rights on the big ditches in front of their households, they raised fish in these ditches and ponds. These fish constituted a major part of their diet for almost six to eight months of the year, depending on the quantity of the rain during monsoon. These Sapha Hod also hired fishermen on contract to fish for them in these ponds and ditches. Guests in these households were mostly treated to a meal with some kind of meat, especially pigeon, fish or duck. They also sold their pigeons to their Satar neighbors for a lower price whenever these neighbors had guests in their households. During big festivals like Baha and Soharai, these Sapha Hod also slaughtered goats and distributed mutton among their fellow villagers, including the caste people. In these festivals, they also ate meat or fish for several days.

The other diet restriction, which sharply distinguished the Sapha Hod from the other Satar was the absence of the use of rice-beer among the Sapha Hod. The Sapha Hod differed from the Christian Satar because the Christian Satar neither prepared nor drank rice-beer, whereas the Sapha Hod prepared it but did not drink. These Sapha Hod further distinguished themselves from the Bidin Hod who prepared it as well as drank it. They, together with their caste friends, looked down upon the Bidin Hod for drinking rice-beer and eating chicken and pork.

Since rice-beer appears as a key symbol among the Satar which blurs the duality of their economic and ritual identities, and also summarizes a complex system of ideas under one unitary form, I examine the various meanings related to this symbol in detail in the next and the last chapters.

JAJMANI SYSTEM: The other ritual that distinguished the Sapha Hod from the Bidin Hod was the Sapha Hod's participation in the Jajmani system. This system is a part of the caste system. In the Jajmani system, services are exchanged for goods. Individuals exchanging stand in a patron-client relationship. The patron (Jajman) could have several individuals of different caste groups working for him as barber, drummer, priest, smith, or a mid-wife. A patron thinks of his clients' ritual status as equal to his own or lower than his own. A client could also have more than one patron who might live in one village or different villages. The clients think of their patrons' ritual status as equal to their own (clients') or as higher than their own. Clients visit their patrons as often as they are asked for, and are paid two or three times a year during harvest. In addition, they receive gifts from their patrons during festivals and life-cycle rituals of their children and their patrons' children. The Jajmani system, thus, reinforces both economic and ritual transactions and enables the participants to behave accordingly in both these types of hierarchy.

In Jajmani work, as mentioned in chapter IV, only three men of three different caste groups, Sonar, Chamar and Teli, and a Chamar woman followed their traditional caste occupations of smithery, leather-work, cooking and mid-wife. Their patrons were rich and belonged to different caste groups. As their patrons lived in other villages these individuals spent most of their time outside Sunauli visiting their patrons.

Although the Jajmani system is a part of the caste system, the Sapha Hod also participated in it. In 1985, the members of all the three Sapha Hod households maintained a patron-client relationship with two caste individuals. One was a barber and the other a drummer. The Sapha Hod considered the ritual status of these individuals as lower than their own. The barber visited them twice a week. He shaved the men of these Sapha Hod households, trimmed their hair, and cut the nails of all the members, both male and female. Another client of these Sapha Hod was a drummer who was a Bengali from India. He visited them once or twice a year for one or two weeks each time. The Sapha Hod paid both these clients in cash and grain. They considered both these occupational caste groups of barber and drummer as lower in ritual status than their own.

DEATH AND MOURNING: Borrowing of Hindu rituals was most evident in the life-cycle ceremonies of the Sapha Hod,

such as death, mourning and marriage. All Satar buried their dead and removed the pollution caused by death the same day the death occurred. Offering sacrifices to the different Bonga achieved this end. During the first period of my field work, two Bidin Hod men and one woman died in Sunauli, and the pollution caused by their death was removed the same evening, after their burial, by offering chicken and pigeons to the Bonga. Although the Sapha Hod, unlike their caste neighbors who cremated their dead, buried their dead on the same day of death, unlike the Bidin Hod, they did not make offerings to the Bonga on the day of burial. They made these offerings to the Hindu gods and the Bonga after three or seven days following a death, as the local caste people did. I learned in 1985 that they mourned for seven days on Baba T's death. They also excluded all meat and salt in their diet, a practice which was also common among the local caste people. The Satar section of Sunauli remained Bithlaha (unclean/impure) during this mourning period. Therefore, no Satar could perform any Bonga worship during this time. The pollution caused by this death was removed only after deities, including the household, clan, Majhi and other Bonga, were worshipped on the seventh day, proper offerings were made to them, and the villagers, both Satar and caste people, were given a funeral feast.

MARRIAGE: Another ritual context where such Hinduization of rituals was evident was marriage,

especially the Daudo Bapla (chapter V). According to the Bidin Hod custom, the bride-price and the items included in the bride-price, such as cash, feasts and cattle, move in one direction, from the groom's family to the bride's family. But influenced by the caste custom of dowry, my Sapha Hod informants often looked down upon their Bidin Hod neighbors and called them Jhutia Hod (ignorant Satar) for "selling" their daughters. The Sapha Hod considered the caste custom of dowry as rewarding and fulfilling.

These Sapha Hod men combined both the Satar and caste customs and practised both bride-price and dowry at the same time, as I show in figures # 25 and 26. They took a minimum amount of bride-price (Rs. 41) for their daughters and gave big feasts to their daughters' in-law, prior to the marriage. I was a participant in one such feast given by a Sapha Hod to his daughters' in-law, immediately following his two daughters' Nepel ceremonies (in which the prospective grooms and brides formally gave their consents to marry each other). I also learned from the married daughters of the Sapha Hod households that the Sapha Hod also "donated" a cow per daughter in each such marriage, a practice highly valued by the caste people of Nepal. The following two figures # 25 and 26 illustrate the difference between the bride-price and dowry and the Sapha Hod's unique way of combining these two.

Figure # 25

Bride-price and dowry among the Satar and the caste people

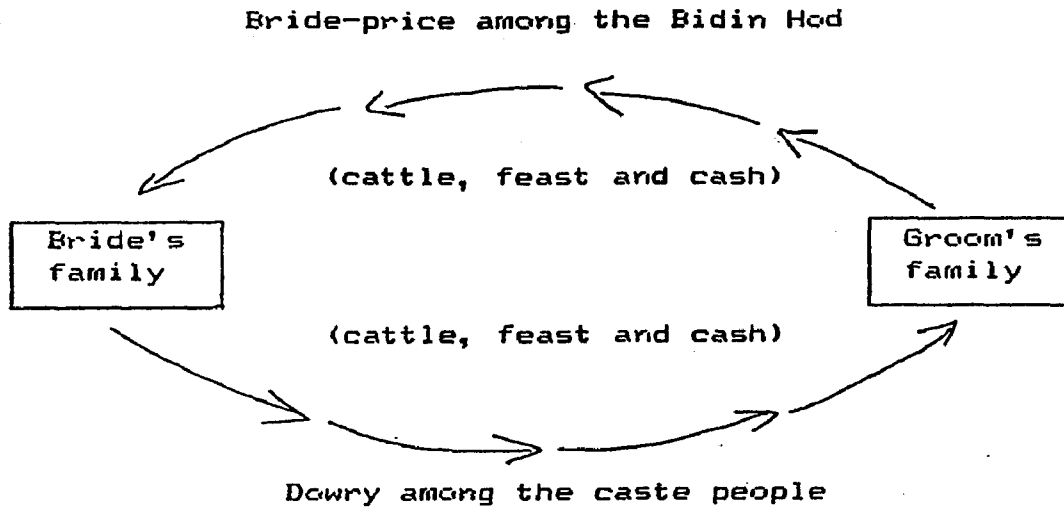
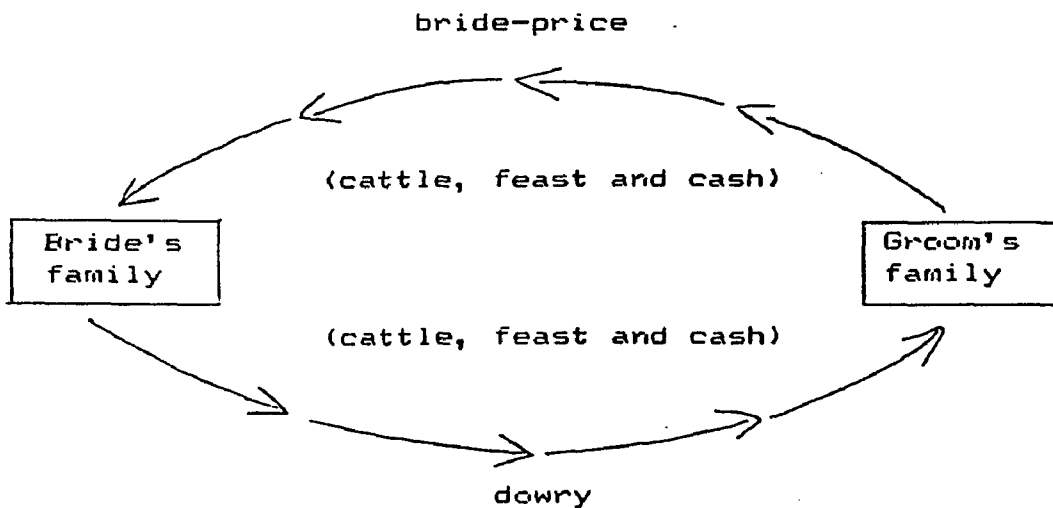


Figure # 26

Bride-price and dowry among the Sapha Hod



CONCLUSION: The syncretism of Hindu and Satar rituals distinguished the Sapha Hod from their Bidin Hod and Christian Satar neighbors. Although my Sapha Hod informants verbally denied any status difference between themselves and the Bidin Hod and repeatedly emphasized their being one kind of people (Hindu), their everyday rituals and behavior indicated a status difference between them. This difference was symbolized primarily in the context of giving and receiving of food - the Sapha Hod being the givers and the Bidin Hod and the Christian Satar as the receivers. The relationship developed between them through such unilateral exchange of food was interpreted differently by the various groups. These interpretations reveal plural perspectives on the system - economic perspective of the lower group and religious perspective of the higher group. For example, the Sapha Hod, who were also rich, viewed this relationship in ritual terms of Sapha/non-Sapha. They considered themselves Sapha and, therefore, did not accept food from their Christian and Bidin Hod neighbors. The Bidin Hod and the Christian Satar, who were also poor, conceived this relationship in economic terms of Malik/Nokar (master/servant) and thought of their lower class status as discouraging them from feeding their Sapha Hod Malik.

These characteristics of the Sapha Hod of Sunauli distinguished these Sapha Hod from the Sapha Hod of Kuapara, India, described by Kochar (1970). Kochar

distinguishes between the tribal and the non-tribal Santal, His tribal category includes the Bidin Hod whom he calls the Santal. His non-tribal category includes the Christian Satar and the Sapha Hod (those "who adopt Christianity or Hinduism"). Kochar (1970) refers to the Sapha Hod as Sadhu. According to him, the Sadhu (Sapha Hod) and the Santal (Bidin Hod) live in the same village, but both have different followers who "virtually constitute two separate social entities without any mutual participation" (1970: 33). And furthermore, the Santal (Bidin Hod) treat both the Sadhu (Sapha Hod) and the Christian Satar as either outcast, or at least socially inferior to them, as Kochar describes:

when some body (sic) becomes a Sadhu or Kristan in a village the whole village resents it. The convert, however, continues to be (a) member of the society, subject to village authority and tribal law. Some degree of social stigma is attached to his social status. They (sic) often lose their authority and right to participate in the village matters, such as festivals and sacrifices. They (sic) may even be deliberately neglected as partial outcasts (Kochar 1970: 33).

This is not the case in Sunauli. Here no Satar thought of the Sapha Hod as an outcast. In Sunauli, the Sapha Hod not only celebrated and participated in all the Satar festivals, they also actively joined in village politics and played a major role in organizing their group meetings, which I examine in chapter VIII.

What is seen in Sunauli then, is the emergence of the Sapha Hod as the most powerful ritual category among the

Satar. Both political power and ritual purity coincided in this category. The Sapha Hod of Sunauli were very proud of their distinct Hinduized rituals, and viewed these rituals as having been handed down to them by their ancestors and, therefore, as belonging to the entire Satar group. They had so completely internalized these rituals, that they denied the belief that these rituals were Hindu rituals, and thought of them as belonging to their own traditional belief system. According to them, those who did not follow these "ancient" cultural forms were either deviants or ignorants. The deviants were the Christian Satar. The ignorants were the Bidin Hod whom the Sapha Hod referred to as the Jhutia Hod meaning those Satar who did not know the difference between good and bad. The Sapha Hod further incorporated the ritual hierarchy of the caste system into the Satar framework and viewed both the Bidin Hod and the Christian Satar as lower in ritual status than themselves.

It is important to keep in mind here that despite combining the cultural forms of both the Satar and the caste people and claiming themselves to be ritually purer than other Satar, the efforts of the Sapha Hod are not oriented toward merging into the caste system and losing their cultural identity. But since they combine both the Satar and caste rituals, the ethnicity claimed by the Sapha Hod differs from the way members of their larger group define it. It is this ethnicity, developed in the guise

of a new tradition, that the Sapha Hod think of as belonging to the entire Satar people. And, therefore, their efforts are rather aimed at making other Satar "return" to this ethnic identity.

During both periods of my field work, the dominance of the Sapha Hod and the hierarchical scheme, emphasized by them, had influenced their entire community. The same Bidin Hod who did not agree with the Sapha Hod's claim to be ritually higher than themselves, did agree with the Sapha Hod in designating the Christian Satar as untouchable and ritually lower in status than both the Bidin Hod and the Sapha Hod (see chapter IV).

Such implicit consensus with the hierarchical values of the caste system which serves to define their inter-group and intra-group relations was prevalent among the Christian Satar as well. Although the Christian Satar did not share the view of the Sapha Hod and the Bidin Hod of themselves as being lower in ritual status, they also viewed themselves within a hierarchical scheme. As Christians, they denied being Hindu or being a part of the caste system, but they also ranked themselves with a few caste groups. In this ranking, they considered the Mohali and the Chamar caste groups as lower in ritual rank

1. See Moffatt (1974, 1979) for a similar treatment of hierarchy among the untouchables of Endavur, south India.

than themselves. Further, they also used the ritual criterion of Sapha/non-Sapha in ranking themselves with these caste people.

In 1985, the only outcasts among the Bidin Hod and the Sapha Hod of Sunauli were the Christian Satar. As mentioned in chapter IV, all non-Hindus were regarded as Muslims by the Bidin Hod and the Sapha Hod. As such, Christians in general, and the Christian Satar in particular, were also thought to be within the category of the Muslim. Therefore, all my Bidin Hod and the Sapha Hod informants considered the Christian Satar as outcasts. They maintained a great degree of social distance from the Christian Satar in part by not accepting any boiled food, particularly rice and lentil, from them.

Conflicts and tensions emerging from the Sapha Hod's claim to be ritually higher than the other Satar and the denial of the Bidin Hod and the Christian Satar of such claim of the Sapha Hod have impacted on the ethnicity of the Sapha Hod. Despite their Hinduized behavior, the caste people still thought of the Sapha Hod as Satar. The Bidin Hod and the Christian Satar recognized them as wealthy and "Diku-like" people. The Sapha Hod, however, identified themselves as Satar, but belonging to a higher ritual status. Today, the syncretism of Satar and caste rituals, mentioned above, has come to characterize the Sapha Hod of Sunauli. Primarily because of this, the Sapha

Hod seem to be the ethnic mediators in Sunauli - belonging to an intermediate category between their ethnic group and the caste groups. As ethnic mediators or belonging to this intermediate category, the Sapha Hod viewed the Satar and the caste groups as unbounded units. Such view enabled the Sapha Hod to define their relationship with the caste people and the Satar differently and to display their power and prestige both within their ethnic group and between the Satar and caste groups.

CHAPTER VII

COMMUNICATION OF ETHNIC/CLASS/CASTE DIFFERENTIATION

In the previous chapters, I have discussed those cultural forms of the Satar which provide criteria for differentiating them in terms of their ethnic and ritual identities. In this chapter, I discuss in greater depth the nature and function of those symbols and rituals which are significant in conveying both the socio-economic and ritual identities of the Sapha Hod. The symbols and rituals presented in this chapter are: 1) symbols of speech behavior, 2) the visual symbols of household architecture, and 3) the commensal rituals concerned with the distribution of rice-beer and hospitality.

With such discussion, I show that although Satar share symbols, they do not necessarily share the same meaning. They interpret the same symbol in different ways. Such variation in interpretation, I illustrate, shows the flexibility of the Satar cultural system that permits social movement for the individuals within and between groups. Second, I demonstrate how these symbols are related to the identities of the Satar. I show that the Satar's use of these symbols make their existing socio-economic differences more obvious both within and between groups. The effectiveness of these symbols in

distinguishing the Satar in terms of their class also affects the ethnic identities of the Satar, but in two different ways - class difference persuades its members to maintain ethnic differences at the lower class level and to ignore these differences at the upper class level.

In chapter IV, I discussed the criteria of placing the Satar into two economic categories - upper and lower. The upper class included three Sapha Hod and two Bidin Hod households. Since this thesis examines the ritual category of the Sapha Hod, my use of "upper class" in this chapter refers only to the Sapha Hod and the upper class caste people of Sunauli. Through such exclusive use of the label "upper Class" for the Sapha Hod, I examine the interrelatedness of their economic and ritual identities. And by including the upper class caste people in my discussion, I illustrate how the Sapha Hod share a theme of class culture with the caste people to enhance their (Sapha Hod's) secular and ritual identities.

In this thesis, I follow Leach's definition of "ritual" and "symbol" that he uses in understanding the dynamic characteristics of the Burmese social system (/1954/1979). Following his model, I consider all verbal (myth) and behavioral acts as 'ritual', as a "pattern of symbols". The symbol is the smallest unit of a ritual and is highly condensed because it stores different types of cultural information. This information is passed on to the individuals through the repetition of ritual from time

to time, in different ways and through different channels, to remind them of the underlying norms and themes of their culture. As a result of this, as Leach explains, ritual 'represents' "an ideal version of the social structure. It is a model of how people suppose their society be organized" (/1954/1979: 286). Because of such characteristics, he writes, ritual has the efficacy to maintain social order which is supposed to guide the social activities of the individuals.

Since the verbal and visual symbols, discussed in this chapter, play a significant role in the Satar culture, following Ortner (/1973/1979: 92-98), I call them "key" symbols. Ortner defines "key" symbols as representing "the internal organization of the system of cultural meaning, as that system functions for actors leading their lives in the culture" (Ortner /1973/1979: 92-98). Some of the key symbols of the Satar, as I examine them, are traditional and are objects of respect. They "synthesize complex experience". Some others, however, function as "key scenarios" in that they order action for providing life-strategies for the Satar. Both as object of respect and as "key scenario", the concept of key symbols is significant to my study in that it lends insight into the life-strategies of the Sapha Hod in their attempt to gain prestige, or in native terms "to be respected and feared".

LANGUAGE:

Natal (native) language serves as one of the key symbols. It appears as a badge of ethnicity, political status and class status. In India and Nepal such linguistic/ethnic identities are also correlated with regional identities. For example, the people of Nepal are identified as Nepali because of their regional affiliation, and also because of their natal language affiliation with the Nepali language. Similarly, in India, Maithili or Bengali can be an individual's regional and linguistic identity. In this chapter, I have used as analytical categories, the Satar (those who speak Satari), the Maithil (those who speak Maithili) and the Nepali (those who speak Nepali), calling these both ethnic and linguistic categories which mark the differences of cultural groups.

Since Satar and caste people live in a multilingual society, many of them can speak and understand more than one language. In Sunauli, the switching between linguistic codes was practised widely and the choice of language depended upon and varied according to the social context. For example, a Satar spoke Satari at home, Nepali in school, and Maithili in the village and in the weekly market.

Among these three languages, Maithili, Nepali and Satari, Maithili was the language of the numerically dominant Maithil people and there was a constant daily

interaction between the Satar and the densely settled Maithil people in and around Sunauli. Maithili was also the language of the weekly market held seven days a week in various places within the distance of a quarter mile to six miles from Sunauli. Most of the adult men, both Satar and caste, went to these weekly markets almost daily. Most of the adult women of both ethnic groups also went to these markets twice or three times a week. In Biratnagar, almost forty percent of the inhabitants spoke Maithili as their first language, and the rest of the people of this town could understand and/or speak this language. Such a situation put pressure on the non-Maithili speaking people like the Satar to learn this language. The social world of the Satar was so dominated by the Maithil people that many of the Satar who did not know Nepali (the national language of Nepal) did speak Maithili. During both periods of my field work, almost one hundred percent of the Satar, above the age of eight, could speak and understand Maithili.

My own experience as a native Nepali speaker is pertinent here. When I started my field work in Sunauli I did not know any Satari. I could understand Maithili, but could not speak it. Among my Satar and caste informants, only a few upper class men had a good command of Nepali. The rest of my informants could understand a few Nepali words, but could not converse in Nepali. Instead, they were fluent in Maithili which I could understand.

This situation pushed me to learn to speak Maithili to communicate with my informants. We all got used to communicating in Maithili so much that even after I learned Satar, Maithili remained as the medium of communication between the Satar and me throughout my field work.

Because of the dominance of the Maithili language, even those Nepali and Maithil people who lived amidst the Satar spoke Maithili with them. During 1978-79 and 1985, the Teli and Mohali people were fluent in Satar, as well as in Maithili and Hindi. During their daily interaction with the Satar, however, these Teli and Mohali also chose Maithili as the medium of communication.

The sharing of Maithili among the Satar and its non-sharing among the caste people conveyed different meanings for the members of each of these groups. These meanings also varied within each group according to gender and class. Among the Satar, gender was not significant in the interpretation of the sharing of Maithili, class was. The Satar of lower class (men and women) referred to Maithili as the language of the Diku (Indian language-speaking caste people of Nepal and India). They still viewed the Diku as those who once exploited the Satar (see chapter III). These Satar, therefore, considered the knowledge of Maithili as necessary to interact with the Diku and other caste people of Nepal in order to prevent

themselves from being exploited again. For the upper class Satar of Sunauli (both men and women), however, Maithili language functioned primarily to maintain a smooth social and economic relationship with the caste people.

Although Satar of both classes had not forgotten their exploitation by the caste people in the past, the lower class Satar had not changed their attitude towards the Maithil people. The lower class Satar still felt threatened by the dominance of the caste people. The upper class Satar, however, had overcome their fear of the caste people, and viewed themselves as a part of the larger caste society. Therefore, they considered their use of Maithili mainly to maintain a smooth socio-economic relationship with the caste people.

The non-sharing of Satari by the Maithil people also had different meanings which varied according to gender and class. A few upper class men had a politically sophisticated justification for not speaking Satari. According to them, there should be one language which everyone could understand and speak when discussing the problems of the village and nation. This would then help the government achieve the goal of its integration program. Since Maithili served this function in Sunauli, and since Satar themselves were willing to speak Maithili, these upper class caste men did not see any necessity for speaking Satari.

The rest of the caste people (upper class women and lower class men and women) considered the Satar people as Asabhya (uncivilized/wild), and of Chhota Jaat (low type). They based this distinction on behaviors condoned in the Satar community: premarital sexual activity, marriage practices like elopement, marriage by capture, frequent divorce, remarriages, and ritual dancing while drunk. The caste people also looked down upon the Satar because their dietary practices included drinking rice-beer and eating meat of lower ritual values, such as field-mice, pigs and chicken.

In spite of the dominance of the Maithili language, this language was not the prestige language of Sunauli. The Satar thought of Maithili as the language of Diku and as an "out-side element". This language, therefore, did not function for them as a means to "earn a name". "Earning a name" was possible only through the knowledge of Nepali which the Satar regarded as the prestige language. The caste people did not agree with the Satar about Maithili being an "out-side element", but did agree that Nepali was the prestige language. Both the Satar and caste people regarded the knowledge of this language as a sign of refinement. Nepali is not only the national language of Nepal but is also the language spoken by the Brahman and the Chhetri, the two upper castes of Nepal. It is, therefore, the language with the greatest socio-political significance. Nepali is used by the government,

the educational system and by the mass media as a means to achieving the national goal of integration. Because of these factors, the Satar and the caste people of upper class attached the most social value to the Nepali language. These upper class people, especially men, always spoke Nepali with me and also expected me to talk to them in Nepali whether in the tea stall or in their households. They referred to their women as Murkha (Maithili word meaning ignorant) because of their lack of the knowledge of this language.

Nepali language, as a language of prestige, distinguishes itself from Maithili which functions as a language of daily interaction in Sunauli where the language of the numerically dominant (Maithil) people is imposed on the Satar. The use of Maithili language by the Satar and the non-use of Satari language by the Maithil people symbolizes the asymmetrical political status of the Satar and the Maithil people as a minority versus a dominant group. Although such a situation puts pressure on the minority group to share the language of the dominant group, it separates the cultural boundaries of these two groups and indicates the class differences within each group. Nepali language, as a key symbol of prestige, functions in a different way. It ignores the ethnic boundaries and divides the whole population of Sunauli into two class categories, upper and lower, where all the members of upper class have this language in common to

enhance their socio-economic statuses and to earn respect from their fellow Satar and caste people.

The efforts of enhancing one's socio-economic status in order to gain respect and prestige are culturally approved in Sunauli. The information that I gathered in 1985, after conducting my ranking task, shows that in Sunauli most of the Satar and caste people valued upward mobility within their cultural system (see Barber 1968; Rowe 1968; Stein 1968 for dimensions of social mobility in the caste society of India). They often equated such mobility with prestige and fame. They talked about these in various ways such as, "to earn a name", "to be well known", "to be respected and feared", or "to be like upper caste Nepali people". In the following pages, I will be using these idioms synonymously. These phrases implied "upward mobility" both in the ritual order of caste and in the economic order of class. Informants also agreed that the knowledge of the prestige language Nepali was one of the criteria for "being respected and feared". However, during both periods of my field work, the individuals who were constantly engaged in this process of "earning a name" were the upper class Satar and the caste people, both males and females. And these were the same individuals, especially men, who valued most the knowledge of Nepali as a means to enhance their socio-economic status.

According to my census data, gathered during both periods of my field work, literacy in general and the

knowledge of Nepali in particular were correlated with an individual's socio-economic status. In 1978-79 and 1985, all upper class men and their children knew Nepali. Older men had learned it by interacting with the Nepali people, but the children had learned Nepali in school. During 1985, all the children of upper class status were in the local school and in the schools of Biratnagar. And especially because of such schooling, the literacy rate was also higher among the upper class Satar of Sunauli (Figure # 27).

Figure # 27

Literacy rate among the Satar and the caste people

<u>ethnic gender</u> <u>group</u>	<u>class</u>						
	<u>upper</u>			<u>lower</u>			
	<u>lit.</u>	<u>non-lit.</u>	<u>total</u> N=69	<u>lit.</u>	<u>non-lit.</u>	<u>total</u> N=277	
<u>SATAR</u> (n=170)	male	89% (8)	11% (1)	9	3% (2)	97% (71)	73
	female	31% (4)	69% (9)	13	1% (1)	99% (74)	75
<u>CASTE</u> (n=176)	male	61% (14)	39% (7)	23	22% (14)	78% (53)	65
	female	0% (0)	100% (24)	24	0% (0)	64% (64)	64

This figure further shows a significant ethnic

difference in literacy rate among the Satar and caste females. There is one hundred per cent illiteracy among the caste females despite their different economic statuses. Among the Satar, however, four out of thirteen women of upper class, all daughters of the Sapha Hod, could read and write during 1985. Such ethnic difference in literacy rate indicates that the Sapha Hod were not as reticent or withdrawn as their caste neighbors were. The Maithil people favored their sons against their daughters in education and sent only their sons to school. The Sapha Hod did not do so. They viewed education as a means to achieving a certain political goal, so they educated both their sons and daughters. They believed that only in this way could their children be a part of the larger Nepali society and compete with other Nepali people.

Though some lower class Satar and caste men were also literate and knew how to speak Nepali in 1985, their language was less stylized. In 1978-79 and 1985, it was mainly the upper class men among the caste people and upper class men and women among the Satar who not only knew how to speak Nepali, but also knew the art and style of using this language as appropriate to the contexts. They had learned this art mostly through their contact with the upper caste Nepali people. As such, their style of speaking Nepali was closer to the upper caste Nepali people who also belonged to upper class. Such distinct behavior

distinguished these upper class Satar from their lower class Satar and caste neighbors, and reinforced their socio-economic identities more effectively.

The upper class men displayed their upper class identities in various ritual and secular contexts. At the village level, such contexts included the separate Satar meetings and the village-wide meetings of the Satar and the caste people. I attended five Satar meetings and six village councils in 1978-79 and three Satar meetings and four village councils in 1985. In the Satar meetings the medium of communication was always Satari and in the village councils it was always Maithili. In neither of these meetings was Nepali used to talk about problems. Therefore, I believe that the use of Nepali language was not itself important in these meetings. However, it was obvious that the men of upper class had used Nepali to build up "powerful connections" both within and outside of Sunauli, which had helped them to become "well known", "knowledgeable" and "respected and feared" by their fellow villagers. Thus the knowledge and use of Nepali indirectly allowed them to use their political status to their advantage in these village meetings.

HOUSEHOLD-ARCHITECTURE:

The design of the household-compound is another key-symbol which marks the class and ethnic boundaries of the Satar.

The Sunauli villagers, both rich and poor, distinguished verbally between the household-compounds of the poor and wealthy people. According to them, a poor man lived in a 'hut' whereas a wealthy man lived in a 'palace'. The household-compounds of the wealthy people, both the Sapha Hod and the caste, included two story multi-room dwelling-houses with separate granary and kitchen, and had two courtyards, inner and outer, with plenty of space in and around their homes. The structure of a poor man's household consisted of one single story house, having one or two rooms, and with a small inner courtyard. I start my discussion of the ethnic differences among the Satar and caste people of Sunauli with the household designs of the lower class people.

The houses of the lower class Satar and caste people were windowless mud-walled houses with one or two rooms. Most of these people lived in these small houses which could not comfortably accommodate more than a single nuclear family. These rooms were used as a sleeping place for married couples with their children, as a kitchen, as a place for storage of pots and other valuables, and for certain rituals related to their deities or Bonga. The cattle-owning poor villagers had cattle-sheds in front of their dwelling-houses with a small courtyard between.

The houses of the lower class people were made of bamboo and mud. Long and thick bamboo stems/poles were

used vertically and horizontally to support the structure of the house. Thinner branches of bamboo were used to make the inner walls. The walls were then plastered with mud mixed with cow-dung and husks of rice, wheat or mustard. In 1978-79 and 1985, my Satar and caste informants used either Khar grass or hay to make the roofs of their houses. Khar was four times more expensive than hay because it was especially grown to make roofs, and also because it had better water resistance than hay. As a result, the roofs made of Khar did not need replacement for three to four years, depending on the quantity of rain during monsoon, whereas roofs covered with hay required replacement almost every year. Hay was cheaper and also easily available to the villagers after they harvested the fields. During both periods of my field work, all the houses of the poor people of Sunauli had roofs of hay. Every year in March, before the Baha festival of the Satar and the Phaguwa festival of the caste people, villagers reconstructed or replaced their roofs and replastered the walls of their houses.

All the household-compounds of the lower class people had an inner courtyard where family members dried and cleaned grain before taking it to the mills. Babies slept, children played, and women relaxed after lunch and took a nap in the courtyard. Men also used this space as an open air workshop for making ploughshares and rope. Unlike their lower class caste neighbors, who kept drinking

water on one corner of this courtyard, the lower class Satar used a corner of this courtyard to plant some flowering bushes and made a small platform on which to keep drinking water. Next to this place, the Satar and the caste people had a mud stove which was usually used for cooking the main meal. Thus this courtyard was a private sector and was the main locus of Satar and caste home life. In a wealthier household-compound, three or four houses, i.e. granary, kitchen/dwelling-house and cattle-shed, on three or four sides defined the boundary of this courtyard and made it private. Household-compounds with only one house maintained the privacy of this sector by putting up a bamboo curtain on the side of the courtyard along the road.

ETHNIC DIFFERENCES: In spite of the similar structure of the households and the similar material used for the construction of the houses, the Satar and the caste people maintained their ethnic differences by their use of veranda which was an integral part of their households. It was the presence, size, and shape of these verandas that appeared to be crucial in distinguishing a Satar household from a caste household.

The verandas of the caste households were about three feet wide and three feet above the ground and ran parallel to the front part of their dwelling houses or kitchens. These were open verandas partially covered only by the

roofs of the houses. Most of these verandas did not have any steps.

The verandas of Satar households were of similar width and height, but they were split into two parts in front of the main entrance, leaving a three to four foot wide space making a convenient access to the room. Unlike the verandas of the caste households, the Satar verandas were also extended along the other two sides of their dwelling houses or kitchens and had a mud-wall around them. The Satar used these windowless covered verandas to lock up their chickens and goats at night or as extra rooms for themselves. Each covered part had enough room for both a guest and a household member to sleep at night. During 1978-79, a couple with two grown up children (who did not have their own household-compound) used one part of such covered veranda in one of their relative's household-compound. The couple used this part of veranda for cooking and sleeping purposes, thereby, maintaining a separate household of their own within the same household-compound.

This design of the veranda seemed to be a distinct ethnic feature of the Satar households. The Satar also viewed it as an ethnic marker. During 1978-79, all lower class Satar household-compounds had this particular design. And since this design apparently also symbolized a Satar's ethnicity, all but one upper class Satar households also had these verandas in their household-

compounds. Although this particular household had a verandah on the three sides of the kitchen, it was not a covered veranda of the traditional Satar style. Further, although, the particular Satar architecture of the veranda was found in the other two Sapha Hod household-compounds, it was not necessarily visible from outside. This made these compounds look more like the household-compounds of the upper class caste people.

The meanings attached to this veranda varied among my upper class Satar informants. Most of them used this covered veranda as a convenient place for relaxing and visiting their close kinsmen, and as a private sector during the daytime. One Sapha Hod household, mentioned above, had left its veranda uncovered for the sake of "cleanliness", which made it look more like a caste household of upper class.

As all the Sapha Hod were constantly engaged in enhancing their social status, the particular design of the veranda did not appear as a key symbol for them in which to indicate their ethnic identity. Although their strategic use of this symbol at a minimum level did mark their ethnic differences, the upper class Sapha Hod of Sunauli were less concerned with the symbols of ethnic identity. Rather they stressed the use of some other symbols, to be described in the following pages, to maintain and signal their higher ritual and socio-economic

statuses.

CLASS DIFFERENCE: While the veranda's design visually marked the ethnic boundaries of the Satar, the structure of the household-compounds and their size made class differences much more visible.

The design of the household-compounds of the upper class people of Sunauli (both caste and Sapha Hod), were strikingly different from the household-compounds of the lower class people as described above. This contrast was so obvious that any outsider coming to Sunauli for the first time could distinguish the house of a wealthy man from that of a poor man.

One such symbol was the size of the upper class household-compounds. The households of upper class people were clusters of three or four separate houses each with one or more rooms. Because of the degrees of difference in wealth, a few of these households had one story, others had two stories. Most of the upper class people had roofs of tin and tile for their dwelling houses and Khar roofs for their cattle-sheds and kitchen. Others had Khar roofs both for their dwelling houses and cattle-sheds. The walls of all the houses with tin roof were made of wood and were plastered with mud.

Since the compounds of the upper class people were bigger in size, they housed two or more nuclear families, and included both relatives and hired non-

relatives, who helped them in various agricultural activities. All these people, as members of one household, shared one hearth. In 1978 and 1985, there was a significant difference in the kind of people who lived in upper and lower class households of Sunauli. Lower class households included only consanguineal and affinal relatives. The upper class households also housed these kin but, in addition, included three or four servants/maids for agricultural help and household chores. The heads of these households asked these hired individuals and the other members of the households to sleep in the various units of their household-compounds in order to ensure the overnight safety of their household property. In a typical arrangement, the household heads, their wives, and young children slept on either of the two stories of their dwelling houses. One or two adult male members of these households, whether single or married, slept on the story not occupied by the household head, or in the kitchen or in the granary. One corner of the cattle-shed was also used as a sleeping place for one or two male relatives who were eight years old and above, or the servants of the household.

These households, unlike the lower class households, also owned and housed more domestic animals. In 1985, most of the upper class households of the caste people and the Sapha Hod had three to four pairs of oxen and buffaloes to plough their land, as well as milking cows

and/or she-buffaloes for a constant supply of milk. Selling milk was an additional source of income for all the upper class households of the caste people. These upper class households also owned ox-carts which were used to carry their grain to mills, and also to take their women and children to fairs in distant villages or in Biratnagar.

In addition to large livestock, all the upper class households also had pigeon or dove cotes in one corner of their courtyards. They also kept ducks and treated their guests with these. None of the upper class households kept chickens or pigs. Their households also had trees producing lemon, betel (areca) nut, grapefruit, jackfruit, mango, banana, guava, and tamarind planted within the courtyards of their household-compounds. The produce of these trees added to their household income. All upper class households sold surplus fruits and kitchen garden products in the weekly markets of Gaur and Chenna.

Further, all upper class caste people had hand-pumps in their inner or outer courtyards. Two of them also owned ponds. Among the Satar belonging to this economic category, two owned and shared a well and a pond in front of their households. In 1985, another upper class Satar had started digging a pond for his own household. The case of one upper class caste man L, who did not own a pond, was interesting. A pond was in front of his house. According

to my elderly Satar and caste informants, L's grandfather dug that pond. Because of this, L claimed the ownership of that pond, but was "proven" otherwise when at the time of a local survey conducted by the government officials in 1982, L could not produce any ownership papers. His grandfather was still alive in 1985 but too senile to remember anything. In such a situation, contracts for fishing in the pond was given by the local government office to local individuals. However, due to the previous higher social status of L's grandfather, the villagers always referred to this pond, as really belonging to L, and not to the government.

Among all the features, the courtyards of upper class household-compounds were most distinct. These courtyards were almost four times bigger in size than the courtyards of the lower class household-compounds. These courtyards commonly served as a general guest-house for passing travellers and a meeting place for the villagers. During my field work, several meetings were held in the big courtyard of Baba S to fix the dates of different festivals. It was to these courtyards that villagers came when they needed any help or to complain about something. This area was also a place for strangers to stay or for beggars to ask for alms. Among the Satar, it was in this courtyard that villagers beat drums and sang songs during different festivals and, in turn, were served rice-beer by the host.

The various functions of this courtyard, in entertaining people and in helping them in different ways, clearly demonstrated the high socio-economic status of the household head. The lower class people also fed and served rice-beer to their guests, but it was the size of the courtyard of the upper class households which appeared crucial in drawing a class distinction within and between the Satar and the caste people. The bigger a courtyard, the greater the capacity to hold a large number of individuals. This further indicated the wealth and the economic capacity of the host to entertain and feed more guests or to lavishly distribute rice-beer among them - two key symbols themselves, as I describe in detail in the following pages.

COMMENSALITY AS A KEY SYMBOL

RICE-BEER: As mentioned in chapter VI, the Satar use rice-beer as a significant symbol in separating their ritual categories within their ethnic group. For example, the Bidin Hod drink it, offer it to their Bonga, and distribute it among their friends and relatives. The Christian Satar do not use rice-beer at all, whereas the Sapha Hod prepare it and distribute it among their friends and kinsmen but never drink it. Since rice-beer is both a symbol and a ritual of hospitality, it has both economic and ritual connotations.

Like the visual symbol of household-design, rice-beer also has different but rich meanings. It is

considered an important part of all the Bidin Hod festivals and life cycle rituals. The Bidin Hod offer it to their Bonga (spirits) and to their ancestors, and no ritual is considered complete without the use of the rice-beer. Rice-beer is also offered to their guests. In Sunauli, where most of the residents are kinsmen, they constantly support each other - both morally and financially. The distribution and acceptance of rice-beer in ritual is one key symbol of this supportive interpersonal network.

Rice-beer is also conceived as a traditional and sacred symbol. The Bidin Hod talked about the sacredness of rice-beer every time they talked about their creation myth. According to the myth, the good and clever Bonga (Marang Buru) taught Satar how to make rice-beer in order to reproduce their Jaat (meaning 'type' or 'kind' in this context). Their creation myth is as follows:

Once Thakur created a duck and a goose and sent them to the earth. Both flew around the earth for several years. As there was only water and no dry place to sit, the couple went back to Thakur and complained about it. Thakur asked them to go back again. This time they saw some Jana grass (which is used for making brooms by the Satar today) and sat down on that grass. But as there was still no dry ground, both went back again to Thakur. Thakur gave them some ground and asked them to throw it on water. Then the earth was formed, and both the duck and goose started living there. A few years later they had two human children - Pilchu Hadam, a male, and Pilchu Budhi, a female. The couple was surprised to find that human beings were their children, so went back to Thakur again. Upon the advice of Thakur, the duck and the goose raised their children and helped them get married.

Pilchu Hadam and Pilchu Budhi, thus, became the first

Hod couple. They gave birth to seven sons and seven daughters. Thakur asked this couple to live separately in order to raise their children nicely with more rooms for them. Pilchu Hadam lived with his sons and Pilchu Budhi with her seven daughters in two places which were quite far from each other. After many years, the seven boys met the seven girls and they became fond of each other. They did not know that they were brothers and sisters. When their parents learned about their fondness and love for each other they were worried and called Thakur to help them. Thakur advised them to marry their seven sons with their seven daughters and asked the good and clever Bonga Marang Buru to help the first Satar couple. Marang Buru asked the couple to pluck some Udy rice and prepare Handi (rice-beer) of it. After experiencing the intoxicating capacity of the rice-beer, Marang Buru asked Pilchu Hadam and Pilchu Budhi to give it to their sons and daughters. When they all got drunk each couple ran into the Jungles and had sexual intercourse. When they came back home they got married. From these seven couples seven Paris (clans) originated, and all the Hod, from then on, were divided into these Paris.

Almost all my Bidin Hod informants agreed that Marang Buru introduced rice-beer among them to create more people of their kind to continue their Jaat. As such, they thought it their prime duty to offer rice-beer to Marang Buru as a token of respect for his love and support for the Satar. During both periods of my field work, I noted that only women prepared rice-beer, and only men offered rice-beer to Marang Buru and to other Bonga. Both of them drank rice-beer only after offering it to these Bonga. According to these Bidin Hod men and women, to cease making or drinking rice-beer was to cease being a Satar.

Some Satar men and women also talked about rice-beer as the best source of "energy", as the best "food" to forget the hardships of their lives. Among them, women

interpreted drinking rice-beer as preparing them to enjoy sexual intercourse with their husbands, or if unmarried, to solicit other men. These women also drank rice-beer but they seldom got drunk. The married Bidin Hod women purposely drank less since they had to take care of their households, their children, and also because they wanted to enjoy the company of their husbands at night.

The theme of enjoyment through sexual activities is supposed to have been handed down to the Satar, as the creation myth of the Bidin Hod goes, by Marang Buru who instructed the first Satar couples of the seven clans about sex. This theme is very explicit in the dances of Scharai and Baha which I treat in the next chapter.

Rice-beer also symbolized the themes of social ties for the Bidin Hod of Sunauli. While both Sapha Hod and Bidin Hod agreed that serving beer to guests symbolized social ties, Sapha Hod men refused to drink rice-beer with their guests because of its low ritual status. Daughters and sisters of such Sapha Hod households were the only members who were involved in extending social ties through offering and drinking beer. These women treated their neighbors with rice-beer and also visited them, thereby, allowing their hosts to reciprocate by treating them with drinks.

For all Satar women (of Sapha Hod and Bidin Hod households), rice-beer also symbolized natal ties. As

mentioned in chapter VII, these women carried rice-beer and puffed or flattened rice to their natal homes while visiting their parents or brothers during Soharai and Baha. This rice-beer was first offered to their clan Bonga and then distributed among other members of their natal households. The offering symbolized the continuity of their natal identity and their potential membership in their natal households.

Thus rice-beer appears as one single symbol among the Bidin Hod men and women and the Sapha Hod women which summarizes a complex system of ideas under one unitary form. It functions as a religious symbol and connotes themes of enjoyment, procreation, and a happy life. It also stands for expanding and strengthening interpersonal bonds and social ties. Furthermore, it provides "energy" to forget the hardships of life and lighten ill feelings against others. Because this symbol condenses different themes, it appears in many different ritual contexts, including birth, death and marriage, in the festivals of Baha and Soharai, and in the daily formal or non-formal ritual context of hospitality, which I examine later in this chapter.

Turning now to the Sapha Hod men, I observed that although they did not drink rice-beer, they prepared a large quantity of rice-beer for their guests during Baha and Soharai, the two big festivals of the Satar. They distributed rice-beer to their guests of Sunauli and

outside with great zeal and spirit, and encouraged and insisted and persuaded their guests to drink as much as they could, but all the while abstaining from drinking it themselves.

Like the Bidin Hod, the Sapha Hod also worshipped Bonga but, as I have mentioned in chapter VII, Bonga never occupied a primary place in a Sapha Hod Puja. A Sapha Hod Puja always started with Hindu deities. Therefore, rice-beer never became an integral part of a Sapha Hod Puja, even when worshipping their Bonga. This indicates that rice-beer does not play a ritually significant role in Sapha Hod culture. The sacredness of rice-beer, which is so much elaborated by the Bidin Hod, is entirely absent from the Sapha Hod version of the creation myth, presented below.

Once Thakur created a duck and a goose and sent them to the earth. Both flew around the earth for several years. As there was only water and no dry place to sit, the couple went back to Thakur and complained about it. Thakur asked them to go back again. This time, they saw some Jana grass and sat on that grass. But as there was still no dry ground, both went back to Thakur. Thakur gave them some ground and asked them to throw it on water. They did so, and then the earth was formed. A few years later, they had two human children - a boy and a girl. The couple was surprised that human beings were their children, so went back to Thakur again. Upon the advice of Thakur, the duck and the goose raised their children with great affection and care. They named their son Pilchu Hadam and daughter Pilchu Budhi. When these children grew up, they became fond of each other and, one day, committed the most incestuous act ever known. They married each other and gave birth to many many children. Since the couple were brother and sister, their children came to be known as Musalman (Muslim).

Thakur condemned the marriage of Pilchu Hadam and

Pilchu Budhi and the children born from such a marriage. So, one day, he sat down and created seven Hod couples one by one in seven days. These couples founded the seven Paris (clans). They had many children who all lived together, and later married in each other's Paris. When their living place got very crowded and they had problems finding food to eat, the good and clever Bonga Marang Buru asked them to move from that place forever. The Hod said, "How could we? The children of Pilchu Hadam and Pilchu Budhi (meaning Muslims) are everywhere on this earth. They will not welcome us." Marang Buru thought of an idea and advised them to call themselves the children of Pilchu Hadam and Pilchu Budhi, so that they could have plenty of food to live on. The Hod listened to Marang Buru. Although they had to lie about their identity, they had enough to eat no matter where they went or lived.

Obviously, rice-beer plays no role in this Sapha Hod version of myth. Further, according to this version, the Satar are not the descendants of Pilchu Hadam and Pilchu Budhi. Since these two were brother and sister, their marriage was incestuous, and they gave birth to Musalman (Muslims). My Sapha Hod informants explained to me that since all the Satar had to lie in order to survive, the lie misled the Satar to think of themselves as the real descendants of Pilchu Hadam and Pilchu Budhi. It also encouraged them to entertain themselves with intoxicating beverages, like rice-beer, and justify their indulgence in premarital sexual activities.

Now the question remains - "why then did the Sapha Hod prepare and distribute the rice-beer among their fellow Satar?" Its answer is to be found in the culturally defined ritual of hospitality which allowed the Sapha Hod to interact and strengthen interpersonal bonds with the Bidin Hod without sharing the meaning of this particular

key symbol with the Bidin Hod. It also allowed the Sapha Hod to maintain an asymmetrical relationship, both along ritual and economic orders, with the Bidin Hod. By constantly distributing rice-beer, the Sapha Hod reinforced the boundaries of both their higher ritual and economic identities.

Rice-beer, thus, functions as a key symbol among the Satar. For the Bidin Hod, it summarized various cultural meanings of different levels and represented to the participants what the system really meant. But for the Sapha Hod rice-beer as a key symbol provided cultural strategies. It related to a particular scenario of hosting and feeding which was replayed in every public ritual, formal or informal, in one's every day life. For these reasons, rice-beer appeared as that key symbol for the Sapha Hod which helped them define three of their crucial life-strategies : a. through the ritual action of beer-making they fulfilled the minimum requirements of their Satar culture and identity, b. by not drinking it they participated in the caste culture, and c. by distributing it among their fellow members they maintained both their class and caste cultures, their economic and ritual identities.

HOSPITALITY: Hospitality was also both a key symbol and a ritual context in Sunauli. It was valued by the Satar and the caste people as a proper social behavior.

For them, hospitality represented a clear-cut personal strategy for an individual to demonstrate his culturally defined social success. Hospitality also has religious connotations both among the Satar and the caste people. Manu, a Hindu lawmaker, talks about various gifts and religious acts, and the reciprocal nature of these gifts and acts (Buhler: 1886). Among many other things, these include the gifts of food and cooperative acts of digging ponds and wells. Manu speaks of gifts and religious acts as a means of accumulating merits for the next life. According to him, no matter what one gives as a gift to another, the giver does receive a reward equivalent to this gift, with due honor, in this and/or in the next life. This is the clue to the value of being hospitable. In Sunauli, both the Sapha Hod and the caste people believed in Dharma, Karma and rebirth, and also that in giving food to others or doing something good for others the giver receives a more prestigious reward in either this or the next life.

In Sunauli, the meanings related to hospitality were clear and orderly. They implied, as Ortner points out in her discussion of symbols, "clear-cut modes of action appropriate to correct and successful living in the culture" (1973/1979/: 92-98). Both upper and lower class individuals in Sunauli agreed that hospitality was the key to earning a name and respect in this life and to making merit for the next life. A lower class man was not able to

host as many guests as his upper class friends did. While he could treat his fellow villager with tobacco, a rich Satar or caste man could provide both tobacco and food, and occasionally also tea and cigarettes. As such, though hospitality was culturally valued both among the Satar and the caste people, for economic reasons hospitality was very limited among the lower class people.

To be hospitable, to be able to feed others, an individual does have to have a certain economic status. During both periods of my fieldwork in Sunauli, I observed that those who were constantly hospitable to their fellow villagers and generous to them whenever needed were men of wealth. Yet, as I explained in chapter 1, in the context of Sunauli wealth did not appear as an end in itself. A man was not respected only for his wealth. To earn respect and prestige an individual had to use wealth in a culturally defined way. Hospitality was one such appropriate method. Through hospitality, by sharing food with others, a wealthy man was able to convert his economic status into a ritual status. Here, as among the distillers of India described by Bailey, hospitality appeared as a game, 'the objective being to maximize prestige, or honor, or ritual purity' (1968: 284). Upper class men in Sunauli, particularly the Sapha Hod, aimed to achieve all three of these, but especially ritual purity, by constantly feeding others including the caste people.

In 1978-79 and 1985 in Sunauli, the men of upper class constantly gave to others, either by offering them tobacco or betel nut or food, either in formal or informal occasions. Formal hospitality events were held in conjunction with weddings, funerals and socio-religious festivals. In the festive contexts, like Baha and Sohrai, the Satar did not have any fixed schedule for hospitality. In these ritual contexts, the host fed any guests who dropped in. I also observed that during these festive occasions food was given to kinsmen only, but rice-beer was distributed among all - neighbors and friends.

The informal hospitality events occurred in daily life, during any time of the day or night. I observed that a stranger who dropped by an upper class households during mealtime was always fed rice and lentils. I also saw villagers who were short of tobacco frequently dropping by upper class households to get more. I was also constantly entertained with betel nut and/or tea by two upper class household heads of different castes, no matter what time of the morning or afternoon I stopped by to visit them.

While giving and receiving food were culturally valued among both the Satar and the caste people of Sunauli, the implications differed for these two groups. Among both the Satar and the caste people of Sunauli, acceptance of

food was symbolic of, among many other things, the guest's lower economic status and/or lower ritual status. Therefore, as I observed, the guest tried his best to avoid accepting or overindulging in the food. To be able to feed and constantly entertain the villagers with tobacco, betel nut or rice-beer indicated the generosity of the host and his higher economic or ritual status. Such generous and hospitable behavior was associated with prestige which had far-reaching ritual and economic implications. By giving more the host also asserted more power. Though this power did not mean political power in terms of having authority to make decisions for the community, it certainly enhanced the host's influence over the guest. As the host did not want to give up his chances for generosity, prestige and power, he very tactfully and politely pressed the guest to accept even more food.

A unilateral flow of gifts continuing over time, can make the temporary relationship of host-guest into a more permanent relationship of subordination. In Sunauli, the host-guest relationship led to the establishment of a patron-client relationship between the upper class "patrons" and the lower class dependent "clients". Such a relationship frequently cross-cut the ethnic/caste boundaries because an ambitious and generous host will feed not only the people of his ethnic group, but also those of other cultural groups. It was

especially by feeding the caste people that the Sapha Hod defined their own ritual status in the caste hierarchy. During both periods of my field work, people belonging to certain castes, such as Mohali, Barber, and Teli, frequently accepted food cooked by the Sapha Hod of Sunauli. According to these caste informants, the Sapha Hod were "just like" the higher caste people in their manners and hospitality behavior. And since the Sapha Hod were also their Malik (patrons), it was perfectly all right for these caste men and women to accept the boiled food, especially rice and lentils, from the Sapha Hod.

Among the wealthy people of Sunauli, Baba S had more guests dropping in on him than had any other household head. These guests were mostly his Sapha Hod, Bidin Hod, or Christian Satar relatives from other villages, Maithil people, and Muslims. I was also his guest several times during my field work. Baba S knew well the art of feeding people. Two incidents occurring in 1985 will illustrate the complex and dramatic process of being a host and a guest. At different points in time two men, one a Christian Satar, the other from the Kiyat caste, came to see me at noontime. Baba S had finished his lunch, but the members of Baba S' household had not. As usual, Baba S asked these men to have lunch at his place. Both men acknowledged that it was a generous offer, but denied very politely saying that they did not want their own food cooked at their homes to be wasted. The host's polite but

persistant offer and the guest's equally polite resistance continued for more than half an hour. In between these men talked about other things, including the weekly market and own produce. The two women of Baba S' household could not begin eating their own meal since Baba S frequently called out to them to serve food to these visitors. The two women stood between the big outer courtyard and kitchen waiting for these men to make a decision. Finally, the guests left promising Baba S a "rain check" for his generous offer. No one was upset afterwards. Both parties knew the rules, and both acknowledged that this is how the host-guest game should be played. The host was outwardly praised by the guests for his persistence, and the guests were outwardly praised by the host for not being greedy. Yet, several days after this event, each told me privately that he disliked the other's behavior (persistence or resistance) and thought that others were trying to manipulate the ritual and economic status vis a vis one another.

The rewards brought by the culturally defined rituals of hospitality or other pious acts in an individual's lifetime, then, were conceived by the Sunauli villagers as positive. In addition to bestowing soteriological awards, these acts bestowed prestige and honor on the host which, in turn, enhanced his social status and served as the "key" symbol for "earning a name". An individual first acquired prestige by fulfilling ritual obligations of feeding

others. This prestige was then converted to a certain recognized prestigious or higher ritual status. Prestige and status, thus, did not depend solely on wealth. They depended instead on generosity and good reputation which were earned by adequately performing the culturally defined ritual of hospitality, in both formal and informal settings.

CONCLUSION:

In the previous chapter, I demonstrated that even within a single ethnic group, not all individuals share the same symbols. Some use caste symbols, while others use ethnic symbols. In this chapter, I have shown that even when the members of an ethnic group do share a few key symbols, they may not share in the same meaning of these symbols. To explain this, I have illustrated that the nature of these symbols is not static and fixed, either within the group or in inter-group relations, but keeps changing in contact situations according to the needs and interests of the individuals. This is particularly true among the Sapha Hod.

Studies of symbolism have demonstrated the dynamic characteristics of symbols in expressing cultural norms, conflicts, and uniformity or diversity. Symbols also express various needs and diverse interests of individuals and groups (see Fernandez 1965; Geertz 1979; Leach 1954; Ortner 1973; Talai 1986; Turner 1967). As I have demonstrated in this chapter, the meaning attached to

a symbol may continue over time, but often may change. In the process of achieving certain culturally defined goals, individuals reinterpret some of their old cultural symbols, as well as create and internalize the new meanings of these symbols. In this process, old cultural symbols (like rice-beer) may not be totally discarded. Rather they may be assigned new meanings and are manipulated to meet the new situation.

Of the four symbols discussed in this chapter, two symbols, language and household-compound, mark the socio-economic boundaries of the Sapha Hod. The other two key symbols of rice-beer and hospitality mark both class and ritual identities. The role of these key symbols indicates how variation in the interpretation of these symbols occurs despite the unanimous recognition of the effectiveness of the symbols. Such variance in meaning functions as a key factor in understanding the harmony and conflicts among the Satar and their continuing group identity and the emerging individual identities.

Among the various identities of the Satar, I have discussed how some key symbols affect the ethnic, ritual and economic identities of the Satar. The use of these symbols by the Sapha Hod show how these individuals often are less concerned with their ethnic boundaries and more with their ritual and class boundaries. I have shown that the ethnic differences made explicit at the lower

class level are not so apparent at the upper class level. The boundaries of the Satar and caste groups are very blurred at this higher class level especially because the members of upper class also share many values in common and seem to follow one particular theme of "class"/"caste" culture despite their ethnic differences.

Such interrelatedness of ritual and economic identities relates to the issue of ritual status versus power as is often discussed in the anthropological literature on the caste society of India. Following Hunter and Whitten (1976: 314), I consider power to be the ability to exercise one's own will effectively in order to control the behavior of others. In this sense, personal power is to be seen as the effectiveness in obtaining economic, ritual and political objectives.

In viewing power in such a holistic way, I diverge from the issue of status versus power raised by Dumont (1966/1980). Dumont's structural model presents a holistic view of the caste system. In "Homo Hierarchicus", Dumont is concerned, among other things, with the hierarchical binary oppositions of pure/impure and status/power. Here "status" refers to ritual status and "power" refers to political power - "the monopoly of legitimate force within a given territory" (Dumont /1966/1980: 153). With such a narrow political definition of power, Dumont examines ritual status as pure and power as impure - as complementary but arranged in a

hierarchical order. But since Dumont is concerned with Durkheimian "representations" (/1915/1965), with values and norms of the caste system, he does not relate these norms and values to individual behavior. Once related to individual behavior, as I have done so here in the context of Sunauli, the duality of status and power disappears.

In Sunauli, status and power are separable in the people's mind, and can be used separately in some contexts. For example, as I show in the ritual context of hospitality, the ritual (and also class) status of the Sapha Hod becomes apparent and their power becomes evident while making decisions at the village level and implementing them. These decisions include fixing the days of ethnic meetings and festivals, celebrating festivals and in negotiating and controlling the fighting parties.

In spite of these clear-cut boundaries of political/economic and ritual identities, status and power reinforce each other in Sunauli. The key symbols used by the Sapha Hod illustrate the interdependence of these two. The Sapha Hod's ritual status determines their power and their power, derived from their higher socio-economic status, influences their ritual status. Beals (/1962/1980), Johnson (1970) and Mayer (1960) illustrate similar correlation between ritual and economic status in their studies of caste groups of India. A few other Indianists have examined such interrelatedness in their studies

dealing with the significance of a secular model in the context of upward or downward mobility in the caste system of India (Bailey 1968; Damle 1968; Mandelbaum 1970; Rowe 1968).

In Sunauli, the boundaries of these two identities, ritual and secular, become so fuzzy, and are so well interwoven in the behavior of the Sapha Hod that the analyst has to go to a deeper level to find out when one identity is replaced by the other. And it becomes especially hard when a group claiming higher ritual status is also rich and, like the Sapha Hod of Sunauli, tries to convert its wealth to the achievement of a distinct ritual status. As I have shown in this chapter, through constant use of some significant symbols, the Sapha Hod define the boundaries of their ritual and class categories both within and between the Satar and caste groups. I have illustrated how, in this process, the Sapha Hod cross the boundaries of their ethnic group by defining their behavior in the wider cultural context of the caste society. At the same time, as I demonstrate in the next two chapters, they are constantly engaged in widening and maintaining the networks of their influence and power through continual participation in various secular and ritual contexts, thereby, displaying their cultural and individual identities simultaneously.

CHAPTER VIII

SECULAR CONTEXTS

In the preceeding pages, I examined a number of key symbols which relate to the various identities of the Sapha Hod. In this chapter, I focus on the secular and in the following chapter on the ritual contexts. These contexts include the Sapha Hod's participation in activities ranging from narrow (exclusive) to wide (inclusive) contexts. Exclusive contexts limit Satar's interaction with and isolate them from members of other ethnic groups. My field data indicate that as the Sapha Hod move from narrow contexts to wider ones, they become less concerned in maintaining their ethnic identity, and more concerned with their class, regional, or other religious or political identities.

This chapter focuses on the ethnic, ritual and class identities of the Satar and how these identities are related to their participation in different contexts. I show that the people of lower class tend to participate in the narrower contexts and the individuals of upper class participate more in the wider contexts. The higher an individual's class is, the more likely she/he will participate in those wider contexts which blur her/his ethnic boundaries and enhance her/his class and ritual statuses, prestige and power. However, as a person keeps moving back and forth from one context to the other, he/she

keeps contracting and expanding her/his identity according to her/his perceived needs and strategies.

SECULAR CONTEXTS

VILLAGE: The village is a secular context for interaction between villagers of different cultural groups. It also provides the Satar and the caste people with a regional identity which could be labeled as "village identity". An individual's village identity is less exclusive than her/his ethnic identity and is highly significant in presenting her/himself to the outsiders. She/he acquires this identity simply by living in a village for a certain length of time. Though Sunauli does not have any formal ritual in which the participation of the Satar and caste people is required to validate their village identity, participation in certain political meetings, described later in this chapter, reinforces and strengthens the bonds between the members of these two ethnic groups and helps them view themselves as members of one locale. Certain economic transactions, such as wage labor, also bring them closer. Certain kinship bonds, established between the Satar and the caste people, such as Dosti (ritual friendship), are also maintained among the villagers irrespective of their ethnicity. Dosti strengthens the social ties of neighborhood. In Sunauli, Dosti is established either between two men or two women. Dost (ritual friends) act as kin by inviting each other to participate in each other's life-cycle ceremonies and as

1

mourners at the other's death. Since exchange of gifts plays an important role in establishing the bond of Dosti, class becomes more salient in such relationship. Dost may belong to the same ethnic group or not, but must have equal economic statuses. During both periods of my field work, G (a Bidin Hod) and L (a Kevarat caste man) were two such Dost who acted as kin to each other.

It is also in the village context where a person's ethnic, ritual and class identities become prominent. I start with those contexts which functioned as the crucial contact zones among the Satar and the caste people of Sunauli and where ethnic, ritual and class identities were displayed.

TEA STALL: The tea stall of Sunauli was one such spot where most interaction occurred between men of different ethnic, caste and class groups. Almost every morning men gathered around the tea stall. There was a bench inside the stall on which four men could sit if they squeezed together. Two benches were outside the stall. People sat wherever they found a space, on the benches or on the floor. I observed that different ways of sitting were highly significant in communicating how much the Satar and the caste people cared about their ritual statuses in terms of Sap̄ha versus non-Sap̄ha. Those who

1. See Jay (1973) for a similar treatment of ritual friendship in India.

were very concerned about maintaining their pure ritual status never went to the tea stall. During both periods of my field work, Baba S and a caste man (N), both of upper class, were two such people whom I never saw at the tea stall. They did not want to drink tea prepared or touched by those whom they considered to be of lower ritual status. The other upper class caste man A was different. He was very particular about maintaining his Sapha status and following the rules of purity and pollution, but he frequently went to the tea stall. He relaxed there by sitting on the floor or to one side of the bench. This way, he maintained a certain physical distance between others, while enjoying a hot cup of tea.

Despite these concerns for the maintenance of one's ritual status, the tea stall seemed to be the spot in the village where constant interaction occurred between the adult Satar and caste men and one's village identity was developed, discussed, and displayed. Their ethnicity as Satar and caste people did not appear to be of much relevance in this context. Their village identity overrode all other identities. And as village members, the Satar and the caste people came to the tea stall for various reasons: to meet each other, to secure loans, to contract for fishing and ploughing, to talk about and solve problems related to intra-village and inter-village conflicts, and to confer on marriages, dowries, politics, and religion. All these problems were discussed and solved

orally, even the dowries and contracts. All villagers present in the tea stall functioned as witness for these contracts. The informal atmosphere of the tea stall thus cross cut the boundaries of the different cultural groups.

As the Satar and caste men gathered in the mornings in the tea stall, they expected all the villagers, irrespective of their ethnicity, to join them. But these men also understood that it was not possible for all the villagers to do so, particularly those of low income. The regular visitors of the tea stall (the Satar and the caste people), however, wanted all the upper class men to come because they considered the upper class men as "men of words and deeds" and, therefore, respected them and counted on their advice. I noted, every time any elderly upper class man came to the tea stall, his poor friends made sure that this man had a proper seat or that he was comfortable.

Despite this, only three upper class caste men (of different castes) and one upper class Bidin Hod regularly visited the tea stall. In 1978-79, one older Sapha Hod frequently went to the tea stall. In 1985, one thirty five year old Sapha Hod went to the tea stall only occasionally, (usually with his guests), and the other older Sapha Hod never went there. I often heard caste people saying they wished these men would come regularly to the tea stall to meet others and to help solve their problems. As these

caste people respected the Sapha Hod men they felt they deserved the presence and the advice of the Sapha Hod in this public place.

POLITICAL MEETINGS: The other arena where the Satar and the caste people expected the presence of their rich neighbors and where these rich neighbors displayed and maintained the subtle boundaries of their power, status and role, were the political gatherings. These political gatherings were organized both at the ethnic and village level. These meetings dealt with different problems. Satar meetings resolved only those issues related to the Satar people, such as the paying of bride-price, fixing the days of the Satar festivals, and smoothing the problems arising from elopement, acts against group endogamy or clan exogamy. The political meetings at the village level were more often related to the problems of the villagers, both the Satar and the caste people. Some of the problems that I observed during both periods of my field work were related to property damage. A few of these were caused when someone poisoned an individual's fish pond or cut the grass from someone else's land to feed his/her cattle or let his/her cattle go free to graze on someone else's land.

Between these two types of gatherings, the Satar gatherings were more exclusive and distinct. As members of one locality, the Satar of Sunauli organized themselves into one distinct political unit. This unit had seven

administrative positions: Majhi (headman), Jog Majhi (representative of the headman in his absence), Paranik (the first assistant of the headman), Jog Paranik (the second assistant of the headman), Naeke (the village priest), Kudum Naeke (the assistant priest), and Godet (the village messenger). During both periods of my field work, I noted that although all Satar villages made use of all seven offices, these offices were not necessarily represented by seven individuals. For example, in Sunauli, the office of the Majhi was represented by a Sapha Hod, and the office of the Naeke and Paranik by another Sapha Hod. One Bidin Hod did the work of both Jog Majhi and Godet and another Bidin Hod represented the offices of the Kudum Naeke and Jog Paranik. My Christian informants neither represented any of these offices nor participated in any ethnic political activities.

Such distinct political organization was characterized by the egalitarian values of the Satar. Each man holding these positions had a different function, but no power over the others. A Majhi was respected by the Satar, but ideally he was not considered powerful to make decisions about others. The Satar egalitarianism was also reflected in the relationship among the participants of the Satar meetings. Although such participation marked gender and age boundaries and included only adult Satar men, the relationship among the participants was one of equals, which was emphasized by the equal right of all to speak.

The only role of Majhi (headman) was to negotiate between two parties. Discussion and negotiations continued until a consensus was reached (see chapter IX).

Although Satar informants viewed political positions as non-hereditary and based on individual achievements, in 1985, all the Satar political offices were in fact inherited. The offices of the Paranik and Naeke, however, were held in 1985 by a Sapha Hod woman, Gogo T. Gogo T inherited these positions from her Sapha Hod husband (Baba T) after his death. Though everyone respected her, she was not allowed to participate in any Satar village council because of her sex. Instead, Baba T's patrikin Baba S represented her in these councils during 1985.

The Satar meetings were exclusive, as only the Satar of Sunauli could attend. The Satar of other villages never participated in the Satar meetings of Sunauli unless they themselves were involved in the cases discussed in these meetings. This political mechanism separated Sunauli from the other Satar villages of the vicinity. It also separated the Satar of Sunauli from other units of their own village which, in this case, were the various caste groups.

Unlike the Satar meetings, village meetings held in Sunauli were attended by both the Satar and the caste men. As in the Satar political gatherings, only men attended these meetings. As mentioned earlier, the

issues raised in these meetings were related to the general problems of the Satar and the caste people, such as property damage caused when someone cut the grass from someone else's land, insulted a fellow villager, poisoned someone's fish-pond, or wanted a larger portion of their extended household's property upon moving out of the extended household.

Whether the meetings were ethnic or inter-ethnic, an individual's class status played a significant role in political decision making. Although the Satar of Sunauli emphasized equality and also practised it by making the Majhi and other prestigious men pay penalties for any misconduct (see chapter V and IX), they also expected these men to help them reach decisions. During both 1978 and 1985, as I observed, only the men of wealth and prestige exercised their power in making political decisions in these meetings. The two individuals whom the caste people most respected and feared in 1978-79 were two elderly Sapha Hod, Baba T and Baba S. Baba T died in 1982, but Baba S was still the most powerful individual in Sunauli in 1985. He was older, literate, knowledgeable, and spoke fluent Hindi, Maithili and Nepali, in addition to his native language Satari. He had good contacts with some upper caste people of Biratnagar belonging to upper classes. Baba S had also travelled widely and made several trips and pilgrimages both in Nepal and to north India. In addition, he was very generous and hospitable.

These qualities combined made Baba S the most prestigious man in Sunauli. In 1978, he was a land-owner, but in 1985 he was a man without land. The loss of wealth, however, had not brought any change in the villagers' attitude towards him. They still respected and feared him and counted on his help. As a result, even when only caste men and women were involved in the intra-village conflicts, Baba S was always invited by these men and women to help solve their problems. No meetings, ethnic or inter-ethnic, were ever held without his presence.

The other individual who was powerful in political decision making was A. A was an elderly caste man. He belonged to the upper class, but owned the smallest amount of land among all the upper class members of Sunauli. He was also older and spoke fluent Nepali and Hindi, besides Maithili. Although A could not read and write, he had travelled widely, had good connections in and out of Sunauli, and was a very knowledgeable man. A was also religious. He had been to various pilgrimages in Nepal and India. A also sponsored and organized individual Puja (worship) and Pravachan (recital from sacred texts) in his household. These pious activities enhanced his social status among his caste friends, both in and out of Sunauli. My Satar friends also respected and feared A. Since A himself respected Baba S, he never started a meeting without the presence of Baba S. Both of these men presided over the village meetings of 1985 and helped solve village

disputes. And because of their active participation in village politics, both these men emerged as dominant in decision-making at the village level. Due to the influence of these men, their ability to solve the cases, and the villagers' respect and trust in them, the cases brought to the village meetings seldom reached the local police station or the court of Biratnagar.

WEEKLY MARKET: The other secular context where an individual displayed his class status were the weekly markets. Weekly markets provided a context for the people of Sunauli to interact with a wider group of individuals belonging to other ethnic groups and caste groups than found in the village. As such, these markets also functioned as a transition from the narrower context of the village to the wider context of the region.

During both periods of my field work, the Satar and the caste people went to different weekly markets (Hatiya). None of these was held in Sunauli. There were seven weekly markets held seven days a week at a distance of between one fourth of a mile to six miles from Sunauli. These markets were either known by the names of the places they were held or by the names of the days when they met. For example, Chenna weekly market was held on every Tuesday and Friday in Chenna which was about a quarter of a mile from Sunauli. Gaur weekly market met every Sunday and Thursday in Gaur, about three quarters of

a mile from Sunauli. Budh Hatiya (Wednesday weekly market) and Sani Hatiya (Saturday weekly market) were held in Biratnagar on every Wednesday and Saturday. The Som Hatiya (Monday weekly market) met in Nauligaun, three miles from Sunauli, on Mondays.

Individuals could buy many different things in these markets. Fish and liquor were the most popular items and sold very fast. Mostly vegetables were sold in these markets. Eggs and pigeons were also sold here. Some salesmen, whom I met in 1985, came to Chenna regularly. They sold cookies, bread, and miscellaneous items such as, ribbons, tobacco, and pictures of Hindu deities. Some who regularly sold vegetables were from the upper class Satar and caste households of Sunauli. These people grew vegetables especially for cash. Others from two to two and half miles away came here to sell their surplus produce.

The weekly market I attended the most during 1985 was in Chenna, one fourth of a mile from Sunauli. Individuals from different villages held this market. Both men and women participated in it. The location of the weekly market seemed very crucial in understanding the various reasons that attracted the individuals to a given market. For example, the spot where the Chenna weekly market was held was a small dusty field which held about one hundred people. A local police station and a middle school were on the southern side of this field, a grain

mill on the eastern side, and four tea stalls and a blacksmith's store on its northern side. There was also a big fertilizer store owned by the government near the black-smith's store. On the western side of this dusty field there was a footpath with a long row of three tea stalls, two tailor shops, a salon, and a store for selling grain and other food items. Two barbers regularly came from other villages and sat towards the end of this row. At the end of this row, started the Satar village of Minghu Panchayat. Behind this long row of stores, there was a post office, a clinic, and a family planning office, which all belonged to Minghu Panchayat. The proximity of the market to other stores meant that people attended the weekly markets for various reasons, besides selling and buying food and vegetables.

Although both men and women attended weekly markets, men participated more than women in these markets. During 1985, almost one hundred percent adult men of Sunauli went to the weekly markets of Gaur and Chenna. Very few caste women and about sixty percent of Satar women went to these markets. Men also went to the Biratnagar weekly markets once or twice a month. Since these men primarily thought of the weekly markets as places for social gatherings, the distance did not make any significant difference to them.

Among the men, those men of influence and power

spent more time in this wider context than the others. The weekly market provided an appropriate setting for the upper class people to display their social status. It encouraged them to expand the domain of their interaction and to widen their contacts. All the men of Sunauli thought of the weekly markets as the places for meeting people and socializing. The class differences among those who came to weekly markets were also more obvious. On a weekly market day, the status of upper class men was distinctively perceived in the way they left their village for the weekly market, with a few lower class men walking behind them. Also, although the upper class men bought vegetables in the weekly market, they never carried them to their households. Their lower class friends did this for them. These rich men or patrons assumed that their lower class friends would carry things for them and would always walk behind them. Such assumption and the above behavior of my upper class informants constantly reminded the lower class people of their (upper class people's) higher economic status and the established bond of the Malik/Nokar (master/servant, patron/client) relationship.

In addition, the upper class men (both Satar and caste men) spent a longer time than lower class men in the weekly market chatting with people or just walking around. While the lower class villagers spent more time among fellow villagers, the upper class men spent more time with

the people of other villages. They talked about politics, listened to the problems of other villagers, and offered their advice when asked for. These upper class men also spent some time in the tea stalls of the weekly market, with or without drinking tea, and often ended up paying a bill for a crowd of eight or ten individuals. Here, these upper class men, once again, ignored ethnic differences. They constantly engaged themselves in widening their contacts and developing their inter-ethnic relations. Such contacts and relations were highly valued by the Sunauli people especially because these acts enhanced an individual's socio-economic status and bestowed prestige on him.

CHAPTER IX

RITUAL CONTEXT OF SOHARAI

Festivals provided a more elaborate context for the Satar in which individual roles, economic and political powers, and ritual statuses were displayed. To demonstrate these, I discuss first a general summary of types of Satar festivals that took place over a twelve month period in Sunauli and the basic themes underlying these festivals. Then I treat one festival, Soharai, in depth.

In this chapter, I illustrate how members of the ritual categories, the Sapha Hod and the Bidin Hod, act out their differences and similarities. I show how the Sapha Hod manipulate their class, ethnicity and other identities in a ritual context. I also discuss how this context determines where and when social choices are made and defines the rules of proper behavior for an individual or group.

TYPES OF FESTIVALS:

The Satar celebrate different kinds of festivals almost every month, for nine months in a year. They do not have any celebrations in June, July and August, which are the months of monsoon. The Satar festivals are primarily related to the agriculture and the seasonal cycle of nature. Propitiation of various spirits and deities

constitutes the most important part of these festivals. The Satar also participate in some caste festivals. Each of these festivals has a theme and a message for the Satar. Each of these provides an inclusive or exclusive context for social interaction within or between ethnic groups.

The calendar of festivals, listed on the next page, gives a list of these festivals, which start from the Satari, Maithili and Nepali New Year Baisakh (the second week of the month of April). This calendar includes all the Satar festivals and some Hindu festivals observed by the local caste people. I present a short description of these festivals in the next few pages.

DESCRIPTION OF FESTIVE CATEGORIES:

In this chapter, I am mainly concerned with the festivals of the Sapha Hod, Bidin Hod and the caste people. These festivals are presented in figure # 28. I have divided these festivals into three categories. I call the first category Hindu festivals. These festivals are mostly observed by the caste people. The second category is of the Hinduized festivals which are celebrated by the Sapha Hod. The third category of festivals includes Satar festivals. These festivals are mostly observed by the Bidin Hod.

The first category of Hindu festivals includes Dashami, Sukratia, Shivaratri and Ramanavami. Among these the

Figure # 28

CALENDAR OF FESTIVALS

<u>FESTIVALS</u>	<u>MONTH</u>	<u>BIDIN HOD</u>	<u>DEITIES OF SAPHA HOD</u>	<u>CASTE PEOPLE</u>
Patamela	Baisakh (April-May)	Mahadeo	Mahadeo	X
Dashami	Asoj (Sept-Oct)	X	X	goddess Durga
Sukratia	Kartik (Oct-Nov)	X	X	goddess Lakshmi
Nevar	Mansir (Nov-Dec)	Bonga	Hindu deities/ Bonga	Lineage deities
Soharai	Push (Dec-Jan)	Bonga	god Rama and Bonga	X
Til Sakrat	Magh (Jan-Feb)	X	god Mahavira	god Vishnu
Shivaratri	Phagun (Feb-Mar)	X	god Shiva	god Shiva
Baha	Chait (Mar-Apr)	Bonga	Hindu deities/ Bonga	goddess Kali
Ramanavami	Chait (Mar-Apr)	X	X	god Rama

NOTE: Since the three months of June, July and August are monsoon months with heavy rain, all the agricultural activities of the Satar and the caste people completely stop during these months. No festivals occur during this time of the year.

first two, Dashami and Sukratia, are celebrated nation
wide¹. In Sunauli, although the Satar did not worship
Durga or Laksmi in these festivals, they visited the local
shrine of Durga, bought new clothes and slaughtered a
goat or two in Dashami in as much the same way as their
caste compatriots did. Among these Satar, only the Sapha
Hod observed some rituals of Sukratia. Like their caste
neighbors, they lit a candle in the middle of their
courtyard and in their cattle-sheds at night during this
time.

In Shivaratri (the night of Shiva's wedding), the Sapha
Hod visited god Shiva in a village in India, across the
Nepal-India border. Although the Bidin Hod also went to
that village on that day, the purpose of their visits
differed from that of the Sapha Hod. The Sapha Hod went
there to worship Shiva, while the Bidin Hod went there
primarily to attend the fair.

I have added Ramanavami in the above list mainly to
indicate that although both the Satar and the caste people
of Sunauli worshipped god Rama, the Bidin Hod thought of
this god primarily as the god of the caste people. The
Sapha Hod viewed Rama as an ancestor of Satar from whom

1. Dashami and Sukratia are also celebrated in India.
They are known by different names in these two regions.
Nepali call these festivals Dasain and Tihar, and Indians
call them Vijaya Dashami and Dipavali. Their celebrations
also differ between these regions.

they inherited the art of hunting with bow and arrow. As such, the Sapha Hod's worship of Rama differed from the worship of their caste neighbors. For these reasons, the Sapha Hod did not worship Rama on the day the caste people worshipped Him.

I call the second category of festivals the Hinduized festivals. These festivals symbolize the Satar's borrowing of certain caste rituals and values. In these festivals, the Sapha Hod of Sunauli made no offerings to the Bonga. Although these Hinduized rituals were borrowed from the caste people, they were well interwoven with the Satar rituals. The Sapha Hod claimed the festivals having these rituals to be their own "traditional" festivals. The rest of the Satar, however, did not think of these rituals as their own.

Three of these Hinduized festivals are Nevan, Til Sakrat and Patamela. According to my elderly Satar informants these were held only in Sunauli. I observed the Patamela of Sunauli in 1978 and 1979. Although this festival, also known as the "Hook swinging" festival among the Indians, had not started while I was in Sunauli in 1985, a decision had been already made for its celebration there. Among these three festivals, Patamela and Til Sakrat were always sponsored by individuals in Sunauli and, during both periods of my field work, the individuals belonged to the three Sapha Hod households.

Among these festivals Patamela provided an inclusive context for interaction between and among the members of the Satar ethnic group, living in and around Sunauli, and the local caste people. Nevan included only the Satar for such interaction, whereas Til Sakrat provided an exclusive context to create networks among the members of the Sapha Hod category in particular.

The Satar celebrated Nevan (a harvest festival) in the month of November. They remembered their ancestral and other Bonga in Newan - both in its public and private rituals. Their public ritual included the worship of the Hindu and Satar deities and spirits, and was performed in Baba T's courtyard. Both the Bidin Hod and the Sapha Hod men participated in this performance. These spirits and the Satar deities were propitiated individually by the Bidin Hod in their households also. The Sapha Hod did the same. In addition, they added the Hindu deities in their privately held rituals.

The distribution of food among the villagers appeared as an ethnic characteristics of Nevan and also of Til Sakrat and Baha, described below. On these days big vegetarian feasts were given by the Sapha Hod to their

1. By "public" rituals, I mean those rituals which require the participation of all the Satar. I distinguish such rituals from those, such as the worship of clan and household spirits, which are performed by each male head of the household in his own household. I call this latter type of rituals "private" ritual.

fellow Satar and the Mohali.

In Til Sakrat the Sapha Hod worshipped god Mahavira (the caste people worship Vishnu), and in Pata Mela they worshipped Mahadeva (Shiva). Although the Satar's celebration of these festivals was different from the caste people's celebration, certain rituals indicated the obvious borrowing from the Hindu rituals. One such ritual was the participation of the women of the Sapha Hod households in the worship of Mahavira in Til Sakrat. Such participation stood in contrast to all the Satar rituals which prohibited the Satar women's participation. The Satar women's passive role in their ethnic ritual was explained to me as their being dangerous or impure as potential witches.

The other borrowed ritual was presented in Patamela. This ritual included the partial fast carried on for three days by the possessed devotees of Mahadeva. It also included the use of sacred thread¹ by the fasting participants.

The third category of festivals in Sunauli was the traditional Satar festivals. This category characterized the ethnicity of the Satar in various dimensions. This category included Soharai and Baha festivals. Although

1. In the caste society of Nepal, sacred thread is worn only by the upper caste males, especially the Brahman and the Chhetri.

certain rituals of these festivals also bore resemblance to the Hindu festivals celebrated around the same time, the themes of these festivals were not Hindu. They were very ethnic, symbolizing the various aspects of the Satar culture. These festivals were characterized by performing their own songs and dances. As such, the festivals functioned as markers separating the Satar from the caste people.

Baha stood in contrast to the Phaguwa festival of the Hindu (color festival known as Holi in India). In Phaguwa, the caste people played with colors by throwing colored water or colored powder on each other. In Baha, the Satar played with plain water in a similar fashion. In 1979 and 1985, I noted that no member of either ethnic group was encouraged to play with the other. Since the red color (vermillion powder) on the Satar females' heads indicated the married status of the females¹, caste people's throwing of color water or color powder on the Satar women, was taken very seriously by the Satar. In any such incident, they required from the caste people to abide by the ethnic law of the Satar, and asked the caste people to pay a penalty for the damage caused by their actions. Due to these possible complications, the Satar

1. Although the use of vermillion powder on caste women's head also symbolizes their married status, its accidental use on unmarried girl's head does not change the status of the girl to that of a married woman, as it does among the Satar (see chapter IV).

of Sunauli preferred to celebrate Baha a few days before the caste people celebrated Phaguwa. This way, as my Satar informants explained to me, they controlled one of the situations causing Bithlaha (impurity/danger/disorder).

The different songs and dances performed during the evening of Baha further indicated the different ways of celebrating this festival by the Satar and the caste people. The young caste men (between the ages of 10 -20) visited each caste household and the Sapha Hod households on the eve of Phaguwa and sang songs in honor of god Krishna while visiting these households. The Satar visited only the Satar households in Baha festival and danced and sang Baha songs in front of these households. What was interesting here was that the ethnic differences were overlooked by the caste people in their visits to different Satar households. These differences, however, were maintained by the Satar by not visiting their caste neighbors in Baha.

SOHARAI:

Soharai is an annual ritual of fundamental importance to the Satar. It is a harvest festival which lasts for six days. In Sunauli, each day Soharai started out with a different theme and different ritual. This festival could be briefly described as an annual event to remember the dead and to strengthen the kinship bonds between the dead and the living. It helped

maintain the interpersonal bonds of kinship among fellow Satar. It also indicated the symbiotic relationship between cattle and men. And last but not the least, Soharai illuminated the Satar's love for a nomadic and adventurous life.

One of the distinguishing characteristics of Soharai of Sunauli and its neighboring villages lay in its having no specified date in the Satar calendar. It simply began on dates suitable for each village depending on its time of harvest. Fixing the date in this way had one clear advantage. An individual could enjoy Soharai both in his home village and at his in-law's village since the festival might take place in these villages at different times.

I observed Soharai in 1978, 1979, and 1985. In 1978 and 1985, this festival was held shortly after I arrived in Sunauli. I missed certain meetings and preparation of food related to it. In this illustration, therefore, I primarily draw on my data of 1979. In this chapter, description will be centered around Baba S, Baba T, Gogo M, Gogo T and J and their three different Sapha Hod households.

SCENE PRIOR TO SOHARAI

Harvesting was about to be finished. The Satar were busy making plans for Soharai - where to shop for clothes, how much rice-beer to prepare, what kind or how many kinds of meat to buy, and whom to invite. Among these

various plans the members of the Sapha Hod households had already completed the part of making rice-beer. They prepared the rice for fermenting about two weeks before the harvest.

Once the harvesting was completed and the loans or the interests on the loans were paid back, the head of each household had a fair idea whether he was ready for the celebration of Soharai. Families with surplus or enough grain, such as that of Baba T, Baba S, and J, were eager to set a date for the festival. But families with a shortage of grain were hesitant because they did not have the resources to obtain the required amount of grain and/or money needed for the festival. These problems were partially solved when Baba T and Baba S gave free grain to some and loaned to others to help them participate in the festival.

Now that every one had enough grain for this celebration, all male heads of the households gathered in Baba T's courtyard for a meeting to fix a date for Soharai. No women participated in this meeting. The date for Soharai was fixed ten days from the date of that meeting, giving all Satar enough time to prepare for Soharai.

Following this meeting women were engaged in making rice-beer. In 1979, all Satar households (but the two households of the Christian Satar) had rice-beer. The quantity of rice-beer, however, varied from one household

to the other depending on the economic status of the household head. The three households of the Sapha Hod had five to six jars of rice-beer (from eight to ten kilograms in each jar) in each household. The rest of the households had anywhere from one to three small jars of rice-beer.

While the women were busy making rice-beer, the men of the Sapha Hod households met several times within that week to decide on the number of goats to be slaughtered for the feast. They also talked to the Bidin Hod to help the Bidin Hod decide for the slaughtering of a pig. In addition, these Sapha Hod men spent a great length of time especially to decide whether to celebrate the Khunto Hilok, the third day of Soharai, in the traditional way. The traditional celebration of the Khunto Hilok required the participation of the daughters and sisters of the households, married/unmarried, in a ritual, prior to the cattle-worship. In this ritual, these females ceremonially blocked the way of the male head of their household while he proceeded to worship the cattle of his household. The women did not leave the place until they received cattle in return.

The time spent in reaching a decision aroused expectations and hope among the daughters and sisters of those households which owned cattle. Obviously, they wanted this ritual to be a part of their Khunto Hilok. The Sapha Hod men, however, decided against the ritual. As

this ritual required buying a cow for or giving their own cattle to each daughter and/or sister, they decided to celebrate Khunto Hilok without this. Gogo T, however, strongly expressed her unhappiness of the decision. According to her, without this particular ritual, the cattle worship of the Satar did not look any different from the cattle worship of the Diku (Maithil or Indian language speaking caste people) and Mundo (Nepali language speaking people). For her, not continuing this ritual was a matter of shame.

This period of ten days before Soharai allowed enough time for the Satar to buy new clothes. I noted that the ritual differences within the ethnic group were again made explicit here. The Sapha Hod men bought Dhoti and made long shirts for themselves. The Bidin Hod men bought Lungi and a shirt. The wives and daughters of the Sapha Hod men bought Sari, blouse, and petticoat, whereas the Bidin Hod women bought Lungi, blouse, and Panchi.

CELEBRATION OF SOHARAI:

UM HILOK: THE FIRST DAY: Um Hilok, the purifying day, was the first day of Soharai. The Satar's belief in purity/impurity was acted out on this day. In this context, to be pure meant to be physically clean. As such, all Bidin Hod and the Sapha Hod removed the dirt by cleaning their houses and courtyards with a mixture of cattle dung and water. They also washed their dirty

clothes in boiling water with ashes, or soda, or some detergent leaves.

The other significant part of Soharai, which started on this day, was to give complete rest to the cattle till the end of this festival. The symbiotic relationship between the cattle and the Satar was carried out through out this festival, particularly on the Khunto Hilok, as I explain later in this chapter.

DAKKA HILOK: THE SECOND DAY: Dakka Hilok or the "Rice (Food) Day" was the second day of Soharai. The food of this day was actually a feast shared with the dead and the living kin.

Although all the Bidin Hod and the Sapha Hod were busy this morning, Baba T, Baba S and V (a Bidin Hod) were busier than others. Baba T's goat and V's pig were to be slaughtered and distributed among the Satar. Messages were already sent for this. After they received the proper response of who was buying how much, Baba T's goat was slaughtered and mutton was distributed in his courtyard. The pig was slaughtered and pork was distributed in V's courtyard. Since the Sapha Hod men did not eat any pork, mutton was consumed largely by them and three caste men. Almost every Satar household bought pork. Here again, a large quantity of pork was bought by the three Sapha Hod households, because these households also included Bidin Hod, who ate pork.

There was no collective feast that year, similar to the one I observed in 1985. In 1979, each household had a separate feast of its own. This feast varied from one household to the other. Its variation largely depended on the economic and ritual status of the household head. It included any one or two of the following categories or all three of them :

- a. Usina rice (parboiled rice which is consumed mostly by the rural and/or poor people of Nepal) or Arwa (long or short grain white rice consumed mostly by the urban and/or rich people) and meat/fish,
- b. lentils, vegetables and/or pickles to go with the above, and
- c. special food such as, fried wheat or rice breads, rice pudding, cream of wheat, yogurt, in addition to the above.

FOOD FOR THE DEAD: Around the noon of Dakka Hilok, the male heads of all the Bidin Hod and the Sapha Hod households offered the especially prepared food first to their ancestral spirits. Among these men, only Baba S did not perform ancestor worship in his household. As he explained to me, he shared his ancestors with Baba T. And as long as Baba T propitiated those spirits Baba S did not see any need to propitiate them again.

Baba T performed the ancestor worship in Baba S' store room. Rice-beer, milk, fried rice breads, cream of wheat and yogurt were offered to his seven lineal and collateral dead kin (both males and females). These kin were, I was told, Baba T's father's mother and father's father, his parents, his brother and brother's wife (Baba S' parents), and the married-in females of the households, which included Baba T and Baba S' dead wives. This ritual was immediately followed by the offering of milk and fried rice breads to Vishnu Baba, in his shrine.

The Sapha Hod made a distinction in the offering of food to these spirits inside the household and outside, i.e. the shrine. Inside the household, they offered rice-beer and other food to their Bonga and Vishnu Baba. They worshipped Vishnu Baba once again in his own shrine, not as a kin, but as a Sapha Hod, who tried to maintain the glorious tradition of the Satar. Therefore, they did not offer him rice-beer during the second time. And during this second time, the Bidin Hod also joined the Sapha Hod in offering food and drinks to Vishnu Baba.

I could not observe any ancestor-worship performed by the Bidin Hod. Later I gathered two reasons for my not being able to observe that. The first of the two reasons was the economic differences between the Sapha Hod and Bidin Hod. Most of my Bidin Hod informants belonged to a lower economic status. They considered the Sapha Hod

feasts as an ideal type. These feasts included expensive food like milk, yogurt, butter, and meat in large quantity. And since the poor Satar were not able to meet these requirements, an outsider's intrusion was shameful for them.

My own gender identity as a female was the second reason. As a female, I was thought to be a potential witch. Therefore, I was not expected to be present near the ritual place.

FEAST FOR THE LIVING: The feast among the living started following the above ritual. Other days Baba S and Baba T ate before any one else was served in their households. But on this day, both these men saw it as their Dharma to feed the youngsters of their households first. The category of youngsters included their servants and/or relatives who worked for them living in their households. These men sat in the veranda of my one room house.

This feast also, like those of Baha and Til Sakrat, crossed the ethnic boundaries. Invitations were extended to the Mohali and two Mohali men attended. A separate seat, near the entrance of the courtyard, symbolized their lower status. I never saw any member of the Satar households ever sitting for lunch or dinner near the entrance. My Mohali and the Satar informants, however, interpreted the nature of the lower status differently.

The Mohali defined the status difference in terms of economic relationship of patron/client. They viewed the Sapha Hod as their Malik (patrons). The Sapha Hod defined this status difference in terms of the ritual criterion of Sapha/non-Sapha (pure/impure). They considered the Mohali as impure and lower in ritual status - lower than the Bidin Hod. And so, they assigned that particular place to the Mohali.

Among all the Sapha Hod men, the way Baba S served and fed people set him apart. As always, here he was able to create a very friendly and relaxed atmosphere by teasing the individuals he served, calling them his kin, and joking and laughing with them. Every now and then, he praised his servants for their hard work and efficiency, and gave them due credit for the harvest. He also appreciated the Mohali for being good neighbors.

The scenario of feeding, in this context, or in any other context (see chapter VII), included a series of acts, such as the generous offer of the host, denial of the guests, persistence in the part of the host, and hesitance, and finally the acceptance of the food by the guest. This five act series was mostly repetitive and was embedded with culturally valued themes of generosity, economic and ritual status differences, and power and prestige. This scenario of hospitality underlined forcefully to the participants their status relationships. That prestige was a profoundly serious business was made very explicit here.

Also in this scenario, the ritual and economic differences within the ethnic group were reinforced, and ritual relationship with certain caste group was clearly defined.

The following conversation which took place in my veranda and Baba S' courtyard while he was feeding the Mohali and youngsters of his household, will illustrate the various themes mentioned above. Here the Satar being served were Bidin Hod, and the food being served was Usina rice, lentils, yogurt, pickles, vegetables, pork and mutton curry. The Mohali were also served the same food in this feast.

Baba S : (to a servant) Here, take some more.

Servant 1: No, no. This is enough.

Baba S : How come? You don't want people (other Bidin Hod) to say that since your Mama (meaning mother's brother, but here referring to Baba S) is a Sapha Hod, he does not let you eat pork. (Serving) Now, this is to quiet the people.

Servant 1: (happily) All right! But this is enough now.

Baba S : (turning to the Mohali and teasing them) Hey Mejman (guests)! How about some pork! (disparaging the ritual status of the Mohali).

Mohali 1: (laughing) I would rather have some more mutton.

Baba S : (laughing while serving chim mutton) I thought since your Jaat Bhaai (derogatory use of the term. Literally it means "caste brothers", but here refers to the caste group Doom²) ate pork, you might like to try it today. (Rushing.

1 & 2. The Doom and the Mohali belong to two different caste groups. The Mohali are basket-makers and the Doom are both scavengers and basket-makers. In addition, the Doom raise pigs and eat pork, the Mohali do not because

to a servant who is about to get up after his meal) Sit down, sit down, you haven't yet tried the mutton!

Servant 2: That I shall eat in the dinner.

Baba S: No, no. We have duck for the evening. You sit down, or should I pour the mutton curry on your head!

Mohali 2: Listen to your Malik and sit down.

Servant 2: But I really can't eat any more. Look at my stomach.

1

Baba S: Gadam Koda (referring to the servant as grandson)! You live in a big (rich) household. You are used to eating a lot of meat. This little bit of mutton won't make much difference. Besides, how can your Gadam Baba2 (meaning grandfather, but here referring to himself as the servant's grandfather) eat this without serving you!

It took almost an hour and a half for this scenario to be completed. After feeding them, Baba S and Baba T had their share of feast which included short grain white rice, fried rice bread, cream of wheat, lentils, mutton,

they think of pigs as having a lower ritual value. My Satar informants considered both these groups having similar ritual status, lower than that of the Satar, but the Mohali thought of the Doom as lower in ritual status because of their diet, which included pork, and their occupation of scavenging. Despite these differences, the members of these two social groups share the profession of basketry. Such sharing has often led outsiders to think of them as belonging to one social group. I also thought of them as such during the first few months of 1978. Although, my Satar informants verbally distinguished between the Mohali and the Doom, I often heard the Satar women and children referring to the Mohali as Doom and/or calling them "Doom" during several unpleasant encounters.

1 & 2. Satar kinship terms meaning grandson (gadam koda) and grandfather (gadam baba).

vegetables, and pickles. The third category of people, who enjoyed this feast, were the females of the households. They ate after serving food to these men.

These women of the Sapha Hod households, either married or unmarried, old or young, did not practise any dietary restrictions. They included both types of meat, mutton and pork, and rice-beer in their feast. Such flexibility in the diet of the females of the Sapha Hod households was related to the Satar's belief in witchcraft. As mentioned earlier, the Sapha Hod men viewed the Satar women as potential witches. The Satar men thought that as potential witches, the Satar women also had less Buddhi (reasoning capacity). Further, they perceived these women as dangerous and capable to harm in various ways. These men also thought that to deprive these women of certain food was to provoke them to cause sickness and/or injuries. As a result, the diet of the females of the Sapha Hod households varied from those of the Sapha Hod males, and did not necessarily meet the criterion of the Sapha Hod diet.

The evening of the Dakka Hilok was the busiest evening of that year. The women of all the cattle owning households decorated the entrance of their cattle-sheds. Arrival of the guests, exchange of greetings, and noise of the children - all boosted up the spirits of Soharai. There were four sets of relatives in Baba S' household.

These included his mother's brother, Gogo M's brother and his wife from India, Baba S' son-in-law G's parents, also from India, and Baba T's sister's daughter D and her family. Although D was a closer relative of Baba T, her brother worked for Baba S, so she decided to stay in Baba S' household. Baba T also had a few guests. Two men were his relatives. And there was Gogo T's son and his family. The other Sapha Hod (J) had his one brother and two sisters, all with their children and spouses, visiting him. Some Bidin Hod also had their married daughters and sisters this evening. Other Bidin Hod had their guests on the third day of Soharai, not on this day.

All the married daughters and sisters, coming to join their natal kin for the celebration of Soharai, had brought rice-beer for their ancestral Bonga. As members of their father's clan, they were expected to do so. This rice-beer was first offered to these Bonga, and then distributed among the hosts and the guests. As mentioned earlier in chapter VII, the bringing and offering of rice-beer to the ancestral Bonga was symbolic of the continuation of the natal identity of the Satar females.

KHUNTO HILOK: THE THIRD DAY: The third day of Soharai was Khunto Hilok (the cattle-pole day). The earlier part of the Khunto Hilok was devoted to the worship of the cattle, and the latter part to drinking and dancing.

Khunto Hilok symbolized the strong bond that the Satar

had with their cattle. The relationship between them was symbiotic in the sense that they provided services to one another. Cattle served the Satar in different ways. Male cattle ploughed their fields and the female cattle provided milk for them. In addition, the Satar used their dung as fertilizer, for fuel, and for plastering walls and floors. Further, as cattle was a prestige item, as I show below, they were given as gifts to the bride's parents in Daudo Bapla, following the payments of bride-price.

The Satar, in turn, insured the welfare of their cattle by taking good care of them. They provided them with complete rest on every Sunday. Cattle resided in the special units of the households, i.e. cattle-sheds. One or two men slept in the cattle-shed to take care of the cattle at night. During the day, they took them to graze in the fields. During the agricultural season, male cattle were taken to plough the field once every morning. I noted that a little sickness of the cattle became a matter of great concern for the members of a household. I often saw Satar surrounding their sick cattle, patting and touching them with great affection, and grieving for days on their death.

The nutritive and economic services provided by the cattle certainly cannot be overlooked, but this was not the sole reason the Satar valued the cattle. As I have discussed in chapter IV, since the Satar considered agriculture to be the most prestigious form of livelihood,

as well as the best way of living, cattle had great cultural value among the Satar. The possession of cattle implied an individual's freedom to work on his own will, to be "one's own master". Such possession also enhanced an individual's socio-economic status and bestowed prestige on him.

It was this symbiotic relationship between cattle and men that was symbolized in Soharai with different rituals starting the first day of Soharai and in Khunto Hilok. In 1979, the Khunto Hilok started with the worship of the cattle by the male heads of the households. Female cattle, especially cows, were worshipped in the Sapha Hod households as the goddess Lakshmi (the Hindu goddess of Wealth). The Bidin Hod also worshipped their cattle, but they did not give any primacy to their cows. In their worship of cattle, both the Bidin Hod and the Sapha Hod fed their cattle a small bunch of the newly harvested rice plants and green grass. In this ritual they also smeared mustard oil on cattle's horns to make them look shiny and beautiful. This ritual was followed by the beating of drums by the Jog Majhi and some fellow villagers who visited each household, singing songs in the praise of their cattle. During these visits, they stopped longer in the three Sapha Hod households, where they were treated with a drink of rice-beer.

In these gatherings, the Sapha Hod and the Bidin Hod

viewed their relationships in different terms. Gender difference played a significant role in this context. The women of the Sapha Hod households defined the relationship between the Sapha Hod and the Bidin Hod in terms of kinship, while the men of both ritual categories conceptualized their difference in economic terms and reinforced their patron/client relationship. In one such gathering, the Bidin Hod (clients) visited their Sapha Hod patrons' households and started singing songs asking their patrons to treat them (clients) with food and drink. The Bidin Hod did not intend to leave these households until they were offered some drink. Instead of encouraging them to stay, or serving them rice-beer, the patrons admonished the females of their households not to serve rice-beer that early in the morning. These patrons also made sure that their clients heard this. These sayings and acts of the patrons, however, hardly affected the singers. They continued singing and drumming. They imposed themselves on the host as their right to start a better day by being fed properly by their Sapha Hod patrons. Through their singing, they reminded the Sapha Hod of their patron/client relationship, and urged them to fulfill their obligation by providing drink for their clients. They also made the Sapha Hod aware of the fact that the act of not serving food to their clients (the Bidin Hod) might bring shame for both parties and even destroy the patron/client relationship of the Sapha Hod with their caste clients who, in this case, were a barber

and a drummer. They also asked the Sapha Hod to think of their reputation of being wealthy and generous not only among the Satar but also among the caste people of Sunauli and its vicinity.

In the Khunto Hilok of 1979, this scenario of verbal encounters finally came to an end with the Sapha Hod serving rice-beer to the singers, and the singers welcoming this with great joy. They then admired the Sapha Hod for being good patrons. Since the Sapha Hod men did not drink rice-beer, the Sapha Hod verbally reminded the Bidin Hod of this. They further told these Bidin Hod that the entire stock of rice-beer was especially prepared for them. And then the Sapha Hod urged these Bidin Hod to finish it all.

While the Sapha Hod men acknowledged the patron/client bond, as claimed by the Bidin Hod, the women of the Sapha Hod households defined this bond in terms of kinship. Once, although all the women of the Sapha Hod households watched and enjoyed the above scenario, Gogo T even came forward and scolded these men for viewing themselves as Malik/Nokar (master/servant). She reminded them that their kinship bond of parent/child and/or grandparent/grandchild was much stronger than any other bond. She joked with them, and invited them into her household for a treat. Then she served them rice-beer, and asked them to drink it as good kinsmen.

In these gatherings, the Satar also stressed their shared identity and their differences from the caste people. They fondly accused the guests drinking less rice-beer of being like Diku (Maithil people who are not supposed to drink). At one time, as a good host, Baba T persuaded these men to drink more and more. Gogo T, a Bidin Hod by birth, also did the same. In addition, she persuaded them to drinking excessively. She talked to these guests about the spirit Marang Buru who introduced rice-beer among the Satar and taught them how and why to drink it. She, thus, neatly ignored the boundaries of the Sapha Hod and Bidin Hod categories by repeating the Bidin Hod version of the creation myth, according to which the Satar were instructed by Marang Buru to drink rice-beer and enjoy. To reinforce the shared identity, Gogo T also shared the rice-beer with these guests.

As I observed in this Soharai, Gogo T and Gogo M then went to each household and invited its members for a drink. In return, they were also invited as guests to some of these Bidin Hod households. As guests in these Bidin Hod households, they again defined their guest-host relationship as being based on kinship. This was unlike the Bidin Hod men, who perceived this relationship as based on economic differences, and the Sapha Hod men who viewed it as based on ritual differences.

In these contexts of visits and commensality, the

boundaries of the different ritual categories of the Satar and their ethnic group were also maintained simultaneously. Gender roles were crucial in such maintenance. My data illustrate that the Sapha Hod men crossed the boundaries of their ethnic group by combining the caste rituals with their traditional Satar rituals. The women of their households, however, mediated between the Sapha Hod and Bidin Hod categories by simultaneously participating in the rituals of both categories. While the men tried to maintain the boundaries of their own Sapha Hod ritual category, the women tried to blur its boundaries with that of the Bidin Hod category.

Throughout this third day of Sohrai the beat of drum increased with the increase in the quantity of rice-beer. As mentioned earlier in chapter eight, the Bidin Hod believed such drinking, dancing and sexual activities, that followed afterwards, to be taught and handed down to them by a Bonga, Marang Buru. To repeat again, Marang Buru instructed the first Satar couples of seven clans to perform these acts of "enjoyment". These related themes became very explicit towards the late afternoon of Khunto Hilok when a small group of boys and men (four or five) took their turns in beating drums and playing flutes to call the girls and women for dancing. As I noted in this Sohrai of 1979, the delay, on the women's part, to show up was customary. Such slowness was taken by men as

challenging their virility. Once a few women, both married/unmarried, started singing and dancing, holding each other's arms and moving together in one or two rows, two or three men continued beating drums and playing flutes facing the dancing women. All these men and women took turns in dancing and playing instruments, and continued dancing from one end of the village to the other end. Often in the middle of the dancing, few dancing men also stopped by the households of the upper class people to drink rice-beer. I noted that as the rhythm of drum beats grew faster, quantity of rice-beer drunk increased among them.

And at this point, the Satar men and women who had Donguo daughters and sisters became a little worried. They thought that this situation might encourage them into elopement or other sexual activities. These men, then, asked the married females of their households to keep an eye on their Donguo daughters and sisters.

These worries of these Satar were not without base. Their own past experiences told them that this could and often did happen. During 1978-79, three elderly and two young married women told me, at different points in time, that they often ran away with other men (whom they did not marry) for a few hours, during these festive occasions. This was also the time when some youngsters chose to elope, or when a man/boy forcefully applied vermillion powder on the head of a Donguo he wanted to marry. In such

cases, as illustrated earlier in chapter V, if the individuals belonged to proper clans and both agreed to get married, payment of bride-price was negotiated and, if appropriate, certain other rituals were performed. If the woman did not want to marry the man, as happened to five females in Sunauli at different periods of my observation, the man paid a heavy penalty to the woman's parents for his "deviant" act.

As men drank more and became very aggressive during this time, the married women drank less, and kept an eye on their husbands dancing with other women. The Bidin Hod Donguo drank more to provoke boys, even though the elders of their households tried to keep an eye on them.

To turn now to the Sapha Hod, these men were equally worried about their Donguo daughters and sisters. Further, they despised drinking and feared some unpleasant fights between the Satar because of their drunkenness. According to my own experience with the Satar, occurrences of such fights on the festive occasions like this were not unusual. These quarrels were mostly provoked by sexual matters, jealousy or by adultery. In 1985, a Bidin Hod woman was beaten by her husband when she accused him of beating drum for a particular woman throughout the day. Although none of these resulted in death, some did result in divorce.

One quarrel that I observed during 1978 had a

different cause. It occurred among six Satar, one Sapha Hod and five Bidin Hod, when one of them did not let the others play the only drum the Satar had during that particular year. All the men were drunk and their quarrel led to minor violence. Many adult men and women gathered around them trying to stop their fight. Baba S locked himself in his dwelling house in order to avoid witnessing such shameful drunken behavior. Baba T could not do so. At first he also waited in his household for the fight to stop. After some time, though, he came barging in. He succeeded in calming these people, although it did take him some time to do so. As the quarrel went on and on, the men not only talked about the drum, but also brought out a bundle of charges and countercharges against each other revealing old issues. Two of the fighting men and some among the audience started laughing at few of these charges, and all of a sudden, everyone started laughing. What had started as a fighting scene ended up as a humorous event. The Satar men and women talked about it for several days. They hoped that since those men poured out their grudges against each other, they would not fight for a long time.

In addition to the worries of having a fight, the drumming, dance and songs of this evening created a different type of anxiety, mixed with shame and anger, among the Sapha Hod men. It was primarily because they despised this kind of dancing and thought of it as an

"lower type of act". These Sapha Hod men felt this way during all the Baha and Soharai festivals that I participated in 1978-79 and 1985. My caste informants were also aware of the Sapha Hod's mixed feelings of shame and anger. These caste people condemned the acts of drinking and dancing and, therefore, were sympathetic to the Sapha Hod.

The following conversation that took place in the courtyard of Baba T clarifies how these men viewed themselves, their fellow Satar, their women and their caste neighbors. This conversation also illustrates women's role and how some women assert their status.

Baba T: Drumming is going on. Jhutia Hod will never learn.

Gogo M: I am worried for Q (an eighteen year old Donguo who was living in Gogo M's household).

Baba S: You better keep an eye on her. Hunh! Look at Diku (caste people), they never dance in their festivals.

Gogo T: (with slight anger) Marang Koda (elder son)! You are becoming Diku (an accusatoin)! Who are they? What do they know? Our Soharai dance is fun!

Baba T: (with rage) You women always have less Buddhi (reasoning ability). It is useless to talk to you. Is this only dancing? This is .. this is..

Gogo T: (in low voice) Well .. elopement .. adultery .. are bad .. but little dancing should be fine. It is only once a year. Who knows what will happen next year!

Baba S: We will never learn .. never. That is why every one (caste people) thinks we are the lowest type of people.

Gogo M: How are we to protect that Donguo (Q)!

Baba T: I am worried about our children (future generation). Their Buddhi will also be low .. When is Thakur (God/Creator) going to help us!

That evening no women of the Sapha Hod households, except Gogo T, joined the dancing group. She let every one know, by speaking loudly, that she could no longer resist dancing with her kin (Satar men and women). She also asked the people, in the same fashion, to close their eyes and ears till the end of Soharai. The two Sapha Hod men pretended not to hear her. She went alone, joined the group of older people, and danced for a short time.

The dance of that day, however, did not continue late into the night because Baba T ordered the drummers to stop for that night. No one liked it, but since they feared and respected Baba T, they stopped.

JALE HILOK: THE FOURTH DAY

Jale Hilok was the fourth day of Soharai. The main event of that day was the reciprocal visits of the neighbors to each other's households. The interpersonal bonds of neighborhood were strengthened through such visits and exchange of food. Although reciprocity was highly desired and valued in these visits, it was not necessarily practised. In this Soharai of 1979, the Bidin Hod boys from each household visited the Sapha Hod households, and were greeted with some food by the Sapha

Hod, but the members of the Sapha Hod households, including the Bidin Hod servants, did not visit the Bidin Hod households. Instead, they visited other Sapha Hod households.

Dancing continued throughout this day.

The Soharai of 1979, which I am describing here, remains deeply embedded in my memory, as well as in my informants' memory, due to an incident that occurred during the night of this Jale Hilok. This incident provided me with an understanding of how many facets of socio-cultural practices, which cannot be verbalized, can best be learned at the event/ happening. Furthermore I gained a deeper insight into how individuals react in unexpected events, and how norms differ from behavior, i.e. whether what people say "they should do" differ from what actually "they do".

IN SEARCH OF A DONGUO:

Later that evening, two male relatives of Baba S visited him. These relatives lived in a different village. They were accompanied by six other men of Sunauli. These men were young, between the ages of eighteen and thirty. Three of them were married and each had two or three children. Baba S felt something was wrong, but, since it was a "greeting day", he greeted them well. In the middle of conversation, he secretly informed Baba T, Gogo T, and Gogo M about these men, and asked them to be careful for

Q. He also rushed to the kitchen for his own dinner when he saw that these men were in no hurry to leave his courtyard. But as a good host, he left a big jar of rice-beer for these men behind him.

Sometime after this, one of the men, C, my maid's father, came to join me and his daughter for a chat. While we three were chatting I lost track of what was happening outside of my household. All of a sudden, I saw Baba S coming to my room with a bamboo pole. He was in a rage. He accused C of diverting me from the goings on outside my household as part of a certain plan. Then he hit him with the bamboo pole. I was shocked and puzzled. I tried to defend C. The more I tried to talk to Baba S, the worse the situation got. He got more and more angry. He hit C again, and scolded me for defending a guilty person. C quietly walked out telling Baba S that he would talk to him in the Panchet (political meeting).

Before I could overcome this shock, I received further information from my twelve year old maid (S). She told me that through the small holes of my room (supposed to be my windows), she had seen the visitors of Baba S searching for Q. S saw them breaking the lock of the kitchen, the storeroom, and trying to go to the second floor by standing on each other's shoulders. That was when they woke Baba S up. S also saw three of them stealing a bag of grain and my lantern, which was hanging in my veranda.

I was speechless.

Later we all gathered in Baba S' courtyard. There we learned that none of these men could find Q. Baba S and Gogo M had arranged for her to spend the night in their bedroom. Although the men had not found Q, they had, however, done other damage. They had urinated in the courtyard, stolen the shoes of a guest and my lantern, and drawn various triangular and rectangular lines and circles in the middle of the courtyard.

The behavior of these men aroused much anger among the members of these two Sapha Hod households. These men talked about the issues related to this case. A few of these issues were chasing the girl, adultery, excessive drinking, stealing and misbehaving. Of these issues, no one, even for a moment thought seriously that it was wrong for young men to chase the young girls. Second, although they did not approve adultery, they overlooked it in this context. Drunken behavior was the third issue. Baba T and Baba S repeatedly emphasized learning something from this incident of drunken behavior, but the Bidin Hod and the women of the Sapha Hod households did not consider the excessive drinking of the men bad. According to them, it was Soharai and, as such, perfect time to drink and get drunk. What was objectionable to them all, including the Sapha Hod men, was the timing and the way the young men tried to get at the girl. They should have been brave enough to call on the girl during the day and take her

consent. Instead they entered the house as "thieves", giving no choice to the girl had she been caught by them. In addition, the young men misbehaved by urinating in the courtyard, stealing the headman's grain, a guest's shoes, and my lantern.

The various drawings in the middle of the courtyard aroused much curiosity and fear among the members of Baba S' household. Although Baba S had often denied his belief in any Bonga besides the ancestral Bonga, he was shaken up by these drawings. He thought of them as Bonga and immediately asked Baba T, who was a shaman, to diagnose the nature of these spirits. This diagnosis, however, was postponed till the next morning.

HAKO KAIKOM: THE FIFTH DAY

The next day was Hako Katkom, the day to catch fish and crab. Baba T and Baba S were deeply worried about the drawings from the preceding night. So, early that morning Baba T performed a shamanistic ritual on his own veranda to find out the nature of the drawings on Baba S' courtyard. After his communication with various benevolent and malevolent spirits he announced that all these spirits had been propitiated properly from time to time. Therefore, they were not interested in bringing misfortune into the households of these two men. After some thinking, he proudly announced that these drawings represented nothing but the whimsical and "low type" acts of drunkenness.

This removed the fear among all the members of these two households. Baba S then called the Jog Majhi to call a meeting that afternoon to solve the problems of last night. He shamed the participant Satar for drunkenness. Then he called some of his elderly caste friends to show them the "shameful acts" of drunkenness of the Satar.

Life had to go on. Hako Katkom had to be celebrated despite these disturbances. As mentioned above, it was the day to catch fish and crab. The Satar's love for and dependence on fish is symbolized on this day by catching the fish of the village ditches. The Satar of Sunauli believed that if one caught and ate fish on this day, one's life-span would be prolonged.

During early afternoon, all men and women (old and young) headed for the three village ditches to catch fish. The only two men who did not join this gathering, nor the ones of 1978 or 1985, were Baba S and J. Both of them never felt it quite right to compete with their neighbors for fishing in the ditches. The women of the Sapha Hod households also did not join this gathering. Instead, they sent their children and servants for fishing. The only Sapha Hod who joined and headed the crowd was Baba T.

As the Satar stepped into the third ditch, after finishing fishing in the first two, they were denied access to this ditch by J who also held the political position of Majhi. J was very drunk. He claimed that

since this ditch was in front of his household it belonged to him, and not to the village. Some younger men tried to fight with J. They tried to shame him for insulting Baba T, the elderly and the most prestigious man among them. Besides, Baba T was also J's relative. In addition, they condemned J for not keeping up with the norms of the neighborhood and for not behaving as a Hod (Satar) on this festive occasion. These hot arguments were disrupted by Baba T. He reminded these young men the uselessness of arguing with a drunken man. He also asked them to leave that ditch. But since the Satar had not caught enough fish for their dinner, he boosted up the festive spirit of Hako Katkom by inviting all of them to fish in his big pond, which he owned jointly with Baba S.

DONGUO CASE - CONTINUED

Once the fishing was completed, women and children left for their households. All adult men gathered in front of Baba T's pond. Some of them wanted to call an immediate meeting to punish J for his deviant act, but on the advice of Baba T and Baba S, they decided to wait for this till Soharai was over. They, then, waited there for the proceedings of the other meeting related to the incident of the previous night.

Although Baba S called a few caste men that morning to show them the drawings of his courtyard, no Satar invited these caste men to speak or to be present in this

meeting. It was a Satar problem and had to be solved in the Satari way without any interference from outsiders, either from this or other villages.

Early that morning I learned from two other men, B and L, (one working for Baba S and the other for Baba T), that they had also seen the whole incident and knew the people involved. B and L were also present in the meeting, but they wished to remain silent. The Pancha had heard that these two men were witnesses, but they did not force them to talk. Ideally, B and L were supposed to insure safety to and protect the interest of their masters who, in this case, were two Sapha Hod. Their failure to do so should have been looked down upon. But in this context, the Pancha, including Baba T and Baba S, considered it perfectly all right for these witnesses to talk about the incident with their friends and relatives, and yet not present themselves as witnesses. No one felt bad about this. They understood the situation that the fear of being beaten by the men looking for the girl pressured these two witnesses to remain neutral. Such decision in these two men's part did not bring any change in their relationship with their masters - Baba S and Baba T. B and L continued working for these two men even after this meeting.

This meeting did not solve all the problems because the witnesses were quiet, and some of the men involved in this case were not identified. Besides, the three men,

whose identity was known, had left Sunauli out of fear and, so, were not present in this meeting.

The only thing that was discussed in this meeting was the case of C. C had been beaten and accused by Baba S the earlier night. C proved his innocence and asked the Pancha to demand a penalty from Baba S for falsely accusing and beating him. It was a great shame for Baba S mainly because he could not differentiate between an innocent and a guilty person. Baba S abided by the rules and paid a proper fine for his behavior. After this the meeting was postponed for the next few weeks.

This particular "shameful" act of Baba S affected his prestige a little bit. My Satar and Mohali informants talked much about this act even in 1985, upon my return to Sunauli. Baba S' compensation for his unthoughtful behavior was proper and just, but such compensation was not necessarily accepted by the Bidin Hod, the Christian Satar and the Mohali as a retribution for his unreasonable act.

The incident with my lantern further hampered Baba S' prestige. After I left Sunauli in 1979, Baba S received a new lantern from the men who were involved in this incident. This lantern replaced my old stolen lantern. As I was not in Sunauli, Baba S kept it for his own use. According to my Satar informants, it was not proper for him to do so. They had expected Baba S to return it to my

parents whom he often met. His use of my lantern lowered his image as a "thoughtful" and a "just" man.

Upon my return to Sunauli in 1985, I was asked by my Bidin Hod informants to claim my lantern. I found it rather hard to do. But my informants were persistent in their efforts. They talked about it both in my presence and my absence. These Bidin Hod also talked about the economic differences existing within their group and their being exploited by their Sapha Hod Malik (masters/patrons). They expressed their fear towards the Sapha Hod, but at the same time wanted me not to be afraid of the Sapha Hod and not to be exploited by them. My Bidin Hod friends interpreted my not being able to ask for my lantern as my being unable to stand for my right and my lack of self-respect. I was often teased by the Bidin Hod women to stop studying the Hod if I did not have those human qualities. To avoid any ill-feelings between my informants and myself, I finally asked Baba S about my lantern. Baba S and Gogo M laughed and pointed to one hanging in their veranda. I still had my cultural bias, so I could not ask them to give it back to me. Neither did they volunteer.

This news was immediately spread around by other members of Baba S's household. My Bidin Hod friends admired me for "asking" for it (that was how my "question" was interpreted), and shamed Baba S for not returning it

to me. The poor Bidin Hod, the Christian Satar and the Mohali of Sunauli became much closer to me after this incident. They put me into a different role. For them, my class and caste identities no longer remained significant. They viewed me as their friend and included me in their category of "deprived" or "exploited" people by the wealthy Sapha Hod men of the village.

Going back in time to the same evening of Hako Katkom of 1979, Gogo T and Gogo M spent some time with me, teaching me how to behave like a daughter. They firmly asked me not to continue my Gaal marawa (Satar words meaning conversation/chatting) with men at night. They interpreted Baba S' action as oriented more towards protecting me. They further explained to me that had I behaved in a proper way, by being quiet all the time while C was being accused, C would not have been beaten again. Further, I tried to interfere between Baba S and C which was not proper because that showed that I did not respect Baba S and did not behave as his daughter.

SENDRA HILOK: THE SIXTH DAY

Sendra hilok, the hunting day, was the last day of Soharai. It symbolized the Satar's fondness for the nomadic and adventurous life. Many men of Sunauli went out hunting on this day. An early meal was cooked in each

1. The Satar men also go out for hunting on Sundays. In India, Disom Sendra (Annual Hunt) marks one of their hunting festivals, which lasts for three days (Troisi

household for the hunters to eat before they left. They also carried their lunch to the jungles.

Sendra was also the day to propitiate spirits and worship the Hindu God Rama. As mentioned in chapter VI, the Sapha Hod thought of all the Satar as the descendants of Rama. They thought of inheriting the art of hunting with bow and arrow from this God, who is also the hero of a Hindu epic Ramayana. Sunauli had a temple of Rama and his consort Sita. The caste people worshipped Rama in that temple especially during Ramnavami (Rama's birthday). I noted that no Satar participated in Ramnavami. Since the Sapha Hod considered Rama as their own god, they worshipped him on this last day of Soharai, in their own "traditional" way. They also propitiated some Bonga (spirits) while worshipping Rama. The Bidin Hod acknowledged Rama as a hero, but did not regard him as their god. Therefore, they worshipped only Bonga in their households, not Rama.

Despite the absence or presence of these spirits and/or deities in this worship, the theme of worship remained the same in this Soharai. All these spirits and deities

1978: 146-151). My Satar informants and the Satar of the neighboring villages did not celebrate this festival. My elderly male informants of 1978 - 79 knew about the celebration of this festival in India, but not in Nepal. The absence and presence of Disom Sendra might be looked at as one of the regional differences between the Satar of Nepal and India.

were asked to insure the safety of the hunters. They were urged to forgive those hunters who might have had done something wrong, knowingly or unknowingly. These spirits and deities were further thanked for the present harvest, and requested to make better ones in the coming years.

The evening ritual of the Sendra Hilok was performed, upon the return of the hunters, by greeting them in the Majhi's (headman's) household. Only women participated in this ritual. The wives of the men, representing the political offices, washed the feet of these hunters for their accomplishment of such a dangerous task. Then they fed them with great affection. These hunters were looked upon as heroes fighting with death and conquering it (see Ghimire 1980). In the meantime, the catch was distributed among the hunters and the men holding positions in their political offices. Baba T and J, the two distinguished members of their political organization, also shared this distribution. Since this catch included animals of lower ritual value, these two Sapha Hod men distributed it among their Bidin Hod servants who enjoyed them.

This theme of victory of life/good over death/danger/evil was repeated again in various games held later in the evening on the big field at the northern end of Sunauli. All Satar gathered to enjoy the different

sports, but only adult men took part in them. Among the sports, the archery competition seemed the most important one. For this competition, a plantation stump was fixed on the ground. A target, which consisted of three Puwa (fried rice bread), was placed on it. The odd number of these breads was interpreted by the Sapha Hod as symbolizing the nine-headed demon Ravana (who was killed by God Rama). The men, taking part in this archery competition, started shooting at the target from a distance of about a hundred and twenty-five feet. The individual who hit the target was regarded as the hero, and was carried around by other men on their shoulders. He was also given his target, the three fried rice breads, which he shared with other participants of the sports and his audience. With this symbolic killing of the demon Ravana by God Rama, the festive period of Soharai of 1979 came to an end.

CONCLUSION:

In the last two chapters (including this), I have discussed the social contexts of Sunauli under two categories: secular and ritual. In secular contexts, I showed that an individual's class, ritual and ethnic identities often determined his participation in different contexts, class identity being an especially accurate predictor. The higher an individual's class was, more likely he was to participate in those wide contexts which ignored his ethnic boundaries and enhanced his prestige and

power. However, as a person kept moving back and forth from one context to the other, he kept contracting and expanding his other identities according to his perceived needs and life-strategies.

The ritual context of Soharai highlights various significant aspects of the Satar culture such as, the difference between norms and behavior, gender difference in dietary practices and their implications, egalitarianism of the Satar as is evident from their ethnic meetings, influence of the caste values on the Sapha Hod and the shifting pattern of the Satar identity. In this conclusion, I discuss the last two.

The celebration of Soharai shows how the caste values provide a model for the Sapha Hod behavior. Caste values create changes in the behavioral attributes of the Sapha Hod. This is evident from certain behavior of the Sapha Hod like arranging marriages of their children, not drinking rice-beer and not encouraging drinking, dance and premarital sex among the Satar. These changes, then, influence the Sapha Hod to gain identifications other than those ascribed by birth, as members of their Satar group. These identifications, both secular and ritual, enable the Sapha Hod to ascertain a higher ritual status both within and between groups.

By incorporating the caste rituals, the Sapha Hod view the caste values as pervasive and dominant. Incorporation

of certain caste values and rituals has tied them to the people of their vicinity and has also enabled them to define their behavior in the wider cultural context of the caste society. This has made their interpersonal relationships more meaningful to the caste people.

The Sapha Hod's replication of the caste order in the same cultural code of Sapha/non-Sapha, however, has created a hierarchy, modelled after the caste hierarchy, within their larger egalitarian ethnic group. In this, the Sapha Hod define their ritual status as the highest within their group. They consider themselves as pure and the rest of the Satar as impure and lower in ritual status. As I have illustrated in this chapter and chapter VIII, they reinforce their higher ritual status especially in the ritual context of hospitality through a unilateral distribution of food.

The practice of caste values has also affected the ethnicity of the Sapha Hod. Since they select certain culturally defined symbols and rituals and use them to highlight their similarities to the caste people in some contexts and to their fellow Satar in other contexts, they are often labeled as "Diku-like" people, which actually is an accusation, by the fellow Satar. In the process of combining the core elements of two cultures, the Sapha Hod, as ethnic mediators, also show less of a commitment to the key symbolic markers of both the Satar and the caste people. They view the Satar and the caste groups as

unbounded units and move back and forth between them. The case of the Sapha Hod illustrates that in contact situations an individual's identities are affected and his ethnic boundaries are overlapped. Levine (1987) finds the Chhetri caste people of Humla, Nepal a similar case.

In addition, the festive context of Soharai illustrates the shifting identities of the Sapha Hod. It shows that in spite of the Sapha Hod's participation in caste culture, they have been able to maintain their cultural identity. Some of the ways they mark the boundaries of their cultural identity, as I have shown in this chapter, are by believing in and worshipping the Bonga, believing in witchcraft, preparing rice-beer, participating in ethnic meetings and abiding by the egalitarian values of their ethnic laws. The interrelatedness of the other two identities, ritual and economic, are further fully acted out in this ritual context of Soharai. This is evident especially from the ritual context of hospitality where, through the unilateral distribution of food, the Sapha Hod simultaneously reinforce both their economic and ritual identities.

Soharai further clarifies the mechanism of gaining prestige and power in enhancing an individual's secular identities. Although the importance of wealth in the distribution of food cannot be denied, wealth by itself is not valued by the Satar. A wealthy man is not respected

simply because he possesses wealth. To earn respect he must participate in the culturally defined acts of generosity and hospitality. These acts are not for the increment of money. They are meaningful for maximizing social honor and prestige which, in turn, grant power to an individual. And in order to maintain this prestige and power, a wealthy man must constantly indulge himself in the above culturally defined acts. It is only by doing so, an individual can exert his power to claim a higher ritual status both within and between groups. It was especially for these reasons that the Sapha Hod prepared and distributed even those food and drink, like rice-beer and pork, which they themselves did not consume. Through this distribution, they asserted their higher ritual status and also enhanced their prestige.

In addition to the overlapping of identities, Soharai brings forth the plural perspective of the Satar about their relationship to each other. The celebration of Soharai indicates that people did not share the same view about an individual's economic and ritual status. The Mohali and the Bidin Hod, who were poor, viewed their relationship with the Sapha Hod in economic terms of Malik/Nokar (patron/client). They expected their Malik to take care of them, to be hosts, and to provide them with jobs. They never hosted their Malik mainly because of their own lower economic status. The Sapha Hod, who were rich, defined their status difference in ritual terms of

Sapha-non-Sapha (pure/impure). They considered their own ritual status as higher than that of the Bidin Hod, Christian Satar and the Mohali. This view discouraged the Sapha Hod from accepting food from any of these people. Therefore, the Sapha Hod served food to them. This way, they maintained both their caste and class identities.

The ritual context of Soharai, thus, underscores the individual and interpersonal behavior of the Sapha Hod. It illustrates the patterns of group behavior and explains how the Sapha Hod manipulate their secular and ritual identities to reinforce their higher ritual status within their wider Satar group through their selective participation in the three social systems: ethnic, caste and class.

CHAPTER X

CONCLUSION

Manipulation of symbols and switching of identities, linguistic or others, is quite common in the multi-ethnic society of Nepal and India. The Sapha Hod's manipulation of certain symbols, however, raises some issues in relation to their ethnicity (both within their ethnic group and between groups) especially because the symbols at issue here come from the caste society. Although only a few symbols of the caste people have been adopted by the Sapha Hod, the Sapha Hod's use of these symbols sharply distinguishes the Sapha Hod from the rest of the Satar and also creates conflicts and diversities within their otherwise culturally homogeneous ethnic group.

The habit of presenting a group of people as culturally homogeneous is common in much of the literature on different tribal groups of India, including the Satar, written by missionaries and government officials during the British rule in India (1818-1947). The uniformity of the Satar group is also implicit in more contemporary studies done on the processes of interaction and socio-cultural change (Agrawal 1977; Majumdar 1956; Mukherjee 1960; and Prasad 1972, 1974). While these studies focus on the relationship and interaction of a social group with one or more other groups, they take these groups as isolated entities, and examine only the changing or unchanging

cultural forms of a social unit. The above literature treats the unchanged unit, perpetuating its traditional cultural forms, as a homogeneous cultural group and the changed unit as one which is "dying out" or as merging into the caste system. These studies do not examine the intermediate or transitional categories emerging within a social group due to the simultaneous and selective continuance and change of its plural cultural forms.

In this study, I have presented a detailed ethnographic study of the Satar of one village in Nepal. This ethnographic description will enable us to understand and compare the social organization of the Satar of both Nepal and India. I have demonstrated that the observed trend of emerging hierarchical categories among the Satar challenges the tradition of studying them as a uniform or normative group sharing a given set of cultural values. I have illustrated that while the Satar are viewed by the outsiders as belonging to a single ethnic group (because of their shared language, dress and particular design of their household compound), from the insider's point of view they are divided into distinct ritual categories: the Sapha Hod, the Bidin Hod and the Christian Satar. Despite their various shared cultural forms, the Sapha Hod, Bidin Hod and the Christian Satar use their ethnic charters differently.

My study shows that among the Satar, the Sapha Hod

emphasize the ritual difference between themselves and the other Satar and think of themselves as ritually higher than these others. Because this claim stems from a belief which shapes their behavior, the Sapha Hod, in their everyday behavior, maintain a great degree of social distance from the members of the other two ritual categories. The Sapha Hod's claim to be ritually superior becomes explicit especially in the contexts of commensality, festivals, and the life-cycle rituals. In these contexts, while they invite and serve boiled food (rice and lentils) to their Bidin Hod and Christian neighbors, they themselves will never accept any food served in these neighbors' households.

I have also shown that a focus on individuals, their interests in the pursuit of certain goals, and their conflicts with the members of other Satar categories regarding these individual interests clarify some of the reasons behind the diversity and overlapping identities to be found within the Satar ethnic group. I suggest that further research, carried out with such focus on individuals, may yield similar conclusions about many of the other ethnic groups of Nepal which, so far, have been studied and described as being culturally homogeneous. In this context, my study has wide implications for the students of socio-cultural change, particularly in areas where there is a complex history of culture contact resulting in a pluralistic society.

The issue of contextual versus normative identities, raised above, challenges studies on the Santal/Satar, such as those of Kochar (1970), Somers (1976) and Troisi (1978) which identify the concept of ethnicity with the maintenance of cultural forms alone. The role of traditional cultural symbols in the maintenance of the boundaries of a social group cannot be denied. I have demonstrated this in the boundary maintenance behavior of the Bidin Hod (see chapter V). I have also shown that it is the sharing of certain cultural symbols which defines the group identity of the members of the Satar group. But I have moved beyond this and illustrated that an individuals' ethnic ties are not manifested in cultural forms alone, but rather, as Levy (/1973/1975) demonstrates in her study of the Hassidim, "in manipulation of symbols and approved social behavior that provide opportunities for a moving or floating identity" (Levy/1973/1975:).

The Sapha Hod's use of some crucial caste symbols in defining themselves indicates that cultural forms do not necessarily perpetuate over time. In contact situations, they may be discarded, changed, or replaced by new cultural forms, invented or borrowed from one or more ethnic group. I have demonstrated that the Sapha Hod do not necessarily use the cultural forms historically belonging to their own ethnic group. Some of their borrowed forms of diet and dress come from caste society and appear very different from their own. Despite this,

the borrowed symbols are used whenever appropriate or needed. They are even internalized with their own values and are viewed as belonging to their own ethnic group, or as "traditionally" handed down to them by the ancestors of the Satar people.

As I have shown in chapter VI, the Sapha Hod combine both the Satar and caste rituals and consider the Hindu rituals to be their own. They deny that these rituals are borrowed from the caste people. As such, the criteria the Sapha Hod use to define their ethnicity are different from the way the members of the larger Satar group define themselves. Ethnicity as a category of shared traditional values, as defined by the Bidin Hod, is not accepted by the Sapha Hod. A switch in the cultural forms has not jeopardized the Sapha Hod's ethnicity. Even though the cultural forms they participate in are not structured by the codes and values applying to a person of Satar identity, the Sapha Hod identify themselves as Satar when asked about their ethnicity.

Such a view of ethnicity has led the Sapha Hod to view themselves both as members of the Satar ethnic group and as members of a more inclusive religious group (Hindu). Their chosen identity varies according to contexts. Their Satar ethnicity is important in certain contexts, while in different contexts, certain "other" dimensions of their identity appear salient. These "other" aspects of

identity could be economic, educational, occupational, religious, national, or regional. The Sapha Hod's use of the key symbols related to these different categories of identity explain their situationally specific behavior. Identification, thus, can and does change. A Sapha Hod can consider that he/she belongs to the Satar group only in certain situations, whereas in others he may identify himself with another group, or display an entirely new identity.

In the last three chapters (VII, VIII and IX), I have provided illustrations of the major contexts within which the Sapha Hod manipulate and select, from a range of possibilities, appropriate cultural identities. For example, I have demonstrated how in certain contexts (e.g. group and village meetings, kinship, marriage arrangements, propitiating the Bonga (spirits) in life-cycle rituals and socio-religious gatherings), the Sapha Hod consider themselves as belonging to the ethnic group, and they are also aware that they are accepted as members by the others of this group. I have also shown that through participation in the worship of Hindu deities, such as Shiva and Kali, and performance of various pious acts, such as of sharing water of their ponds and well with their neighbors and making pilgrimages, the same Sapha Hod identify themselves as Hindu. Further, they claim to be Nepali when speaking Nepali language. And lastly, in the contexts of commensality and religious practices, their

distinct ritual identity as Sapha Hod becomes highly salient.

In the above contexts, especially in the formal/informal contexts of commensality, we get a pluralistic view of their relations. The members of Sapha Hod, Bidin Hod and the Christian Satar categories interpret their intra/interrelationships in different ways. For example, the Bidin Hod and the Christian Satar define their relationship with the Sapha Hod in the economic terms of Malik/Nokar (patron/client). They think of the Sapha Hod as Malik and view their lower economic status as an inhibiting factor to reversing their roles. The Sapha Hod do not agree with the Bidin Hod's definition of their (Sapha Hod) status. The Sapha Hod define their relationship with the Bidin Hod and the Christian Satar in ritual terms of Sapha/non-Sapha (pure/impure). They consider themselves as Sapha and the rest as non-Sapha. The Sapha Hod, therefore, will not accept food from the Bidin Hod and the Christian Satar.

The ritual identification of the Sapha Hod becomes stronger with the caste people in the contexts of commensality. Although the caste people of Sunauli think of the Sapha Hod as being Satar, they do not judge the performance of the Sapha Hod by the standard of the Satar culture. Rather, these caste people evaluate the performance of the Sapha Hod with reference to their own culturally valued caste ritual standards. Some of these

caste standards are: the abstinence from drinking rice-beer, or eating meat of lower ritual values, and not following the behavior of lower Jaat people, such as drinking and dancing and premarital sexual activities. I have shown that the Sapha Hod, like caste people, do not eat or drink above tabooed items, and that they also strongly disapprove of premarital sex and dancing.

To explain the Sapha Hod's use of certain key symbols of the caste society contributes to two theoretical debates. One is related to the process of acculturation in the context of caste society of Nepal and India, and the other is to the nature of group boundaries in general. I start with the first one here.

The borrowing of the cultural forms brings forth some obvious similarities, some "look alike" features, between the Sapha Hod and the caste groups. The fact of "looking alike" has been interpreted by some Indianists as one way borrowing for upward mobility within the caste system. The term Sanskritization, coined by Srinivas (1962), has been used widely to describe such a process of upward mobility. Srinivas (1962) uses this term to describe a process of acculturation by which a lower caste or non-Hindu group imitates and adopts the beliefs and rituals of the higher castes in an attempt to raise its economic, political and social status in the caste hierarchy of a given area.

My view, as developed here, is that acculturation in this context, may not necessarily function as a means for upward mobility, especially the kind of upward mobility some Indianists have examined (see chapter I). My research shows that although the Sapha Hod practise certain cultural forms of the caste people, they do not try to move up in the caste hierarchy. Instead, they use these forms to enhance their social and ritual status within their own (Satar) group and to maintain a subtle relationship between groups.

Such strategic use of caste symbols call for a study of acculturation from the participants' point of view. How the members of an ethnic group view such borrowing, manipulate it, and integrate it with their own cultural forms are important aspects of their cultural outlook. Borrowing may be used for upward mobility. But in this particular cultural context, borrowing of caste symbols and rituals is seen more than mere upward mobility. The adoption of the caste symbols has a different meaning for the Sapha Hod. To them, it appears as a strategy to facilitate interaction with the caste people as well as that with the members of their own ethnic group. Such interaction enables them to realize the grip of the encompassing and inclusive nature of the caste system and pushes them to view themselves within this system.

Contact situations affect a Sapha Hod's identity in two

different ways: 1) They encourage them to incorporate the caste values in order to rank themselves within their own group. 2) They also enable them to compete with the caste people. Both strategies are achieved by practising certain culturally defined acts of the caste people (such as being pious, generous and hospitable). I contend that the Sapha Hod use such strategies in order to compete with the caste people for prestige and power, rather than to try to move up in the caste hierarchy itself. The Sapha Hod do not accept a caste identity. Rather, they have developed a new ethnicity, which combines selected features of both the Satar and the caste identities. It is this new ethnicity that the Sapha Hod think to be their cultural identity and in addition want all the Satar (Bidin Hod and Christian) to embrace, or as they say "to restore", it. While this new ethnicity makes the Sapha Hod look more like the caste people, and different from the Bidin Hod, the Sapha Hod think of this new ethnicity as the Satar ethnicity. Therefore, the efforts of the Sapha Hod are oriented towards restoring their ethnicity, not abandoning it, discarding it or merging it with caste identities.

Although the integration of the caste symbols with their own has not led the Sapha Hod to merge into the caste society, it has resulted in a different type of mobility within their own ethnic group. Since the Sapha Hod use the symbols of caste society to enhance their

social and ritual status within their group, they have characterized their ritual categories in hierarchical terms. In this they place themselves at the top of the hierarchy. Such a grading of categories has had the effect of reinforcing the difference existing between these categories. In this process, they have created and maintained a distinct ritual status within their group.

Some questions emerge here. What is the nature of the class and the ritual category that the Sapha Hod represent? What are the units involved here? And, what could be learned about the boundaries of the ethnic groups under study?

I have labeled the social category represented by the Sapha Hod as a ritual category. In Sunauli, caste and class provide two different models of ranking. The first, caste, relates to ritual rank while the class model relates to secular economic rank. Although they are different models, they can function at the same time. In the context of Sunauli, they must be viewed as interrelated. Such interrelatedness of the ritual and economic identities reflects the complexity of the Satar social system and makes it hard to describe it in a lineal sense. Such a situation also contributes to our understanding that not all behavior can be interpreted as being exclusively caste-relevant in the caste societies. The Sapha Hod present an example of how the choice of certain behavioral roles are often those which function in relation to class,

and not caste. For the Sapha Hod class becomes the crucial measure of social rank in some contexts, especially in the secular contexts of the village and the weekly market.

In Sunauli, the concept of class has two dimensions - economic and ritual. Quite often, same behavior is interpreted in both economic and ritual terms by the parties involved. I have illustrated how the Bidin Hod view the difference between the Sapha Hod and themselves in terms of the economic categories of rich and poor, whereas the Sapha Hod view such difference in relation to the ritual criterion of pure and impure. The role of wealth in the design of the Sapha Hod household-compounds and rituals, especially in the variety and quantity of food prepared and in the distribution of food among the fellow villagers, cannot be denied. Despite these, wealth by itself is not a determinant factor of the Sapha Hod category. To be rich in Sunauli did not alone make one a Sapha Hod. It was the practice of certain values based on the particular corpus of beliefs concerning purity/pollution that defined an individual as a Sapha Hod. And, since the caste rituals mark the boundaries of this category, I have defined such category as a ritual category.

In my opinion, such class categories based on caste rituals will emerge in Nepal and India whenever an egalitarian group will interact with a dominant group

having a non-egalitarian ideology of caste system. Such interaction breaks the homogeneous egalitarian group into various heterogeneous sub-groups or categories which incorporate the characteristics of the caste ideology and, thereby, maintain social distance from each other. And in doing so, they create a certain kind of hierarchy within their egalitarian group. I have illustrated that with the increase of diversity within a cultural group, such as of the Satar or caste, there has been an increase in similarities between members of these two groups especially at the upper class level. Logically speaking, (or more correctly certain theoretical models hold that) such increasing similarities should eventually weaken ethnic identification or solidarity and strengthen class identification. But this has not happened in Sunauli. Here it is the ethnic/ritual/caste differences which continue to structure behavior within and between groups, similar to what Carstens (1983) finds in his study of the Pulai Chinese in Malaysia.

Such a situation indicates that despite the emerging hierarchy within an ethnic group, ethnic and ritual identifications remain so strong that they overcome class and also mitigate the class formation within that group. It is especially because although economic criterion determines the formation of a class in Sunauli, cultural criteria of ancestry (inherited biological make-up) and manners (ways of behaving properly) are equally important

in defining a person's social status. The boundaries of such a status is further marked with ritual criterion of pure/impure. Cultural patterns set by these cultural and ritual criteria and caste values of Dharma and Karma, with an emphasis on asceticism and renunciation, are more pervasive in Sunauli than those by class. These cultural and ritual criteria and the egalitarian ideology of the Satar down play the role of wealth and also discourage the formation of an economic class in Sunauli.

The second problem, related to my study of ethnicity, is that of defining a unit. As ethnicity is contextual, it implies continuous interaction of a particular social unit with other units. These units, involved in the process of creating and maintaining a new identity, may consist of an individual or a group, as Marriott (1968) also points out in his methodological study of mobility pattern in India.

The small number of the Sapha Hod seems to discourage them from forming a group. The Sapha Hod men do not get together with other Sapha Hod men for any formal gathering related to their ritual category alone. In addition, a Sapha Hod's household does not necessarily include only Sapha Hod. Other members of a Sapha Hod's household could be Bidin Hod who follow Sapha Hod rituals at certain times and Bidin Hod rituals at other times. A Sapha Hod neither encourages nor forces these household members (even the women) to be Sapha Hod. Thus, we find only individuals (especially men) participating in the

processes of acculturation and in developing multiple overlapping personal identities.

This leads us to consider other related problems concerning the boundaries of the social categories within a group and of those between the ethnic and caste groups. Many studies done on similar cultural groups have characterized them as having fixed and rigid boundaries. In the studies on acculturation in the caste context, groups crossing the boundaries of their tribal or caste groups are conceived as "dying out".

My work shows that groups such as Satar and caste, in reality are never so fixed and bounded as Barth (1969) conceived and Leach (/1954/1979) illustrated in his study of the Gumsa, Gumlao factions of Kachin in relation to the Shan of Burma. In reality, individuals oscillate within and between groups. It is the social scientist who presents bounded groups for theoretical purposes. Looked at from inside, however, the individual members may not see the boundaries of their group and/ or categories as stable. Depending on their different strategies and goals, they keep expanding or contracting their personal ethnic boundaries. The Sapha Hod, for example, are not much interested in clearly defining the boundaries of their own Satar ethnic group or of the caste groups. Their practice of both the Satar and caste rituals indicate this. For the Sapha Hod, then, the boundaries of either of these groups

are flexible, having enough elasticity to let them move in and out. Their own ritual category presents a case of boundary-fluidity rather than boundary-maintenance. And especially because of this, the Sapha Hod appear as ethnic mediators. As ethnic mediators, they seem to belong to an intermediate category which keeps moving between their egalitarian ethnic group and the hierarchical caste groups. The identity sought by the Sapha Hod, by belonging to such an intermediate category, ignores similarities that emerge from their traditional Satar cultural background. At the same time, it also ignores differences that exist between the Satar and the caste people.

Actually, such flexibility allows individuals to claim several possible identities arranged in, what Cohen (1978) calls, a "series of nesting dichotomies", without breaking the rules of any of the categories and/or groups. Studied in this light, the Satar and caste groups do not seem to be bounded units. Their boundaries are expanded, contracted, crossed or overlapped depending on an individual's needs and life-strategies.

This study has gone beyond the study of the Satar of southern Nepal by examining the Satar's relationship with and self-perception with regard to the caste people of Sunauli. Since caste values provide a model for the Satar's behavior, I have presented a description of the caste people of this region. Nevertheless, I have looked

at the hierarchical caste society from the perspective of untouchables. I have illustrated that these caste people do not view themselves as untouchable within the larger caste system. This is evident from the ranking task described in chapter IV. Like Moffatt (1979), I found that these caste people of Sunauli follow the caste values of Dharma, Karma and purity in defining themselves both within and between caste groups, just as their upper caste neighbors of Biratnagar do. In doing so, the caste people of Sunauli view themselves as a part of a larger caste society, arranged in an immutable hierarchical order.

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