

■ Article ■

Vasectomies and Other Engagements with Modernity: A Reflection on Discourses and Practices of Family Planning in Nepal



Tatsuro Fujikura

In this article, I reflect on the words of those male villagers in Nepal who told me how proud they were of having undergone vasectomy operations, and how their actions stemmed from and exemplified their qualities as true leaders of their village in a time of change. This reflection constitutes part of my larger study of the history of development discourses in Nepal. In general terms, I view the project of development as an ensemble of political technologies that aim, among other things, to reform subjectivities and reorganize the social fields in which the subjects act and are acted upon, with the aim of increasing the welfare of the individuals and the population as a whole [Asad 1992; Scott 1999; Fujikura 2001b]. Elsewhere, I have also shown that the notion of democracy, at least since the 1950s in Nepal, has been closely articulated with the ideas and techniques of development, so that democracy does not simply refer to the notion of popular sovereignty, but is also expected to further the wellbeing of the entire population [Fujikura 1996, 2001a]. Partha Chatter-

藤倉達郎 Tatsuro Fujikura, Centre for Social Research and Development, Kathmandu.
Subject: Cultural Anthropology.

Articles: "Emancipation of Kamaikas: Development, Social Movement, and Youth Activism in Post-Jana Andolan Nepal", *Himalayan Research Bulletin*, 21 (1): 29-35, 2001. "Discourses of Awareness: Notes for a Criticism of Development in Nepal", *Studies in Nepali History and Society*, 6 (2): 271-313, 2001.

jee has stated that this duality-i. e. the notion of people as sovereign citizens and as subjects of governmental technologies-is "present in our understanding of political power in late twentieth [or early twenty first] century societies all over the world" [Chatterjee 1998b: 254]. It is a characteristic of "the modern regime of power as we now know it globally" [Chatterjee 1998b: 254]. To me, these remarks signal, among other things, that the kinds of dilemmas and impasses of politics we face in 'developing' countries are not fundamentally different from the problems in the 'developed' ones. In other words, the problem of development ought to be treated as part of the problem of political modernity that is *global*, rather than as a peculiar and exceptional problem of the Third World, or as that of an epistemological apparatus regulating the relationship between the First and the Third Worlds.¹⁾

In this paper, I consider the perspectives and actions of those who have been the target of development interventions-or, to borrow Chatterjee's concise expression, I seek to explore "the politics of the governed" [2004].²⁾ Specifically, I consider the life-stories of self-identified village leaders which include narratives about vasectomy. In her pioneering and widely discussed work, Stacy Pigg describes how the categories of 'village' and 'villagers' are central to the discourse of development in Nepal [1992]. She argues that the discourse has the dual effect of promoting a vision of generic 'village' as a central focus of the national project, while marginalizing actual villagers from the centers of power by marking them as backward, superstitious and ignorant, and hence in need of development interventions. More broadly, Chatterjee [2001; 2004] suggests that non-Western modernity is characterized by the existence of a small number of elite ('citizens') who are engaged in a pedagogic mission in relation to the rest of the society ('population'). A related concern animates the recent discourses about 'a rights-based approach to development' where a number of development professionals have expressed hope that by re-conceiving the poor and marginalized people as subjects of inalienable rights, rather than as objects of pedagogic and reformative interventions (i. e. 'populations'), positive changes might be effected in the ways development projects are defined and implemented [cf. ODI 1999]. I have myself described elsewhere a concrete case in which the adoption of a 'rights-based approach' allowed a major international NGO to assist in the political mobilization of an oppressed group, i. e. the bonded agricultural laborers in western Nepal

[Fujikura 2001a]. Based on this case, I have argued, among other things, that there are concrete instances in which a change in how some people conceive the project of development assistance affects what actually happens on the ground. However, it remains the case that we are dealing with big binary concepts: i. e. citizens vs. populations, and subjects vs. objects. These powerful binaries may well encumber and haunt our efforts to conceive of the 'subject of political practice' in a manner that Chatterjee urges in the epigraph above.

Let me briefly illustrate the difficulties by way of discussing Stacy Pigg's analysis of the ideology of development, or *bikās*, in Nepal. Pigg observes that "Nepalis experience modernity through a development ideology that insists that they are *not* modern, indeed, that they have a very long way to go to get there" [1996: 163]. One of the paradoxes that propels Pigg's inquiry is the question as to why Nepali villagers seem to find this development ideology—which define them as backward, ignorant, and irrational nonetheless, compelling. Pigg introduces us to a kind of villagers she calls "cosmopolitan" [1992: 510]. 'Cosmopolitan villagers' are those who, while they are themselves villagers for all intents and purposes, nonetheless refer to other villagers as 'those who do not understand'. As an answer to the riddle, Pigg offers that these cosmopolitan villagers are seeking to differentiate their consciousness from that of others by asserting their ability to recognize the characteristic of the 'generic villager', thereby aligning themselves on the side of *bikās*. According to Pigg, this move is an important strategy in the politics of representation in a society where "Increasingly, the apparatus of *bikās* ... is the source of power, wealth, and upward social mobility" [1992: 511]. She writes:

The best future for upward mobile individuals lies in becoming a modern Nepali qualified to deliver development. They need to distinguish themselves from the "village" that has been constructed, through national development discourse, as the obstacle of development [Pigg 1996: 187].

Hence, for Pigg, it is the desire for upward mobility, or the desire not to be defined as 'marginal', that explains the adoption of the language of development by Nepali villagers.

Elsewhere, in her analysis of the efforts to incorporate 'traditional medical practitioners' (TMPs) into the project of health development in

Nepal, Pigg shows how those well intended programs end up simply subsuming "local tradition" under the universalistic rationality of the development model" [1995a: 62–63]. Pigg notes that, from the point of view of the villagers, there could at least be two models of development. In the realm of health development, for example, one model would acknowledge the efficacy and rationality of local knowledge and integrate "Western-style medicine into a local scheme of knowledge in a way that posits the possibility of a *bikasi* village" [Pigg 1995b: 33]. The other model is the one that we have already seen. It places "the doctor's medicine and the shaman's mantra in separate worlds, thus reinforcing a definition of the village as the place development can never reach" [Pigg 1995b: 33]. Both models can be compelling. But, Pigg argues, only one has "a life outside local experience. The model that insists that *bikas* and the village are distinct and mutually exclusive finds echoes in the messages of schoolbooks, the rhetoric of development, stereotypes of ethnic sensibilities, and the conventions of everyday speech" [Pigg 1995b: 33]. In other words, in Pigg's view, the definition of the village as the opposite of *bikās* is overdetermined. In this context, "mere words," such as 'TMPs' and 'villagers' beliefs "are produced by and reproduce a power asymmetry that becomes more entrenched every time development visions turn into policies and policies turn into actual programs. The scale of this activity is immense, global" [Pigg 1995a: 62]. Based on this analysis, she urges that "we strive to step outside the development paradigm all together" [Pigg 1995a: 62].

In sum, for Pigg, the primary function of development discourse is the production and reproduction of a structure of inequality. This characterization of development discourse, in turn, forms the basis for her interpretation of the motives of the Nepalis.⁹ That is, when 'Nepalis variously positioned along a steep grade of inequality' use the vocabulary of development and science, they are trying to "rappel themselves up this cliff face to stand, as it were, on the flat plains of internationally established truth and fact" [Pigg 2001: 510]. We are hence locked in a world of stubborn inequalities where individuals try to 'move up' by learning new vocabularies and accumulating cultural capital, while the structure remains the same, and there is no possibility for a 'developed village' in Nepal.

In Pigg's portrayal, development emerges as something like a machine, similar to the way James Ferguson famously characterized it in his study with reference to Lesotho [Ferguson 1994]. For both Pigg and Ferguson,

development is like a machine that produces regular and consistent effects: Development reproduces asymmetrical power relations and disempowers the local through its objectification. I have elsewhere questioned whether we should project machine-like regularity and coherence to ideas, institutions and practices of development [Fujikura 2001b]. There, I argued, among other things, that the history of development interventions in Nepal has been *productive* of a variety of forms of social and political mobilizations aimed at transforming relations of power. In the context of this article, one of my main concerns is with Pigg's foregrounding of upward mobility as the motive for Nepal's engagements with the ideas and practices of development. While I agree that the construction of a new "map" of inequality [Pigg 1992: 511], and the consequent creation of new modes of social mobility, are important *aspects* of development, I would highlight that they in no way cover the whole experience of development in Nepal.

In this article, I consider the words of self-identified village leaders who engaged both conceptually and physically with the ideas and techniques of development, including vasectomy operations. I believe their narratives demand interpretations of the relationship between development activities and the lives of rural Nepalis that are not confined to the concerns with status and mobility. Before discussing their life stories, however, I need to describe the discourses and technologies of family planning which they were confronted with.

1. Critical Discourses on Family Planning in the Metropole

Sushma Joshi [1999], in an opinion piece in the *Kathmandu Post*, an English daily in Nepal, talks about the large advertisement boards that began to appear in places like bus-stops and pharmaceutical shops around the Kathmandu valley and beyond, towards the end of the 1990s.

A man is holding a large needle and seemed to be stabbing it into the figure of a woman. Below, there is a larger depiction of a hypodermic needle syringe. The large red letters say, simply: The three month needle [Joshi 1999: 83].⁴⁾

The billboards are advertisements for depoprovera, a synthetic hormonal contraceptive, marketed in Nepal under the name *Saigini*, or 'friend' (fem.). The problem, Joshi says, is that in the advertisement campaign for

this product, as for other contraceptive products, no mention whatsoever is being made about its possible side effects, such as information about "conditions like diabetes and previous jaundice that could make it unsafe for a woman to receive the injection" [Joshi 1999: 83]. Indeed, the advertisement of depoprovera itself, as Joshi correctly observes, may not be aimed primarily at the women who may be receiving the injection. More likely, the advertisements are aimed at rural health workers and pharmacy owners, who may be administering injection to the women. The vector of the advertisement itself is pointing towards somewhere quite removed from women's health or subjective choice.

At one level this situation is not very surprising, given the history of family planning and population policy in Nepal wherein health and autonomy of women and men were always regarded as subordinate to the objective of controlling population growth.⁵⁾ An editorial of the *Kathmandu Post* [2001], appearing three days after the World Population Day (July 11th) represents views on the issues of population growth and family planning commonly held by much of the elite in Nepal. The editorial spoke of the "horrifying" picture of population growth in Nepal:

Over the last three decades, Nepal's population has doubled, and is all set to reach 24 million this year. This unprecedented growth far outweighs any progress made in socio-economic sector.

The editorial goes on to remind the readers that population growth is not only devastating to the nation's economy (whose unemployment rate is at "47 percent"), but also produces "other evils that drive men to crime and women to shame." While the government often talks about "poverty alleviation," without "attacking the root cause" which is population growth, any so-called poverty alleviation program would be an "exercise in futility." The editorial then goes on to discuss the need for "women's empowerment." Women's empowerment is necessary, because, the editorial argues: "Unless women are given the right to decide on the number and spacing of their children, the population menace cannot find an effective exit" [*Kathmandu Post* 2001].

The overriding concern for limiting population growth explains the strong emphasis on sterilization in Nepal's family planning program. Given the fact that the vast majority of rural population live far away from any health service facilities, the 'permanent' methods that could be

applied through such means as occasional 'sterilization camps' are regarded as most practical. Depopovera is regarded favorably among the temporary methods for the same reason-it requires only one contact every three months between the family planning service provider and the acceptor [Thapa 1989; Thapa and Friedman 1998; Caldwell 1998; Tamang 2001]. Depopovera has been in use in Nepal since 1975, many years before it was approved for use in places like the United States.

In the aforementioned article, Sushma Joshi expresses indignation at the Nepali elite, who failed to express so much as a concern about the safety of depopovera and other contraceptive devices. For her, this is another symptom of the backwardness of the Nepali elite, compared to their counterparts in India, Bangladesh or the United States, where, Joshi says, the introduction of depopovera was a topic of much debate and controversy [Joshi 1999: 83].

For Seira Tamang, another critic of family planning programs in Nepal, the lack of concern for the welfare and autonomy of women is symptomatic of the larger state discourses on women and development, in which women are often seen simply as means for national development. In the sphere of family planning, the Nepali state is intent, only on "appropriating women's wombs" [Tamang 2001: 12]. The state, Tamang argues, consistently fails to take women seriously as rights bearing citizens of the nation, i. e. "as autonomous, purposive actors capable of choice and demands that local voices ... be heard in the full authority of legal and political personhood" [Tamang 2001: 12].

Hence, the citizen's autonomy is pitted against the imperatives of governing and controlling the population. For many of the partisans of population control, rural Nepalis are too uneducated, and often even irrational, to be trusted to make the right reproductive choices on their own. To let them behave as they want, will endanger the nation as a whole. For Tamang, such an argument is built on a total disregard of the basic ideas of sovereignty. This debate, the debate in which neither side appears hopeful of persuading the other, pivots around the figure of 'Nepali villagers', the nature of their consciousness, rationality, and subjectivity. Let me quote a family planning expert discussing an "example from the custom and value system of Nepal":

There is a tradition of blessing younger ones by elderly persons

saying that '*May your sons and daughters cover the hills and mountains!* Unless the idea of 'better to cover the hills and mountains with offspring' is hit, there will be no use of condoms and oral pills. Vasectomy and laparoscopy camps will remain without clients and personnel will fill the forms with proxy clients to obtain extra money as 'incentive' according to the service offered [Acharya 1996: 137, emphasis original].⁶

On the consciousness of Nepali villagers, so much seems to hang, not only the present and the future of their welfare and happiness, but those of the entire Nepali polity and indeed, the Earth. For instance, around 1998, on the wall of a District Administration Office in the mid-western hills there was a poster with a picture of the Earth as seen from outer space. At the center of the Earth, there was a young Nepali couple with a baby, wearing traditional clothing marking them as villagers from the hills. The caption accompanying the picture read:

6 billion and counting.

How many more can the Earth bear?

Let us think before it is too late.

It is with the awareness of such discourses about themselves, in addition to other considerations, as we shall see later, that some Nepali villagers make their reproductive decisions.

1.1 'Beware of Modernity'

Besides the ones we have seen so far, there are other modes of textual interventions in the matter of family planning. Notable among them is the one exemplified by Kedar Sharma's book [1997]. While Sharma, a well respected journalist, appears to share much of the concerns with Joshi and Tamang, unlike their articles Sharma's book is written in simple Nepali and aimed directly at the 'ordinary' (*sārvāsādharaṇ*) Nepalis, including the actual and potential targets of family planning programs and promotions. The book is titled *Beware of Modernity* (*Ādhunikatāsāga sāvadhān*) and aims to inform the ordinary Nepalis of the dangers and risks associated with modern "goods, technologies, and behaviors" -including medicine, toxic and addictive substances, marketing and advertisement, electricity, television, nylon clothes, magazines, and cement housing. In the foreword

to the book, the publisher, Kanak Dixit writes that when Nepal opened its doors to the outside world about 50 years ago, Nepal was not ready at all to cope with the flood of "modernity and modern goods" that have subsequently deluged the society. The Nepali elite has only recently begun to think about the dangers of modern goods. In this situation, it is up to the ordinary Nepalis, the consumers of the modern goods, to educate themselves about the risks as well as benefits of modernity and modern goods [Dikṣit 1997: ii].

In the chapter titled "Family Planning: Let's not forget about health, either," Sharma discusses merits and risks associated with a variety of temporary and permanent contraceptive methods, including condoms, pills, depopovera, IUD, 'natural' methods, vasectomy and laparoscopy. Among the permanent family planning methods, Sharma strongly recommends vasectomy, since it is a relatively simple and low risk operation, so that "it is good for a man who loves his wife to go through vasectomy as soon as they have had a desired number of children" [1997: 40].

Yet, Sharma stresses that family planning is strictly a "private matter" (*nijī kura*) for the couple [1997: 44].⁹ To illustrate the kind of attitude towards modern contraceptive devices that Sharma wants ordinary Nepalis to adopt, he tells a story of a fictional couple, Bimal and Bimala, and urges the readers to 'learn from them'. In the story, Bimal and Bimala not only seek health workers' advice on family planning, but also consider experiences of their relatives and close friends in choosing what methods to use. Based on the information, they decide to use both condom and spermicide, but Bimala soon stops using spermicide, simply because it was cumbersome. After giving birth to her first daughter, Bimala is urged by a doctor to use dipoprovera. Bimala tells the doctor that she first has to consult with her husband, and despite the fact that Bimala's sister had used depoprovera and experienced no adverse effects, the couple decides not to use it, just to be on the safe side. Although the government is calling on Nepali people everyday through the radio to have a second child only after the first child starts going to school, Bimal and Bimala decide that it makes more sense to have all the children early. In that way, Bimala can go back to work outside of the home early. Their second child turns out to be a girl too. Although Bimal's father says he really would like to have a grandson, when the second daughter reaches three, Bimal decides to go through a vasectomy operation [Sharmā 1997: 43-44].

Thus, Bimal and Bimala are a practical and pragmatic couple, who inform themselves from a variety of sources. Furthermore, they are a couple who can recognize the sphere of privacy and private decisions, who can make final decisions according to their own needs, feelings, and preferences and not those of the government, doctor, or relatives [Sharmā 1997: 43-44]. In making family planning decision, most important consideration ought not to be the fate of national economy or social pressures, but how the couple feel about it, 'personally'. Of course, Sharma is not saying that Bimal and Bimala are typical of ordinary Nepalis. Rather, they are the kind of people Sharma urges his fellow Nepalis to emulate. Sharma's project here is different from Tamang's, who urges the Nepali leaders to treat the Nepali women as legal and political subjects of rights *already* capable of making choices and demands on their own. Sharma is urging ordinary Nepalis to *become* the practical and prudent consumers exemplified by the fictional Bimal and Bimala, for whom there indeed exist such things as the sphere of privacy and private decision making.

To be sure, the health and wellbeing of the individuals are within the agenda of the Nepali government. Indeed, to reiterate, the ultimate aim of the art of national development planning is to install relations of positive feedback between the welfare of individuals and the welfare of the nation as a whole. Yet, it seems Sharma simply does not trust that the Nepali government, as it is, has the ability to devise and execute such a plan. Neither he believes, I presume, that the World Bank or transnational pharmaceutical companies, who are increasingly influencing the health policies in Nepal, possess such ability or intent. What strikes Sharma as crucial in contemporary Nepal is the engendering of consumer consciousness, who educate themselves and others about the dangers of 'modernity and modern goods,' and sometimes even pressurize the government to adopt policies to safe-guard its people from such dangers.¹⁰ The *Kathmandu Post* editorial, as we have seen, also wanted women to be empowered and be able to choose. Of course, the *Kathmandu Post* presumes, as does Sharma, that given the ability to choose, people will choose in a certain way, in this case, the way that will ultimately result in the reduction of birthrate.¹¹ It is the tension one can sense beneath this presumption that seems to be inherent in the processes of installing freedom in Nepal that I want to further consider through a fragment of local history from a remote village.

2. Vasectomy, Leadership, and the Work of Mourning

I just wrote 'a remote village'.¹⁰ Remoteness, of course, is a relative notion. For most people in Kathmandu in the 1990s, the hilly district which the village I call by the pseudonym 'Simbang' was located in, would have seemed very remote. However, there was indeed a motor road connecting the district to the national highway system since the 1980s. During the 1990s, there were 'night bus' services that took you directly from Kathmandu to the district capital in about 20 hours. However, not being a destination for tourism or religious pilgrimage, most people in Kathmandu or elsewhere in Nepal would have had no reason to visit the district unless they were government servants or NGO workers who were assigned there.

The area belonged to a small principality that, along with a number of other principalities in western Nepal, were allowed to maintain semi-autonomous status even after the 'unification' of Nepal by the Shah king of Gorkha during the 18th century. These principalities were called *rājya* (literally, 'kingdom') and their erstwhile rulers were allowed to continue to call themselves *rājā* ('king'). However, even though they retained a measure of autonomy in internal administration, their nature was that of vassal states, and they were subject to the general suzerainty of Kathmandu [Regmi 1999: 39]. The raja families of these western principalities also became closely connected to the ruling dynasty in Kathmandu through marriage relations.

Older people in the district where Simbang is located recalled that until the 1950s visible presence of the government consisted only of the taxation office, the court, and the post office in the district capital. Once a year, tax collected from the area would depart the district capital on the back of a carrier amidst much formalities and ceremonies.¹¹ Nowadays, they commented, they don't actually see with their own eyes the tax being carried away to Kathmandu. Instead, they often hear on the radio about millions of rupees being sent *from* Kathmandu for development programs here in the district-although, they don't see that money either. What was nonetheless visible was a remarkable increase in the number of government office buildings. The District Profile published by the District Development Committee Office in the year 2053 v. s. (1996/97 AD) listed fourteen main government offices concerned with development. The list

included: District Education Office, District Drinking Water Office, District Health Office, District Irrigation Office, District Construction Office, District Soil Conservation Office, Cottage and Rural Industry Development Committee, Women's Development Office, District Cooperatives Office, District Agricultural Development Office and Road Building Office.¹² In the mid-1990s there were also a growing number of NGOs implementing their programs in the district. They included a few major international NGOs. The combined presence of a large number of governmental and non-governmental development agencies resulted not only in the increase in the number of office buildings, but also in a flood of posters and signboards with development oriented messages all around the district. Among these messages, a substantial portion concerned family planning.

During the more than two years I stayed in Simbang in the late 1990s, I was indeed struck by the ubiquity of messages about family planning in and around the village, not only on numerous posters, advertisement boards and on the radio, but also in conversations among villagers. The policy makers would describe this situation as a definite achievement, a positive outcome of such interventions as the 'social marketing' of contraceptive devices. USAID, the primary force behind Nepal's family planning policy since the 1960s, describes its Contraceptive Retail Sales Project in the late 1970s as having involved a major advertisement campaign: "Innovative attention-getters included display contests among shopkeepers, a frisbee contest held in the national stadium, and a float in King Birendra's birthday parade. Attractive, interesting displays were designed to desensitize open sales of birth control methods." USAID claims that "More than the initial sales levels achieved, these efforts helped increase public awareness of contraceptive availability and reduced social resistance to the subject" [Skerry et al. 1991: 229]. The tradition continues into the present, in such major events as the 'Condom Day' festivities sponsored by the Nepal Red Cross Society with funding from USAID through the Washington D. C.-based CEDPA (Centre for Development and Population Activities). In the area in mid-western hills where I lived in the late 1990s, the Condom Day, celebrated in October, involved 'street dramas' conveying information about HIV/AIDS and its prevention, and a parade including local merchants dressed-up as giant condoms.¹³

However, the story that I convey below relates to the past-before the

onset of the concerns with HIV/AIDS and primarily concerns one specific family planning method, i. e. vasectomy. As I have noted earlier, in the history of family planning policy in Nepal, there has always been a 'de facto' orientation towards sterilization [Thapa 1989: 48].¹⁴ Moreover, according to Shyam Thapa, vasectomy was the most common method of contraception in Nepal until 1976, when it was overtaken by female sterilization [Thapa 1989: 46]. This implies, at least from the mid-1960s to the mid-1970s, that men as a group were the primary and effective target for family planning intervention in the sense that more of them actually went through contraceptive operations than women. Conversely, the increase in the number of women going through the variety of contraceptive operations (which as we have seen, tend to be more complicated and involve more risks than vasectomy) since the 1970s, needs to be seen as a 'feminization' of family planning and considered in relation to the rise of Women in Development (WID) discourses and the feminization of development in general.¹⁵

In the course of my stay in Simbang, I learned that there were many men who had gone through vasectomy operations. One day, I asked several people gathered around the front yard of my friend's house to make a list of the names of persons who had gone through contraceptive operations in Simbang. They could collectively recall more than 50 such men who had had vasectomy operations in a village of about 200 households.¹⁶ There was only one woman in Simbang who had had a contraceptive operation, clearly making Simbang an exception to the national trend.¹⁷

Three men, who were all in their mid-forties at the time I met them, were the first to go through the operation together. In addition to all of them being farmers, one of them was a school teacher, the other a politician, and the remaining one was the chairperson of the district committee of a large grassroots development organization in western Nepal. According to the standard of Simbang, all of them were relatively well off in the sense that they did not need to engage in seasonal migrant labor in India to meet their households' subsistence needs whereas more than sixty per cent of the households in Simbang needed to send one or more members to work in India to survive. However, they did not belong to the richest category of people in Simbang. The richest category consisted of six households, exclusively of Brāhmans and Tāgādhāri Chetris (the two

highest caste groups), had houses and substantial amount of farmland in the Tarai (southern plains) area, in addition to those in Simbang.¹⁸ In fact, historically, most of the lands in and around the village belonged to these Brāhmans and Tāgādhāri Chetris. The last few decades, however, have seen a gradual transfer of lands from these high-castes to the members of middle and lower castes through purchase, creating smaller landowning households, although as I have also indicated, a majority of them were not able to produce enough to feed themselves from their own land.

The three men were all Matwāli Chetris, the medium and most numerous caste group in Simbang, and did not possess any land outside of the village.¹⁹ This meant that these three men lived in Simbang all year round, in contrast to both those who had to go *kamāune* ('to earn') in India and those who spend part of the year living in the Tarai to look after their properties there. This was a condition, I think, that favored these men to be more actively involved in all areas of the village affairs.²⁰ I became very close to two of these three men, whom I will call Indra Bahadur and Dar Bahadur. As I have already noted, they were in their mid-forties when I met them. They were well established and respected leaders of Simbang. In addition to occupying a medium place in terms of economic status, they were also medium in generational terms. Even among those who were not very rich, some of the younger generation, especially those with long years of formal education, tried to avoid physical labor, including farm works. Indra Bahadur and Dar Bahadur, in contrast, were among those who were 'not afraid of work' (*kām dekhi darāundainan*). In their views, one should avoid buying grain from the market unless it was absolutely necessary—that is, unless you could not get enough to eat from your own land and from working as a sharecropper. The act of buying grain with money, for them, signified a state of poverty. In contrast, some of the younger people with regular cash income, such as from working as schoolteacher or working in government offices, did not hesitate to buy rice from the market.

Among the things they organized in the village were communal work projects, such as, to repair village paths before major festivals such as Tihar in the autumn, in order, they said, for Laxmi, the goddess of prosperity to enter the village easily. Indra Bahadur and Dar Bahadur also organized major singing and dancing events. Among the most popular dances they took initiative in planning and organizing was the *Sorathi*

dance. Indra Bahadur and Dar Bahadur were themselves skilled singers and dancers of Sorāṭhi. According to older people, the dance was introduced to Simbang village in the mid-1950s, when about 20 Simbangis collectively learned the dance from the gurus from another village. Sorāṭhi quickly replaced other dances as the most popular dance in Simbang. A performance of Sorāṭhi required a large drum, a lead singer, at least about fifteen chorus singers, three dancers, and elaborate dresses for the dancers. The performing troop typically included members from almost all the caste groups represented in the village. Although the performers were all male in the case of Sorāṭhi, almost the entire village, both women and men, showed up to watch and enjoy the performance.²¹⁾

From the point of view of development professionals, such as those of community development (CD) practitioners, a performance of Sorāṭhi as I just described, may appear as a 'community event' [cf. Fujikura 1996]. However, there are some differences between what some CD practitioners might imagine as a community event celebrating the values of CD, and the Sorāṭhi dance event. For one thing, in the old days at least, attendance at a Sorāṭhi event was not voluntary. Particularly on the occasions of Sorāṭhi performance in front of the house of the *mukhya* ('village headman') on the prescribed day of the year, each household *had to* send at least one of its members to attend the performance. Otherwise they were fined. Also, in terms of its contents, Sorāṭhi was not about the celebration of communal work or 'development'. Instead, the Sorāṭhi songs sang about the creation of the world, the transitory nature of life, and flirtatious exchanges between Lord Krishna and his lovers. Still, Indra Bahadur and Dar Bahadur would have been recognizable, to a community development worker approaching the village, as leaders (or 'natural leaders' in the CD terminology). The stories from their lives that I relate below, have to do in part with being *recognizable* as leaders *both* to the local society *and* to the wider world in the age of development.

2.1 Indra Bahadur

Indra Bahadur was born around 1950, and is the eldest of four brothers. His father, Ram Prasad, had learned how to read and write from a local Brahman who used traditional Hindu religious texts in his teaching. Indra Bahadur, in contrast, was among the first people in Simbang to go through the national education system. Since there was no school in Sim-

bang when he was growing up, Indra Bahadur had to walk two-and-a-half hours to get to the school in the district capital. In fact, he would go to school only at the beginning of school seasons and at examination periods, and study at home by himself the rest of the time. Of course, during this time, he also worked in the fields and carried out other domestic work and remained one of the most important source of labor in the household. After over ten years of studies, he became the first person in Simbang and the surrounding villages to pass the School Leaving Certificate (SLC) exam.²²⁾ Despite his disadvantages, he passed the SLC with better scores than most students from the district capital. When he passed the SLC, he had already been married and had a daughter. After passing the exam, he became the headmaster of the newly established primary school in Simbang, the school which was built utilizing a fund provided to the district from the national government on the occasion of King Mahendra's visit there.

However, after three years, he lost this position. There was a severe famine in the early 1970s and many households in the area were in desperate need of food. The interest rate for loans in the area, even when there was no famine, included such usurious rate as 5 percent per month. During the time of this famine, some large landlords profited enormously. In one case, often recited by local people, a landlord would agree to provide grains to those who came with a copper container. The landlord would provide the volume of grain that could be contained in the copper container. Those who received the grain had to give the copper container to the landlord in exchange. Some people in Simbang lost all their land and left the village due to the loans they took during the famine. Indra Bahadur, for his part, led a group of villagers down to the town of Nepalgunj in the southern Tarai plains. They brought with them ginger and other goods from the village in order to exchange them for grain in Nepalgunj.²³⁾ When they returned with grain after more than two weeks, they found out that Simbang's school management committee, led by a wealthy Brāhman, had decided to fire Indra Bahadur, citing his absence from school. Hearing about this decision, Indra Bahadur himself submitted his resignation letter to the management committee. He was replaced by a nephew of the Brāhman.

After this incident, Indra Bahadur decided to enter 'politics'. The Brahman who mobilized the school management committee against him, was

also a vice-chairman of the local 'Back-to-Village' committee, a local organ constituting part of the national 'Back-to-Village Campaign' (BVC). The BVC initiated by King Mahendra during the 1960s officially aimed at social mobilization for national development from the grassroots level. (According to the way the Brāhman later told me himself, the task of the local Back-to-Village committee was to make sure members or supporters of the underground Congress or Communist party did not enter the Panchayat political system.²⁴⁾ In his first political campaign, Indra Bahadur successfully replaced the Brāhman as the vice-chairman of the Back-to-Village committee. Indra Bahadur was neither a communist nor a Congress supporter. He entered politics in order to participate and thrive in the Panchayat system, the system instituted by King Mahendra on the thesis that political parties were neither suitable to Nepal's soil nor conducive to national development.

Indra Bahadur was indeed successful and was eventually elected as the *pradhān pāñca* (chairperson) of the village panchayat. Until this day, Simbang villagers talk of how dedicated and honest Indra Bahadur was as the *pradhān* during his tenure in the 1980s. (He is still referred to by many Simbangis as 'Pradhān'). There is an almost unanimous agreement that he was an effective *pradhān*. Many villagers credit him for successfully lobbying the government to construct a suspension bridge where it connected Simbang to the paths leading to the bazaar and the motor-road, rather than at the originally planned location. Perhaps more important than what he accomplished, in many people's minds, was *how* he worked. While it was customary for many *pradhān pāñcas* to ask payments for their services-e. g. accompanying and assisting villagers in their dealings with the government officials, mediating disputes, organizing collective work such as the maintenance of village paths-Indra Bahadur never asked for such favors. His house was always filled with visitors asking his help and advice. In addition to a herd of almost a hundred goats, he raised rabbits, so that he could always offer meat to his guests. Many villagers recount with fondness that Indra Bahadur was a rare *pradhān* who lost a substantial amount of his wealth during his tenure.

During the early days of my stay in the village, Indra Bahadur would visit me and tell me about his life. On the first of these occasions, he mentioned the fact that his youngest brother had been elected to the post of the treasurer of the district committee of a large NGO a few days ago. In-

dra Bahadur himself had also recently won a seat in the District Development Committee. He said his family had always been leading and serving other people. He told me he was a *pradhān pāñca* whose good work for the people was recognized by King Birendra, who decorated him with a medal of honor, and showed me a photograph of him being endowed the medal from the King himself. He also spoke of the fact that he was the first person to pass SLC in the village; and that he was one of the first people in the village to go through vasectomy. At the time of the vasectomy, he had two daughters and a son. The son, the youngest among his children, was two years old then. He would tell me that back then (in the late 1970s) people did not know the importance of family planning. "They were all afraid of family planning. I was one of the first to do family planning (*parivar niyojan garne*). I showed an example. Now people understand. Now so many people have done family planning."

2.2 Dar Bahadur

Dar Bahadur also told me about his vasectomy along with other achievements in his life. Dar Bahadur was born in the early 1950s. Dar Bahadur's family possessed substantial amount of land that they cultivated themselves, so that they did not have to worry about their subsistence at all. However, as a teenager, he did once go to work in Himachal Pradesh in India, because all his friends were going there. He said he could not forget how hard the work was and how hungry he was in India.²⁵⁾ Although Dar Bahadur quit going to school after fifth grade he told me, he was an innovative person, a leader in the village. He began growing hybrid potatoes, onions, corn, etc., when he was only 14. He received certificates from the government as a progressive, model farmer. He was invited to observation trips and training programs on new agricultural techniques. In the year 1990, when he was in his mid-thirties, he began growing Japanese white radish (*aokubi-daikon*) in his irrigated field to sell their seeds. "Everyone said it was a stupid thing to do," he said. At the time, people only grew rice and wheat in the irrigated field. "No one knew the 'system' (he used the English word) for growing radish seeds." However, in that first year he was able to earn three thousand rupees from the sales of radish seeds. The next year, three other people also grew radish in their irrigated fields and Dar Bahadur earned six thousand rupees. In the third year, Dar Bahadur organized a group of

thirteen radish growers in the village to sell the seeds collectively. Dar Bahadur was the chairman of the group. The group opened its own bank account, and made an agreement with a seed trader. That year, each member of the group earned twelve thousand rupees. The next year, each member earned twenty five thousand rupees. However, in the third year, the group was cheated by a trader from outside the district. A lengthy and ultimately unsuccessful lawsuit ensued. The group disbanded and members began to grow and sell seeds on individual basis. According to Dar Bahadur's estimate, so many people in Simbang have followed his example in growing radishes in the irrigated fields that, in the year 1999, as a whole, Simbang earned between 300,000 to 400,000 rupees from the sales of radish seeds.

Dar Bahadur also told me he was proud to be one of the first residents of Simbang to become active in establishing a branch of an NGO which ran literacy classes and other community development programs in his district in 1993, and was elected the district committee chairman of that NGO. He has been re-elected many times since then and continues to be the chairman of the district-level organization, which consisted of about twenty-five hundred members as of 2003.

At the time he went through the vasectomy operation, along with Indra Bahadur and another person from Simbang, he was 25 years old and eight years into his marriage. He had two sons. The elder one was 2 years old, and the second son was only 25 days old at that time. Dar Bahadur said, "Back then, no one knew about family planning. Everyone was scared. So I showed an example. Three of us became the model. Now, many people understand. Now, so many people in this village have done family planning." Indeed, there are fewer men who have gone through vasectomy operation in the adjacent village, further into the hills and away from the road. People in Simbang say that the difference is due to the fact that "our village is more advanced, and here, people understand (*kurā bujichan*)."

2.3 The Work of Mourning

After my conversations about vasectomies with Indra Bahadur and Dar Bahadur, I asked Ram Prasad, the father of Indra Bahadur in his late 60s, why people in Simbang were reluctant to have the vasectomy operation initially, and then why people started having operations:

Well, in the older days, you would have ten children and two or three would survive. Also, you know, well, doing family planning operation means, that you are making a man into, well, a *khasī* [i. e. 'castrated goat']. There used to be a *jāt* [caste] who worked for the rajas. They were the people who carried palanquins for the queens. Those people were like *khasi*. So if we did family planning, we said our *jat* will drop [down to the status of the palanquin carriers].

Then, Durga, a village family planning worker and daughter-in-law of Ram Prasad, interjected, "They used to say that there won't be fruit from mourning." Ram Prasad said, "Yes, yes. We used to say that, too."

Among these people, who consider themselves Hindus, mourning of the deceased parents is the responsibility, primarily, of the sons. That is why, in the first place, people need to have a son. The son's work of mourning helps the deceased parents in their difficult journey to the other world [Chalaune 2000].²⁶ A castrated son's mourning may not be effective, may not produce the fruit that is needed for the deceased parents. This was the concern. As to the reasons for this concern, other people later explained to me by saying that you do not offer *khasī* to a god (or the deceased), because *khasī* is a damaged animal. You need to offer an animal that is whole. The same may be said for a sterilized person. Offering of a person who lost the integrity of his body may not be appropriate. The loss of *jat* by doing things that is only proper for the palanquin carriers can also be understood in relation to the performance of mourning. In a funeral, people who carry the body of the dead to the place of cremation need to be people of the same caste [Chalaune 2000]. The requirement of the integrity of the body of the mourner can be understood as referring more concretely to the specific integrity of the body of a given *jāt*.

Given these concerns, older people in particular, understandably, objected to their sons' having vasectomy operations. But younger people started to have operations anyway.

"What happened to those dharmic concerns?" I asked Ram Prasad.

"[People's] thinking has changed" Ram Prasad simply said.

As I later thought about this conversation, the change narrated there appeared remarkable. The concerns expressed over vasectomy seemed to me to engage particular and fundamental issues about the maintenance

and reproduction of individual and caste bodies. Why was it overcome? In my subsequent conversations with other people-including those who underwent vasectomies, who included Thagadhari Chetris and members of lower castes-they recalled that in the late 1970s, some people in Simbang spoke not only about vasectomy's consequences on mourning rituals, but argued that any ritual would have to stop in the households with castigated men. Many had also heard that a person who goes through vasectomy would not live more than 20 years after the operation; and that the operation will weaken the body so much that the person would not be able to engage in hard labor. Indra Bahadur repeated to me that all those opinions were baseless, and that by undergoing the operation himself, he *showed* that they were *indeed* wrong. I also learned from him and others that it was the officials from the Department of Health who, towards the end of the 1970s, informed the people of Simbang and surrounding villages that there was going to be a 'free vasectomy camp' in the nearby bazaar, and that they would really like to see many villagers show up. Indra Bahadur and two others were responding to that request.

Dar Bahadur, on the other hand, added that he had seen the difficulties faced by poor households with large family members. Especially, in this day and age, he said, you cannot just have children, you also have to send them to school. He also told me that when he went through his operation there was a special provision for those who underwent sterilization after having only two children. The children would receive free education up to the tenth grade. Indeed, Dar Bahadur's elder son enjoyed free education up to the tenth grade, although the younger son stopped going to school at the fifth. But the important thing, Dar Bahadur added, was that he wanted to show others that there was nothing to be afraid of, and that everyone should 'do family planning'. After their operations, Dar Bahadur and Indra Bahadur continued to engage in hard physical labor. They also continued to perform and participate in all the rituals and no one stopped them from doing so. Others began to go through vasectomy operations too, and the topic ceased to stir any debates. To illustrate how the operation had become so common place, and dissociated with any sense of fear, a number of Simbangis related to me the following story. Whoever goes through a vasectomy operation is given one hundred rupees in cash from the government, officially to help the person cover the cost of purchasing simple medical supplies for preventing post-operation infections. Once, a

sixty-year old Simbangi man who had no wife went through the operation just because he wanted the cash. (In the area in the late 1990s, a chicken weighing one kilogram cost around one hundred rupees, and a bottle of homemade liquor around fifteen rupees.)

As we can see, Dar Bahadur states clearly that he saw a number of benefits in undergoing vasectomy: free education for his children and avoidance of difficulties associated with having a large family. Also, both Indra Bahadur and Dar Bahadur already had sons. But how could they be certain that the operation would not have consequences on the effectiveness of their mourning rituals? I believe neither they, nor those who opposed them, could have been perfectly certain, because it was something new, about the vasectomy's moral consequences on oneself and the others. I have come to think that the argument about vasectomy that took place a couple of decades ago in the village was not something that was to be resolved solely through logical debates, or weighing of costs and benefits-not the least because no one could have been certain about its costs.²⁷

Stacy Pigg's work that we discussed earlier alerts us to add that by making the leap and having vasectomies done, Indra Bahadur and Dar Bahadur made claim to a position from which they could describe others as being backward, superstitious, and ones 'who don't understand'. Notice that in this scenario, the rationality manifests itself *in the act* of 'doing family planning', and not in the prior deliberations on whether or not to do it. This is because (as we saw earlier) in the dominant discourses of family planning, any deliberation that does not result in 'family planning' is irrational. However, if we were to conclude by saying, simply, that Indra Bahadur's and Dar Bahadur's moves were aimed at gaining symbolic or material capital, or at upward mobility, I believe we will miss important aspects of their actions.

Indra Bahadur and Dar Bahadur were asked by the health officials to 'lead the way' for other villagers in undergoing vasectomy. Indra Bahadur and Dar Bahadur (as well as others in Simbang who comment on them) describe their having vasectomies as *exemplary* acts-i. e. acts aimed at providing an 'example', at becoming a 'model' (*namuna*) for others to emulate. As we saw earlier, in their accounts of their lives, vasectomies are recounted as one of many exemplary acts they performed in their lives-e. g. going to school, experimenting with new farming technologies, and getting involved in electoral politics. In this sense, the meaning of family

planning for Indra Bahadur and Dar Bahadur is very different from that for Kedar Sharma's fictional characters Bimal and Bimala. Sharma argued that family planning was a private matter, to be decided according to the couple's own private feelings and preferences. In their narratives, Indra Bahadur and Dar Bahadur are urging that family planning for them was not solely a matter between husband and wife—because, an *exemplary* act is an act oriented towards *others*, and an example exists for others, beyond itself.²⁸

Indra Bahadur often described his engagement in politics as stemming from his desire to serve others [*sewāko bhāvanā*]. In this vein, becoming the first to go through the vasectomy operation was also a form of *sewā*. In my view, Indra Bahadur and Dar Bahadur were aware that 'doing family planning' would serve as a means for them to be recognized as 'ones who understood' by the powerful others outside the village, in the same way that school education or adoption of new agricultural technologies did. However, I do not believe they were simply aiming to *differentiate* themselves from other villagers, as Pigg suggests. Rather, I would take their words seriously, when they say they underwent vasectomy operations so that *others too will 'understand'*.

To be sure, I am not here arguing something like purity or goodness of their intentions emanating spontaneously, as it were, from the bottom of their hearts. The notions of being progressive and of being models for others, they *learned* from existing discourses, just as they learned how to sing and dance Sorathi, or how to perform mourning rituals, from others. Laura Kunreuther has recently argued that development discourse has become an important "mediating discourse" in Nepal, in the sense that William Mazzarella defined the term in his discussion of cultural industries in India and elsewhere [Kunreuther forthcoming; Mazzarella 2003; 2004]. Mazzarella described "the social processes of mediation" as "the places at which we come to be who we are through the detour of something alien to ourselves" [2004: 356].

The fact that Indra Bahadur and Dar Bahadur, in relating major achievements in their lives to me, a visiting Japanese student, chose to speak about their schooling, family planning, and adoption of new agricultural techniques, but not Sorathi dance, may be indicative of the pervasiveness of development discourses in Nepal that Pigg points to. (I came to know their superb dancing skills by living in the village and watching

them dance, and not by being told by them.) Laura Kunreuther, in her analysis of the letters sent to an FM radio program in Nepal by the listeners describing their 'life stories', highlights how those letters regularly employ the rhetoric of 'gaining' or 'raising awareness'.²⁹ She argues that those letters are "evidence of how people's personal stories can *mean something* in a public world by maintaining a semantic link with the dominant social discourses of development" [Kunreuther forthcoming, emphasis original]. What I am suggesting here, in agreement with Kunreuther, is the role of development discourses in shaping the sense of self and its relation to others. That role, I argue, is not limited to instigating differentiation and strategies for upward mobility. This is to say that the effects of development are more pervasive than suggested by Pigg's analyses. That is, ideas and practices of development participate not only in the constructions of social difference, but also of networks, solidarity and sense of obligation.

Before concluding this section, I should like to add a note which in part underlines that the association between the enlightened leadership and vasectomy, described above, was a historically contingent one. Durga, the female family planning worker in Simbang I mentioned above, told me that vasectomy was a much safer and preferable contraceptive measure than female sterilization or depopovera. I had myself had several occasions in which I heard women complain about what they perceived as side-effects of continued use of contraceptive injections, and that they wished their husbands had gone through vasectomies.³⁰ Durga's husband underwent vasectomy operation after they had two sons and a daughter. However, she also told me that she would not have had her husband go through the operation had she known well then (about six years before) about the variety of contraceptive methods she came to learn after going through a training to become a family planning worker. She observed that it was predominantly the poor and less educated people in the village who go through vasectomy operations these days. The more educated among the younger generation manage through combinations of variety of non-permanent methods. In retrospect, she said, her husband's operation was unnecessary.

3. Conclusion

As Arjun Appadurai has argued, the process of becoming a competent local subject, always a process under conditions of anxiety and entropy, faces added challenges with the tremendous disjunctive effects of modern nationalism [Appadurai 1996: 178-199]. The act of undergoing vasectomy for Indra Bahadur and Dar Bahadur, I have suggested, was an in-stance among many others in their lives, in which they sought to become moral and responsible agents recognizable by both the living villagers and their ancestors, as well as in the eyes of the state and other agents of development. Unlike Stacy Pigg's 'cosmopolitan villagers', Indra Bahadur and Dar Bahadur are not trying to dissociate themselves from the 'village'. Their 'awareness' does not entail for them the desire to live comfortably in Kathmandu, or in America. As we have seen, they were proud to be cultivating their own land and producing their own subsistence. Dar Bahadur's radish farming, of course, was done *in addition* to his subsistence farming, and did not reflect his intention to *turn himself entirely into* a commercial farmer. When going through vasectomy operations despite objections from the elders, they nonetheless intended to remain fully loyal to their ritual obligations. We can thus regard their actions as efforts to create conjunctures and combinations in the face of disjunctive pressures. Their efforts to construct coherence, new conjunctures and alliances can be occluded, I have argued, by an exclusive focus on dichotomizations and politics of differentiation.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to Genevieve Lakier, Seira Tamang, Pratyoush Ohta, John Kelly, Arjun Appadurai, Mary-Jo Good, Melinda Pilling and two anonymous reviewers for JJASAS for their helpful comments and incisive criticisms on various earlier versions of this paper. Remaining errors and shortcomings are mine.

Notes

- 1) On how the globalization theories displace older boundaries and units in social theory including the division of the world into three, see Kelly [1998], cf. Pletsch [1981]. For an important critical intervention which traces the construction of the Third World through the discourses of development and modernization, see Escobar [1995].

- 2) In borrowing the title of Chatterjee's book [2004], which maintains, among other things, radical social, cultural and political differences between the elites and masses in 'places like India', I hope I will not be mistaken as claiming that city dwelling elites and transnational professionals are never the targets of government. They also *are* the targets of government, pedagogy and discipline. What I describe in this paper are the particular ways in which rural Nepalis have become targets of development interventions, and how they have responded to them.
- 3) In one place, Pigg suggests that the objectifying logic of development is easy for the Nepalis to adapt to because "the notion that some people are inherently more 'developed' echoes Hindu concepts of caste superiority" [1993: 54].
- 4) Sushma Joshi's 'My Friend Sangini: Women's Bodies in Population Control,' [Joshi 1999] was originally published in *The Kathmandu Post*, 12 July 1998 and reprinted in *Re/productions* 1-1, pp. 83-84 (April 1999).
- 5) In officially adopting family planning as part of government policy, King Mahendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev declared, in 1965, "In order to bring equilibrium between population growth and economic output of the country, my government has adopted a policy of family planning" [Tuladhar et al. 1978: 2]. Although the first major organized governmental program was called the Nepal Family Planning and Maternal and Child Health Project (FP/MCH), the health component of the project-as it was clearly understood by the Nepali planners as well as the USAID, which supported the project-was there to facilitate "greater acceptance" of family planning, with the ultimate goal being a "decrease in the birth rate" [Skerry et al. 1992: 140].
- 6) The 'incentive system' was introduced in 1982 wherein health workers were rewarded by the government for meeting a set quota of sterilization acceptors [Thapa 1989: 47; Skerry et al. 1991: 333].
- 7) In translating the Nepali word '*nijī*' as 'private' here, I do not, of course, imply that 'private' is always the best way to translate '*nijī*'. The choice I made here is based on my interpretation that Sharma himself intends the word '*nijī*' to mean what 'private' means in English.
- 8) See, in particular, the concluding section, titled "Need for Activism," of Sharma's book [1997: 144-147].
- 9) Sharma writes "Whatever thoughts and behaviors prevailed in our forefather's time, in the modern age, everyone has understood that it is not good to have too many children" [1997: 31].
- 10) My aim here is not that of providing a comprehensive socio-economic account of a hill village. For such an account see, for example, Adhikari [1996]. On the shift away from a view of village as a bounded system in South Asian studies, see Cohn [2000 (1971): xiii-xiv].
- 11) -The tax was collected every year before the end of the month of Baisak (which falls around April and May). *Jimuāl* or *mukhyā*, appointed from among the locals by the tax office, collected taxes from their assigned areas. According to Regmi [1999: 84] the tax collection system in this area during the 19th century was that of *thehtithi*. Under this system, "the village com-

munity as a whole represented by the *mukhya*, and not the *mukhya* in his individual capacity, was held liable for the full payment of the revenue." Correspondingly the assessment of taxes was made with the entire village as a unit and not the individual households. This resulted in more local control regarding the assessment and allocation of tax burdens among the households [Regmi 1999: 84-86].

- 12) The list was not exhaustive. For example the list did not include such major offices as the Forest and Cattle Service Offices, although description of these offices appeared in other sections of the Profile.
- 13) See Mazzarella [2003] for a study of advertisement of condoms in India. He argues, among other things, that the advertisement campaign for Kama Sutra condoms was effective in dissociating condom from the notions of civic responsibility and population control, and associating it with personal pleasure and fulfillment.
- 14) A data quoted by Shyam Thapa [1989: 48] from a 1986 survey shows that out of the 15.2 percent of married non-pregnant Nepali women who were using a specific method of family planning, 13 percent were using sterilization (female sterilization 6.8 percent; male sterilization 6.2 percent). Thapa notes that this excessively heavy reliance on sterilization is "a pattern of contraceptive method mix not common worldwide" [Thapa 1989: 46; See also Caldwell 1998: 6].
- 15) For a review of 'Women in Development' discourse, see Upadhyaya [1996]. For 'feminization of development', see Rankin [2001]. 'Family planning' is often included as an integral part of an intervention program aimed at *women*. An overall effect of this trend must be a feminization of family planning.
- 16) A 'household', as the term is used here, could consist either of 'nuclear' or 'joint' family. Being a member of a household (*ghar*) is marked by eating food cooked in the common kitchen of the household. When a member separates from a household and constitutes a new one, one of the first things it does is to construct its own kitchen. Around 1997, the household with largest number of members in Simbang consisted of 24 people. The smallest household consisted of two (i. e. husband and wife). What I am calling 'Simbang village' here encompasses two 'wards' in terms of local administrative divisions. A 'ward' is the smallest unit in the local administration and local self-governance in Nepal. Each village development committee (VDC) consists of nine wards. A five-member 'ward committee' (including the 'ward chairperson') is elected at the local elections.
- 17) The only woman in Simbang who went through sterilization did so after her husband, an educated person in his late-30s, refused to have vasectomy after they had four children.
- 18) The richest household possessed about 4 bighā of irrigated land in Simbang and about 16 bighā of irrigated land in the Tarai. 1 bighā is about two-thirds of a hectare. People in Simbang said 1 bighā of irrigated land in the area produced about 65 muri of paddy. 1 muri (a volumetric unit) is equivalent to about 50 kg of paddy.

- 19) A literal translation of 'Matwāli Chetri' is 'Drinking Chetris (Kshatryas)'. Conventional story is that they felt the status of Tāgādharī Chetri due to their habit of drinking, an act prohibited for the Tāgādharī castes. For an account of Matwāli Chetri see Prayag Raj Sharma [1971]. At one point in the year 1997 in Simbang the numbers of households by caste groups were as follows: Brāhman (5), Thakuri (1), Thāgādharī Chetri (38), Matwāli Chetri (83), Jogi ('ascetics') (17), Magar (30), Kāmi ('blacksmiths') (15), Sunār ('goldsmiths') (3), Sārki ('cobblers') (12), Damāi ('tailors') (1). For a general account of caste system in Nepal, see Höfer [2004].
- 20) Seasonal migration to India is also called *kālāpār* in this area. It literally means '(going) beyond death' signaling sense of extreme hardships and risks associated with such ventures.
- 21) There were other dances which involved female dancers and singers.
- 22) The School Leaving Certificate exam (SLC) is a standardized national exam taken at the end of the 10th grade. Passing of SLC exam is a condition for getting most of the government jobs, including the job as a schoolteacher. According to Stiller and Yadav [1993 (1979)], there were slightly over three hundred 'primary schools' in Nepal at the beginning of the 1950s. The first step towards creating "a uniform system of education for the whole country in place of the existing confusing variety of schools" was taken with the appointment of an Education Board in 1952 [Stiller and Yadav 1993 (1979): 225]. The National Education Planning Commission was appointed in 1954 in order, among other things, to create "a new system of national education that would (in time) be universal and free-at least at the primary level" [Stiller and Yadav 1993 (1979): 227]. At the beginning of the 1960s, there were about 4,000 primary schools, and by 1970, there were over 7,000 primary schools in Nepal [Stiller and Yadav 1993 (1979): 229]. On the construction and propagation of official nationalism through the national education system in Nepal, see Onta [1996].
- 23) In ordinary times too, before the construction of the motor-road, people in this area had to trek down to Nepalgunj once a year to obtain salt. Further back in time, before the 1940s, people in the area obtained salt from traders from the *north* who brought rock salt and exchanged them for paddy.
- 24) On 16 December 1960, after a decade of 'experiments' with parliamentary democracy, King Mahendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev assumed emergency powers and dismissed the Congress government. A new constitution was promulgated in 1962 based on the system of 'Panchayat democracy'. The new government was composed of the king and a tiered system of the village, district, zonal, and state panchayats or elected councils. "According to Mahendra, the *panchayat* system and the kingship were the traditional forms of government in Nepal; these two political institutions were especially suited to promote unity and development in the Nepali context. All sovereignty, however, was vested in the kingship, and the *panchayats* were granted only an advisory function in the government of the kingdom" [Burghart 1984: 119-120; cf. Burghart 1994].

- 25) Typical work that Simbangis engaged in India included. I was told, work at construction sites and work in apple farms and potato farms.
- 26) Sher Bahadur Chalaune, who is from the area and holds BA in Nepali Culture wrote Chalaune [2000] based on his interviews with elders and ritual specialists in the area, and gave me a copy of the manuscript.
- 27) See, for instance, an educational booklet explaining sterilization operations, published jointly by the National Health Education, Information and Communication Centre and UNFPA. It contains a chart showing a list of "Wrong opinions prevalent in society about Laparoscopy" and "Answers" to them. (Interestingly, there is no such chart regarding vasectomy in the booklet.) First among the wrong opinions listed reads " [One will] accrue sin, [one] cannot bear children in another life" and the answer to that opinion reads, simply, " [One] does not accrue sin" [Rāṣṭriyā Swāsthā Śikṣā Sūcānā tathā Saṃcār Kendra and UNFPA, n. d.: 11].
- 28) I borrow this formulation from Derrida [1994].
- 29) For more on discourses about 'awareness' in Nepal, see Fujikura [2001b] and Ahearn [2001].
- 30) I did not ask any women in the village to tell me about their views on, or their practices of, family planning, since I felt those questions might be inappropriate. I listened to both general and specific comments by women relating to family planning as and when the topic came up in daily conversations. In addition, by invitation from Durga, I accompanied her as she visited groups of women in different hamlets in the VDC to discuss topics relating to children and maternal health and family planning. She told me about her personal views and experiences with family planning during our walks to and from those visits.

REFERENCES

- Acharya, Bidan, 1996, "Family Planning: Concepts and Issues", in Bal Krishna K. C. (ed.) *Population and Development in Nepal Vol. 4*. Kirtipur: Central Department of Population Studies (CDPS), Tribhuvan University, pp. 133-143.
- Adhikari, Jagannath, 1996, *The Beginnings of Agrarian Change: A Case Study in Central Nepal*. Kathmandu: TM Publication.
- Ahearn, Laura, 2001, *Invitations to Love: Literacy, Love Letters, and Social Change in Nepal*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Appadurai, Arjun, 1996, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Asad, Talal, 1992, "Concepts of Western Civilization", in Christine Gailey (ed.) *Dialectical Anthropology: Essays in Honor of Stanley Diamond*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, pp. 333-351.
- Burghart, Richard, 1984, "Formation of the Concept of Nation-State in Nepal", *Journal of Asian Studies*, 44-1, pp. 101-25.
- _____, 1994, "The Political Culture of Panchayat Democracy", in Michel Hutt (ed.) *Nepal in the Nineties: Versions of the Past, Visions of the Future*. Delhi: Ox-

- ford University Press, pp. 1-13.
- Caldwell, John C., 1998, "The Global Fertility Transition and Nepal", *Contributions to Nepalese Studies*, 25 (Special Issue on Fertility Transition in Nepal), pp. 1-8.
- Chalaune, Sher Bahadur, 2000, (in Nepali) *Hāmro samājmā antesṭi saṃskār (Funerals in Our Society)*. Unpublished manuscript.
- Chatterjee, Partha, 1998a, "Community in the East", *Economic and Political Weekly*, 33 (6), pp. 277-282.
- _____, 1998b, "Civil Society and the Forms of Governmental Power: Extensions to Mandant's Arguments", *Political Power and Social Theory*, 12, pp. 253-258.
- _____, 2001, "On Civil and Political Society in Postcolonial Democracies", in Sudipta Kaviraj and Sunil Khilnani (eds.) *Civil Society: History and Possibilities*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 165-178.
- _____, 2004, *The Politics of the Governed: Reflections on Popular Politics in Most of the World*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Cohn, Bernard S., 2000 [1971], *India: The Social Anthropology of a Civilization*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Derrida, Jacques, 1994, *Specters of Marx: The State of Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*. New York: Routledge.
- Dikṣit, Kanakmani, 1997, (in Nepali) "Prakāśakiya" ("Publisher's note"), in Kedar Sharmā, *Ādhunikatāśāga Sāwadhān: nayā sarsāmān, praviḍhi ra vyavahārharule swāsthya ra janajāvanmā parekā asarharu (Beware of Modernity: The effects of new goods, technologies and behaviors on health and people's lives)*. Lalitpur: Himāl Kitāb, pp. iii-iv.
- Escobar, Arturo, 1995, *Encountering Development: Making and Unmaking of the Third World*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Ferguson, James, 1994, *The Anti-Politics Machine: "Development," Depoliticization, and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Fujikura, Tatsuro, 1996, "Technologies of Improvement, Locations of Culture: American Discourses of Democracy and 'Community Development' in Nepal", *Studies in Nepali History and Society*, 1-2, pp. 271-311.
- _____, 2001a, "Emancipation of Kamaayas: Development, Social Movement, and Youth Activism in Post-Jana Andolan Nepal", *Himalayan Research Bulletin*, 21-1, pp. 29-35.
- _____, 2001b, "Discourses of Awareness: Notes for a Criticism of Development in Nepal", *Studies in Nepali History and Society*, 6-2, pp. 271-313.
- Hofer, András, 2004, *The Caste Hierarchy and the State in Nepal: A Study of the Mulki Aim of 1984*, second edition. Lalitpur: Himal Books.
- Joshi, Sushma, 1999, "My Friend Sangini: Women's Bodies in Population Control", *Re/productions*, 1-1, pp. 83-84.
- Kathmandu Post, 2001, "Population Quandary", *The Kathmandu Post*, 13 July - 2001, Editorial page.
- Kelly, John D., 1998, "Time and the Global: Against the Homogeneous, Empty Communities in Contemporary Social Theory", *Development and Change*, 29-4, pp. 839-71.
- Kunreuther, Laura, forthcoming, "Voiced Writing and Public Intimacy on Kathman-

- du's FM Radio", *Studies in Nepali History and Society*, 9-1.
- Mazzarella, William, 2003. *Shoveling Smoke: Advertising and Globalization in Contemporary India*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- , 2004, "Culture, Globalization, Mediation", *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 33, 245-367.
- ODI, 1999, *What Can We Do with a Rights-Based Approach to Development? Briefing Paper 1999 (3)*. London: Overseas Development Institute (ODI).
- Onta, Pratyoush, 1996, "Ambivalence Denied: The Making of Rastriya Itihas in Panchayat Era Textbook", *Contributions to Nepalese Studies*, 23-1, pp. 213-254.
- Pigg, Stacy Leigh, 1992, "Inventing Social Categories Through Place: Social Representations and Development in Nepal", *Comparative Studies of Society and History*, 34-3, pp. 491-513.
- , 1993, "Unintended Consequences: The Ideological Impact of Development in Nepal", *South Asia Bulletin*, 13-1 & 2, pp. 491-513.
- , 1995a, "Acronyms and Effacement: Traditional Medical Practitioners (TMP) in International Health Development", *Social Science and Medicine*, 41, pp. 47-68.
- , 1995b, "The Social Symbolism of Healing in Nepal", *Ethnology*, 34-1, pp. 17-36.
- , 1996, "The Credible and the Credulous: The Question of 'Villagers' Beliefs' in Nepal", *Cultural Anthropology*, 11-2, pp. 160-201.
- , 2001, "Languages of Sex and AIDS in Nepal: Notes on the Social Production of Commensurability", *Cultural Anthropology*, 16-4, pp. 481-541.
- Regmi, Mahesh C., 1999 [1978], *Thatched Huts and Stucco Palaces: Peasants and Landlords in 19th Century Nepal*, reprint edition. Delhi: Adroit Publishers.
- Pletsch, Carl, 1981, "The Three Worlds, or the Division of Social Scientific Labor, ca 1950-1975", *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 23, pp. 565-590.
- Rankin, Katherine, 2001, "Governing Development: Neoliberalism, Microcredit, and Rational Economic Woman", *Economy and Society*, 20-1, pp. 18-37.
- Rāstriyā Swāsthā Śikṣā Sūcanā tathā Saṃcār Kendra and UNFPA, n. d., (in Nepali) *Saṃcārīk bandhākarāṇa sevā* (Voluntary Sterilization Service). Kathmandu: Rāstriyā Swāsthā Śikṣā Sūcanā tathā Saṃcār Kendra/UNFPA.
- Scott, David, 1999, *Refashioning Futures: Criticism after Postcoloniality*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Sharmā, Kedār, 1997, (in Nepali) *Ādhunikatāśāga sāuvadhān: nayā sarsāmān, pravīdhi ra vyavahārharule swāsthya ra janajīvanma pārehā asarharu* (Beware of Modernity: The effects of new goods, technologies and behaviors on health and people's lives). Lalitpur: Himāl Kitāb.
- Sharma, Prayag Raj, 1971, "The Matwali Chhetris of Western Nepal", *The Himalayan Review*, 4, pp. 43-60.
- Sherry, Christa A., Kerry Moran, and Kay M. Calavan, 1992 [1991], *Four Decades of Development: The History of U. S. Assistance to Nepal*, 2nd printing. Kathmandu: USAID/Nepal.
- Siller, Ludwig F., and Ram Prakash Yadav, 1993 [1979], *Planning for People*, 2nd printing. Kathmandu: Human Resources Development Research Center.

- Tamang, Seira, 2001, Women in Democratic Nepal: Still the Politics of 'Developing Women'. Unpublished manuscript.
- Thapa, Shyam, 1989, "A Decade of Nepal's Family Planning Program: Achievements and Prospects", *Studies in Family Planning*, 20-1, pp. 38-52.
- Thapa, Shyam, and Matthew Friedman, 1998, "Female Sterilization in Nepal: A Comparison of Two Types of Service Delivery", *International Family Planning Perspectives*, 24-2, pp. 78-83.
- Tuladhar, Jayanti M., B. B. Gubhaju, and John Stoeckel, 1978, *Population and Family Planning in Nepal*. Kathmandu: Ratna Pustak Bhandar.
- Upadhyā, Shizu, 1996, "The Status of Women in Nepal-15 years On", *Studies in Nepali History and Society*, 1-2, pp. 423-453.