

Nepalese Society : Liquor and Culture

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According to the Hindu rule of social stratification, the people of Nepal are divided into four main categories - the Brahmins, the Kshatriyas, the Vaisyas and the Shudras. The first two come to the higher echelon and are supposed to perform the duties of the priests and protectors respectively. The Vaisyas are supposed to handle the trade and business affairs. The remaining group is to provide manual services to the higher ones.

The population of Nepal is approximately fifteen million having different ethnic groups like the Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Newars, Tamangs, Gurungs, Magars, Thakalis, Rais, Limbus, Thamis, Sherpas, Satars, Dhimals, Rajbansis, Darais, Hayus, Dhangars, Manangbas, Lapas, Baragaunles, Damais, Kamis, Sarkis, Chepangs, Rautes, Musalmans, and others.

The Tibeto-Burmese speaking Mongolid people like the Sherpas, Manangbas, Lopas, Rais, Limbus, Tamangs and other Bhotiyas live in the mountainous region of North, North-East, and North-Western part of Nepal. The mid-mountain population is composed of Indo-Aryan speaking people like the Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Newars, Damais, Kamis, Sarkis, Gurungs, Magars, etc. Among the indigenous ethnic groups of Tarai, the Southern part of

Nepal, the Tharus, Satars, Rajbansi, Dhimals possess dominant position.

So far as the climate is concerned, there is an alpine climate at altitudes of between 8,000 and 16,000 feet. The climate of the lower part of the Himalaya 3,500 and 7,000 feet, is cool temperate to warm temperate. The altitude of Southern Nepal is approximately 1,000 to 2,500 feet above the sea level and the climate is warmer than the middle and higher parts of Nepal.

The country is constitutionally declared as Hindu State though Buddhists and Muslims have their own values but have similarity, too. The nation has followed the principle of religious tolerance.

Though the caste system has not been constitutionalised in the country, yet its nature is still in vague. Under the present context, the people of Nepal can be categorised broadly in two groups - *Tagadhari* (Holi-Cord-Wearer) and *Matawali* (alcohol drinker). The *Matawali* groups can be classified further in two categories based on thus caste heirarchy i.e. *Panichalne* (touchable or water acceptable) and *Paninachalne* (untouchable or water unacceptable). The *tagadhari* (generally orthodox)

groups do not take food at the kitchen-⁴hearth of the lower caste groups (*panichalne* and *panikachalne*) of Nepal. So far as the culture of the people is concerned, one never hated the other culture. As a result of this, every ethnic culture is existing independently.

Generally the orthodox Brahmins and Kshatriyas are recognized as *Tagadhari* group as well as non-alcoholic drinkers of the country. Alcohol is strictly tabooed in their community. There are some Kshatriyas called 'Matawali Chhetris' who have settled in the Karnali region of far western Nepal, are permitted to take liquor by their culture. Those ethnic groups, who drink liquor and brew at their own home by applying, their traditional technological method of distillation, fermentation and filtration are called Matawali groups of Nepal. But in general term, a matawali is he who is traditionally recognised as habituated alcoholic intoxicant of the society. In one side the Orthodox Brahmins and Kshatriyas take it as a profane act, but, in other side, the matawali groups have taken it as an integral part of their culture.

So far as the man, liquor and culture is concerned, firstly the 'Man' can be defined as a reasoning/religious/social/speaking and talking animal who creates pleasure and suppresses pain for the mind that is inseparable from his body. Man was created to be happy and home brew was undoubtedly part of the plan.² Home brewed liquor can be used as 'alcohol' or alcoholic beverages, any of various potables, including beer, distilled liquor, consisting of a solution that contains alcohol (usually ethyl alcohol, called grain alcohol), an intoxicating substance resulting from yeast fermentation of sugar or starchy materials. Anyway, the liquor, which is made at home by traditional, is call homebrewed liquor. But, the word 'alcohol' 'drink' or 'liquor' is

also used in terms of 'home brewed liquor' in same paragraphs of this article. Society is composed of men and the way which they behave is their culture – the whole social tradition.

In some languages, as in English, the very term 'drink' takes on the connotation of drinking alcoholic liquor.³ Thomas Trotter was the first man who presented the thesis on drunkenness for the degree of doctor of medicine at Edinburgh University in 1778 A.D.⁴ Now-a-days it is studied by ale-specialists, Chemists, Psychiatrists, Psychologists, Sociologists and Anthropologists.

A lot of work have been done by different anthropologists and sociologists in different aspect of ethnic groups of Nepal. But no ale-anthropological research work is done intensively on this particular aspect of the Nepalese society.

Anthropology 'The Science of Man' – is concerned with every behavioural aspect of human groups. Regarding to the different aspect of human groups, ale-anthropology is that discipline, which studies on man, alcohol and culture. I, therefore, determined to study on homebrewed liquor and its social, cultural and religious function towards the man's social system in the ethnic cultural context of Nepal under social anthropology.

The study is done in the Thakalis and Gurungs of Naundada and Ghandrung area of Kaski District, the Sherpa and the Tamang community of Solukhumbu district, Rolwaling and hilly region of Dolakha district, some villages of the Newars of Kathmandu Valley, and some ale-houses of proper Kathmandu City. Rest of that, some information is taken from different individuals belonging to the different ethnic communities. The information is collected from participant and non-partici-

pant observations and unstructured interviews supported with some photographs. The synchronic study is supported by diachronic also.

I hope, this framework on home brewed liquor among the Matawali groups comprises various ethnic groups of Nepal, would certainly be helpful for the planning makers, administrators social workers and social thinkers or social scientists to understand in a better manner, the importance of 'liquor' under the shade of their cultural pattern.

The difficulty is that once a man starts drinking he becomes addicted to it and goes on increasing its quantity, which has a very harmful effect both on the individual as well as the society.⁵ That is why, from the view point of health, it is rejected by many people in the world. Though the liquor has become a crutch for millions of persons and an indispensable necessity for hundreds of thousands of others.⁶ These characteristics have made alcohol controversial from ancient times. Religious leaders and heads of states have either banned it or permitted its use. The Roman Catholic or the Protestant Church does not object to a man drinking alcohol, yet he is permitted to have one wife only ! Islam, on the other hand, very wisely prohibits alcohol but compensates men by permitting four wives.⁷

Thus drinking in a particular society may be either a sacred or a profane act, depending on the context, and the people may not be aware of the basic principles and meanings that are actually involved.⁸ Hence it is useful to ask what the form and meanings of drink in a particular group tell us about their entire culture and society.⁹ In connection with this matter, for example, among the Kofyar of Northern Nigeria, "People make, drink, talk and think about beer." In the religious sphere, the Kofyar certainly believe that man's way to god is with beer in hand."¹⁰ This is what

Mandelbaum has taken it as cultural artifact : the form and meanings of drinking alcoholic beverages are culturally defined, as are the uses of any other major artifact.¹¹

So far as its uses is concerned, those who favour of the use of alcohol generally advocate (a) moderate use of alcohol with meals does not interfere with health or length of life, (b) its medicinal effect, and (c) use in moderate dose is not intoxication. While its opponents point out that (a) morbidity rate of drinkers is higher than that of non-drinkers, (b) its medicinal effect is not so important, while it is a habit forming drug which is both depressant and narcotic in its effects upon the human organism, and (c) even its moderate use causes intoxication. Some truths appears to be on both sides.¹² Anyway it may be tabooed : it is not ignored.

As regards alcoholic intoxicants cultures are of three kinds; those using fermented liquors, those using both fermented and distilled liquors, and those getting along without any.¹³ Levi-strauss writes, "there are, finally, certain incompatibilities which are consciously maintained by the social group and which possess a normative value : hot food/cold food; milky drink/alcoholic drink; fresh fruit/fermented fruit, etc."¹⁴

Liquor in Ancient Period

The ancient civilization itself the people were very much familiar with 'drink'. The alcoholic fermentation of grain to produce beer as has been practised for thousands of years in many centuries. The earliest records of brewing coming from Egypt where a drink called "hequ" or "hegup" was brewed.¹⁵ Regarding to its date this goes back in Egypt and Mesopotamia, at least, five thousand years quite likely six thousand.¹⁶ Actually the history

of brewing goes back 10,000 years to ancient Egypt almost to the beginning of agriculture. The art of brewing was known to the ancient Greece and had established itself 2,000 years ago in Britain, for it was discovered and appreciated by the Roman invaders in 54 B. C.¹⁷ It was more common in the northern countries of Europe where corn will grow but not the vine. In these countries it was usual drink with meals for many centuries before the introduction of tea or coffee.¹⁸

Liquor in Hindu Civilization

Its origin might be questioned in Hindu civilization. If we trace back to the Vedic civilization (C. second millenium B. C.), there were two kinds of drinks called *Soma* and *Sura*. *Soma* was used to offer to the gods and goddess whereas the *Sura* was a secular drink.¹⁹ It shows that even Vedic people also were not unfamiliar with home brewed liquor. Among the ancient Iranious, an intoxicating drink called *Haoma*. (in the Aucsta) was very likely the same thing as *Soma*.²⁰

In epic period, people used to take it as food for recreation, for example, the sage Bharadujaja offered it to Bharat and his soldiers. It is also written that Rama "embracing Sita with both his hands made her drink pure Maireya wine even as Indra makes sachi drink nectar.²¹ According to Balmiki Ramayana (Uttarkhanda, Sarga-42, slok 19-20), so many Apsaras, Nag-Kanyas, Kinnaris, and other beautiful ladies were intoxicated by drinking alcohol and showed their dance to Ramachandra.²² The Mahabharat mentions how Baladev, Krishna, and Arjuna indulged in drink in the company of their wives, sisters, and daughters and how queen like, Sudeshna used to quench their thirst wine.²³ The above mentioned texts show that the drink was taken as an important recreational food

particularly in the higher classess of the latter Vedic society.

According to the Kautilya's Arthasastra (4th C. B. C.), it is known that the people of Mauryan period consumed it very much. He has mentioned in his book about various kinds of drinks.²⁴ Some of which are *medaka* (beer made from rice), *asava* (wood apple wine), *maireya* (a kind of liquor made from raw sugar, pepper, and the bark of the meshasringa tree), and *sahakarsura* (mango spirit).²⁵

In ancient Europe and in Vedic period, there was no beer made from rice. At that time corn was popular in European countries and barley and wheat was popular in Vedic society. Since the time of Kautilya, among the home brewed liquors, rice beer gained more popularity in the middle classess of the society. One of the most important drink (wine) was *maireya* which was used only by noble families. But, coming to the Mauryan period, even foreign drinks were also imported at the court of the Mauryan Empire. It comes to our notice from the history of king Bindusara, the son of Ashoka.

In the Gupta age (circa 3rd to 7th C.A.D.) ladies of the rich families were specially charmed with drinks and taking from the mouth of the husband was a fashion.²⁶ Vayu and Matsya Puranas and the Ajanta Paintings also confirm the luxury of taking wine by the ladies.²⁷ Brhaspati however advised ladies to avoid drinking of their husbands were away.²⁸ Manu also has given ample opportunity to drink alcohol only for Shudras.²⁹

Liquor in Tibet and China

In the early period, home brewed liquor was unknown to the Tibetan people. According to Bell, a Chinese princess, who got

married with a Tibetan king in seventh century A. D., brought local beer with her to Tibet as a part of her dowry and so it was taken as a means to show hospitality. This shows that the Chinese were acquainted with liquor before the Tibetans. Anthropologist Paul gives a somewhat different opinion about the source of its origin to Tibet. According to him, beer was first used by Guru Padmasambhava in Tibet. After him, the Tibetan made it their practice to use it as an offering to Guru Padmasambhava.³¹ There is another legend among the Sherpas of Solukhumbu that the Tibetans were once engaged in building the Sammya monastery but as they were unable to complete it, they were being harassed. Padmasambhava, at that time, saved them from harassment by sprinkling drops of beer towards the incomplete monastery as an offering and gave the people to drink beer as offering (prasad). Then only, the people of Tibet were able to complete the building. From then onwards the Tibetan and the other Tibetan type of Himalayan people drink beer as a blessing of the Padmasambhava.³²

Liquor in Ancient Nepal

In regard to the Nepalese context, Jha has tried to show the common practice of wine drinking habit in ancient Nepal. In order to prove it he has taken the word 'paniyagosthi' from Lele inscription of Shiva-dev I and Amsuvarma dated 526 and the word 'karanapuja' from Pashupati inscription of Jayalambha dated 413 and Patan Gairidhara inscription of Narendradev dated 83. According to him, the word 'paniyagosthi' probably speak of the organizations which arranged for wine drinking at least on ceremonious occasions.³³ Besides this he has written that very cold climate of the country would have necessitated the people to take wine with which the Lichhavis and the Guptas were

closely associated even before their migration to Nepal and which has great consumption specially in the valley even now-a-days.³⁴ Regmi, Vajracharya and others are not of this opinion. The word 'paniyagosthi' means a kind of organization which provided either drinking water for the travellers or for irrigation.³⁵ So far as the word 'karanapuja' is concerned, Vajracharya says that the meaning of this word is 'naimittikpuja'³⁵, which does not indicate the sense of wine worship rather it should be occasional worship for festive occasions. The opinion which is opened by different scholars, does not reflect whether the people of ancient Nepal were known or completely unknown to technique of distillation, fermentation and filtration. The sources of ancient history mention that the Kiratas, Shakyas, Koliyas, Lichhavis, Mallas, Ahirs, Abhir Guptas, Pundris were the main inhabitants of Nepal. Due to the commercial trade, some people were related with Tibet and some of them were related with India. At that time the drinking pattern was already flourished in China, Tibet and India. Then how Nepalese people could remain without it in such a climatic zone? Rather, it can be said, due to the influences of Smriti-karas, some groups may not have used it.

Liquor in Medieval period

Father Ippolito Desideri a medieval traveller through Nepal, gives some information about the drinks. He mentions about the Nepalese context that people drink with water a pungent liquor made from certain millet which grows in this country and is one of the staple foods of the poor people.³⁷ A kind of beer is also made from wheat or rice and a drink called *arac* is distilled from raw sugar.³⁸ In this context Regmi has also described a kind of liquor which was used by the people of Medieval Nepal. According to him the fermented drink was known as *thon*, while the distilled variety was called *yela*. It might be the same

drink *urac* mentioned by Desideri and was used in Northern part of Nepal and Tibet. Vajracharya says that the word *thon* (Newari term of beer) is clearly mentioned in Gopal Raj Vamsavali.³⁷ Anyway, since early medieval period it is gaining more popularity in the various ethnic society, considering as social food and religious offering.

Liquor in Modern Period

In the modern Rana period, Mulki Ain of 1854 divided the Nepalese caste groups into five categories as follows:

- (i) Tagadhari (wearers of holi-cord).
- (ii) Namasinya matawali (non-enslavable alcohol drinkers).
- (iii) Masinya matawali (enslavable alcohol drinkers)
- (iv) Paninachalnya choichitohalnu naparnya (impure but touchable castes).
- (v) Paninachalnya choichitohalnu parnya (impure and untouchable castes).

The above mentioned first three hierarchical caste groups are recognised as pure castes (Chokho jat) or 'Water acceptable' and rest of the two different groups are recognized as impure castes or 'Water unacceptable castes'⁴⁰ Later on Rana Prime Minister Sri 3 Maharaj Chandra Shumsher (1901-1929 A. D.) abolished the term 'masinya' and 'namasinya' of Mulki Ain of 1854. Anyway, since that time people started considering the alcoholic people as a lower group of the society. Besides it, those who used to drink liquor, automatically would have lost their social prestige also. This sort of assumption has rooted till now in the Brahmin's and Kshatriya's society generally in the rural areas of this country.

Alcoholic Phases of Nepalese Society

The concept of 'matawali and non-matawali' considering the intoxicating (liquor intaking) nature of different ethnic groups of Nepali society, in the past, seems to be vague under the present context of the society. Because the people of all the ethnic groups, belonged to either matawali or non-matawali groups, are facing tremendous changes in the socio-economic, religious and cultural spheres of their life pattern. As well as, the introduction of some new type of intoxicating liquors to the people are affecting differently to the different ethnic groups; which also creates a confusion in having a clear cut idea of the 'matawali and non-matawali' concept under the present context of the society.

The mobility of a considerable number of people of each ethnic group, irrespective to its belonging to matawali and non-matawali towards the consumption of modern liquors from traditional liquor (homebrewed liquor) as well as so-called non-matawali to matawali group is also equally responsible to create the problems for the social thinkers to understand the social structure of the Nepali society according to the liquor intaking habits and its effect on the society.

So a new concept of matawali and non-matawali is an urgent need of time. Instead of considering the ethnic groups/castes to define the concept of matawalis and non-matawalis it seems to be more appropriate to classify those people according to their economic standard and social status as well as willingness towards their rites and rituals. Furthermore, the type of drinking, which also reflects the socio-economic, religions and cultural position, required a consideration for the classification of those people who use to take liquor.

At present the people of existing Nepali society consume three types of liquor prepared by three different techniques. One is traditional liquors which are brewed at home, and have socio-cultural and religious importance, and commonly known as *jand* and *rakshi* or *madira* in Nepali language. While second type of drinks manufactured at local Distilleries by applying modern technologies which are known as Egrand Earl, Khukri Rum, Ruslan Vodka, Snowland Gin, Three Lions Whisky, Sree Special and Eagle and Star Beer, and the third types of drinks include Scotch Whisky, Brandy, Sherry, Liquor, Gin, Vodka, White Wine, Red Wine, Champagne and Beer, imported and have no socio-cultural and religious value.

Considering the importance of brewed liquors in socio-economic, cultural and religious spheres of the life of the Nepali people and the main objective of the study the Nepali society can be divided into three phases- Core, Marginal and Fringe.

The core group comprises the people who are religiously orthodox, economically weak, socially depressed and have low level of aspiration, almost zero degree of literacy and consume the home brewed liquor. They are commonly known as matawali groups and can be placed in the core of the Nepali society.

The marginal phase of the both Nepali society represents by the people (matawali and non-matawali) who are comparatively less orthodox, economically well-being, socially acceptable and have better level of aspiration and rate of literacy, consume the second type of liquors manufactured by Nepali distilleries.

Those people (generally non-matawali), who are at the top level of economic ladder, religiously liberal, possess high social status,

high level of aspiration, easily influenced by Westernisation and Modernisation, delineate the fringe phase of the society.

So the group who represents the core phase of the society can be termed as 'traditional drinkers' while those who represents marginal phase can be termed as 'situational drinkers' and finally, representors of fringe phase may be called as 'recreational drinkers.'

Taboo

Alcohol is tabooed in the Brahmins and Kshatriya's society. Manu has allowed to drink wine only for Shudras. The wine which is distilled from sugar, from the blossoms of the Madhuka, or from flour, these three kinds of spirituous liquor have to be discerned; as one or so are all none of them must be tasted by the twice born.⁴¹ Again, distilled from the blossoms of the Madhuka tree, from malasses, from the fruits of the Tanka tree, of the jujube tree, of the date tree, of the bread fruit tree, from wine grapes, from Madhuka blossoms, Maireya and the sap of the coconut tree: these ten intoxicating drinks are unclean for a Brahmins.⁴² Thus the Brahmins as a rule are expected not to drink wine. The drinking of spirituous liquor is condemned by Chandogyan Upanishad. But sometimes, people, unknowingly, drink alcohol, are not recognised as sinner. The Mahabharat (Shantiparva, 34) however mentions some exceptions to the above general rule. "One who has drink spirituous liquor unknowingly or for the sake of saving his life from serious illness under the advice of a physician can get rid of his sin by some purificatory ceremony."⁴³ It is possible that liquor was supposed to have an invigorating effect, this is further confirmed, by the fact that other two Varnas, the Brahmins and Vaisyas, both of whom are associated with more mental and less

physical work strictly abstain from liquor as a cultural ideal.⁴⁴ The anathemas with regard to drinking affected the Kshatriyas and Vaisyas but slightly as many kinds of drink were allowed to them and they too did not fail to indulge in them.⁴⁵ Although the Kshatriya is a high or twice-born Varna and the Shudra, a lowest, both are associated with physical exertion. Anyway, people of ancient Hindu society, had followed certain rules and regulations in cultural context as such. Besides that, it also can be known that certain facilities were given to the people respectively. It is written even in the Buddhist Texts like Tundila and Padapusalamanava Jatakas. As it is mentioned there drinking is indulged especially as festive occasions. Such as the Matanga and Dhammadhoja Jatakas also mention about the occasional excessive drinking habit of the kings.⁴⁶

As time past by, people of the higher group dominated to the lower group and also made a strict social rules and regulations. In connections with this matter feeling of caste defilement or 'defilement by touch' has deeply rooted in the society. In Nepal, this sort of system was practised up to the time of Rana period (1846-1951 A. D.). Then the Mulki Ain of 1963 (2020 B. S.) avoided this sort of rule of the society.

So far as the liquor and *Jutho* (eating or drinking repeatedly from the same pot by different people) is concerned, different communities have different system of it. In Brahmin's and Kshatriya's society *jutho* is regarded as impure element of the Hindu little tradition. In their family, a husband is not permitted to take *jutho* from his wife. But there is no restriction for wife to take *jutho* from husband. In the Sherpa community, it has played an unique role for their clan recognition. The system of drinking by sharing from the same

cup relatively indicates that they belong to the same status socially endogamous groups or *khadiku* in their term. Some of them prefer to call it as *phurmilne* (*juthomilne*). According to the Newars, *jutho* drink makes intoxication. Now-a-days there is no feeling of *jutho* in the young circle at all. If they have close friendship with each other do not hesitate to share the same cup from each other at the same time.

Anyway those Brahmins or Kshatriyas who drink too much, are negatively called as *jandyana* by their neighbours. Though it is pervading day by day and use to take it either openly or secretly. That is why the matter of taboo is gradually desolating in the young Brahmin and Kshatriya boy's circle of the society.

Various types of Home Brew

There are mainly three varieties of local fermented and distilled drinks like *jand*, *rakshi* and *tongba*. These three kinds of drinks are purely brewed at home and used in different ethnic communities. The name of fermented local beer and distilled local wine is culturally and linguistically different from one ethnic community to another. The local beer which is known as *Chhyang* among the Sherpas, *nurya* among the Tamangs, Sherpas and Thamis of Bigu, Simigaon and Rolwaling area of Dholakha district, *ji* among the Tamangs of Nuwakot-Rasuwa and Timalpur area, *thon* among the Newars, *phes* among the Thakalis, *jand* among the Kiratis, *toyangpa* among the Gurungs, *baski* or *muna* among the Majhis, and *janra* among the Tharus. Likewise, the distilled drink *rakshi* is known as *arac* among the Sherpas, Tamangs, Manangis, Lopas and other Tibetan type of Himalayan people, *Kilop* among Thakalis, *pa* among Gurungs, *aila* among Newars and *madh* among the Tharus. *Daru* is common word for *jand* and *rakshi* in Southern

Nepalese societies. The *tongba* type of drink is more popular in Limbu society of Eastern Nepal. Bista has written in the context of *tongba* that every man has a large wooden mug which is filled on occasion with thick millet beer and drink through a bamboo tube.⁴⁷

Chhyang a sweet, thick and potent liquid is frequently brewed from wheat, barley, maize.⁴⁸ *Thon*, at once, cannot be said that it is sweet, thick, fine and potent liquid beer. The Newars have various way of techniques of brewing the *thon* and they have given different names to it. *Thon* is brewed from rice is called *ti thon*, *Kahani thon* from maize and *Chhongu thon* from wheat. *Ti thon* is generally brewed on the occasion of festivals and other ceremonies. Anyway, it is common among the Newars. Most of the Newars do not prefer *Chhongu thon* and *kahani thon*. According to them, *kahani thon* is a sweet drink but it may spoil very soon. Then its taste also changes to bitterness. So the Newars do not want to brew it from maize. It is only brewed in Kirtipur in the month of March-April. At that time people shall be working in the field. According to the Newars of Kirtipur, this type of beer gives them refreshment, likewise, *chongu thon* or *chhoyu thon* also is not brewed in so many villages of the Newars. In their opinion this type of beer causes headache. If they feel headache, then, they will not be able to work in the field. Very few Newar farmers use to take it only on the occasion of the transplantation and harvesting season.

On average 115 kg. hulled rice per year is used to brew liquor in each Newar family while, among Sherpas of Solu (110 kg.), Khumbu (160 kg.), Bigu (140 kg.), Simigaon (140 kg.), Rolwaling (160 kg.) usually wheat or millet and sometime rice or maize is used. The Tamangs on average 80 kg. grain a year use to brew the beer. But as well as people of Tharu community are concerned the quantity of grain (about 400 kg.) is considerably more.

So far as the Newar beer is concerned, Gajurel and Vaidhya has divided it into four categories : white *jand*, red *jand* (*hyaun thon*), *kata thon* and *bhyavar thon*.⁴⁹ White *jand*, which is mentioned by Gajurel, is generally known as *ti thon*. It seems white, thin, fine and potent. The Jyapooos of Urban area make beer which is known as *pya thon*. It is thick, heavy, not fine, untasty, strong and brown in colour. The beer brewed by the Newars of Kirtipur is called *kat thon* and *bhya thon* is popular among the Newars of Bhaktapur.

In the first fraction, the liquid which comes out from the grain, is known as *moti thon* or *ningu thon* among the Newars and *ningar* among the Sherpas. The Newars use to brew the next type of beer which is known as *hyaun thon*. But, now-a-days most of the Newars do not brew it due to the scarcity of *hakuwa* rice (rice which has been covered with earth kept hot for some days, and then threshed.)

According to their belief, there will be no lightning or thundering, if they could keep even a single drop of *hyaun thon* at their home. Even it is offered to the gods and goddesses. Most of the rural Newars use to keep it at their home for their preventive cure. *Hyaun thon*, a tasty, red and stronger is taken out of the first fraction as *moti thon*.

Pya thon, the next type of Newar beer, is only served to the workers at the time of transplantation and harvesting season. To prepare this beer grain, beaten rice and *Chhokmana* (yeast made from wheat) are mixed in a fixed proportion of 2:1:1.

Brewing of beer

Different communities have different type of techniques of distillation, fermentation and filtration for the preparation of local wine and beer. Though the grains may be same but the method of fraction and the stuff also differs.

among different communities. Even the quality of the wine and beer is also different from one place to another and one community to another. Various methods are adopted by different communities in different places to check the taste of the prepared liquor, for instance: by smelling, drinking or pouring, etc.

So far as the brewing method is concerned, in order to prepare *moti thon*, approximately 6 litres of water is poured to the 7 kg. boiled rice from which they get nearly 3 litres of *moti thon* usually after a week. *Maghe thon* is quite popular in Tokha village, four miles north of the Kathmandu city. This is brewed in the month of January. It is more intoxicating than *ti thon*. According to them, one *batka* (peg) of *maghe thon* is equal to four *batka* of *ti ton*. *Ti thon* is their common beer which is served to the guests, own family members and it is made for ceremonial purposes also. It is quite thin, white, tasty and not so much strong. But *maghe thon* seems brown, thick, strong and potent. According to their belief, in the month of January and February, the beer becomes more tasty, strong and do not spoil early because water seems to be more pure or sacred in these months. On the full moon day of *Magh* (Jan-Feb), pure or sacred water is distributed to the each household of the village in Tokha to prepare the *maghe thon*, which is rarely practised in other villages of the Newars. (Plate No. 1 A)

In the first process of brewing the liquor, the grain is wet for four hours. This is known as *Jakiphoyagu*. Four hours after it, the grain is kept in *potasi* (big earthen pot, ghyampo in Nepali, which has many holes on the bottom and the top portion is opened). Under the *potasi*, there is kept one *phosi* (a big copper-vessel) full of hot water to boil the grain. When it is supposed that grain has partly boiled usually after two hours it is taken out from the hearth and then the

grain is taken out from the big earthen pot. At the same time the grain is washed from water and again the same process is followed. When it is supposed that the grain has completely boiled then it is dried on the *mala* (mat). It takes about one hour to cool down. Then after a small piece of *hyangba* (burning charcoal) and *malta* (chilly) is kept over the grain to protect it from the evil sight of the strangers. They call it 'mikha waneyagu'. It is a popular belief not only among the Newars of the Kathmandu Valley but also among the Sherpas of Solukhumhu and the Rai-Limbus of the Eastern Nepal. So far as the burning charcoal is concerned, Gajurel and Vaidhya has written that the charcoal has a chemical energy and it can absorb the gas cleaning the grain.⁵⁰ Anyway, after keeping charcoal and chilly, yeast is also mixed with grain. If the beer is going to be prepared from 4 kg. of grain, a piece of 50gms. yeast, which costs about 50 pice, is mixed with the grain. After mixing the yeast, the grain is kept into the top floor of the house for fermentation. Its duration is six to eight days, then after a peculiar smell comes out of the grain. After eight days, the grain is put into a *tyapa* (big earthen pot) and the *tyapa* is covered either by banana leaves or leaves of *sal* tree.

Again the mouth of the *tyapa* is sealed up either by dry hay or some clothes to make it air-tight. This process is called *pokatinegu*. Then, the grain is called *haja* in the Newar community, *Ium* among the Sherpas and *mapp* among the Tamangs. Then after four or five days water is poured in it. This process is called *la tayagu*. After six hours of *la tayagu* the liquid changes into beer which is called *thon moyagu*. In order to filter it *ba* (a cane basket) is put inside the *tyapa* and the liquid is taken out of the grain by aluminium bowl.

If the beer is made from millet, wheat

For maize, the process of brewing is, to some extent, different from above-mentioned process. The wheat, millet and maize, is not wet and just stewed in *potasi*. Then after, the same process is followed up. In the last stage the grain like *haja* is taken out and it is rubbed either by one hand or churned by stick. Then it is kept for six hours for separation of liquid from solid. The Newars of Kirtipur make a kind of beer which is called *kata thon*. The process of brewing of liquor, firstly it is dried on the fourth day of a fort night, according to Hindu Lunar Calender, of August. It goes on till eight days. This process is called *manasui*. When the grain seems dry, it is grinded and then it is boiled on. When the whole grain is completely boiled, it is taken out from the hearth. After that the grain should be completely cool. According to them, if the grain is slightly hot, its taste becomes sour. Some portion of chilly is already kept in the previous process. After cooling the grain, some portion of yeast and *hakuwaye boji* (beaten rice from hakuwa rice) is added to the grain. This is the process of brewing *kata thon*.

In the first fraction, the liquid which is taken out from the pot, is called *moti thon*, in the second fraction, the liquid which is taken out from the pot is called *ba:ta thon*. After taking *ba:ta thon* from three to four times, there remains juiceless solid. The last stage of grain changes into pure solid non-juicy part, called *kat* or only *ka*. Most of the Newars, except Salmis, do not want to use it. Generally it is given to the cattles. But the Salmis make a special variety of food along with bone marrow of buffalo, which they call it *kakwa*. So far as the *bhyavar* type of beer is concerned, it is recognised as one of the lowest quality of the drinks. Generally the liquor, which is not filtered from solid, is called *bhyavar thon*. The

water is poured into the grain and all the grain is churned by churning-stick. Then the stuff changes into thick liquor i.e. *bhyavar*. It is generally served to the workers of the field.

In the Newar community the pot, where the filtered beer is put inside it, is called *soma*. Shanti Surav has opined that the word *soma* is related with Vedic *soma* (drink).⁵¹ How he related this word with Vedic *soma* cannot be said anything about this opinion. They have another type of ritual pot which is called *anti*, in which the distilled local wine is put. Their traditional drinking-pot is called *salincha*. Generally local wine is drink from *salincha* whereas the local beer is drink from *batka*. *Salincha* is made of terracatta whereas the *batka* is made of aluminium. The Sherpas use to call it *kai*, which is made of wood and now-a-days they drink from bowl also. But that is also said *kai* in their language *dabaka* among the Rais, and *badha* among the Tamangs.

So far as the Sherpa brewing method is concerned, they make beer and wine from wheat, barley, millet and rice. In order to brew *chhyang* in the first stage, the grain is kept in a *fungsir* (copper vessel, *phosi* in Newari term) during boiling it they do not like any visitors because, according to their belief, an evil sight might contaminate the whole thing. After boiling, the grain is spread over a *sorang* (granary made of malingo; a kind of cane) to dry it. A small piece of the yeast is mixed with the grain at the stage and a piece of *metak* (burning charcoal) is also kept. Some Sherpas use *marchi-simu* (Chilly flower) instead of *metak*. If it is not done, they fear that evil-sight might spoil even before maturing. So secrecy is maintained to keep it unspoil. After drying the grain it is put into a *rongzyung* (a basket

made of bamboo, *thunse* in Nepali) and is covered with *bulu* (rhododendron sprigs). The whole thing is covered with *Chhera* (cloth made of core-hair) for fermentation and is kept for three to four days till a peculiar smell comes from the grain. It is called the *lum*. When the grain changes into *lum*, it is kept in a *dom* on *dojyung* (a kind of wooden vat) and the mouth is sealed to make it air-tight. It is then pressed with a grinding stone. This is done to keep the *lum* from spailing. In this way the *lum* can be kept for about six to seven months. During this time the *lum* becomes quite strong. This is the last stage in brewing the *chhyang*. After this *lum* is put in a *chhapani* (a cane basket) which, in turn, is kept in a *sotum*, and the *lum* is then rubbed from warm-water between palms. The liquid which carry out is known as *Chhyang*. Similarly, *ningar* is brewed. This is the name for better quality *chhyang* and is used in connection with certain ceremonial like wedding. It is thinner liquid and seems different in colour from *Chhyang*. Thus the Sherpas brew liquor applying by their own traditional technology.

Hurya, a kind of beer, is used in North hilly region of Dolakha District of East Nepal. It is used by the Sherpas, Thamis, Tamangs and others of Bigu to Rolwaling area. It is made from maize, millet, and sometimes wheat also. It is too thick, brown, tasty heavy, and not enough strong. Firstly, the flour is parched in *handi* at hearth and it is boiled for some minutes. When it is boiled, then the boiled flour is spread out of the hearth. After that some portion of yeast is mixed with it. After two days it is put in big terracotta pot. After fermentation of the boiled flour, people start drinking. (Plate No. 1 B)

Yeast Manufacturing Tradition

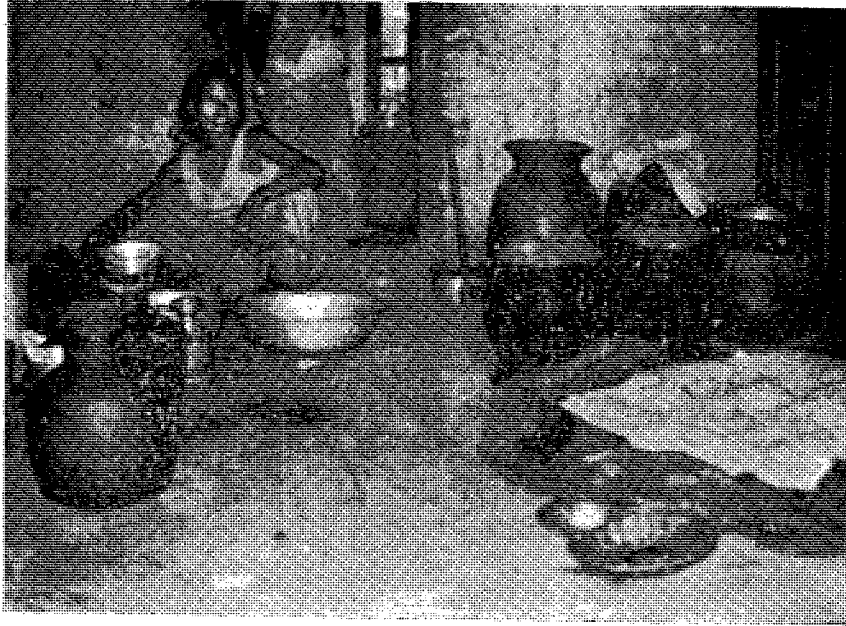
Yeast is used for fermentation of the

grain. It is an indispensable element for the preparation of wine and beer. As people came to know the technique of distillation, fermentation and filtration so yeast was also manufactured by them. It can be taken as one of the material cultures of the matawali societies of Nepal. "The products of man's technical knowledge are frequently called artifacts of material culture."⁵²

People understand the environment and exploit the nature for their survival. By knowing it, they manufacture yeast by applying their own traditional technology not only for the purpose of fermentation but to develop alternative sources of income. One manufactures yeast and other make beer.

The yeast is known as *marcha* in Nepali, *mana* or *manapu* among the Newars, *Phapp* among the Sherpas and *brama* among the Tamangs. There are two different kinds of *mana* in the Newar community. One type of *mana* is made from rice which is known as *kimana* and the second type of *mana*, made of wheat is known as *Chhomana* or *Chhongu-man*. In some parts of the Eastern hilly region, it is made from millet flour. In order to prepare the yeast, a kind of plant is necessitated. The plant is called *mana-wasa* among the Newars of Lunvu, , *ranhabing* among the Tamangs, and *khenba* among the Sherpas of Solukhumbu. (Pl. No. 2 A)

The technique of preparation of Yeast was studied in Lunvu, a Newar village four miles East of Patan. The Rajthala, one of the Newar groups, make it and sell in and around of the Kathmandu Valley. Their main occupation is yeast manufacturing. According to them, firstly the yeast plant is dried and then dust of leaf is prepared, After that the rice is wet till two hours. When it is wet, then the rice is grinded at water-mill. After doing this, some portion of old piece of yeast



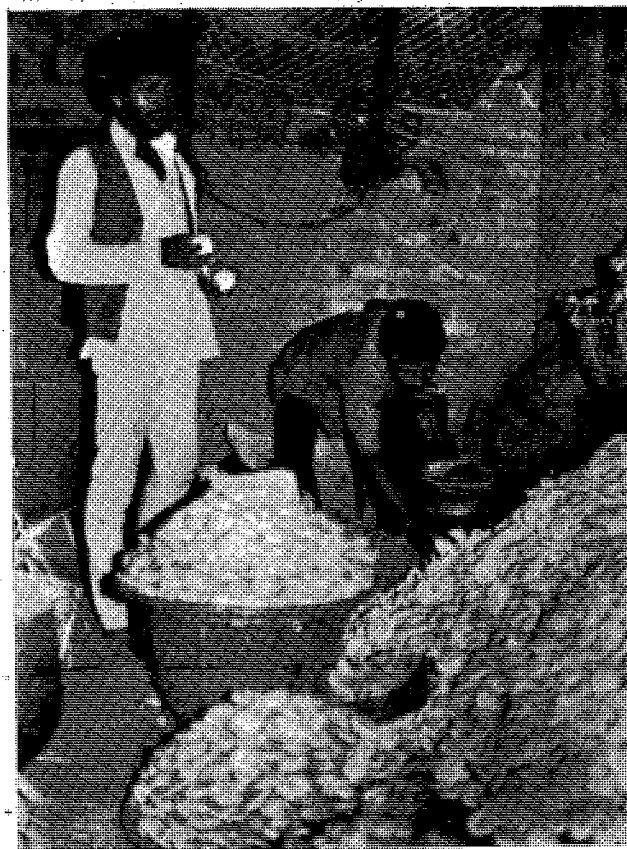
(A) The Newar liquor brewing materials



(B) A Tamang woman is filtering Hurye



(A) A Yeast-plant



(B) Yeast pile in Lumva village



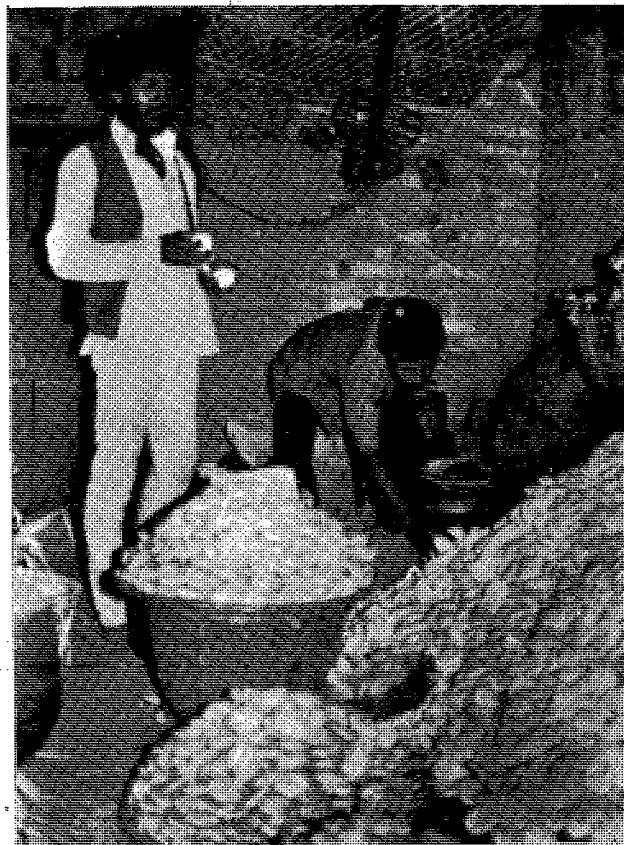
(A) The Newar liquor brewing materials



(B) A Tamang woman is filtering Hurye



(A) A Yeast-plant



(B) Yeast pile in Lunvu village

and yeast plant dust mixed with floured rice and finally it is dried in sunrays, This is the process of *kimana* preparation. (Pl. No. 2 B.)

Chhomana is made from wheat and yeast plant. It is generally used for the brewing of *kata thon* and somewhere it is used for wine distillation. Most of the people use *kimana* for fermentation of wine or beer. Obviously, because the main crop among these people is rice not wheat. In summer season a less quantity of yeast is required for fermentation while, in winter season a little bit more yeast is mixed with grain.

The Role of Liquor in Society

People take it not only for intoxication but to perform sacramental rites and rituals—it is a must. So, their cultural as well as natural surroundings provide them ample opportunities to consume it. Which keeps them warmth provides energy and helps them to maintain social relation and their cultural heritage.

In the Sherpa community it plays a vital role during the settlement and other stages of marriage ceremony. It plays different role on different occasions and have different terminology. For instance, if some one is supposed to get arranged marriage groom's parents send a bottle of beer to the girl's parents which is considered as a token of marriage proposal. If the girl's father consents to the proposal, he drinks the *chhyang* brought by the boy's relatives. This is called *sodane* or *tizyang* means 'question beer'. The word *chhyang* or *jyang* is generally used by Sherpas for this fermented liquor although *jyang* or *Zying* has become vulgar. Like in the first process of marriage, *chhyang* is sent to the girl's house to fix the date for the wedding.

On this occasion people from both party drink and talk about the wedding day. This is called *pejyang*. When the wedding procession is about to leave for the bride's house, at that time too beer is given to the groom as a omen. This is known as *chhejyang*. When the procession reach at the bride's house, firstly the beer is served them as a omen to which they call it *surjyang*. Again it is served to them for their refreshment and warmth. This is known as *ngajyang*.

On the other hand the beer which is served to the deceased person near his corpse is called *kenjyang*. *Chhyanga* is the next rite which is performed during mourning. The beer which is served to the neighbours, is called *sabjyang*. At the end of the *ghewa* (mourning) rite, the mourners invite their neighbours for thanks giving. On that occasion the beer is served them which is known as *Jongjyang*.

Similarly when the villagers are engaged in any constructive work as fitting of water-tap or construction of road or bridge inside the village the beer which is served to the workers of the village called *corjyang*.⁵³ It is also served on such occasion in the memory of a deceased person.

According to Furer-Haimendorf, anyone who offends the rules is fined a *nawa* which should be paid either in cash or in the form of beer which is called *naajyang*.⁵⁴

A mason, on the completion of his work, deserves a reward of a bottle of beer or wine is given to him. Which is known as *sinjyang*.

If a son comes to his home after a long absence his parents celebrate his home coming with *dongjyang* or beer feeding ceremony.

If the Sherpas arrange any gathering for the purpose of merry making as singing, dancing and drinking to which they call it *dojyang* or *chhyang thung*.

A woman who is under birth-pollution is given a special beer which is known as *dejyang*.

The Sherpa businessmen take liquor after the settlement of business in a village within their community which they called it *chhongjyang*.

The Sherpas celebrate so many festivals during a year. On the occasions, liquor is the most essential for them.

A man who has to get some sort of working help, then he goes to request to somebody taking a bottle of liquor which is known as *yangji*. As Ortner writes, the strategy of *yangdzi* which initials softing up the hardness of others through gifts traditionally beer to gain their cooperation, *yangdzi* is based on assumption that the other will be resistant to one's request, and unmovable by purely moral/social appeals; hence need for the gift.⁵⁵

In the Rai community they also need it in different phase of their life. In order to get religious merit people use to provide shelter and shade. For this they construct a stone Chautara, rest-platform, erecting a wooden bench, planting the pipal trees in memory of their deceased men. On that occasion, they offer one party to their guests and serve different foods as well as alcoholic drings also.⁵⁶

In the Magar community liquor is recognised as one of the ingredient social foods for hospitality. After the fermentation of the grain, it is kept at home for three years by

the Magars of hilly region. If it is kept for a long time, it becomes quite strong and it produces a kind of maggot (*jandko kira* in Nepali). This maggot increases more and more by taking juice of the beer. That seems very thin and inside its body nothing is seen except the juice as well. The Magars generally use to mix it with water. According to Shros (Thapa) from the drinking point of view, one maggot is sufficient for six to seven persons regarding to the intoxication.⁵⁷

Anyway they also do not hesitate to keep good relation with the neighbours by serving liquor. If people could get this type of hospitality, they will be more happy than from other type of foods.

The Newars also take it as one of the important social foods for their life and culture. They have a numbers of fertivals, sacramental rites and rituals. On those particular occasions, many neighbours and guests use to visit at their home. At that time, if the liquor is not served to them, the dinner and dining will not be appreciated by the guests. In such a party, people take it not as a intoxicant drink but as a digestive food. They really need such type of food for their digestion. They, generally, prepare it on the occasion of festivals, *kaita puja* (bratabandha), marriage, Dasain, *kijapuja* (brother's day) and any other auspicious ceremonies except *Bhimaratharohona*. On the occasion of marriage, it is taken as an indispensable food for the purification of ritual. It (aila=wine) is given to the both bride and groom at canopy. At the same time they take it as men, which they call it *sabjanakegu*. Even it is not restricted to take at death pollution. According to their tradition, when the married daughters come to know the information about the death of any primary kin (father, mother, sisters, brothers, sister-in-law) and secondary

kin (gsand parents, uncles, aunts, etc.), they have to bring wine ginger and unrefined sugar to their natal home. It is served to the funeral processions after the cremation. The family members of the deceased person use to take it to remove their worriedness. Again four days after the death, they have to bring 2 kg. to 4 kg. beaten rice, bread and about one litre wine. It is given to the mourners. This is called *locha woyegu* or *bya woyegu*. So far as the marriage and upanayana is concerned, on that occasion too, the married daughters, nieces should bring egg, *hara* (a kind of bread), fish, wine, etc. as *sagun* (omen). This omen is given to the main person who perform the ritual. This tradition is called *chinpa theyegu*.

It is that drink which recognizes the actual kin among the Newars. In big dinner which they call *bho*, different members of the family serve different bods gradually and strictly. Liquor is generally served by women. It indicates that she is either married or unmarried daughter of the host. But the beer can be served by anybody.

After the wedding rite, at the time of welcoming to the bride at the house of groom, her foot is washed from three different type of drinks which they call it *bhaumacha lusakasa*.

Their hospitality is fulfilled by serving liquor. If some neighbours or guest take entrance then the husband orders his wife to serve liquor. According to the Newars of rural area, wine is served in the morning and beer is served at the day time. It is due to their traditional custom and unfamiliarity of tea. The Newars of Urban area do not prefer wine serving practice but prefer to serve tea now-a-days.

Though the Sherpas are fully acquainted with tea but they generally welcome to their guest by serving beer or wine. According to their social tradition, if someone could not offer beer immediately to the visitor he or she will be criticised by the villagers or guests. That is why to save their social prestige every Sherpas make it and are ready to serve it. It was their old tradition which was followed by the Tibetans in seventh century A. D.⁵⁸

In the Magar community immediate after their wedding ceremony without taking wine no couple is permitted to go back to the wife's natal home. This practice is called *duran*. According to Bista, the groom's parents should prepare gifts of *rakshi*, a leg of mutton, and a goat for the bride's parents to be taken along to the *duran* observance.⁵⁹

Likewise in the Sunwar and Jirel community, *thekichardham* is the first process of arranged marriage: on the occasion of the *thekichardham* process, the boy's parents send gifts to the girl's parents after having known consent for the match has been received. Bista has written that 'the gifts consist of a goat, a chicken, millet beer, salt, mustard oil, tumeric and one rupee in cash.'⁶⁰

In the Gurung community, without sending wine there will be no marriage proposal at all. With the decision of the boy, his parents send one of their neighbours or sometimes relatives to the girl's parent's house to present a bottle of liquor and of a rupee. If the proposal is going to be acceptable, there may come some relatives and neighbours, and entertain with food and drinks. The liquor which is not only taken in marriage, party and other ceremonies but it is given to the deceased soul also. Though it is given to the deceased soul but the

mourners are not permitted to take it for certain days.

In the Tharu community, the liquor is most essential for the marriage ceremony, festivals and hospitality. It is recognised as an essential offering to the family deities which is installed in their family house. The deities which are installed inside their home is called *deuryar*. They take it not only as social drink but it is recognised as ritual drink also. In the word of Rajaure, "The ritual *murbhevaj* (hair cutting ceremony or celebration of the head) is performed on any Monday or Wednesday of Fagun (February–March). In this ceremony liquor is first offered to all liquor-accepting household deities. For this performance, respected guest, especially members of the boy's married, sister's household, the father sister's families and the Tharu tribal chief are invited. A great feast of pig and goat or sheep is arranged in this honour. Plenty of homemade beer is served on this occasion. The Tharus do not want take it limited dose of liquor on the occasion of dances and festivals. They generally enjoy with plenty of drinks on the occasion of dancing festivals like *jhumara* dance (dance of male groups), *Sakhiya* dance (dance of male groups in ladies dress), *bhangarahavea* dance, *lathihawa* dance and so on.

The system of *bhalamansa* is not very old among the Tharus of Kailali Kanchanpur. Whereas the Tharus of Dang-Deukhuri are not familiar with it. A *bhalamansa* is recognised as a headman of particular area. He is selected by the villagers for one year. The house to which *bhalamansa* belongs, is called *badghar*. Each and every Tharus use to donate some money to *bhalamansa*. The function of *bhalamansa* is to prepare beer and wine to serve to the guests. The next duty of *bhalamansa* is to look after other economic

and social activities. If they went to the *baaghar*, the *bhalamansa* serves them liquor free of cost. According to them, this system was arranged by the Ranas who use to visit there for hunting purpose. But the system is practised by them even today. Their liquor serving method to the guest is also quite interesting. According to their social tradition, if someone is serving the drink to the guest, then other members of the family also use to serve him. Though the Tamangs are poor, but they do not hesitate to brew liquor at home. They also need it in every phase of their life. They think that liquor is the most essential for marriage ceremony, funeral rites, at the time of worshipping to the family deities, at the time of cultivation and other festiviuous occasion. That is why it is very influensive factor of their life and culture.

On the wedding day even a poor Tamang, due to social tradition, should be ready to send twelve to eighteen bottles of liquor to the bride's house. This sort of process is called *perungolane* among the Tamangs of Nuwakot-Rasuwa and *kajel pong* among the Tamangs of Timal. After *kajel pong*, they send twelve *pong* (pot) of wine and other food materials to the bride's house, which they call it *chukunha pong*. The function of this process to confirm the wedding date. Even a girl who is captured by boy or married by elopement the bride and the groom go to the girl's parents house only when they have given their consent. If it happens, the new couple should take a bottle of wine as a gift to the girl's parents. This is practised in the Tamang community of Northern Nepal. This gift is called *livomba*.

According to their social system when a man dies, immediately, all the villagers bring a bundle of firewood, incense, drinks and rice for the cremation of the deceased person. Then, they orderly, offer the drink

to the deceased body and then only, the fire is given to the pyre. It was asked the reason or importance of drink which was offered to the deceased body. But they could not give satisfactory answer as well. At the same time the married daughter brings liquor to her natal home and serves it to the funeral participants for the whole night. The purpose of serving this drink to the villagers is to be free from her either deceased father or mother. It is thought that she paid her debt toward her deceased father or mother. Anyway, this type of paying debts towards the father or mother by serving the drink is called *nhelabhar*. And, again the other issues, except the married daughter, take responsible to serve the drinks to the villages for two days respectively. But the sons are not permitted to drink liquor during the mourning days.

According to their belief, without offering the liquor no family deities will be pleased with them.

In the Rai community also, the liquor is recognised as an essential item for their life cycle. Without liquor they cannot establish good social relations with others. In the process of arranged marriage, the proposal is accepted by the girl's parents unless liquor is sent to them till three times by the side of boy's parents which is known as *sodhane* at first time, secondly *multheki*, and thirdly *bhakah*.⁶² If the boy wanted to take a Rai girl without performing any ritual, in terms of marriage by capture, he is asked by the girl "how much beer he can provide",⁶³ -it indicates how it is deeply rooted in their culture. But that type of questioning is based on singing conversation. The Limbu also take it as necessary social, ritual and spiritual item for ceremony, ritual and worship to the gods and goddesses of their community.⁶⁴

Religious Value of Liquor

Since a long time people are using it as an offering material to the gods and goddesses. Though Gautam Buddha refused it and advised everybody not to drink alcohol. Instead of it, people who believed in Saivism and become the follower of Kalamukha sect are bound to drink liquor. The worshipping of Bhairab by wine is an ancient tradition.⁶⁶ Likewise, for the Kalamukhas, keeping a pot of wine has become the means for their attainment of desires concerning this world and the next.⁶⁷

In Nepal, since medieval period, people offer beer to the Bhairab with a view to please him. According to Vajracharya and Shrestha, that was called *ha: thon* which was celebrated in Dolakha in medieval period.⁶⁸ The same type of tradition is followed even now in Kathmandu also. The ritual worship is done to the Swyeta Bhairab of Hanuman Dhoka on the occasion of Indra Jatra festival for eight days. Generally the ritual worship goes on from 7.30 P. M. to 9 P. M. This ritual worship is called *ha: thon hyakya*. In the process, firstly there in ritual worship to the *ha: thon deo* (Swyeta Bhairab). In order to watch its ritual and to have offerings of god Bhairab, devotees have gathered in front of the statue. Majority of the devotees belong to the Newar community. After the ritual worship, *samayabuji* (flattened rice with fried black soyabeans, small pieces of cooked meat, ginger and local beer) is distributed to the devotees as a token of blessing of Bhairab. Thereafter, two *gagris* (approximately 32 litres) of beer is put into a big copper vessel which is kept behind the Bhairab statue. The hole of the big red pipe is opened and the liquor drops down from that pipe out of the mouth of the Bhairab. Shoving and elbowing one's way or even climbing on one's shoul-

ders people tried to get a mouthful of this beer blessed by Bhairab. The scramble for blessing beer usually gets quite boisterous at Hanumandhoka.⁶⁹ Besides it, some Manandhar groups of Thahiti also celebrate *ha: thon* ritual on the full moon day of Dasain festival. According to the Newars' belief, the beer which comes out of the mouth of the Bhairab and secret part of the Ganesh, becomes important medicine and recovers the bodyache and stomach pain as well. (Pl. No. 3A, 3B & 4A).

Even if they are sick from evil sight, it cures by drinking even a single drop of beer. It shows how the beer is rooted in the Newar spiritual souls. It is not only by people, god and goddess but it is also taken by the demon or devil soul. They believe if the liquor is given to the demon then he will not create any trouble for them. As the Newars observe another festival which is called *Gathemuga*. On this particular day, every people offer *kat* to the demon in five places: in front of main entrance gate of the home and in four corners of the space, where the spirits might have remained there. This offering is called *baubivegu*. They think that Kumar, the son of Lord Mahadev, will be staying in front of the main entrance gate.

The beer has not only the religious value in their community but wine also has same importance as such. They prepare special wine which is called *deo aila* (wine of god). This sort of drink is fully dedicated to the gods and goddesses. But it cannot be said which god is particularly related with their drink. Most of the traditional Newars use to distill it in the month of Poush (December) and some of the Jyapooos prepare it in the month of Baishakh-Jestha (March-April). According to them, if it is supposed to drink *deo aila*, water should not be mixed with it.

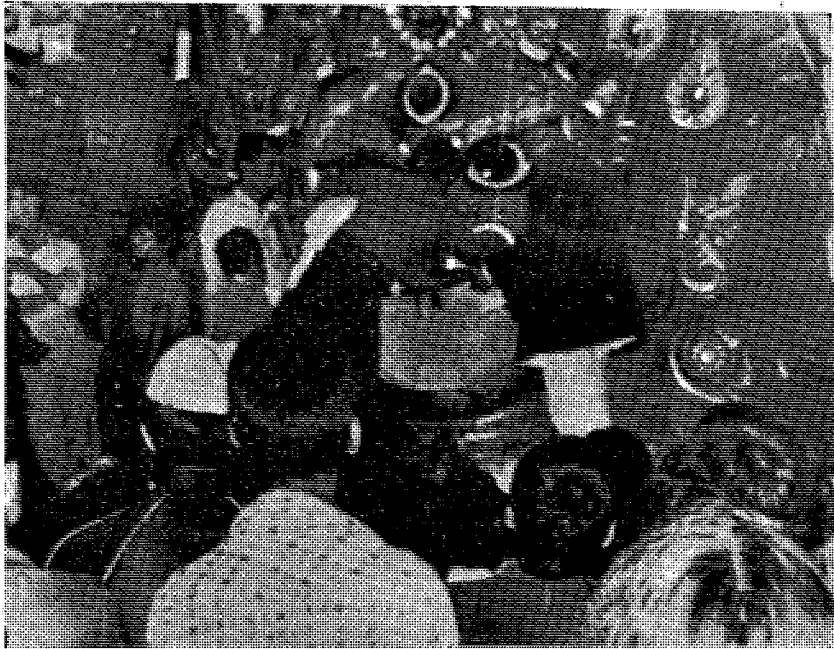
If someone drinks with water he or she may fall victim of leprosy or asthma. Till now the old Newars do not drink it with water especially on ceremonial and festive occasions.

Even in the Sherpa community beer is completely recognised as religious drink. Before taking it, they touch it with ring finger and springle towards up three times as an offering to the gods and it is called *Chhe ! Chhe ! Chhe* in the Sherpa tongue. *Chhe ! Chhe ! Chhe !* means the liquor is being offered to Guru Padmasambhava or Guru Rimpoche. Without offering it to Guru, no one would drink it as it is thought to be direct sin among them.⁷⁰ This proves that the beer is recognised as sacred drink of the community.

Even in Tantra, the drink is ritually purified and consecrated before actually drinking it. According to Varya, this is called ritual drink which is accepted by all Tantric.⁷¹ In this context, it can be taken another example of the word *panchamakara* (Madhya, Mamsa, Maithun, Madra, Min) which is used by Sahajyanist or Vajrayanist. Ritually, the drink is indispensable for the Vajrayanist at the time of receiving *dikshya* (mantra).⁷²

Medicinal Value of Liquor

Though it is an intoxicating material but these people regard it as a medicine also- if someone got bodyache, stomach pain, indigestion, cholera, and so on. In this context people take it as medicine for cure. According to the belief of Newars, if someone catches cholera, immediately *hyaun thon* is given to the patient. If any woman suffers from any kind of disorder in her womb, *hyaun thon* is given to her which affects positively within the short span. If fracture or soiling



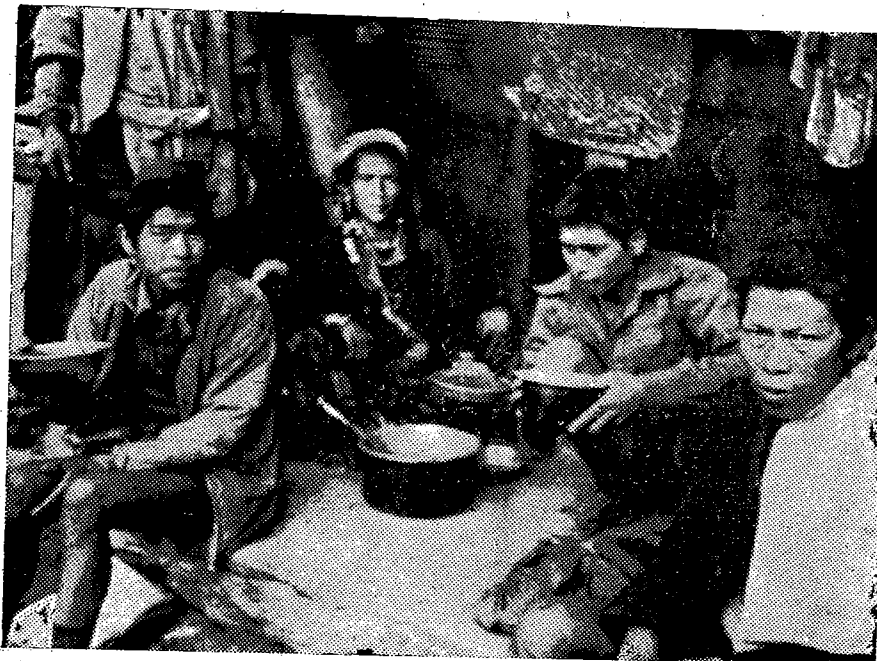
(A) Ritual of ha: thon deo



*(B) Shoving or elbowing own's a way or even climbing on shoulder
to get a mouthful of beer blessed by Ehairab*



(A) A devotee is drinking blessing beer



(B) A Tamang woman is selling hurya beer to the Porters in Gongar village of Dolakha district

occurs then the wine is given to him or massage on that part of body. If someone suffers from cold then the drink is taken by him. *Bya* or *byako* or *belayaqila* is the next important local wine of the Newars. It is also prepared in the month of Paush (December-January). According to their belief, the water of December is recognised as pure and healthful. That is why, it is used as an important drug also. In order to save from painful diseases, most of the traditional people keep it at their home but they will be hardly ready to provide it to everybody because they do not have sufficient *byako aila*. In order to distill this type of wine, water is poured nine times which they call it *nau pani*, then only the wine will be ready for distillation. It is not only considered as medicine by the Newars, but other matawali communities also take it in the same manner. A woman who gives birth and if she could not provide breast milk to the infant then the beer is given to her for some months. It is said that the beer helps to start lactation.

Liquor-Food for Walking

In the hilly regions people generally use to walk twenty to twenty four miles a day. When they start their walking along the way, they feel thirsty and hungry. So they are in quest of some foods. If someone is about to go out of his home at the outset of his departure, *hurya*, approximately two litres is taken by him and then he leaves that place for somewhere. According to the people, it gives energy for walk till three hours and as also not possible to get anything along the way. Generally the distance of another settlement area in hilly region is far from 4-6 miles from the starting point. In those areas, as it was observed everyone is supposed to take *hurya* or *jand* or *chhyang* or *rakshi* either at their own home or on the way where it may be available. Those areas where people are

acquainted with tea, someone may take drink. As it was seen in Solukhumbu and from Hyanja to Ghandrung areas of Kaski district. But the people, like porters do not prefer to have tea. Many workers, labourers are chronically under nourished, others are unable to buy a variety of food sufficient to provide an adequate varied diet. They use liquor as a supplement to a diet counteract the monotony of food. Besides that the causes of drinking in such a situation is due to their fatigueness from long hours of walking. (Pl. No. 4B)

Liquor-Food for Working

In various communities of Nepal, liquor is taken as food for work. The economy of majority of the people is based on agriculture and labour. When people go to the field, they work hard and feel tired and exhausted, considering the climatic environment, culture and permission, it is served to them at least four times a day. They drink it not because of getting intoxicant but to get refreshment and energy. In this context, people generally prefer to take and serve beer instead of wine because it is expensive and also causes headache.

In connection with this matter, the Jyapooos belong to the Newar groups, are traditionally cultivators consume the beer five to six times a day. When he cultivates his town land holdings. It is also said that if he takes more than three pegs at a time, he may lose his consciousness. That means the beer which is brewed by the Jyapooos is quite strong. If wine is served to the workers it is assumed that they would feel laziness which affect their working efficiency. Their main purpose is to work in the field. Besides it the moderate doses of beer make them active. In the interval of 1-2 hours the beer is served to them by the female folk in a little quantity. While the women

also work in the field; they do not take it so frequently. The same tradition is observed among other matawali communities of rural and hilly regions but to environmental as well as cultural understanding, when they work in the field of non-matawali people they are not supposed to get it and so they do not take care for the liquor.

As far as the Newars of rural area are concerned, they may take liquor from anybody. Due to their caste heirarchical system, people immediately hesitate to drink from any caste and subcastes of the society. The Newars feel that they become impure during the agricultural season especially at the time of transplantation. Some people said that the local beer is recognised as nonpurified food in social heirarchical context. That is why after the transplantation, people perform a purificatory ceremony on the occasion of Gathemuga festival of Shrawan (July-August), which is known as *sinaja-benkegu*. As it is mentioned, "just after the agriculture season, *sija-benke* for the purification of one's self is held. Because during the plantation period food and drinks are taken without any attention to the caste differences of the planters and then one is supposed to have been impure."⁷³ After this purification, it is understood that the plantation season has been off and they exchange their tobacco-smoking hubbles-bubbles, kitchen and beer drinking process within their endogamous group. On the occasion of *sinaja benkegu*, they follow certain rituals like taking bath, cutting nail and clearing home, etc.

The Sherpas and the Tamangs do not take liquor from the hand of Damais, Kamis, and Sarkis. They do not have any purificatory ceremonies also. Though the Hyanbas who culturally look like the Sherpas but they are called *Khamidiku* which are categorised into the lower group as *juthonamilne* or *mukhnamilne*

in their tongue. That is why the *khadiku* (*juthomilne* or *mukhmilne*) Sherpas do not prefer to exchange their liquor with *Khamiaiku*. It is due to the group superiority and inferiority. But none of the *matawali* groups mentioned that taking or remaining food or drink, *jutho* of other's is the most harmful from the view point of health.

The Newars do not prefer to take liquor without any snacks. The farmers take a lot of snacks like beaten rice, soybeans, potato curry, chhoyela, kachila, sekuwa, beams and so on. But, the Sherpas, the Tamangs and the other groups do not take snacks at all.

Liquor and Its Popularity

Now-a-days it is gaining more popularity in the Urban areas and central headquarters of the districts. Generally the home-brewed liquors are sold in the rural and hilly areas as well as in Urban areas but the distilled liquor is mainly popular among the Urban inhabitants of the country.

Credit business is more effective in Urban as compared to rural areas. This is accepted by both sides - debtor and creditor. Once the people get on credit them, they do not hesitate to take it regularly. The youths, who feel the deindividuation, start drinking and become habituated. In the word of Lindgren, deindividuation is more likely to occur in situating in which the individual feels anonymous and without identity such as when he is away from home in an environment in which no one knows who he is, when he is disguised, when he is part of large crowd or when he is under the influence of psychoactive drugs like alcohol and cannabis."⁷⁴ Recreation is also next important factors for its habituation. As Elliot and Merrill write "Recreational pattern also

affect group drinking habits to a major degree.⁷⁵ Drinking is ordinarily confined to leisure hours.⁷⁶ Friday night is the traditional occasion for a spree. That is the one night of the week when the individual is free from the social demands of the morrow.

Actually, they are compelled to drink it because of cultural affiliation and assimilation, social interaction, climate, environment, entertainment instead of job dissatisfaction, frustration and others.

At all certain time of the year there are more gatherings, or *melas* (fair) at various places in different villages and localities attend to drink, sing, dance and have a good time. The attendants are from both core and marginal group of the society.

It is always popular in the core phase of the society. Though some of the educated matawali youths are giving up this drinking habit.

The marginal groups are approximately five hundred thousands of people out of the total number of population of Nepal, bear offices—government, educational institutions, corporations, tourism business agency, army, police, politicians businessmen, labourers and some youths (not all) are gradually taking this habit. But, this marginal phase comprises both matawali and nonmatawali groups of Nepal. Some of them prefer to take it at their own home to maintain the secrecy and some of them do not hesitate to enjoy with it openly. These marginal groups may take all three different kinds of drinks—homebrewed liquor, Nepalese distilleries and imported. If they do not have sufficient money, then homebrewed is taken. Otherwise, they generally prefer to drink distillery. But, on the occasion of big party at hotel or somewhere else, they

may get imported drinks also. Besides that, according to the nature of income, quality of drink is chosen. Among them, some use to take it regularly, some once in a week, some occasionally. Some of them are habituated and some are not favour of it.

So far as the fringe phase is concerned, they generally do not create any sort of problem in the social spheres as an intoxicated individual creates on. They generally drink at their own home and sometimes at restaurant and bar. There are not more than two hundred households who can consume the imported drinks permanently. It is only possible to drink it by the higher classes of the Nepalese society. Because they are economically sound. Their drinking pattern is completely different from the ordinary core and marginal groups. But sometimes, some of the marginal members are also accompanied with them only for drinking purpose. Their alcoholic gathering or party seems as western gathering in the sense of speaking, talking, discussing, joking and laughing style. At that time they look like very sophisticated, modernised and westernised. People at the time of drinking speak in English with low voice or in disciplinary way. But they do not care for the drink whether it is related with own's culture or not. Anyway, drinking is not a moral issue. Both men and women and there is no attendant implication of immorality. Also, it does not affect to their economy. So far as the culture is concerned, it is already diffused in their community and the purpose of drinking is only for recreation.

Distribution of liquor especially among the weaker sections of both rural and hilly areas as well as in Urban areas, during the election period to turn their opinion in his favour is also a effective measure of popularity of liquor in the society.

Due to increasing popularity of this habit considering the side-effects of its, it

is usually asked whether the youths use to take it or not during marriage negotiation. It shows how alcohol is gaining popularity and affecting the Brahmins and the Kshatriya's society too. Culture and religion permit to drink only to matawali groups but it never emphasized much drinking alcohol to anybody. Anyway core groups take it in an organised way while the youths of marginal and fringe group take it in disorganised way under the slogan of fashion, modernity, westernity, friendship, fatigueness, etc.

Alcohol is that means from which one can establish a good friendship with anybody by serving Scotch Whisky, Champagne, distilled or homebrewed liquor. It depends on standard of living, personality, economy and influence, etc. One is served to the others to find out secrecy from him or them. When one is intoxicated then, without any hesitation disclose confidential matters. In one side it may be beneficial but on the other side it is quite dangerous because he is not suppose to transfer the confidential informations.

Some of them drink regularly, some occasionally, and some occasional excessively. As Jellinek commented, other types of drinking, like occasional excessive drinking, may lead to behaviors that present a problem to society: examples of these would be "explosive drinking" in Finland, or Fiesta drinking in Spain, Portugal, Brazil and Argentina.⁷⁷

In such a case, those over-enthusiastic imbibers may drink away their money, fight with their friends or strangers; jeopardize their jobs by appearing at work with hang-overs; neglect their children, beat their wives; engage in sexual infidelities with other women; or otherwise give evidence of personal disorganisation. According to the nature of drinking of the people, they can be catagorised into two groups- drunkenness and alcoholism.

The non-alcoholic drinks because he likes to; the alcoholic drinks because he must. The former groups drinks for various reasons to relax, to forget, to make friends, to make money, to celebrate, to quench their thirst, to warm (or cool) themselves, or to show their virility. The alcoholic makes no such pleasant decession. He drinks because he can do nothing else. The chief characteristics of the true alcoholic is therefore the compulsive nature of his drinking.⁷⁸ These type of people, after drinking, may become subject to black-outs exhibiting a complete loss of memory in the morning for what he said or did the previous evening. The more moderate signs and symptoms seen after he is deprived off alcohol include intense craving for it, weakness, tremour, perspiration and so on.⁷⁹ As Bruce Ritson and Christine Hassal have witnessed the situation of some drunkards, when their potation had been longer withheld than usual; it is imposible to relate such a scene; fantic gestures; hideous yells; screams of torture; looks of despair; groans; signs; weeping and gnashing of teeth; are but a describable part of it; it may literally be summed up in what is called the "torments of the damned."⁸⁰ The physical damage may involve stomach ulcers, cirrhosis of the liver, or peripheral neuritis; moreover excessive drinking lowers the body's resistance to tuberculosis. Mental damage ranges from nervous disorders to delirium tremens and stems from the poisonous effects of too much alcohol, and this may be aggravated by malnutrition if the man has been neglecting his diet.⁸¹

In Nepalese societal context, very few people are pure alcoholic and some use to take occasional excessively and a lot of people, yet the data could not be collected at all, are seen as excessive drinkers in Urban areas. So far as the occasional excessive drinkers

are concerned, they can be found on the festive spots. In the beginning it is taken as a food for recreation but later on it may creat a problem. The same thing happens in the restaurant also. People come together, laugh, talk, drink, and become intoxicant. After taking at least three pegs of liquor, they start steriotyped of discussions which seems of no use. Finally the restuarant is to be closed. Anyway the number of the alcoholic people are increasing day by day. As Horton notes that for many societies a similar sequence of behavior occurs during drinking. In the early stages there is laughter and friendly conversation, but in the later stages of intoxication quarreling and fighting often break out among the men.⁸²

Market Price of Local Wine and Beer

Generally in ale-houses, one peg of local wine is charged Rs. 2. Occasional drinkers usually consume it not more than three pegs whereas the habituated drinkers consumed it nearly five to six pegs as such. The quantity of peg is about 1/4 of glass. In rural areas, one peg is equal to one full glass which they charge not more than 2 rupees at all. One may consume it from three to five glasses as such. So far as the local beer is concerned, in Kathmandu, it costs 2 rupees per *mokh* (approximately half litre) whereas the people charge it only 50 pice to one rupee per glass in rural areas. In those areas, one may consume five to seven glasses or *dabakas* or *khola* or *badhas* of beer easily.

Liquor and Women

In almost all the societies women are regarded as house-wives. Their work is to prepare the food, look after the child;

clean the house, grazing the cattles, working to the fields and so on. Majority of the non-matawali women, except higher families, do not take liquor at all. The women of matawali group are permitted to take it. But after all drunkenness is not very common among them. As Mandelbaum writes, where drinking is culturally approved it is typically done more by men than by women.⁸³ Though the women do not take it more in comparison with men but it is completely associated with them. In regard to the Limbu community, "local women made huge quantities of beer to sale day and night to the ex-soldiers and their friends and families."⁸⁴ The Thakali, Magar and Gurung women of Western Nepal and the Tamang, the Sherpa women of North-East and Eastern Nepal also follow the same occupation. That is why the liquor has become one of the important income sources of women. According to Caplan, probably one third of outside income other than army service comes from the sale of beer and liquor.⁸⁵ Some women who follow this business, add the income to their own private fund which is known as *pewa* in Brahmin and Kshatriya society. It was seen in Rolwaling Sherpa Village. A Sherpa woman, who left her husband and started this liquor selling business at her natal-home and said the money which she earns that goes to her own property. McDougal also mentions, from time to time that she (Rai woman) adds to this private fund while living with her husband, by selling beer or liquor which she prepares, a common source of petty income for women, or by working on other people's field for daily wages.⁸⁶ Even on the periodical market day, and some other festive occasions, the women earn a lot of money from it. On that particular day people come from very far for the purpose of marketing and meeting to their relatives, neighbours on the spot. When they meet each other, then they decide to go to ale-houses for drinking

purpose. Anyway very few women seem drunk on that particular day. In such a occasion they are forced to drink it moderately by the male friends or relatives or even own family members.

In most of the villages, where the tea-shop or ale-houses are opened, that is generally watched by the woman. Due to the women's presence other people use to visit there and take some liquor. In this way, the woman use spend their days and night for their livelihood. The atmosphere of ale-house, where the woman is host seems very pleasant in the evening and sometimes unpleasant also. But one of the important characteristics of these hostess that the problem has been already digested and do not care for any pollution. This sort of ale-house reflects two major things in the society - first, it may possible to integrate the people and the second, it may spoil the life of young people of the society.

Among the women from different communities, the Thakali women are expert in ale-selling business. Their technique of selling is by laughing, talking and serving, to the guests. Like Thakali, the Sherpa women also know how to sell and serve the liquor to the strangers. But the Sherpa women have their own cultural identity. If someone become very close with them, they do not hesitate to serve some peg of liquors without taking money. They think it as social transaction or cultural tradition.

Most of the matawali women know the technique of distillation, fermentation and filtration of liquor. In regard to Limbu woman, Jones and Jones write that in winter season when a woman distills liquor which takes several hours, neighbouring women gather to taste the product and offer a

sometimes brutally honest judgement on its duality.⁸⁷ The Sherpas do not have his tradition and the person who is making liquor himself or herself tastes it. According to them, all of the member cannot make it tasty.

Family Environment

Good family environment is the symbol of ideal society. If one married man become addicted, he gives a lot of trouble not only to his family members but to the society also. One type of people drink limited quantity outside the house, return and go to bed. It is understood to his wife. But the next type of people take unlimited peg, become aggressive, come late at their home and would beat their wives, shout at children. Those type of drinkers not only misbehave their family members but do the same thing outside the house also. Drinking at home or returning home after drinks is very dangerous and will have strong effects on the children.⁸⁸ Besides that, if some people take liquor in moderate dose at their own home or outside the house that increases sexual performance. Moderate quantities of alcohol help in relaxing an inhibited female partner, and enjoying sex better.⁸⁹ There is some recognised member of the family who only is allowed to make beer as well. There is no restriction to drink liquor for Sherpa women from their husband. Comparatively the unmarried girls do not take too much. Anyway female drinking is an incidental and male drinking is an incidental and male drinking is a part of the masculine role.⁹⁰ There are some higher classes of women in the Kshatriya society, who are habituated with it. They take it not because of cultural fulfilment but because of entertainment. Anyway, most of the women are completely associated with liquor among the matawali societies. But drunkenness is after all not very common to them.

The farmers and rural matawali people work hard and look very tired in the evening. In order to get refreshment, they (not all) use to get some moderate dose of liquor, but, it increases their sexual feeling. As a result of this, women give birth year after year.

So far as the addict member of a family is concerned, once he is addicted, his all responsibilities goes to his wife or son. It actually seems a great problem to maintain their day to day life in comparison with their neighbours. The addict man fights, quarrels and disturbs to his neighbours. Thus enmity increases day by day. It directly affects his family members. Consequently, their social relation also may be cut off with the villagers. This will be their next problem.

There will be no good relation between father and son. The son is always anxious about his father and due to the father's disturbance he cannot read and write. Finally, he may not attend school because his father cannot provide the needs for education as money is spent on liquor. As Acuff Etal writes, the third way a home may be broken is by one or both parents refusing to play the role of a parent. The alcoholic parent whose overwhelming concern is his ability to supply his drinking habit is an example. This parent, either male or female, spends a considerable amount of the family income on himself and does not accept the responsibility of child rearing or care, may often be abusive and consciously withdraws himself from meaningful interaction. By being present but not playing an appropriate role he becomes virtually non-person to the child who is in search of a model for a parent.⁹¹

In connection with this matter, Nepali women do not drink too much. That is why they will not create such type of problem

in the family environment at all. If their husband followed that negative path, then, they know only weeping as their alternative way.

Occasionally, they seem intoxicated and begin quarrelling, fighting, or falling down on the street. But even in such a situation, people do not care for them because of their permissive culture or matawali character. But, if the addicted people belong to the non-matawali group, they are neglected by the society. It also affects to their children's personality. Generally, their personality develops from either inferiority complex or responsibility bearer for the maintenance of their family members.

In average, except ale-houses, the matawali people make it from 160 kg. grain every year in each household families. No doubt, the distillery type of drink is gaining more popularity in urban areas. But it is not culturally accepted to the rites and rituals of the traditional alcoholic society. Even, due to their low economy, they cannot provide these types of drink to the worker at different situations.

Conclusion

Homebrewed liquor is the natural gift to the human beings. Since very long time people are taking it as a part of socio-cultural universe. In Hindu society, since the time of Smritikaras, it is tabooed in the Brahmin and Kshatriya society. Even today, the orthodox Brahmins and the Kshatriyas do not touch it at all. But in the context of matawali society, it is completely related with ecology, economy, socio-cultural system and religious belief of the people of Nepal. Those ethnic groups who are culturally permitted to take liquor, it has become an indispensable food at the axis of their life. As they use it, on building their houses and

other type of works, at the time of cultivation, at sowing time and harvest, for curing their sick, buying their dead, on welcoming and hosting their friends, relatives and guests, on celebrating their marriage and other ritual ceremonies.

Due to the natural surrounding, people make it differently by applying their traditional technology and consume it in different way according to their cultural norms, values and beliefs. It is not only accepted by man but it is equally accepted by the gods and goddesses and spirits, as they believe also. Religious festival is also one of the sources of collective merry-making of the people. In festiviou spot, people not only pray and worship to the god but they drink and entertain also. Due to these various reasons, liquor has become integral part of their cultural.

Many non-matawali young people after crossing the age of 20, are going to handituated on it. Some of them use to take it out of their home and do not want to show their liquor intaking habit to their parents

as well. They just follow the hereditary cultural adjustment. Anyway their compartmentalized behavior remains of no use from the cultural point of view. It is known to others that they drink outside their home. Thus they are adopting the new way of life and their culture is fast being diffused by the influence of other culture. The liquor has played an unique role to avoid the caste feeling in the society. A Brahmin or Kshatriya boy use to take it with lower caste group at the same table even somtimes sharing the same liquor glass with each other. Though it creates a problem but equally it has helped to create man to man relation or social integration. Over all, drunkenness is not common in the various ethnic societies but it is gradually pervading in urban areas and central headquarters of the districts of the country. In alcoholic society, the issues request their guardian not to drink too much whereas the parents of non-alcoholic society use to force their habituated sons to leave that alcohol intaking bad habit. Anyway alcohol does not seem as integral part of the Brahmins and Kshatriya's culture.

FOOT NOTES

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