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The Polyandry Transition: Rural Change and Marriage  
Practices in Nepal's Tibet Frontier Zone

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# Chapter 1: Introduction

## 1.1 Introduction of Problem

This study analyzes the links between social-economic change and changing marriage practices in the Loba<sup>1</sup> population group (hereafter Loba in Lo-kingdom). Since long ago (until recently), single women of Loba group have been marrying more than one man. All brothers of same household have been sharing a common wife. This fraternal polyandry system has been common in Mongol race Tibetan ethnic group-Loba in Nepal-Tibet frontier zone. Such uncommon polyandrous marriage system is now in transition from polyandry to monogamy.

In Tibet polyandry is illegal but still practiced, while in Nepal, polyandry is legal and socially recognized by customary laws. The Loba group is living in a high altitude region in the Nepal – Tibet frontier. This study focuses on the shifting trends of Polyandry marriage and their causes.

In the ‘pre-transition’ polyandrous marriage system, the Loba society as a whole was commonly known as a polyandrous society. In polyandrous Loba society not all the women of the society get a chance to marry polyandrous; some of the women seem as surplus and remain unmarried. Generally in core polyandrous society, in pre-transition times, less than half of marriage aged females and males in society entered polyandrous unions and others remained as surplus, monogamous or became Buddhist priests. Pre-marital and extramarital birth is common in polyandrous Loba society. The unmarried “surplus” women also may give birth to children. Such children have to live in their birth household without getting land ownership. Any such children born from “surplus” mother may marry polyandrously.

In the polyandry system property acquired by inheritance is taken as indivisible. The household rather than individuals are taken as the owner of parental property. Assets acquired from inheritance like land, cattle, and trade activities are considered household property. Polyandrous households utilize the inherited property and assets as common household property rather than individual property.

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<sup>1</sup> In Tibetan language people of the Lo-kingdom are called the Loba.

In the polyandrous marriage, the senior brother has a more significant role than his younger brother(s). The married wife is often closer in terms of age with the senior brother. The common wife may be more loyal towards senior brothers. Generally polyandrous marriage happens with the consent of the elder brother and wife. The elder brother is the legal owner of parental property. Other brother/s have to share the same wife and same inherited property. Other brothers have no customary rights to marry separately.

In the polyandry system a woman (wife of all brothers) is generally the head of the household. Polyandrous society is not matriarchal but women exercise more power than in patriarchal society. Women are more autonomous to exercise power in households and society. The Loba group has been relatively backward from the rural diversification process and mainstream of social and economic development process compared to other social groups in Nepal.

In the polyandrous, marriage custom and society have a more significant role than father does. Father is also taken as the part and parcel of a social system and he has to follow polyandry customs. Polyandrous society is governed by its own customary laws, its own social systems and has its own Loba king (social king but not sovereign and independent king) and Loba region has is an autonomous status (culturally and legally) of Nepal. The Loba King is also a part of the customary system and taken as supreme in society and having customary rights to solve all the social and legal issues of society (except murder cases). The polyandry system regulates itself as a self-governing social system guided by traditions and customs. Customary laws prevent junior son(s) from marrying separately (outside polyandrous marriage) and prevent access to inherited property for those who go against the customary laws. Polyandrous marriage was therefore closely related to (a) the land-based nature of livelihood and (b) the inability of individual sons to gain access to land or other assets on an individual basis.

The rural diversification process of the Loba group started after the expansion of tourism. The expansion of tourism shifted economy from land-based to diversified; due to which new opportunities for employment were available for the young unmarried population. The tourism business boomed after 1990. The new opportunities have made the unmarried group become more economically

independent then ever. They have increasingly started to marry separately and the marriage system started to change from polyandry to monogamy.

In polyandrous society important social-economic changes have been occurring; in particular, the shift from a land-based to a diversified rural economy based in tourism. At the same time, there is clear evidence that important changes in marriage practices have also been occurring with a sharp decline in polyandrous marriage. Hence the purpose of this study is to explore the links between these two developments. In particular, as explained in Chapter 4 below, I have explored the usefulness of the concept and theory of entitlement as an analytical tool for the explanation of these changes.

## **1.2 Research Objective:**

**The general research objective is to analyze the relationship between social-economic change and the decline in polyandrous marriage among the Loba group in Lo-kingdom in Nepal's Tibet Frontier Zone.**

## **1.3 Critical Literature Review**

The relationship between change in marital regimes and change in the broader socio-economic environment is one of the long-term debatable issues in the study of rural development. Specifically in the case of polyandry; various authors have debated its causes. The existing literature highlights four reasons to practice polyandry as follows: (1) Demographic, (2) Socio-cultural, (3) Economic and (4) Resources.

*First, demographic* arguments claim that the polyandry practice is an outcome of high sex ratio (Westermarck, 1976; Berreman, 1987; Aiyappan, 1987; Majumdar, 1944; Prince Peter, 1955; Prakshi, 1964; River, 1906; Heath, 1955). It also explains that the practice of polyandry is a result of female infanticide (Goldstein, 1978; River, 1906; Peters and Hunt, 1975). Others have argued that the sterility of men is the cause of the practice of polyandry (Majumdar, 1982). Some have argued that the surplus of males over females is the cause of polyandry. It also describes the practice of polyandry as a form of population control mechanism (Malthus, 1798; Goldstein, 1971, 1976; Prince Peter, 1963). It is also argued that the prolonged absence of males in the family is the cause of the practice of polyandry (Gough, 1959; Prince Peter, 1955). Some have argued that the practice of the polyandry increases the proportion of unmarried women and non-reproductive males in society (Crook, 1987).

This literature has argued that the cause of the polyandry practice is an imbalance between male and females numbers (imbalance of sex ratio) in society. But in the Loba kingdom the sex ratio is almost balanced (Table 6, Appendix). Hence the practice of polyandry is not due to a high sex ratio. Some literatures have argued that female infanticide is the cause of polyandry. But in the Loba kingdom female infanticide is not practiced.

*Second, Socio-cultural* arguments argue that the practice of polyandry provides security to the wife and family members during the prolonged absence of the husband in household, because polyandry keeps at least one male within a family (Prince Peter, 1948, 1955; Westermarck 1922; Kapadi, 1955; Berreman, 1987). Some have argued that in the absence of a husband, the practice of polyandry insures that the wife will have no liaisons with men outside the family (Berreman, 1987). Others have argued that polyandry prevents women from having life crises by providing men to support her life (Gough, 1959). Others claim that polyandry reduces quarrels among brothers (Aiyappan, 1937; Carrasco, 1959; Leach, 1955; Prince Peter, 1948, 1955; Saksena, 1955). Some argue that the polyandry practice minimizes fraternal conflict and jealousy among brothers (Mukherji, 1950). Some have argued that polyandry saves households from the risk of friction and fission (Leach, 1955). Others have argued that polyandry can be attributed to a tradition derived from the ancient Hindu system Mahabharate, where five *Pandava* brothers shared a common wife, *Draupadi*. Hence polyandry has been practiced since the age of the Mahabharata (Berreman, 1987). It is also said that polyandry prevents families from hazardous difficult Himalayan terrenes from uncertainty by providing at least one man in the family (Raha, 1976, 1982, 1983, 1987; Raha and Mahato, 1975, 1985). Some have argued that the cause of the polyandry practice is to fulfill strong co-operative family work necessary to the social system (Crook, 1987). Some have argued that a "heavy bride price" preventing many marriages is a cause of polyandry practice (Majumdar, 1982). More marriage means diverse economic interests within a family, which might pose a threat to the unity of the household (Luintel, 2000). Some have argued that in the Himalayan hills polyandry is nothing more than a custom of community (Majumdar, 1944). Some have argued that polyandry is an outcome of the hard struggle for existence (Raha, 1987)). Some have argued that the polyandry is a result of the super-

imposition of patriarchy over matriarchy (Majumdar, 1944). Some have argued that polyandry provides security in hard climates (Crook, 1987). Polyandry is an outcome of man's adaptation to ecological conditions in high altitude, cold climate, and harsh, tough and challenging surroundings (Chandra, 1987).

This literature has argued that polyandry is an outcome of difficult topography. Topography in Loba kingdom is difficult. But in the Loba kingdom, not all people have been practicing polyandry to provide security in difficult geographical settings. Some have argued that polyandry is an outcome of the prolonged absence of males in society. In the Loba kingdom most males are absent from households. But this phenomenon is not sufficient cause to practice polyandry.

*Third, economic* arguments claim that polyandry prevents land sub-division and fragmentation (Ghosh, 1987). Some have argued that polyandry keeps family property, especially land intact within households (Westermarck, 1922; Berreman, 1987; Chandra, 1974; Majumdar, 1963; Prince Peter, 1963; Saxena, 1955). Some have argued that polyandry keeps property intact, which is necessary to keep the property of the very poor from dropping below the subsistence level (Prince Peter, 1955; Stulpnagel, 1978; Berreman, 1987; Majumdar, 1982). It is also claimed that the practice of polyandry is a survival strategy of the poor to avoid further degradation (Nakane, 1966). Some suggest that the economic function of polyandry is intensities of unity and solidarity of the sibling group (Prince Peter, 1955). Some have argued that the practice of polyandry is an outcome of the division of labor in household between brothers (Raha, 1987). Some have argued that polyandry strengthens the inter-generational transfer of an unbroken estate (Crook, 1987).

This literature argues that polyandry prevents land sub-division and prevents poor people drooping below the subsistence level. It is a survival strategy of the poor. But in the Loba kingdom, the polyandry transition occurred without division of land. Polyandry is not an only issue of land division.

*Fourth, resource* arguments are that polyandry united a "corporate group" in the household between brothers, which need to create complementary and supplementary roles in Himalayan societies social and economic system to make people self-sufficient to meet the basic requirements (Chandra, 1987). Levin (1988:239) has



argued that limiting population where there are scarce resources and need for resources conservation is the cause of polyandry practice.

This literature has argued that polyandry has been practiced to limit the population in an area of scarce resources and to protect these resources. But in the Loba kingdom, even after increase in polyandry, natural resources are not protected. The Loba people are depending on natural resources and long distance. Trade resources are unlimited and depend upon utilized manpower. Hence this argument is not applicable here. Utilizing trade activities, the Loba people have been polyandrous.

Some have argued that the practice of polyandry is an exotic and fascinating cultural trait (Berreman, 1980; Leiven, 1988). Some have argued that monogamy is expectable and moral, polygyny is reasonable and even enviable and polyandry is puzzling (Berreman, 1980). Engles (1972: 16) has argued that monogamous marriage improved women's condition more than other marriage systems. My argument is that polyandry is out come of failure of entitlements.

## **1.4 Conceptual Framework**

There is debate over the causes of the existence of polyandry in society. However, none of the literature highlights individual or own responsibility for the existence and practice of polyandry. This paper attempts to explore the causes for the existence and practice of polyandry. In Loba society, the expansion of tourism alone is not sufficient to explain the polyandry transition. The major cause of the decline of polyandry decline may be the emergence of the alternative (non-land based) sources of income which make it possible for younger brothers to have an independent income even if they do not have any rights to land. Hence they have a material basis to support a monogamous marriage. The younger man and woman themselves take the decision to marry monogamously. Rural diversification thus may be a major changes variable to explain the decline of polyandry in the Loba kingdom. Together with rural diversification, education, media, tourism and migration may have also played significant roles.

As already noted, polyandry was not universal among the Loba before the transition; it was more common among some social groups in the society than others were.

Basically, the poor and landless have practiced polyandry to maintain a certain minimum level of living. They have been achieving certain minimum living level.

It is therefore important, in considering the decline in polyandry and its causes, to look at the evidence of change among different social-economic groups among the population. In exploring the social and cultural mechanisms through which changes in the broader environment promote change in marriage practices, the concept of entitlement<sup>2</sup> provides us a useful analytical tool. Dreze and Sen defined 'entitlement' or 'ownership rights' as follows:

In each social structure, given the prevailing legal, political, and economic arrangements, a person can establish command over some alternative commodity bundles (any one bundles of which he or she can chose to consume). These bundles could be extensive or very limited and what a person can consume will be directly dependent on what these bundles are. The set of alternative bundles of commodities over which a person can establish such command will be reflected as this person's entitlement (Dreze and Sen 1989:9).

According to Dreze and Sen (1989:9-11), entitlement focuses on a person's legal rights of ownership. Sen (1981:2) classified the entitlement system as following four categories: (1) trade-based entitlement – obtains by *own* trading, (2) production based entitlement – obtained by arranging production using one's *own* or hired resources, (3) *own*- labor entitlement – obtained by entitled own labor power and (4) inheritance and transfer entitlement – obtained by legitimately *owned* from previous *owners* or obtained by inheritance. Sen (1981:3) argued that the above mentioned entitlements could be transferred from one persons or institutions to another persons or institutions by transactions. Goldewijk and Gaay (1999:123) argued that a key word here is the adjective '*own*': his *own* land, her *own* labor, his *own* shop, and her *own* knowledge. They argued that, entitled by such *ownership*, people may engage in transactions with others.

Goldewijk and Gaay (1999:122-123) defined entitlement broadly as follows:

By entitlement we understand the possibility to participate legitimately - in the sense of participation based on rights- in process of production is thus a function of both law and power. Power means opportunity, actual command. Law protects in case of dispute.

They again added – combination of law and power makes entitlement precious. Goldwewijk and Gaay (1999:125-133) argued that entitlement could be gained individually or commonly by following four ways: (1) direct access entitlement (2) institutional-arranged entitlement (3) state-arranged entitlement and (4) internationally arranged entitlement.

Entitlement approach explains activities of all actors and all interested parties involved in any development-related social phenomena in broader prospective. Unless such broader social-economic environmental aspects of any social event are taken into account, it is impossible to understand the whole development of social phenomena including polyandry. To understand the phenomena of the polyandry transition in the broader environment, I have used the entitlement approach in my analysis.

The survival and well being of people depend upon the availability of entitlements. Due to the dynamic nature of society, the nature and type of the availability of entitlements changes over time. The availability of entitlements<sup>3</sup> depends upon the social environment. The state plays major role in providing entitlement systems to a society. Sen (1981:6-7) has argued that the absence of famines and starvation in the developed countries is not due to wealth to a guaranteed minimum value of exchange entitlements provided through the social security system. According to Sen (1981:7-8), starvation is a function of entitlement. It is a result of the inability to establish entitlements to enough food, but not the physical availability of enough food. Hence, of social systems either by state or any other institutions of society. Klein Goldewisk and Gaay (1999:115-6) argued that an analysis of entitlement systems must give primary attention to the role of the state. A particularly non-existent or failed state provides an adverse environment for the realization of economic, social and cultural rights (Klein Goldewisk et al.1999: 115-6).

Entitlement is a matter of both power and rights as pointed out by Gaay (1990:21). In the absence of state-arranged modern entitlement systems, society has arranged its own traditional entitlement systems to regulate society. In the traditional entitlement system certain groups, classes or individuals may have utilized resources, assets,

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<sup>2</sup> Nadel (1957:20 cited Bhatt, 1987) gives 'responsibility' as a synonym of 'entitlement'.

power and opportunities. Goldewijk and Gaay (1999:118) argued that legitimacy transfer power in authority. The situation of entitlement is dependent on author person and his power-utilizing behavior. The opportunity to utilize power, resources and rights by people in society determines the nature of the entitlement system utilized by that society. Goldewijk and Gaay (1999:119) have argued that entitlement is a struggle against the illegitimate use of power. Such illegitimate use of power and resource-utilizing behaviors of people is, as argued by Klein Goldewijk and Gaay (1999:116) rooted in the culture of the society. To change such culture and power-utilizing behavior of certain people, new entitlement systems have to be introduced. In polyandrous society traditional institutions and customs regulate and guide the social life of people. Such customs as argued by Gaay (1990:24) are constraints to the process of modernization. These customs have been providing a traditional entitlement system to the Loba society. In such traditional societies as argued by Gaay (1990:2-5) people were unable to claim their rights. As argued by Gaay (1990:2-5), without claims economic opportunity is impossible to people. As argued by Goldewijk and Gaay (1999:118), claims are people rights especially human rights. The human rights approach to poverty eradication is motivated by duty. Legal claim is one of the components of entitlement. As argued by Klein Goldewijk and Gaay (1999:127), the major principle of private law is individual freedom as a vehicle for the realization of private self-interest. Self-interest, individual freedom and legal claims give new entitlement systems to the society. Only such new entitlement systems, as argued by Gaay (1990:24) be only able to replace the traditional institutions of the Loba society. To change the traditional institution system, people's collective action need. Such collective action, power, laws, struggle and protection provided entitlements. Laws legitimize claims and protected them in case of dispute. Claim itself is ongoing and always an incomplete process. Rein (1983:26) argued that people receive something from society by demand, extraction, and request or enforce bids for resources. A process of struggle, pressure, resistance, leverage and bargaining also establishes claims. Hence, the claim system of any society depends upon the nature of claiming process, the historical background and the production or

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<sup>3</sup> Klein Goldewisk and Gaay (1999: 115) argued that to know the conventional development oriented approach it needs to analyze properly the existence of entitlement system in that approach.

availability of demanded matter or goods. Rein (1983:30-36) argued that claim packages assembled by households today are a product of a long, evolutionary process of claiming. Claim systems must be grounded in a particular set of historical circumstances and claiming process change with production, so that without production a claim is not possible.

Laws provide actual command and utilization power of people's rights to the assets. Gaay (1990:2) argued that entitlement is a process. It is part of the general socio-economic process in society. Development is a change process and change produces conflicts in terms of rights and obligations. Entitlement analysis is a way of getting insights into such disputes. As argued by Goldewijk and Gaay (1999:120-121) the failure of entitlement prevents people from achieving economic, social and cultural rights<sup>4</sup>. As argued by Goldewijk and Gaay (1999:128) in modern society entitlement is rooted in the form of association, so achievement or yield depends upon an individual's position within such institutions.

It is therefore important to explore the relationship between shifts of entitlement and the transition to polyandry. Collective action creates new opportunities and such newly available opportunities may be utilized in the service of new social and economic agendas. For the younger generation in polyandrous society, the element in the new agenda is to change polyandry into monogamy. Empirical research shows that the lack of land for distribution to individuals was insufficient for each and every member of society; hence, society practiced polyandry to prevent a crisis. The crisis of life can be solved another way i. e. Tourism and other non-farm based diversified economic sectors, which can be taken as changing agents (entitlement) of the Loba group. These factors may be responsible for the change from polyandry to monogamy.

Besides the concept of entitlement, the conceptual framework for the proposed research incorporates the following key concepts: (a) livelihood diversification, (b) inter-generational relations and (c) socio-economic differentiation in rural communities. Before the polyandry transition, the individual welfare issue of Loba community was weak due to the lack of individual livelihood opportunities. The expansion of tourism introduced different external factors to the Loba group. Tourism



together with local politics and local struggle was strengthening the concept of individual welfare. It changed the tradition based inter-generational relationship into a more material basis. Social-economic diversification has occurred through the expansion of professional activities other than farm-based activities like working opportunities available in communication sectors (due to the expansion of VHF telephone), local police, local teachers, NGO activists, small-scale trade activities, hotel activities and the like. All these diversified activities diluted the customary law for certain aged unmarried population. These activities changed the way of life of the people. Finally, all such activities together translated polyandry into monogamy.

#### **1.4.1 Conceptual Base**

The availability of commodity bundles for a person depends upon their political, legal and economic situation. For this purpose, individual, institutional, state and international supports provide commodity bundles. But the state played a significant role in providing commodity bundles to the people. The exist legal system is an outcome of an adopted political system and the economic achievement. The type of the national political system and its local practice determine the availability and the actual command of commodity and goods to people. Local political authority translates national political goals into real political achievements. Such achievement influences people directly. Through the political guidelines and legal protection, economic achievements are the people's ultimate goal. Major possible economic resources of the people may be the land and its ownership; trade and it's ownership, agriculture and its ownership and animal husbandry and its ownership. The availability of the alternative commodity bundles depends upon the utilization of natural resources like pasture, land, forest, trade, tourism, market development, economic diversification, educational development, media development and the claim capacity of people. The claim capacity of people depends upon individual factors like personal resistance, conflicts, crisis, bargaining and negotiation capacity.

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<sup>4</sup> Sen argued that the ultimate outcome of the failure of entitlement in a period of famine is death.

## 1.5 Specific Research Questions

This study will try to establish the relationship between diversified rural livelihoods and marriage pattern changes in the rural population. The following are the central research questions:

### Central Research Question

- *How was polyandry regulated in the past?*
- *How was Polyandry was promoted in the past?*
- *How did the Polyandry – monogamy transition occur ?*

### Other research questions.

- *What is the evidence for the prevalence of polyandrous marriage in the Loba population in the pre-transition period?*
- *Among which sub-groups was polyandrous marriage was most and least common in the pre-transition period?*
- *What (if any) was the relationship between land-based wealth and polyandry?*
- *What specific non-agricultural opportunities (for livelihood and accumulation) have emerged as a result of the development of tourism in the region?*
- *Which sub-groups and individuals (by generation, gender etc.) have been able to capture these new opportunities?*
- *What is the evidence for the decline in polyandrous marriage in the Loba population?*
- *Among which sub-groups is the marriage of junior sons is most and least common for monogamous and polyandrous marriage?*
- *What were the main social/cultural obstacles to the emergence of monogamous marriage, and in what ways were men and women of the younger generation able, or not able, to overcome these obstacles?*
- *What has been the influence of organized anti-polyandrous motivation overcoming without obstacle of monogamy?*
- *How do Loba people themselves view the recent trends in marriage practice, and how do they explain these changes?*

## 1.6 Guiding Hypothesis

As has emerged from the preceding discussion in section 1.4, the general hypothesis guiding this study is that the access to independent, non-land based incomes resulting from tourism and economic diversification has generated new entitlements among the younger generation of the Loba population, at least in some subgroups. These new



entitlements in turn promote successful claims among junior sons for the right to enter into non-polyandrous marriages, and also the ability of younger women to enter monogamous unions with junior sons.

We expect to find the greatest decline in polyandry (or lowest frequency of polyandry) among those social groups with the greatest degree of income diversification and the lowest degree of dependency among those with high dependency on land-based income.

Beside change in the material base for marriage, another contributing cause of the polyandry transition may be changes in the “local environment” created by the local marriage - aged men and women. The local environment may be created by the long-term effect of competitions, challenges, conflicts, resistance, negotiation, bargaining, support and “specific situation” created by the younger generation. Organized anti-polyandrous motivation has played a role here.

## **1.7 Methodology**

### ***Entitlement Approach to Polyandry Transition***

The entitlement approach to polyandry transition focuses on changes in the legal means of command over individual property ownership. Ownership of individual land rights is one of the most primitive property rights and in each society, there are rules governing these rights. The entitlement approach to the polyandry transition concentrates on each person’s entitlement to commodity bundles including land rights or any other means of subsistence.

For the purposes to study the above raised issue, the qualitative and quantitative survey conducted by Tribhuvan University in 1999-2000 is used. The survey quantitatively collects the information about economic status and the occupation of individual members of polyandrous society. Other available publications, journals, and information collected from secondary sources are also used in this study.

#### **1.7.1 Tribhuvan University Survey 1999-2000**

The Tribhuvan University (hereafter TU) study was conducted by TU’s Lecturer team under the professional development programme of the University and financially supported by TU’s faculty of Humanities and the Social Science Dean’s Office in

1999 and 2000. This study collected two types of information (1) qualitative information and (2) quantitative information.

In the initial year 1999, a five-member research team collected qualitative information in June, July and August. In this period, information like socio-economic, demographic, marriage patterns; occupation, indigenous farming, trade, business, tourism, and animal husbandry were collected. This includes marriage-types and frequency before and after tourism expansion; present and past occupation, activities and experiences; information about time period of polyandry transition; anti – polyandrous struggle, its nature limitation and time boundary; teachers' role against polyandrous marriage; the role of local political parties against polyandrous marriage; the activities of the mothers' group.

Most of the time was spent to interact with local people who have experience with these activities. For this purpose, secondary information available at the local level, like village offices, local NGOs, and Loba King were collected from primary informants. After the information was collected from key informants like the Loba King, local teachers, village chiefs local politicians, social workers, NGOs workers, mothers' groups' members. The experience of the elderly population was collected about there past life. The experience of old age population of animal husbandry, long-distance trades and indigenous agriculture was collected with the help of local teachers and local social workers. At present the Loba kingdom is divided into six village administrative units. From each village unit (VDC) at least 10 persons were interviewed in open-ended discussions. All together, 71 persons (13 females and 58 males) were interviewed. For this purpose, 8 school teachers, 3 policemen, two workers in government post offices, 5 NGOs workers, 7 mothers' group's members, 15 retired persons (65 years and above), 12 working persons in different modern and traditional sectors, 6 village unit (VDC) chiefs and, 6 village unit members and 9 social workers were interviewed. Loba's King and his secretary were also interviewed. I was also one of the team members of the Tribhuvan University. The main weakness of this study was that it did not choose a focus group discussion method. Qualitative interviews were conducted informally. No questionnaires were used but the major themes followed qualitative information of 1999. Quantitative information was collected in 2000 June, July and August. Questionnaire was designed

as our objectives. In total, 282 households (389 women/couples) were interviewed on random sampling. The sample size was designed to represent 50 HH from each political village unit, but we were able to interview only 282 households. File data tape of the TU study was used for this purpose. The summary tables of findings of the TU study are in Appendix.

To better understand women's views, attitudes, behavior and their desire or resistance to polyandry, several cases few case studies, collected from different sources, are presented in this study.





## **Chapter 2 : Economy, society and marriage practices in Lobas Kingdom prior to the development of tourism<sup>5</sup>**

The Loba are former nomads<sup>6</sup> settled in the present Lo-Kingdom<sup>7</sup> in Nepal's Tibet frontier zone in more than 32 hamlets and number approximately 5400 population<sup>8</sup>. Loba civilization<sup>9</sup> flourished in the basins of the Kaligandaki River<sup>10</sup>. From the beginning of settlement of nomads to present day; the way of life of the Loba people has been close to nature. Prior to the development of a diversified economy the life of the Loba people (found by TU study) was based on the following three activities<sup>11</sup>: 1. Nomadic-type animal husbandry, 2. Long-distance trade and 3. Indigenous agriculture.

### **2.1 Nomadic-type animal husbandry**

Due to the nomadic background, the Loba people are still practicing nomadic-type animal husbandry. The TU study found that animal husbandry is the major occupation and principle source of earning of the Loba people. Animal husbandry is the way of life of the Loba people. Animal husbandry provides an opportunity to utilize common resources like fresh water; grazing land, green grasses indigenous plants and much plant related species as food for survivals to feed animals. Animal husbandry provides

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<sup>5</sup> Unless other sources are mentioned in footnotes sources of this Chapter are based on the TU study (1999/2000).

<sup>6</sup> Blamont argued that in the seventh century nomadic groups settled in the Lo-kingdom in present Kimaling village (Blamont, 1996: 7). Local people ( key informants) of Kimaling village also agree that they are true nomads people or Loba.

<sup>7</sup> Great warrior Ame Pal founded the Lo-Kingdom in 1380 almost 25 generations ago from present King Gigma Prabal Bist's ancestor (Dowling, 1993: 1). Before 1380 it was part of Tibet. In 1740 the Jumla Kingdom took over the Loba Kingdom and it was under Jumla rule. In 1780 unified Nepal conquered Jumla and Lo-Kingdom together. Since the unification of the Nepal Lo-Kingdom is an autonomous region under Nepal's sovereignty. But the Loba King is still ruling the Lo-kingdom under Nepal's sovereignty.

<sup>8</sup> Preliminary report of population census 2001.

<sup>9</sup> Present Lobas people believe that after settlement, their ancestors started living in caves. In the Loba Kingdom there are many unused caves. Some of the households are still in caves. The polyandrous study 1999 found that 20 families in Chhoser village are still living in caves.

<sup>10</sup> Kaligandaki is a famous mountainous river and its source is in Nepal's Tibet frontier. Many civilizations including Loba civilization developed on the basins of this river.

<sup>11</sup> Loba people have been using more than one life supporting assets to reduce life from vulnerability. Walder argued that livelihood of Loba's has consisted of a combination of agriculture, trade and animal husbandry (Walder, Gary 2000). Craig distinguished Lobas past activities were combination of animal husbandry, agriculture and trade ( Craig, 1996 : 1 ). Blamont categories Lobas past activities into following three activities (1). Animal rearing, (2) Cultivating fields and (3). Engaging in long distance trade ( Blamont 1996 : 1).

physical materials almost free of cost to their cattle. The Loba people need not pay any costs to the state or society instead to graze their cattle. Only their labour cost is utilized for animal husbandry<sup>12</sup>. The Loba people have developed their own indigenous knowledge of animal husbandry through the long experience of their ancestors and have transferred knowledge to their successors. Yaks, sheep, goats, Lulu cow (local small cow), and horses are the major animals kept by the Loba since ancient times. In the uncultivated highland area (above 4000 meters) uncultivated, unused and barren land has been used for natural grazing. The Loba have been using grazing land of their own region and surrounding areas Humla, Manang and Tibet. The annual range of animal grazing land of Loba people varies between 20-250 kilometers.

The animal husbandry of the Loba people is based on two basic concepts<sup>13</sup>: (1) the raising of livestock and (2) the movement of livestock and people. The nature of the animal husbandry of the Loba people is similar to the nomads of the central Asian regions. The mobility of the Loba with animal husbandry is a seasonal process. In the start of the summer season, the Loba graze their cattle to the neighboring grassland of their region. Then they move with the cattle towards neighboring regions Humla and Manang together with the finishing of grasses. In the peak of the summer, the animals' caretakers move s more than 50 kilometers. At the end of the summer season, the animal caretakers have to reach the Tibetan boarder areas. When winter starts, the Loba region will be colder; snow and glaciers will cover all the grazing land. Due to steppes, mountainous deserts and wind, grazing of the animals will be impossible in their region. The animals may suffer famines. The death rate of animals may increase. The life of the whole pastoral system depends on the animals being well fed. The natural condition and the location of pastures determine the health of animals. They have to travel long-distance trips and reach Tibet's pastureland. In the start of winter the Loba people start to graze their animals in Tibetan region. At the peak of winter the Loba reach the last end of the grazing land of the Tibetan

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<sup>12</sup> Livingstone argued that pastoralism is a low –cost, labour-intensive means of animal production based on use of natural forage. The distribution of this forage varies seasonally and from year to year and requires mobility, which has a variety of other valid objectives ( Livingstone, 1984 :1).

<sup>13</sup> McCabe argued that any definition of pastoral nomads must include two basic concepts: the raising of livestock and the movement of livestock and people (McCable, 1994 Pp. 70).



region. They have to reach around 250-kilometers distant from their region. At the end of winter the Loba return to the border between Tibet and Nepal's Loba region. When winter ended, the Loba started to graze their animals nearer to the Loba region. The grazing of the animals of the Loba people completed one annual cycle in one year. Even the grazing of animals is done in one annual cycle; the Loba people believe that in each 12-year period, an animal cycle occurred where the death rate of the animals reached maximum peak point. This 12-year period is called the "hard years". The legends of the worst years fall on the year of the mouse, the year of the hen and especially the year of the rabbit.

The TU study found that the Loba junior polyandrous brothers of different households involved in nomadic animal husbandry. Generally such groups have to leave their homes for one seasonal year. For the next seasonal year another polyandrous brother does animal husbandry and the previous brother will shift to long distance trade activity. The polyandrous wife determines the role of a polyandrous brother in animal husbandry or long-distance trade. Indirectly the senior polyandrous brother guided the polyandrous wife to send his brothers away from home. Junior polyandrous brothers follow the direction of their polyandrous wife without thinking twice. For nomadic animal husbandry more strong male hands are needed and such need is generally fulfilled by polyandrous marriage.

The TU study found that the senior polyandrous brother is primarily responsible for policy level animal management and decisions like the sale, purchase, and slaughter of animals and sale of milk. Other members of the household implement the decisions taken by the senior polyandrous brother. The senior polyandrous brother makes all decisions with the consent of his wife. Household power is therefore concentrated in the senior brother and common wife. Other members of the household also help in animal husbandry and animal management as guided by senior brothers. Junior polyandrous brothers leave their home for animal husbandry and move far away from their home. This movement reduces conflicts between different brothers and a polyandrous wife. The source of conflict exists between sexes. Between polyandrous brothers, between polyandrous husbands and their wife at issue is the use of households and sex. When different polyandrous brothers and their wife meet they show deep intimacy between each other, because they not meet for long period. This



is the advantage of the work division in the polyandrous marriage system. These factors have regulated the polyandrous life since ancient times. Sometimes intra-household conflicts exist between brothers over issues of power, goals, objectives, and sexual issues.

Women have not been playing co-partner role in animal husbandry. The TU qualitative study found that women are playing a minor role in animal husbandry. When the animal husbandry group came near to the Loba residence, women sometimes assist them. Women take part similarly men near their residence area. But women do leave their home for animal husbandry for a long time. Some of the “surplus” women sometimes join with male animal husbandry groups. In such situation women play a similar role to as men. But for domestic purposes, women feed their animals in their home and take care of sick animals.

## **2.2 Long Distance Trade**

Since ancient times the Lo-Kingdom has been the “low scale” trade center of Tibetan salt<sup>14</sup> between Tibet and Nepal. In Tibet “Tibetan Salt” is taken out from mines as ore. Tibet is rich in quarrying salt industries; but lacking in food production. The Loba exchange food grain and Tibetan salt between Khumpas and Rombas<sup>15</sup>. In the hilly region of Nepal; Tibetan salt is taken as herbal medicine and is in high demand for this purpose. The Loba region is the center between Tibet and Nepal. The Loba people have the opportunity to exchange Tibetan’s salt and Nepal’s food grain. Loba’s trade is based on exchange in kind between salt and food grain. The nature of The Loba trades cover long distances; selling doors to door (hawker style) and has adjusted to the ecological environment and social environment. In the winter season, Loba’s region is not a suitable place to live due to cold climate. During the winter Loba polyandrous brothers start to move to the Tibet side to exchange commodities. Some of the women join the male trade group, but most stay their homes. Women generally are not involved in long distance trade activity. This movement helps Loba to save from the cold weather and make profit from exchange. Loba give food grain and takes salt from the Khumpas. The commonly exchanged food grain is maize

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<sup>14</sup> Walder argued that Lo-kingdom was a major trade route for salt and grain between Tibet and India (Walder 2000 : 5 ).

<sup>15</sup> Khumpa are people living in the Khum region of Tibet. Romba are lowland people of Nepal.

flour. Sometimes maize, rice, barley and wheat, wheat flour are also exchanged. They have fixed exchange rates, based on volume measurement. The TU study found that when the end of the winter season approaches, Loba returns back from far Tibet regions to their surrounding. Generally they leave in September –October and return back in the Loba kingdom around March carrying the exchanged goods. The polyandrous brothers then stay a few days in their households to assist in agricultural work. Then they start to move towards the south in the hilly region of Nepal to exchange Tibetan salt into food grains. In Tibet they had collected Tibetan salt in exchange for food grain and flour; in the hilly region of Nepal they exchange Tibetan salt into food grains and flour like maize, wheat, barley and it's flour. At the same time Lobas exchange *Gembu* (locally available indigenous herbal leaves which grow everywhere in the Loba region in summer seasons). Generally they start to move towards the south in the hilly region in April to August. Then they start to return back to their Loba Kingdom moving north carrying already exchanged goods; generally around September. They help their family in harvesting and generally live in their home a few weeks to inform the elder brother about trade activities. Before winter starts polyandrous brother(s) who were involved in long distance trade activity shift to animal husbandry work, and brother(s) who work in animal husbandry the previous year will shift to long distance trade. Then again the movement starts towards the north carrying the already exchanged food grain to exchange into Tibetan salt. In this way the cycle of long distance trade continues for polyandrous Loba brothers. Sheeps are commonly used to drift animals to go to Tibet and are called "Lobas Trucks" in Lo-kingdom, and horses are also used.

The TU study found that the junior polyandrous brothers have a few weeks time to live in their households to share their common wife at two periods; before winter and after winter. When polyandrous brother(s) return from long distance trade for a few weeks the elder brother leaves the household, then the junior brother lives with his polyandrous wife. The senior brother either has to assist his brother who is working with animal husbandry or he has to manage agricultural work away from the household. After a few weeks the polyandrous brother working in the long distance trade moves to work with animal husbandry; and the polyandrous brother working in animal husbandry last year, comes to live in his household to share the common wife.

Who have to share the common wife in how many weeks is managed by the common wife. The common wife decides whom and for how many weeks the polyandrous brothers get to share her. The absence of other brothers in household at a time helps to reduce conflicts between different the brothers regarding the use of property and sharing of the wife.

The senior polyandrous brother is primarily responsible for policy level long distance trade activities with the consent of his polyandrous wife. Other brothers have to work by the as policy formed by him. After returning back from long distance trade, junior brothers have to describe detailed profit of their long distance trade. The profit is taken as property of the household.

Long distance trade provides opportunity to generate economic resources for Loba households. Long distance trade provides opportunities to utilize resources between different social groups in highlands and hill people. Long distance trade established equilibrium relationships between people of different geographic region.

As explained earlier; Lobas society is not matriarchal but women are more autonomous than patriarchal society. Women in Loba society exercise more power than other patriarchal societies in orient countries. Wife of all brothers headed a household. She is the owner of the household property including earnings from trade. All household activities are managed and controlled by the polyandrous wife. She is the chief executive of a household. She determines a role for every polyandrous brother in the household.

In some cases women join with the long distance trade group. In rare cases, some of the polyandrous women join with long distance group. In such a case there is no role difference between men and women. Generally when the Loba moves towards the south for trade purpose Loba women joined in the trade team. Because moving towards south is easier for Loba than moving towards the north. This means that it is not true that Lobas women can not do difficult work. But also in some cases Loba women join to trade groups towards the north (in Tibet). In such cases women work as co-partners in long distance trade activities. The role played by men and women seems similar in such cases.

## 2.2 Indigenous agriculture

The Lobas are former nomads and started to involve into indigenous agricultural activities after settlement. The Loba kingdom has 1326 ha of cultivated land and the land is totally irrigated<sup>16</sup>. Although the land is totally irrigated the grain produce sufficient only for less than six months to feed family members and animals<sup>17</sup>. Due to high altitude (above 4000 meter), low temperatures and extreme climate, only one crop cultivation is possible in one seasonal year. Generally snow starts to melt at the end of March or beginning of April then planting of agricultural work starts. Barley is the major agricultural product of the Loba people<sup>18</sup>. Agriculture work is most important at the time of planting and harvesting. The Loba people have to do agricultural work for Loba king first, free of cost, then they have the rights to do work for their own family. In each and every village of the Loba kingdom the most productive land is controlled by the Loba King and his kinship. In each village, the representative of the King has managed the agricultural activities of the Loba King. The senior polyandrous brother from each household has to manage the agricultural activities of themselves and their King. Generally senior polyandrous brothers do not leave home for more than 4 weeks. Their primary responsibility is to manage household's activities including agricultural activities and share the common wife longer than junior polyandrous brothers. Other activities of the junior polyandrous brothers are to formulate and mobilize long distance trade and animal husbandry activities. The senior polyandrous brothers also managed occasional trade activities like purchase and sales of sheep, horses, mules, donkeys and goats from Tibet and their sales in hill area of Nepal. Participation in social, political, religious and other trade activities is also the main responsibility of senior polyandrous brothers.

In polyandrous society women play a major role for indigenous agriculture activity. The TU study found those women played both productive and reproductive roles like plantation, farming and yield production. Women are co-partners with men in agricultural activities. For agricultural activities women are sharing equal role with men in Loba society.

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<sup>16</sup> Raut and Richard ( 1998 : 1)

<sup>17</sup> ibid

<sup>18</sup> Gurung ( 1998 : 5 ).



Except agriculture; women have a major responsibility for fire wood collection for purposes of cooking fuel. It is difficult to obtain firewood in Loba kingdom. Women collected bushes and small prickly plants for cooking purpose. Women have to cut, collect, dry, carry and store such prickly plant. In Loba society wood collection and storage (on top of the roof) is the women's duty. Showing more fuel wood on the top of the roof means showing wealth, which is prestigious work in the Loba society. Women have to manage this activity alone or with other persons. Due to unavailability of cooking fuels dried cow dung, horse dung, and sheep dung are also used for cooking purpose as fuel.

## **2.4 Loba Society**

Loba Kingdom is a heterogeneous society, composed of different social and economic classes. The TU study found that Loba society can be classified as following four categories based on economic diversification and social supremacy: (1) High-class royal heritage and their nearest kin; (2) Non-royal heritage and high economic groups; (3) Buddhist religious communities and (4) professional, untouchable and low economic earning groups.

High-class royal heritages are supreme in social and economic terms in the Loba Kingdom. Most of the productive land belongs to this royal group. The royal heritage and their nearest kinship are mostly non-polyandrous. Non-royal heritages are a high earning economic group and are mostly polyandrous and engaging in the three activities as described above.

Generally second sons and daughters of the entire Loba group have compulsion to perform Buddhist religious activities. Such community has no rights to earn money by a profession. Society and state have to support them. They have to live Buddhist Gumba and have to manage different religious activities. The Loba Kingdom is a Buddhist kingdom. There are no Christian or Muslim persons in the Loba Kingdom.

The major group of the Loba Kingdom is composed by the professional groups, untouchable (socially excluded groups) and low economic earning groups. Almost all groups are polyandrous in these groups. These groups are engaged in the three major professions as described earlier.

## 2.5 Marriage Practices

A large number of adults males are required for of long-distance trade, nomadic animal husbandry and indigenous agriculture; although females are also important. Polyandrous marriage in the Lo-kingdom has been a central mechanism in the household combination of three activities. Polyandrous marriage has made possible a specific mode of managing and regulating these activities as has been described above and the marriage system was adjusted to the environment (physical and social)<sup>19</sup>.

Loba society easily accepts the births of children before marriage in her own birthplace and the event is taken as normal. Generally the polyandrous senior brother does not carry his wife and kids to his home until his wife has given birth to 2-3 children. If he accompany his wife in his home she will become a common wife and his junior brothers have rights to share the wife. The junior brothers start to share the common wife immediately by following certain rules. So the senior brothers want to keep secret the name of their wife. Until two to three children are born, the name of the father is kept secret in society, especially in the woman's households. Then, after two or three births, the husband pays a dowry to the parents of the woman and takes his wife and children to his household. Sometimes a man also pays a dowry and can accompany his wife to in his households at any time. This is marriage by local definition.

If some junior brothers has secret contact with any woman and if the woman becomes pregnant and gives birth to children, the junior brother would be afraid to accompany his wife and children to his home. Due to polyandry customary rules, such males have no rights to get parental land assets. Then, such men pay some minor amount 10 rupees (0.3 Guilder) to the women and her parents. He need not accompany his girlfriend and kids. In a similar way "surplus" woman gives birth and regulates polyandrous Loba society. Loba society accepts this event easily. Such children have to grow and develop in the home of their mother. Hence the polyandry system also generates a lot of single mothers.

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<sup>19</sup> Walwer argued that the religion and cultural values of the Loba people are traditionally inseparable from the natural environment ( Walder, G. 2000 : 3 ).





### **Chapter 3: Tourism, livelihood diversification, and the evidence for change in marriage practices<sup>20</sup>**

At the end of the 1980s and the start of the 1990s, there was a period of rapid rural diversification in the Loba kingdom. Some of the important changes, which occurred in the Loba kingdom (found by TU study) included the following: (1) Scarcity of pastureland; (2) Rapid expansion of tourism and (3) Economic diversification and the and the availability of new opportunities.

#### **3.1 Scarcity of pasture land**

The Loba kingdom suffered from a scarcity of pastureland in the decade of the 1970s and 1980s from the impact of the cold war and international politics. In 1959, the Tibetan Dalai Lama's religious administration was replaced by China's communist-led administration. When the Dalai Lama was exiled in 1959, Tibetan freedom fighters entered the Loba region. They came with large numbers of livestock (accustomed to mountainous transportation) like Dzopa, horses, mules and donkeys to prepare for war against Tibet-China. These domestic livestock had grazed for more than 20 years in the Loba region and destroyed almost all grazing pasturelands and forest-based natural resources. The Khampa guerrilla<sup>21</sup> destroyed almost all of the forest of the Loba Kingdom in their preparation war against China.

Since the Khampa guerrillas' intervention, the Loba Kingdom suffered from a scarcity of pasturelands and faced grazing problems. But they had been using winter grazing facilities in Tibet since ancient times, due to historical ties to pastoral communities in Tibet. These arrangements ended<sup>22</sup> in 1988. In winter of 1988, the Loba animals suffered famine and more than one-fourth of the nomadic animals died. This event affected 21,000 animals.<sup>23</sup> Most of the lost animals were grazing animals like yaks,

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<sup>20</sup> Unless other sources are mentioned in the footnotes; the sources of this chapter are based on the TU Study (1999/2000).

<sup>21</sup> Local people knew that after 1960s, the Khampas established camps, monopolized trade along the Kaligandaki River, set up supply posts and instituted rotating credit systems. The Khampas engaged in guerrilla warfare against China's people's Liberation Army. Khampas troops demanded firewood, building materials, food and animal fodder. The local resource utilization rate increased heavily. The local people blamed the deforestation and the depletion of grassland resources of the Lobas region on the due to Khampa guerrilla's movement.

<sup>22</sup> Craig argued that the historical grazing facilities of Lobas ended for always in 1988 according to 1983 Sino-Nepal agreement. This agreement restricted movement of Lobas animals and people in Tibet since 1988. Only limited purpose of the local people movement was permitted ( Craig, 1997 : 4).

<sup>23</sup> Craig ( 1997 : 2 ).

sheep, goats, chauris, and dzopas. This event changed the attitude towards animal husbandry. The Loba started to sell nomadic animals and limited their number to less than 25 percent of pre-famine levels. After this event, husbandry shifted from nomadic to domestic type. Instead of yak, sheep, goats, chauries, and dzopas the Loba started to farm horses, mules, and donkeys for transportation-purposed animals. Before 1988 the Lobas King himself had around 2000 yaks. After 1988, animal famine reduced the number 400. The period after 1988 was a difficult and harasses one period for Loba communities. Hence, shifting trends of animal husbandry occurred. The Loba utilized domestic animals like horses, mules, and donkeys for carrying goods and they started to take their horses to lower areas. They started to hire out their horses within the Loba kingdom for Nepali and Indian Hindu religious tourists. Some Loba also hired out their horses outside the Loba Kingdom for overseas tourists. Some of the owners of the horses, mules and donkeys carried goods from a lower belt. They started to carry goods for more than 15 days walking distance. Development of these animals helped to make available consumer goods more easily than before. Due to the increased number of animals the narrow tracks began to widen. Then transportation facilities became easier than before. These changes helped to diversify rural economy.

### **3.2 Rapid expansion of tourism**

Before 1740 A. D., the Loba Kingdom was an independent state and religious center between small Kingdoms in the Tibetan mountainous region. It was a center of Tibetan Buddhism. The founder of Tibetan Buddhism, Padam Sunbhav had established Buddhist centers in the same place in 8<sup>th</sup> century and the Loba King was also Buddhist religious leader in the Tibetan region. Many Buddhist scholars, philosophers, thinkers and founders of different branches of Buddhism had visited this small state in the past. They had learned and practiced Buddhism and expanded their philosophy into other neighboring regions. This independent period was a golden age for the Lo-Kingdom. Hence the Loba Kingdom had developed Buddhism in historic times. In this region, many Buddhist Gumbas, schools, and monasteries were built. Buddhism was developed as a way of life of the Loba people. Hence the Lo-Kingdom has a long history both of emigration and immigration. Over a century ago, the Japanese Buddhist philosopher, Eko-Kawa-Guchi, had gone to Tibet via the Loba

Kingdom. Until 1960, many Buddhist religious philosophers had gone to Tibet through the Loba Kingdom. But when Tibet's religious administration was replaced by the Chinese communist administration in 1959, this trend of tourist arrivals fell suddenly. The Nepalese government restricted access to the Loba Kingdom for foreign tourists on the request of the Chinese government<sup>24</sup>. The Loba kingdom was thus untouched by modern tourists until 1990.

The Loba Kingdom was re-opened for overseas tourists in 1990. Initially for a one-year period; tourism was opened for specially permitted tourists including researchers, journalists and writers to explore and write about the area. Then, after one year, the Loba Kingdom was opened for general tourists. The area is attractive for tourists due to the presence of endangered species of flora and fauna like snow leopard, lynx, Tibetan argali sheep, wild donkeys and yeti. The Loba Kingdom has been nominated as a "world heritage site" by the central government.

Geographically the Lo-Kingdom lies in the Mustang district of Nepal. The District headquarters are four days walking distance from the Lobas Kingdom. The District headquarters lie in a part of the Anna Purna Region<sup>25</sup> of Nepal. The Loba Kingdom is 3500 meter above sea level. High altitudes, strong winds, cold deserts, treeless landscapes, barren lands, landslides, innumerable gorges and cliffs in mountainous region the characteristics of the Lo-kingdom. The area is covered by snow from mid-October to February. Hence it is accessible for tourists for only six months (April – Sept). Tourism is seasonal in the Loba Kingdom. Due to the limited time and resources, a policy of "low-volume, high-quality" tourism has been adopted<sup>26</sup>. To check the quality of tourism, visitors have to pay 10 US \$ per day as a royalty. Generally, permission is given for not less than 10-day periods. Initially, visitors were limited to 200 per year. Then, the number of visitors was increased to one thousand and permission has been given only for visitors arranged on groups only including government environmental officers. The individual movement of visitors is not

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<sup>24</sup> Kantipur (5 November 2001) daily newspaper.

<sup>25</sup> Annapurna Region is world's famous trekking route for overseas tourist since 1946. Mountain Annapurna, Dhaulagari, Nilgari, Fishtail are famous mountains in this region. Dhandruk – the traditional Gurung village is other famous place in Annapurna trekking route. Annually more than 30 thousand overseas tourists visited this region. Annapurna region is taken as cheapest destination for overseas tourist. Hence volume of overseas tourist is maximum in this region.

<sup>26</sup> Walder, Gray (2000 : ).

allowed in The Loba kingdom. To supply the visitors, more than double the number of workers and same the number of horses (or mules, donkeys) have to move in the small Lo-kingdom (2500 Sq. Km. But 90 % of the land is not in use). Due to the availability of new opportunities to provide different services for visitors, in a short period a rural diversification process occurred in the Lo-kingdom. Within a short period of time (10 years) the Loba people benefited from a rural diversification process. But not all the local people benefited from tourism<sup>27</sup>. The Government adopted a policy to spend 60 % of royalties earned from tourism to develop the infrastructure of the area.

### **3.3 Economic diversification and the availability of new opportunities**

Modernization in Tibet and Nepal has had direct effects in the Loba Kingdom. Before 1959, modern goods and services flew into Tibet through the Loba kingdom. The Loba Kingdom was a trading center for Tibetan salt and Indian and Nepali goods. The salt trade activity of the Loba people ended after political change in Tibet in 1959. When the political system of the Tibetan government changed, the Lo-kingdom had no access to visiting foreigners. The local Loba had no demand for modern goods and services, hence the flow of modern goods and services ceased. When the Loba Kingdom was opened for foreign visitors in 1990, Tibet linked a road with the Loba kingdom. Due to this, modern Chinese goods became easily available in the Loba Kingdom. On the Nepalese side, the Loba Kingdom is not yet linked by road. The nearest road is 10 days walking distance and the nearest domestic airport is 4 days walking distance from the Loba Kingdom. The flow of foreign visitors and their assistance to the Loba Kingdom has increased the demand for modern consumer goods (noodles, beer, cigarettes, toothpaste, Coca-Cola, Mineral water, etc.) and services.

The most important one is the direct helicopter charter service from outside to the Loba Kingdom. The helicopter service provides to see “most development tools” the helicopter to the Loba people. In this nomadic animal husbandry region, the Loba have seen a helicopter before motor vehicles. This very “fast and effective” air service carries high quality overseas tourists to any place in the Loba natural and ancient

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<sup>27</sup> Nebel Carsten ( 1997 : 7 ).



region. When the flying of helicopters in the Loba region became normal, the Loba demanded a permanent airport in their region. The local groups who benefited from tourism wanted to maximize their benefit. They advised their King<sup>28</sup> to start the process to build a permanent airport in the Loba region. A consensus was built in the Loba Kingdom to build an airport. The issue was raised at the political level. Finally the central government sent an investigation team. Civil aviation officers and security officers were moved to study the feasibility of building an airport in the Loba Kingdom. Finally, the central government agreed to build a permanent airport in the Loba region. After a few months, the leadership of the central government changed and, due to security reasons the earlier decision to build a permanent airport in the Loba Kingdom was cancelled. But the local Loba view was different. The government postponed their decision to build an airport in the Loba region due to the pressure of the people of Jomsome (the people of the district headquarters – a lower belt than the Loba region). If a permanent airport was built in the Loba region, then the tourist flow to Jomsome would be reduce. The volume of tourists in the Loba region would be more than Jomsome. The people of Jomsome were one of the first groups to benefit from tourism. This issue suffered the Loba people by “anti-development factors” in their development process.

Together with the expansion of tourism, many modern facilities were introduced in the Loba Kingdom. Modernization was introduced through government, private enterprise, NGOs and at the community level. Various conservation and development programs started to operate. Communication services, like VHF telephone service and wireless communication service, started to operate.

Some of the international organizations like Global Environmental Fund, International Center for Integrated Mountain Development, Japanese Overseas Development Agency, The American Himalayan Foundation, United Nations Development Program have shown their interest to conduct various action programs with the collaboration of the Employment Promotion Bureau, District Development Office,

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<sup>28</sup> The Loba King is a member of “the Privy Council” of the central government of Nepal. The King of central Nepal is the great King of Nepal. The Great King is the head of the five Kings of Nepal. The Loba King is one of the five Kings in Nepal in present time. The status of the Loba King is legal in Nepal. The Loba King has social authority but not political or security authority. His status is honorary General of Royal Nepal Army.



Village Offices and Annapurna Conservation Area Project. To train Loba in tourism different governmental, private and non-governmental organizations conducted tourism-related training in cooking, baking, housekeeping, lodge management, and hotel management. These organizations, together with government organizations, conducted community development programs. Mother groups, forest conservation groups, consumers groups were formed. Literacy, health care, childcare, mothers' care activities were initiated after 1990s. In the past 10 year period, the Loba Kingdom has been opened for all interested groups. All these activities help to diversify the economy.

A diversified economy provides both development and anti-development (issue of a airport construction) opportunities for the Loba society as described above. Both development and anti development opportunities have been diversifying non-farm activities.

### **3.4 Evidence for change in marriage practices**

Polyandrous marriage in the Loba society has been changing into monogamous marriage. The TU study found that, out of 334 Loba females of age (20-49) years married between 1971-2000 period 38 % were married polyandrous, 30 % married monogamously and 32 % were "surplus", unmarried and Buddhist monks. The TU Study found that, on average, single woman shared 3 husbands. But some women have shared as many as 7 husbands (Table 7). In of marriages between 1971-91, about 30 % were polyandrous. The polyandrous marriage ratio fell to 8 % between the year 1991-2000. In the time period 1971-81, about 8 % of marriages were monogamous, but this number increased to 22 % between 1991-2000 (Table 1 and Table 2). In The Loba society the before 1991 was the polyandry transition period. The year 1991 was an intersection period between rapid polyandry transition and the polyandrous period in Loba society. Hence the polyandry transition is a recent phenomenon in Loba society.

The TU Study 2000 found that, before 1991, about 312 Loba males were married polyandrous between 1971-91, out of which 51 % were engaged in "nomadic-type animal husbandry", 12 % were engaged in long-distance trade and 37 % engaged in indigenous agriculture (Table 6). In the same time (1971-91), only a few Loba males

were married monogamously. Such non-polyandrous Loba males were engaged in active politics and business activities (Table 5).

Prior to the polyandry transition, traditional activities had been shifting from animal-based farm and pasture activities to non-farm and non-pasture activities like horse hiring to support tourists wanting to visit the Lo-kingdom. The TU quantitative survey found that around 25 % of the Loba males have been engaging in animal related tourist promotion activities. Around 9 % were engaged in trade activities, 19 % were engaged in their own hotel and lodge management, 23 % were engaged in governmental and non-governmental activities and 3 % were engaged in modern communication sector (Telephone/Telegraph) activities (Table 3). Hence in Loba society the rural economy seems to have diversified from a traditional-base to a more modern one. The shifting of the economy was from tradition based on nomadic-type animal husbandry to transportation-based animal husbandry after 1991. Such shifting of animal husbandry has been helping tourism promotion activities in Loba society. Animal husbandry is more important in Loba society than agricultural production. In Loba society, livestock activities produce an average income of NRs 10,118 per household in 1990, whereas agriculture produced only NRs 7,665 – a ratio of 4:3 (Blamont 1996: 1).

In the past, the sons and daughters of polyandrous fathers and polyandrous mothers (Table 11) performed most of the polyandrous marriages (78 %). Hence polyandry was an inter-generational phenomenon. But non-polyandrous fathers and mothers performed few (15 %) polyandrous marriages. “Surplus”, unmarried and Buddhist monks’ mothers (Table 11) performed very few (6 %) polyandrous marriages.

At the time of marriage, prior to polyandry transition, most of the couples were illiterate or literate at primary level. The TU study found that few literate and educated people were married polyandrous. Illiteracy is not the reasons for the existence of polyandry. In Loba society 4 % of males were polyandrous married, despite being educated at secondary level and above (Table 4-a). But non-polyandrous males were all literate or had above average educational status (Table 4-b). Some of the “surplus” females were also literate. Few (10%) have secondary education (Table 9).

Population Censuses in 1991 and 2001 shows that Loba society has lower literacy and educational status than national levels. Population Census 1991 shows that 28 % of Loba were literate. This number increased to 35 % in the 2001 Census. But the female literacy rate is low (below 20 %) in both Censuses. Few had entered higher education (Table 15). The national literacy rate was 40 % in the 1991 Census and 49 % in the 2001 Census. Village offices records show that 32 % of the male population had recorded their marital status as polyandrous (Table 12) in 2000. Similarly, 28 % of females had recorded their marital status as polyandrous (Table 13). Voter lists recorded that in 2000 around 8.7 % of males and 14.3 % of females were polyandrous (Table 14).

Although CEB per husband is not a common measurement in demography, but it is a relevant measurement to analyze polyandry. In Loba society the average number of Children Ever Born (CEB) per woman is 4.8 and the average number of children ever born per husband for polyandrous marriage is 2.4. Hence, on average, the polyandry system has reduced the 2 to 3 (average 2.4) births per husband (Table 10). One of the benefits of polyandrous marriage system is low number of children born per husband (average CEB per husbands). It was also one of the methods of population control in a high population growth and low land resource area. But women were found to suffer more in the polyandry system in household and social activities.

CEB of Loba society was similar to the CEB of Nepal. The population census 1991 found that the average CEB of Nepali women was 5.6 in 1991. Other studies, conducted in 1996 by Central Bureau of Statistics – Nepal (Nepal living standard survey 1996), found that the CEB of Nepali women was 4.8. Hence, birth trends of Loba women are similar to Nepali women.

### **3.5 Women's issues in polyandry**

Women are not legal owners of fixed property in Loba society. But women manage all available property in Loba society. Women are engaged in food processing, water collection, fuel management, agricultural activities, and community work. Preparing compost fertilizer or organic fertilizer is also women's responsibility. Leiven (1988:211) argued that these activities are women's "unpleasant or polluting tasks".



The Loba females also engaged in food processing, water collection, fuel management, and community work as forest management. Domestic work like washing, home cleaning, clothes cleaning, cooking are also females responsibilities. Some of the Loba females engaged in carpet manufacturing, and herbal plant collection activities. Adding all together these activities between males and females; The TU study 2000 found that females work 4.5 hours more than males. Levine (1988:211-215) argued that, in polyandry society, men undertake some of these tasks occasionally, but not very happily. Households can not survive without the labor of adult women. As argued by Prince Peter (1963: 531-534), in polyandrous society women do not enjoy status- superiority or even egalitarian status with men. Women have superior status in polyandry when they have rights over property (ibid: 315). Luintel (2000:30) argued that property is the base of polyandry where women's economic interests are largely ignored and marginalised for the sake of so-called fraternal solidarity. So in the polyandry system women are exploited in various ways. Unmarried and "surplus" females in also engage all households' activities together with the polyandrous wife. Female children help with cooking. They also help with kitchen-garden activities of households. Female children also take care younger children. Male children also participated in these activities. Child labor is in excess in Loba society.

The TU Study 2000 found that the common wife designated who is whose father or son(s) in the household to their son(s) or daughter(s). In the polyandry system, common children called senior husband "the father" and other brothers were called "uncle", even if the junior husband may be their actual father. All brothers treat their common wife equally and the wife may be happy with all her husbands. Furer et al. (1964 cited by Crook 1987: 43) studied Sherpa's polyandry in Nepal and found that many girls preferred to marry with two brothers to improve economic prospects and to enjoy the advantages of a younger husbands in later years. He found that a woman's traditional attitude was based on expectations of higher standards of living in polyandry. Furer et al. argued that polyandry provided effective maintenance of the home and continued sexual life to Sherpa's women community. Furer et al. found that some women of the Sherpa community left a single husband in order to marry two brothers. But this is not similar to the Loba cases. In some cases, as many as even 10

husbands are sharing a common wife<sup>29</sup>. The birth of 10 children is common in polyandrous society.

It is believed in polyandrous society that no two siblings should sleep in a single bed at the same time. It might bring ill health, loss of herds, loss of profit in trade and other such harms (Luintel, 2000:40). It is also believed that if more than one-husband stays at home for a longer period than one month, it is also harmful for Loba life (Luintel, 2000:40). Hence each brother has to sleep separately. Sometimes the polyandrous wife shares more than one husband in a single night. Women offer a particular husband for a particular night. Women are responsible to share sexual activities with particular husbands. But some times, junior co-husbands shows are too aggressive for sexual intercourse. In such cases, wife has to understand him for sexual intercourse (Luintel, 2000:41).

The marital sexuality of Loba women gives rights to engage with multiple husbands. Due to the practice of polyandry, Loba men and women have developed multi-sexual partner habits. Loba society is open sexual intercourse society. In terms of sexual relationships. The Loba society is a liberal society<sup>30</sup>. Generally, sexual relationships happened between polyandrous junior brothers and "surplus" women. Sexual relation is common beyond the married couples also. Generally, sexual relation occurred between Loba males and females. But sexual relations are also common for outsiders who come from to live in the Loba Kingdom. Monogamous married couples are also practicing extra-marital sexual relationships. The diversified economy and tourism development also encourages sexual activity in Loba society. After the development of tourism, prostitution has been increasing in Lobas society (TU study, 2000).

Some cases<sup>31</sup> of polyandry and women's issues in polyandry system:

A case of Pangila : Pangila had married at the age of 17 with the senior son of a household in 1973. Four brothers of her husband had been sharing her as common wife. Pangila's older son and her younger husband are the same age. She doesn't like to accept the younger husband similar to her younger son's age. But she has been

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<sup>29</sup> Deshantar weekly (Sept 9, 2001) reported that, in Nepal, 10 husbands are sharing a single common wife in the polyandry system.

<sup>30</sup> Sherpa community was polyandrous until the last decade of 1960. Their polyandrous marriage changed into monogamous marriage after the development of tourism. They have also had an open and liberal sexual culture until now.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid



compelled to agree by households and society. Pangila has been accepting five husbands without her consent. Pangila said that she has been accepting polyandry without her consent. She does not recommend that her daughter and son marry polyandrously in the future.

Kamala also disagreed with the polyandry system. Kamala married with the senior son of a family at the age of 21 in 1997. Then, after she shared seven more husbands (all together 8). Kamala said that the polyandry system needed to be reformed and women must be given rights to marry a single husband.

The case of Tara is more painful than others. Tara is an educated woman. She had married recently at the age of 23 in 1997 with the senior son of a household. Before marriage Tara had never thought that she would be a polyandrous wife. Presently she has been sharing seven husbands. At the beginning, she was against the polyandry system and against sharing her body with seven husbands. Once some one is married there is no divorce in the polyandry society. Finally, Tara can not do anything except accept the polyandry system. She has changed her view towards polyandry. Now, by compulsion Tara is in favor of polyandry. She has become a supporter of polyandry. She is easily accepting polyandry and related social activities.

Dolma had married polyandrously with four husbands in 1991 by her consent at the age of 20. In the beginning, she was happy with the polyandry system; when she was able to make all husbands happy and treat them equally. This situation may not always remain the same, if Dolma is unable to treat all husbands equally. Then Dolma found it difficult to accept all brothers as husbands. She only wanted to treat one brother as husband and the rest of other brothers have to be away to share her body. But society and her family did not accept her view. Then she left her husband's home. Dolma felt that her body was very weak and she was not able to share four husbands together. Luckily, her father and mother agreed that she could return to live with them. The case<sup>32</sup> of Sonam Dhuka Wangdi: an employer (male) in the Telephone Office had married monogamously in his four brother's family. He doesn't like to share the wife of his senior brother(s). Although his father and mother were polyandrous. He doesn't like to share his wife by his brothers. He is in favor of monogamous marriage. He is educated employed and he knows that HIV/AIDS

would transmit through polyandrous intercourse. But he knew that his non-polyandrous wife had been sharing his non-polyandrous brothers since long ago. Finally Sonam concluded that in Loba society, in polyandry transition cases, wife sharing by polyandrous brothers and non-polyandrous brothers is similar to polyandrous cases before the polyandry transition. In his view, the only progress in the polyandry transition period is recognition of monogamous marriage instead of polyandrous marriage. But sexual habits are similar to those between polyandrous brothers.

Some of the polyandrous women and non-polyandrous women are against the polyandrous system. In some cases, polyandrous wives are in favor of a single husband and polyandrous husbands are in favor of a single wife. Polyandrous wives are demanding a single husband. Polyandrous husbands are demanding a single wife.

In polyandrous culture, some of the couples had married non-polyandrously in Humla Nepal<sup>33</sup> (other than Lobas society). The polyandrous society did not give them any assets like land that was taken from their ancestors. Such polyandrous couples had started common farming systems in land provided by the District Office in Humla Nepal. Some non-governmental organizations are assisting these anti-polyandrous couples. The number of such couples has been increasing in the polyandrous zone Humla. Such activities have not been developed yet in Loba society. In Kimangthan<sup>34</sup> Nepal (a polyandrous society other than Loba society) some of the educated people have left their village in rural areas and they stay in urban areas and marry non-polyandrously. Some of the educated males can not leave their village and are still practicing polyandry. Males educated to SLC level are still following polyandrous culture.

Some of the polyandrous and non-polyandrous members of society are also demanding a single wife and husband system. Polyandrous couples argued that “they have to be given rights to marriage monogamously”<sup>35</sup>. Polyandrous women argued that in polyandry system they have to share many husbands, due to which their

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<sup>32</sup> TU Study 1999/2000.

<sup>33</sup> Kantipur daily newspaper (28 Oct 2000).

<sup>34</sup> Kantipur daily news paper (Sept 3, 2001).

<sup>35</sup> Ibid

physical condition will be weak. Women are not capable of sharing many husbands and have to endure more births. Women want to reform polyandrous customs. Even polyandrous men want to reform polyandrous customs<sup>36</sup>. But some men and some women are able to break the polyandrous customs. Even educated males and females do not like this polyandry culture but they are following the tradition. Some of the capable men and women have broken the polyandrous customs.

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<sup>36</sup> *ibid*



## Chapter 4: Understanding the Polyandry Transition

### 4.1 Issues of polyandry transition

Previously the Loba society was polyandrous due to consequences of three-commodity bundle function – political, legal and economic system.

*Politically*, Loba society practiced a dual system (1) national politics – where the entire polyandrous nation exercises a partyless and autocratic system ruled by an absolute monarchy in Nepal and (2) local politics – where the Loba King ruled on every social and political institution of their lives.

*Legally*, a dual political system gives mandate to exercise two types of law in the Loba society; (1) national law – land and other property can be divide between ancestor based on claim. To practice and implement national law the state has to provide its law and implementing institutions like legal and administrative units. Until now nobody has claimed their inheritance property rights based on the national law system in Loba society and (2) by customary law – a verbal law and practiced based on custom and tradition that does not allow dividing land and other property between all ancestors. Customary law does not allow dividing land and property from father to all sons and daughters. Only the elder or senior son has customary rights to acquire inheritance property.

*Economically*, the Loba earning and management system was based on three resources: farming, long distance trade and nomadic animal husbandry. The ownership of these three resources was father or junior/elder brother. Other sons and daughters have no ownership rights to above mention economic resources. Other members of the households have to work as unpaid household worker. But the household provides all necessary commodities for family members. Household based production and consumption systems are adopted by the Loba society. Household's interests was people's interests.

Loba people were supported by the commodity bundle on the base of previous political, legal and economic supporting systems. Between the period of 1960 to 1990 major socio- political change occurred in the Loba Kingdom and it's surrounding. In this period the previous Tibetan political power was replaced by a new and strong communist system. Before 1990, Nepal's political system was based on partyless and



absolute monarchy system. The people's popular movement of 1990 replaced Nepal's political system from party less absolute monarchy system to multi -party based constitutional monarchy system. Impact of a national political system occurred in the Loba society. Previously the Loba people were united under the Loba King. When Nepal adopted a multi-party system; Loba people divided according to national political parties. Debate and dialogue started between Lobas people on the issue of politics. Such debate and dialogue on political issues trickledown on other aspects of society and social life. After re-establishment<sup>37</sup> of a multi party system in Nepal in 1990. Within a short interval from 1990 to 2000; people including the Loba population, voted three times for national assembly election and two times for a local body election based on a multi-party system. These five elections and other political activities created many computations, debates, dialogue, crisis, conflicts, bargaining, and negotiation and resistance power on the life of the Loba people. These factors spreads and trickle-down on other aspects of the Loba life. The implication of these changes started to spread on other social factors of life of Loba people.

Many legal systems changed in the national level but any significant change can not be seen on the Loba life until now. Previous customary law is still in practice.

Together with major political change, major resources and economic changes were seen on the Loba society. Previous commodity bundles disappeared. Major economic activities and long distance trade completely collapsed. China blocked its traditional trade route with Nepal after the 1959s political change in Tibet. Demand of traditional Tibetan salt reduced when Indian salt spread in hilly Nepal. Due to scarcity of animal pastureland; animal husbandry collapsed. Previous types of commodity system almost collapsed between 1960-90. Economically a new commodity boundless and new supporting system developed in Loba society together with the collapse of the previous organizational system. Basically two economic opportunities developed in the Loba society (1) tourism, and (2) diversified economy. Tourism provided new work opportunity on new sectors like hotel business, porter, horse hiring, and animal based transportation. Ownership of these activities remains with the individual, not with households.

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<sup>37</sup> Nepal has exercised multi party system between 1949 to 1959.

Nepalese political change of 1990 opened the Loba Kingdom for all, and diversified economy occurred in many sectors. A market economy expanded due to the increase of modern Chinese goods. Self-employment opportunities were available for the little skilled manpower by conducting their own hotels; lodges and other tourism based trade activities. Unskilled manpower also benefited by acquired porter jobs. So that new opportunity trade based entitlement (management of small hotels, restaurants, lodges and tourism based service activities like horse hiring) and own labor entitlement (porter service) has been available after opening up for tourism business. Many NGOs and community organizations expanded their activities. Many service opportunities were available for local Loba. Service activities, tourism movement and trade activities increase the income of the people. The Loba people gained income by their own knowledge; own labor, own ideas but they do not receive by their inheritance side. So that ownership of newly gained income and new activities belongs within individual but they do not receive by their not household. Household head can not claim ownership of these newly gained activities. Newly unmarried Loba males and females run new activities by their action, power, and struggle. Unmarried Loba claim ownership of newly developed opportunity through their demand, extract, request, struggle, pressure, bargaining, resistance within himself or herself or within society in an organized way.

Such newly gained economic benefit finally utilized to change their polyandrous marriage system to monogamous marriage system. Previously Loba junior brothers and sisters may not have claimed their ownership in land due to lack of resources or production. Without sufficient yields claim is not possible in the general sense. But claim means not only consumption of existed resources, but also the creation of new resources. Loba society was polyandrous previously due to lack of claim. Lobas has not claimed to create new resources. Loba has not claimed to consume existed land, trade and animal husbandry. Claim was lack on both production and consumption sectors. Loba were polyandrous in the past due to lack of claim, action, power, struggle, protection, demand, request, pressure, bargaining and resistance. Summing up these words, the Loba were polyandrous due to failure of entitlement. The polyandrous nature of the Loba has been changing into monogamy after gaining entitlement.

The entitlement approach to polyandry transition concentrate on ability of people to command individual property and assets ownership through the legal means available in the society including possible factors to run separate households. A man is polyandrous because he does not have the ability to command separate households due to lack of individual endowments in the past. If lack of land endowment can be substituted by other endowments; polyandrous life of a person can be changed.

Prior to a polyandry transition in the Loba society, traditional organizations were a means of surviving people. Ownership of traditional activities (nomadic animal husbandry, long distance trade and indigenous agriculture) was the household. People were engaging these activities as unpaid household labor. Hence, assets and individual ownership bundle lacked for each and every adult. Due to an endowment vector collapses (individual property right collapses) Lobas society was polyandrous.

Prior to a development-diversified economy; it is necessary to analyze the existence life supporting system in Loba society. The polyandry system was a by-product of existed ownership systems. The major cause of existed polyandry, as explained in earlier sections, is the lack of individual (18 years and above age's males) inheritance, and transfer entitlement and lack of individual livelihood factors. Polyandry marriage system in Loba society was developed as a self-organizing social system. One of the important components of self-organizing Loba society were senior (elder) brothers. The senior brothers have attitude to utilize household power and assets individually rather than distributing between brothers. Such attitude was rooted in culture. Such power-utilizing attitudes might have developed as a part of customary laws in the Loba society. The customary laws provided legacy to senior brothers to utilize household powers. The elder brother has customary rights to utilize unlimited household's income. Other junior brothers might have been excluded to utilizing household assets. The senior brother(s) entitled by such unlimited households' power either, fought in ancient time or philosophers might have developed such a philosophy and the society might have taken inertia of polyandrous culture. At the same time junior brother(s) might have lost all their personal entitlement because they were defeated in war or philosophers might have developed such a social system. Junior brothers might have lost all their personal initiatives and resistance. Junior brothers

might have been excluded from access to resources to run separate households. Junior brothers might have been unable to run an economy effectively. Such a polyandry system was developed and takes "social inertia" at the stage of non-functioning state. The role of modern state was completely absent in that time. In such situations, private initiative has virtually collapsed all the households' power and assets were captured by one of the household members (senior brother) and social and economic inequality within the households was predominant.

The struggle for a right to monogamous marriage is a struggle against the legality of polyandrous customs and established universal socio-economic rights. In polyandrous culture; individual needs are denied on the basis of custom. Anti-polyandrous struggles have been raised in Loba kingdom since last 20-25 years. Local schoolteachers and local policemen all have come from outside the Lo-Kingdom. Generally these go to Lo-kingdom with their single wife. This increases the visibility and attraction of monogamous marriage to polyandrous Loba. Similarly local teachers diffuse anti-polyandry views in society. Generally local School's teachers have high respect for Loba society. Anti-polyandrous view generally diffuses to society through local schoolteachers. Some of the educated Loba educated people returned from the capital Kathmandu after completing higher education. They also spread anti-polyandrous thought where diffused into society. Some of the NGOs and INGOs also campaign anti-polyandrous programs in Lo-Kingdom. Due to preference of anti-polyandrous thought; some of energetic local youth groups organized drama programs and concert programs about anti-polyandry. Hence anti-polyandrous struggles on a low scale diffuse into Loba society. These anti-polyandrous struggles also help to reduce the speed of polyandrous marriage in the Loba society. These anti-polyandrous struggles are also the major component of entitlement. These anti-polyandrous struggles are not capable to change the polyandrous customs but are able to increase self-interest and able to justify individual freedom and choice.

The new benefited younger group became organized and benefited like never before in the history of Lo-Population. After they achieved new opportunities, new entitlement, new unmarried groups became more economically independent. This economic independence has been gaining by legal ways. Until now only the national laws legalize this independence. Laws and power both played a common role for



economic achievement. After gaining economic achievement unmarried Loba started to marry separately. The marriage system started to change from Polyandry to monogamy. Polyandry transition started initially from the road adjacent areas and for the more dynamic (elite) group. Polyandry transition occurred after gaining entitlement. Entitlement is an on going process. The new generations are not likely to practice the polyandrous marriage system.

## **4.2 Conclusion**

Polyandry and it's activities of Loba society is based on a common social system rather than an individual system. Polyandry transition was based on development of individualism rather than commonhood. The cause of commonhood was outcome of the failure of individualism, failure of entitlement. The commonhood of the household developed to an extent and the outcome is practice of polyandry. Due to commonhood nature, all household activities managed commonly in the previous polyandry system. The group of fathers' and social fathers' system in polyandry is the outcome of a commonhood household system. The commonhood system reduces jealousy in the polyandrous society, so that a biological father has no significant meaning and role than a social father. Polyandrous Loba society has lower jealousy than other societies. Due to a low degree of jealousy in Loba society, female status seems higher than other societies. Sexual intercourse accounts for pleasure mechanism rather than harassment mechanism. Loba females has been taking more pleasure by "cash down" sexual intercourse than other social groups. Due to an open sexual environment 'single mothers' are common in Loba society. Single mother phenomena is rare in other social groups in Nepal except the polyandrous or former polyandrous groups. Due to accessibility of contraceptives methods mainly Condoms, single mothers seems to be decreasing even in Loba society. The polyandry is disappearing not only due to economic development but also due to widespread contraception. Within a few years sibling brothers will not see it in any households in Loba society. The polyandry will automatically reduce.



### **4.3 Further Research Questions**

Due to certain limitations, this study has not answered all question of cause of existence of polyandry as I had expected. I have to leave many important questions unanswered. Basically, this study is very weak on gender and women issue of polyandry. For example what is happening on the divorcees and separation phenomena on Lobas polyandry after the polyandry transition ? What is happening on surplus unmarried women in Loba society after the polyandry transition ? Is the number of Buddhist nuns declining together with polyandry transition ?. Besides these questions, this study has not answered many other aspects. This study does not answer the issue of balance between sex and property ? Is there a sexual transition occurring in Loba society together with a polyandry transition ? After a polyandry transition, what will happen if tourism and the market economy collapse ? Will Loba returned in polyandry path or not ? These are important questions, which I can not answer now. I expect to answer them in the future research.

### **4.4 Policy Implications**

Loba society has exercised sexual freedom during a polyandrous period and after a polyandry transition. The Loba male and female have been utilizing advantage of sexual freedom. Basically this sexual freedom raised status of women nearly similar to men in the Loba society. The issue of sexual freedom reduces jealous between each and every member of society. Nobody take cares that have established sexual relations with whom. This stage is a precondition for social progress for society. The Loba case on sexual issue is a model and can be replicated to other social groups. Freedom of women provides opportunity to keep sexual relationship with each social division like cast, ethnic groups, race, and color. If women gained entitlement to keep sexual intercourse with each and every cast, race, ethnic group or any division of society according to women's wishes; society will be homogenous after a few generations in terms of division. After the homogenization of societies there will be no division on the issue of cast, ethnicity, race, and color. Society will get cross race, cross ethnicity, cross color and cross culture. Jealous between social division will be reducing for every sector on society. In such a situation, society can invest their

energy, time, resources and money for construction of society rather than division and destruction. Freedom of the sex especially for women is a way of the homogenizing the society between different divisions.

## Appendix

### Tribhuvan University Survey 1999-2000

Table 1 : Date and types of marriage of the Loba females born between 1951-80  
(Current age 20-49 yrs )

Marital Type\Year	2000-96	1996-91	1991-86	1986-81	1981-76	1976-71	Total
1.Polyandry	6	8	25	19	23	46	127
2.Non.Polyandry(monogamous)	41	34	14	8	3	2	102
3.Surplus, unmarried, Buddhist Monks	3	7	18	16	18	43	105
Total	50	49	57	43	44	91	334

Table 2: Date and types of marriage of females born between 1951-80 (current age 20-49 years and expressed in percentage)

Marital Type\Year	1991-2000	1971-1991	1971-2000
1.Polyandrous	14.1	48	38
2.Non-Polyandrous(Monogamous)	75.7	11.5	30.5
3.Unmarried,Surplus and Buddhist Monks	10.2	40.5	31.5
4.Total	100.00	100.00	100.00

Table 3: Occupation at the time of marriage of the non-polyandrous couple's prior to polyandry transition

Occupation	Male No. (%)	Female No. (%)	Total
1.Own horse hiring	7 (9.3%)		
2.Employed in horse hiring	12 (16.0%)		
3.Transportation by animals (horse, Donkey, Mules)	8 (10.6%)		
4.Trading	7 (9.3%)	7 (29.2)	
5.Porter	14 (18.6%)		
6.Own Hotel Management	8 (10.6%)	8 (33.3%)	
7.Employed in Communication	2 (2.6%)		
8.NGO/INGO employed	11 (14.6%)	6 (25%)	
9.Government Employed (Post office, teacher, Forest Management)	6 (8.4%)	3 (12.5%)	
Total	75 (100%)	24 (100%)	

Table 4 : Education status of the non-polyandrous couples prior to the polyandry transition

Education Status	Male No. (%)	Female No. (%)	Total
Literacy	8 (10.7%)	17 (22.6%)	
Primary	35 (46.6%)	46 (61.3%)	
Secondary	22 (29.3%)	12 (16.1%)	
SLC Passed	5 (6.6%)		
IA	2 (2.6%)		
BA	2 (2.6%)		
Overseer	1 (1.3%)		
Total	75 (100%)	75 (100%)	

Table 5 : Occupation of the non-polyandrous marriage prior to transition

Occupation/Life style	No. of cases (%)
1. Active politics	8 (29.6%)
2. Business outside Lobas kingdom	9 (33.3%)
3. Politics and Business	10 (37.1%)
Total	27 (100%)

Table 6 : Education status of surplus, unmarried and Buddhist monk's women

Education	Cases (%)
Illiterate	54 (51.4%)
Literate	21 (20%)
Primary	18 (17.1%)
Secondary	7 (9.6%)
Total	105 (100%)

Table 7 : The polyandrous women sharing more than one polyandrous husbands

Husbands cases	No. of wives	No. of husbands
Two	69	138
Three	33	99
Four	12	48
Five	8	40
Six +	5	30 +
Total	127	355 +

Average Polyandrous husbands per woman is 2.8 +



Table 8 : The polyandrous women sharing more than one the polyandrous husbands e prior to transition ( 1971-91).

Husbands cases	No. of wives	No. of husbands
Two	65	130
Three	29	87
Four	6	24
Five	8	40
Six +	5	30 +
Total	113	312 +

Table 9 : Occupation of the polyandrous Loba married prior to transition (1971-91)

Occupation/Life style	No. of cases	(%)
1. Nomadic type animal husbandry	159	(51%)
2. Long distance trade	37	(12%)
3. Indigenous agriculture	116	(37.%)
Total	312	(100%)

Table:10 The average Children Everborn (CEB) of the Loba females aged (15-49) years and their marital type

Marital type	No. of cases	Average CEB	Average CEB per husbands
1.Polyandrous	148	6.7/2.8	2.4
2.Non-polyandrous (monogamous)	117	4.8	4.8
3.Surplus, unmarried and Buddhist monks	124	2.4	Unavailable
4.Total	389	4.8	

Average CEB per husband's difference between polyandrous and monogamous women is 5.0



Table 11 : Typology of the marriage matrix of the Loba females born between 1951-80 (current age 20-49 yrs )

Marital Type	Polyandrous Father	Polyandrous mother	Non-polyandrous father (monogamous father)	Non-polyandrous mother	Surplus, unmarried and Buddhists monks	Total
1.Polyandrous	43	56	7	13	8	127
2.Non-polyandrous (monogamous )	9	7	38	32	18	102
3.Surplus, unmarried and Buddhists monks.	5	3	16	12	69	105
4. Total	57	66	61	57	95	334

Table 12 : Marital types of the Loba males irrespective of age (%)

Matital Type	1986	1996	2000
Polyandrous	34.7	34.2	31.8
Non-polyandrous	22.4	26.6	26.7
Unmarried	42.9	38.9	41.3
Widow	-	0.3	0.2
Divorced/Separated	-	-	-
Total	2364	2818	3189

Table 13 :Marital type of the Loba females irrespective of age (%)

Marital Type	1986	1996	2000
Polyandrous	36.5	32.3	28.4
Non-polyandrous	17.4	27.6	33.7
Unmarried	45.9	39.6	37.4
Widow	0.2	0.5	0.5
Divorced/Separated	-	-	-
Total	2202	2667	2873

Table 14 : Marital characteristics of the Loba Kingdom age 18 years and above based on the Voter list

Marital Type	1996 (Males)	2000(Males)	1996(Females)	2000(Females)
Polyandrous	13.2	8.7	14.3	10.2
Non-polyandrous(monogamous)	64.4	64.9	64.0	71.0
Unmarried	22.4	26.8	21.7	18.8
Total	1932	2184	1898	2270

Table 15 : The Educational Status of the Loba kingdom based on Population Censuses

Education Status	1991		2001	
	Males	Females	Males	Females
1. SLC	45	1	60	12
2. IA	21	-	38	6
3. BA	9	-	18	2
4. MA	-	-	3	1

Table 16 : The population size and sex ratio of the Loba Kingdom based on the Population censuses

Sex	1981	1991	2001*
1. Males	2293	2461	2709
2. Females	2271	2478	2693
3. Sex ratio	100	99.3	100

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