THE CHANGING CULTURAL SPACES IN A THARU

VILLAGE OF SEHARI

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DECLARATION

I hereby proclaim that this dissertation bears originality on its own and I, thereby, declare that no part of this dissertation was submitted for the candidature of any other degree to any other university.

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the *Tharu* people of the Sehari Village.

AN ABSTRACT

Of the dissertation of *Emil Shrestha* for the degree of Master of Sustainable Development presented at Kathmandu University School of Education, on 17 August 2022

Title: *The Changing Cultural Spaces in a Tharu Village of Sehari*

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The traditional indigenous socio-cultural spaces are changing in the contemporary contexts, mostly owing to the globalized phenomenon of modernization. In this pretext, the cultural spaces and constructs associated with them are transformed, adulterated and misinterpreted which have impended threats on the cultural values, systems, knowledge and identities peculiar to the thriving indigenous ethnic communities. This work seeks to study the sociocultural aspects in the traditional indigenous spaces and reciprocally the influences of spaces on the sociocultural aspects of life. The study attempts to understand how both of them are changing with the progressing times. Literatures on significances of culture and traditions, influences on cultures, cultural shifts, anthropological concepts of spaces and embodied spaces with reference to culture are studied to set the base for the research. A *Tharu* community in the village of Sehari was studied using ethnographic methodology. The research shows that the changes in both the spaces and the traditional socio-cultural aspects of living are pertinent. Such changes are influenced by the pushing factors within the internal complexities of the culture and spaces that the community thrives in and by the pulling factors which are supported by the

external factors in the global spaces. The study signifies that the understanding of interrelationship between culture and spaces in a progressing community is crucially important to value and promote the embedded indigenous knowledge and identity of the community for sustainable development.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Communities around the globe are constantly evolving to strive in the changing contexts with their own culture and traditional knowledge. Culture and tradition collectively represent the communities and guides their ways of living as they strive along. In the progressing times, communities are revisiting and reconsidering their native cultures and traditional knowledge to continue with their existences. But, as the communities progress, they've cared less to reflect on the past and acknowledge what they had and what they were in the past. They've lagged behind to acknowledge that their present is a derivative of their past actions. They're changing their identities and leaving behind what they had already known about endeavoring the human civilization. This has left most of the communities to question on their own sustenance as the world goes on transforming with the temporal progressions. In this context, revisiting and reconsiderations of socio-cultural aspects of living are seen prominently important.

The traditional spaces and constructs have always been an integral aspects of the human socio-cultural living and progressions. As the societies are transforming with the changing times, the traditional spaces are also changing, often being neglected and misinterpreted. This has impended threats on cultural identities, socio-cultural functioning in the traditional spaces and associated indigenous knowledge. These are related with the 'sense of belonging' and collective consciences of the community which encourages them for political dialogues for their collective well-being and development. Likewise, the knowledge and practices associated with the traditional spatial constructs are found to be sympathetic and humble to the

environment. In this pretext, this thesis aims to explore the changes in the traditional spaces and associated socio-cultural aspects in the progressing times. The study focuses on the extents of changes being practiced in the modern developmental paradigm and analyze the praxis in an evolving traditional community.

The study starts with my personal experiences and interests in the transforming traditional spatial constructs. Several literatures are referred to understand the concepts of spaces and cultures and related transformational dynamics. I find the subjectivity of the spaces and their constructs, their concepts, formation and transformational processes in relation to the temporal values and progressions are feebly discussed in most of the existing literatures. For a clearer understanding on the issue, I have attempted to examine a transforming *Tharu* community in their traditional settlements. I find that the traditional vernacular spatial fabrics of the communities are adulterating with their traditional socio-cultural aspects as the community continues to homogenize to become a part of the modern society. In the process, I've found several push and pull factors for the changes and several modes of alterations in the traditional spatial constructs as well as the related socio-cultural aspects.

Context

After five long years of university education, I graduated as an architect in 2014. Like every other fresh graduate, I aspired to design modern contemporary buildings that flaunt sophisticated engineered structures, concrete volumes and shimmering glassy metallic skins. It was largely the university curriculum that developed an infatuation in me towards the modern design trend. The curriculum mostly focused on the Western Architectural histories, design philosophies, theories and modern construction technologies. Although, there were a few of the courses on

the regional vernacular architecture, Eastern Architectural histories and philosophies, the orthodox contemporary design trends in the evolving design market in the country had my interests.

I grew up playing around the traditional houses, temples, streets, *hitis*, *patis*, wells, *chowks* and squares in the traditional towns of the Kathmandu Valley. The traditional architectures of the valley were a part of my daily humdrum childhood. I was familiar with the archetypes of the traditional constructs - the repeating material palettes, layouts, forms and features. Studying the same in the formal education, although broadened my understanding of the stories and sciences backing them. They failed to please my visual and experiential appetite. Those traditional structures had been there, since hundreds of years ago, before I came into existence. Nevertheless, for a young growing millennial, tantalized by the western pop-cultures and evolving revolutionary design-technologies, they were only the remnants from the past. They bored my growing consciences as they could offer nothing new. My interests in the traditional architectural glories and the regional vernacular structures were confined to visualizing them in the romanticized paintings, photographs, stories, and folklores only.

As I started practicing architecture, I was appealed to designing new trendy, flamboyant concrete houses with shimmering glasses on facades. For a designer, architect or engineer building such houses have been an easy livelihood option, an opportunity to explore one's creativity, gain experiences with new materials and technologies and if lucky, earn some fame as well. The modern architecture has become the only viable options for the urban population to build and living in one of those '*dhalan ghar'* has always been associated with scaling up their social prestige.

The modern contemporary trends of concrete building in the country is new and can be traced back to the years of 1940s and 50s, when the country was opening to the international forum to bring in the modern development. Initially it was the government that adopted the modern construction practices for large infrastructures. The affluent society in the country soon followed the new construction practices as an avant-garde in the growing urban areas of the medieval towns of the country. As it followed, the modern construction practices became a status symbol of affluence and modernity in the progressing Nepali society. Gradually around the 1980s, when the country extensively liberalized the market, extended trade and commerce with global communities, it became more convenient for the Nepalese to get the taste of the imported modernity and development. With the booming communication networks and fast adaptations of the new advents in the sciences and technologies, soon everyone wanted to be in the race to be more modern and developed. The modern contemporary construction practices easily became one of the means for the Nepalese. As the urbanization rapidly spiked in the country, the globally connected market, guided by the ethics of mass consumerism, conveniently catered to fulfill the modern urban needs and demands for the construction industries.

On the other hand, the myopic government leaderships tempted to the modern western development patterns failed to recognize the significances of the traditional construction practices and administer them in the development processes. The development process, a mere mockery of western nations that focused on highways and skyscrapers, failed to introduce the policies and curriculums to signify the importance and roles of the traditional construction practices in development beside, objectifying them to conservational pieces for viewing and storytelling the past.

Growing up in this context, I found the modern contemporary designs and constructs sugary while I barely attempted exploring the traditional constructs.

However, in the following years after my graduation, my perception towards the traditional built spaces and structures changed. The earthquake in April devastated the country, took thousands of lives and grounded thousands of houses and other built structures. It was during this devastating time that, I found myself in despair to be walking on the glorified traditional structures reduced to rubbles and dusts. I was heartbroken to be looking at the dilapidated structures, hardly managing to stand upright. As I strolled around, I had to relentlessly unfold my memories of the places where once the traditional built structures existed showcasing the centuries old testaments of arts, cultures and histories. The traditional architecture that previously I once ignored, then offered to freshen the 'sense of belonging to' and the identity of the regional natives, with its disappearance. In the following days, I found the concerns of the locals grew suddenly towards their traditional spaces as their culture, traditions, values, beliefs and identity was at stake.

In the aftermath, I had opportunity to volunteer in a few of the villages in the outskirts of the valley; rebuilding a few of the shelters. In the devastated traditional settlements, it was common to observe the regional vernacular houses built out of stones and wood reduced to rubbles or standing with damages, some with beyond repair while some with minor cracks. The tragedy had left the villagers to shelter under make-shift temporary shacks built out of corrugated tin sheets in their patio areas. While I worked for a year and half in the villages, I observed that the villagers were adapting themselves to the new living conditions, was continuing their daily works in the farms and related daily house chores from their small tin shacks. This had me imagine what it was like when they used to be living in their stone built

traditional vernacular houses. How would they be continuing their daily livings from their authentically built traditional vernacular houses? While I wondered such, I had a few opportunities to visit some traditional vernacular houses that survived the quake with minor damages. Inside, I saw the spaces were planned, schemed and used intentionally to function their daily living based on agricultural practices while they made the best use of the locally available resources. They had a small firewood stove in a corner, a corner for water containers, another corner and niches for their farm tools, a ladder leading to their private sleeping areas upstairs and a large open space in the center for family gatherings, all rendered in mud on the ground floor. The inside was accessed from a porch raised on a plinth and adjacent to their open ground floor was their cattle shed separated by thick stone walls. This had me comprehend the role of built spaces in the functioning of daily living practices of people or simply, the culture.

On a similar note, I remember my family's traditional house which was flattened to the ground by the quake. The house was around a century old where my grandparents grew up and where my family members used to gather for the festivities, ritual ceremonies, and other special occasions. The four and a half-storied house followed a typical archetype of a *Newar's* traditional house, built out of clay bricks, mud mortar and timber. The house was street facing with large carved wooden windows to peep out and observe the festivals '*jatras'* performed on the streets. The interior with mud rendered walls, earthen tiles on the floors and the timber posts supporting the low height ceiling composed a 'spirit of the place', providing a warm, cozy ambience unique to the culture of the *Newars*. The house embodied the socio-cultural aspects of a *Newar* family in its spatial fabrics. For example, I recall the days of my amusement, when the elders referred a small opening formed by semi-curved

terracotta as "*bhau-pwa*", meaning an opening for cats. What I once thought as a gesture made for animals to come through was actually an architectural feature used for ventilation specifically for a firewood fueled mud stove. I acknowledge the true purposes of several such spatial features of the house which were interconnected with the day to day living practices of the elders back in their times. The house was a manifestation of a *Newar* community's indigenous knowledge of building science intertwined with the cultural fabrics.

While I was volunteering at a few of the disaster-stricken areas, managing the rubbles, salvaging the pieces of the traditional built structures and rebuilding a few of them, it struck my mind that the lives of the people associated with those traditional spatial constructs weren't going to be the same. It was found that the people affected by the earthquake were less interested in building their traditional houses, and more interested in rebuilding public traditional structures. Apart from them, in the contemporary times there are only handful of people who would build authentic traditional vernacular houses and would live in them. I find majority of the people are infatuated with the modern concrete building construction techniques and the pride that would tag along when dwelling in one of those. Additionally, it is more convenient to have access to and use the resources to build the houses in modern contemporary style rather than building in an old school traditional vernacular style. The mushrooming modern concrete structures in the urban areas have become a common phenomenon, as more Nepalese aspire to live an American dream ushered by the global wave of modernization. Meanwhile, people in the villages don't find it absurd to be mocking the urban lifestyles and be living in concrete houses in the middle of their paddy fields. It is perplexing to think, in which of the concrete rooms they have their livestock and in which they cook, eat and sleep!

Beside these, it is also common to find the interventions in the traditional vernacular spatial constructs to adjust and adapt to the modernity to the possible extents, to meet the needs of the time. It is obvious for these houses be connected to the electrical grids, have gas or electric stoves in the kitchen, toilet adjusted in the ground floor and similar other improvisations. In a different scenario, there are exceptional cases of continuation and gaudy promotions of the traditional spatial fabrics, where they are simply put on as a mockery, a dummy for a glamorous display of the romantic nostalgic aesthetics. For example, the newly constructed houses in the traditional Newari style in the historical part of the towns in the valley boasts intricately decorated wooden windows which were originally purposed to greet performing deities during the festivals '*jatras*' on the streets. However, they have become only a part of the building façade; as most of the house members prefer to watch digital screens inside, which are flamboyantly placed along with other antiquities! In this regard, the understanding of the traditional spaces and constructs is changing as well with the progress of time. I got more acquainted with these changes in a *Tharu* community's domain as I continued with my professional practices.

Tharus and Their Traditional Spaces

Since 2018, I have had opportunities to experience similar changes in the traditional cultural spaces of the indigenous communities of *Tharus* in their village, Sehari. I have been working in the village as a technical coordinator for an infrastructure development project ventured by a community based organization. As an outsider, I have observed how a tribal community thrives in and around its traditional spatial constructs. I have noted changes in the living practices of the communities brought upon by the changes in their cultural spaces and at the same time changes in their cultural spaces induced by the changes in their living practices.

The traditional ways of living are amalgamated with the built spaces and structures set out in a natural setting. In certain ways, the *Tharus* living practices has guided the spatial constructs and the spatial constructs have guided their living practices as well. Their spaces reflect how the indigenous community has been thriving for centuries, embraced within their own culture and radiates a sense of belonging to them. They entice genuine nostalgias and unfold true identities and roots of their community.

Tharus are oldest tribal inhabitant found in the forested land along the south base of the Siwalik Mountain range in the *Terai* belt, mostly in the middle and the western regions. They are believed to be the descendants of *Rajput* women who fled with their domestic servants from *Rajputana*. They live in their distinct settlement patterns and houses made of mud, bamboos and thatches (Bista, 1967). The indigenous *Tharu* community lives close to the wild nature in the tropical forested areas, thriving on substantial farming, animal herding and foraging from the forests.

Their socio-cultural values and practices strongly represent their unique tribal identity and foster their indigenous knowledge that guides them to live in harmony, sympathetically and humbly among themselves, others and with the nature as well. Their primitive housing structures built out of wattle-daub and thatched roofs are vernacular, environmentally friendly and at the same time hosts their socio-cultural activities. Their climate responsive, eco-friendly, sustainable structures built from optimal usages of local natural resources are exemplary for sustainable construction practices. Let alone, the resiliency of the *Tharu* community to adapt to the annual Narayani River flooding is a good lesson to learn in the wake of climate change and induced catastrophes. The archetype of their traditional spatial constructs has become a trademark of their indigenous identity and at the same time has continued accommodating their thriving traditional living practices from preceding generations.

Growing Modern Constructs in the *Tharu* Community

Over the time, my involvement with the community has helped me to learn about the tremendous changes pertaining in the indigenous *Tharu* communities' cultural and traditional building practices. The global wave of modernization has been encouraging the community to adapt to the changes. Until some couple of decades, their cultural practices and spaces were hardly influenced by external dynamics. The *Tharus* are finding themselves with convenient access to modern education, market resources, global medias and communication networks. The *Tharu* community living amidst the paddy fields, in the banks of the Narayani River, in the buffer zone of the Chitwan National Park, are undergoing transformation to adopt and adapt the modernity.

As the modern development is encroaching the village with widened black topped roads, changes in the traditional ways of living are becoming more prominent. The low height make-shift sheds of timber and hays for sheltering buffaloes and oxen are becoming taller, bigger to house the tractors and farm machines because the working generations hardly has any time for animal herding and farm machines prove to be more efficient than animals. The rudimentary mud, timber, bamboo and reed buildings for dwelling are adulterating. Thatch roofs are being replaced by tin roofs because the locals find it cumbersome to keep periodically replacing the reeds and hays on the roofs to stop roofs from monsoon leaks. Mud walls are being replaced by cement masonry walls because it is cumbersome to periodically rebuild the mud walls damaged by seasonal flooding events. More to that, traditional old houses are becoming small, inadequate for growing families and obsolete to house the modern amenities like TVs, refrigerators, comfortable couches, furniture and motorbikes. As an alternative, new concrete houses are replacing the old traditional houses in the

village. Villagers are more keen to proudly wait in their shops with rolling metal shutters, built in their new houses alongside the main black-topped road, rather than working in the fields or herding animals as their predecessors did. Villagers find the buildings built by engineers to be safer, more attractive and handsome than their traditional vernacular buildings. Villagers are unable to fully reject the persisting change and stay primitive and aboriginal as their forefathers did.

The regional market connected to global economy is boosting the changes in the traditional cultural spaces of the *Tharus*. It is more convenient to source building materials from the market than to source from natural sources. The natural resources generally come under states' conservational jurisdictions. Furthermore, the rapid spreading of mass medias, social medias and modern education system is tempting the new generations in the village for modern ways of living in modern houses built of concrete and glasses. These houses are built with reinforced cement concrete frame structure and cement plastered masonry walls, smoothly rendered with gypsum putty and painted in different hues. Mostly aluminum frames with glass glazing are used for fenestrations. Tiles, marbles, granites, stones, laminated parquets, synthetic carpets are used for the floors, terraces and porch areas. Likewise, ceramic commodes, basins, bronze faucets in ceramic tiled bathrooms, lavish furniture like mattresses, couches, wardrobes, appliances like refrigerators, televisions, microwave oven, electric chimney and others are fancied in the interior of these houses. These new constructions are becoming a symbol of affluence and higher social status in the village.

In days to come, the village will likely transform into a hustling sub-urban area with modern concrete structures and a few rare traditional vernacular structures. Along with the transformation, the indigenous communities' cultures, indigenous

knowledge and identity may also be disappeared, disregarded, misinterpreted, intermixed or be subservient to the globally homogenized culture. As the world modernizes and globalizes, the tribal community cannot always be adamant to keep holding on to the traditional ways of living in the traditional spatial constructs. Why would anyone prefer to live in an old traditionally built house that needs occasional rebuilding due to flooding damages, when they have means to live in a luxurious concrete house and watch the surroundings get inundated from their tiled terraces? The changes in the traditional ways of living in the *Tharu* community are inevitable in the progressing times.

Studying traditional cultural spaces

It is pertinent for the traditional cultural spaces along with the associated socio-cultural aspects to be disregarded, ignored, obsolesced, adulterated or demolished, as the world continues with global homogenization, modernization and cherishing contagious conspicuous consumerism (Asquith & Vellinga, 2006). However, the extents of changes can be assessed to understand the true significances of the traditional cultural spaces and preserve them while progressing with the modernity. This work is an attempt to study the alterations in the traditional spatial constructs from socio-cultural perspectives in the progressing times. I am attempting to explore the architectural concepts and understanding of the local vernacular architecture from a sociological dimension. In order to do so, I am studying, examining a *Tharu* community and their traditional spatial constructs in relation to their socio-cultural fabrics in this dissertation.

There are several literatures on traditional architecture or vernacular architecture, which mostly explores construction methodologies of spatial constructs and simply present them as a manifestation of a regional culture or a feasible solution

to adjust in the given environmental contexts. I find most of the studies in the field of architecture and engineering objectify spaces and the spatial constructs. Often, the utilitarian values, aesthetics and material-technological constructs of the spaces are discussed in those literatures. Whereas the sociological studies explain spaces and their constructs as cultural derivatives or influencing factors for cultural existences. In this regard, most of the literatures broadly discusses different concepts of cultures, its paradigms, dimensions, derivatives, formation and transformational processes to present the understanding on the spaces and spatial constructs. In this work, I have attempted to explore the understanding of spaces and spatial constructs from both the objective building-science point of view as well as from the subjective cultural lens. Similarly, I have attempted to unravel how the building construction methodologies are transforming as the society gradually transitions with cultural progression and at the same time how the cultural progressions are influenced by the evolving building construction methodologies. I believe this work will further explore the correlations between spaces, spatial constructs and cultures in the progressing times.

The study attempts to explore the integration of culture and associated aspects in the traditional indigenous built spaces of a *Tharu* community, as a reference. The research emphasizes on studying the inter-linkages between the culture and traditional built-spaces, document and assess the dynamics of viable changes. Likewise, in the context of global homogenization of culture, the study attempts to unfold the importance of cultural differentiation and cultural identity. It attempts to unfold the true essence of 'genius loci' or 'the spirit of the place' and how they offer a 'sense of belonging to' to an indigenous community. The study tries to explore the role of embodied spaces and places in community to assist practice of critical self-reflection, cultural and political dialogues. Significances of functional spatial constructs to foster

daily living practices and cultures of community are studied. I believe the study can facilitate discourses on how a traditional community can accept and adapt to the modernity whilst strongly preserving and promoting their cultural significances.

Problem Statement

Traditional indigenous spaces are vernacular, enriched with socio-cultural values. Socio-culture values define spaces and their constructs, likewise spaces define culture. Spaces are influenced and defined by livelihood, resources, construction technologies, environmental contexts, which all sums up to culture. Culture is referred as the interpretations and representations of various norms, values, myths and beliefs, which guide the living practices of a community (Spillman, 2007). The transferring of culture through generations by practice is the tradition (Tonkinson, 2007). "*Tradition in vernacular buildings can be both subject and object*." states Asquith and Vellinga (2006) and emphasizes on traditions shaping the built spaces and the built spaces incorporating the tradition. Also, Oliver (2006) mentions that the formation of the building and the bearings of the lives that occupy it are influenced by the cultural impact upon a building.

Durkheim elucidates in the process of transformation from traditional societal to modern, the norms, values, beliefs, practices which outline the culture are reconsidered as the livelihood changes and knowledge and technologies advances (Griswold, 2013). The regional cultural identities, social beliefs and values of tradition are influenced by the trend of consumerism, homogenization, manufacturing of heritages and ethnic revitalization (Asquith & Vellinga, 2006). This presents traditions as more than just a static representation of cultural happenings from an era and more of a continuous process of cultural transfiguration. In the same accord,

Oliver (2006) mentions that in the wide acceptance of modernization, the spatial construct of culture is ever changing.

The traditional context in Nepal portrays an intense cultural-religious life which defines all aspects of life. Here culture and tradition – is interrelated with the social order and organization of the community, economic exchanges, interpretation and use of spaces (Tautscher, n.a.). The ethnic diversity of the Himalayan nation is well reflected in its architecture and spatial pattern, which has become the heart and soul of the country's identity. However, since 1970-1980s several changes in the architecture and spatial patterns of the nation have pertained. Toffin (2016) writes, these changes mostly owe to the significant socio-economic transformations due to the opening of the nation to the outside world, to forest protection and to restricted access to natural resources. Individualization of houses are largely noticed mainly due to children leaving their large family house and to changes in building materials. The writer concerns on the Nepalese traditional vernacular architecture to gradually disappear as they are exposed to ineluctable effect of modernity and globalization while at the same time being susceptible to the massive seismic events, referencing to the earthquake of 2015. It is worrisome to witness the popularity of westernized modern houses sprouting in a chaotic fashion, with no organic relation to the land or to each other, while the traditional vernacular houses are being disregarded.

The context in *Tharu* village of Sehari is no exception to all the tumultuous changes happening in the cultural spatial paradigm of the nation. Social, cultural and traditional elements associated with the *Tharus* have played vital role in setting and designing the spaces in Sehari. The progressing socio-cultural scenario in the village are under influences of the modern development ushering throughout the country and has more or less focused on accommodating the modern lifestyles. The changes are

largely seen in the traditional cultural spaces in the village, as the community transfigures to meet the contemporary needs. The adoption and adaptation to the modernity and externally facilitated development trends have led to reassessment of the traditional built spaces in the village. This is subsequently pushing the traditional cultural spaces and associated socio-cultural aspects native to the *Tharus* of Sehari to be disregarded, ignored, obsolesced, adulterated or demolished.

With the reassessment of traditional built spaces, the embodied values, beliefs, myths and ancestral systems are also reassessed. The regional indigenous cultural identities and the ancestral legacies are compromised. The traditional spatial constructs are transforming, and the transformation are eventually leading to reconfiguration of societal norms and values. The issues of misinterpretation of regional indigenous cultural identities and values are likely to be seen in the forthcoming generations. The threats on indigenous cultural identities, indigenous knowledge and sense of belongings are impending. On the other hand, modern development is unavoidable for the existence in the present world. So, it has become crucial to maintain a conservative posture whilst accommodating the changes that have become an integral part of modern living. Preserving the traditional cultural spaces can be a key in preserving the sense of "belonging to" and homages in the process of cultural homogenization. Spatial constructs associated with traditional socio-cultural aspects and practices can assist in critical self-reflection and provide spaces for a positive (cultural and political) dialogue to the traditional indigenous communities. The transformation of traditional built spaces can and will impact the constructs of an indigenous traditional society. These concerns relating to the progressing indigenous community intrigues me to study the practices of the traditional cultural spaces and their deviations in the modern times.

Purpose of the Study

The research explores the changes in the traditional indigenous cultural spaces of a *Tharu* settlement in a village of Nepal. Along with the changes in the traditional cultural spaces, the study aims to explore the other associated changes in the traditional socio-cultural aspects of the *Tharus*. The study intends to signify the importance of the traditional indigenous cultural spaces as the traditional society morphs to fit in the contemporary modern times.

Research Question

To address the purpose of the research, attempts are made to explore the answers to the following research question.

- How are changes in the traditional cultural spaces and the associated socio-cultural aspects being addressed in an indigenous *Tharu* community of Sehari village over the years?

Significance of the Study

The study can significantly contribute to understand the dynamics of development on imparting the changes in the sociological setting of the country. The study intends to highlight the transformation of socio-cultural values and regional identities with references to the built spaces of the *Tharu* community in the given region. It intends to disclose a niche to intervene to conserve the country's intangible heritage and preserve the diverse knowledge, ideologies, and customs of indigenous *Tharu* community. The study can be important in the following fields:

- It can highlight the significances of the *Tharu* culture that has guided their traditional built spaces. This can help the transmuting indigenous community to retrace back to their roots, retrieve their identity and facilitate critical self-

reflections. This can provoke for collective consciences to unite the indigenous communities and provide spaces for their collective discourses.

- The study can project how the *Tharus'* socio-cultural aspects will be influenced with the changes in their traditional cultural spaces. This can offer a head start to take necessary interventions to preserve and promote the indigenous culture and knowledge.

- The research can provide guidance in formulating and implementing the construction building codes and other developmental policies to preserve traditional indigenous culture and knowledge.

- The study can facilitate the preparation of baselines/guidelines to assist the conservation approaches to preserve the traditional cultures and spaces of the *Tharus*.

- It can provide guidance to formulate, strategize and plan development activities in the region domain to the *Tharus* and also in the similar contexts related to other indigenous communities.

- The inferences from the research can be helpful in other faculties of architectural design and planning. It can be used as references in revising, designing and formulating the settlement planning in rural contexts and urban neighborhoods associated with the traditional cultures.

- This study has attempted to highlight the significances of built spaces for the social development of indigenous community. More to this, the embedded traditional indigenous knowledge and culture in the built spaces are elucidated in the study. These knowledge and culture depict significant roles in promoting environment conservation and social stability and prosperity, which are the key concerns in the paradigm of sustainable development. Thus, the study tries to

highlight the significances of traditional cultural spaces for the sustainable development.

- The study has significantly broadened my knowledge on the understanding of traditional cultural spaces and its values. This has helped me to professionally to comprehend and practice the spatial design and planning with more inclination towards the regional vernacularism and stand for/with the indigenous traditional communities, their culture and knowledge.

Chapter Summary

Cultures and traditions have always been an integral aspect of human societies, giving them an identity and guiding their ways of living. With exploration, understanding and sharing of new knowledge and cultural practices, human societies are always progressing. As the societies progress, they leave behind their traditional ways of living and embraces modern ways of living which offers convenient, consumptive, luxurious ways of living to strive in the changing times. Convenient access to the modern market, spreading global communication network and modern education system are tempting the communities to embrace the modernity. With a global wave of modernization intriguing human societies, the changes in the socio-cultural aspects of living are pertinent. More people have inclined towards building modern constructs and as a result modern concrete houses are mushrooming in the traditional settlements. This has inflicted adulteration in the traditional spatial constructs.

Reflecting on my personal experiences, I have accounted various stances of traditional spatial constructs where they are neglected and misinterpreted. The traditional spatial constructs offer 'a sense of belonging' to communities empowering their collective consciences for social harmony, critical self-reflection, and political

dialogues. Additionally, the humility of the traditional spatial constructs towards the environment are noteworthy. Having said these, it is challenging to hold on the conservative stance to continue with authenticity of the traditional spatial construct in the contemporary times. In this pretext, I have attempted to explore how the changes in the traditional indigenous spatial constructs and the associated socio-cultural aspects are being addressed in the progressing times. I have attempted to examine a *Tharu* community in their transforming traditional settlement to have a deeper, better understanding of the issue and correlate the learnings from the field with the existing literatures. I believe the study will bridge the gaps in the literatures regarding the spaces, their construction methodologies, associated cultures and temporal transformative phenomenal paradigms. The study would help in understanding the persisting socio-cultural changes in the societies and signify the importance of traditional spatial constructs for sustainable development.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter synthesizes the major literature used in the research. Understanding of culture, traditions, their interpretations, scopes and dynamics to change which are embedded in traditional indigenous spatial constructs are studied. Likewise, literature on the concepts of spaces, its influences and derivatives with reference to culture are explored. The inter-linkages of culture, tradition and spaces are broadly studied to understand their influences on each other. In addition to this, literature on vernacular architecture and architypes of traditional vernacular spatial constructs of a *Tharu* community are also studied.

Understanding Culture and Tradition

Cultures and traditions are presented in various understandings in literatures.

Culture as Symbolic Representations

Societies in different parts of the world and in different time period portray different sets of characteristics that define their way of existence. These sets of characteristics commonly referred as culture is generally guided by the norms, values, myths and beliefs. The norms, values, myths and beliefs are interpreted and represented in different forms like language, costumes, festivals, music, literature, behaviors, living practices, built spaces and other metaphors. These symbolic and expressive dimensions give an individual and a social institution an identity. In the same note, Durkheim had expressed culture as a collective representation of groups and societies (Griswold, 2013; Durkheim, 1915). Griswold (2013) further elaborates Durkheim's thought; culture fulfills the need of the collective representations for groups and societies which inspire their sentiments of unity and mutual support.

From the perspective of vernacular, Spillman (2007) refers culture as "all the symbols, meaning, and values shared by members of a group, by contrast to other groups; or else to a specialized realm of expressive activities and artifacts contrasted with other institutional realms, like politics or economy." (p. 922). This simplifies culture as a variable which varies as per the social institutions and their formations. However, culture can be found being shared by different groups or communities when they share common beliefs and practices. It is a human process of meaning making in specialized institutions, not necessarily to be confined in one clearly bounded group. The human meaning making can be generating norms, values, practices, rituals, artifacts, symbols, ideas, ideologies and discourses. These meaning makings subsequently guide the social structures and social actions. In this sense, culture can also be referred as the "whole way of life" (Spillman, 2007, p. 922). It can be clearly observed in the *Nepalese* indigenous communities. Various *guthis*, clans, groups, professions, institutions are formed in the community which conduct various customs and rituals of life, festivals and give continuity to the practices of ethnic costumes, languages, literature, art and crafts. *Tharu* community is a good example where their costumes, architecture, language and other practices depict their unique identity in the larger diaspora.

Culture and Tradition as a Cognitive System

Culture is also explained as a cognitive system. It is the understanding of the organization of people, behavior, emotions, etc. that operate a society in an acceptable manner (Keesing, 1974). Throughout the course of time, culture has been transferred from a generation to the succeeding and this process has been playing an important role in the existence and the characterization of the culture. This process is commonly known as tradition which is defined by Tonkinson (2007) as a transfer of body of

values, beliefs, rules and behavior patterns that is transmitted generationally by practice. However, in the process of transfer, changes are inevitable and are incorporated in the practicing culture for its contextual functioning.

The culture and identity of the society are defined by the behaviors and beliefs which are learned and shared in a society (Pieterse, 1996, p. 1390). Sharing is social which has no limitation to the nature of sociality in terms of territoriality and historical boundaries. Likewise, learning is always a continuous process as an outcome of changing circumstances. This indicates, culture is viable to change in the course of time and as per the geographical locations when the humans try to fit in the contextual changes. In this accord, culture is referred as an adaptive system (Keesing, 1974). It is an open-ended process which changes to accommodate the human life in the status quos of ecological as well as social settings.

Culture and tradition in society is often regarded as a blueprint for the acceptable behavior. This can be prominently noted in the traditional settlement or neighborhood which is an element of socio-cultural system (Keesing, 1974). In the *Tharu* community as well, the customary life rituals, building practices, daily living practices, etiquettes, behaviors and other similar social functioning are guided by their strong culture. It is also reflected in the modern contemporary society but more in a loose and flexible pattern, as the culture tends to change and accommodate the influencing externalities. Griswold (2013) explains Durkheim's thoughts on the differences between the modern social life and the earlier traditional social life. In the earlier traditional social life, people had the same occupation, followed the same religion, raised and educated their children in the similar way. They shared common beliefs and understandings which guided collective consciousness and governed their thoughts, attitudes, and practices. In contrast to this, the modern societies have

evolved as it grew in size and densities. People now have different occupations, different fields of knowledge and expertise, different beliefs and life experiences which concludes to institutional specialization and deviation in the traditional cultural practices. In the process, the norms, values, beliefs, practices which outline the culture are reconsidered.

The modern social lives are also more open to the foreign new ideas, practices and institutions, unlike the traditional social life. The foreign ideas, practices often with immigrants and settlers, overtime intermingle with the society and this itself represents a historical momentum, profound enough to engage cultural grammar and not merely language. There may exist the cultural mixing, a politics of integration without the need to give up identity, while cohabitation is expected to result in new cross-cultural patterns of differences (Pieterse, 1996). With the migrations in and out from the traditional settlement and especially the trend of rising foreign employment have promoted the cultural mixing and produced new cross cultural patterns of differences in the *Tharu* community as well.

Influences on Culture

Values, beliefs, norms and guidelines give complexities to culture and the social consciousness. The complexities orient the social consciousness on the fundamental perception about the society and the individual of the historical period and this is known as "cultural paradigm" (Elena et al., 2017). In the course of time the paradigm changes to fit in the progression of the humankind which goes hand in hand with the reconsideration of values, norms, beliefs and guidelines for the well-being of the individuals. In the contemporary context, modernization and globalization play important roles in fueling the process. Modernization is a continuous process of adapting modernity. Modernity is referred as post-traditional, a move from feudalism

or agrarian toward capitalism, industrialization, secularization and rationalization (Barker, 2005). The multiple choices and freedom in the processes of modernization offer to maximize one's profitability and comfort. This influences the adaptation of modern values and systems where the individuals discard the traditional cultural practices or adulterate them in order to adapt the modernity. Modernization as a homogenizing process is leading towards the cultural convergence among the societies (Reyes, 2001).

Globalization has further spread the modernization in the larger global settings. It explains the trend of growing worldwide interconnectedness and is common with cultural change. It emphasizes on the application of communication systems and economic relations to bring various nations, societies, groups and communities under a comprehensive school which includes various factors such as the main model of identity, ideologies, value systems and subgroups that importantly define each nations or groups' economic and social feature (Shareia, 2015). Globalization has further induced the desires to explore the cultures of others with different motivations. Alsayyad (2001) explains developing countries try to imitate the developed countries and adopt its developmental practices. Subserviently, their own local cultures are pushed to disintegrate where the values and systems are reconsidered to fit in the modern contemporary paradigm.

Globalization has interconnected the individuals and the communities around the world. There persist symbolic interactions among people from the different parts of the world and hence may produce new culture (Griswold, 2013). Also, in addition to this, when a cultural system counteracts with external culture, the externalities may influence the new meaning leading to the formation of subculture. In this context, teenagers are more prone to the production of subculture as they are not yet hooked

by the institutions of adult life and they tend to express themselves through consumption to differentiate themselves from other age groups or even other teenagers (Griswold, 2013). The cultural production is also rooted on economic sociology. Griswold (2013) explains that the organization of cultural producers and consumers, which include the culture industries, distribution mechanism, and the markets of cultural products contribute in the production and promotion of new cultures. On the same note, Hannerz (1996) explains the reproduction of culture where global influences are filtered, transformed and incorporated in a local level into beliefs and practices. For example, the consumerism practice plays significant role in shaping the culture and as well as creating the new cultures. When the material culture like home, factories, machines, raw materials, manufactured products, food stuff and other material objects change, the nonmaterial culture which includes practices, folkways and social institution must change in response for the efficient functioning of the society (Griswold, 2013). Hence, globalization can significantly attribute to creation of new culture or subculture or reproduction of culture impacting the prevailing culture.

Cultural shifts as consequences

Cultural factors are the determinant aspects of society and are vulnerable to change or adulterate by the cultural communications. The standardization in the technological advances promotes the social sectors connections where dominant culture rules while the subservient disappears (Reyes, 2001). This has been evidently proven in the traditional neighborhood where the imported foreign western consumerism trend has over-ruled some of the traditional socio-cultural system in the communities. The livelihood of the traditional neighborhood in the country has changed from the agriculture to trade, businesses and services in the nearby urban

centers and has forced to reconsider the traditional socio-cultural values. The influence of modern living trend derived from the developed western world has infatuated the locals to rush for the touted comfort. Cultural convergences are being encouraged and, in the process, traditional cultures are devalued while, the modern foreign cultures are encompassed.

Besides, the cultural convergence, Pieterse (1996) explains two other paradigms in the cultural shift influenced by globalization; cultural hybridization and cultural differentiation. Cultural hybridization relates to postmodern sensibility of travelling culture. "It is then the folkloric, superficial elements of culture- foods, costumes, fashions, consumption habits, arts and crafts, entertainments – that 'travel' while deeper attitudes and values, the way elements hang together, the structural ensemble of culture, remain contextually bound." (Pieterse, 1996, p. 1392) . The change in the surficial elements of the traditional culture can be clearly observed in the traditional indigenous communities of the country. However, the traditional customs, rituals, festivals are still found to be conducted in the traditional way to a possible extent due to the strong orthodox beliefs and myths that has been passed down the generation in the communities. Although, these are practiced in the traditional way, few deviations derived from the modernity are always permitted mostly in the minor activities as the contexts and relevancies of the culture are addressed in the contemporary times. However, Alsayyad (2001) argues that these reconsiderations invented from the legacy of pasts and the fragments of the new contribute to the pseudo-modernized communities. In this accord, the search of identity and reconstruction in the limelight of reconsiderations has become utmost.

On the contrary, cultural differentiation is referred as "clash of civilization" where modernization persists without westernization. The cultural differentiation

serves as a position in defense of the cultural diversity where local empowerment is promoted and conservationist posture is maintained (Pieterse, 1996). Although, the changes pertain in the traditional cultural practices in the traditional neighborhoods, the efforts of conservational approaches to preserve the traditional cultures are also often found. Nonetheless, the conservational stances are constricted to the sentiments and nostalgia of romantic pasts and needs to be defined with broader, clearer scopes when compared to the other cultural shifts. A varied practice of culture conservation unlike the cultural differentiation is also found. The sentiments and feelings towards the culture in the constructs of adapting modernity are powerful enough to encourage the cultural objectification. As a result, the cultural environment with their former images are resuscitated and hence culture is manufactured (Alsayyad, 2001). These practices are laudable in the mostly in the cultural revitalization of the neighborhoods and as showpieces in museums.

Anthropological Understanding of Spaces

Life is always full of happening and all the happening is held in a space. The concept of space is perceived in various understandings and depends on the protagonist perceptions. Einstein has famously quoted, "…the event is localized not only in time but also in space." (Einstein, 1993). The study of space has become an important understanding in anthropology, to understand the human society. The earlier notion of space was conceived as a physical environment that decided the level of cultural progressions. The understanding developed in the 20th century and the physical environment was emphasized more as the means of social organizations or economic strategies. The relationship between culture and environment was focused. Space was conceived as where the cultural development and change progressed as adaptive social system to the natural environment (Ottarsdottir, 2017).

Space is socially produced or constructed. Different spaces are purposed differently by different societies, groups and individuals. The notion of space has always centered in relation to human agency (Tilley, 1994). Christopher Tilley presents space as a conflicting medium between an individual and their surroundings. He explains spaces are filled with different meanings and traits of power relations manifested in gender, age or varied social status among others (Ottarsdottir, 2017). Spaces are largely influenced by human experiences and signify the metaphors of human body. The notion of space changes with time, contexts, constructions and premises.

Low (2009) presents the ideas on spatial formation: social production of space and social construction of space. The social production of space refers to the physical creation of material setting based on social, economic, ideological and technological factors. The spatial tactics and contested spaces in the production of spaces are common practices mostly in the formation of urban spaces. They are often linked with the Foucault's perspectives on power and politics where a dominant culture rules the space formation. On the other hand, the social construction of space defines the transformation of the material site through social actions. The values defined by the experiences of memories, social interactions and representation persuade the social construction of spaces (Ottarsdottir, 2017). Hence, the spaces can be perceived as an evolving entity when referred to its coexistence with the embodied social actions and events.

Spaces transforms into places when any events or actions in a constructed space induces feelings. Places are spaces with identity. It is the conscious awareness of the space. Places have some degree of spatial containment, boundaries, and some field influences (Day, 2002). The architectonic features of the spaces are denoted in

places. Spaces are organized and arranged accordingly to accommodate functional needs in society and mostly portrayed in architecture. Relevantly, Louis I Kahn quotes, "Architecture is the thoughtful making of space." When the architectural and experiential qualities of spaces are deeply memorable and valued, it is described as sense of place. The authenticity of the place is closely bounded with the culture and tradition that thrived in the space.

Concepts of Embodied Spaces

The concept of space entails both absolute space and relational space (Low, 2009). The notion of absolute space perceives space as an object and explains it independent to other factors. Contrarily, the relational space describes space in respect to various factors that guide and define the space. The embodied spaces are described with reference to the ideas of relational space. Low (2003) describes embodied space as a location where human experience and consciousness takes on material and spatial form. Here, the space is relationally presented based on body which represents human agency and its metaphors. Body is a part of space and without it space would not exist. Body occupies the space. The space itself and the perception and experience of the space occupied by the body, shrinks, and widens according to an individual's emotions, state of mind, sense of self, social associations, and cultural factors (Low, 2003). Proxemics, the study of human's use of space as an aspect of culture is crucial in defining the embodied space. Spatial orientation, movement and language in the formation of place are acknowledged in the understanding of the embodied space. It overlooks the inter-linkages of body, space and culture.

By encompassing the body in embodied space, the embodied space covers multiple wide fields and factors associated with the body. This human body is drawn as a template for spatial and social relations by the cultural institutions. Hence, the

inscriptions of sociopolitical and cultural relations on the body produce the body space (Low, 2003). The bodies conceptualized in embodied space incorporates metaphors, ideology, language as well as behaviors, habits, skills and spatial orientations derived from specific locations as well as global discourses (Low, 2009). In the phenomenological understanding of embodied space, Heidegger uses the term "dwelling" to describe the symbiosis of body with the embodied space. He explains coexistence of body in the embodied space as "belonging to" or "being and being-in-the-world" (Ottarsdottir, 2017). The comprehension of spaces in regard to body presents deeper insights to subjectivity of the spaces.

Embodied spaces are referred to inscribed spaces when attachments, emotions and morality are adhered (Low, 2009). Embodied spaces are transformed into inscribed spaces by assigning meaning to their locales by an individual or a group. In this sense, the inscribed space closely relates to the sense of place and boasts the spiritual, architectonic features of the embodied space. The significances of inscribed spaces are subjective to the protagonists who view and experiences the spaces. The qualities of inscribed spaces may trigger the sentiments and feelings differently to different protagonists. Inscribed spaces store memories of people's experiences and influence people, their circumstances and their surroundings reciprocally.

Culture, Space, and Place

The concept of embodied space has highlighted the interdependence of culture and space. As discussed in the preceding heading, culture dwells in spaces. Spaces are equated with physical environment in general which are governed or guided by the set of action, beliefs and structures, commonly described as culture. Space is where the cultural development and change foster subsequently from a process of adaptation of social systems to the natural environment (Kokot, 2006). Here, space is presented

more as a container where the cultures thrive. But Hauser-Schaublin and Dickhardt (2003) argues space is not only an abstract entity or a vessel of human action. It is a conceptualization of cultural model, both as a medium and a product of social practices. In the premises of globalization, culture and spaces are studied coherently, "being and being-into-the-world" (Kokot, 2006). The concept of cultural spatiality highlights the spatial metaphors which represent social and cosmological relations and identities.

Spaces are perceived as symbolic mediums. The spaces and space languages convey a culture's meaning about the immediate world. Cultural spatiality includes spatial practices of social, aesthetic, political, religious or economic dimensions which are produced by cultural engagements and experiences. Both physical and ambient dimensions are conceived in distances, locations or topographies. When the sites take on cultural meanings, they are distinguished from generalized spaces as places. Places carry the sentiments of attachment and identity that emerge out of lived experience (Aucoin, 2017). This notion of "cultural sites" or places play important role in maintaining social structure and dignify the traditional values, facilitating as a physical frame and as a focal symbol for the conceptualization of a common identity (Olwig & Kirsten, 1997). Thus spaces in the form of places critically represent a specific community and their associated culture and traditions.

However, in the era of globalization, cultures are no longer fixed to places. The idea of global space is conceived to further describe this. Global space is perceived as a vast arena beyond the national borders and geographical regions where goods, people and services as well as capital, technology and ideas are conveniently shared and promoted. It induces the *deterritorialization* of space which refers to detaching the space from local places (Low, 2009). In the premises of the global space

the exchanges of cultures are promoted. The cultural knowledge and practices are shared among widely spread social networks crossing spatial boundaries and have been accounted for in different urban anthropological studies based on migration studies and diaspora (Kokot, 2006). This strengthens the concept of a society or culture not being rooted in a given territory as the migrants and refugees are uprooted or rootless in their given habitat (Malkki, 1997). Schoenfelder mentions cultural differences are not to be localized as any elemental and "given" relationship between societies, cultures and the space as people inhabit cannot be presumed (Kokot, 2006). Hence, a line of thought concludes that the local levels are losing its significances in the pretext of transnational migration flows and globalization.

Studies of diaspora and transnational networks deal with units of studies extending far beyond local boundaries. Nevertheless, this does not indicate that space and place have lost their meaning. A different line of thoughts presents that the cultural spatiality is still significant and hold the authentic values and identities of the place in the global space. Setha M. Low and Denise Lawrence-Zuniga connote the term "spatial tactics" to present how people use space to influence social control and power (Ottarsdottir, 2017). This is profound where the stance of cultural differences as the cultural shift is withheld. Spatial tactics are used to give continuity to the identity of the places. However, isolating the places to preserve the cultural spatiality is challenging in globalization. In cases, where the cultural spatiality is stronger, but the modernity is unavoidable, cultural hybridization is born and practiced, again through the practices of spatial tactics. The knowledge, interests and experiences of the actors of spatial tactics play important role in continuing the culture, influencing and adapting the cultural anomalies. Thus, the importance of cultural spatiality is still

ubiquitous in hosting the critical self-reflective dialogues and is necessary more than ever in the homogenizing world.

Often in the practices of spatial tactics, new places are formed where the culture of the area comes together but represented, contradicted and reversed all at the same time. Foucault uses the term "heterotopia" to refer those places and gives examples of museums, historical sites, theme parks among others. Heterotopia practices conservative constructivism which presents the past deceptively, disregarding reality in favor of customary needs (Ottarsdottir, 2017). Hence, understanding cultural spaces should depend on the ontological constructs and premises of the culture and space.

The spatiality of traditional culture

The preceding literatures has attempted to elucidate on the concepts of culture, tradition, spaces, how they are intertwined with each other and the phenomenological attributes and changes when they are subjected to different dynamics. This section tries to explore the understanding of traditional cultural spaces and their attributes. Traditional cultural space represents a large spectrum of spaces and spatial constructs ranging from an open space associated to a community to buildings to villages or even cities that are infused with traditions and cultures. The study of traditional cultural space requires attention from two different disciplines: architecture and anthropology.

Spaces and spatial constructs are often connoted under the term architecture, where the form, aesthetics and functions are primarily concerned. Culture is a specific way a community performs or functions. Tradition is an ambiguous change which seeks answers to 'traditional' with respect to what or whom? (Toffin, 1994). In this sense, traditional cultural space not only represents buildings and structures from the bygone generations but, also the contemporary buildings and spaces that have been

inculcated in a short period of time guided by the recent transfiguration of contemporary culture. The modern concrete buildings can also be referred as a traditional cultural spaces when referred to the last few decades of construction practices and people facilitating or living in them. However, in general an immediate traditional cultural practice is less considered in the field and focus is mostly on the traditional cultures practiced from generations ago. Traditional cultural spaces in this regard can be considered as the result of a long process of technological change and rearrangement.

Vernacular architecture is a widely used term which are usually described with the examples of primitive buildings or traditional buildings. It was only in the 19th century, the scholars identified and analyzed the vernacular architecture as rudimentary, non-monumental, natural or spontaneous and of pre-industrial traditions shelter structures (Asquith & Vellinga, 2006). The utilitarian purposes of those buildings were emphasized in most of the earlier studies. Vernacular architecture was popularly conceived as the vestiges of underdeveloped or romantic pasts and was commonly considered as traditional buildings. The rise of modernism in the 20th century, contradicted the understanding of vernacular architecture as traditional building for just being an immediate relationship between form and function (Brown & Maudlin, 2012). The understanding of vernacular architecture extended beyond the functionalist theories to incorporate the socio-cultural dimensions embedded in them and is often discussed in the discourses related to ethno-architecture.

Referring to the basic etymology, Oliver (2006) describes vernacular architecture as the *native science of building* which would represent all the types of building made by people using traditional indigenous knowledge and technologies where building experts are not involved. However, Toffin (1994) argues that the

vernacular houses believed to have been built without the supervision of any building experts is totally exaggerated. He argues that the so-called traditional societies responsible for vernacular structures have strict status regulations and generally prepare competent professionals to build the structures. He further states that the traditional spaces and constructs are preconceived owing to the prevalent myths, beliefs and practices in the traditional society. Oliver (1997) clarifies

> Vernacular architecture comprises the dwellings and other buildings of the people related to their environmental contexts and available resources, they are customarily owner or community-built, utilizing traditional technologies. All forms of vernacular architecture are built to meet specific needs, accommodating the values, economies and ways of living of the cultures that produce them. (1997b, xxiii)

Spaces, dwellings and structures of the traditional societies respond to ecological, economic and cultural determinants. They are conceived as an instrument of work. In the rural context where agriculture is prominent, the built structures are a livelihood supporting tool. The traditional spaces and spatial constructs are related to men, animals, goods and the environment they live in. It is often believed that the vernacular construction is a natural process where spontaneous architectural decisions are taken in harmony with the environment which is completely false (Toffin, 1994). The characteristics of the built spaces in a traditional community can be explored under following themes.

As ecologically determined

From a pragmatic subjectivity of geography, vernacular architecture is considered in relation to the resources, geographies and climates. In the process of adapting to the climatic conditions, the availability of building materials, topography

to support the population and the nature of economy rules the kind, form, location and density of buildings (Oliver, 2006). For example, the people in the Himalayan regions live in more close and compact bulky walled houses with flat roofs to prevent the thermal loss and tackle the mountain winds. However, in the *Terai* flat lands, light mud houses with high pitched roofs and large overhangs are scattered around large shady trees to ease ventilation and maintain possible optimal temperature comfort inside. Although, different archetypes of shelter as per varying geographies and climates are found, the use of locally available building materials for construction and efforts to acquire comfort in living at the expense of less resources are common throughout and is also true in the case of the *Tharu* communities. In addition to that, the expertise required and the labor required to build are all sourced from within the community.

In relation to tradition and culture

Anthropology emphasizes the phenomenological accounts of the vernacular architecture in relation to the growth of kinship over generations (Oliver, 2006). Vestiges of social, ritual and spiritual values of ones are found embedded in the traditional forms of the architecture. The traditional buildings are not just an isolated element within culture, but is a part of symbolic representation which gives it a meaning. In this accord, vernacular architecture is mentioned as '*the architectural language of the people'* with its ethnic, regional and local 'dialects' (Oliver, 2006). Oliver further argues that the formation of the building and the bearings of the lives that occupy it are influenced by the cultural impact upon a building. Asquith and Vellinga (2006) argues that tradition shapes buildings and buildings embody tradition.

Referencing to the works of Claude Levi-Strauss on Bororo Village in 1958, Toffin (1994) elucidates how inhabited space relates to a social structure and a way of

thinking in the society. When the existence of these spaces are threatened, the culture of the societies is also threatened. Likewise, referencing to the works of Pierre Bourdieu on the Kabyle house in 1970, he explains how the built structures, "are integrated into a bipolar system of indigenous conceptions about society and the world, in which are opposed summer and winter, male and female, dry and humid, culture and nature, etc." (pg. 10). These references clarify that the built structures give immediate explanations of how different cultures distinguish themselves, operate with their social system and functioning and express their identity and their innermost ways of thinking (Toffin, 1994). The spaces and constructs in a traditional society are rich with these kinds of references to social and cultural context. In such cases, the spaces are meaningless except in relation to the group of people who live in it.

<div align="center">*Tharu* **and Their Vernacular Architecture**</div>

Tharus are indigenous ethnic communities found in small clearings in the middle of the forests in the southern plains of the country. The plains are highly malarial infested and marauded by wildlife (Bista, 1967). Blair (1983) accounts the traditional culture and settlements patterns of the *Tharus* in a village of Budbudi in the Surkhet district of the country. She writes, the *Tharus* were primarily slash and burn cultivators who used to migrate to new clearings in the forest as they exhausted their farmland quickly. The migration also helped them to prevent themselves from epidemics and prowling wildlife. Eventually, they became sedentary farmers, practiced rearing cattle, used them for farm works and their manure for fertilizing. These traditional migrating patterns and the lifestyle based on the animal-based farming practices are reflected in their settlements and housing practices. The small size and the layout of the settlement depict their convenient mobility schemes for migration.

Most of the *Tharus* are peasant farmers, some rich landlords and majority tenant cultivators exploited by the landlords. Milliet-Mondon (2016) accounts the *Tharus* in the Dang Valley of the country live in a village with a chief, '*mahatua*', who is important for social and religious functions and '*jamindar*', who maintains relations between village and the local government. *Tharus* follow a tribal religion worshipping a number of spirits and some Hindu deities and have their own family or communal priests called '*guruva*'. They have their '*kul devta*', ancestral deities installed in a room of the '*deurhar*' in the eastern corner of their family house where they worship and make blood sacrifices of animals to the deities during special rituals and occasions. Besides, they also have a village shrine of '*barham*' in the center of their village which is occasionally visited, worshipped and offered blood sacrifices when inhabitants of the village fall ill and during other days of their festivities (Bista, 1967).

In the *Tharu* community, monogamous and patri-local marriages are common with their own unique customary wedding practices (Bista, 1967). Most of the them live in a large joint family where they practice hierarchy of power and authority privileged to the seniors over the family decisions and house chores (Blair, 1983). Father has full authority over the family members and he is succeeded by his youngest brother or in his absences by the eldest son. Mother is important in a family, who looks after children, running of the house, food and grain reserves. The eldest daughter in law plays an intermediary role following the mother. It is usually the last daughter-in-law who is responsible for the kitchen works (Milliet-Mondon, 2016). In the *Tharu* community of Dang Valley, there is a trend to break away from the joint family with mutual consent from bothers, where the departing family lives under another roof. However, the new family lives in close family communities for reasons

of economy, cultural celebrations and according to traditions (Milliet-Mondon, 2016). The bonding in between the family members and communal tie is an integral part of the *Tharus* way of living.

Tharus generally don't own land or plot in which their houses are built on. The family members commonly share the house equipment which primarily belongs to the head of the family. Everyone in the family has their own clothes and personal belongings, especially the jewels and gifts of the in-laws for the women (Milliet-Mondon, 2016). They farm rice, wheat, maize, mustard, red lentils and various vegetables. Besides, they herd cattle of *jamindaar,* fish in the nearby rivers or rivulets, gather and hunt in the nearby forests. They dry manures from cattle to make dung cakes for fuel and also gather fodders for the purpose. They are found to be self-sufficient to a great extent, but they buy all that they do not produce. They sale surplus grain for money, as the barter system is hardly practiced over the years (Milliet-Mondon, 2016).

A *Tharu* Village

Several *Tharu* villages are found dispersed in a region but connected by networks of foot trails. Their settlements in Budbudi are generally composed of twenty to thirty houses aligned on either side of a lane that runs along the entire length of the villages (Blair, 1983). In Dang, the houses are found to be traditionally orientated north-south, laid out generally in a single row on the either side of the main village road. The houses are found to share adjoining kitchen garden. The dimensions of the houses are found to vary according to the size of family dwelling in them. It is found that the villages differ from each other in the arrangement of community equipment such as wells, ponds for animals, oil crushers, places of worship and others

(Milliet-Mondon, 2016). Different accounts on *Tharus* settlements show that the community farms in the fields around the fringes of their settlements.

A *Tharu* House

A traditional *Tharu* house looks primitive, simple and is built using easily available local materials in minimal time with little energy invested. Their houses are single storeyed and may span several feet long varying according to the number of people and animals in the house. With the fluctuating numbers of house members and animals, they extend or shorten their houses as needed. Adjacent to their house, they have a large kitchen garden with vegetables and fruit bearing plants. They have a fenced areas around the house where the family socializes, dries grains and performs various household chores (Blair, 1983). They have an open space preceding the main construction, referred as *'garik-ang-na',* which connects the building to the road. This space is used for multiple purpose, like to hold animals for a while after having them grazed, to dry grains and vegetables, to receive guests and similar other activities. They have a backyard that connects the house with the kitchen garden, where mostly house chores related with water like cleaning dishes, personal washing and other chores like drying grains, basketworks etc. are done (Milliet-Mondon, 2016).

Blair (1983) referencing to the *Tharu* houses in the village of Budbudi in the Surkhet Valley describes general spatial constructs of a typical traditional house. A *Tharu* house is divided into several spaces along its length by a floor to ceiling partition of wattle-daub, which is mud plastered on interwoven bamboos slats or reeds. Half of the rear part of the house is used as an animal shed. The other half is used for household chores mostly related to processing the agricultural harvests, dining and family gatherings for important occasions such as weddings, funerals and other religious ceremonies. The primary spaces in the house are in the northern part

which occupies almost two third of the house and have different spatial ambiences. These spaces are extremely dark; the only light sources are a few small openings around a foot high from the floor level. Few *dehris*, huge earthen grain storage pots which are around four to six feet high and around two feet wide divide the spaces into smaller spaces. Shrine and kitchen spaces are at the far end of the northern part of the house. The kitchen is equipped with a small clay stove for cooking without any smoke outlet. The smoke from the cooking fire fills the entire house, preventing insect infestation by coating the timber frames with soot and tars. The shrine area is separated by the largest *dehri* in the house, where family's religious activities are performed. The eldest male member of the family who leads the family's rituals sleeps with his spouses in the shrine room. Sleeping arrangements for the other family members differs from household to household. *Tharus* cleverly use overhead platforms and the thatches frame supports to store and hang their belongings. The migratory *Tharus* have only a few household goods. They make most of the things they need in daily life like baskets, *dehris*, fishing nets, ropes and other. They keep large farm tools and firewood outside (Blair, 1983). The houses of the *Tharus* are a mere instrument for their survival in their traditional cultural realm.

The migratory lifestyle of the *Tharu* people is depicted on the construction schemes of the houses as well. The material used in the construction of the building are sourced from the immediate natural environment. The houses are built in multiple bays which gives the length to the house and which are demarcated by the aligned timber or bamboo posts along the width of the house (Milliet-Mondon, 2016). A rigid frame of simple tree trunks supports the thatch roof and the partition walls of wattle-daub. The houses are surprisingly climate responsive. The thick thatches and mud-built walls and floors absorb the heat during the day and dissipates the heat during the

night. This warms the inside during cold winter nights and morning. Small openings on the walls ease the cross ventilation during the hot humid weather (Blair, 1983). The houses are built with simple construction techniques and reflect primitiveness but caters reasonably to the ecological and socio-cultural factors.

When the existing building does not suffice the need of the family and cannot be enlarged, construction of a new house is opted. Traditionally, the existing building is demolished to make a space for new construction. When the space in the same plot does not allow for new construction, a new plot is allocated by the *mahatua* and *jamindaar*. The *guruva* is then consulted for the cardinal location of the house and auspicious date to begin the construction work (Milliet-Mondon, 2016). The houses are built with the participation of the local villagers and no specialized skills are employed. It takes around a month to collect the materials required for the construction and around couple of weeks to construct the houses. The workers are not paid wages, but are offered food during construction and feasts after the completion of the construction. The villagers collectively own the house as they collectively participate during construction. The crude houses built using natural materials require regular periodic maintenance. Women periodically mud render the walls and floors. One half of the roof is replaced every year. *Tharus* take great care and effort to keep the house and surroundings neat and clean (Blair, 1983).

The internal organization of spaces, use of the house equipment and built spaces and the general archetype of the built structures guided by the ecological constraints and their traditional building practices give characterization to the houses or built structures in the *Tharu* community. In the same line, the *Tharu* village shows unique characters true to their socio-cultural attributes.

1. Animals
2. Eating / Food Preparation
3. Food Preparation
4. Cooking
5. Sleeping
6. Backyard
7. Pigsty

scale: 1/8" = 1'0" (1:100)
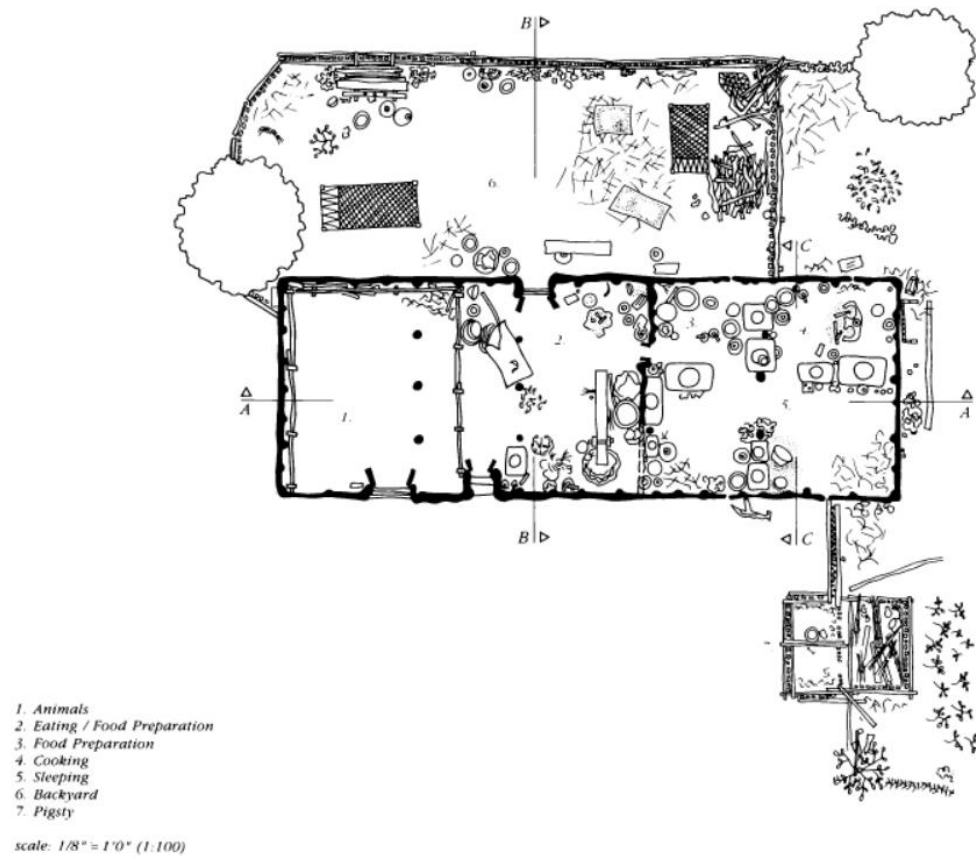
Figure 1: A generic plan of a *Tharu* house in the village of Budbudi.

(Source: Blair, 1983, p. 24)

SECTION B
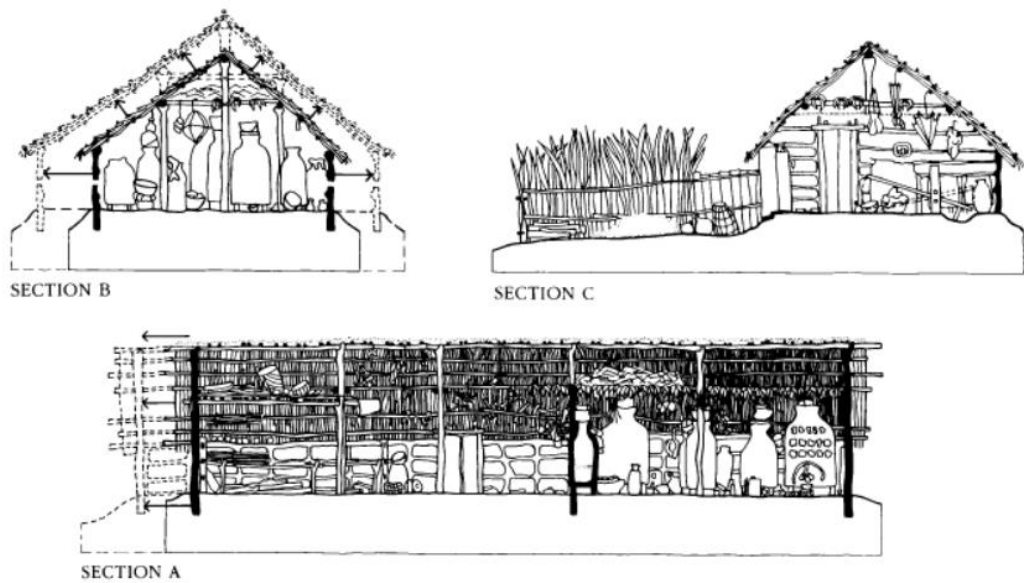
SECTION C

SECTION A

Figure 2: Section drawings of the Tharu house in the village of Budbudi.

(Source: Blair, 1983, p. 24)

Traditional cultural spaces for sustainable development

The classical concept of development model specifically focused on the economic growth only. For the economic prosperity, the countries blindly raced on for the consumption of the natural resources without any due considerations for the wellbeing of the society. Around the 70s, it was perceived that the rate at which the natural resources was being consumed would soon exhaust and collapse the planet natural systems and that would push the human society to the brink of existence. The need for sustainable development was realized. The Brundtland Report of the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987, originally defined sustainable development as development "that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". The concept of sustainable development was introduced for economic advancement and progress with mindful consumption of the natural resources focusing on protecting the long-term value of the natural environment while at the same time aiming for fair, just and equitable society. Sustainable development investigates the integration of economy, environment and social functioning for economic progress with environmental equilibrium and peaceful and harmonious society. It stresses on strategies, approaches, and actions for economic progresses with sustainable consumption of natural resources and well-being of the human society.

In a research of the traditional dwellings of Dai in Yunan, China, the researchers have highlighted the concepts of architecture, physics, ecology, and sustainability in space planning, building material and construction method contained in the traditional built spaces (Wang & Chiou, 2019). They have advocated on the significances of the traditional built structures for the sustainable development at a time when the global climate environment is deteriorating and energy saving,

emission reduction, and low-carbon life are encouraged. The concepts, knowledge, and culture integrated in the traditional built spaces are valuable and contextual in the contemporary times. The empirical knowledge can be significant to address the global issues from the local level to the global context. Perspective of sustainability and resilience can only be achieved if it is based on the use of local capacities, resources and dynamics (CAIMI, 2017). The local communities themselves are the true key for the sustainable improvement of their own resilience and living conditions. The study in the field of ethno-architecture which comprises the traditional cultural spaces are significant for large-scale rehabilitation projects, reevaluating the value of traditional materials constructs and reassess the functioning of the traditional society in present times (Toffin, 1994). There are several traditional cultural spaces and built structures scattered around the world, belonging to the local communities.

Chapter Summary

Various literatures related to cultures, tradition, and spaces are studied. The understanding of culture and tradition as symbolic representations highlight the role of culture and tradition as identity which collectively characterizes a community in a temporal context. Culture and tradition are also presented as a cognitive system which guides the dos and don'ts in a society and administers functioning of the ways of life in the society. Continuous learning and sharing in societies inflict changes on cultural paradigms and tend to reconsider values, norms, beliefs and guidelines of living in the societies. In the contemporary context, globalization and modernization have influences on culture and tradition. This have induced production of new culture, formation of sub culture and brought shifts in the cultural paradigms. Mainly three different cultural shifts are discussed – cultural convergence where cultural homogenization is led by dominant cultures, cultural differentiation where the culture

rejects changes and holds on to conservationist stance and cultural hybridization where the superficial elements of a culture changes while the essence remains the same. Often cultural hybridization is attributed for the pseudo-modernized communities.

Likewise, different understandings of spaces are explored. Space is discussed as both the container for the culture and tradition to exist and flourish as well as a derivative of the culture and traditional influences. Social production of spaces where the material constructs forms spaces and social construction of spaces where social values transform the material constructs to places are discussed. The concepts of embodied spaces briefly discuss relational spaces where spaces are studied with various embodiments, mainly the inter-linkages of body, space and culture. This highlights the notion of 'belonging to' in space and elaborates the values, attributes of inscribed spaces. When culture and spaces are studied conjunctionally, the idea of cultural spatiality is explored which deliberates various spatial practices produced by cultural engagements and experiences. The concepts of global spaces and *detorriotorialisation of spaces* in the context of globalization are elaborated where spaces and places beyond the demarcated geographical boundaries are discussed. Similarly, the concept of spatial tactics is elaborated which stresses on the role of spaces to influence social control and power. Cultural spatiality and spatial tactics as the main means for influencing the culture and spaces by each other are discussed.

Beside culture and spaces, literatures on vernacular architecture are studied. Although, vernacular architecture has wider scopes of study, the concepts of vernacular architecture as resources orientated and relating to tradition and culture discusses the essence of traditional spatial constructs. In the same regard, a detailed study of *Tharus* and their vernacular architecture are studied and discussed. Basically,

the cultural characteristics of the *Tharus* and their spatial characteristics in respect to material constructs and embedded socio-cultural entities are explored.

Lastly, literatures on the significances of the traditional cultural spaces for sustainable development are discussed.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES

This chapter discusses research methodology that is applied to study changing traditional spatial constructs of a *Tharu* community in relation to their socio-cultural aspects. Research philosophy and procedures which have guided to conduct the research systematically are discussed. Research paradigm which regulates the study along with research design is articulated. Research process, data collection methods and data analysis, ethical considerations for the study are described.

Research Paradigm

The study is conducted in an interpretive research paradigm. This paradigm believes that the knowledge is contextual and focuses to understand knowledge related to human and social sciences to interpret their world and act accordingly (Hammersley, 2013). Here, the researcher attempts to have deeper understanding of the phenomenon and its complexities in relation to its unique context rather than simply generalizing the base of understanding for the whole setting (Creswell, 2009). In this regard, this paradigm is preferred to explore the integration of culture in the built spaces to further understand the changes in the traditional indigenous spatial constructs.

There are multiple interpretations developed among humans' relationships. An interpretive researcher tries to comprehend the world and worldly phenomenon through diverse perspectives and experiences in relation to different contexts and cultures. They try to avoid the biases in studying the events and people in their own interpretations (Hammersley, 2013). This helps a researcher to have a diversified view to look into phenomena. Interpretive researchers can not only describe objects, human

or events but also deeply understands them in a social context. Research in this paradigm is conducted in a purely natural setting by using ethnographic research, case studies, life history, and grounded theory methodologies. This can help the researcher to probe *Tharu* communities' thoughts, values, views, perceptions, feelings, prejudices, and perspectives which help to understand the realities that can't be seen from outside (Pham, 2018). This paradigm eased the study of inter-linkages between culture and traditional built-spaces, document and assess the dynamics of viable changes in the *Tharu* community.

<div align="center">**Ethnography as Research Methodology**</div>

This research implies ethnographic research methodology. Ethnographic research is a central feature of anthropological research. Creswell (2009) defines ethnography as "*a strategy of inquiry in which the researcher studies an intact cultural group in a natural setting over a prolonged period of time by collecting, primarily, observational and interview data*" (pg. 13). Studying space in socio-cultural life involves observation, stimulate through interview and participatory research methodologies. Brewer (2004) explains that the methods used in this approach should facilitate access to people's social meanings and activities and involve close association and familiarity with the social setting. He argues that an actual participation is not needed and emphasizes more on the selection of techniques including in-depth interviews, discourse analysis, personal documents and vignettes alongside participant observation. As the approach involves the use of multiple methods of data collection, triangulation of methods should be routinely assessed (Brewer, 2004). The methodology is often debated for bringing in the claims of positivism and naturalism and extent to which the ethnographer is conscious of his/her subject position (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007).

An ethnographic approach can incorporate different methods which can combine both qualitative and quantitative data. Brewer (2000) presents, ethnography as both a method and methodology. Brewer presents method as a tool for data collection. Whereas, methodology is a justification of the use of particular set of methods which establishes bases for general theoretical and philosophical understanding of the research (CHUNLAHAWANIT, 2015). Ethnography is applicable for any small scale social research that is carried out in everyday setting and uses different flexible methods. The methodology evolves in design throughout the study and seeks interpretive understanding of the meanings of individuals' actions and explanations (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). In any cross cultural study of space and places, dialogical process is crucial. This involves exploration and accounting of various features like symbols, meanings, beliefs, activities and experiences relating to space and place in a particular society through the perspectives of those who dwell it as a cultural meaningful experience (Aucoin, 2017). Thus, ethnography entails both a method for data collection and methodology to justify and comprehensively illustrate the data based on theoretical and philosophical backing.

In ethnographic research, researcher observes people's actions and accounts of everyday contexts. The transformation of global practices into local practice is investigated empirically by closely observing and analyzing individual actors in their natural setting (Kokot, 2006). It focuses on the flow of events in their natural, social, and cultural settings in a prolonged field engagement. As a result, distinctive micro-level inside view of the scenario is unwoven. Ethnographic research is conducted in fields which are defined by the temporal, spatial and cultural factors. The ethnographic study of the changing traditional spatial constructs can limit to a particular location as well as explore different locations for relative studies, while

specific cultures are referred in specific time. In the cases where fields are not spatially defined, relational notion of the "field-as-network" has to replace the "field-as-location". Field was constrained to a site and location for ethnographic investigation before the arrival of *deconstructivist* critique which came along with the globalization (Kokot, 2006). This entails that ethnography study of the cultural variables for a community in the study area can extend beyond the territorial confinement of the study area to other places with similar contextual cultural properties. Additionally, the '*deconstructivist'* approach would ease the study of global influences on the traditional *Tharu* communities and the study would be referenced for similar cases in different territorial regions.

Research Procedure

The procedure for this research, begins with defining the problem statement. To highlight the significances of the problem statement, related contexts and rationales are presented. The problem statement is derived into a research question to streamline the research directions. Various literatures on cultures, traditions, influences or shifts in them, spaces and their derivatives interlinked with culture, vernacular architecture, and archetypes of *Tharus'* spaces are studied to have ontological insights in the subject matter.

With the reviewed literatures as references, field studies were conducted primarily, based on ethnographic methodologies. The study has been primarily based on the participant observation and transect walk as a major tool for information. I have been observing the living practices of the *Tharu* community since 2018 in their traditional settlement. I've been noticing the way they've been coping with the contextual changes in the progressing times. Over the years, I have made several visits to the site as I've been involved professionally in an infrastructural

developmental work in the same village community. The durations of the visits at the site have been from a single day to a couple of weeks, living with the villagers. This has helped me to experience their local culture and daily practices. I have had several experiences with the locals, like fishing in rivers, working in paddy fields, herding buffaloes, feasting, celebrating their festivities and others.

As few of the locals were hired to build the infrastructures for the project, I have had opportunities to explore their traditional ways of building using the bamboo strips, earth, and thatches. It was this co-working opportunity with the locals that helped me blend in with the social group of the *Tharu* community. I took opportunities to study the local co-worker's houses and surroundings. They also guided me with transect walks around the village to observe and study other's houses, spaces and site surroundings. During the transect walks, several informal conversations were held with the villagers. As the *Tharus* folks were comfortable in speaking their native language it was challenging for me to understand what the locals literally meant unless a language interpreter pitched in to translate and explain in Nepali. The local co-workers also helped me facilitate and translate a few of the interviews with selected participants.

These techniques helped to elicit the micro-details of the scenarios as I gradually familiarized myself with the community's moods in their natural and social settings. Additionally, several photographs and notes were taken and sketches were made since the early years of my involvement in the community. These documentations helped to study the changes in their traditional settings. The photographs and sketches are also used as photo-voice in the research. Likewise, several secondary sources of data are referred to. Various publishing contents, digital

images, maps are sourced for the unstructured data collection. These secondary data helped to have further insights on the field contexts.

The qualitative data collected are interview transcripts, notes, images, text documents and sketches. Interpretations of the meanings and functions retrieved from the collected data and their implications in local and wider contexts are considered in the analysis of the data. To analyze these data, as suggested by Bryman and Burges (2002), generation of the concept is used as data analysis methods in this qualitative research. The concept is generated from discourse analysis. Discourse analysis is a method of analysis naturally occurring talks and all types of written texts (Dudovskiy, 2018). In the initial stage of discourse analysis, the raw data are organized and categorized in common themes as inferenced from the literature reviews. The collected and organized data are discussed referencing to the theories highlighted in the literature review. In the last stage of data analysis research findings are linked with the objective of the research.

Site Selection

The study area is located in Sehari village of Ward 2, Madhyabindu Municipality, in Nawalpur district in Gandaki Province. The village spreads amidst the paddy fields in the southern plains of the country. It is around 8km south from the Mahendra Highway. It is in a buffer zone of Chitwan National Park, in the flood banks of the Narayani River and the Pathar River and is yearly inundated. The prevailing winds are from the east in the summer months and from the west in the winter months. The warmest average temperature is about 29.9°C (36.6°C maximum) and the coolest average temperature being 15.0°C (7.4°C minimum). The maximum precipitation recorded is 416mm of rain in the month of July (Climate Data, n.d.).

Three neighborhoods of the village, Char-ghare Tole, Hetki Tole and Bhutaha Tole were studied. The studied neighborhoods are majorly inhabited by *Tharu* community and other ethnicities of *Brahmins*, *Chhetris*, *Botes*, *Kumals* and *Sukis* of around 65 households with population of around 1,600. Agriculture is a primary occupation in the village. Located in the riverbanks, the land around possesses alluvial depositions making the entire surrounding highly suitable for cultivation. Paddy, sugar cane, maize, lentils are the main crops planted. Vegetable farming is also popular. Beside agriculture, the villagers are also involved in buffalo herding. Foreign employment is prominent in the villages; however due to the COVID-19 pandemic, most of them were forced to return to the villages. It is to be noted that majority of the villagers would be busy in their farmlands during the planting seasons and harvesting seasons.

The settlement is in the southernmost end of the municipality and although being connected by a graveled road network it is difficult to traverse during the monsoon season. The road from the municipal headquarter at Chormara ends at the Pathar River, awaiting a bridge to be built across and relate the village to a village market at Bhandara which could be accessed in about five to ten minutes in a vehicle. The road through Bhandara would shorten the distance with Chormara, a market town in the highway around half an hour drive from the site. Presently, the road is connected through Panauti or Sitapur, both village markets at about fifteen minutes of drive from the settlement. A desolated location makes it difficult to access the major market in the region. One may not find high end goods, materials or tools around the immediate market areas of Panauti or Sitapur or even in Chormara. The locals often fetch the supplies from Narayanghat or Butwal or even Kathmandu.
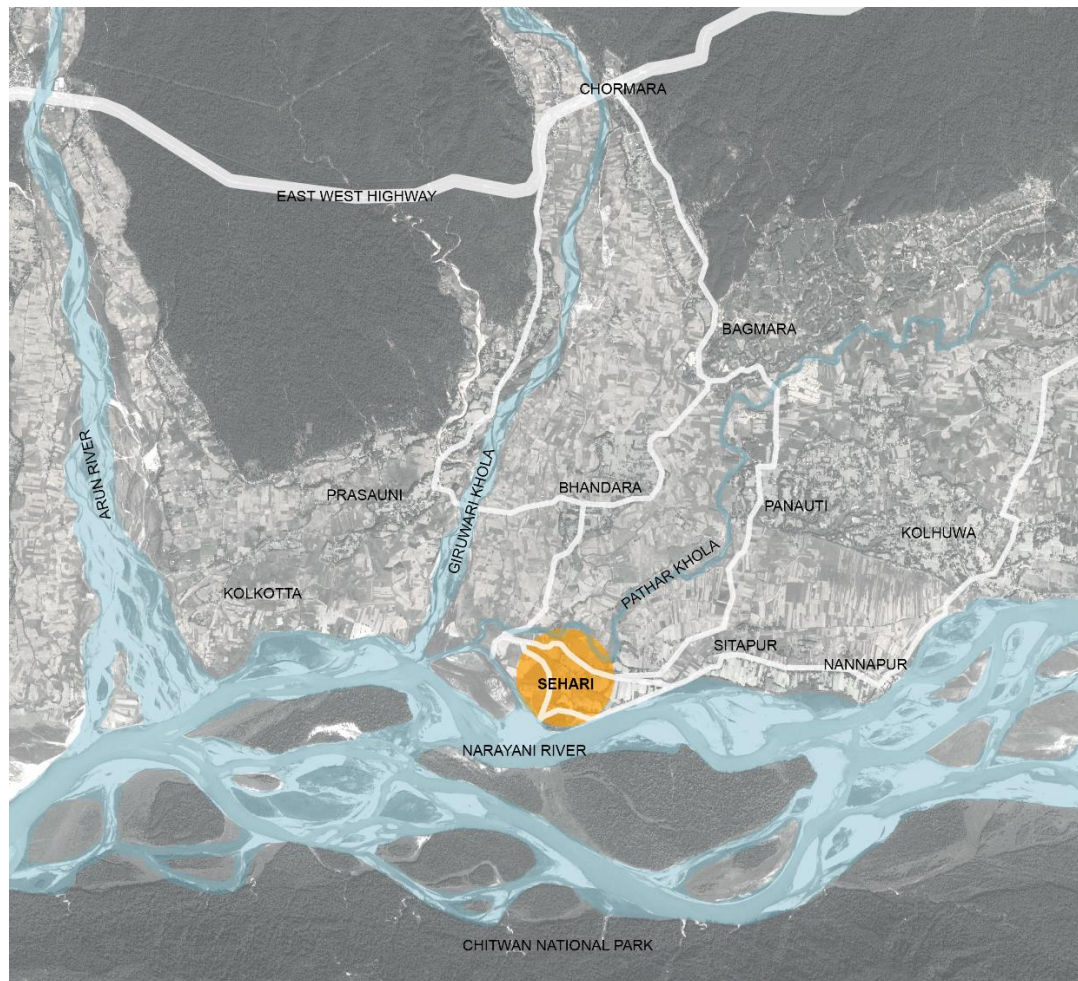
Fi*gure 3*: Location map of the study area

(Source: GOOGLE EARTH 11/03/2017)

The village hosts cluster of settlements developed in the indigenous vernacular archetypes, encompassed by fields all around. Modern reinforced cement concrete constructions are rare in the region while the vernacular houses built out of wattle and daub intervened with tin sheets are also common. Most of the earth-based constructions seen in the region are prone to moistures from the ground and lacks proper ventilation. Modern constructions mostly marketed under "*ek dine ghar*" campaign which builds the basic structure of the house out of concrete posts and tin sheets on metal supports are also widely seen in the neighborhoods.

Figure 4: Neighborhood map in the lower Sehari Village

(Source: GOOGLE EARTH 11/03/2017)

Other developments have followed in the village. Animal husbandry, fish farming and a center for peace has been built in the neighboring plots of the settlement. People from Butwal, Bharatpur, Kathmandu and other city centers have also been flocking into the village to buy plots of land for different business ventures or simply for the land speculations. The river banks nearby the site are popular for wildlife observation and tourist activities as safaris from resorts at Nannapur, half an hour drive away, could be seen often. It is unlikely the site surroundings could be developed into some busy settlement areas due to the flooding risks but could develop into a tourist areas owing to the rich local cultures and biodiversity.

Participant selection

All of the participants selected for the study are from the *Tharu* community in the village or associated with the village. As mentioned earlier, most of the participants were the local workers from the village who were employed in the

infrastructure development project of a community based organization working in the village. Beside them, a few other locals met during the transect walks were communicated and interviewed.

There was a boy in his early twenties from the Bhutaha Tole who helped with the labor works and coordinated with the other workers from the community. He also helped facilitating several transect walks, communicating with the locals and interpreting conversations in the *Tharu* language. His mother, his two aunts, his uncle and younger brother also worked together with him on several occasions at the site. His mother and his aunts were good with mud slurry rendering works on the walls and floors, weaving *khadiya* or bamboo mats and other local handworks. He and his brothers offered several local experiences to me like swimming, fishing in the river, cycling, spotting rhinos, attending local festivities, working in fields etc. They also showed me their houses, their kin's houses and surroundings in the Bhutaha Tole. His uncle who had previously been for foreign employment, had a scooter parked in the small ground floor of their house while TVs and refrigerator were on the upper floor. His uncle was interviewed and detailed sketches and study of his house and surrounding was done, which is presented in the following chapters.

A local builder in his late thirties and his companions from the village who were employed, helped me to understand the local building practices and their traditional knowhow of construction. He was skilled in masonry work, plaster works, roofing works and other construction works, may that be old school construction or the new cement based. He had two daughters and his wife altered her religion to Christianity. His house, both the *ek dine ghar* and old traditional house at Char Ghare Tole were visited. Similarly, there was a local carpenter of around thirty-five years old from Hetki Tole. He had previously been for foreign employment. His house and

surrounding which housed more than ten family members were also studied, sketched and are presented in the following chapters.

Besides, the co-workers, a local *Tharu* activist in his forties was interviewed. He elucidated the history of the village and elaborated about the traditions and culture being practiced in the village. He explained about the traditions of '*Kantariya*', '*kul devta*', several nature spirits and other myths and beliefs in the village. He also explained about the development trends in the village. He concerned about the outsiders venturing into the land speculation markets in the village. Similarly, he presented his thoughts on cultural preservation in the village through the practices of homestays and local *Tharu* museums.

A lady who had been working as a field office staff for the organization was also interviewed. She was in her later twenties and was newly married into a *Mahato* clan in a nearby village of Panauti. Her stories presented her new living arrangements in her new family. Her stories were relatable to the observed contexts in the village of Sehari. During the time of the interview her husband was in a foreign employment. Recently with the return of her husband, her family had completed a construction of a single storeyed reinforced cement concrete house. She also elaborated on the local *Tharu* traditions and customs which she noticed were shared in between the two villages of Panauti and Sehari. She shared her insights on the practices and changes pertaining in Sehari, being a *Tharu* woman from a neighboring village.

Similarly, an old man in his late sixties was interviewed in his front yard in between the Hetki Tole and Bhutaha Tole. Around 2018, he was completing his *ek dine ghar*. In about couple of years, I noticed he had built a rudimentary structure next to his *ek dine ghar*. This fascinated me and hence I approached for an interview. His rudimentary construct which was mostly built using salvaged materials, catered a

buffalo shed, a kitchen, and granary storage on the upper floors. His stories were mostly nostalgic about his youthful days, the traditional cultural practices that his generations valued and his opinions on the persisting changes.

Likewise, a few other people who were met at their houses or fields during the transect walks were conversed. When the initial conversations started getting interesting, further probing into their living practices were made. They happily showed around how they lived in their dwellings. There was an old woman in the Charghare Tole who showed around her cattle shed and poultry coops, showing different agricultural tools, earthen wares, *boshi*, *shuli*, fishing tools and others. Similarly, another old woman in the Bhuthaha Tole showed inside her house, the way they live. She had all her belongings hung on the strings. Together with her belongings, were the mushrooms sprouted on hung arrangements. She showed her private sleeping spaces on the upper floor as well. There she had a TV and a refrigerator next to her bedding and wooden trunk for closet.

Hence, several participants were selected as my engagements in the village became more methodical. Over the years of working, my co-workers became my participants as I had the opportunity of observing and learning from them for a significant duration of time. There were a few participants who were purposefully selected, after a prolong observation of their practices in the village. Likewise, most of the other participants engaged during the transect walks were unintentional. Simple conversations with them established further engagements with them to study their living practices in their cultural spaces.

Quality Standards

The research is based on the data collected from multiple sources using multiple methods. There are possible chances of data missing or misinterpretation and

may raise the question on the quality standard of data. To ensure the credibility, trustworthy and authenticity of data collected, participants native to the community and who have been practicing their daily living in the most traditional way possible were preferred for observation and conversations. The participant observation along with transect walk was a major tool for data collection. Primary data were collected from prolonged field engagement. Conversations were conducted in natural, cultural, spatial settings where the environment settings could be observed as well. It cannot be denied that the originality of data from conversations with the locals might have been skewed in the process of translations. However, the data retrieved from interviews were matched with the observed environment to ensure the data were trustworthy. Field notes, sketches, photographs and audio recordings were taken during data collection procedures. They helped to revisit data while analyzing them, and generating inferences.

Efforts are made to preserve the authenticity of the research work by focusing on the fairness, ontological, educative, catalytic and tactical aspects of data collection (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). The voices of the participants are fairly presented. The data collection procedure helped the participants reflect on their environment and expand their individual constructs and understandings of their world. Native terms used by the participants are presented without any language translation in the research to avoid wrong presentation of data and preserve the authenticity of the data. The use of native terms has catalytically helped in viewing the participants' world with less distortion.

In ethnographic research, one needs to engage in the field with an open mind considering emergence of new data from the field collected data (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). The emergence process continues throughout the research process from data

collection in the field till developing themes from analyzing the data. To guide this emergence process, several mind mappings and memos and notes were taken. With the field notes, sketches, recordings, photographs, memos and mind mappings, it was easier to triangulate the data and also audit trail the research process ensuring conformability of the research. Photographs and sketches are also used as photo-voice to present the data fairly. All the collected data are systematically organized in a theme generated from the analysis of collected data. The findings are presented in a standard paper format to maintain the quality of the research.

Research Ethics

Ethics are the norms for conduct that distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable behavior. There are ethical issues surrounding social research. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) suggest five different ethical issues to consider for ethnographic research – informed consent, privacy, harm, exploitation, and consequences for future research. Informed consent is a procedure in which a participant voluntarily chooses whether to participate in an investigation after being informed of facts that would be likely to influence their decisions (Diener & Crandall, 1978). The participants in the research were informed about the nature of research, purposes and procedures before involving them. The research sought to seek consents from the participants and the stakeholders whenever the conducted observation and interviews started to become intimidating or probing into their private details. All participants were voluntarily engaged during the research activities. Their confidentiality and anonymity are maintained. Any kind of harms to research participants were avoided while engaging with them. Stressful situation and anxiety of participants were avoided.

Trusted and credible sources of data are followed. Plagiarism is strictly avoided during the study. Works of original authors are acknowledged. The data analysis and interpretation are done based on the understanding and knowledge acquired over the course of this program. The external influences like peer pressure, contemporary trends, and others are avoided during the data analysis and interpretation process. The findings from the study are presented in qualitative standards in simple language and formats. Best efforts have been made to avoid unbiased language or words against gender, racial or ethnic groups, disability or age in writing report.

Chapter Summary

An interpretive research paradigm is opted in this research to understand the complexity of social contexts. The inter-linkages between culture and traditional built-spaces in a *Tharu* community is explored and the understanding is interpreted in this research. The research methodology follows ethnography. The research starts with the problem statement from which a research question is formulated. For clearer ontological insights on the topics, various literatures on culture, spaces and interlinkages between cultures and spaces and vernacular architecture are studied. A field study was conducted in a transforming traditional *Tharu* village of Sehari with around 65 households. The socio-cultural life of *Tharus* in relation to their spatial constructs were observed in a prolonged field engagement which stressed on participant observation. Additionally, various formal, informal interviews with the participants were conducted and sketches, field notes, memos, photographs and recordings were taken. The collected data are categorized under various themes and analyzed in reference to the knowledge from literatures. Various inferential concepts are generated from the discourse analysis and presented under different headings.

The research work abides to maintain quality of work to its best standard. In this regard, considerations were made during field study and other research procedures to ensure credibility, trustworthy, authenticity and conformability of the research. Research ethics for ethnography are followed. Informed consents were taken from the participants during field study. Likewise, the right to privacy of the participants are respected through the research work and no harms and exploitations to the participants are intended. Works of original authors are credited, plagiarism is avoided and efforts have been made to present the work in simple unbiased languages.

CHAPTER IV

FIELD WORK AND INTERPRETATIONS

This chapter presents various interpretative descriptions of findings from field works. The *Tharus* and their dwelling places of Sehari are introduced and explained here. The socio-cultural attributes of the communities are presented. The influences in their socio-cultural fabrics and the prevailing changes are discussed.

A Story of Sehari and the Native *Tharus*

Around half an hour drive to the south from the midpoint of the East-West Highway is how one can get to Sehari. Chormara, Danda and Kawasoti are the urban hubs along the East-West Highway in close proximity to the midpoint. One can hire an auto-rickshaw from the highway hubs and feel the gusts of fresh breeze from the two open sides while riding on the lengths of bumpy graveled roads and a few kilometers of black-topped roads in between. The road meanders through a few settlements, small rivulets, canals and vast fields of lush greeneries, mostly of paddy, maize, mustard, depending upon the farming season. As one gets farther south, it becomes more common to find villagers cycling with their farm tools hung behind them, some working in their farmlands, herds of buffaloes, poultries pecking along the roadsides, varieties of birds flying and chirping around.

There's no clear sign that welcomes one to Sehari. It spreads amidst vast plots of farmland with a few settlements in the center. The Narayani River flows on its south and the Pathar River flows on its west and northwest. The Pathar River is also known as 'Ulti Khola' in local terms, 'Ulti' meaning 'opposite' and 'Khola' meaning 'river'. The river flows in the opposite direction every year during the times of the

Narayani River flooding. The Chitwan National Park lies to the other side of the Narayani River and the village actually lies in the buffer zone called 'Nanna – Vauju Buffer Area'. An urbanizing village, Panauti lies to the north and another village called Sitapur lies to the east of Sehari village. A rivulet flows through the village, called Sehari, after which the village is named. The rivulet divides the village into upper Sehari and lower Sehari. The upper Sehari hosts a settlement called 'Bijli Tole'. It is interesting to understand the etymology of the settlements. 'Bijli' in *Tharu* language means 'in between' and 'Tole' means 'neighborhood'. As its name suggests, the neighborhood is located in between Panauti and other settlements farther to the south. In Bijli Tole itself there's another neighborhood called 'Sauteni Tole', 'Sauteni' is a term generally used for multiple wives of a common husband or for multiple husbands with a common wife. Again, as the name suggests, in all of the ten houses in the neighborhood, a man has three wives.

The neighborhood immediately on the other side of culvert on the Sehari rivulet is 'Charghare Tole'. 'Charghare' in the local terms means 'four houses'. It is said at the beginning there were only four houses in the neighborhood. Farther to the west of the 'Charghare Tole' is 'Hetki Tole'. In the local terms 'Hetki' means 'recent', the neighborhood is one of the last one to come into existence. To the farther south in the village, on the riverbanks of the Narayani River is 'Bhutaha Tole'. The term 'Bhutaha' is derived from 'Bhoot' meaning 'ghost'. It is said that in the beginning, the villagers used to cast down the ghosts or the evil spirits haunting the old folks and children in the village in this area. The neighborhoods are also named after their geographical features. 'Hetki Tole' is also known as 'Tadi Tole' and 'Bhutaha Tole' as 'Gehari Tole'. 'Tadi' means 'higher lands' and 'Gehari' means 'lower lands'. To the southwest end of the village, the 'Ulti Khola' meets the

Narayani River. The confluence is called 'Ligiya Ghat', 'Ligiya' means 'tracks' and 'ghat' means 'the river banks where dead bodies are cremated'. It is said that bullocks' carts used to drive on the tracks through the confluence area from the village to the 'Gulariya Ghat'. 'Gulariya Ghat' is another confluence to the farther west where the Giriwari River meets the Narayani River. In the past, *haat bazaar*, the occasional village market used to function for a few days once every year at 'Gulariya Ghat' where merchants from across the Tribeni Dham in the border between India and Nepal used to come to trade fabrics, kerosene, spices and other goods with the harvests produced in the nearby villages.

Becoming Sehari as of Today

The development of Sehari as a place is interesting to unfold. One may think, the village is old enough as people link the village to the *Tharus* and their primitive ways of living. But in reality, the village seems to come into existence around a couple of generations ago. During my multiple visits to the village, I did not find any of the typical *Tharu's* long, one-storey houses as mentioned in the existing literatures. I was surprised to find double storeyed houses made of mud rendered walls and tin sheets for roofing as I walked along the streets in the village. Although, the streets and the neighborhoods gave the vibes of the *Tharu* ethnicities, they did not match the true characteristics of the *Tharu* settlements as documented in several publishing. Beside the *Tharu* families, the village has also been hosting families from other ethnicities like *Kumal, Brahmin, Chhetri, Bote, Gurung* and *Magar*. However, the cultural dominancy of the *Tharus* is prevalent although, with some deviations. The village proudly presents itself as a *Tharu* village.

A conversation with one of the *Tharus*, aged around 50 years of old from 'Charghare Tole', unfolded how the village of Sehari came to be. It started with the

first four houses which were built during his great grandfather's times in the Charghare Tole. Each of the first four houses belonged to a family of *Jamindar*, *Thanet*, *Mahato* and *Chaudhary*, the sub-castes within the *Tharus*. *Jamindars* are the landlords, *Thanets* are the '*mukhiyas*', one who overlooks the social functioning in the village, *Mahatos* are the higher sub-castes of *Tharus* who can practice witchcrafts and priests and *Chaudharys* are the minor castes among the four who basically work at farm. He identified himself as a *Thanet*, whose family migrated from Panauti. His family's '*kul devta*', an ancestral deity, is still worshipped in Panauti at his relatives where the family pays homage during auspicious occasions. Like his family, the families of *Jamindar*, *Mahato* and *Chaudhary* also migrated from Panauti and other nearby villages. As all of the *Tharu* families are from within the Nawalpur district, they collectively introduce themselves as *Nawalpuria Tharus*.

As time passed by, a *Kumal* family migrated from the Palpa district with a *doko* of belongings and settled at the Hetki Tole. When I last visited, I noted seven houses of the *Kumal* kin clustered in the Hetki Tole. Likewise, another *Mahato* family migrated in the 'Bhutaha Tole' from Amaltari, a village center to the east. In the course of time, other families of *Bote*, *Kami*, *Suke*, *Brahmin*, *Chhetris* and others immigrated in the village. As their families expanded, they divided themselves into smaller units and moved into new houses around the primary neighborhoods thus forming the present village of Sehari, which now houses around 1,600 people.

Beside the *Tharus* and the immigrants in the village, a *Rayamajhi* family also played a role in the history to shape the village of Sehari. During the times of autocracies in the state, a *Rayamajhi* family from Bhiuran, a settlement to the west of the Giriwari River, used to govern the regions around Sehari. They used to ride horses to the villages around with a *chowkidaar* running after. The *chowkidaar* used to

gather the villagers upon the arrival of the *Rayamajhis* and facilitated the governance in the regions. During those visits around the villages, the *Rayamajhis* used to command for the developmental works in the villages like building foot trails, tracks for bullock carts, *chautaras* and other public constructs. Upon their commands, the villagers had to volunteer their labor for the construction. The present-day road networks are upgrades of the then built mobility networks. The *Rayamajhi* family owns a large property of land plots with few structures behind boundary fences at the Charghare Tole.

Previously, the *Jamindar* families from the nearby villages used to own the majority of the land plots in Sehari and around. The interviewee quoted, "*Once upon a time, a Jamindaar used to own more than 88 bighas of land.*" 88 *bighas* of land is around 600 hectares. During those times, it was a practice in the region, for the *Jamindar* families to offer a *bigha* of land to those who brought new wives home. But, the bridegroom had to be a migrant from the hills. The clever ones brought new *Tharu* wives and had the wives for fifteen to twenty days at home, until they received the gift of a *bigha* of land. Once they received the gifts, they returned the wives back to her family with a rupee, a tradition called '*jwari farkaune*', and again remarried another *Tharu* women for another gift of a *bigha* of land. In this way, the migrants from the hills in the region gathered huge plots of lands. On the other hand, the *Tharus* in the region worked as '*raiti*', farm labors for the landlords. Often, after working for around ten years, the landlords used to pleasingly offer a right to the *raitis* over any plot of land they desired. Such land right is called '*mohiyani hak*' and the recipients of the right is called '*mohi*'. Under *mohiyaani hak*, the *mohis* were allowed to farm the plots, make harvests but share the harvests with the landlords. The prevailing law dictated, the *mohis* to be granted equal shares of the plots by the

landlords. This ensured the *Tharu* families in the region to have their own plots of land.

As the families divided, their plots of lands divided too. This granted autonomy over fragments of land to smaller units and influenced the regional land market to play along. Subsequently, more migrants from outside the region flocked into the villages, to own plots of land for cheap prices. Also, businesses and other institutions ventured in to own huge plots of lands, to operate their businesses or to simply make profits by holding the plots of lands as the prices escalate over time. To this day, institutions and individuals from outside the village have held significant shares in the village property mostly for land speculation.

As one walks around the main lane of Sehari, one would find clusters of houses alongside, in each neighborhood. Most of the houses and structures built alongside are primitive and very simple in construction. The gestures of the former migrating patterns of the *Tharus* can be read as one walks around the streets. Surprisingly, it can be observed that the dwellers from the other ethnic backgrounds have also adopted the similar patterns of living in the village. There are around twenty to thirty houses in each of the neighborhood. Each cluster of houses generally belongs to a kin or a family. A house in the village in average accommodates two to more than ten family members in a house, depending on the size of the house. As the size of the family grows, the old houses become smaller to accommodate the growing family, hence new houses around the old ones are built. That is how the *Kumal* family owns seven houses in their cluster. In addition to that, as new brides are wedded into the family, the conflicts between the newlyweds and the old folks often lead to divisions in the family. Subsequently, either the separated family lives together in the same house with separate living arrangements or move out of the house and build a new

one around the village. In such cases, new houses are built in the inherited plots of farmland in the outskirts of the settlement or in a small plot purchased in a different neighborhood.

On a similar note, the alternate livelihood earning in the family has also influenced for new constructions around the village. As the locals earn enough, they're privileged with autonomy to live their life. With the collected surpluses, they look forward to enjoy luxury to their possible extents and the best way to convenient luxury is when lived alone or in smaller units, so that sharing within the large family is not necessary. As a result, new modern properties are built around the village by the locals themselves.

Figure 5: Satellite image of the lower Sehari village from the year 2005

(Source: GOOGLE EARTH 11/03/2017)

Figure 6: Satellite image of the lower Sehari village from the year 2020

(Source: GOOGLE EARTH 25/12/2021)

Over the course of time, Sehari has grown organically, without any proper legit planning frameworks. It has always been the villagers themselves, specially the *Tharus* who have led the growth of the village. The sociological constructs or the functioning of the *Tharus* have had the major influence in the growth of the village. Additionally, the new trends of development mainly the road networks, bridges, modern education system, the modern market and the new state policies on land management have stimulated external agents to play role in the development of the village. When two different satellite images of the village from the year 2005 and 2020 are compared, one can see the changes accommodated by the village during the course of just fifteen years. The number of housing units have sporadically increased and seems scattering in the fringes of the main neighborhoods. The Bhutaha Tole didn't even exist well until 2005. But, by the year 2022 the neighborhood has grown with significant number of houses scattered randomly, defying the general patterns of

Tharu settlement. The road networks can be traced easily and so do the long narrow plots of divided lands with narrow faces aligned along the main road network which reflects the influences of the land speculation market in the village. On the other hand, the Narayani River has extensively moved to the north encroaching the huge river banks in the village.

In the days to come, the village is more likely to change and evolve as a response to the different factors. Time will tell, how the *Tharu*s, played along for the existence of Sehari as a *Tharu* village, that they boast in portraying.

Faiths and Myths in Sehari

The main protagonists of Sehari, the *Tharus* are indigenous ethnic tribal people. Their acts of daily living are highly based on the faiths, myths and the other traditional cultural values that they have developed in the course of time. For an anthropological study, the *Tharus* in Sehari cannot be isolated from the collective mass of *Tharus*. They share common faiths, myths, beliefs, superstitions and socio-cultural practices that shape their cognitive system for the sociological functioning. However, there exists different dialectics of their socio-cultural practices depending on the regions they live. To understand the socio-cultural practices of the *Tharus* of Sehari, the scope of the study extends beyond the territory of the field of study area to the Nawalpur region as a whole.

The findings explore the spaces for the gods or the abstracts and suggest there are three main abstracts that the *Tharus* pay homage to. All the myths, faiths, beliefs, superstitions, customary rituals and other related socio-cultural practices are centered around these three main abstracts. These three main abstracts are - a common deity of the *Tharus* in a region, the nature spirits and the '*kul devtas*' or the ancestral spirits. Religions are secondary to these abstracts. However, their faiths and beliefs are found

to be in close conjunction with a sect of Hinduism which mostly focuses on '*shakti'* and its derivatives. Majority of the *Tharus* adopt Hinduism in this sense. A few important gods and goddesses are worshipped at the temples around the villages and few festivals for the Hindu deities are celebrated. A Christian missionary operates in the village as well and a few of the *Tharus* have adopted the Christianity too. When it was asked around the village for reasons the *Tharus* change themselves into Christians, the notion of the common answers was that it was hard to become a *Tharu*. When the *Tharus* find it cumbersome to follow the traditional *Tharus* customs, rituals and other socio-cultural practices they tend to adapt Christianity as an easy escape. This entails that in order to abide by to continue living, it is necessary for the *Tharus* to have some faiths and beliefs on anything – no matter what they follow or who they follow.

Nawalpuria Tharus and the Tradition of 'Kantariya'

I was surprised to know that the *Tharus* of the whole Nawalpur region pay tribute at a common shrine. This commonality in the *Tharus* community living in the Nawalpur district is what truly identifies them as the *Nawalpuria Tharus*. The conversations with the old people in the village entailed a tradition to go pay homage to the shrine once in every five years. The tradition is called '*Kantariya'*. '*Kantariya'* in their local understanding is a customary ritual which is simply translated in Nepali as '*durga vog lagaune'*. '*Durga'* is a deity in Hinduism revered as mother goddess who destroyed '*Maisahashur'*, the evil. The deity is symbolized as a manifestation of *Shakti* in Hindu philosophies. '*Vog lagaune'* translates to English as 'offering blood sacrifices. Hence, the term '*durga vog lagaune'* means offering blood sacrifices for *Shakti*. This may sound absurd, but the significance of the tradition is valued once the stories behind the tradition are unfolded.

The shrine is located at Devchuli, in a middle of a jungle on a hill to the north of the region. Although, the shrine can be accessed in a travel of a day, the *Tharus* make a trip of two days to reach to the shrine during '*Kantariya*'. It is believed that if they attempt to reach the shrine in a single day during the ritual, they'll fall sick in the middle of the pilgrimage. So, they make a stop at a river bank on the way for a night, and take a holy bath in the river the next morning and head to the shrine. At least a member from every *Tharu* kin in the Nawalpur region makes pilgrimage to the shrine with their own ancestral weapons, costumes and offerings. Different *Tharu* kin have different roles and their own turns to perform their rituals at the shrine. First, the *guruvas,* the *Tharu* priests perform the ritual to invoke the '*devi*'. It's an act to manifest the holy spirits of *Shakti* in the three idols found at the shrine. Following the *guruvas*, the representatives of the other *Tharu* kin worships at the shrine. After worshipping at the shrine, the pilgrimage travels in a route to other several smaller shrines scattered around the regions. The ritual concludes at a shrine in the village of Kolkotta, which lies to the west of the Giriwari River. It is believed if the ritual is not concluded appropriately at Kolkotta, thousands of tiger would appear and predate the humans in the region.

The tradition of '*Kantariya*' is based on the belief of revitalizing the spirit energies of the *Tharu* community. The shrine at Devchuli is worshipped as the main source of the *Shakti*, or the energy which is transmuted, divided and distributed among the several *Tharu* kin and other shrines in and around the villages in the region. In the phenomena, different nature spirits, ancestral spirits or '*kul devtas*' and the *guruvas* are revived with the *Shakti* to protect the communities and the regions from evils, omens and misfortunes. Hence, it can be said that the village of Sehari is also blessed with the divine *Shakti* manifested from the tradition of '*Kantariya*.'

The Nature Spirits

The *Tharus* are nature worshippers. The details and varieties of their practices, myths and beliefs centered around the nature surprised me. Their socio-cultural practices are critical to the natural resource management and conservation. They abide to strict customs to pay homages to the nature and gracefully consumes the natural resources as they avoid harming the nature spirits. They fear that the nature spirits would trouble them with various catastrophes like flooding, droughts, marauding wildlife, epidemics and so on, if the nature and the natural phenomena are disturbed.

Every year, on the day of '*Shoraii'*, known as *Laxmi Puja* in Nepali, the *Tharus* worship the '*bandevta'*, the gods of the forests. They travel deep into the forests with the offerings and call upon the spirits of the forests and perform their rituals. They ask for forgiveness for having the forest resources exploited or consumed during a year. They also ask for protection from the marauding wildlife and permissions to consume the natural resources from the forests for the days to come. Beside, a customary ritual for the *bandevta*, the *Tharus* often perform a small ritual or asks for permissions to the *bandevta* before chopping down a tree.

Likewise, once every year they perform a different ritual for the '*jal devta'*, the water goddess. They go to the banks of the Narayani River and perform their rituals where they sacrifice a black goat. During the ritual, they ask the water goddess to mainly prevent them from flooding disaster and allow them to have access to the water resources and fishes. But sometimes, they perform special rituals for the unusual happenings around the river banks.

A story by a local *Tharu* activist explained how they resolved an unusual erosion on the riverbank by the Narayani River by performing a meticulous spiritual ritual. The case was during an event of flooding the year before. As the Narayani

River started washing away the river banks terrifically, the villagers were afraid that the river would encroach their farmlands and settlements. So, a few representatives of the village visited their *guruva* for consultation. The *guruva* after a short trance, told them that a huge fish had appeared at the river bank and the massive erosion was due to the fish violently waving its tail, causing violent waves. The *guruva* told the representatives that eight women had sighted a huge fish near the riverbank where the erosion was happening. He asked them to confirm the sightings with the eye witnesses first. As told, the representatives went to the village and confirmed the sightings with the eye witnesses. They went back to the *guruva* and explained that it was all true. Then, the *guruva* told that during the embankment constructions along the riverbank, earlier in the year, none had conducted a proper ritual to pay homage to the *jal devta*. So the *jal devta* was angry and took a form of the fish to wreck a havoc. The *guruva* suggested the representatives to send a virgin male in new sacred clothes to the riverbank, then for him to take a dip in the river and commit to the *jal devta* to offer a sacrifice of a black goat. As the virgin male performed the ritual as instructed, the representatives who went along, saw massive erosions on the other side of the river while the violent waves of water calmed at their side. The villagers even recorded a video footage of the events. The next day, they offered a black goat to the *jal devta* and hence they saved the village from being washed away. After the event, the villagers commonly joke that instead of spending huge budgets on building embankments and dams to protect the villages from flooding, they should offer a black goat every year and save huge amounts.

The *Tharus* have a strange tradition of '*barna*'. During '*barna*', the *guruva* performs special rituals for several purposes and the whole villagers do no work and simply stay idle as they are forbidden to do. So, the *Tharus* do not go to their fields,

neither they go fishing or herd their buffaloes or go foraging in the forests. They say, they perform '*barna*' to give rest to the nature as their daily livelihood practices demand constant engagement with the nature. '*Barna*' is celebrated many times a year for different purposes, except on the Sundays, as per the instructions of the *guruvas*. '*Leruwa puja*' is one such '*barna*', when they pay homage to the '*leruwa*'. '*Leruwa*' means the 'leftover stalks of the paddy in the ground after the harvest' in the *Tharu* language. The *Tharus* say the *leruwas* cry when sun shines because its yields are harvested by the people. So, they perform *leruwa puja* to calm the 'crying leftovers' and thank the mother earth for a good harvest. Likewise, the *Tharus* perform several other *barnas* for several reasons, all to thank and appreciate the nature spirits.

'*Kul devta*', the Ancestral Spirits and Other Evil Spirits

'*Kul devta*' have significant importance in the *Tharu* community. They have huge respect to their *kul devta* and perform their socio-cultural practices very strictly so as not to make their *kul devtas* angry. Every kin in the *Tharu* community has their own *kul devta*. *Kul devtas* are the ancestral spirits that the *Tharus* pay their homage to.

As told by a local from the village, every *Tharu* kin has their ancestral weapons and tools. These weapons and tools are the ones that the kin members carry along with them during the tradition of *Kantariya*. He said his kin possess a '*khaand*', a blunt sword with both the edges around two fingers thick. *Khaand* is a weapon in which the powers of spirits of the kin's ancestors are manifested into and once in every five years the kin members touch it and worship it. It is believed, the *khaand* has to be placed upright; if the edges touch the ground, the power of the weapon would split the ground into two. *Khaand* is also used for making sacrifices during special occasions. He said that when the blunt edge of the *khaand* touches the neck of

a calf, the mystical power in the weapon separates the head of the animal from its body. The manifestations of the *kul devta* are generally kept with the eldest son's family. But, there are no any strict rules that the eldest son's family has to keep the *kul devta*. The one who houses the *kul devta* has to strictly abide by the traditional *Tharu* rituals like bathing daily, worshipping the deity daily, avoiding unholy food and such.

When I asked about the *kul devtas* revered in the three earthen pots in a Tharu house as mentioned in the literatures, the local claimed the understanding to be not precisely correct. He claimed that the ancestral spirits can be manifested in any objects, may that be stones, bamboos, trees or even earthen pots. He explained that in every kin and its branched out families there may exist '*bokshi*' or the evil spirits dwelling inside a family member's body. The *bokshi* can be one among the ancestral spirits or may come together with a newly wedded bride from a different family. The earthen pots are actually the objects offered for the *bokshi* to rest in. Through rituals the *bokshi* is extracted from an individual and captured in the earthen pot. Such earthen pots are buried in the ground with its covered openings above the ground. The family which houses such earthen pots follow strict rituals and customs to not disturb the pots. When the individual from whom the *bokshi* is extracted dies, the earthen pots are also emptied. During the transect walks around the village I found a family in the Bhutaha Tole with such earthen pots housed under a bamboo shack behind their house.

There are several other spirits that rule the Tharu communities. *Mahatos* are the only kin in the Tharu community who can learn and practice *guruva*. They can harness '*deu*' or awaken the spirits or house the spirits within their body. They use the divine mystical powers of the *deu* in them to communicate with the spirits, read the

omens and perform various spiritual rituals. If any other individuals from a different

kin in the *Tharu* community tries to harness *deu*, it would take many sacrifices of

calves, pigeons and other animals to pacify the awakened spirits in them. When the

awakened spirits in their body becomes uncontrollable, the person dies.

Figure 7: The three earthen pots housed under a bamboo shack found behind the

house in Bhutaha Tole

Likewise, there are the rituals of '*bhoot akrani'* performed when an individual

is casted by an evil spirit that comes with the wind. The evil spirit is said to trouble

the individual with various health issues which aren't normally diagnosed by the

medical sciences. So, the villagers perform *bhoot akrani*, where they walk backwards

to a river bank, cast down the evil spirit with some rituals from the individual, offer a

sacrifice of a sheep, feast on the sacrificed sheep and get back home. The next day

they would find the individual in normal condition with good health. It is fascinating

to explore how the *Tharus* value spaces for gods, spirits or the abstracts and the

related faiths and myths function their traditional society.

Superstitions and Beliefs while Building a House

Although, the *Tharu* houses are primitive and crudely built, they follow certain customs prior the construction of their house to ascertain that the house would be fortunate to them. Previously, most of the villagers consulted their *guruvas* and carried out '*bhumi puja*', or worship the land before they build their house. They used to bury silver and copper coins a night before in the location where the '*nyayi khanba*' would stand upright. '*Nyayi khanba*' is the main central timber post of the house. When the *nyayi khanba* is erected they pour a vessel full water from a bronze *gagri* into the pit of *nyayi khaba*. If the poured water in the pit turns in clockwise direction, it is believed the house would be auspicious. If the water turns the other direction, either the location for the house or the location for the *nyayi khanba* is changed. The *Tharus* believe the earth around the *nyayi khanba* should not be stomped and compacted manually. They let the earth to settle around the post with the help of water only.

In recent days, some *Tharus* visit the *Brahmin* priests to know the auspicious portion in their plot of land to build their house. However, the ritual of the *nyayi khanba* is still considered important. Even during the construction of a concrete house, the *Tharus* bury some coins underneath the main pillar of the house and perform certain rituals. Some *Tharus* pour water from the bronze *gagri* in the pit of the center column as well. Not to mention, little do the younger *Tharus* know the importance of pouring water and no matter what the result is, they continue with the construction. The elders who witness the custom and understand the result however, stays silent and hesitate to speak even when the water turns the wrong direction. Once the house is ready, it is always the daughters who ritually inaugurate the kitchen by making a fire and preparing a meal for everyone.

Tharus way of Living in Sehari

The *Tharus* in Sehari live a peculiar way of life. The main livelihood of the villagers is agriculture. However, there are very few houses from which their men have not been abroad for employment opportunities. I found that the *Tharus* in the village are living in between two different time frames; past and the present. Their living portrays their traditional way of life whilst at the same time presents their kind of modern lifestyle.

I visited several of the houses in the village and found that the *Tharus* live a very minimalistic way of life, which is a true representation of their migratory traditions. They tend to have a very few personal belongings but have some numbers of cattle or poultries. I found a few wardrobes or chests in a few of the houses where they keep their belongings. They tend to hang their clothes, tools and their other belongings on the strings stretched in between the timber posts or on the wooden pecks or nails on the walls or the timber posts. Likewise, few furniture in their house are simple bed platforms with simple bedding. However, one can find TV antennas hanging outside their crude houses, and refrigerators in the upper floors of most of the houses. The *Tharus* generally reference such modern additions in their homes to the earnings of their men from foreign employment.

It was found that the houses with younger generations tend to have more modern amenities and personalized belongings. Although, they possess a few modern luxuries, the *Tharus* are yet to transform significantly from their migratory roots to fully adapt to the modernity. Their living conditions reflect their poor traditional way of life and their growing infatuations towards the conspicuous luxuries tantalized by the modern living.

Old *Tharus* Living in Nostalgia

During my stay at the village, I had several instances to have conversations with the old folks of the village. Their stories portray more sophisticated traditional *Tharu* ways of living. Their common notion dictates, living in their times were nothing as mundane as living in the present. They told the stories about how their neighborhoods used to be different and admitted the recent neighborhoods of Sehari aren't supposedly the true representation of the *Tharu* settlement.

As per their say, previously the *Tharu* houses used to be very close to each other in a tight cluster. The houses were so close that one could share their meal with their neighbor simply by extending their hands through *jhorkha*, or the small openings on the wall. Likewise, they used to have very long houses of a single storey made of wattle daub walls and thatch roofs. There once existed such a house which sheltered around thirty family members. The house had multiple entrances leading to each separate rooms, a kitchen and *deurhar* at the very end of the house. None such houses exist anymore. As the family outgrows and divides among themselves, the new generations learn new things and practices in a new way. The yearly flooding had damaged most of such houses. As what the old people in the village said, most of the houses found around the villages weren't even old enough.

In a similar conversation with one of the old folks, he showed around his old house which he had built next to his new modern *ek dine ghar,* sponsored by an organization. He told although he had built the house just a few years ago, the house was actually very old from the times of his parents. He had previously relocated to three to four places around the village with the same old house. He showed the old timber posts and timber roofing joists that he had carried along with him during his relocations to different places. He elucidated that beside the timber frames everything

else like the bamboos, reeds for the roof didn't last for long and he preferred to leave them at the old place. When I visited, the house built from assembling the old timber members had a brick masonry wall enclosing a room in the lower floor and an upper floor built of wattle daub to the harvests. When asked why he used brick walls, he told he was tired of regular maintenance for the mud walls and would not want to periodically repair the walls as he had grown old.

Figure 8: The house which was relocated to different places, still had the same old timber structural elements. The house was intervened with brick masonry wall and the inside is used for kitchen. Upper floor is used for granary storage.

However, he reminisced living in an authentic traditional old *Tharu* house was better than living in the modern masonry houses as the old houses were better with thermal comfortability as compared to the modern ones. He remembered his times when he and his companions used to go to the nearby forests and spend days to gather elephant grasses, bamboos, timber and other materials needed for building or repair-maintaining their houses. It used to be a kind of celebration once every year, for him and his friends. But as time passed, with the policies of the protected areas, he found

it very difficult to gather the resources needed to change the old rotten timber posts and joists members. He sarcastically mentioned that now none would venture to build a new *Tharu* traditional house as the new generations specially, the newly wed females would be hesitant to touch animal manure to render the houses. He added the new generations with education are more interested in modern occupations and modern living and hence they would opt for new modern houses as they would have to bother less for regular repair and maintenance in such concrete houses.

Site Surroundings in Sehari

It was observed the *Tharus* spent more time in their site surroundings than inside their houses. One of the reasons may be their small houses with constricted spaces, inside. Their site surroundings feature an archetype of a cluster of constructs which facilitates their daily activities. These clusters, as previously mentioned are branched out from the main village lane. The houses and the site surroundings orient towards the lane. These clusters generally, belong to an extended family or close neighbors living together. Most of these clusters include residential structures, cattle sheds, granaries, sheds for kitchen or store, firewood stacks, a tube-well and toilets in the rear end. Additionally, some have *boshi* (large earthen bowl for the poultries to lay egg), *shuli* (stacks of maize raised on posts for drying them under sun and breeze), fishing gears like nets and other livelihood props and constructs in their surroundings. The traditional old houses as well as the modern built houses can be seen together in such clusters. Single storey houses as well as double storey houses can be seen in the clusters. Beside the houses, other structures like granaries, poultries coops and other storage units are seen raised on the stilts, so that they stay safe from the ground moisture seepages and yearly inundations. *Tharus* don't tend to mix their habitat with

their animals shed. Although, they have their animals close to them, they make sure their cattle sheds are separated from their living arrangements.

Apart from the built structures, fruit bearing trees and shrubs fill in the peripheries of the cluster. The canopies of the trees shade the central open courtyard areas where most of the *Tharus'* perform their daily activities. The arrangements of the houses and the trees in the peripheries of the central courtyard facilitate cross ventilation both inside the structures as well as in the courtyards. Most of the social gathering, drying harvests, laundry works, drying clothes, cleaning dishes, bathing, crafting tools and other household items are performed in the courtyards. Precise distinction of the courtyards as *garik-ang-na* and utility backyards are less noticed. The *Tharus* make great efforts to keep their site surroundings neat and clean.

Although, similar archetypes of *Tharus* clusters can be seen in the major neighborhoods in the village, the cases in the Bhutaha Tole differs from the other neighborhoods within the village. In Bhutaha Tole, beside a family of *Mahatos*, other dwellings are seen isolated from each other. Most of such dwellings are newly constructed with a support from a social organization under the flooding rehabilitation programs. Such houses are built adopting the *ek dine ghar*'s construction methodologies and brick masonries with tin sheets for roofing. Such houses are built separately with its own small premises in the front which accommodate stacks of firewood, tube well, toiletries, sheds for storages and cattle and a few trees and plants surrounding the premises. Most of these dwellings are housed by small nuclear families.
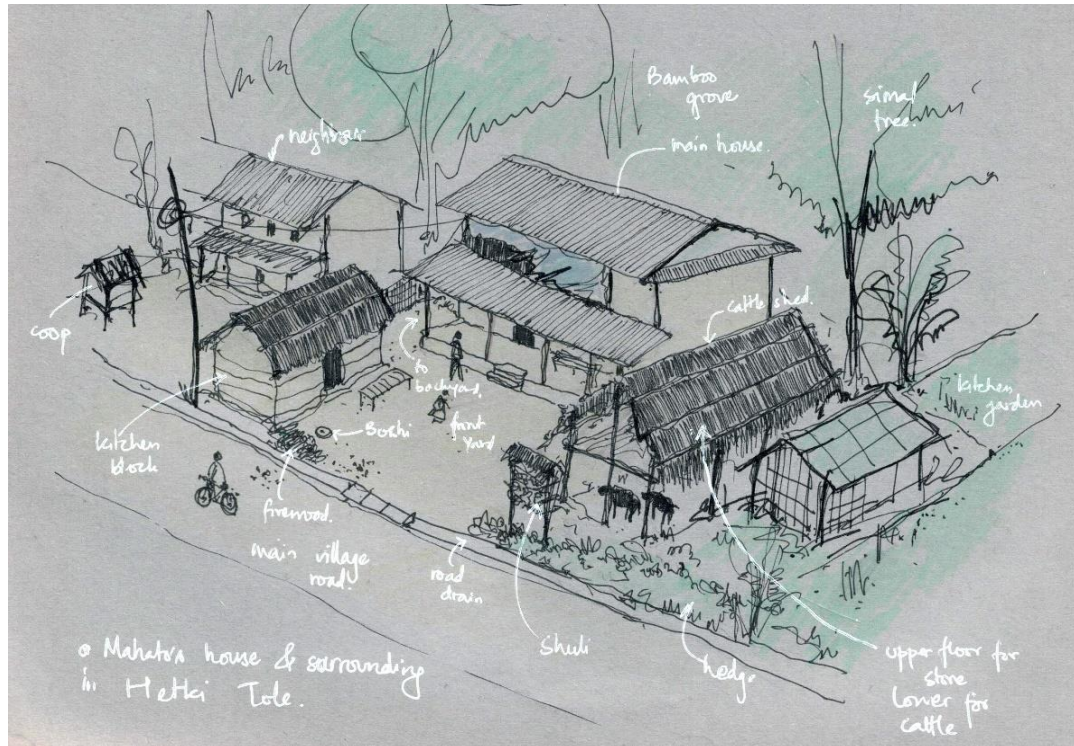
Figure 9: A Mahato's house and surrounding in the Hetki Tole. - sketch by the author.
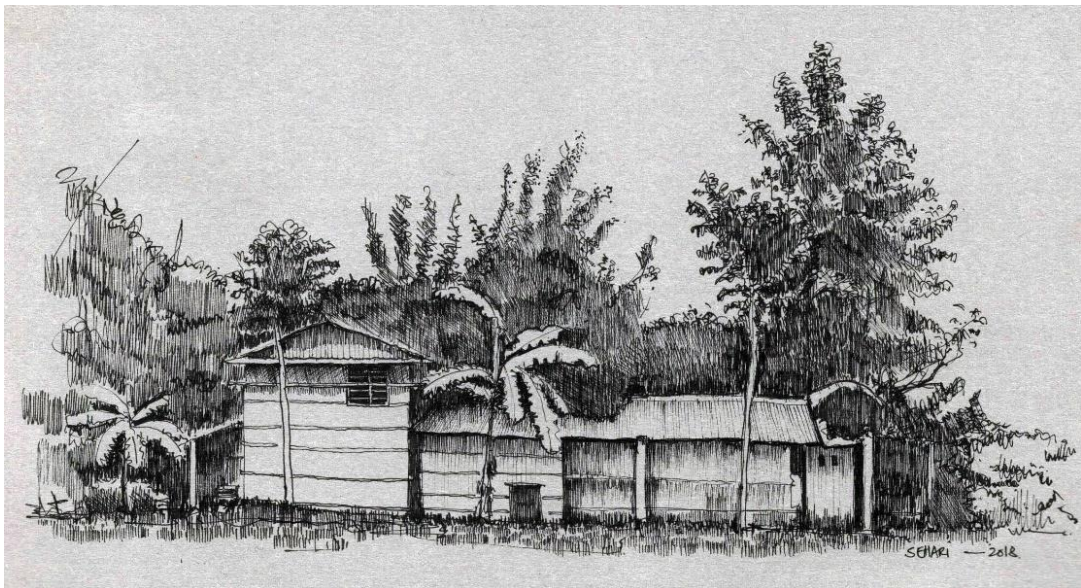
Figure 10: Tharu houses and other structures are clustered together surrounded by

trees and shrubs for shades. The houses depict primitive construction techniques

which primarily employ natural building materials. - sketch by the author.

Figure 11: Houses belonging to a *Mahato's* kin clustered together in the Bhutaha Tole feature a common front yard connecting their houses to the road. Stacks of firewood, tube-well, poultry coops, kitchen hut, *shuli*, laundry for drying and dishes washed are found.

Figure 12: In the *garik-ang-na* of a *Mahato's* house in Bhutaha Tole, the villagers gathered to celebrate and feast on the occasion of *anahadat ko darghat*. Despite the crude house, they tend to fancy the house with modern lighting.

Figure 13: A cattle shed with the lower level for cattle and carts, and the upper level

for storage - generally agricultural tools, hays and fodders.

Figure 14: An old cattle shed transformed as a garage for tractors and agricultural

machines.

Figure 16: Typical structures of timber raised on stilts with tin sheets roofing can be found in the village which is used to store granaries.

Figure 15: Above - Stones, known as *silauta* used for grinding spices are found out in the courtyard. Bottom – an earthen bowl is used for poultries to hatch eggs, also a common object in their courtyard.

Traditional *Tharu* Houses of Sehari

The traditional *Tharu* houses of Sehari differ from the those documented in the earlier publishing. Unlike, mentioned in the literature, I did not find any houses with similar references like *deurhar* and huge earthen granaries. However, a single storeyed house of wattle-daub in the village can be closely referenced to those documented previously.

Single-storeyed traditional houses

These houses are smaller in size, supported by timber frames and spans only for a couple of bays of interior spaces. One has to bow down a little to enter such houses through a crude timber door frames. These houses have an open interior space with a bedding in a corner, a kitchen equipped with clay built stove and a small clearing in the center with clothes and other belongings hung on the strings where possible. Often a gas stove and a small TV set can be found in these houses. The interiors are generally dark with a very few small openings on the walls. The *Tharus* often lit electric bulbs which are hung on the central post, while they're inside during the daytime. Mostly, a couple of old folks are found living in such houses.
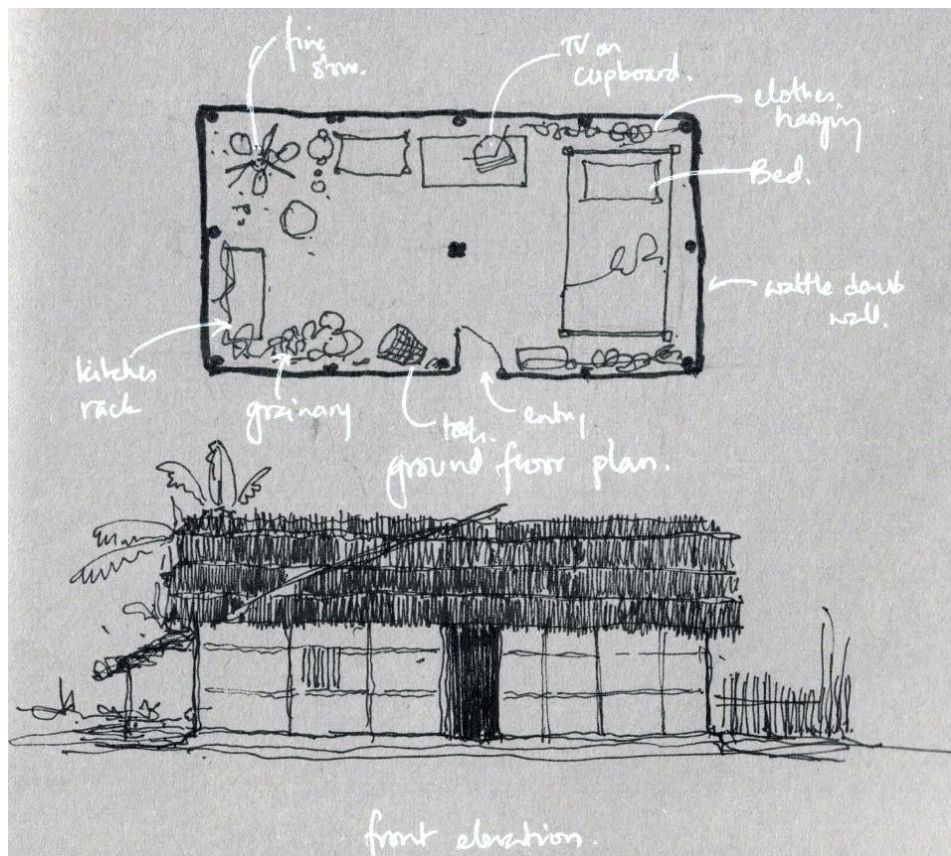
Figure 17: Internal space arrangement and an elevation sketch depicting the architecture of a single storey house belonging to an old *Thanet* couple in the Charghare Tole. – sketch by the author.

Figure 18: A single storey house belonging to an old *Mahato* couple in the Hetki Tole features murals on the front wall, the only form of decoration in the house. Corrugated tin sheets cover the house instead of thatches.

Figure 19: It is common to find a mere gas stove cooking arrangement next to a firewood stove on the ground in a dark tight setting.

Double-storeyed traditional houses

Double storeyed houses built in the traditional *Tharu* ways are also common in the village. These houses are found to accommodate mostly a joint family with large number of family members, up to ten or even more in some cases. These houses span not more than eight or nine feet in width while the length span depends on the number of bays of timber frames they use. The houses are accessed through a porch in the front of the house, which are supported on timber posts. I noted the dwellers' tooth brushes and other sanitary kits along with their agricultural tools hung on either the timber posts or in between the roofing joists over the porch. The porches are raised from the ground and leads to inside which low in heights and generally dark.

Inside, the height of the ceilings is just enough for the *Tharus* to stand upright. The houses are built without any proper planning of spaces. The main intent here is to simply have an enclosed space to dwell in. They intend to improvise both living in the spaces as well as the constructs, as the time and contexts require them to adapt to. I was astonished to find a scooter next to beddings in the open ground floor. These double storeyed houses generally, feature an open ground floor with a small bedding in a corner, a small clearing in the center, a wooden ladder leading upstairs in a corner and their belongings hung on strings where possible. Often, kitchen is found in a corner or found in a separate arrangement under an extended enclosure added to an end of the house. Few houses are also found without kitchen. Rather, they build a separate one storey block in their traditional style next to their main house simply for the purpose of kitchen and dining. All of the kitchen are equipped with a clay built stove and a simple gas stoves arrangements as well.
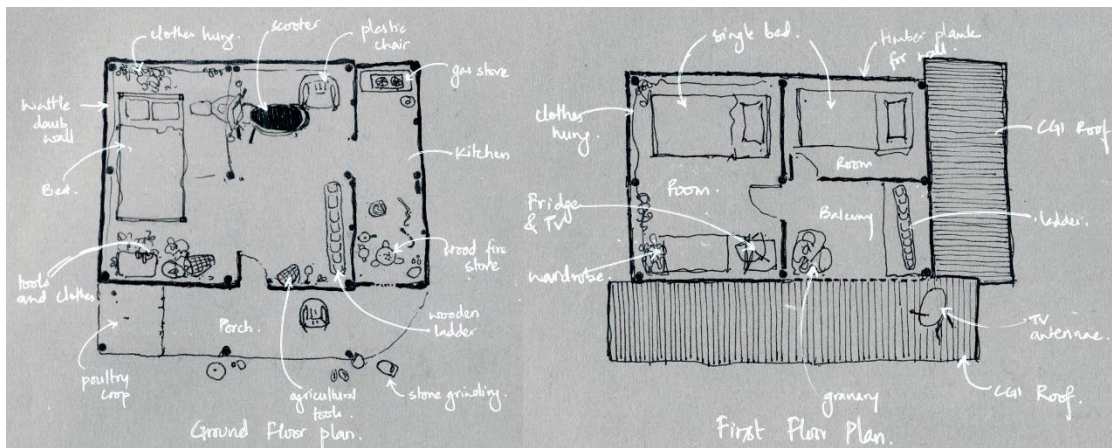
Figure 20: Floor plans depicting internal space arrangement in a double storey house of a *Mahato* family in the Bhutaha Tole. – sketch by the author.
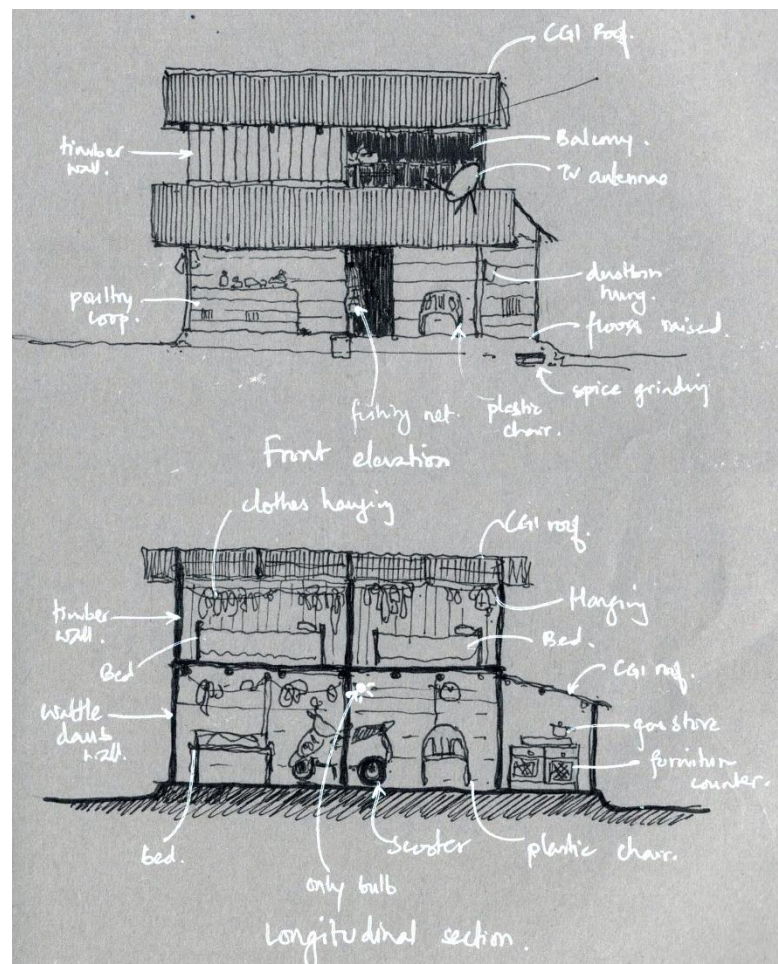
Figure 21: Front elevation and longitudinal section of the *Mahato* family in the Bhutaha Tole depicting material constructs and internal spatial arrangements. - sketch by the author.

The upper floor of the house has a low roof over and a small room without any firm doors. A few of the houses boast a balcony in the upper floor above the porch, which leads to the rooms. These rooms have some simple beddings either on a timber furniture or on the floor itself. Some houses have a few wardrobes in the upper floors to have their clothes and other belongings. I was amazed to find the refrigerators in the upper floors in most of these houses, despite their kitchen being in a different floor. It is a deliberate act to keep the valuable appliances safe from the annual inundation. Most of the newlyweds are found to be living in the upper floors while the old folks live in the lower floors. The upper floors are found to be more personalized and private compared to the other spaces in their houses and the surroundings.

Figure 22: A porch buffers the interior with the outside in the *Mahato* family's in the Bhutaha Tole. An end of the porch is occupied by a poultry coop, dustbins, toothpastes, brushes, fishing nets and other daily tools are hung on the timber posts or the rafters. Plastic chairs from the market are offered to the guests for sitting in the front yard.

Figure 24: A scooter found inside, in the middle of the ground floor in the *Mahato* family's house.

Figure 23: Steps are carved inside a timber log for ladder in the *Mahato* family's house.

Figure 25: A double storey traditional *Tharu* house belonging to a *Thanet* family in the Hetki Tole. It hosts living arrangements for a joint family of ten. Kitchen and dining is in the hut to the left in front of the building. The balcony is covered with a tarpaulin to prevent from rain.

Figure 26: Inside, in a dark open ground floor of the Thanet's family, bed with hung mosquito nets occupy the central space. Clothes and belongings are hung all around on the walls from timber ceiling joists or posts.

Figure 27: Similar archetype of traditional double-storey house is commonly found throughout the village.

Figure 28: Hangings in the interior spaces. Left – fishes are dried on a pan hung over fire in kitchen, middle – belongings are hung in bags or clothes along the wooden joists on the ceilings or timber posts, right – mushrooms are sprouted in a hung arrangement in the dark corners of the interiors.

Eco-friendly Construction Methodologies

Traditional *Tharu* houses in the village are primitive, simple and light in construction. The houses are built with smaller footprints. The built structures feature walls constructed of *'tha: tha: ra'*, as the locals call the interwoven bamboo stalks. The *tha: tha: ra* are rendered with mud slurry mixed with dung and hays and the methodology is known as wattle-daub construction. These walls are horizontally connected to the timber posts which support the roof of straw bale or elephant grasses or corrugated tin sheets on either timber or bamboo joists. The floors in the upper level are made up of timber planks supported on timber joists. The floors and walls of the houses are all rendered with a mixture of dung and earth slurry to prevent the structure from termites and insects. The integrations of natural building materials in the walls and floors feature building components that can breathe to prevent the interiors from moistures, molds and fungus development. These houses are raised a little higher from the ground level to keep the floor inside dry from outside ground

moisture. However, the mud rendered walls can be seen infested with molds and algae on the outside, due to the moisture seepages from the grounds or the precipitations.

Figure 29: Right - mud mixture cladded on the *tha: tha: ra* to form walls get infested with molds and algae over time due to humid environment. Left - villagers stomp and mix mainly earth, dung, hay fibers to form mud slurry for the wattle-daub walls.

The traditional *Tharu* houses in the village have small openings as the structures are rudimentary. However, the large overhangs of the roofing and intentionally placed openings feature ample cross ventilation in the interior spaces to maintain comfort. The large overhangs also protect most of the earth walls in the houses during torrential rains. The houses are very rarely painted in the village. The structures are built by the locals without any modern technical knowhow of building but solely relying on their traditional indigenous building practices which has been transferred through inter-generational practices. It takes them about two to three weeks to build a double storey house in their traditional *Tharu* way. The locals periodically, repair and maintain their built structures specially, during festivals like *Dashain*, *Maghi* etc. or during some occasional events of wedding and alike.

Figure 30: A *Tharu* woman coating her house with mud slurry mixed with animal dung and hay stalks prior the times of *Dashain* in 2020.

The traditional construction strategies focus on the application of locally available resources. Previously, the villagers used to source the timber from the nearby forests. But at present, they're mostly depended on the markets around the urban hubs along the highways for the timbers. Few manages to collect the driftwood washed away by the Narayani River. The villagers collect *khar, khadiya,* elephant grasses from the river basins. They use animal manures and earth from their own land for the building purposes. They harvest bamboos during winter season and collect most of the resources after the paddy harvesting seasons when most have leisure from their agricultural works. As most of these materials are sourced locally, there is insignificant contribution to carbon emissions during transportation. Also, most of these resources are processed locally using manual labor. Hence, there is less energy embedded in the materials and the building materials have very low carbon footprint. The building strategies employed by the locals are environment friendly, requires less energy to function and also stresses less on the natural resource management in their region.

Tharus' **kind of Modern Houses**

Beside the traditional *Tharu* houses, modern housing practices are also adopted in the village.

Dhalan ghar

Modern reinforced cement concrete framed buildings or simply '*dhalan ghar*' as seen in the nearby urban centers are very rare to find in the village. Only one or two such buildings exist in the village. Such building has four small rooms opening to a central corridor leading from the main entrance to the rear entrance. Such house is of two floors with painted facades of cement plasters, colored glazing in the aluminum profiles for the openings on the outside and stainless steel railings on the parapets. It can be noted that such buildings are a sheer mockery of the constructions trending in the urban areas.

Figure 31: A *dhalan ghar* in its own fenced plot of land in the Charghare Tole.

Ek dine ghar

Commonly, modern construction practices in the village employ the *ek dine ghar* construction methodologies. Under the brand, different contractors from the nearby urban centers build a basic structure out of pre-casted concrete posts and tin sheets roofing for their customers in a single day. The villagers visit such contractors located at the nearby urban centers, make an order for a structure depending on the footprint and number of floors they want to build. The contractors basically charge for the number of precast concrete posts, number of tin sheets used and other materials used during the construction with additional charges for transportation and labor charges for construction.

The construction of such structures follow similar ways of building as in the traditional methodologies, the only difference being the pre-casted concrete posts used instead of timber posts and corrugated tin sheets used for the thatches. The concrete posts are generally placed at around distances of eight to ten feet apart, generally in two to three bays with taller concrete posts in the middle line to form the two sided pitch roofs. After the completion of such structures, the owner hires different contractors or local skilled builders to complete the structure with walls, floors and openings. Such structures are added with masonry walls either of bricks or concrete blocks. Those who can afford, plasters the walls with cement sand mortar and paints them with colors available in the market. The ground floors are raised on a concrete slab and finished with fine cement punning. Those who have upper floors, make the floors out of timber planks supported on either pre-casted concrete posts or timber posts. The houses go high up to eighteen feet from the ground level. The villagers prefer to use timber doors and shutters with glazing in timber frames for the windows.

Figure 32: A cluster of *ek dine ghar* with front yards connecting the houses to the main village lane in the Charghare Tole. The house in the middle features a shop encroached in the front yard.

Unlike the traditional *Tharu* houses, such houses feature multiple rooms and enclosed spaces in different floors. Such rooms either open to the front porch or to the central corridor leading from the main entrance to the rear entrance. These rooms are large and well lit compared to those in the traditional ones. A few of the houses along the main village lane also feature a small shop in one of the front rooms with pull down metal shutters for openings. Often the villagers are found confused on using the multiple rooms for their living. Very few villagers use the separated rooms for different family member or for different purposes. Such houses have kitchen with gas stoves, TVs and refrigerators. It is rare to find decent set of furniture like bed, wardrobes, tables and chairs in such houses. Mostly, the newlyweds or the younger generations are found to live in such houses and they tend to personalize or privatize few of such rooms. In a large family, these types of constructions are built to accommodate the growing number of family size, where they are built next to the traditional old houses. In such cases, the old folks prefer to live in the old houses

where majority of the household activities like cooking are performed. A few of the

rooms in the house are used for storing harvests and agricultural tools.
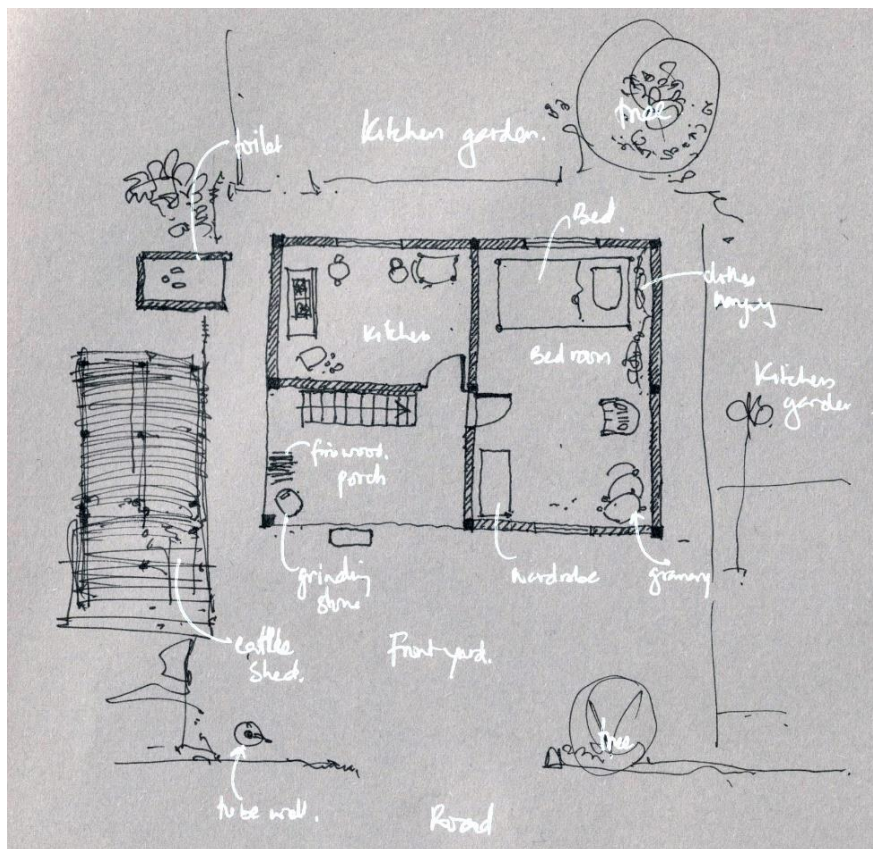
Figure 33: An *ek dine ghar* with brick masonry wall laid out in its site surrounding at

the Bhutaha Tole. – sketch by the author.
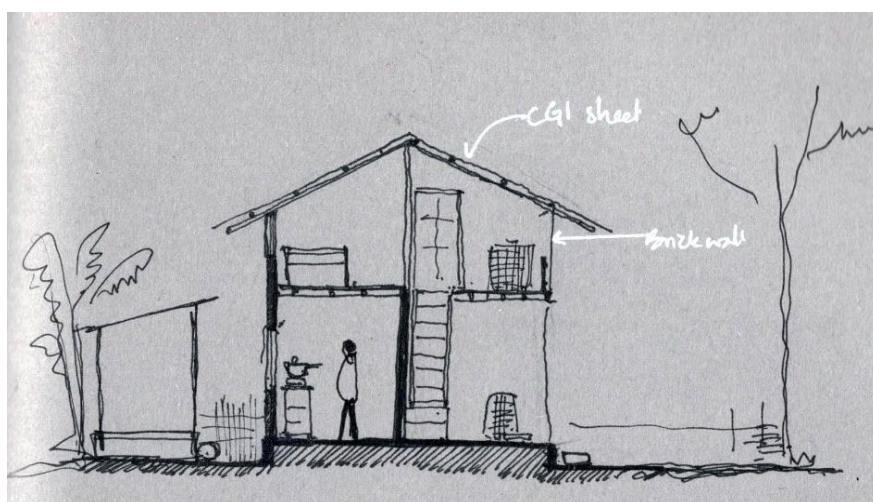
Figure 34: A sectional illustration of the *ek dine ghar* found in the Bhutaha Tole. –
sketch by the author.

These kind of modern *Tharu* houses although equipped with electricity and modern appliances are not properly fitted in with sanitary amenities. The toiletries are generally built behind such buildings. Adults who dwell in such houses complain of the indoor environment being thermally unpleasant as compared to the traditional ones. However, they comment such houses are convenient to build and to maintain compared to traditional structures which require cumbersome efforts for resources collection and regular maintenances. Additionally, they see modern houses favorable to raise their children who are receiving modern education. Lastly, they feel more assured that such houses are less likely to be damaged or washed away by the annual flooding events in the region.

Figure 35: A newly constructed *ek dine ghar* at the Hetki Tole boasts a front porch which leads to two rooms at the rear end of the house. A wooden ladder leads to the upper floor.

The construction of such houses mock the traditional *Tharu* houses found in the region yet reflect the aspirations for modern living. Majority of the villagers still live the traditional way in such modern built spaces, as they find themselves confused in the way of living. Such houses are cheaper to build than the reinforced cement

concrete frame buildings as found in the urban centers. These houses are commonly found in the Bhutaha Tole, where a social organization had sponsored such houses for those who lost their houses in the Narayani River flooding around eight or nine years ago. Other such houses can be observed blending in amidst the traditional *Tharu* houses in the old settlements of the village.

Figure 36: Ek dine ghar found in the Bhutaha Tole is accompanied by a hut built in old traditional style which houses kitchen dining. Synthetic granary bags are cut and used to cover the timber frames in the openings.

Figure 37: Granary made of flattened bamboo mat raised on stilts and covered with tin sheets found behind an *ek dine ghar* in the Charghare Tole.

Figure 38: A porch in a house adopting *ek dine ghar* method, built next to an old house. The house is a modern build, but the living in such has yet to be modernized.

Inevitable Changes in Geo Politics of Sehari

In present context, Sehari is no doubt an evolving village of *Tharus*, transforming from the traditional way of living to adapt to modernity. Having said that, the socio-cultural practices and norms of the *Tharus* are still dear to them and they follow them to their possible extents. However, there seems a progression of gradual disregard to some of their traditional socio-cultural values and practices as the communities often find them bothersome to follow due to various reasons. The *Tharu* communities find themselves in between the doldrums influenced by the various factors like the annual flooding, policies on the natural resources management, new functioning of the local government, the evolving modern market system and many more.

A case of Flooding

Sehari and the region is annually flooded at least once a year. The Narayani River and its other tributaries grow in size during every monsoons and inundate the low lands in the whole region. A village called 'Dhaja Gau' no longer exists, as the Narayani River swept away the entire village years ago. The villagers of the Dhaja Gau had to be relocated around Chormara area. The *Tharus* in Sehari fear the similar wrath of the rivers flowing around the village. They presume the Narayani River once flowed through their village, as most of the villagers find driftwoods and layers of sand and river stones deposit during the deep excavations for infrastructures built in the villages. They fear the river would claim its course when the time comes. Mostly, the locals of the Bhutaha Tole are afraid that the river would wash away their settlements soon if no any interventions to stop the riverbank erosions are made. It is always the people of Bhutaha who get displaced first during the yearly inundations, as their houses get submerged first. The locals in other settlements are mildly affected during inundations as the water levels to the top of the road, barely few centimeters below their plinth levels.

In exceptional cases, when the gates in the river dams downstream at the border of Nepal and India are not opened, the houses in the whole village gets submerged. The flood victims move to higher lands around Panauti or Chormara to their relatives or other closed ones with their belongings in their bullock carts or motorbikes. Once the water level recedes, everyone returns to their houses and works together to clean the flooding debris and repair maintain the damaged portions of the houses. In this regard, the *Tharu* communities of the village have developed resiliency towards the flooding and have adapted to the inundation phenomena. The flooding is also one of the reason for most of the villagers to build a strong double storeyed

houses. Having a double storeyed house, helps them to have their belongings safe at least on the upper floors. Flooding is also the reason why the villagers opt for strong, maintenance free housing structures. However, the villagers hesitate to make large investments in the village for huge constructions due to the insecurity for the investments getting damaged by the flooding events. The huge developmental activities are curtailed in the riverbank region.

Wildlife and Conservational Policies

With the village being next to the protected area, it is common in the village to hear the stories of rhinos, deer, jackals, boars, alligators and other wildlife trespassing through the village. Small wild predators like jackals and wild cats often hunt the domestic poultries in the village. Deer often comes to graze on the mustard fields whilst rhinos often comes to graze on the sugarcane fields or paddy fields and occasionally can be found strolling on the village streets. To stop encroachment in the village, the villagers have made fences and electrified some few sections along the riverbanks but the efforts are mostly futile. Likewise, the fishermen getting chomped by alligators in the rivulets around the village are also familiar cases. Nevertheless, the villagers are not allowed to kill, poach or harm such wildlife. An army range post to guard the national park is located in the Bhutaha Tole and keeps an eye for the restricted activities related to wildlife and natural environment in the village region.

As the village is a part of the Chitwan National Park's buffer zone the village community must adhere to the national park management plan to adopt strategies for human-wildlife co-existence (Chitwan National Park Office, 2015). The management plan recommends crop composition change, electric-fencing around settlement, construction of permanent and safe structures to be safe from the wildlife, which seems futile in the region. Similarly, the restrictions imposed by the national parks

and other environmental policies have hindered the *Tharu* community's resources collection. The locals are not allowed to enter the forests for fodders, gather wood on the other side of the Narayani River or fish in the river and exploit other natural resources in their close vicinity. They are only allowed to access the forests once a year when the national park authorities permit the villagers collectively. Strangely, the villagers need permits from the district forest offices to cut down any hardwood timbers like *saal* that grows in their own property. These different environmental policies have also hindered the local *Tharus* to practice their traditional indigenous way of living and encourage for convenient changes.

Local Governance and State Policies for Infrastructural Development

In the similar regards, the governance in the region has also changed significantly. The village has evolved from the times of Rayamajhi's jurisdictions to the present-day governance by the local state authorities under the federalism in the state. At present, the village falls under the jurisdiction of the Madhyabindu Municipality's Ward Office No. 2. Under different headings and developmental plans and programs, various developmental initiatives are being carried out in the village. For example, yearly budgets and programs are made for embankments along the Narayani River to control the riverbank erosions. Similarly, under the recently proposed municipality town development and building construction regulations, road networks are being upgraded in the village. Likewise, the proposed by-laws and building construction guidelines by the municipality classifies the village area as an agricultural region and prohibits any large constructions. It further promulgates a right of way for the main village lane to be of twenty-four meters and setbacks to be of six meters (Madhyabindu Muncipality, 2021) . This regulation foresees the settlements

alongside the main village lane to be displaced and foresees the village to bustle into a semi-urban region.

Beside the local level policies, rules and regulations, the national level policies also rule the village. For example, the Building Construction By-laws of 2064 B.S. and the amendments of 2072 B.S. out rules the setbacks, right of way (R.O.W.), floor area ratio (F.A.R.) and ground coverage requirements for new constructions. The National Building Construction Code of 1994 has different regulatory guidelines for timber, steel, reinforced cement concrete (R.C.C.) and masonry structures, architectural design, electrical design, sanitary design, fire safety, earthquake resistance structures and others. There is also the Irrigation Policy 2060 B.S. that stresses the need for an optimal use of available resources to ensure participatory management in a sustainable manner for irrigation networks in agricultural land all year round. Likewise, there are other several policies addressing different faculties and aspects of living in the villages. All these policies also have impacted the changes in the socio-cultural aspects and built constructs in the village.

Role of Modern Economy

The role of convenient modern market system as a pull factor for the changes in the socio-cultural aspects of Sehari is also interesting to acknowledge. The market has always been graceful to the villagers to fulfill their needs. As per the villagers' statement, when timber became scarce due to the state imposed restrictions to access the forests, they had to adopt steel plough called '*Brahmapuri*' which were commonly found in the regional market. Currently, the tractors and modern agricultural machines offered by the market have become good alternatives to the old way of farming based oxen driven ploughs and manual labors. They save their time and efforts working in the field. Likewise, the new breed of seeds available in the market have helped them

to farm all year round and increase the yields compared to the times when they used to farm just for a season in a year. Although, hesitant at first, the pesticides and chemical fertilizers found in market have helped them to control pests and insects' infestations on their crops which were never noted before and secure their yields. The modern interventions in the agriculture boosted by the market have made the villagers busy at the farms almost all year round.

Similarly, the markets have offered cheap and convenient materials and resources for the spatial constructs in the village. The *Tharus* unlike before, don't have to spend time and effort collecting resources from their natural environment around. They can simply travel an hour to the nearby urban centers and fetch the materials needed to build their structures. Overall, the development of regional market has also helped to get other resources and materials to live a modern life like fossil fuels, furniture, sanitary wares, new clothes, food and others. Beside these, the markets have also provided the local Tharus with better employment opportunities within the village and also beyond the country, which have escalated their livelihood earnings. On a different note, the evolving market in the village has influenced real estate businesses in the village pulling the outsiders into the village primarily for land speculation. Additionally, the market has helped the village to sell its produce to the outsiders and develop the village economically. Hence, the market plays a significant role to drive the changes into the socio-cultural aspects of living of the *Tharus* in Sehari.

In conclusion, various factors are driving for changes in the village to transform from the traditional way of life to modern living. But at the same time, the same driving factors have disclosed a new vista to conserve and promote their traditional way of living. Being located in the natural landscapes and in close vicinity

to the national park and the Narayani River, the *Tharus* are looking forward to promote their village as a culturally and naturally rich tourist hub. They're slowly channeling their resources and attention of the local government to develop home stays to provide accommodations for tourists and leisure facilities in the village. The *Tharus* are growing more aware of their discontinuity and disregard towards their native socio-cultural values, beliefs, myths, systems and practices. They are gradually taking collective efforts to preserve and promote their socio-cultural heritages. However, only time will tell if their efforts will bear fruit.

Chapter Summary

Sehari is an evolving *Tharu* village located in a natural setting of farmlands, the Chitwan National Park, the Narayani River and its tributaries. The village which is an hour drive from the urban centers along the national highway is composed of different neighborhoods with names owing to their socio-cultural features. The origin of the *Tharu* village dates back to a few generations ago only. It was the four families of *Jamindar*, *Thanet*, *Mahato* and *Chaudhary*, all sub-castes of *Tharus* who migrated from nearby villages in Charghare Tole and later expanded the settlement into a village with the other migrants. Although, the *Tharus* of the village are the main protagonists for making the village as it is of now, other players in history like, the Rayamajhi family had significantly contributed in shaping out the village with infrastructures. Furthermore, the socio-cultural practices of '*jwari farkaune'*, '*mohiyaani haak'*, recent states policies on land management and convenient accesses to modern market networks have contributed in the development of the village. These have helped the expanding family sizes of the *Tharus* to divide among themselves and spread out in the village with new built structures. Also the outsiders have found it easier to venture in the village as habitants as well as for their businesses. Over the

year, the village has grown organically with no formal planning frameworks. The evolution of the village has been primarily inflicted by the prevailing socio-cultural practices in the region and in recent years, the market economy is driving the transformation in the village which may likely present the village as a sub-urban settlement in coming years.

As the village is primarily inhibited by the *Tharus*, their faiths, myths, socio-cultural values and practices guide the traditional socio-cultural functioning in the village. The *Tharus* pay homage to three main abstracts. First is a common deity of the *Tharus* in a region, where they pay homage in every periodic year, which is often known as the tradition of '*Kantariya*'. This tradition is what collectively identifies the *Tharus* of the Nawalpur district as *Nawalpuria Tharus* as they make a pilgrimage to a shrine to the north in the region to revive, transmute, divide and distribute the '*shakti*'. Second, is the nature spirits. They worship different natural resources like land, forests, rivers for gracefully letting them consume the resources and pray to keep them and their properties safe from natural catastrophes. They perform different rituals for different nature spirits representing different natural resources on different auspicious occasions throughout the year under the guidance of their *guruvas*. Third, is the '*Kul devta*', the ancestral spirits and other spirits. The significance of the *Kul devta* is very important for a *Tharu* kin. They believe the existence of their kin is graced by their ancestral spirits and follow strict customs to respect the spirit like having a sacred space devoted for the spirit, following a specific routine and dining habit etc. Beside, these faiths and myths the *Tharus* have peculiar traditions associated with building constructions which are hardly followed in present times and even if they do are misinterpreted or practiced with deviations. The faiths, myths and practices of the *Tharus* closely resembles to Hindu religion and traditions. To extents

Tharus have adopted Hinduism as well. Exceptionally, there are a few *Tharu* families which have adopted alien religions and cultures as they had found it cumbersome to follow the traditional *Tharu's* customary rituals. Nevertheless, it is important to have *Tharus* to have faiths in godly abstracts to continue living.

Faiths, myths and superstitions guided *Tharus* are originally a primitive migrating indigenous communities who in the course of time adopted substantive agricultural practices for their livelihood. Apart from that, cattle herding, fishing, foraging are equally important in the communities. Following the recent development trends, *Tharu* youths are also actively flying abroad for employment opportunities. With the new means for livelihood earnings the minimalist *Tharu* communities are inclined in building new homes and adding modern amenities in their abodes. In this changing context, the old *Tharus* reminisced on their traditional pasts and their ways of living. Their stories unfold the ways of living in their traditional constructs, practices and customaries they followed for building their traditional constructs and how the changes in their ways of living are pertinent.

The *Tharu* communities are found to be living in a clusters alongside the main village street with their single or double storeyed houses closely built around one another forming a central common courtyard where most of their daily activities are performed. They tend to have clean surroundings with separate arrangements for their cattle and storages for their harvests. However, in the recent years, the archetypes of *Tharu* neighborhoods are differing in the village, mostly in the Bhutaha Tole where small '*ek dine ghar*' are dispersedly built to re-shelter the flooding victims from years ago.

Unlike studied in the literature, the old *Tharu* houses found in the village are small, single storeyed structures built out of wattle-daub walls with bamboo frame

structures and thatch roofing. Such houses offer a small clear space in the center with belongings like bedding and kitchen stoves in the corners. Traditional old double storeyed houses are also found in the village which are similar to the single storeyed houses in construction methodologies except they use timber joists for the upper floors. These houses cater large families with generally kitchen and common spaces in the ground floor and sleeping arrangements in the upper floors. The traditional old houses in the village have none or small openings on the walls and have dark interiors, often lit by electric bulbs. The dwellers tend to have less belongings and hang most of their clothes and other belongings on the strings tied in between timber posts. It is common to find gas stoves and other electrical appliances like televisions, refrigerators and others fitted in their old houses. In a few of such houses, motorbikes can also be seen parked inside in their ground floors. The old *Tharu* houses are light structured, built with natural building materials and simple indigenous construction methodologies. These structures are climate responsive and are sustainable eco-friendly constructions with low carbon footprints.

In recent years, modern construction practices can be observed flourishing in the village. The modern reinforced cement concrete farmed buildings are rarely seen in the village with only a few existing. Such buildings are generally two floors with all the rooms opening to the central corridor. Such houses have masonry walls and aluminum framed glazing for the fenestrations. The facades are generally cement plastered and coated with synthetic paints and balconies with shining stainless steel railings. Interestingly, the *Tharus* have adopted their own kind of modern construction practices in the region which primarily employ the '*ek dine ghar'* construction methodologies. Such buildings use pre-cast concrete posts and tin sheets on metal purlins for roofing. Often the modern houses in the village alongside the main road

features retail shops with roll down metal shutters. Although, these modern houses are built, the *Tharus* still prefer to live in their traditional style in these houses. Besides, having a few modern amenities and furniture in some new, large well lit rooms, the *Tharus* mostly prefer to cook, sleep in the old houses which exist next to these new houses. While the adults complain the new houses to be austere and cold, the new generations cherish living in the newly built houses. Nevertheless, the *Tharus* prefer building new houses, as it is more convenient to source the modern building materials, easy to find the skilled labors, requires less periodic repair maintenances and can boast an upgrade in their social status.

Sehari village has come a long way from its formation to gradual transformation as a striving *Tharu* village with adaptation of the modernity and the new ways of living. Nevertheless, the community still efforts to cling on to their traditional belief and values to possible extents. Multiple geo-political factors are influencing the changes in the village. The annual events of the Narayani River and its tributaries flooding have proven the resiliency of the villagers to cope with the calamities. Flooding in the past have displaced a whole village of Dhaja Gau in the region, and the villagers constantly live with fear of being their settlements washed away too. In this pretext, the villagers opt to build stronger and safer structures to protect their lives and assets. The eco- sensitive natural setting of village often troubles the villagers with wildlife confrontation, harms and damages in their farmlands. Furthermore, being in a buffer zone of a wildlife sanctuary, the villagers have to abide by the state's conservational policies which hinder the *Tharus* indigenous ways of living. Additionally, the new governance systems and both the local and state policies have failed to recognize the importance of the indigenous ways of living of the *Tharus*. The governing authorities focus on promulgating new

policies, codes, regulations and rules overlooking the development of the village as a modern sub-urban settlement in the nearing future. More to this, the convenient access to the modern market networks have offered new explorations for the villagers to earn their livelihoods, learn new trends and knowledge. On the other hand, the market has facilitated contagious conspicuous consuming habits to the primitive *Tharu* communities and also have helped the outside to venture into the village for making profits.

However, with all the persisting changes happening in the village, a new wave of consciousness and efforts are emerging in the village to resist and streamline the changes on their socio-cultural aspects of living in order to preserve and promote their traditional socio-cultural heritages.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSIONS

This study interrogates various intertwining relationships between culture and spaces and how they aid communities to progress with the changing times. How the socio-culture subjective represents, functions, influences and assists the progresses in the community are discussed. The significances of socio-culture aspects in forming, shaping and administering the spaces are discussed with focus on cultural spatiality. Likewise, how the spaces influence, forms and guide the socio-cultural aspects of community are debated. The importance of cultural spaces in regards to cultural spatiality and spatial tactics in the pretext of sustainable development are explored as well.

Socio-cultural subjective of a progressing *Tharu* community of Sehari

The findings attempted to explore various socio-cultural subjective of a progressing *Tharu* community of Sehari. They are attributed and disciplined by their traditional socio-cultural variables and at the same time influenced by the external socio-cultural variables as well. Developments in theses socio-cultural factors have encouraged the community to transform over the progressing times. The alterations in their identity and functioning of their community in the process of transformation can be debated.

Framing identities

The village of Sehari is inhabited by several ethnic communities, but predominated by the *Tharus*. The extensive practices of *Tharu's* traditional way of living is widely noted throughout the village. Families from other ethnicities like *Kumal, Brahmin, Chhetris, Bote, Suki* and others have blended themselves to live like

the *Tharus* of the region. In a first glance, it is difficult to identify their houses or even their families in the village, as they follow similar housing senses, similar dressing senses, converse with similar accents or in cases even speak the *Tharu* languages. They are often found to be celebrating several of *Tharu's* customary rituals and festivals like *Maghi, anahadat, barna*, marriage ceremonies etc. I was fascinated to observe and participate in one of the *Tharu's* annual celebrations of *anahadat*, when the whole village fished together in the surrounding canals or rivulets, prepared feasts of '*chichad'* and varieties of fish dishes and had a grand feast in the evening with dances and conversations. These acts and practices of living in the village brings the whole community together to be represented as the *Tharus* of Sehari. The families from other ethnicity are less bothered to be collectively represented as the *Tharus*. As Griswold (2013) states culture brings various groups and societies under a common collective representation which inspires their sentiments of unity and mutual support. It is always the cultures of predominant groups in a community that gives a collective identity to the community.

However, when the details of the individuals or groups living in the community are micro-analyzed, several identities within the exclusive brand name of '*Tharus of Sehari*' can be traced. Although, the families from other ethnicities abide by the ways of *Tharu* living on the surficial level, their myths and beliefs does not completely align with the *Tharus* and this distinguishes their identity. For example, the *Brahmins* and *Chhetris* in the village are Hindus and are highly religious. They tend to pray to the Hindu deities and practice religious rituals which differs from the *Tharus*. Often, the *Tharus* can be seen participating in the occasional *bhajans* conducted at the *Brahmin's* house. Similarly, if closely observed, *Bote* can be distinguished from the *Tharus* as well. Their housing and living style is more crude

compared to the *Tharus*. They are often seen with fishing nets and tools and lower half of their body wet. Similar, such cultural differences in the multiple ethnicities residing in the village can be made, if minutely observed. As these ethnic families are migrants in a *Tharu* domain community, they practice their distinct way of living within the cultural framework of the *Tharus*. When a cultural system counteracts with external culture, the externalities may lead to practices of subculture (Griswold, 2013). Hence, it can be concluded that different identities based on the persisting subcultures in an ethnically diverse community exists although the community is collectively identified to the predominant culture.

On the other hand, if we consider the community of the village as a complete set of traditional cultural practices, there is a looming transition of cultural identity owing to the influences from alien cultural practices brought upon by globalization or the so called development. The impacts of modernity ushered along with the wave of globalization is clearly seen in the village. The villagers are fonder of wearing new fashionable clothes, ride their new motorbikes, send their children to receive education in English, carry new set of cellphones, have TVs, fridges, gas stoves, live in gaudily painted modern concrete homes and alike. Additionally, the modern development being introduced in the traditional settlement foresees new black asphalt road and sub-urban houses equipped with modern utilities. These new practices and trends in the traditional community are bringing changes in their traditional ways of living and hence is forcing to reassess their traditional cultural identity. The trend is more lucrative with the younger generations in the community.

It is convinced that the true identity based on the traditional culture is not going to pertain as the time progresses. In a postmodern world, none can be withheld to choose their own way of living and identify themselves as they like. It is more

likely for a new identity to be constructed based on the subcultures or the new cultural production being practiced. One shouldn't be surprised if the progressing community from Sehari in the coming days, identifies themselves as the '*new traditional Tharus*'. Referencing to the tradition and culture as ambiguous terms, always subjected to phenomenal changes (Toffin, 1994), the new identity can be justified. The only question is how traditional? Or to what extent is traditional?

Nevertheless, the changes in the identity of the traditional cultural society of Sehari will impact the collective sentiments and unity of the people. The traditional cultural identity of the *Tharus* has been bringing the indigenous tribe of the region to a common unison and has empowered them for political discourses. The feeling of 'we' or 'us' among themselves have helped them to critically reflect on their existence, provided sentimental supports and thrive together as the world changes. The dissolving of their traditional cultural identity is sure to backfire their collective living practices or even their existences. Similar, stances are clearly noted in their own community, where the minor ethnic families feebly perform in the community due to their disintegrating traditional cultural identity. It has always been the *Tharus* who've taken lead in making communal decisions in the village. But, with the transitioning identity, the *Tharus* losing their collective mutual conscience and political strength, the stories are likely to change.

Functioning of a progressing community

The community of Sehari is accustomed to the predominant traditional culture of the native *Tharus*. Despite, the residency of multiple ethnic families and individuals or groups from other backgrounds, the traditional cultural practices of the *Tharus* have primarily acted as a cognitive system or as Keesing (1974) states a 'blueprint' for the community to function. The findings have clearly discussed

Tharus' faiths, myths, cultures and built practices that rule the socio-cultural functioning in the village. For example, in the day of '*barna*' all the villagers, including people from other ethnicities, stay idle and avoid working for their livelihood. More to this, the common archetype of spatial constructs native to the *Tharu* people is seen throughout the village despite the diverse ethnicities dwelling in the village. Hence, in a traditional cultural community with multiple groups of people inhabiting, it is always the culture of the predominant group that rules or defines the functioning of the whole community.

Although, the subjective entities of the *Tharus* primarily governs the functioning in the village, the role of intersubjective entities in the progressing times cannot be denied. The intersubjective entities depend on communication among many humans rather than on the beliefs and feelings of individual humans (Harari, 2016). It refers to the sharing of cultures in the community that sees no spatial and temporal boundaries (Pieterse, 1996). This intersubjective entity can be discussed in two different aspects – within the community and beyond the community. The multiple groups of people in the community, especially the diverse ethnicity, have their own subjective entities that guide their realities. However, most of their subjective entities resemble to each other or are feeble compared to the common subjective entities prevalent in the community. That is why, it is said that the subjective entities of the traditional *Tharus* rule the community.

But, in the progressing times, the intersubjective entities beyond the grasp of the traditional community is actively influencing the contextual functioning of the community. The assimilation of the external cultures with the traditional cultures of the community and the integration of these different cultural practices guiding the functioning of a progressing traditional community cannot be rejected. Some of these

external entities can be pointed as the modern education system, modern market systems, state policies, global communication trend and other foreign modern ways of living. The traditional community of *Tharus* aspiring for a better life is continuously subjected to the phenomenon of intricate interweaving of intersubjective reality in a larger realm and is changing the way their traditional community functions. The traditional *Tharu* community sees the modern ways of living as better, comfortable, and luxurious and hence pursues for the changes in their functioning of the society to adopt the modernity.

The aspirations to live a better life pushes the community to improve. Cultural learning is constantly continued to adapt to the contextual changes (Pieterse, 1996). This cultural learning and sharing has helped produce new culture and facilitate reproduction of culture in Sehari and in the region. For example, the *'ek dine ghar'* is a new practice flourishing in the village that adopts the principles of market economy from the external culture to facilitate in the traditional cultural diaspora. Here, as Griswold (2013) suggests, the organization of cultural producers and consumers associated with the market systems within the traditional community and beyond the community has produced the new culture. Likewise, as Hannerz (1996) suggests the filtration of global influences, transformed and incorporated in local level into beliefs and practices have resulted in the reproduction of culture. Hence, the functioning of the traditional *Tharu* community is always constantly progressing with the time as the cultural sharing and learning cannot be controlled.

In the intermixing of the traditional and the new modern culture in Sehari, the changes in cultural grammar of the traditional cultures are noted but not the languages. The best example is their adaptation of *ek dine ghar* as dwelling typology where they employ the modern construction materials and aspirations for modern

lifestyles in conjunction with the concepts and ideas derived from their traditional vernacular architecture. Yet, they find themselves confused to be living their traditional primitive ways in their modern homes. This in a way has portrayed the cohabitations of the traditional cultures and the modern cultures resulting in new cross cultural patterns, as remarked by Pieterse (1996). However, the nonmaterial culture like the faiths, beliefs and practices must change for the efficient functioning of the society owing to the changes in the material culture persisting in the society (Griswold, 2013). Although, the new cross cultural patterns are guiding the functioning of the community in Sehari, with the course of time it is eminent for the traditional culture to fade out for a completely new culture to take over the functioning of the progressing community.

The changing socio-cultural paradigm in Sehari

In the process of contextual functioning of the society, transformation of socio-cultural paradigms can be noted as well. This entails the transfiguration of social consciousness on the fundamental perceptions about the society and individual in a temporal dimension which are oriented by various complexities of culture like values, beliefs, norms and guidelines (Elena, Yuliya, Pavel, & Artem, 2017). From the findings, it is apparent that there already exists cohabitation of both the traditional culture and the modern cultural practices in the progressing community of Sehari. The new cross cultural patterns are already functioning the contextual socio-cultural aspects of living in the community and at the same time exploring the changing identities of the traditional community. The changes in the social consciousness of the traditional community has already started.

There are high chances that the traditional cultures would lose its significances as the community would evolve with the progressing times. For example, the cases of

disregarding of the traditional beliefs and practices in the construction of houses have already been discussed in the previous chapter. The findings suggest that the complexities in the traditional culture are likely to be a major factor for the community to incline more towards the new external culture. These complexities include meticulous daily living practices, rituals and proceedings based on the transferred myths and beliefs from the ancestors. Similarly, the challenging management of resources for the traditional way of life is another hurdle for the continuity of the traditional socio-cultural practices. Moreover, the traits of the traditional cultural practices are becoming obsolete as the time progresses to adapt to modernity. Here, to opt for the changes in the social consciousness is not a matter of they want to but rather because they have to, mostly out of necessity.

As Durkhiem elucidates in his thoughts on differences between the traditional social life and modern social life (Griswold, 2013), the autonomy, multiple choices and freedom in modernity granted by the modern social life is playing as a major pulling factor for the transformation in the traditional community of Sehari. The ideals of consumerism, capitalism, industrialization, global communication, secularization in the modern social life have fascinated the traditional *Tharu* community. Moreover, the modern education and an easy access to global communication networks are catalytically boosting the transformation from the traditional lifestyle to the modern living.

There exists both the disintegration of the obsolete socio-cultural practices and integration of viable socio-cultural practices in the process of sociological evolution of the *Tharu* community. This suggests changes in socio-cultural paradigm are continuous processes in the progressing community. There are always pushing and pulling factors that inflict changes in the socio-cultural paradigm as a community

progresses. In this regard, different paradigm shifts with references to the happenings in Sehari can be discussed.

Cases of cultural hybridization

From the findings, it is apparent that with the changes in the old traditional cultures and adaptations of the external or new cultures, there prevails a paradigm of cultural hybridization where both the cultures from the past and the new ones exist together (Pieterse, 1996). The traditional *Tharu* community is adopting the modernity whilst still trying to retain their traditional way of life. Various stances of cultural reproduction in the village is addressing the desire of the villagers to adopt foreign cultures and at the same time practice their own native cultures. For example, few of the villagers have ventured into agricultural businesses to generate profits for their modern living aspirations while holding on to their traditional cultural practices of livelihood.

The community of Sehari has not fully been able to live aspired life even in their 'modern houses' with 'modern amenities'. Although, the transformation of material culture is significantly observed in the village, the non-material culture still has its strong hold in the community. This illustrates the village as a pseudo-modernized community, as argued by Alsayyad (2001). For example, how the superficial elements in their socio-cultural practices have changed while the essences remain are clearly depicted on their adaptation of the *ek dine ghar* and their dwelling patterns in them. The adaptation of such houses by the *Tharu* communities are becoming a new archetype of the *Tharus* architecture in the region. There are chances that the traditional *Tharus* vernacular spatial constructs would be misunderstood in the coming days. With reference to this, the misunderstanding of other traditional *Tharu* cultural practices are imminent in the coming days.

Cases of cultural convergence

It is foreseen that over the course of time, the old traditional cultures of Sehari would lose its significances if timely necessary conservative interventions are not taken. Hence the new paradigm of cultural convergences may emerge (Pieterse, 1996). In this case, the *Tharus* will lose their true identity and go through drastic changes in the functioning of their traditional socio-cultural aspects of living to adapt to the new contextual culture. However, owing to the strong beliefs and practices rooted to their traditional cultures, it may take generations for the community of Sehari to have cultural convergence.

Cases of cultural differentiation

Only with the success of strict conservative interventions, there may exist a paradigm of cultural differentiation (Pieterse, 1996) where the authentic traditional culture survives and flourishes which is challenging in the persisting contemporary contextual changes. However, the findings suggest that the *Tharus* are well aware of the persisting cultural transformation and their traditional indigenous socio-cultural practices being at stake of existence. The locals are in a dawn of cultural differentiation where they are alerted on empowering themselves to withhold a conservative posture to conserve and promote their traditional socio-cultural practices. Having said that, they're neither in any state to truly keep practicing their traditional socio-cultural way of life with mobile phones in everyone's hand or simply with the acceptance of the offerings of the modern social life. As an alternative, they're likely to look into cultural objectification as a convenient means to retain their traditional cultural heritages. They've already initiated the discourses on the concepts of home stays and museums where they would be able to showcase their true authentic traditional indigenous socio cultural heritages. As Alsayyad (2001) suggests this

phenomenon of cultural objectification focuses on cultural manufacturing which poorly presents the integrity of the traditional cultures. Again, this indicates a looming threat on the traditional *Tharu* culture being misrepresented.

The ontology of spaces in regards to the *Tharu* community

The spaces in Sehari reflect a conceptualization of the cultural model of specifically the *Tharu* community who are foreseeing changes in their living practices. Given the premises of a diverse groups of individuals within the community, the meaning of spaces to the *Tharu* community can be analyzed based on two groups – older generations and younger generations. As, the study is more on the changing traditional spaces, the understandings of the older generations mainly present what/how it was and the younger generations present what/how it is or will it be.

As perceived spaces

The findings suggest, that the older generations perceive the traditional spaces in the village more as the remnants of the pasts or nostalgias of their youthful days. They trace their old stories, experiences, values, beliefs and myths when talking about those spaces. The old traditional houses for them are dear. They recall how those spaces have helped them to thrive and connect to their predecessors' legacies. In this regard, the old traditional houses embed strong traditional cultural values and sentiments for the community. When the new types of houses are concerned, the old generations seem perplexed. They find those houses austere and uncomfortable to live in. Nevertheless, they regard those spaces as a necessity for the off springs to thrive. Beside the built spaces, the older generations perceive other spaces around their settlements like forests, rivers, farmlands and others as a graceful offering of the nature spirits or the godly abstracts.

Whereas, the younger generations have mixed perceptions of the spaces. Those who are more exposed to the modern happenings in the world find the old traditional houses as a shelter of poor, uncomfortable to live in, devoid of personal space and a liability that needs regular care. Nevertheless, the conscious one values those traditional houses as their ancestral legacy. On the other hand, they find the *dhalan ghar* or the new constructs as a better way to live in. They associate such spaces with affluences, raise in their social prestige, luxurious, comfortable and close to living like those in the cities.

As conceived spaces

Traditional built spaces in the community are conceived to their ergonomics. Those spaces can be easily related to their bodily sizes, traditional cultural practices, beliefs and the materials that they find around them. For example, in their interior spaces, floor heights are conceived to their height measurements, internal organizations of spaces are based on their traditional beliefs and practices, and the sizes of the interior spaces are based on their primitive construction technologies. Strong embodiment of their traditional cultures are conceived in their old spaces or when the old generations are involved.

Contrarily, the younger generations understand the spaces in terms of personal traits and the market standardization. This is highly relevant in their new spatial constructs. They tend to have spaces that are defined by the market standards, like the height of the pre-cast concrete posts or the lengths of the tin sheets available in the market. More to this, unlike their older generations, they tend to conceive their own personal space to enjoy the modern luxuries and live a modern lifestyle. That is why it is not uncommon for them to have rolling metal shutters in one of the multiple rooms

to make it a shop in their newly constructs. The alterations or feeble incorporation of their traditional constructs can be observed in their newly conceived spaces.

As lived spaces

The old *Tharus* live a very minimalistic traditional way of living in their spaces. Their old traditional spaces have bare minimum amenities, mere enough to thrive and continue their livelihood. As most of the old *Tharus* spent most of their days out working in their farmlands or foraging in forest or cattle herding or fishing in the rivers, they tended to care less about the interior spaces of their dwellings which are mostly dark covered in coats of wood fire smoke. However, their site surroundings are well maintained and cleaned where they host most of their social functioning and their household activities. Based on their living practices in their spaces, it can be said that the traditional community use most of their traditional spatial constructs only as means to store or protect their harvests, granaries or their belongings.

Surprisingly, the old community are found to have spaces designated for gods or the godly abstracts in their dwellings, site surroundings and even in the fringes of their settlements. Although, the findings do not mention about *deurhar*, a house in the village has tin shacks to house the evil spirits. Likewise, they have a common conscience that some places in their village are haunted or visiting those places or doing misdeeds in those places bring them omens. This entails that the myths and beliefs are deeply rooted in their living practices and in their spaces as well. It is to be noted that the younger generations also affirm to the traditional myths and beliefs, as they fear wrong happenings to them if they fail to abide by.

The findings present how the community, specially the older generations live ridiculously a traditional way even in their newly built constructs. The new constructs

are mostly housed by the younger generations who unlike their elders hardly work in the fields, herd cattle or go fishing. As the younger generations receive education and tend to work for blue-collar jobs or get involved in businesses, the new spaces mean their achievements in life and a place for refuge from their daily grinds. They take the spaces as a tool to explore their personal traits, preserve their privacy, and enjoy the comforts of affordable conspicuous luxuries. While, their children do they homework in a different room and wives prepare meal in another room, husbands relax on their beds or sofas and stares at the TV screen placed on a refrigerator or a wardrobe. The younger generations don't find themselves comfortable living in old traditional houses. Although, a few lives in a traditional house, they aspire to live like kings in their own palaces.

Space making and cultural spatiality in Sehari

The findings have explored the relationship between the spaces and the socio-cultural aspects of the *Tharu* community and how the spaces are formed. The socio-cultural engagements and experiences of the *Tharu* community are manifested in the cultural spatiality of their village. The socio-cultural subjective of the *Tharu* community have significantly worked to adapt to the natural environment. Communities work on form, shape and defining their spaces to meet their cultural development as an adaptive system to the natural environment (Ottarsdottir, 2017). How the community uses their traditional knowledge of building based on their myths, beliefs and practices and the available resources have already been presented in the findings. The study shows that the socio-cultural aspects have significant role in making spaces from micro-personal scopes to large communal scopes. Different aspects of socio-cultural aspects of a traditional indigenous community is integrated

in the spatial making processes and hence embeds the socio-cultural fabric in the spatial features.

Power play for Space Making

Throughout the progression of the *Tharu* community, the ontology of space making in power relation to social status, religion, social beliefs, economy, age, local policies and various other factors are noted. The concept of power relations as mostly described by Foucault is also depicted in the process of spatial formation. The formation of spaces is highly influenced by the ones who are in power and have political influences. For example, the spatial development in Sehari, in the times of autocracies was a derivative of the power in relation to the social status of the *Rayamajhi* families of then. Moreover, the spaces in Sehari is directly factored by the socio-cultural progression of the living indigenous *Tharus*, despite the village is shared by other ethnicities as well.

The multitude in a community also influences the spatial formation and often presents the senses of 'us' and 'them' through the spatial usages. Beside the *Tharus*, the space making by the other immigrated ethnic families can be distinguished in the village. These families tend to live in their own separate cluster mostly to the end of the *Tharus* neighborhood. This spatial segregation portrays the sense of 'us' and 'them' in the community. Nevertheless, the mass of the *Tharus* and their unity is significantly responsible to the space making processes in their village.

Spatial Production and Construction in Sehari

As discussed by Low (2009), both the act of spatial formation; social production and social construction of spaces are evident in the village. It was the *Tharus* who immigrated and built the first four houses in the Charghare Tole and initiated the formation of the village. This was later followed by a gradual extension

of the settlements with spatial constructs built as needed, by mainly the same group of *Tharus*. The phenomena are an example of social production of space where physical creation of materials are catered for spatial formation. Likewise, the *Tharus* played along for social construction of spaces where the material sites are transformed through social actions based on the memories, experiences, beliefs and sentimental attachments (Ottarsdottir, 2017). They successfully transformed the spaces into places by embodying the spatial constructs with their socio-cultural aspects. The naming of the village and several places and settlements within the village are good examples of the social construction of spaces in Sehari. Additionally, the spaces in the village are formed and associated with specific socio-cultural progressions and activities. The significances of Hetki Tole, Charghare Tole, Bhutaha Tole, Ligiya Ghat, Sehari Rivulet and other various places in the village have already been discussed in the previous chapters. The socio-cultural aspects of living factors the material construction of the spaces as well as transcribes the material entities with human abstracts like memories, experiences and sentiments and hence adds socio-cultural integrities in the spaces making them places.

Embodied Spaces and Sense of Place

As Low (2003) states, the associations of the socio-cultural aspects with the spaces transform the absolute spaces into relational spaces, which is clearly evident in Sehari. These relational spaces in village have offered the culture to thrive in the spaces. These relational spaces in the village can also be analyzed in micro details when the houses in the village are studied. The *Tharus* houses are small in proportion to their body like, the sufficient floor height for one to stand just upright. These space are also effective to cater the traditional living of the *Tharus* mainly to host their livelihood culture. True examples of proxemics where the human's use of space as an

aspect of culture crucial for embodied spaces (Low, 2003) can be noted. Likewise, the interlinkages of body, space and culture where the human body as a template for spatial and social relations are depicted in their built spaces.

The symbiosis of their body with the embodied spaces in their spatial constructs have offered a sense of 'belonging to' to the *Tharus*. Not only the *Tharu* houses, but the other relational spaces in the villages which are inscribed with memories, experiences, sentiments and other spiritual essence have privileged the sense of 'belonging to' the *Tharu* community. Their myths, beliefs, superstitions, customs and practices associated with different spaces like forest, rivers, farmlands, settlements have provided such spaces with a sense of place. The village of Sehari to be identified as a *Tharu* village in itself is evidence of the development of sense of place in the region. These abstractions embedded in the spaces further highlights the criticality of the socio-cultural aspects in forming and framing spaces.

Space Making in a Progressing Community

As the socio-cultural aspects of the community progresses over the time to adapt to the changes, the essence of spaces and formation of the spaces also transforms. This sees the transformation in the traditional embodied spaces which pushes the traditional socio-cultural aspects of living to fade or change. Contextually, the true sense of place of Sehari is likely to fade or get forgotten or evolve as a new abstraction as the community progresses over the time.

It should be noted that progresses in community is influenced by both the internal and external factors. It is not only the socio-cultural progression within the community that forms and rules the spaces but also the external socio-cultural factors influence the formation and administration of the spaces. In this regard, this study finds the power in relation to local policies and market economies are active in spatial

formation and characterization in the village. The new infrastructures like roads and the development of the village foreseeing a semi-urban tourist centric hub accompanied by a process of cultural objectification are likely to alter the true spatial essence of the village in coming days. The state policies of national parks have already hindered the continuity of social construction of the spaces in the village as the socio-cultural activities associated with the protected areas have been constrained.

Additionally, the market economies, a subsequent of progressing globalization have rapidly influenced the modern spatial formation in the village. The convenient market system has offered the materials for production of spaces while the convenient access to the global communication system have assisted in the construction of the social spaces. These effects and transitions are noted in the construction methodologies of the structures. There have been significant changes in how the houses and infrastructures are built compared to years ago. At present, the modern synthetic market available materials are popular in the construction practices in the village. Moreover, beside the traditional socio-cultural values and beliefs the external culture promoted by the global communication networks are ruling the construction of the spaces. The new constructions tend to mock the modern structures and spaces prevalent in the urban areas and the western countries. Such progressions are a continuous threat to the traditional inscribed spaces rich in traditional socio-cultural aspects.

Nevertheless, the process of formation of spaces in the community is a continuous process. In coming days, although the spatial characteristics and functioning may change to fit the socio-cultural progressions, the evolution of the spaces will continue. As spaces are a product of a socio-cultural model, the evolving

cultural spatiality depict and reflect the socio-cultural characteristics of the dwelling community in its true time.

Spaces for Socio-cultural Progression

The intertwining relationship between the spaces and the culture also presents a different side where the spaces play critical role in influencing and guiding the socio-cultural progression of a community. As Kokot (2006) states culture dwells in spaces and is an adaptation of social systems to the natural environment. As the spaces transform into places, the places have higher influences and control over the social structure of the community (Day, 2002). These influences of spaces and places over socio-cultural entities can be discussed.

Spaces Framing Identity

Places provide a physical frame and focal symbol for the conceptualization of common identity of a community. The study explores the cases of *Nawalpuria Tharus* and their traditional cultural practices of '*Kantariya'* in the region. Here, the significance of Nawalpur district as place brings the *Tharus* of the district under a common identity as the *Nawalpuria Tharus*.

Similarly, the identity of individuals or groups within the village can be further distinguished based on their spatial constructs or ways of living bound to their spaces. Different spatial arrangements and spatial characteristics of *Tharu's* places reflect the individuals or the community's characteristics. Houses can be the most conspicuous and the most personal among ethnic traits, as similar domestic dwelling in a similar settlement pattern however differs from status or class or individuality (Toffin, 1994). The built spaces speak a lot about the identity of the individuals or the families residing in the village. For example, the findings suggest the single storeyed traditional *Tharu* houses belong to old *Tharu* couple. *Tharus* kind of modern houses

suggest, the residing family is a new one with off-springs. TV antennae on the roofs of the houses or refrigerators or motorbikes or scooters in the house suggests, a member in the family has been to or is in foreign employment. Similarly, the *ek dine ghar* in the Bhutaha Tole identifies the displaced families from past flooding events. Likewise, the housing sizes depict the socio-economic standard of the family living in the house, in which case comparatively poorer, families are found to live in a small single floor house. Thus, the built spaces can be a crucial socio-cultural subjective to distinguish the identities of individuals or groups within the community or the community itself.

Spaces Functioning Community

Tharus of Sehari have evolved in its own spatial domain. Forests, rivers, riverbanks, plain topographies of the region have shaped and evolved the *Tharu* communities. The former primitive indigenous migratory lifestyle of the *Tharus* thrived specifically in those natural spaces. At present too, the physical environment has more or less factored and guided the living of the *Tharu* community. The spaces have influences over their daily living practices, construction practices and customary rituals as well.

The housing archetypes of the *Tharu* community is the best example of how their spaces have ruled their dwelling styles. As Oliver (1997) and (2006) explain, the vernacular architecture is influenced by the adaptability to the climatic conditions, the availability of building materials, topography and other natural environment characteristics. It is because of the physical environment like climatic conditions, hydrology, geology and the resources available in the nearby spaces, the vernacular *Tharu* houses are shaped and built in the typical pattern found in the village. Most of the traditional indigenous spatial constructs in the community are light weighted, built

out of natural building materials like earth, bamboos and reeds, and responsive to the hot humid climatic conditions of the *Terai* region. The houses feature cooler interiors where provisions for cross ventilation are made. The communities living in such houses have their peculiar ways of living guided by the spatial constructs. For example, due to smaller and darker interior spaces in the houses owing to their primitive construction methodologies, the villagers perform most of their daily activities outside in the open courtyards. Likewise, the villagers routinely function to repair, maintain such houses, as the houses deteriorate mostly due to ground moisture and precipitation.

Similarly, farming, fishing, buffalo herding and other several daily living practices of the *Tharus* are guided and influenced by the spatial factors of the region. For example, the *Tharus* follow specific ways of farming. They have specific crops to grow as per the seasons and geographical conditions of the region, specific time for harvests determined by the climatic conditions of the spaces and likewise. This in a way has shaped the daily living practices of the community which mainly strives on the staple agricultural livelihood.

As discussed earlier in the findings, the myths, beliefs, customs, superstitions and other practices of the *Tharus* are also deeply rooted in the spaces they dwell. They have designated spaces for godly abstracts where they pay homages to their nature spirits and other spirits. As mentioned in the previous chapter they make trips to places inside forests to worship their *bandevta*. Similarly, they have places to perform *'voot akhrani'* and other superstitious myths and beliefs. *Tharus* have to visit *ghats* to cremate the dead bodies where they flow the ashes in the river.

Spaces Inflicting Community Progression

Apart from that, the progressing *Tharu* community opting for modernity is also factored by the spatial dimensions. It is noted that both the internal spaces within a community and external spaces beyond the communities have influences over the socio-cultural progression of the community. For example, when the spaces inside a house becomes inadequate to a family, it is common for the family to divide and for a new family to live separately in a new house. With new living arrangements like this, the socio-cultural characteristics of the community change, where eventually a new neighborhood is formed. The case of formation of Bhutaha resembles this context, which is an example where the internal spaces incur the changes in socio-cultural progression of a community.

In a different note, the changes in the natural environment is unavoidable and can have impacts on the existence of the community. For example, the village of Dhaja Gaun was displaced by the flooding in the Narayani River and the villagers were resettled nearby the urban hub of Chormara. This event of change in space of a community drastically impacted the socio-cultural functioning and identity of the *Tharu* community of Dhaja Gaun. This led to disintegration of *Tharu* community of the village as they lost their native place of dwelling.

In present context, the significances of external spaces in the socio-cultural progression of the community is prominent as well. Contextually, it is necessary to detach spaces from the local place and look beyond to understand the socio-cultural progression in a community (Low, 2009). The understanding of global space is critical in modern context. In the premises of the interconnectedness, global economy, market systems and communication networks, a particular space is exposed to a larger sphere. This has made the cultural sharing easier and rapid. Some of the foreign

cultures have already assimilated into the *Tharus* culture as well and more are in progress. There are also the cases of cultural production as discussed earlier. Subsequently, different shifts of cultural paradigms can be discussed with reference to Sehari and its spatial formation.

Spaces inflicting cultural paradigms

As the community progresses towards modern social life where the global space have influences over the ways of living, the essence of the local spaces are fading or being misunderstood. In the cultural paradigm of cultural convergence, the chances of the spaces losing its values or the 'sense of place' is more likely to happen. For example, with the construction of motor-able roads in the village the spatial characteristic of the village has changed. The dirt track which once were used for oxen driven carts are now upgraded for machines and hence it is now rare to find bullock carts or even oxen in the village. As mentioned earlier, with the black-topped roads meandering through the village, the villagers are transforming their cattle shed for tractors and vehicles. In this regard, the upcoming generations are more sceptic for continuity of their traditional cultural spaces.

In the paradigm of cultural hybridization prevailing in the village, although the social production of spaces is highly owing to the progressing socio-cultural functioning, the social construction of the spaces still holds on to the traditional essences. Construction of spaces in the village still signifies the abstractions like sentiments, memories, experiences, and the senses of 'belonging to'. This retention of the socio-cultural abstracts in the constructed spaces are more valuable for the newer generations that tend to easily swing with the new external socio-cultural sugar candies. In this transitional context, the value of inscribed spaces or embodied relational spaces are more critically important.

On a different note, the traditional cultural spatiality of the community has assisted them to stand together for cultural differentiation. The sentiments and their senses of 'belonging to' associated with their traditional cultural places are supporting them to take a conservative posture to save their traditional socio-cultural aspects. They are using the means of spatial tactics to hold on to their conservative posture. They're using their traditional local spaces to influence social control and power for cultural differentiation. They're intending to conserve and promote the existing traditional vernacular dwellings as homestays, museums and other spatial features to promote their traditional cultural heritages. This approach of cultural objectification introduced as heterotopia would present the new places where the socio-cultural aspects of community are portrayed, contradicted and reversed all at the same time (Ottarsdottir, 2017).

Cultural Spaces for Sustainable Development

The role of traditional cultural spaces for sustainable development is less debated. In present world, no any individual in a local place can be isolated from the global space. All living beings share a single planet and hence shares the interconnected natural environmental systems as well. Moreover, in today's times of globalization, the social functioning of a society or an individual is also connected with the global diaspora. An action of an individual has an impact in the global sphere and likewise the impacts of a catastrophe in a corner of the world are experienced by every individual. In this aspect, the socio-cultural spatiality and spatial tactics can play significant role for sustainable development. There are several socio-cultural societies existing in the world. Those societies include both the traditional indigenous communities as well as the modern communities. The traditional indigenous communities are based on peaceful and harmonious living with mindful consumption

of the natural resources. Meanwhile, the modern societies are based on science, technologies and economic systems for human evolutions. The socio-cultural sharing in the global space can balance both the traditional indigenous ways of living and the modern living practices for the sustainable development.

When the global space is discussed, the *Tharu* communities of Sehari equally share the brunt of disruptions and catastrophes in the global natural environmental systems. They have very less to do with the causal of environmental harm. Yet, they are at high risk of the aftermaths of such environmental disasters, as their living is directly depended on the natural environmental systems. For example, in the recent years, the flash flooding in the Narayani River's tributaries due to unprecedented rainfalls in the higher lands tremendously destroyed the houses, road networks and other infrastructures in the region and also adversely impacted the agriculture. Additionally, their poor socio-economic conditions have made them vulnerable to various natural catastrophes. In this cases, the concepts of spatial tactics are helpful to uplift the *Tharu* communities, increase their resiliency towards natural calamities and host their quality living standards. For example, the village and the region already being identified as the buffer zone of the national park has signified the importance as well as the vulnerabilities of the place. Different environmental conservation and promotional policies, plans and actions are under implementation by the national park authorities. Likewise, the national park authorities have also focused on the socio-economic development of the region through different plans and programs. Moreover, the local governing body has identified the village of Sehari as flood prone region and designated the region mainly as agricultural zone. Policies, laws and regulations are promulgated for the restrictions of large constructions in the region while conservation and promotion of the local *Tharu* culture are campaigned. These

approaches based on the spatial tactics have conserved and promoted the natural environment in the region, helping to uplift the socio-economic status of the native communities and to some extent conserve and promote the traditional indigenous practices of the *Tharus* in the region.

On the other hand, the socio-cultural spatiality of the traditional indigenous *Tharu* communities have largely contributed for the practices and approaches for sustainable development. As discussed earlier in the findings, the traditional socio-cultural practices and spatial constructs are deeply rooted to peaceful and harmonious living of the community with the natural environment. Various socio-cultural aspects like myths, beliefs, customs, superstitions and practices respect the natural resources and focuses on conservative use and consumption of the natural resources. The spatial constructs of the *Tharus* are built with optimal consumption of the resources and energy and also requires less resources and energy to operate; hence making them carbon neutral. Moreover, in the vernacular construction practices of the *Tharus*, more social bonding and interactions are fostered as the villagers help build the houses. The helping hands are either paid or bartered with goods and at the end appreciated with feasting ceremonies. Such vernacular practices encourage the whole village to take shared ownership of the happenings in the village, which promote an equitable society. Hence, the socio-cultural spatiality of the traditional *Tharu* community assists to achieve environmental sustainability as well as social sustainability.

On a different note, the socio-cultural progression advanced by the globalization and modernization have influenced and impacted the socio-cultural spatiality of a local place. The spatial tactics focused on the urban areas have disseminated the modern market economies in the rural traditional places hence transforming the traditional indigenous cultural spatiality. Additionally, there are

adversarial on the traditional indigenous socio-cultural spatiality from the local governance based on the spatial tactics as well. In this aspect, the values and significances of the traditional indigenous socio-cultural spatiality in regards to sustainable development are also curbing. Hence, proper and wise use of spatial tactics for sustaining the traditional indigenous socio-cultural spatiality is equally important for sustainable development.

In the rising influences of globalization and cultural homogenization, the traditional indigenous socio-cultural spatiality offers the post-modern sensibilities for identities and spaces for critical self-reflective dialogues. The traditional spatial constructs help an individual to connect to one's roots or their natives. This in regards help to unravel the beauty of human socio-cultural diversity and the vast knowledge embedded in the diversified human ways of living. The sentiments of 'belonging to' or 'being a part of' have always brought people to unite and stand together for mutual causes and discourse political dialogues for their well-being. This promotes peace, harmony and prosperity in a society. The traditional socio-cultural spaces help to awaken such sentiments and refuge individuals or communities in need. At present, the significances of spatial tactics for socio-cultural spatiality and their significances for sustainable development is more than necessary.

Chapter Summary

The socio-cultural subjective frames a collective identity of a community. Despite the multitude of a community, it is always represented by the socio-cultural subjective of a predominant group in the community. The collective identity of the community encourages the community to foster collective consciences, mutual understanding and support and empower them to involve in political dialogues. Furthermore, the identity of the community helps the individual in the community to

have critical self-reflection and trace back to their roots. Similarly, the socio-cultural subjective of the predominance group in the community administers the functioning of the community. However, a progressing community is also influenced and driven by external cultures which incurs changes in their socio-culture subjective. The external cultures assist in emergence of new culture by intermixing with the local, native culture of the community. Similarly, the progression of community is also supported by cultural production and reproduction which are flourished mostly due to sociology-economic in the community owing to the mixing of different cultures. A progressing community embraces new cross-cultural patterns for its contextually functioning and at the same time explores the changing identities of the traditional community.

The socio-cultural subjective in a progressing community can be observed in different paradigms. Mostly, a cohabitation of traditional cultures, external cultures and new cultures administers the socio-cultural subjective of a progressing community. Nevertheless, as the community progresses, it is eminent that the traditional indigenous socio-cultural subjective loses its value, disappears or gets misinterpreted. Mainly, pulling and pushing factors lead the socio-cultural transformation in a community. The pushing factors are the complexities within the traditional factors while the pulling factors are the easy convenient features of the external cultures.

The socio-cultural paradigm in a progressing community as a continuous phenomenon. In this process, different paradigm shifts can be discussed which are temporal and tends to transform with the interventions taken. In a progressing community, the changes in the old traditional indigenous cultures and adaptations of the external or new cultures embrace the cultural hybridization where cultures from

both the past and the new ones exist together. Presently, the external cultures are mostly powered by globalization and modernization. In this pretext, it is often seen the progressing community to follow the myths, beliefs, and a few practices from the past while they adopt the materialistic culture and a few new practices from the external or new cultures. Subsequently, cases of pseudo-modernized community supported by cultural reproduction and sub cultures are noted. When a community takes a conservative posture in the progression of the socio-cultural subjective, a paradigm of cultural differentiation is seen, where the traditional culture is promoted. In this process, cultural objectification is often adopted, where the integrity of the culture being promoted is questioned. On the other hand, when the traditional cultures are subservient to the new modern cultures, the shifts of cultural convergence persist, where the socio-cultural subjective fades or are misinterpreted.

The socio-cultural engagement of a community is manifested in spaces and its formation. Spaces as conceptualization of cultural model is discussed under cultural spatiality which elaborates the space making processes in relation to socio-culture subjective. The ontology of spaces in regard to the *Tharu* community can be discussed as perceived spaces, conceived spaces and lived spaces. The power relation in community to social status, religion, social beliefs, economy, age, local policies and other various factors play significant role in the forming of spaces. Space formation in a community features social production of space which sees material synthesis for space formation and social construction of spaces which sees integration of abstracts like memories, experiences, stories and others. The social construction in spaces transforms the spaces into places and presents them as relational spaces which feature embodiment of socio-cultural aspects of the community. The relational space is also inflicted by the proxemics which supports and offers the sense of 'belonging to' to the

members of the community. However, with the socio-cultural progresses in the community, the changes in the spaces and the essences in their formations are also imposed. The spaces are influenced by both the factors within the community and beyond community's scopes. Mostly, the role of external factors in spatial adulteration in a progressing community are crucial. These external factors mostly include the influences from the external cultures like market economies, modern education system, expanding global communication networks, state policies and others. With the changes in the spatial features of a community, the traditional indigenous socio-cultural subjective are threatened. Inferentially, the formation and transformation of space is always a continuous process which owe to the continuous progress of socio-cultural aspects of the community.

As socio-cultural aspects of community have role in forming and administering the spaces, the spaces also have role in forming and guiding the socio-cultural practices in community. When spaces transform into places, the places have greater influences over the socio-cultural aspects of community. Places form identity of community and collectively represents the community. Spaces also guide the socio-cultural functioning of community. This is clearly depicted in the vernacular architecture of the traditional indigenous community and the daily living practices of the community. Additionally, spaces influence and guide the community to progress. It is noted both the internal spaces and external spaces associated with community has influence over the socio-cultural progression of the community. The limitation within the internal spaces pushes community to opt for changes for their survival. On the other hand, the external spaces induce community to pertain changes. In the pretext of external spaces, the role of global space and *deterritorialisation* of space are critical to understand. The influences of external space are seen in community in different

paradigm shifts which are already discussed earlier. As places are inscribed with the socio-cultural abstractions, the places are valuable in conservation and promotion of traditional socio-cultural values and practices. Understanding the values of spaces, spatial tactics are often used as interventions to direct the socio-cultural functioning of the community. Spatial tactics are used to countermeasure the influences of global spaces and preserve the importance of local space to preserve the traditional socio-cultural subjective of a community. Nevertheless, the formation of heterotopia due to the application of spatial tactics misinterprets the true socio-cultural aspects of the community.

Significances of cultural spatiality and spatial tactics are critically seen for sustainable development. These can be cleverly used for socio-cultural sharing in the global space to oversee a balance between traditional indigenous ways of living and the modern living practices for sustainable development. In the global space, the indigenous communities like *Tharus* are always the first and underprivileged to experience the brunt of the environmental catastrophe. However, the resiliency of these indigenous community and their knowhow of natural environment and social functioning are lessons to be learnt for communities to progress sustainably. This cultural spatiality of the indigenous tribes is to be supported by the modern sciences for sustainable development. On the other hand, spatial tactics are proving to be essential to conserve and promote the traditional indigenous socio-cultural aspects of living and the environment. Cultural spatiality and spatial tactics can help community to empower for political discourses and assist in critical self-reflection of the community members as well. Hence, understanding the interrelationship between culture and space and their influences for socio-cultural progression of community is critically important for sustainable development.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY, KEY INSIGHTS AND CONCLUSIONS

The research explored the changes in the traditional indigenous cultural spaces of a *Tharu* community in the village of Sehari. The study analyzed persisting changes in the traditional indigenous cultural space of the *Tharus* in relation to the existing literatures to understand how the changes are prevailing and how they are impacting different dimensions of the traditional indigenous *Tharu* community. The study attempted to signify the importance of the traditional cultural spaces for sustainable development in the premise of the traditional society morphing to fit into the contemporary modern times. This chapter discusses the synopsis and conclusions of the study specifically, the answers to the research question, study methodologies, significances, contributions and limitations of the study.

Synopsis of the study

Interpreting Culture and Space

As Spillman (2007) states, culture as interpretations and representations of various norms, values, myths and beliefs, which guide the living practices of a community. The interpretations and representations are generally depicted on the languages, arts, spatial constructs, cuisines, costumes and other different forms and practices of a community. All the interpretations and representation of the culture flourishes in space and hence the space is often referred as a container or a physical environment for the cultural developments (Ottarsdottir, 2017). At the same time, spaces guide and influence the socio-cultural practices of a community. Repeating Hauser-Schaublin and Dickhardt (2003), space is a conceptualization of cultural model of community, both as means and ends of social practices. The spatial practices

produced by cultural engagements and experiences are referred to as cultural

spatiality. There exists an intertwining relationship between culture and space. The

field study at Sehari evidently suggested on how the culture of the traditional

community of *Tharu* thrived in the spaces of Sehari and as well as how the spaces in

the Sehari village evolved along with the development of socio-cultural subjective of

the *Tharu* community. In this regard, the culture and spaces of the traditional

community has become both the means and ends for progressions in the both

faculties. The understanding of the interrelationship between the culture and spaces is

crucial to understand how the traditional indigenous spaces are changing in relation to

the socio-cultural aspects of the community in the progressing times.

Space Making and Evolution of Space in a Community

Spaces are manifestations of the socio-cultural variables and functioning of a

community. The findings illustrated that the spatial formation of a traditional

indigenous community is mainly factored by the physical natural setting, social

customs and livelihood practices, beliefs and the traditional indigenous knowledge of

the community. Low (2009) presents the two different sociological stances of spatial

formation – production of spaces and construction of spaces. The social production of

spaces entails the physical material developments in the spaces guided by the socio-

cultural subjective in a community. Whereas, the social construction of the spaces

incorporates the transformations of material sites through social actions and

abstractions based on the memories, experiences, beliefs and sentimental attachments.

The socio-cultural functioning and the abstractions transform a physical natural

setting of a space into place. The sociological formation and development of space is

also credited to the power relation to social status, religion, social beliefs, economy,

age, local policies prevalent in the community and other factors. The stories of the

village of Sehari presented how a space is transformed into place owing to the manifestation of the socio-cultural heritages of a community. Also, the study evidently presented how the complexities within the community and influences beyond the community pushed the evolution of the spaces in the village.

The relational spaces present the spaces with integration of different variables. In the concept of relational space, the embodied spaces elucidate various variables integrated within the spaces. The spaces with the embodiment of the social actions and abstractions transform into places. Proxemics explore the interlinkages of body, space and culture where the human body is referred as a template for spatial and social relations (Low, 2009). The findings presented how the symbiosis of the bodily references and consciousness in the spaces offer a sense of 'belonging to' or 'sense of place' to the traditional *Tharu* community. This is strongly evident in the vernacular spatial constructs and the traditional cultural spaces of the *Tharu* community in Sehari. With the progresses in the socio-cultural aspects of the community, the transformation in essences and formation of spaces continues. In this regard, the ontology of the perceived spaces, conceived spaces and lived spaces are also updated.

Culture and Space Framing Identity of a Community

There exists different multitude of ethnicities, individualities, families, and other groups within a community. However, the predominant group of people in a community largely impacts the symbolic representation of the community. In the village of Sehari too, the predominant group of *Tharu* people frames a collective identity of the community. More to the socio-cultural subjective of a community, the place where the community dwells also helps in framing the collective identity of the community. Places reflect the characteristics of the dwelling community as well as individual entities within the community. The importance of the tradition of

'*Kantariya'* exemplifies the significance of cultural spatiality for framing a collective identity of the community of *Tharus* of the Nawalpur district. Likewise, the significances of vernacular spatial constructs and the settlement patterns signifying the identity of the indigenous community of *Tharus* are to be noted.

The identity of the community is crucial for inspiring sentiments of unity and mutual support. This empowers for the political dialogues within the community and beyond the community. The identity of the community related with the spaces and cultures also help the indigenous communities to trace back to their roots and facilitate the critical self-reflections in the form of post-modern sensibilities. With the changes in the socio-cultural aspects of the community and the spatial developments, the identity of the traditional indigenous communities are also continuously changing.

Culture and Space for Functioning a Community

A community specifically functions to the socio-cultural aspects of a predominant group in the community. The collective socio-cultural aspects of the community acts as cognitive system for the community to function. The field study in Sehari showed how the socio-cultural variables of the predominant group of *Tharu* has guided the functioning of the community. Likewise, the spaces and places, where the community thrives also have significant roles in guiding and administering the functioning of the community. For example, the traditional vernacular archetype of the *Tharu* community are derivatives of the spatial characteristics of the spaces the community dwell in. The spatial formation within the vernacular houses of the *Tharus* and within the spatial constructs of the village orients the daily functioning of the community in the village. The intermixing of culture and space facilitates functioning of a community. With the persisting changes in the socio-cultural aspects of the

community and the evolution of spaces in same regard, the functioning of the community changes to adapt to the changing context.

Factors Inducing Changes in a Progressing Traditional Community

The progresses in a traditional community are influenced by different factors, which can be presented in a matrix of pushing and pulling factors and internal and external factors. The internal factors are within the community's scope in their internal or local space, while the external factors are beyond the scopes of the community pertaining from the external or global space.

Table 1

Factors inducing changes in a progressing community

	Pushing factors	Pulling/inducing factors
Internal factors/spaces	Cumbersome complexities in traditional way of life and their obsolescence with changing contexts, challenges in managing resources, periodic repair maintenance of their spatial constructs, fading traditional indigenous knowledge, power roles within the community	Adaptive traditional socio-cultural practices, power roles within the community

External factors/spaces	Natural environmental phenomena, policies, power roles beyond the scopes of community	Modernization and globalization and their attributes like market economy, science and technologies, communication network, education system, consumerism, policies

Complexities of Traditional Lifestyle and Their Obsolescence in Changing Contexts

The traditional socio-cultural aspects of a community are based on different meticulous beliefs and practices. The study showed how the community in Sehari thrived with their traditional ways of life and how some of the villagers changed their religion. In the changing context, it becomes difficult for the community members to abide by all the traditional socio-cultural norms, rituals, beliefs and values. The traditional socio-cultural practices and beliefs which are highly based on the superstitions and knowledge from the past are obsolete in the contemporary times. For example, the oxen ploughing in the fields are obsolete as the villagers find it profitable to use tractors and other power machines. Hence, the cumbersome complexities in the traditional socio-cultural aspects of the community and their obsolescence in the changing contexts pushes the community to opt for simpler, easier and convenient ways of living.

Challenges in Managing Resources

The traditional indigenous communities are highly based on the natural resources and their mindful consumptions. With the changing contexts, it becomes

challenging for the community to manage the resources required for their living. For example, the conservational policies, environmental problems, etc. make it difficult to gather timber and other natural materials for their vernacular construction practices. Therefore, the challenges in managing resources required to function their traditional ways of living are pushing the community for further changes.

Periodic Repair Maintenance of Their Traditional Vernacular Constructs

The traditional indigenous vernacular constructs are rudimentary in construction with incorporation of natural organic building materials. These constructs are vulnerable to changing environmental and climatic conditions and hence require periodic attentions, repair and maintenances which communities find burdensome. Hence, they look for easier, convenient solutions to building.

Fading Traditional Indigenous Socio-cultural Knowledge

The traditional indigenous socio-cultural knowledge is transferred from the inter-generational practices. There are chances for the traditional knowledge be misunderstood or wrongly interpreted during the intergenerational transferring. Furthermore, it is not guaranteed that all of the traditional knowledge and skills are shared and transferred with importance on their essences. This poorly presents the traditional indigenous knowledge with less significances, subjecting to losing its influences and hold on the traditional socio-cultural aspects of living. Hence, the fading traditional indigenous socio-cultural knowledge also pushes the community to transform.

Power Roles in Relation to Different Aspects

Power roles in relation to different aspects of the community and beyond the community have significant role in both pushing the community for changes as well as pulling or luring the community to changes. For example, the power relation to the

ethnicity of the *Tharu* tribe within the community of the village have assisted in the transformation of the village both as pulling and pushing factors. Likewise, the power relations beyond the scopes of the community equally has significant roles in progressing the community. For example, the states policies, jurisdictions and economies, education system etc. are both pushing and pulling the community for transformational changes.

Adaptive Traditional Socio-cultural Aspects

The traditional indigenous socio-cultural practices are the derivatives of the spatial and temporal happenings and the changes. For example, the houses of the traditional indigenous communities are the adaptation measures of the community to thrive in the given spaces in the given time. With the changing spatial and temporal features, it is normal for the socio-cultural practices to adapt to the pertaining change. Had it not been this adaptive feature of the traditional socio-cultural aspects of living, communities would not have had any traditional socio-cultures in present days. Hence, the adaptive features of traditional socio-cultural aspects induce the contextual progresses in the community.

Natural Environmental Phenomenon

It is crucial to understand the concept of global space in the contemporary times. The causal effects of a community are globally shared by different communities in different parts of the world. The natural environmental phenomenon is always changing due to natural processes as well as anthropogenic activities performed at different corners of the world. These changes in the natural environment beyond the dwellings of a traditional community can force the community to change with its socio-cultural practices. For example, the flooding in the Narayani River washed away the whole village of Dhaja Gaun resulting a rehabilitation of the

settlement in a completely new setting. Therefore, the natural environmental phenomenon as an external factor or more from an external space can push for a change in the community to progress.

Policies and Governance

Unlike in the past, when the jurisdiction for governance in a community highly stays with the village head, the jurisdiction for governance in present days is shared between the local governing authorities to the state governing authorities. Different policies scoping from the local regional levels to state levels to global levels have pertaining pressures in community to thrive for changes. For example, the conservational policies have hindered the traditional indigenous communities to have convenient accesses to the natural resources from the forests which are now state controlled as protected areas. Similarly, different uniform construction codes and laws have pushed the community to aspire and build the villages as a mockery of urban areas.

Modernization, Globalization and their Features

Modernization, globalization and their features have tremendous impacts as a pulling factor on a community to transform. Modernization seeks a traditional community to transform by offering multiple choices of freedom and more autonomy in living and promoting consumerism. Globalization on the other hand interconnects various communities in different parts of the world to come as a single entity hence featuring cultural homogenization. This wave has also introduced the concepts of global space and promoted the external foreign cultures in the traditional communities. The features of modernization and globalization like modern market economy, modern education system, communication system, mass consumerism and advancements in science and technologies have catalytically lured the communities to

aspire to be a part of the modern community and hence have inflicted changes in the socio-cultural aspects of the community. The villagers are found to be infatuated by the conspicuous luxuries offered by the modernity. Additionally, modernization has offered easy and convenient ways of living to the villagers which are facilitated by the market systems.

Changes in Socio-culture Subjective and Spaces in Traditional Community

Tharus are originally a migratory tribe, who later adopted substantive agriculture and animal herding for livelihood. This characteristic is reflected in the community of the *Tharu* living in their traditional cultural spaces in Sehari. The community in the village follows the *Tharu* archetype of settlement patterns which feature cluster of houses along a main village road while the farmlands and natural resources are abundant in the fringes of the settlements. The settlement patterns and housing depict the minimalist ways of living of the community. The daily living practices of the indigenous community of *Tharus* revolve around their traditional spatial constructs. Beside their spaces, their socio-cultural subjective like myths, beliefs, values, norms and practices rule their daily ways of living.

Repeating Pieterse (1996) and Keesing (1974), culture is an adaptive system, as the sharing of culture is social which sees no limitations to the nature of sociality in terms of territoriality and historical boundaries and learning of culture is always a continuous process as an outcome of changing circumstances. When the space is understood as a manifestation of socio-cultural model, this entails the spaces as an adaptive system as well. Both the culture and spaces changes as a community attempts to adapt to the changing contexts. Hence, changes in the traditional cultural communities are obvious and hence cannot be avoided for the existence of the traditional community. The study suggests the traditional indigenous community are

internally transformed owing to the various internal factors and happenings in the community. In the process, the traditional socio-cultural aspects of the community and spaces are transformed however, retaining most of the core essences, identities and functioning of the traditional indigenous communities.

However, there comes significant changes in the socio-cultural aspects of a traditional indigenous communities with the introduction of external cultures and global space. The external cultures are shared as well as contrasted. This depends on the nature and differentials in the external cultures. If the features of the external cultures like practices, beliefs and values are found similar or relevant to the traditional culture, those features of external cultures are assimilated into the local cultures or else are contrasted which may later be integrated into the local culture when the time or contexts call. These procedures generally encourage emergence of new cultures or sub cultures. New cultures are mostly supported by the cultural production which are based on the economic sociology (Griswold, 2013). This comes along with the development of cultural producers and consumers within the community in the local space or beyond from the global space. The new cultures tend to mix the core values and beliefs of the traditional culture with the superficial attributes of the external culture. In this context, the traditional indigenous cultures are translated with the changes mostly in the materials culture while the essences or the non-material culture are retained to possible extents. For example, the adoption of the *'ek dine ghar'* in the village depicts the new culture of building construction where the spatial construction methodologies are changing with the material constructs while the spatial functioning and core concepts of spatial construction remains the same. The continuity of the new culture like '*ek dine ghar'* becomes a sub culture to the traditional indigenous culture. However, with drastic changes resulting a complete

transformation of the traditional cultural practices, the sub culture completely becomes a whole new contrasted culture. The process of cultural reproduction contributes in the continuity of the changes in the cultures.

Hence, in a progressing community cohabitation of local, external and new cultures present a new cross-cultural patterns for the socio-cultural functioning of the community. The cross-cultural patterns in the progressing traditional communities portray the abstractions like values, beliefs, myths of the traditional communities while the derived material manifestations and associated practices from external cultures are followed. However, with the changes in material aspects of the culture, the non-material aspects of the culture are pertinent to change gradually (Pieterse, 1996). In this case the essences of traditional socio-cultural are misinterpreted or some adulterated or some left behind hence, questioning the integrity of the whole traditional culture being practiced in the time. This in all together inflicts changes in both the functioning as well as the identity of the traditional cultural community as the community progresses.

Different changes in the associated local spaces of the traditional community are also pertinent as the community progresses. Changes in the spaces beside owing to the natural phenomenon, are mostly credited to the influences from the global spaces and external factors. With the changes in the material cultures the spatial formation of the spaces in relation to the social production of spaces is compromised. As discussed previously, the changes in the material culture changes the archetype of the spatial constructs in the local spaces hence may misrepresent the spaces or its traditional indigenous spatial integrity. Likewise, with the changes in the social construction of spaces, the spaces are losing its values as true traditional places or being misunderstood for its peculiar essences.

Therefore, the changes in the socio-cultural subjective and spaces of a traditional indigenous communities are changing mostly in the superficial attributes of such cultures and spaces. However, with the progressing times it cannot be denied that the whole abstractions and true essences of the traditional indigenous cultures and spaces will retain forever. As the community progresses, with the complete changes in the socio-cultural subjective and spaces of a traditional community, the community will no longer be the traditional community.

The socio-cultural progression introduces different cultural shifts in a progressing community. Owing to the strong attachments and abstractions to the traditional indigenous socio-cultural values, the traditional communities are unable to fully accept and adopt to foreign cultures; hence preventing from cultural convergence or homogenization. However, the material cultures of the traditional indigenous community are easily changed while the abstract concepts of their traditional indigenous cultural heritages remain intact. This features the paradigm of cultural hybridization in a progressing community. Although, modern new spatial constructs and other modern cultural spatiality can be observed in a progressing community, the essence of the traditional cultural heritages and spatiality are strongly rooted in the consciences of the traditional indigenous community. Thus, in this sense, a traditional indigenous communities are often explored as pseudo-modernized communities.

While the cultural hybridization pertains in a progressing community, with the shifts gradually inclining towards cultural convergence, the members of the traditional communities are found awakening to preserve and promote their traditional indigenous socio-cultural heritages. In this act of cultural differentiation, the traditional indigenous communities are empowering themselves to preserve their

places and socio-cultural heritages for their identity and communal functioning.
Often, the traditional communities have opted for spatial tactics to come with ideas of
homestays, living museums and other approaches for cultural revitalization in the
village. However, these practices are more likely to objectify their culture and spaces,
while the whole traditional community gradually transcend to more modern way of
living. Hence, it can be said that the socio-cultural spatiality of a traditional
community is evolving with the needs and demand of the new contexts.

Ethnography as Research Methodology

The study followed an ethnography methodology based in the interpretive
research paradigm to understand how the changes in the traditional cultural spaces
and the associated socio-cultural aspects are being addressed in an indigenous *Tharu*
community of Sehari over the years. A prolong involvement in the site and with the
site characters helped to understand how a traditional indigenous community is
functioning in the progressing times. I made several visits to the site from 2018 as a
part of my professional practice. In this time period, involvements mostly included
participant observation in their natural environment, interviews and sharing their
cultural experiences through participatory approaches. As suggested by Aucoin
(2017), dialogical process was emphasized for the cross cultural study of space and
places which involved exploration and accounting of various features like symbols,
meanings, beliefs, activities and experiences relating to space and place in a particular
society through the perspectives of those who dwell it. I had helps from my local
work colleagues to ease the environment for conversations and interpret the
conversations in the native *Tharu* language.

In the premises of globalization and influences of global sphere, the
ethnography study focused on the "field-as-network" which facilitated the study to

extend beyond the territorial confinement of the study area (Kokot, 2006). Different dynamics of changes on the socio-cultural aspects of the community specifically focusing in their spatial constructs and their viable causals and effects in a larger spectrum were observed and studied. The collected data which were mostly interview transcripts, notes, images, text documents and sketches were referenced with the literatures studied and thematically discussed to have clearer understandings of the issues. As suggested by Dudovskiy (2018), discourse analysis was used to generate the concepts, organize, categorize and discuss the data findings, in references to theories highlighted in the literature review. Lastly, the data analysis of the research findings is linked to the objective of the research to come to conclusions.

Significances and Implications of the Study

The study has explored the socio-cultural subjective of a traditional indigenous community of *Tharu* in association with their spatial constructs. The study elucidates importance of socio-cultural subjective of a traditional indigenous community in relation to their spatial constructs for sustainable development.

In the contemporary time, traditional indigenous communities and their places cannot be isolated from the global space. They share wraths of the global planetary disasters in which they have little causals. Their interdependency with the natural environment for their survival has exposed them to direct adverse impacts of the global natural crisis. Moreover, their poor socio-economic conditions have made them more vulnerable. In this regard, the approaches based on the spatial tactics can be valuable to address the issues. On the other hand, the socio-cultural spatiality of traditional indigenous communities has become more significant than ever in the present times for the sustainable development. Their cultural spatiality is facilitated by their traditional indigenous knowledge system and looks into conservative

management of the natural resources with optimal mindful consumption. The communities practice a carbon neutral way of living in their spaces. Moreover, the social bonding and harmony fostered by the traditional socio-cultural spatiality in the local spaces subjects for social sustainability. The traditional spatial constructs or spaces offer a sense of 'belonging to' the natives of the traditional indigenous communities which foster their identity, mutual sharing and unity for political discourses for their collective well-being. The traditional socio-cultural spatiality helps to foster peace, harmony and prosperity in the village. Hence, the importance of the socio-cultural spatiality and spatial tactics is crucial for the sustainable development.

The significances of the traditional cultural spaces can be discussed mainly under following themes.

An aide for Environment Preservation and Mitigating Climate Change

The traditional spatial constructs are peculiar to the traditional knowledge of the community thriving in it. The community thriving in the traditional spatial constructs are mostly the indigenous ethnic groups. Indigenous peoples' building practices correspond to the knowledge system that is based on experiences, often tested over centuries of use, adapted to local culture and environment dynamics (Carm, 2014). The indigenous communities who strive in the traditional vernacular spatial constructs look into gracefully consuming the natural resources to retrieve the construction materials. The myths and practices of the indigenous communities' guide and disciplines the community in mindful consumptions of the resources which helps in natural resource management and preserve them from exploitations.

The indigenous peoples' building practices tend to incorporate minimal embodied energy and carbon footprint in pre-building phase, building phase and post-

building phase as elucidated in the framework by Kim and Rigdon in 1998. As indigenous peoples building practices rely on nearby natural resources and employ natural building materials, the greenhouse gas emissions in construction of the traditional vernacular buildings are minimal. Hence, the carbon embodiment as a building stock is less. Furthermore, the climate responsiveness of these building practices ensures less use of energy during the operation of the building specifically for heating and cooling purposes. In this regard, the carbon footprint of traditional vernacular building practices is minimal both as an upfront carbon embodiment and during the operational phase of the buildings. Furthermore, the indigenous ways of living in their built environment inculcates sustainable living practices.

Strategies to reduce the emissions from building and construction can highly remark in mitigating climate change. The modern conventional building practices has larger impacts on environmental degradation and carbon footprints. Whereas, indigenous peoples building practices are eco-friendly, has less carbon footprint and embedded energy both in construction stage and operation stage. The indigenous peoples building practices like those of *Tharus* use optimum use of natural resources and has less stress on the natural resource management. As most of the resources used in the traditional vernacular building practices are natural organic building materials, there is insignificant problems of waste and pollution from construction wastes. These built structures are feature climate responsive design and hence requires very less mechanical intervention or resources to maintain comfortable indoor environment. Moreover, these building practices are economical and support integrated sustainable living practices like permaculture.

Promoting Indigenous Knowledge for Climate Change Adaptation

The traditional spatial constructs are embedded with the traditional indigenous knowledge which comprises from the knowledge of building construction to the knowledge of thriving and practicing daily living in the socio-cultural and environmental setting. As the society and the natural environment evolves with time, the traditional indigenous knowledge is valuable to adapt with the persisting changes. In the contemporary context, climate change is a prevailing issue which is adulterating the physical environmental and socio-cultural functioning of the society. The indigenous knowledge thrived and promoted in the traditional spatial constructs are time tested and are indeed proven useful in adapting to climate change impacts. There are hard evidences that shows the important role of indigenous communities in natural resource management and biodiversity conservation and hence calls for the scientific communities to work closely with indigenous communities, especially in adapting to the changes caused by climate change on the environment. As there is this gap between the scientific research findings and indigenous knowledge, the need now is to identify and document such indigenous knowledge and also push for more integrations for actionable solutions that are useful for the communities that are worst impacted by climate change.

Challenge of modernization is multifaceted, besides creating added pressure on the environment, it also alienates societies from the environment, driving their ideals further away from those that look to nature for solutions. The most confronting truth the indigenous communities now have to deal with is the increased risk of losing their knowledge altogether as their younger generations are no longer interested in carrying on their age-old tradition. In this pretext, the traditional spatial constructs can safe house the indigenous traditional knowledge and help the younger generations

connect to their native ideologies and knowledge and hence promote the significance of the indigenous knowledge.

Fostering Social Harmony, Prosperity and Resiliency

The traditional spatial constructs feature and promote social harmony, communal prosperity and strengthens the resiliency of the community as well. The construction of the traditional vernacular structures employs local labors and skills. In the traditional practices, the labors are not paid with monetary compensations. Rather, the members of community help each other build the spatial constructs in expectance of receiving similar help later as compensation. Also, the primitiveness of the traditional vernacular structures demand periodic repair and maintenances which are mostly carried out with the help of communal efforts. This makes the members of the community obliged to each other.

More to this, as accounted from the field stories, the members of community venture together for days to collect the resources for the constructions. These practices promote and strengthen the social bonding within the community members. Additionally, employing the native skilled labors from within the community gives continuity to the traditional knowledge of building where the transferring of such knowledge to the new ones is viable. Likewise, the communities feast and celebrates a completion of construction. In this regard, the communal bonding and sharing is extensively promoted and encouraged.

Hence, the traditional cultural spaces assist in promoting fraternity and harmony in the community. The strengthening in the communal bonds and mutual co-dependence within the community values the social assets of the community which crucially develops the resiliency of the community. The social collective resiliency owing to the communal fraternity and mutual supports in the community assist the

community to cope and strive through the cases of environmental catastrophes or socio-economic disturbances. The communal understanding further helps to prevail peace, harmony and prosperity within the society.

Collective Representation for Political Dialogues

The traditional cultural spaces are the places where the indigenous communities thrive and prosper with their functioning. These places offer the senses of 'belonging to' to the members of the communities and help them relate and trace back to their roots and collective consciences. The role of the traditional spatial constructs as a mean to frame collective identity of the community and connect the individual's consciences to their native collectivity empowers the individual to have political debates and dialogues for their rights, discriminations against them and for their collective wellbeing.

In the times when the development is driven by modernization and globalization, the significance of the traditional spatial constructs is more crucial to differentiate the indigenous communities from the homogenizing world. These places powerfully speak for their natives' rights and well beings in the global space where the consequences of the anthropogenic activities on environment are shared globally. The places further portray the vulnerability of the indigenous communities against the impending threats of the climate change and their significance to mitigate and adapt to the persisting adverse of climate change.

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Contributions of the Study

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The study has tried to present significances of the socio-cultural subjective in association with the spatial constructs of a traditional indigenous community in the progressing times. The study presents the discourses on how traditional indigenous communities are transforming in contemporary times. The study revisits the existing

knowledge on the culture and spaces and has explored the factors and transformational processes of a progressing traditional indigenous community. The study has tried to flag the issues pertaining with the uncontrolled changes and happenings in the socio-cultural subjective and spaces of a transforming traditional community. The study has helped to ground the existing knowledge on the topics and generate new understandings on the topics as well.

The discourses from the study have explored the importance of spaces and places in relation to the socio-cultural subjective of traditional indigenous community and how they can be administered in the praxis of sustainable development. The roles of spaces in relation to socio-cultural aspects of the traditional indigenous communities are to be equally discussed for environmental conservation and promoting social peace, harmony and prosperity. Additionally, the study in the *Tharu* community of Sehari have helped the natives to reflect on their past and reassess their traditional indigenous heritages. The involvements during the study with the locals have helped them to rethink and reconsider their stances and approaches for mindful living. This in a way has generated social awareness in the village regarding the significances of their traditional indigenous heritages.

Conclusion

The study extensively presents how the changes in the traditional indigenous spatial constructs and the associated socio-cultural aspects are being addressed in the progressing times. The study showed that the spaces and socio-cultural subjective are intertwined together and are both the causals and effects of changes to impact other. The socio-cultural entities of a predominant group always conceptualize the spaces in the communities and together they frame the identity of the community and also functions the community. There are internal factors within the traditional community

and external factors beyond the domain of the traditional community that influences or bring changes in their traditional socio-cultural entities and spaces. These factors both act as pulling and pushing factors for the changes. In the process of alterations, there exists different paradigm of cultural shifts which are seen in the socio-cultural subjective as well as the spaces of the traditional community. Although the changes are primarily noticed in the material culture or on the surficial level of the traditional community, the changes will sooner or later transfigure the deeply rooted traditional cultural aspects like traditional myths, values, beliefs, customs, practices and knowledge. The study and the findings helped me reflect on my past personal experiences and understand the foregoing and pertaining changes in the traditional cultural spaces.

The transfiguration of the traditional cultural spaces and associated socio-cultural subjective is a critical issue in the contemporary context. The transfiguration is mostly oriented the traditional community to become more modern for better lifestyle. It is high time, the 'better lifestyle' is to be contextually understood and discussed in the traditional cultural societies. The conservation and promotion of the traditional communities like the *Tharus* of Sehari and their associated traditional socio-cultural subjective and spaces are essential in the contemporary times for sustainable development. They are valuable aide for environment preservation, mitigating and adapting to the climate change. They foster social harmony, prosperity and resilience. They collectively bring the members of the community as single representational unit for political dialogues and also assist the members in critical self-reflection in this postmodern realm.

However, there are limitations in the research which may have challenged in achieving the objectives of the research. The study has tried to explore different topics

on the intertwining relationship between spaces and culture in a traditional community and the dynamics of changes pertaining in the progressing traditional community. Traditions and cultures are always changing with time. This presents a subliminal paradox in the understanding of traditions and culture and hence challenges in setting a baseline for study of the traditional culture. As traditions and cultures are always changing there exists no any authentic true traditional culture. The traditional culture that we see or experience now, was at some point in time a new culture for that time. Noting this, the understanding of traditional culture of the indigenous community of *Tharus* are based on generalized understandings from the existing literatures. For example, there are literatures which portray *Tharus* as migratory tribes which later adopted substantive agricultural practices. In this line, the study generalized the traditional culture of the community instead of marking a base point of either migratory lifestyle or agricultural lifestyle, for comparatively referencing the extents of pertaining changes in the community.

Additionally, the field of study is explored not as an old traditional community thriving from hundreds of years ago but a community thriving traditionally to possible extents. The cases in the field was explored nothing as similar to the existing literatures on the indigenous communities of *Tharu*. Hence, the study is based on the generalized understanding of the traditional culture of the indigenous community of *Tharus*. A new study can look into dissecting the space and culture with relation to temporal progression and present an absolute way to study space and culture in its true time and true contexts.

Furthermore, the study presents different scopes of changes pertaining in the socio-cultural subjective of a traditional indigenous community in relation to their spatial constructs. It is not possible to go in depth exploring the deeper understanding

of such explorations and hence the study is limited to surficial understanding of such various topics. New studies can be conducted to have deeper understanding of cultural spatiality, spatial tactics, proxemics, factors for changes, power relations to different aspects for changes and many other related topics. The deeper insights in such topics may help generate new knowledge and critical significances for the traditional communities in progression.

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GLOSSARY

Anahadat   a *Tharus* festival in the day of *Indra Jatra*, when they feast on *chichad* and fishes

bandevta   gods or goddess of the forest spirits

barham   a village shrine in a *Tharu* community

barna   a customary ritual in *Tharu* community where the whole community is prohibited to work or consume natural resources

bhajan   songs or prayers for the gods or deities

bhau-pwa   a Newari term, literally meaning hole for a cat

bhoot akrani   a customary act in *Tharu* community to cast down evil spirits from an individual

bhumi puja   rituals for worshiping land or the mother earth

bhutaha   a *Tharu* term derived from a Nepali word '*bhoot*' meaning ghosts

bigha   a Nepali term used in measuring land areas, 1 *bigha* equates to 72,900 sq.ft.

bijli   a *Tharu* tem meaning, in between

boshi   huge earthen bowls for the poultries to lay eggs

char ghar   Nepali term literally meaning four houses

chautara   a raised platform built around huge trees

chichad   steamed sticky rice of a special breed of paddy called '*anadi*'

chowk   square in a traditional settlement, in Newari language

chowkidaar   warden, supervisor

Dashain	the main festival of the Nepalese celebrated around September or October when the goddess *Durga* is worshipped
dehri	huge earthen pots made for storing grains in *Tharu* community
deu	a *Tharu* term for spirits
deurhar	small shrine space in a traditional *Tharu* house
doko	a basket made of flattened bamboos
ek dine ghar	Nepali term literally meaning, one-day house
gagri	a Nepali term for water container which are generally used to fetch water and store
garik-ang-na	the front yard that connects the house with the main road in the *Tharu* settlement
gehari	a *Tharu* term for, lower land
ghat	places in riverbanks where dead bodies are cremated
guruva	a *Tharu* term for priests or the one with superstitious powers
haat bazaar	an occasional market that runs for a few days mostly around villages
hetki	a *Tharu* term for, recent
hiti	a Newari term for tap, water conduits
jal devta	gods or goddess of the spirits of water resources
jatras	a Newari term for festivals where chariot processions are conducted
jwari farkaune	a tradition in *Tharu* community to return one's wife with money to the family of the bride
khaand	a *Tharu* term for sword like weapon
khadiya	small bamboo stalking
khar	grasses and stalking used for making thatches
kul devta	ancestral deity in Nepali language

leruwa	a *Tharu* term for leftover stalks of the paddy in the ground after the harvest
ligiya	a *Tharu* term meaning associated with tracks
mahatua	village chief in *Tharu* language
Maghi	A *Tharu's* new year festival celebrated during the first day of the month of *Magh* according to the lunar calendar
mohi	a Nepali term for those who have equal right to a land with the landlord, they are supposed to share the profits of the farm with the real owners
mohiyani hak	the rights of equal share granted to the *mohis*
mukhiya	the main person in a village who oversees the functioning of the village
Newars	an ethnic group originally from the Kathmandu Valley
nyayi khanba	a *Tharu* term for the main post in the house
pati	a Newari architecture found along the streets, shelter for resting with raised plinths of stones and mud masonry, and terracotta roofing supported by timber frames and posts
raiti	a Nepali term for those who labors at farm
Rajput	a group of communities primarily from the region of Rajasthan in the Indian subcontinent
Rajputana	the areas where Rajput originally settled in India
saal	Nepal term for *shorea robusta*, a hardwood
sauteni	a Nepali term used by a wife for another all having a common husband
silauta	a pair of stone, generally a base and a pestle used for grinding spices
shakti	power, energy
Shoraii	a *Tharu* celebration during the day of *Laxmi Puja*

shuli	a structure built of timber or bamboo posts for hanging harvests mostly maize, the structure is used to dry maize under direct sun and breeze
Siwalik	hill range running from east to west in the *Terai* geographical region in Nepal
tadi	a *Tharu* term for, higher land
tha: tha: ra	a *Tharu* term for interwoven flattened bamboos or bamboos stalks
Tharu	an indigenous ethnic group mostly found in the jungles of Terai, the southern belt of Nepal
tole	a Nepali term for neighborhood