

**An Exploration of Understandings of  
Development and of Wellbeing in a Rural Hill  
Community of Far West Nepal**

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## ABSTRACT

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This ethnographic case study explores understandings of international and local development, and of personal and community wellbeing, in a rural mixed-caste community of Far West Nepal. Taking an ethnographic, interpretive, discourse-oriented and dialogic approach, the thesis uses data collected during eight months of fieldwork, through participant observation, semi-structured interviews, informal conversations and documentary analysis. The case study community includes three main sites; village, school and administrative/'bazaar' area. Seven individuals and two events are explored as bounded yet interrelated 'embedded cases' (Stake, 2006), their foci informed by a life history approach.

Arguing that development and wellbeing are social constructs and relational processes, the thesis draws on theories of Perri 6 (2012) and Zittoun *et al* (2003) to explore the interplay of institutional structures and human agency in shaping understandings of development and of wellbeing. This involves considering: the community's most prominent institutions, the school and the Hindu religion; and recent political changes and globalisation processes.

My exploration reveals a close connection between understandings of development and of personal wellbeing, and shows the mediating role of multiple identities, including mine, in shaping these understandings. The thesis argues that key to how development is carried out, and the wellbeing of individuals and communities promoted, is the tendency for understandings of development and personal wellbeing to be concomitant with ideas for community wellbeing only amongst individuals whose personal wellbeing is dependent upon that of their community.

Literature on wellbeing in developing countries usually considers wellbeing in terms of its capacity to inform development interventions, the need for the latter going unquestioned. This thesis contends that wellbeing should be explored not merely as a development criterion but in its own right, potentially leading to a positive shift in attitudes and approaches to development, to the benefit of communities and the individuals who comprise them.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## TERMS AND CONVENTIONS

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### REFERRING TO MALLAGAON

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- Mallagaon to include the village, Janakiram School and ‘*Campus*’, and the Ramkuti area (the shops, temple, offices and school hostels)
- Mallagaon village to differentiate the village from the rest of Mallagaon
- Bazaar for the small local market; this term is used locally, in Nepali and English, without its usual exotic connotations
- Pseudonyms for all proper nouns (except for my husband Mahesh and me) by which the true identity of Mallagaon could be traced, both in the thesis and its appendices. In secondary sources, the pseudonyms are in italicised *Calibri Light*. In the appendices, any proper nouns which do not occur in the thesis but may make it possible to trace Mallagaon have been blanked out.

### QUOTATIONS KEY

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- Emphasis and single inverted commas for anything transliterated from Nepali, and for English expressions (sometimes with altered meanings) used as part of the Nepali language
- Double inverted commas for translated direct speech and for excerpts from field-notes and other writing of mine
- Double inverted commas and:
  - This colour for translated written texts
  - Batang font for direct speech or excerpts from documents originally in English

### ILLUSTRATIONS

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## ABBREVIATIONS

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BEd	Bachelor of Education
BS	Bikram Sambat, Nepal's official calendar, 56.7 years ahead of the Gregorian calendar
CEW	Children's Education World (a UK-based children's education trust supporting education at Mallagaon's school). This is a pseudonym
CSIDB	Cottage and Small Industry Development Board
CTEVT	Centre for Technical Education and Vocational Training
DCC	Development Centre for Communities. This is a pseudonym
FN	Field-notes
IEd	Intermediate Education (teaching qualification carried out at sixth form level)
IN	Interview Notes
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
MEd	Master of Education
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PWB	Psychological Well-Being
SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
SDT	Self-Determination Theory
SLC	School Leaving Certificate (GCSE level)
SWB	Subjective Well-Being
VDC	Village Development Committee, the village-level administrative part of Nepal's development ministry. VDC is also used to refer to the area within a VDC's jurisdiction; the local VDC incorporates Mallagaon and eight other wards or village communities
WeD	Wellbeing in Developing Countries

## NEPALI WORDS / USAGES OF ENGLISH WORDS

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Ayurved(a)	Indigenous medicine
Bahira	Outside, used as a term for menstruation
Bhimal	A local type of tree
Bikas	Development
Binaju	Elder sister's husband
Boarding	English medium schools not necessarily offering accommodation
Campus	Educational institution offering university degrees (rather than simply its grounds)
Chalise	Forty
Dai	Elder brother
Doteli	A local regional language of Far West Nepal spoken in Mallagaon
Dukh	Trouble / misfortune / pain / grief / worry
Ghatta	Grinding stone
Intermediate	Level of education equivalent to sixth form (e.g. Intermediate Science, Intermediate Education)
Ji	Honorific suffix
Lakh	100,000
Lek	Flat, highland area
Mool	Natural spring water source
Multiple Campus	University
Nachune bela	'Do-not-touch time', used as a term used for menstruation
Peon	Work-based servant / caretaker
Raamro	Good
Sachiv	Secretary
Santushti	Contentment/ Satisfaction
Servis	Salaried job
Shloka	The basic verse form of Indian epics
Shramdaan	Donation of effort or labour in the community
Sukh	Happiness / Pleasure
Surana	Good leader

Terai	The plains of South Nepal, wealthier and more fertile than the hills
Thulo maanche	Big / important people
Thulo	Big
Timur	Szechuan pepper

## PREAMBLE

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### “What Is She On About Now?”

‘She has her shortwave radio  
And she clearly knows all that there is to know  
Sometimes she’s on about films she’s seen  
And her hair it shines with its vitamin sheen.’

‘You don’t want our facilities,  
Don’t crave for our abilities,  
The Western world’s reality  
Makes living a banality.’

‘Her Walkman plays tapes with fine sound  
Her learning is such as is rarely found  
She’s heard lots of music by various bands  
Not a crack nor a callous upon her soft hands.’”

(Written in 1994 when living and working in Mallagaon)

Women dressed in bright reds, yellow marigolds tucked behind their ears, sit on the ground threshing while girls plait grasses. A swallow flies in and out of the teashop, feeding its young in the nest above our heads while men sit drinking tea, gently taking me in. Small children occasionally come, touch me and quickly run away. Wooden shutters and slate roofs, houses plastered in red and white clay, buffaloes and goats in the yards, and all around us narrow terraced fields. I described Mallagaon in a letter home, after my first visit in 1993, commenting: “If everything were to go wrong from here, it is worth it for this. ... I felt in a film set or in a documentary”. When I returned two months later to work there, I was “filled with the same feeling of wellbeing as the last time”.

However, arriving for my PhD fieldwork in October 2011, I find those innocent-seeming, ‘film-quality’ days gone. In the village where the climb to Mallagaon begins, sleazy looking men hang around staring disdainfully, women queue endlessly for water and there are many concrete buildings. The footpath to Mallagaon, marked by a trail of plastic litter, several times meets the road which, unusable since the monsoon, looks very rough and dangerous.

On my arrival, and several times subsequently, I am thanked for my charitable giving, because I ‘brought’ girls’ hostels and funding for education. There is genuine gratitude, but I am wary of it tending towards obsequiousness and an expectation that I can find more sources. I feel regretful that I was indirectly responsible for the first concrete

buildings here, although their arrival was inevitable. There are plenty more now, and I find them ugly; however a Nepali visitor from Kathmandu praises their beauty. I am certain that materials were skimmed off when the hostels were built; they are shoddy, with bending pillars, cracking concrete, rising damp and flaking paint. I get upset by this ‘development’, only describable as worse-than-no-development, and by seemingly endless direct and indirect requests, made by rich and poor alike, for financial help for buildings or other projects, and for Children’s Education World (CEW) scholarships. Meanwhile, little else is done to improve either conditions in the hostels or the quality of the education offered.

I cannot help wondering if I started the whole money making aid culture in Mallagaon with funding from the UK Embassy and CEW. I wonder what would happen if all foreign aid to Nepal ceased by the end of the month. Inevitably things might first get worse, then perhaps better.

Back in the UK, after eight months of fieldwork, people who see my photos exclaim ‘how amazing’, ‘how unchanged’, ‘how peaceful and content everyone looks’, and ‘what a different world it is’. I am amazed how easily I can agree; one part of me truly does agree! On hearing that I have just returned from fieldwork in Nepal, an academic I meet at a conference (September 2012) exclaims, ‘Oh how exotic!’ Irritated, I desist from pointing out the beautiful buildings, cloisters and gardens of New Hall College, Oxford around us, and from saying ‘Not half as exotic as here’; instead I mumble that, having taught there before, Mallagaon seems ‘normal’ to me.

# CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

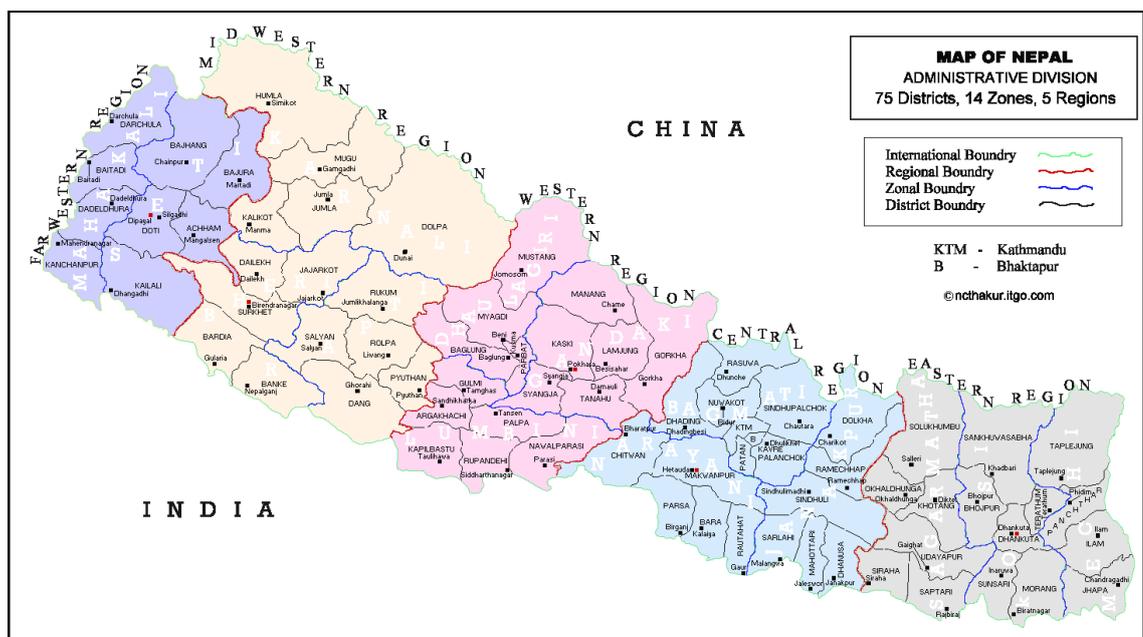
The Preamble, based on my field-notes unless otherwise stated, includes descriptions of my reactions to Mallagaon, both when I first arrived in 1993 and when I returned for my fieldwork in 2011. After briefly introducing Mallagaon, I use it as a springboard to introduce my research.

## 1.1 INTRODUCING MALLAGAON

A Hindu Kingdom until 2006 when monarchy was abolished, Nepal officially became a secular state in 2008 (UNDP, 2012). The ‘Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal’, with a population of approximately 26, 500,000, is landlocked by China and India (ibid). It has three geographical areas: the Himalayan region to the north, the mid-hill region and the Terai (plain) region to the south (ibid). The country is divided into ‘Development Regions’ for administrative purposes; the administrative and political ‘centre’, Kathmandu, (actually in Nepal’s eastern half) belongs to the Central Region, while Mallagaon, at an altitude of about 4,000 feet, is in the mid hills of the Far Western Region. Furthest from the ‘centre’, the Far West is officially referred to as ‘backward’ and ‘underdeveloped’ (e.g. Upreti, 2006).

### Map of Nepal

Mallagaon is in Doti District in the Far Western Region



A decade of civil war, instigated by the Maoists, ended in 2006 when the Comprehensive Peace Accord was signed (UNDP, 2012). Central to this accord was the promise, still unrealised, of a new constitution granting equal rights and opportunities to all (ibid). The political situation remains unstable, with various groups calling for greater representation, involving frequent economic blockades and political violence (Lonely Planet, 2014).

Despite over US\$4 billion in aid (60% of Nepal's development budget), Nepal remains one of the world's poorest countries; 7,000,000 have inadequate food, basic health care and education (ibid), while the male and female literacy rates are 65.5% and 42.8% respectively (UNDP, 2012). The majority of the population depends on agriculture (BBC, 2014).

Mallagaon has three main areas. The first is the village, where most dwellings are located near a natural spring on a hillside; the more powerful live nearer this water source. Another group of homes, inhabited by Dalits, is located a short walk away from these upper caste homes. This Hindu community is strongly hierarchical due to the caste structure. Brahmans, traditionally the dominant, are at the 'top', Chhetrias are also upper caste but 'beneath' the Brahmans, while Dalits, (the 'untouchables'), are discriminated against and at the 'bottom'. Women also face discrimination irrespective of caste. After marriage they always live in their husbands' communities, exogamy being the norm.

The second area consists of Janakiram School and '*Campus*', a ten-minute walk from Mallagaon village. The former provides primary and secondary level education and has about 400 either hostel-based or day students. At sixth form level, it offers Intermediate Commerce and Intermediate Education (IEd) courses, the latter a teaching qualification. In 2009, Janakiram '*Campus*' opened, offering a Bachelor of Education (BEd).

The third area, located on a hill between the other two, is known as 'Ramkuti'. This includes the bazaar – a market consisting of a few tea shops, various medical outlets, general stores and three tailors' workplaces. A few villagers have moved to live here, for convenience and to protect their shops. Ramkuti also includes the Ram temple it is named after, the Village Development Committee (VDC) office, the office of a non-governmental organisation (NGO) called the Development Centre for Communities (DCC), a health post and student hostels.

### The Location of Mallagaon Village, Janakiram and Ramkuti

- Mallagaon village houses, which straddle the hillside below (bottom left)
- Janakiram School and 'Campus' (above centre)
- Ramkuti bazaar, partially hidden by trees (bottom right)
- Ramkuti offices and health post (left of centre)
- Janakiram hostels (right of centre)



Apart from a couple of shopkeepers, all householders farm either their own land or that of Mallagaon's wealthier members, growing staple crops and a limited number of vegetables. The local economy relies increasingly on cash although a barter system still exists, as when (often) paying the tailors. All householders supplement their income, either by teaching or shop-keeping, or with money sent home by emigrated family members. Most emigrants live in Dhangadhi, a town in the more fertile southern plains of Nepal. Others live in Kathmandu.

The Far West suffers from deforestation and, increasingly, from landslides, which affect the fair-weather road first constructed in 2010. After experiments with a generator in the late 1990s, Mallagaon was connected to the national grid in 2002/03. During the last few years, many people have got mobile phones, albeit with poor signal strength. Formerly, Mallagaon relied on two landlines, installed in 1995 but soon abandoned. There is now sporadic internet connection, used by very few people, while a few

householders have bought televisions. Mallagaon has thus, in recent years, experienced much change, also due to the recent civil unrest associated with Nepal's Maoist War (see Chapter 3).

First arriving in 1993, I stayed in the village for two and a half years as paying guest of a Brahman family while working for Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) as an English teacher and teacher trainer at Janakiram. While there, I secured funding from the British Embassy for a girls' hostel, enabling girls to board for the first time. Returning to the UK in 1996, I began working for Children's Education World (CEW), a non-profit children's education trust; from it I secured sponsorship for some of Janakiram's secondary level students. Begun in 1997, this sponsorship programme is ongoing. CEW also funded a girls' hostel and ensured that Dalits were included in selection. These programmes necessitated my visiting Mallagaon for several one-week trips, most recently in 2009. Then, from October 2011 to May 2012, I spent eight months there for my PhD fieldwork.

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## 1.2 JOURNEYING TO MY RESEARCH FOCUS

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### FINDING MY FEET WITH POST-DEVELOPMENT THEORY

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As the poem opening the Preamble indicates, I was, when I first went to live in Mallagaon, disillusioned by the 'Western'<sup>1</sup> world, where life seemed banal because of too many facilities and lacking the sense of wellbeing I perceived in Mallagaon's close-to-nature, simple lifestyle (referred to in my letters home).

I was aware of an illusionary "film-like" quality in my life there even then and, with sufficient time subsequently spent in Mallagaon, I became aware of its negative as well as its positive aspects. Nonetheless, my perception remained that there was some truth in my first impressions, reinforced by my misery on seeing, when I returned for fieldwork, the degradation resulting from 'development' in Mallagaon. This reminded me of the time when, as a VSO there, I had seen the squalor of a nearby town subsequent to its connection by road to India and the rest of Nepal. Robinson-Pant (1988), who worked as a VSO there in the 1980s, described some negative effects of this particular example of development in the only development-related article about Far West Nepal I came across in the early 1990s. She wrote of the shanty town that

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<sup>1</sup> I place 'West', 'Western', 'developed' and 'developing' in inverted commas to distance myself from terms that I believe essentialise cultures or states of being, when, for want of better terms, I am compelled to use them in order to make broad distinctions.

grew up with the road, which, selling goods from India, resulted in a reduction in demand for local products and therefore for porters (ibid).

I had no formal knowledge of development when studying English literature, nor subsequently when I became a secondary level English teacher. I did not know that theory existed which would support my belief that something was amiss with development as I had experienced it in Nepal.

This concern led me to study a MSc. in ‘Environmental and Development Education’ (Subsequently renamed ‘Education for Sustainability’) at South Bank University (2000-2003), where I found my emotional response justified by theory: ‘Post-Development’, a term coined in 1991, refers to ideas which challenge ‘the myth of development’, i.e. the dominant paradigm of development as economic growth and modernisation (Rahnema, 1997:ix-xix). Rahnema and Bawtree (1997), and other post-development theorists such as Escobar (1995), argue that such development threatens the wellbeing of the natural environment, destroys indigenous cultures and creates feelings of inferiority amongst those at whom it is aimed, without concern for individual voices. Shrestha (1998) criticises development ideology grounded in modernisation for its negative effects on Nepali people, suggesting that Nepal would benefit from an end to foreign aid. Sharing these opinions, I locate myself within post-development theory.

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## WELLBEING AND EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABILITY

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Following a one-week work trip to Mallagaon for CEW in 2009, I began to list lifestyle aspects I had always appreciated there but now saw as being increasingly eroded by ‘development’ and as requiring education to redress, including: “cooperation”, “time”, “acceptance”, “simplicity”, “modest circumstances”, “living with nature”, “non-enslavement to technology”, “taking pleasure in simple things” and “sense of self” (Trip Diary, 2009). My values relate to those of Belton’s (2014) UK-based participants in her research into wellbeing for the planet’s sustainability; happy with their lifestyles, they are ‘modest consumers’, valuing nature and appreciating the ordinary.

My concern over the corrosive effects of ‘development’ and my sense, as I noted at the time, that the ‘West’ has much more to learn from ‘developing’ communities such as Mallagaon than it can ever teach (Trip Diary, 2009) also relate to the theorists I came across in my MSc. curriculum. These included authors in the field of education for sustainability, such as Sterling (2001) and Orr (2004), deep ecologists who recognise

the connection between sustainable development and wellbeing. Sterling (2001) calls for a holistic education, which recognises the interdependence of people and nature, in order to achieve sustainability and provide wellbeing for all. Orr (2002; 2004) and Sterling (2003) favour traditional, physically located, rural communities, understanding them to enable humans to participate in the ‘biotic community’ as ‘just one constituency among others’ (Pepper, 1996:23) and providing the sense of ‘rootedness’ Orr (2004) considers essential to wellbeing.

My experience in Nepal in the 1990s, expressed in my Preamble, resonates with Norberg-Hodge’s (2000) experience in Ladakh. She noted a greater sense of wellbeing in traditional communities which continue to live in harmony with nature because of little contact with the outside world (ibid).

I also identified closely with Illich’s ideas (1997 [1971]), as my poem opening the Preamble shows. He blamed the development process for ‘underdevelopment’, considering it ‘a form of consciousness’ which ‘occurs when mass needs are converted to the demand for new brands of packaged solutions... forever beyond the reach of the majority’ (ibid: 97). Illich also argued that schooling reinforces this negative sense of being underdeveloped and inferior, increasing rather than addressing social stratification (ibid).

My experience and ideas led to my joining the University of East Anglia in 2010 to conduct PhD research based in Mallagaon with the intention of exploring what concepts and practices could be introduced in education to best promote sustainable lifestyles, resulting in the well-being of individuals, communities and the natural world.

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### 1.3 REACHING MY RESEARCH FOCUS

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#### TAKING A DISCOURSE-ORIENTED APPROACH

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Wider reading during the first year of my PhD research made me wonder if I was overly romanticising traditional rural lifestyles, a tendency which can result in overlooking the need for social justice (Pepper, 1996). Examining deep ecology’s message for ‘potentially reactionary’ language and ideas echoing Nazism (ibid: 29-30), I recognised, in my emphasis on the local, an outsider’s conception of development and wellbeing perhaps very different from that of my prospective research participants.

Attempting to make sense of others' understandings, I came to realise the centrality of discourse to my research, recognising that:

Discourses... are ways of behaving, interacting, valuing, thinking, believing, speaking, and... reading and writing... They are... always and everywhere *social* and products of social histories (Gee, 1996:viii).

I turned increasingly to theorists who consider discourse, including Escobar (1995) and Pigg (1992, 1993). Particularly relevant was the latter's exploration of the ways in which local Nepali discourses take up the dominant national discourse of development as modernisation (ibid) (see Chapter 2). Robinson-Pant (2001:318) who based her doctoral research in Western Nepal develops this idea, saying that 'local discourses of development overlap and draw on internationally produced discourses'. I thus became interested in exploring the interaction of discourses of wellbeing and of development amongst individuals at the local community level in Nepal.

Robinson-Pant (ibid) also argues that deconstructing discourses can result in new ways of thinking about development. My deconstruction helped me to prevent my own values from dominating the research and to accommodate the understandings of others, thus helping obviate a situation in which 'we [the researchers or outsiders bringing development] never lose our grip of being the originating subject' (Mohan, 2001:164). Thinking in terms of discourse helped me recognise the contributions of societal structures and personal agency to my own ideas which, while still located within the '[w]ellbeing within the sustainability discourse' prevalent in the UK (Ereaut and Whiting, 2008), have been modified by personal experience, causing me to adopt the discourse-oriented approach of my research.

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#### BEING SOCIALLY CONSTRUCTED AND HAVING AGENCY

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Parajuli's doctoral thesis (2002), including research on Mallagaon, takes a part-ethnographic approach to explore the everyday in relation to schooling and development. Through 'dialectic discourse' taking account of diverse viewpoints, he discusses the 'fluid and contextual' interaction between the multiple voices of diverse agents and the societal structures they help to create and recreate through the interplay of received and local discourses (ibid: 191). This is important to my research which explores discourses originating from without and within Mallagaon and how they affect each other and are created/perpetuated/modified by societal structures and human agency.

Although parts of my analysis take discourse as the prime focus, the major part of my study concentrates on individuals. The ‘dynamic approach’, primarily focusing on individuals rather than discourses, taken by Cameron (1998) informs my research. In her ethnography exploring gender and caste relations in a strongly hierarchical mixed-caste community of Far West Nepal, she notes that:

What is of interest about people living with definite codes about social position and social interaction is people’s agency in creating, re-creating, and resisting the system from their position within it (ibid: 3).

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Recognising the importance of discourse, becoming interested in the interplay of institutional structures and human agency, and realising the need to explore the multiple viewpoints of others in relation to development and wellbeing rather than impose my own, my focus shifted and widened. Combined with my particular interest in Mallagaon and the individuals comprising its community, this led to my research focus:

***An exploration of understandings of development and of wellbeing in a rural hill community of Far West Nepal.***

My overarching research question being: ***How are development and wellbeing understood in the community of Mallagaon?***

However, the ideas relating to education for sustainability and deep ecology (explored above) remain important concepts in this research, being central to my own understandings which, if not kept in sight, may covertly impose themselves while I am soliciting and interpreting the understandings of others.

My interest in formal education also continued to inform my research. Having worked in Mallagaon as a teacher and revisited on behalf of CEW, Nepal’s formal education, especially through Janakiram School, are important to me; they had, for nearly twenty years prior to my PhD research, been at the forefront of how I viewed the community. Parajuli (2002) explored schooling, in Mallagaon amongst other places, in relation to the wider societal context and was specifically concerned with the management of schooling at state level, with the role of school in local development and with people’s perceptions about and participation in schooling (ibid). I, on the other hand, wanted to treat school and education on a par with other institutions in the community.

Therefore, returning for my PhD fieldwork, I included Janakiram as one of the three research sites within my study of Mallagaon, rather than focus on it alone. This is in

order to discover how significant its contribution to discourses of development and of wellbeing is relative to that made by other institutions. I am aware that community members may have responded according to my former school-related roles and that these, combined with my interest in Janakiram, could have resulted in my having preconceived ideas about education in the community, potentially affecting my research adversely. However, I have confidence that the reflexive approach I take (explored later in this chapter and in Chapter 4) obviates any such effects.

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#### 1.4 EXPLORING AND DEFINING MY KEY RESEARCH TERMS

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Informed by post-development theorists such as Escobar (1995), who recognise development as a construct forged by discourse conceived of as power (Rogers, 2004), and aware that my other key research terms (wellbeing and community) may be similarly constructed, I now provide broad definitions of my key research terms. I consider this necessary to help me avoid inadvertently subscribing to specific discourses when conceptualising my theoretical framework (Chapter 2), especially since each of these terms has contested and multiple meanings.

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#### DEVELOPMENT

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Relating to my research focus of exploring development in an international context, the *specific* definition of development provided by the 2007 *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* is ‘Economic advancement or industrialization of a country etc. not previously developed’ (Stevenson, 2007:666). A shift towards a broader understanding of such development is provided by the 2010 *Oxford Dictionary of English* which has a separate entry for ‘developing country’ – ‘a poor agricultural country that is seeking to become more advanced economically *and socially*’ (emphasis added) (Stevenson, 2010:479). I consider this still a very limited understanding, which assumes that there is one perceived level of economic and social advancement below which lie the ‘undeveloped’, ‘underdeveloped’ and ‘developing’ and above which lie the ‘developed’. I therefore prefer to think of development in terms allowed for by its *general* definitions:

The action or process of developing; evolution, growth, maturation; an instance of this; a gradual unfolding, a fuller working-out; ‘A developed form or product; a result of developing; a change in a course of action or events or in conditions; a stage of advancement; an addition, an elaboration’; and, ‘The state of being developed; a developed condition, a full-grown state (Stevenson, 2007:666).

These allow for far greater complexity and multiple notions of development. I explore those of greatest relevance to Mallagaon in Chapter 2.

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## WELLBEING

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Listed under ‘well’ as an ‘in combination’ word, the 2007 *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* defines ‘well-being’ as a ‘healthy, contented, or prosperous condition; moral or physical welfare (of a person or community)’ (Stevenson, 2007:3605). The *Collins English Dictionary*, giving ‘wellbeing’ a separate entry, describes it as ‘the condition of being healthy or successful; welfare’ (Black *et al*, 2009:1846). Meanwhile, the *Oxford Dictionary of English* 2010 edition lists ‘well-being’ separately as a mass noun, defining it as ‘the state of being comfortable, healthy, or happy’ (Stevenson, 2010:2014).

### WELLBEING OR ‘WELL-BEING’?

These definitions point to the broad and complex meanings of wellbeing, which I explore and define in relation to my research in Chapter 2. They also indicate the shift in how it is written which is noted by Ereaut and Whiting (2008). Considering discourses of wellbeing, they observe that as a term becomes ‘everyday, normal and unremarkable’ it may be normalised by dropping the hyphen (2008:9). Although White *et al* (2012b:763) note that the hyphenated form of the word is usually used by authors referring to ‘the specific approach of subjective well-being’, I use the term ‘wellbeing’ (unhyphenated), except when quoting directly from text using the hyphenated form.

### ‘PERSONAL’ OR ‘INDIVIDUAL’ WELLBEING?

Some authors refer to ‘personal’ and others to ‘individual’ wellbeing while discussing the same concept. Finding no explanation for their choice, I turned to the dictionary definitions of the adjectives. Individual: ‘Of, pertaining, or peculiar to a single person or thing, rather than a group; characteristic of an individual’ (Stevenson, 2007:1367). Personal: ‘Of, pertaining to, or affecting a person as an individual (rather than as a member of a group or of the public, or in a professional capacity etc.); individual; private; one’s own’ (ibid: 2170).

Neither definition differs substantially from the other. Both emphasise a contrast to a group, crucial to my research which considers wellbeing as relational (see Chapter 2), and explores community and personal wellbeing separately. Since ‘personal’ also refers to ‘private; one’s own’, it allows for internal and subjective, as well as external and

relational understandings of wellbeing. Therefore I refer to ‘personal wellbeing’ except where directly quoting from sources using ‘individual wellbeing’.

#### A WARNING

Ereaut and Whiting’s (2008:6) observation that ‘a meaning can be established if a term like wellbeing is treated as if equivalent to something else’ warns me against conflating ‘wellbeing’ and ‘development’ by speaking of the two as one concept, which might lead my research participants to equate the one with the other.

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#### COMMUNITY

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Community is broadly defined as ‘A body of individuals’; ‘[a]n organised political, municipal, or social body; a body of people living in the same locality; a body of people having religion, profession, etc. in common’ (Stevenson, 2007:467). However, for my research, the term is more complex. While in Chapter 2, I consider the specific meanings I attach to ‘community wellbeing’, here I consider the term as a free-standing noun. This is necessary given the assumption in the development field that there is ‘one identifiable community in any location’, resulting in development committees [or other institutions such as schools] being considered ‘representative of “the community”’ (Cleaver, 2001:44). This has problematic implications; as Jha (2011:6-7) notes, often ‘in practice... “community well-being” describes the well-being of only a few dominant groups’.

Historically, the term ‘community’ meant ‘a particular social group living in a certain area’ (Dennis and Daniels, 1994:202). This relates to the ‘thick version of community’ in which people are closely connected with each other in long term, intimate relationships, engage with each other as ‘whole persons’ and are embedded in a specific locale (Amit, 2002:4). Globalisation (‘the process of global interdependence in areas such as the economy, politics, culture, the environment [and] communication’ (FDFA, 2011:27-28) and other features of modernity such as increasing geographic mobility and the resulting disintegration of such communities through loss of social capital and trust (Layard, 2006), means that the close community relationships described above are becoming increasingly rare. Indeed Amit (2002) questions if they ever actually existed. Nonetheless, a rural community may continue to have many of the attributes of ‘thick’ community.

Particularly influential in this interpretation of community in Western scholarship was Tönnies' 1880s concept of *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* ('Community and Civil Society') (2001 [1887]). It defines *Gemeinschaft* (community) as organic, intimate and small-scale (Harris, 2001). Such understandings of community have emotive impact and have resulted in the term having the positive connotations noted by many, including Dennis and Daniels (1994) and Putnam (2000). My awareness of related discourses of community as 'irretrievable', 'recoverable' and 'yet to be achieved' (Delanty, 2010:11) helped me recognise that the conceptual framework of deep ecology (explored above) in relation to 'community' may be utopian and romanticised.

Community seen as 'a categorical identity that is premised on various forms of exclusion and construction of otherness' (Gupta and Ferguson, 1997, cited by Gray, 2002:41) may also be relevant. Defining a community thus could facilitate more powerful community members to exclude the less powerful, potentially resulting in distinct communities of advantage and disadvantage within a single geographical locale, each of these groups understanding development and wellbeing in different terms. Meanwhile, if 'community-making' is understood as based on the 'core meaning, institution, occupation and/or activity' of a community (Gray, 2002:41), it could lead to polarisation of groups within a community, or to an increased sense of a single community, depending upon whether the focus is socially divisive or cohesive.

A related means of identifying community is interpreting it as symbolic (Cohen, 2002) with the community's 'essence' understood as 'attachment to a common body of symbols, a shared vocabulary of values' (Kempny, 2002:61). It is important to recognise that the symbols and values considered important may differ from group to group within the same community. While some may consider community a 'social entity', this definition's 'focus on fellowship and cooperation on certain activities' resulting in a 'cooperative and harmonious image of community while neglecting inequalities, oppressive social hierarchies and discrimination' (Carney *et al*, 2007:224), suggests that others may feel differently. Indeed, Carney *et al* (*ibid*) question whether a sense of 'community' exists in Nepal, given its social inequalities.

As this section demonstrates, discourses of community are likely to shape how individuals within Mallagaon conceptualise and identify theirs. This is in turn likely to mediate understandings of development and of wellbeing in multiple ways, potentially at odds with each other.

In Chapter 4, I consider the translation of the terms explored in this section.

## 1.6 DEFINING 'POWER'

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The expectation, referred to in my Preamble, of community members that I could source education funds made me very aware of the power they perceive me to have. This and the mixed-caste, hence hierarchical, nature of Mallagaon mean that power plays an important part in my thesis and I therefore consider my use of this term.

In conceptualising power, I take Lukes's (2005) 'radical view', thinking in terms of 'power over' and 'power to'. The latter, not involving conflict, suggests 'a "capacity", a "facility", an "ability"' to be and to do (ibid: 34). It could, for example, involve the 'power to' secure scholarships for children, travel to a foreign country to conduct research, run a shop in the bazaar or emigrate. 'Power over', on the other hand, is 'relational and asymmetrical' involving 'power *over* another or others' (ibid: 73) (emphasis in original), with '*inactive* power' as significant as '*active*' power if as a consequence of 'failures to act' the interests of others are harmed or not advanced (ibid: 77) (emphasis in original).

Influence and authority (such as that of Mallagaon's Brahmins over the rest of the community) can be understood as power if there is a conflict of interests (ibid). Such 'power over' can involve domination, as in the caste system, in which others are subordinated by those in power, who constrain their choices, coerce them or ensure their compliance by preventing them from living according to their own nature and judgements (Lukes, 2005). It can manifest as beneficent paternalism which may or may not be genuinely positive for those over whom power is exercised, depending on whether or not '*power over*' is used as '*power to* empower another by increasing the other's resources, capabilities, effectiveness and ability to act' (ibid: 84) (emphasis added).

Individuals who ask me for education funds reveal an assumption that I have 'power over' them through their sometimes deferential attitude, and hope that I will use my 'power to' provide them with resources. Whereas these community members assume that my power is 'context-transcending', imagining that I can use it 'across a range of... contexts', it is in fact 'context-bound' since I can only use it under a specific set of circumstances (ibid: 75). Individuals were reluctant to take on board that, whereas I could in the past, when working for CEW, select scholars under specific regulations, I could not do so during my research fieldwork.

‘Power over’ may be exercised overtly, with the subjugated ‘more or less aware of the external constraints they face’ even when cooperating or even collaborating with those in power (ibid: 123). Alternatively the power may be covert, operating through processes of enculturation by imposing ‘*internal constraints*’ on the dominated through the ‘formation of preferences’ by ‘stunting, diminishing and undermining their powers of judgment and by falsifying, distorting and reducing their self-perception and self-understanding’ (ibid: 123-124). This observation is particularly relevant to my interest in how discourses shape understandings of development and of wellbeing.

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## 1.5 MY CONTRIBUTION

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### MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES

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Parajuli (2002) and Cameron (1998) exemplify, in the context of Far West Nepal, the emphasis in literature found in wider contexts (e.g. Midgley *et al*, 1986) on giving voice to the most powerless and marginalised. While Cameron (1998) takes the perspective of lower caste women, Parajuli argues that only by ‘prioritizing the discourses of the poor and the marginalized...’ can a contribution be made to improve education and living standards (ibid: 6). I, however, consider it important not to discount the understandings of the relatively powerful, considering Win’s (2004) criticism applicable to many studies, as well as to the development agencies she blames for promoting the most resource-poor women (and I would add, in the Nepal context, Dalits) to secure financial resources, while overlooking other forms of marginalisation. I also believe that the problems of the marginalised cannot be addressed without hearing and acknowledging the voices and needs of the more powerful.

Therefore, inspired by Caplan’s *Priests and Cobblers* (1972), my intention is to include the perspectives of individuals from as many different social positions as possible. This ethnography, also based on a mixed-caste community in Far West Nepal, explored the changes, especially in economic and political relationships, between Brahmans and ‘untouchables’, during the two decades following 1951, when Nepal opened up to the outside world after a century of despotism and stagnation (ibid). Given that ‘the mobilisation of lower caste and marginalized communities which was initiated by the Maoist movement has led to a more critical perspective on development’ in Nepal (Robinson-Pant, 2010:142), I am likely to find even greater change than did Caplan (1972). The likelihood of my coming across ‘hierarchical and changing relationship[s] between different discourses’ (Robinson-Pant, 2001:311) underscores the importance of

exploring, from multiple perspectives, the shifting understandings which are likely to be the result.

At first glance, Upreti's (2006) study *Nepal: Dilemmas of Development and Change in Far Western Hills* seemed likely to provide a more recent and therefore more relevant example than Caplan's of 1972 of research exploring change from multiple perspectives. Upreti (2006:9) asks the question 'development for whom?' and states that development 'embodies... hope towards well-being and fulfilment of desires and aspirations of the people', recognising these to be different for urban and rural dwellers. Disappointingly, however, he bases his fieldwork only on discussions with officials of District Development Offices, donor agencies and local leaders (ibid). His argument, placing human development above structural transformation (ibid), reflects current shifts in ideas about Nepal's development. However, his stated objective of understanding 'what development actually means for a remote and backward region' (ibid: 5) demonstrates his uncritical stance in a development discourse derived from modernisation, in which labels such as remote and backward 'embody concrete relationships of power and influence the categories with which we think and act' (Escobar, 1995:109).

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#### DISCOURSES OF DEVELOPMENT AND OF WELLBEING

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The social construction of understandings being central to my research, it is important to consider how discourses derived from different social histories are shaped by context and in turn shape understandings. While this has been explored in relation to development in Nepal for at least twenty years (e.g. Pigg, 1993; Shrestha, 1998), it is lacking in terms of exploring wellbeing.

The most relevant wellbeing research I found explores the *Socio-Cultural Dispositions and Wellbeing of the Women Left Behind* by emigrating husbands in east Nepal (Gartaula *et al*, 2011). Focusing on individuals' life stories, the authors' qualitative analysis demonstrates wellbeing as 'complex, multi-faceted and context specific' (ibid: 401). As an example, they illustrate their reference to Camfield *et al's* (2007) observation that 'social and cultural contexts influence the way people understand and experience happiness and wellbeing' by noting that 'heads-of-households would perceive wellbeing differently from women living with in-laws' (Gartaula *et al*, 2011:404). However, the paper does not discuss context in terms of discourse, an example of which is provided by my Preamble; my disgust with and the Nepali visitor's

appreciation of the concrete buildings showing the extent to which discourses derived from different social histories influence understandings of wellbeing.

As illustrated here, Nepal-based research relevant to my own considers (often ethnographically) identity, discourse and development, especially in terms of power relationships and social change. In contrast to literature on development, there is a paucity of literature exploring wellbeing in Nepal and I am aware of no studies focusing on wellbeing discourses. Nonetheless, indigenous life and the recent extent and pace of change in Nepal (see Chapter 3) makes it likely that communities there may be exposed to, and understandings of individuals and groups influenced by, shifting discourses not only of development but also of wellbeing, potentially leading to multiple understandings of both in separate as well as interrelated terms.

Most of the research into wellbeing in countries outside the ‘West’ has been carried out by the Wellbeing in Developing Countries (WeD) Research Group based at Bath University. Having as its principal goal the development of ‘*a conceptual and methodological framework for understanding the social and cultural construction of wellbeing in developing countries*’ (Gough and McGregor, 2007:xxii) (emphasis in original), it is particularly relevant to my research (see Chapter 2). However, as suggested by the group’s name, this research considers wellbeing in terms of development. My aim is to explore understandings of development and of wellbeing separately in order to then better fathom how people understand the relationship between them.

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In summary, I believe I can best contribute to research into development and wellbeing, specifically in Nepal, by: embarking on my research with an open mind as to which institutions and related discourses play the largest part in shaping understandings of development and of wellbeing; recognising the importance of human agency; including the multiple perspectives not only of the marginalised but also of the more powerful; and by exploring discourses and understandings of wellbeing and of development separately.

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## 1.6 CHOOSING ETHNOGRAPHIC CASE STUDY

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I chose case study design (see Chapter 4) because it provides the boundaries which, by helping me recognise what my research does and does not comprise (Stake, 1978), are

essential in an exploration as wide-ranging as mine. Meanwhile, agreeing with Stake (2006:2) that understanding the case ‘requires experiencing the activity of the case as it occurs in its contexts and in its particular situation’, I took an ethnographic approach involving an extended period of immersion and observation in the field.

My choice is guided by my wish to address the tendency for development interventions to be based only on the understandings of those in power, presenting some ideas about development as correct and dismissing others (Willis, 2005). In fact, understandings about development (Escobar, 1995) and about wellbeing (Gough and McGregor, 2007) and the means to achieve both differ from place to place as well as with social position and can therefore only be properly explored at the local level. As Escobar (1995: 222) noted, ethnography is the best means to explore the many varied understandings to be found in a single community and to provide an alternative to the ‘abstract, macro-level’ development which he warned against.

## 1.7 BEING REFLEXIVE

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The process of choosing my research focus illustrates the integral part reflexivity plays in my research, be it my awareness of how much discourses and human agency affect understandings including my own, or recognition of my part in potentially shaping the expressed understandings of others. As Hammersley and Atkinson (2010:15) note:

The concept of reflexivity acknowledges that the orientations of researchers will be shaped by their socio-historical locations, including the values and interests that these locations confer upon them. What this represents is a rejection of the idea that social research is, or can be, carried out in some autonomous realm that is insulated from the wider society and from the biography of the researcher, in such a way that its findings can be unaffected by social processes and personal characteristics.

By reflexively exploring my Preamble, I am able to direct the reader to aspects of the research process I consider particularly important:

I had concerns that my findings could be biased because of a perception in Mallagaon of me as a funding source, based on my previous work there. However, reflexivity brings the important recognition that openly admitting this to myself, my research participants and my readers, can only improve the quality of my research and of this thesis. For example, I responded to requests for money for a road with comments about the negative effects of the road on the town described earlier in this chapter. As with Cameron’s (1998:4) articulation of her views on caste and gender in the community she researched, if my openness ‘has altered ... [my] research in any way, it is in the

direction of debate with those involved, asking of us all sometimes uncomfortable reflexivity’.

Through such a process, I now realise that my former roles in Mallagaon often enabled me to discover understandings whose existence I may not have recognised without this reflexivity. For example, I realised that the funding requests (for a road and for educational scholarships) were a process with two aims: the stated one of securing access to Mallagaon or improved education; and the unstated one of enhanced personal wellbeing through the status gained by being connected to a source of potential benefit. These examples, amongst many others, have shown me not only that ‘we cannot escape the social world in order to study it’ and that rather than attempt to ‘eliminate the effects of the researcher’ we should try to understand them, but also that ‘how people respond to the presence of the researcher may be as informative as how they react to other situations’ (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2010:16). I find, as did Robinson-Pant (2001), that clarity about my own ideological perspectives, gained by exploring discourses as outlined above, enables me to place myself in the text and benefits my research by exploding the myth that researchers have no effect on the people they study.

Clarity about my own perspectives also helped me not to dismiss participants’ understandings which did not relate to my own frames of reference. For example, although I took exception at first to people’s comments that I cannot trek, despite their knowledge of my ability to spend eight-hour trekking days, I soon realised through reflexivity (later verified by local people) that this was a ‘compliment-lie’ by villagers, who equate physical unfitnes with the urban (connoting ‘developed’ and ‘wealthy’) lifestyles they aspire to. Without reflexivity, I would have continued feeling insulted, my understanding constrained by a discourse of my own social setting, which equates the inability to walk distances with ill-health or laziness. As Robinson-Pant (2001) argues, by analysing discourses one participates in, one becomes a more self-critical researcher and more attuned to the influence of ‘development ideologies... on the perspectives of those being developed’ (ibid: 326).

My Preamble mentions an academic’s response, “Oh how exotic!” to the information that my fieldwork was in Nepal, perhaps due to the ‘romantic image’ the ‘Western’ world has of Nepal for many cultural and geographical reasons (BBC, 2014). Although irritation is my reaction to such ‘imaginative geography’ derived from ‘ideological suppositions, images and fantasies’ about the Asian world which keeps alive what Said

(1985:90) called ‘Orientalism’, I realise that I am not completely free of it myself. Hence, ‘one part of me truly does agree’ with people’s comments (upon seeing the photos taken during my fieldwork) that Nepal is “unchanged” and a “different world”, full of “peaceful and content” people (FN: 30/08/12). My reflexivity uncovers my essentialist tendencies, the latter exemplified by my extreme disillusionment about the development in Mallagaon (a much stronger negative reaction than to similar development I encounter in the UK), and thus prevents them from interfering in the research process.

Perhaps I simultaneously see Nepal as normal and exotic because, as Gee (1996:ix) observed, we all belong to different discourses, each of which ‘represents one of our ever-multiple identities’. My research participants, like me, may have multiple identities as a result of discourses which:

...need not, and often do not, represent consistent and compatible values. There are conflicts among them, and each of us lives and breathes these conflicts... (ibid).

The realisation that I shift between insider and outsider perspectives vis-à-vis my views of Mallagaon may have helped me to overcome the ‘paradox’ described by Goodson (1992:19) when ‘the insider doesn’t see the “ordinary” because of its “ordinariness”, whereas the outsider sees the “ordinary” as “extraordinary”’. Looking beyond these sometimes misleading categories (see Chapter 4) I can see the ordinary but without viewing it as extraordinary.

## 1.8 CHAPTER OVERVIEWS

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In this chapter I introduced Mallagaon, my relationship to it and why I chose to conduct my research there. Using the Preamble as a springboard, I described how my current research focus evolved, and discussed the importance to me of post-development theory and the sustainable development ideology of deep ecologists. I further located my research within existing knowledge by exploring relevant authors, especially those whose experience is in Far West Nepal. I demonstrated in this process the importance to my research of discourse, societal structures, human agency and the viewpoints of others. I showed how these processes led to my research focus being an exploration of understandings of development and of wellbeing in my case study community. I then gave broad definitions of my key research terms before identifying gaps in the literature and hence the originality of my contribution.

The latter involves considering discourses and understandings of wellbeing as well as of development, and exploring them as separate in order to better understand how they interrelate. I also noted the importance of not giving more prominence to some institutions over others when embarking on research and of giving voice to everyone rather than only the marginalised. This led to my rationale for conducting an ethnographic case study. I then discussed the centrality of reflexivity to my research, as characterised by my Preamble, emphasising the importance of: placing myself in the research; moving beyond my own frames of reference; overcoming essentialism; and recognising that, belonging to multiple discourses, we have multiple identities.

Chapter 2 provides the broad conceptualisations of development and of wellbeing relevant to my research before exploring in depth the specific theories I draw upon. Chapter 3 contextualises my research, recounting my experience of living in Mallagaon and describing its major institutions, both as they manifest at the local level and as theorised more generally. Chapter 4 describes my research design and the methodological approach I used in collecting and analysing data, in theorising and in writing. It also provides a reflexive, ethically-oriented account of these processes.

Chapter 5, 'Co-constructing Janakiram School', is the first of the chapters in which I present my data. It analyses recently written texts about a significant past event, in order to illustrate the structuring power of upper caste voices and institutionalised activity in Mallagaon. Chapters 6 to 9 move from there through upper to lower caste individuals (including as wide a range as possible in terms of age, gender, socio-economic positions and geographical location). This order is not to be mistaken as my considering the upper caste voices explored in the earlier chapters more valuable but is intended to show the extent to which the discourses and understandings of the upper castes influence and have power over the lower castes, and how lower caste discourses, understandings and actions come about in reaction. I end my empirical chapters with Chapter 10, 'Knitting as a Development Intervention', because it shows the interaction of upper and lower castes, men and women, illustrating the play of power between them, and between them and me. All of these chapters include my observations and the voices of many more research participants than those focused upon, as means of triangulating my findings.

Chapter 11, weaving together the strands which emerge in Chapters 5 to 10, discusses the major themes, relating them explicitly to Chapter 2's theoretical framework.

Chapter 12 concludes my research; after a final review of my theoretical framework and methodological approach, I consider the implications of my findings for international development and for education, and how through these I hope to apply my research to help promote wellbeing.

## CHAPTER 2     CONSTRUCTING A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

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### 2.1     INTRODUCTION

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In this chapter, I conceptualise development and then wellbeing, providing the broad definitions and related discourses I consider most relevant to my exploration of my research participants' understandings. I then describe an approach and how I envisage using it to explore how these understandings interrelate. Following this, I discuss theories which enable me to explore the social construction of understandings. I also conceptualise identity's mediating role in these processes. Throughout, I relate the theory to my research questions, concluding with a summary of these and of the theory most important to my research.

I begin, however, by addressing two issues: a concern with whether my research could be considered a cultural imposition; and the importance of not dichotomising development and/or wellbeing discourses as exclusively 'top-down' or 'bottom-up'.

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#### A CULTURAL IMPOSITION?

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With development ideology 'firmly grounded in the Nepali psyche' as early as the mid-1950s (Shrestha, 1998:59), '[t]he notion of "development" grips the collective imagination in Nepal' (Pigg, 1993:48), with strong discourses about development in and about the country (e.g. Pigg 1992; 1993; Shrestha, 1995; 1998). However, wellbeing as a concept appears less ubiquitous, raising questions about whether my exploring understandings of it in a Nepali community amounts to a cultural imposition, influenced by the recent explosion of interest in wellbeing issues in the UK.

However, globalisation processes mean I may find understandings of wellbeing derived from external discourses. Meanwhile, my reading on Hinduism (see Chapter 3), Mallagaon's only religion and dominant in Nepal, suggests there may be more locally embedded concepts of wellbeing, even if only implicitly understood as such. As White *et al* (2012b:766) note about India and Bangladesh, it is 'difficult to separate ideas about wellbeing from moral and religious discourse about the way things were and should be'. Seen thus, research into wellbeing is no more of a cultural imposition than research into development.

More important is the approach I take. Hence, recognising the need to understand 'the complexities of... [development's] effects, the magnitude of its influences, and the

significance of its directions' in social experience (Pigg, 1993:45), I have chosen to explore how both development and wellbeing are understood at the local level, my overarching research question being:

***How are development and wellbeing understood in the community of Mallaqaon?***

With the global community increasingly conceptualising “development” as the organised pursuit of human wellbeing’ (Gough *et al*, 2006:3), my starting point in addressing this research question was White’s (2009:4) explanation of the different ways the term ‘wellbeing’ is used in international development, summarised here:

- ‘Development re-labelled’: ‘Wellbeing’ used as a new word for ‘development’
- ‘Development replaced’: ‘[A] measure of “subjective wellbeing” may replace conventional material indicators’
- ‘Development plus’: Wellbeing ‘includes everything that development did, but with a psychological subjective perception or satisfaction measure in addition’
- ‘Development re-oriented’: Wellbeing incorporates ‘aspects of development approaches’ such as ‘combating poverty and inequality’ but ‘questions or re-orient others’, especially the value put on economic growth by emphasising instead the importance of other areas such as human fulfilment and relationships

The importance of giving wellbeing priority in development was highlighted by Sen (1993; 1999) with his development of the human capability approach which, focusing on the ability people have ‘to lead the lives they have reason to value and to enhance the real choices they have’ (1999:293), conceptualises wellbeing ‘in terms of a person’s ability to do valuable acts or reach valuable states of being’ (1993:31). His complex and grounded understanding of wellbeing in relation to development as an outcome and a process – relational, dynamic and changeable – involving negative and positive aspects, and with multiple meanings, has been an important influence on the WeD (2007) research explored below, and on my own. However, as with much of the research into wellbeing in developing countries (e.g. Gough and McGregor, 2007), I found that these explanations consider wellbeing only in relation to development rather than in its own right. This led to my particular interest in exploring where the differences between them may be understood to lie, believing it important to also allow for understandings of wellbeing and of development which may be entirely separate from each other.

The importance of considering development and wellbeing separately is suggested by the complexity of the discourses relating to both, and by how easily these discourses can be considered in simplistic terms if they are not explored individually and at multiple levels.

In *Wellbeing in International Development: What's New?* Copestake (2008) states the importance of learning how 'top-down discourses of development... [can] learn from and adapt to diverse local visions and narratives of wellbeing' (ibid: 581), implying that development discourses are rarely locally initiated and wellbeing discourses never imported.

However, movements for social change in Nepal that took place before "'development' gripped the international imagination' (Pigg, 1993:45) problematise discourses that characterise all development as 'top-down'. Similarly, wellbeing can be understood as more than a 'grassroots' concept. Indeed [as with research into development]:

Researching wellbeing today cannot ignore the realisation and challenges of our increasingly global community. Systems of meaning which have their roots in societies other than one's own... can affect conceptions, aspirations and experiences of wellbeing (McGregor, 2007:330).

Such '[s]ystems of meaning' could derive from discourses such as those Ereat and Whiting (2008:11-13) found dominant in the UK, including 'Wellbeing and philosophy' and 'Wellbeing, consumer culture and self-responsibility'. Although these are arguably 'top-down' discourses, being established by research within the UK government, charities and NGOs (ibid), they may have become pertinent to Nepal through processes of globalisation, or because they coincide with local discourses.

Meanwhile, even 'local' understandings of wellbeing, such as those which develop out of Hindu or Maoist discourses, may be 'top-down' for certain groups. As McGregor (2007:330) argues, human beings:

...must be understood in relation to all the contexts in which they relate and communicate. Escaping from the tendency to focus on just one level or another, a contemporary, empirical wellbeing research agenda cannot focus on any one of these levels and entirely ignore the others. The conceptual framework must recognise that these contexts are many and multi-dimensional.

Hence I consider it inappropriate to dichotomise discourses as 'top-down' or 'bottom-up', preferring to view them as constantly shifting with social changes and individuals' and groups' contexts, identities and positions. Considering the extent and pace of

change in Nepal since the 1950s, accelerated in recent years by the Maoist Movement, it seems likely that communities there may be exposed to, and understandings of individuals and groups influenced by, multiple and shifting discourses of both development and of wellbeing, whether originating from outside or within Nepal.

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Wanting to explore these discourses and their influences on the understandings of my research participants, and to discover how my research participants understand development and wellbeing as both separate and interrelated concepts, I consider it important to clarify exactly what I mean by the terms. This also helps me avoid conflating them inappropriately by imposing my own belief that wellbeing equates to ‘development plus’ and ‘development re-oriented’ (White, 2009) (see page 38). For these reasons, I conceptualise first development, then wellbeing, leading to the following subsidiary research questions:

*What understandings of development are dominant in Mallagaon?*

*How do individuals and groups within Mallagaon understand personal and community wellbeing?*

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## 2.2 CONCEPTUALISING DEVELOPMENT

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### MULTIPLE DISCOURSES, MULTIPLE UNDERSTANDINGS

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The changes brought by globalisation, political forces (especially Maoist), and the increasing presence of development organisations in the geographical location of my research (see Chapter 3), make likely multiple and shifting understandings of development there.

Reflecting this, and central to my enquiry, is the recognition that:

‘Development’ is... not a monolithic idea with a single, universally accepted definition – understandings of and ideas about development are socially constructed, by the citizens of ‘developing’ and ‘developed’ countries, governments, development agencies, and critics (Rakodi, 2012:638).

Post-development theory is particularly relevant, given its emphasis on development discourse and its recognition that prevailing power relations influence understandings of ‘development’, validating some and discarding others (Willis, 2005).

In order to properly ‘hear’ these multiple understandings of development, I find it helpful to start with this broad definition:

[T]he idea that deliberate action can be undertaken to change society in chosen directions considered desirable (Youngman, 2000:240, cited by Rogers, 2004:13).

Although vague, this definition allows for the projection of individuals’ values, appropriate for research into individual and group understandings.

Nonetheless, in order to later analyse the varied understandings of development I expect to find, I now consider the range of development discourses to which the community may be exposed, these providing ‘the framework which enables us to see and helps us to assign value to those things we have seen’ (Robinson-Pant, 2000, cited in Rogers, 2004:16). As Bulloch (2014:178) argues, development provides a ‘meta-narrative – a set of organising assumptions through which we order the world and understand our place in it’ which are never consistent. Key to this understanding is that:

Discourses of development are not simply assimilated by local people but are reinterpreted, reshaped and renegotiated on an ongoing basis (ibid: 177).

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#### A LOCAL DISCOURSE DERIVED FROM DEVELOPMENT AS MODERNISATION

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Although conducted over 20 years ago, Pigg’s (1992; 1993) Nepal-based research into discourses of development as modernisation as they played out at the local level remains relevant and illustrates the process Bulloch (2014) describes above. Since Nepal opened up to the outside world in the 1950s, coinciding with what Escobar (1995:31) described as ‘the invention of development’, its first encounters with the international community were through the international aid programmes which burgeoned in this post war decade (Pigg, 1992). As an uncolonised ‘third world’ country, it underwent ‘western experiments with wave after wave of “development” ideologies and programs’ (Liechty, 2008:48). Concepts such as ‘underdevelopment’ gained currency at this time, through, for example, the ‘production of labels’ such as ‘illiterate peasants’, which development programmes would ‘treat’ and which affected social relations (Escobar, 1988:435). This strongly influenced Nepal’s understanding of itself and its relationship with the world, and resulted in Nepal’s self-identification ‘as an underdeveloped country in relation to the developed world’ (Pigg, 1992:497).

Pigg (1992) found that many Nepalis saw ‘*bikas*’ (development) as either something external to Nepal or city-based, the city representing the economically rich future to be

strived for and the village the poverty-ensnared past to be left behind. This leads to polarisation of village and city and to villagers' understanding that '*bikas*' involves external agency and goods and that, as 'villagers', community members are ignorant and left behind (ibid). Shrestha (1995; 1998) built on these ideas, noting that Nepali communities and their members' wellbeing were undermined, with local knowledge and traditional values and skills discredited, being now seen as 'antithetical' to development.

Such development discourses, constructing 'developing' countries as lacking what 'developed' countries have, and as having traditions which militate against modernity and economic growth (Rogers, 2004), are likely to have negative effects on community members' perceptions of themselves and their locale in ways discussed above. They could also partly determine the kinds of technology, livelihoods and education community members consider valid. This is because cash and technological inputs characterise the development process, with programmes mainly targeting the formal employment sector and prioritising education and training for developing human resources (ibid).

However, it seems likely that understandings of development in Mallagaon may be shifting away from the notions explored above as a result of recent Maoist and NGO-delivered influences.

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DEVELOPMENT AS 'INCOME FIRST', 'NEEDS FIRST', 'RIGHTS FIRST'  
AND/OR 'LOCAL FIRST'

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Copestake (2008:578) argues that development can best be understood in terms of 'multiple mental models' or 'discursive positions'. Those presented, 'Income first', 'Needs first', 'Rights first' and 'Local first' (ibid: 579), are of likely relevance to Nepal, having been identified during research in Peru where Maoist uprisings occurred for similar geographical and economic reasons (Pfaff-Czarnecka, 2004).

'Income first' relates to Pigg's (1992) ideas (explored above) concerning the modernisation paradigm, with its emphasis on economic wealth, but encompasses capitalist efforts to secure individual material income, leisure and choice (Copestake, 2008) not necessarily involving the perceived necessity of leaving rural areas to secure them.

‘Needs first’ addresses poverty and basic needs, especially the state’s role in ensuring the accessibility of public goods (ibid). The Nepali economist Shakya (2009:116) argues that Nepal’s governance, lacking vision, is ineffective in delivering basic services to, and meeting the basic needs of, the population. This is likely to have implications for local understandings of development.

‘Rights first’ concerns social justice (Copestake, 2008) and relates to discourses which blame powerful groups rather than the poor for underdevelopment (Rogers, 2004). Rural Nepali communities are likely to derive such understandings from two main sources: Maoism and NGOs. The former politicised ‘issues of exclusion and inclusion’ of marginalised communities including Dalits and women, and created local awareness (Bhattachan, 2010:10).

NGOs, dealing with social inclusion, have multiplied since Nepal’s democratisation in the early 1990s, leading to increased awareness amongst the oppressed (Geiser, 2005). They may have also led to participatory approaches playing a part in local understandings of development. The question ‘Whose reality counts?’ which characterises these approaches, may prevent development interventions from imposing the reality of ‘powerful outsiders’ on the ‘realities of local people’ (Chambers, 2007:19-20).

‘Local first’ involves community solidarity, resistance to ‘the hegemonic tendencies of globalisation’, community-led, ecologically sustainable communities and varied local and religious viewpoints (Copestake, 2008). The disillusionment of Nepali youth, caused by unrealistic dreams generated by foreign aid projects, arguably fuelled the Maoist-led civil unrest and popularised the view that foreign aid is ultimately detrimental (Lal, 2001; Mainali, 2001; Rappleye, 2011). Thus dependency theories, blaming the ‘operation of the capitalist system’ for ‘underdevelopment’ and exogenous factors for insufficient economic development (Willis, 2005), may be increasingly reflected in local understandings of development.

Finally, with its agenda of setting environmental limits on development, the ‘sustainable development’ paradigm, popular since the 1990s (Adams, 2009) and now influencing the post 2015 global development agenda (UNESCO, 2014), may feature in local discourse, especially in communities where environmentally sustainable and unsustainable projects compete with each other (see Chapter 3).

Comprised of upper castes and Dalits, and affected by competing influences of religion and politics, indigenous life and modernity, this section has shown the range of development discourses likely to compete in understandings of development in the community of my research, and has suggested how they may have gained significance there.

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## DEVELOPMENT AS 'PROCESS'

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My research is informed by the 'learning process approach' which (unlike the 'blueprint approach' with its emphasis on clearly defined, pre-planned outcomes) recognises the need to interpret, understand and hence adapt to local circumstances as a development project is implemented (Korten, 1980:496-498). In considering relational and contextual aspects integral to development initiatives rather than problematic, it conceptualises development as 'dynamic, unpredictable and idiosyncratic' (Mosse, 1998:5) rather than as fixed. As Mosse (1998:4) notes, this 'process' perspective on development is useful for academic researchers whose purpose is to form an 'interpretative view' in order to gain 'broader reflective understanding' (as is mine). It enables me to consider understandings of development as multiple, interacting and shifting, affected by institutionalised discourses and human agency, and by understandings of wellbeing.

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## 2.3 WELLBEING

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### CONCEPTUALISING WELLBEING

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Effectively, wellbeing acts like a cultural mirage: it looks like a solid construct, but when we approach it, it fragments and disappears (Ereaut and Whiting, 2008:5).

My aim is to maintain wellbeing's complexity by attempting to hold in balance the varied understandings that I find rather than falsely present the fragmentary as solid. In this way I can best address my second subsidiary research question (mentioned earlier):

***How do individuals and groups within Mallagaon understand personal and community wellbeing?***

Wellbeing is arguably a social and cultural construct, its varied meanings shifting over time, its content dependent upon the relative dominance of different philosophical traditions, world views and knowledge systems, and on the position of groups and individuals vis-à-vis these (Ereaut and Whiting, 2008). Hence its meaning is disputable

(ibid), understood in multiple ways in different contexts. Importantly, wellbeing reveals much ‘about other social and cultural phenomena’ (ibid: 4), such as development.

I find useful Ereaut and Whiting’s (ibid: 5) questions about wellbeing constructs, including: ‘Individual or collective?’; ‘Subjective or objective?’; ‘Permanent or temporary?’; ‘Whose responsibility? (structure versus agency)’; and ‘A state or a process?’ Although polarisation is suggested by describing the components as mutually exclusive rather than on a continuum, I use them to help form my broad conceptual framework for understanding wellbeing. However, their UK orientation may miss elements important in other contexts.

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### CONCEPTUALISING WELLBEING IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

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White’s (2010:160) intuitive definition of wellbeing, although designed for development practice rather than for exploring understandings of wellbeing *per se*, is helpful in that it relates to research in developing countries and helps ensure that I do not miss the elements referred to above:

Doing Well \* Feeling Good  
Doing good \* Feeling well

‘Doing well’ relates primarily to understandings that material welfare, based on economic prosperity, provides wellbeing. ‘Feeling good’ relates to personal perceptions and degree of satisfaction (ibid), possibly relevant to a community exposed, through globalisation, to increasingly individualistic tendencies. ‘Doing good’ provides a moral dimension, often related to religion, in which wellbeing is to do with ‘living a good life’ (ibid: 60) (see Chapter 3). This adds ‘a collective dimension to subjective perceptions’ in that ‘they reflect not simply individual preferences, but values grounded in a broader, shared understanding of how the world is and should be’ (ibid). Finally, ‘Feeling well’ relates not simply to the relationship between wellbeing and health but also ‘to a moral sense about feeling at ease with one’s place in the world – which is critically associated with one’s relationship to others’ (ibid).

Although each culture retains some uniqueness (Tov and Diener, 2007), I consider it inappropriately essentialist (Sen, 1999) to apportion exclusive values to them. In doing so, culture is used to explain individuals’ behaviour or opinions, resulting in chauvinistic statements which suggest that individuals have no agency (Holliday, 2007). For example, if I believed that White’s (2010) ‘doing good’ and ‘feeling well’ dimensions are likely to be important to all members of Hindu communities because

they are reflected in Hinduism (see Chapter 3) but ignored the likelihood of individuals holding different understandings, I could be accused of ‘culturism’ (Holliday, 2007).

Despite my reservation that research carried out by the WeD Research Group tends to consider wellbeing in terms of development, I find it relevant, especially with its aim of understanding how wellbeing in developing countries is socially and culturally constructed (Gough and McGregor, 2007).

WeD’s approach considers three wellbeing dimensions (White, 2010:161):

- The material, comprising ‘assets, welfare and standards of living’
- The relational, comprising ‘social relations and access to public goods’ as well as human ‘capabilities, attitudes to life, and personal relationships’
- The subjective, involving ‘people’s perceptions of their (material, social, and human) positions’ as well as ‘cultural values, ideologies and beliefs’

These dimensions clearly include objective wellbeing, which is judged according to our circumstances, position or characteristics not by the desire or emotion we may or may not feel (Angner, 2008) and SWB (Subjective Well-Being) (see below). Although only the subjective category may appear relevant in research exploring understandings of wellbeing, it is important that I consider the objective dimensions, since individuals may understand their wellbeing and/or the community’s wellbeing to reside in them.

My emphasis on finding out how both personal and community wellbeing are understood is informed by White’s (2010:168) suggestion that, since wellbeing’s relational and political aspects imply that it is found collectively, the community rather than the individual level is likely to be its ‘proper “home”’. However, much of the research into wellbeing in the ‘Western’ world (see below) suggests that it is found at the personal level. For openness to my research participants’ potential understandings, I now define personal and then community wellbeing.

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## DEFINING WELLBEING

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### PERSONAL WELLBEING

#### Hedonic and Eudaimonic

Aristotle defined two happiness dimensions (Ryan *et al*, 2008:143), with theorists often considering one or the other to constitute personal wellbeing (Ryan and Deci, 2001; Shah and Peck, 2005; Haworth and Hart, 2012).

*Hedonic wellbeing*, defined in terms of pleasure attainment and pain avoidance (Ryan and Deci, 2001), considers people's satisfaction with their lives and the enjoyment they experience (Shah and Peck, 2005). Hedonic psychology is concerned with 'Subjective Well-Being' (SWB), consisting of 'life satisfaction, the presence of positive mood, and the absence of negative mood, together often summarised as happiness', the latter understood as 'the totality of one's hedonic moments' (Ryan and Deci, 2001:144). Although I focus on socially constructed identities rather than on psychology and personality, the observation that some experience 'a sense of well-being even when their objective circumstances are harsh' (Huppert and So, 2009:1) is important, as is SWB theorists' argument that although people may react strongly to events, their inborn temperaments mean a return to a 'set point, a personal baseline that remains constant over time' and dictates their degree of life satisfaction (Fujita and Diener, 2005:158).

*Eudaimonic wellbeing* is defined in terms of how well a person functions and concerns meaning and self-realisation (Ryan and Deci, 2001) through engagement with life, personal development and fulfilment of potential (Shah and Peck, 2005). Ryan and Deci (2001:146) quote Ryff, (1995:100) who describes Psychological Well-Being (PWB) (a eudaimonic approach) as 'the striving for perfection that represents the realization of one's true potential'. Importantly, the effort involved suggests that, as 6 (2012:132) holds, certain levels of illbeing may be necessary to wellbeing, where the latter is 'understood as a richer process than mere contentment' and where it is believed that 'true happiness is found in the expression of virtue – that is in doing what is worth doing' (Ryan and Deci, 2001:145). Those who experience high PWB levels may be described as flourishing; they 'learn effectively, work productively, have better social relationships, [and] are more likely to contribute to their community (Huppert and So, 2009:1).

Self-Determination Theory (SDT), a eudaimonic approach which recognises that all individuals have innate tendencies towards fulfilling their potential, holds that there are

three universal psychological needs, for autonomy, competence and relatedness, which must be met if an individual is to thrive and which find expression and are fulfilled in different ways in different cultures (Deci and Ryan, 2002). SDT predicts that satisfaction can be gained through ‘the pursuit of intrinsic goals (e.g. personal growth, autonomy, enhancement of others and communities)... whereas the pursuit of extrinsic goals (e.g. financial success, physical attractiveness and social reputation) would not provide people with such satisfaction’ (Oishi, 2000:87). However, I believe that some intrinsic goals may prove difficult to distinguish from extrinsic goals in understandings of wellbeing: for example, autonomy may be experienced only as a direct consequence of financial success.

The relevance of these hedonic and eudaimonic philosophical conceptualisations, which continue to dominate ‘Western’ discourses (Ereaut and Whiting, 2008), to my research is questionable due to their derivation from theories of psychology which ‘conform to the dominant ideology of Western society’, and are perhaps ‘grounded in the cultural values of liberal individualism’ (Christopher, 1999 summarised by White, 2010:167). Importantly, however, they prevent my overlooking the roles, peripheral to my research, of personality and individual psychology in shaping individuals’ understandings of wellbeing. They are also important because aspects of them can be found in Hinduism and therefore may play a part in my participants’ understandings, although Hinduism’s belief system suggests that attempts to separate wellbeing into hedonic and eudaimonic concepts may be irrelevant (see Chapter 3). As Ryan and Deci (2001) suggest, when appraising life’s events and conditions, people may view life satisfaction as including both hedonic and eudaimonic wellbeing. Indeed, Diener and Suh (2000:4) argue that SWB involves more than merely hedonism and satisfaction but is also achieved ‘through our relationships and attainment of goals and values’. Eudaimonic and hedonic dimensions of personal wellbeing may often overlap in understandings, rendering it inappropriate during analysis to impose a distinction between them.

Importantly, Kitayama and Markus (2000: 113) note that, while SWB’s ‘optimism, self-esteem, and positive affectivity’ (usually seen as ‘requirements for human happiness and well-being’) are recognised as important in Western contexts, happiness may assume different forms in other contexts. They observe that ‘[t]o “be well” requires attunement between the self and the social relations that are organised and maintained by the cultural practices and meanings of a community’ (ibid: 114).

This is recognised by Camfield and McGregor (2005) in discussing social comparison, considered an important aspect of SWB (Nettle, 2005; Wilkinson and Pickett, 2010), with downward comparison likely to have ‘a bolstering effect’, and upward comparison either ‘increas...[ing] self-esteem and motivation, or reduc...[ing] them, if people feel their situation cannot be changed’ (Camfield and McGregor, 2005:200). While significant inequality may adversely affect SWB, this depends on which ‘norms, traditions, or aspects of culture’ dictate ‘who people are able to compare themselves with’ (ibid: 201).

### Social dimensions

As indicated above, wellbeing’s public or social aspects need to be considered to properly understand personal wellbeing, since individuals are always ‘embedded in social structures and communities, and face countless social tasks and challenges’, rendering it a less private phenomenon than clinical psychology suggests (Keyes, 1998:122). The dimensions of social wellbeing Keyes (ibid: 122-123) discusses may indicate what individuals in close-knit social settings consider integral to wellbeing: ‘social integration’, ‘social acceptance’, ‘social contribution’, ‘social actualization’ and ‘social coherence’. These dimensions relate to Putnam’s (2000) idea of social capital including: civic participation in formal groups, whereby people can develop supportive social networks (ibid); trust, involving, ‘positively valued expectations about the future behaviour of well-known and generalized others’ (Sixsmith and Boneham, 2012:82); and reciprocity, involving family, friends and community members helping each other (ibid).

WeD research provides a less static, outcome-oriented idea of wellbeing than that offered by Keyes (1998) or Putnam (2000), recognising personal wellbeing not as ‘a state that people do or do not experience’ but as ‘a process, realised through the “work” that people put into making meaning out of their lives’ (White, 2010:165).

White (2010) explores the objective and subjective aspects of this process as including material and human as well as social dimensions. Although she relates this to the individual household, many areas she highlights seem equally applicable to the personal level; those most relevant to my research being:

- The material, including livelihoods, wealth and individuals’ understandings of their economic position (ibid: 163)

- The social, including ‘social capital’, access to amenities, social divisions and inequalities and degrees of power and powerlessness, and the ways people perceive their positions apropos these (ibid)
- The human, including education, people’s perceptions of their positions vis-à-vis it, religious faith, trust, self-concept, personality and sense of competence (ibid).

WeD research considers wellbeing to be a social process in which subjectivity and relatedness are ‘fundamentally intertwined’, people becoming what they are through their relationships (White, 2010:164). I value it because it avoids the idea, found in much of the literature on wellbeing, that wellbeing resides primarily in the individual (White, 2010), and overcomes static ideas of wellbeing as a necessarily positive outcome.

#### COMMUNITY WELLBEING

Suggesting that community wellbeing is also best understood as a ‘social process’, White (2010:168) considers it the ‘sum... of the levels of wellbeing of the individuals who belong to it’ and ‘something that inheres within the community as a collectivity’. Understood thus, community wellbeing, like personal wellbeing, can only happen ‘in relationship’, including what happens both within and beyond the community (ibid). Relevant objective and subjective community wellbeing aspects White (ibid) considers are:

- The material, including infrastructure, information, livelihoods, income levels, and quality of and access to amenities (ibid)
- The social, including the ‘formal and informal ways in which people associate’, the spaces this happens in (ibid: 168), how the community is formed as regards majority and minority groups, migration, solidarity and conflict, ‘organisational belonging’, as well as people’s perceptions of these, ‘scope for collective action’ and the range of experience members have (ibid)
- The human, including education levels, the community’s ‘fears and aspirations’ and satisfaction levels, and members’ collective understandings (affecting individual and community confidence levels) of how their community is seen, (ibid: 169).

Sixsmith and Boneham (2012:80) note that communities rich in social capital have been described as ‘socially cohesive, co-operative and caring... in which people work

together for mutual benefit’, whereas those poor in social capital are seen as possibly consisting of people who are isolated, suspicious and reluctant to participate. This definition points to what people may understand to further, or threaten, community wellbeing. However, it seems to romanticise the idea of community in failing to recognise that what some groups in a community may interpret as leading to cohesion and cooperation, others may regard as exploitative.

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These conceptualisations of development and of personal and community wellbeing reveal the likelihood of overlap in people’s understandings of them. For example, material wellbeing with its focus on income, livelihoods, infrastructure and access to amenities (White, 2010) relates to Copestake’s (2008) ‘Income first’ and ‘Needs first’ discursive development positions. Social wellbeing, emphasising social divisions and inequalities (White, 2010), relates to Copestake’s (2008) ‘Rights first’, with its concern for social justice. Meanwhile, human wellbeing with its focus on religious faith and concern with how the community is seen (White, 2010) has much in common with the ‘Local first’ development position with its concern for community-led initiatives and local religions (Copestake, 2008).

Interested in exploring whether there is similar overlap in the understandings of my research participants, my next subsidiary research question is:

***How do understandings of development and of wellbeing in Mallaqaon interrelate?***

#### 2.4 INTERRELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN UNDERSTANDINGS OF DEVELOPMENT AND OF WELLBEING

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Prilleltensky and Prilleltensky’s (2006; 2012) means of conceptualising wellbeing helps me explore the potential interrelationships and differences between understandings of development and of wellbeing. Their ‘Web of Well-Being’ framework (ibid), considering wellbeing a process, breaks it down into its main constituents while recognising that each is interdependent:

[W]ell-being consists of (a) sites, (b) signs, (c) sources, (d) strategies and (e) synergy. There are four primary sites of well-being (personal, relational, organizational and collective) each of which has specific signs or manifestations, sources or determinants, and strategies (2012:65).

Wellbeing is considered possible only if there is wellness in each of the sites and is therefore neither one nor the other but all integrated (2012). If such synergy occurs, an interdependent ‘web of wellness’ is formed (2006:5) in which:

The well-being of a site is reflected in a particular sign, which derives from a particular source and is promoted by a certain strategy (ibid: 18).

This implies that wellbeing is an absolute rather than a relative phenomenon, perhaps because the authors’ main purpose is to show how wellbeing can best be promoted. It therefore needs to be complemented by the more complex approach to wellbeing offered by White (2009; 2010) and WeD (2007), explored earlier. However, the approach, with its emphasis on the interdependent aspects of wellbeing (Prilleltensky and Prilleltensky, 2006) does in these respects sit well with their, and my, broad and relational conceptualisation of wellbeing.

Prilleltensky and Prilleltensky (ibid: 18) provide examples:

Personal well-being [site] is reflected in control [sign], which derives from opportunities to exercise voice and choice [source], and is promoted by empowerment [strategy]’ (ibid: 18).

Using Prilleltensky and Prilleltensky’s (2006; 2012) ‘Web of Well-Being’ framework increases my recognition of potential similarities and differences between my research participants’ understandings of development and of wellbeing. Although, in the example given above, I understand all the described aspects as related to both development and wellbeing, my research participants may, for example, consider ‘strategies’ (e.g. empowerment) solely as development; ‘sources’ (e.g. the chance to exercise voice and choice) as both development and wellbeing; and ‘signs’ (e.g. control) as wellbeing. The approach therefore helps ensure that I do not conflate my participants’ understandings of development and of wellbeing according to my own values, of wellbeing as ‘development plus’ and ‘development re-oriented’ (White, 2009) (see page 38), but acknowledge and explore the ways in which they understand them to relate. It is not intended to narrowly categorise people’s ideas under labels which may suggest that individuals have fixed notions of development and wellbeing, but rather to help me consider how multiple and varied their understandings may be.

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In the following section of this chapter, I explore theories which emerged as important after completion of my fieldwork, during the cyclical and reflexive ethnographic writing

process which ‘exposes theory to ethnography and ethnography to theory’ (Murphy and Dingwall, 2007:339).

My experience in the field and my discourse-oriented conceptualisations of both development and wellbeing as dynamic and relational processes as well as outcomes led to my interest in social constructivism’s epistemological focus on ‘the interdependence of social and individual processes in the co-construction of knowledge’ (Mutekwe *et al.*, 2013:53) which became increasingly central to my research. As White (2010:164-165) notes:

Personal values and goals are... located within broader narrative frameworks and ideologies [which sometimes] take an explicit religious or political form, [and] at other times... are part of the collective unconscious, the cultural hegemony in which societies are grounded.

Hence my interest in the roles of society’s structural aspects and of individual agency in shaping understandings, and my subsidiary research question:

***How are understandings of development and of wellbeing socially constructed in Mallagaon?***

## 2.5 EXPLORING UNDERSTANDINGS OF DEVELOPMENT AND OF WELLBEING AS SOCIAL CONSTRUCTS

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In mixed caste communities, the upper castes and the institutions they operate through traditionally have social power – through their privileged access to scarce resources – over the actions and ideas of the lower castes. However, owing to Nepal’s social transformation the latter are increasingly able to exercise agency and take some control. Hence, in the struggle to maintain or gain power, the perceived value of these resources (reflected in understandings of wellbeing) and the means by which they can be accessed (reflected in understandings of development), are likely to be in flux. In considering how the processes involved contribute to the construction of understandings of development and of wellbeing, I draw on two main theories to further develop my argument. These are 6’s (2012) exploration of the influence of social institutions on sense-making; and Zittoun *et al.*’s (2003) notion of ‘symbolic resources’ used to reinforce or challenge ‘social representations’.

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### SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS INFLUENCING SENSE-MAKING

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6 (2012) takes a neo-Durkheimian approach, arguing that commitments to differing styles of wellbeing depend on the ‘institutional form of social organisation’ individuals

consider valid, with wellbeing dependent upon the ways people, under the different institutions, ‘*make sense...* of their lives and their social world’ through the ‘guiding tropes’ these institutions provide (ibid: 131-132) (emphasis in original). Hence, the potential for wellbeing is understood to lie not in individuals and their resources but ‘in social relations and social organization’ (ibid).

Amongst 6’s (ibid) four institutions, three are relevant to my research: ‘Hierarchy’, with wellbeing understood as satisfaction gained ‘through appropriate and skilled performance of [one’s] ascribed or achieved place in [the] social order’ (ibid: 134) and with ‘community order’ its core value (ibid:139), is likely to be valued in the traditionally hierarchical, caste-based community of my research. ‘Individualism’, with wellbeing the ‘successful pursuit and achievement of personal objectives over the course of life’ (ibid: 135), and with ‘liberty’ its core value (ibid:139), is likely to result from globalisation and modernisation processes. ‘Enclave’, with wellbeing the ‘committed enactment of shared principles in [the] community’ (ibid: 135) and with ‘equality’ its core value (ibid: 139), may be considered important because of Maoist influence.

Given the relatively recent introduction of the ‘Individualism’ and ‘Enclave’ institutions to Nepali Hindu rural communities traditionally structured by ‘Hierarchy’, Douglas’s (1970) cross-tabulation of the institutions discussed above, showing how they can co-exist (6, 2012) is useful. Hence, for example, considering the effect of ‘Individualism’ (with its emphasis on personal success) on ‘Hierarchy’, wellbeing may be found, by those whose sense-making derives from the latter institutional form, in ‘affirmation of the sanctioned social order’ (ibid: 136). This relates to Zittoun *et al*’s (2003) social representations and the potential value invested in reinforcing them with ‘symbolic resources’ (see below).

Wellbeing, as defined by 6 (2012:138), is understood as ‘plural, complex... unstable’ and ‘a process, a practice and a way of organising’, with elements ‘rivalrous and in conflict’ (ibid: 142-143). This complements Prilleltensky and Prilleltensky’s (2006; 2012) more static notion of wellbeing. As White and Ellison (2007) acknowledge, development and wellbeing processes may contain negative aspects which people help to socially reproduce as they work for their desired outcomes.

I find 6’s (2012) framework helpful in two main respects:

- It enables me to consider how different and interacting institutional forms for making sense of the world structure understandings of personal as well as of community wellbeing, and of development.
- It identifies individuals' and groups' possible understandings of wellbeing and of development resulting from the institutional forms they interact with. In Nepal (as elsewhere) the composition of and relationship between these forms may have changed recently due to forces of globalisation, modernisation and politics.

The framework therefore enables the recognition that what some understand as promoting wellbeing, others understand as undermining it, and what some understand as development, others understand as anti-development. It seems likely that the wellbeing of groups and individuals could be reduced if their understandings of wellbeing and/or development (constructed by one institutional form) encounter another form with different understandings, leading to the possible entrenchment of values. Alternatively, their well-being could be increased and their understandings modified. Meanwhile, apparently ambivalent understandings may result from an individual making sense through more than one of the institutional forms.

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#### HUMAN AGENCY THROUGH THE USE OF 'SYMBOLIC RESOURCES'

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Unlike 6 (2012), I do not consider wellbeing to lie exclusively in social organisations and relations between them, but also in individuals' agency and resources. As Skinner *et al* (1998) emphasised in their Nepal-based research, 'individuals and groups inhabit and co-develop spaces and sentiment, and fashion and are fashioned by social, religious, and political discourses and practices' (ibid: 8).

In considering agency, the use people make of resources, not understood 'as stable, fixed categories of assets' (as is capital) but defined according to the contextual 'purposes of the people involved' (White and Ellison, 2006:4) (emphasis in original), is significant. Existing at the personal level rather than the institutionalised level of capital, they can be used by the underprivileged to achieve wellbeing even 'in imperfect market arrangements' as well as in the community and household (Wood, 2007:120-121). Hence resources are considered both means towards wellbeing and 'part of the meaning of wellbeing itself' (ibid), with 'goods services, relationships and activities' not seen as constituting specific resources but as having 'the potential for use as

material, social, relational and symbolic resources’ (White and Ellison, 2007:167-168). These are ideas central to the Resource Profiles Framework of development studies (White and Ellison, 2007) in which ‘[L]ivelihood refers to the overall living conditions of individuals’ (FDFA, 2011:33).

For these reasons, particularly relevant here is Zittoun *et al*’s (2003) exploration (albeit in human development not livelihoods) of the agency people show in using ‘symbolic resources’ to disrupt ‘social representations’ and construct new meanings in a period of change, so enabling transition to a new stability. Their theory is pertinent because, as indicated above, increasing globalisation, modernisation and political changes are likely to mean that community members are experiencing social disruption and change.

‘[S]ocial representations’ are ‘social facts that exceed the symbolic activity of any one individual’, being ‘structure[s] emerging from patterns and programmes of communications and practices that take place within a given social space’ (ibid:420). They are constituted by the discourses and actions of the local group to whom they apply (Wagner *et al*, 1999) and are ‘horizontally distributed system[s] of meaning (Zittoun *et al*, 2003:420-421).

‘Symbolic elements’, ‘shared concrete things, or some socially stabilized patterns of interaction or customs that encapsulate meanings or experience for people’, become ‘symbolic resources’ when put to use (ibid: 417) either to challenge ‘social representations’ in the transition to a new socio-cultural formation or to reinforce extant ‘social representations’ (ibid). ‘Symbolic resources’ may be used for: ‘external’ effect to enable individuals to achieve new identities, repositioning themselves in ‘the webs of social relations’; and/or for ‘internal’ effect to ‘regulate emotional experiences [and] change... understandings of things’, reshaping how they represent their own worlds (ibid:419). A ‘symbolic resource’ is thus a ‘punctual element that makes a vertical connection’ between the individual and the social (ibid: 421). The agency that a ‘symbolic resource’ user possesses may, however, be constrained by ‘social representations’, the latter playing a role in identity-formation and related action (ibid: 420-421).

How ‘symbolic resources’ are used and valued is especially relevant in a community which contains distinct groups of extreme privilege and under-privilege, helping me to explore understandings of development and of wellbeing. Understandings of development may consist of that which enables people to have access to ‘symbolic

elements'. Meanwhile, they may consider their wellbeing increased both by their ability to use these as 'symbolic resources' and by the result of this use, or feel threatened by others using them.

In considering how 'symbolic resources' may be valued, I am interested in Sen's (1993; 1999) understanding of development as freedom, encompassing both the '*processes* that allow freedom of actions and decisions, and the actual *opportunities* that people have, given their personal and social circumstances' (Sen, 1993:17) (emphasis in original). Freedom is understood not only in terms of enabling a person to achieve outcomes s/he values but also in terms of an individual's ability to help both himself/herself, and to make social change (Sen, 1999). Significantly also, Sen (1999:292) notes the need to distinguish between '(1) the *derivative* importance of freedom (dependent only on its actual use) and (2) the *intrinsic* importance of freedom (in giving us freedom to choose something we may or may not actually choose)'; hence evaluative importance is attached to 'having opportunities that are *not* taken up' (ibid: 76) (emphasis in original) and a sense of entitlement is likely to be as important as the 'entitlement' (i.e. 'the commodities over which... [one] can establish... ownership and command') itself (ibid: 162).

Hence, 'symbolic resources' may be valued for directly promoting wellbeing and bringing about positive outcomes, and as opportunities to exercise freedom to choose between doing and not doing, even when the outcomes for wellbeing may be negative. The ability to choose and sense of entitlement may manifest as 'symbolic resources' taking the form of narratives, with no concrete outcome *per se*. Such 'symbolic resources' seem likely to be valued by individuals who, belonging to the community's marginalised groups, are only recently experiencing greater social freedom.

This exploration helps me recognise what role identities play in these processes which will be especially useful when considering reactions to change.

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I now argue that, in some contexts, Zittoun *et al*'s (2003) 'symbolic resources' can be used as a means to explore understandings of development and of wellbeing alongside Bourdieu's (2010 [1984]; 2002 [1986]; 1991) cultural and symbolic capital, from which their ideas appear to indirectly derive. I also argue that thinking in terms of 'symbolic

resources' can, in some contexts, be more informative than Putnam's (2000) social capital.

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### SOCIAL, CULTURAL AND SYMBOLIC CAPITAL, OR 'SYMBOLIC RESOURCES'

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Putnam (2000) considers social networks important aspects of social capital, including 'bonding' and 'bridging' capital. The former involves 'thick trust' between close kin and friends, while the latter involves relationships with acquaintances outside one's intimate social networks and is useful in providing links with external assets (ibid). Woolcock (2001) adds 'linking' social capital to Putnam's (2000) list, involving the formation of ties with people with power (Woolcock, 2001). Linking capital 'incorporates relations developed between people and representatives of public and professional institutions', for example, NGOs (Sixsmith and Boneham, 2012:83), indicating the likely relevance of this concept.

Wellbeing and/or development may be best considered in terms of social capital in relation to the more privileged to whom access to the networks described here is a given, but in terms of 'symbolic resources' in relation to the marginalised, to whom access to most of these networks is new. It is also possible that members of privileged groups value these social networks as 'symbolic resources' when they are used to help reinforce a threatened 'social representation'. As White and Ellison (2007:167-168) hold, relationships 'exist as they are *lived*' and may therefore better be understood as dynamic 'resources' than as static 'social capital' (emphasis in original).

The means used to attain or retain cultural and symbolic capital may also be understood in terms of 'symbolic resources'. Bourdieu (1991:230) argued that, because of its autonomous nature, cultural capital in the form of educational qualifications can become symbolic capital ('prestige, reputation, fame'), the form capital takes when 'perceived and recognized as legitimate'. This may happen in, for example, the matrimonial market (Bourdieu, 2002:283-284 [1986]). Such 'symbolic capital' gains value through scarcity, so that in class-based societies [or caste-based ones I would suggest] its benefit depends on everyone not having access to prolonged education (ibid). In contexts [such as Nepal where access to schooling and academic qualifications have increased massively amongst traditionally excluded groups (see Chapter 3)], the traditionally advantaged, 'step up their investments... [in education] to maintain the relative scarcity of their qualifications...' (Bourdieu, 2010 [1984]). Although the qualification is a form

of ‘symbolic capital’ (Bourdieu, 1991), I argue that the actual efforts taken by the privileged to keep their position in the class [or in this case caste] structure (ibid) is better understood in terms of Zittoun *et al*’s (2003) ‘symbolic resources’, with ‘symbolic elements’ deliberately used to reinforce the threatened ‘social representation’ in which they are powerful, and to ensure their prerogative to ‘symbolic capital’.

Bourdieu (2002:282 [1986]) considered ‘the domestic transmission of cultural capital’ an educational investment belonging to a system of reproduction strategies that exclude the marginalised, undermining their social identity and self-image and thwarting their aspirations since, lacking inherited cultural capital, they are often unable to get jobs despite being qualified. The more powerful may take their possession of domestically transmitted cultural capital and the symbolic capital contained in educational qualifications for granted, and therefore not need to resort to ‘symbolic resources’. However, I would argue that a community’s marginalised, only recently having begun to gain access to such capital, may value their ability to talk about the possibility of possessing it, and opportunities to take action to secure it as ‘symbolic resources’, enabling them to construct new self-identities in a context of social transformation.

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6’s (2012) theory helps me explore how discourses derived from institutional forms structure understandings and Zittoun *et al*’s (2003) how understandings derive from individuals’ ability to exercise their agency through ‘symbolic resources’. By thus looking into the social construction of understandings of development and of wellbeing from two directions, I can best explore it as a multi-dimensional process occurring at multiple levels.

Recognising that understandings of development and of wellbeing are constructed through the interplay of social structures and human agency, and that ‘the meanings of wellbeing [and of development] will differ... according to the cultural context, purposes, agency, *and social identities* of the people concerned’ (White and Ellison, 2007:174) (emphasis added), I arrive at my final research question:

***How do individual and group identities mediate socially constructed understandings of development and of wellbeing?***

## 2.6 IDENTITY CONCEPTUALISED

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I follow Gee's (1999:12) conceptualisation of identity which includes relatively stable 'core identities' and the 'different identities or social positions we enact... in different settings', called 'situated identities'. As Levy (1998:327) found in Nepal-based research, 'situation-determined, shifting identities' are 'in part at least, a shifting function of present significant relationships', pointing to the part played by context and relationship in identity-formation, and hence in mediating understandings. Meanwhile, since not all the multiple identities an individual adopts are 'wholly grounded in the specific social context in which they are living', not only the daily and local level meaning systems of people, but also their 'imagined' ones are important (McGregor, 2007:330). An individual's multiple identities could make him/her function differently at individual, group and community levels, adapting to context and audience. Recognising this brings awareness of the multiple understandings one person may simultaneously hold; although individuals may say something in one context but contradict it in another, I agree with Bulloch (2014) that all views should be taken seriously.

However, outsiders to a community often 'hear' only the voices of the powerful (Mosse, 1994), yet communities are also composed of less powerful groups, such as Dalits and women. Since 'social divisions and inequalities, and... forms of entitlement and domination [are] codified in identities by class, caste, gender, religion, race, ethnicity, age, disability, or ritual responsibility', these different group identities predict differences in levels of wellbeing experienced and hence also affect how wellbeing is understood (White, 2010:163), as well as development.

Ardener's (1975) ideas, first presented in 1973, about 'relative articulateness' are relevant here. A group's identity may be 'articulate' or 'muted', dependent on whether or not it forms 'part of the dominant communicative system of the society' (ibid: 22), affecting the extent to which individuals within it have 'voice' and therefore how they present their understandings of development and of wellbeing. This underlines the importance of the reflective process, whereby I strive to "unpack"... non-linguistic expertise and "put...it into words" (Mosse, 1994:521). I explore the possible effects of my own identities on the ideas presented by my research participants in Chapter 4.

Levy (1998:326) states that identity is 'constituted by [informal] learning and the social environment'. The changing social environment and hence the likelihood of increased

learning experiences amongst my research participants suggest that individuals now have a wider range of available identities and more opportunities to exercise agency in choosing their own. While participants could find this freedom positive, their construction of identities, considered by some the ‘stress of modern life’, (ibid: 159) could compromise their wellbeing.

This overview of the mediating role of identity provides the lens which helps me recognise that: what some may understand to increase wellbeing others may consider to decrease it; and what some may subscribe to in terms of development others may contest. Even this is a simplification; each individual is likely to have multiple and potentially conflicting understandings, and those expressed to me should not necessarily be taken at face value.

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## 2.7 CONCLUSION

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My discourse-oriented conceptualisation of both development and wellbeing as dynamic, relational processes enables me to consider the potential multi-dimensionality of community members’ understandings, these being liable to shift constantly, according to multiple discourses, contexts, identities and social positions.

Having begun my fieldwork with broad concepts of development and of wellbeing, I found on my return, various more specific theories relevant to my exploration. My focus became the social construction of understandings of development and of wellbeing, structured by institutions yet increasingly shaped by human agency, leading to my subsidiary research question: ***How are understandings of development and of wellbeing socially constructed in Mallagaon?*** I base my analysis on 6’s (2012) neo-Durkheimian approach to the structuring of wellbeing by different institutional forms of social organisation, and on Zittoun *et al*’s (2003) exploration of ‘symbolic resources’. Building on these theories as means to explore individual and group understandings of development and of wellbeing, I find the former particularly useful in considering how discourses shape these understandings and the latter in enabling me to recognise that opportunities to use ‘symbolic resources’ also affect how people understand development and wellbeing. Taken together, 6’s (2012) and Zittoun *et al*’s (2003) theories enable me to explore understandings at multiple levels, from both institutional and personal perspectives.

Considering it a shortcoming that wellbeing research in ‘developing countries’ tends to explore wellbeing only in relation to development led to my conceptualising them separately. Therefore, I first looked into development discourses potentially influential in shaping understandings in Mallaqaon through the institutions and processes which I explore in Chapter 3. These discourses include Pigg’s (1992) analysis of the ways in which development as modernisation is reinterpreted in the local context, and Copestake’s (2008) four ‘discursive positions’ (‘Income first’, ‘Needs first’, ‘Rights first’ and ‘Local first’) of development. These, by providing means to consider which aspects of social life people are likely to conceptualise in terms of development and the broad categories into which these fit, enable me to address my first research question: ***What understandings of development are dominant in Mallaqaon?***

In considering which aspects of wellbeing are of likely importance, I find White’s (2010) conceptualisation of wellbeing in terms of ‘Doing Well’, ‘Feeling Good’, ‘Doing good’ and ‘Feeling well’ useful; the latter two areas particularly help in formulating a collective, relational and moral means of understanding wellbeing in developing countries (2010). Meanwhile, her exploration of wellbeing as multi-dimensional at both the household (which I relate to the personal) and community levels informed my decision to explore understandings of wellbeing relating to both levels. While considering White’s (ibid) relational conceptualisation of wellbeing to be particularly relevant, I also consider Western psychology’s interest in hedonic and eudaimonic conceptions of wellbeing (Ryan and Deci, 2001; 2002) useful, especially because their theorists conceptualised them in terms unrelated to development. These wellbeing theories are central to my second subsidiary research question: ***How do individuals and groups within Mallaqaon understand personal and community wellbeing?***

These explorations of development and of wellbeing reinforced my wish to avoid inappropriately conflating my research participants’ understandings of them. Prilleltensky and Prilleltensky’s (2006;2012) ‘Web of Well-Being’ framework allows me to consider the different separate yet interrelated, and sometimes common, areas in which my research participants may consider wellbeing and development to lie, helping me to operationalise my subsidiary research question: ***How do understandings of development and of wellbeing in Mallaqaon interrelate?***

Recognising that ascribed meanings vary according to social identity (White and Ellison, 2007) my fifth and final subsidiary research question is: ***How do individual and***

*group identities mediate socially constructed understandings of development and of wellbeing?* In this exploration, I take Gee's (1999:12) conceptualisation of 'core' and 'situated' identities, the latter importantly indicating that my research participants are likely to have multiple identities at the individual, group and community levels, leading to multiple understandings of development and of wellbeing. Whether these identities lead to 'articulate' or 'muted' expression (Ardener, 1975) may in part depend on the various identities my research participants ascribe to me.

I decided on a reflexive, discourse-oriented ethnographic case study methodology, explored in Chapter 4, as best suited to unpacking these concepts. First, though, Chapter 3 provides the context of my research.

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## CHAPTER 3 CONTEXTUALISING MY RESEARCH

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### 3.1 LIVING THE CONTEXT

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#### MALLAGAON VILLAGE

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#### BECOMING REACQUAINTED

Early morning, I walk down the steep path to fetch water from the ‘*mool*’ (natural spring) near the bottom of Mallagaon village, each round trip taking 40 minutes. Several of the larger houses have TV satellite dishes, one is festooned with fairy lights and another has a large, square-windowed balcony, suggesting reinforced concrete; otherwise no change. Plastered in bands of red and white clay, the houses are constructed by villagers from local stone and slate. Between small vegetable patches, livestock is tethered in the yards. Surrounding the village, narrow terraced fields yield wheat in winter, rice in summer. Despite the predominance of farming and an increase in vegetable production for home consumption, nobody here subsists fully off the land; individuals from both the upper and lower castes find their produce sufficient for only three months a year.

Women are at work, cutting buffalo fodder, pounding rice, mucking out the ground floors of their homes used for livestock. A few pass me, water pots on their heads. They all seem delighted to see me; an elderly woman pats me, telling me she missed me. She asks if I have children and is concerned how I will survive old age without them. Most of this conversation is mediated by a younger woman, translating the widow’s Doteli<sup>2</sup> into Nepali. Despite their friendliness, I feel a huge distance from these women, who usually giggle when I suggest I join them in their work.

Stone slabs cover the clean area round the ‘*mool*’, used only by the upper castes. Above is a small shrine; an elderly Brahman man recites a prayer as he bathes. His wife, seeing me waiting, invites me for tea. Recently resurfaced with cow-dung, the rooms are fragrant, except the kitchen, dense with wood smoke from the open cooking fire. Despite those years spent in the village, this is the first time I have been invited into a private kitchen, perhaps because local attitudes about ‘pollution’ are changing. My feeling of distance lessens.

Filling my water jerrycans, I remember I have never before used this ‘*mool*’. When living here in the early 1990s, I was directed to a water supply outside Mallagaon village (used

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<sup>2</sup> The local regional language

by the ‘polluted’ – Dalits, and women of all castes during menstruation). I am still unsure if this was because I was considered ‘polluting’ for not being an upper caste Hindu, or if it was safer to treat me as always menstruating since they felt unable to ask me to tell them when I was. Still finding the rules around its use a minefield of potential problems, it is weeks later that I offer to fill the water pots of Dalits, often waiting hopefully nearby.

I am ashamed by how little I used to know about Mallagaon’s Dalits. Only during this fieldwork trip I visit their water source, an unreliable trickle of unclean water a little downhill from the upper caste ‘mool’, the used water from which flows around it. Only now I visit their part of the village. Located a short walk away from the other houses, it consists of much smaller homes, cramped together.

### Mallagaon Village

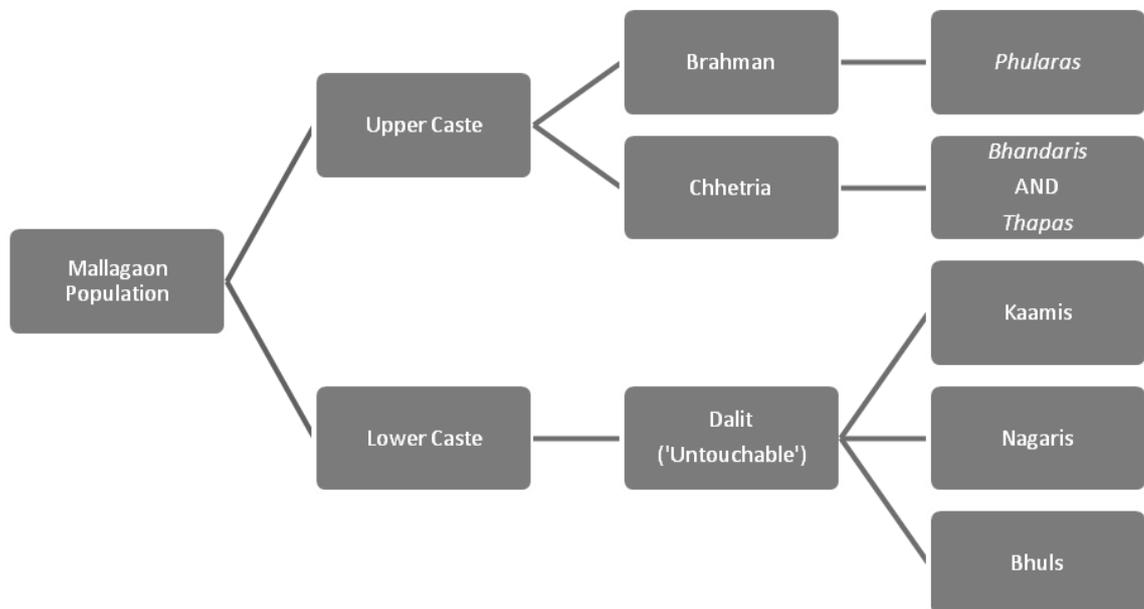
- Upper caste homes (left and centre)
- Dalit homes (centre, above the larger upper caste homes)
- Upper caste water source and shrine (left of centre)
- Dalit water source in the fields below the village (right of centre)



## MALLAGAON'S CASTES

Mallagaon's composition has changed over the last two decades, although it still consists of three major castes, upper caste Brahmans and Chhetrias and lower caste Dalits. There are now only 258 residents in 44 households (14 Brahman, 14 Chhetria, and 16 Dalit). During the last two decades 210 people (39 households – 32 Brahman, 4 Chhetria and 3 Dalit) emigrated. Consequently, the Dalits now form the majority instead of Brahmans. Yet within the village, the caste-based hierarchy seems unchanged.

### Mallagaon Caste Hierarchy (Clan pseudonyms in italics)



### Brahman<sup>3</sup>

All Mallagaon village Brahmans are Phularas. This clan's men are often priests, following the traditional role of their caste, and/or have salaried jobs; five teach and one is Secretary of the VDC. Four Brahmans run shops in the bazaar. Many are also involved in small-scale farming, employing the lower castes to plough, a task from which Brahmans of west Nepal are 'precluded by their caste status' (Caplan, 1972:20).

Phulara males have higher levels of education than other village members, perhaps because, even after they migrated from India approximately four hundred years ago and settled in different communities in the Far West area of Nepal, they continued to send

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<sup>3</sup> See Appendix 1 for details further to those provided here about the clans within Mallagaon's castes

sons to participate in India's Gurukul<sup>4</sup> system. Most salaried employees of Mallagaon are Phulara men, although most under forty have emigrated; the 'pull' factor of migration for economic reasons and a desire for 'amenities and status' (Upreti, 2006:172-173) mean that this emigration was a lifestyle choice, not economic necessity. Many Mallagaon Phularas are prominent in Nepal, especially in politics, education and medicine. The Maoist War sent many into exile; some of them subsequently emigrated permanently.

Dixit (2011:115) puts the dominance of Brahmans in modern-day Nepal down to their following 'societal advantages':

- a) the spread of their settlements across the country, which helped promote networking;
- b) their tradition of learning, which was useful in a modernising state...;
- and, c) their command of Sanskrit and Nepali, the evolving lingua franca, which helped them represent the state in numerous capacities.

These advantages help to explain the wealth and power of Mallagaon's Phularas relative to the rest of the community.

### Chhetria

The Chhetrias, consisting of two clans, Bhandari and Thapa, are the second 'highest' caste. Although Chhetrias are traditionally the warrior caste (Zaehner, 1992), Mallagaon village's Chhetrias, until recently, worked exclusively as subsistence farmers or as farm labourers for Brahmans. As Caplan (1972:5) found, even in the 1970s, apart from the priestly role of the Brahmans, none of the 'clean', upper castes 'is associated with a specific traditional occupation; all are agriculturalists'.

The majority continue to farm, or do other work for Brahmans or institutions, including portering, carpentry and building. Some migrate to India for semi-skilled work, nowadays a couple teach, one runs a teashop and another works in a nearby village as a Community Medical Assistant. Three work as '*peons*' (work-based servants / caretakers) in the school, health post and VDC Office.

### Dalit

Three of Mallagaon's castes are Dalit<sup>5</sup>, the 'untouchable' lower castes, who were, and by some still are, considered impure. It is important not to identify all Dalits as one,

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<sup>4</sup> Gurukuls = residential schools in which pupils lived with their master or Guru, learnt from him and performed daily tasks. They were India's primary educational institution until British rule

<sup>5</sup> 'The term "Dalit" comes from the Sanskrit root "dal" meaning to shatter, to break into pieces and to step on' In the past the term was used to refer to all oppressed groups but nowadays in Nepal is only used to refer to the 'untouchable' castes. (Kisan, 2005:6)

especially since a hierarchy is followed, with Kaamis the 'highest' Dalit clan, followed by Nagaris and, at the 'bottom', Bhuls. This is the same hierarchy Cameron (1998) found in the Far West Nepal community of her research, although it differs from the 1854 Law Code from which the categories derive.

The Nagaris<sup>6</sup> follow their caste occupations of tailoring and drumming, and work their own land. Perhaps because tailoring continues to be in high demand, they are the most prosperous of the Dalits. Only in the generation now in its twenties has one member still living locally attempted to diversify (as a self-employed vet), although he continues helping with his family's tailoring business.

Kaamis were traditionally blacksmiths, while Bhuls worked with leather, making plough ties. In each case, only one person still practises his caste skill, with insufficient income. With increasing availability of, and preference for, manufactured goods, many of the caste-based skills are becoming redundant (Kisan, 2005), a process observed by Caplan (1972) in 1970s India.

One elderly Kaami is contracted to supply firewood for the school hostels; otherwise only members of the younger generation have diversified into other self-employed work. A Bhul has set up a mobile phone repair shop and his wife a tailoring business. The majority of the Kaami and Bhul castes work as subsistence farmers and as labourers for Brahmans or local institutions. No Mallagaon-based Dalits have salaried employment.

'Untouchability' precludes Dalits from certain occupations including 'the hotel industry ... dairy trade and ... food related businesses' (Kisan, 2005:164). It also means that they cannot go into temples or upper caste homes and must use a separate water source; although some Phularas claim that Dalits can use the upper castes' '*mool*', in practice they do not, through enforcement and self-regulation.

Some Dalit families have permanently emigrated but usually men migrate temporarily, often for several years, usually to India as unskilled workers. The main reason is the 'push' factor of migration for economic reasons, whereby 'lack of employment opportunities and poor economic conditions... compel people to move out of the place of origin in search of means of livelihood' (Upreti, 2006:172-173). Dalits can work in restaurants in India, thus temporarily escaping their 'untouchability' by migrating

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<sup>6</sup>*Nagari* = Tailor caste name

(Caplan, 1972), suggesting that other factors contribute to their leaving (see Section 3.4).

Initially, the Phularas owned all Mallagaon's land and property. Now all except one Dalit family own their own homes, gifted<sup>7</sup> to them by the Phularas, sometimes with small amounts of land. This is significant, since, 'in Nepal, land underpins all social, economic and political development of a person or a household' and 'therefore, access to land also defines one's inclusion (or exclusion) in the social, economic and political processes' (Adhikari, 2010:93). Landlessness forces acceptance of a 'hegemonic relationship' with land owners and, until 2007, citizenship necessitated land ownership (ibid).

There is still a land tenancy system in Mallagaon, tying in many of the poorer, lower castes. This involves the tenant giving a lump sum to the (Brahman) landlord for the use of land. The landlord gets the interest, the tenant the land's produce (FN: 11/05/12).

In many cases payment is still in kind, with caste-based skills like tailoring as well as farm work remunerated with a fixed amount of grain per season. With greater availability of cash, more options for spending, and lower supply of grain, cash payments are preferred, a change Caplan (1972) observed in the 1970s. Nowadays, increased awareness of rights and empowerment, brought by external forces such as globalisation and Maoism, mean that individuals are increasingly able to meet their preferences.

#### WOMEN IN THE VILLAGE

Women from all the castes work as farmers and do most of the household work. Exceptions to this are few: One female Nagari can sew but spends most of her time farming. Two Chhetria women are in salaried employment; they are expected to do all the household work even though their husbands are unemployed. One Brahman woman teaches in a nearby primary school. Amongst the very few remaining Brahman women under forty, three girls in their early twenties, awaiting arranged marriages, are studying Bachelor of Education (BEd) at Janakiram '*Campus*'.

Upreti's (2006) description of the situation for women and girls in the hills of Far West Nepal applies, barring a few wealthier Brahmans who employ others: Women of all

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<sup>7</sup> Possibly these 'gifts' were imposed by land reform acts introduced by various governments following the overthrow of the Rana regime in 1951; one new law placed 'a ceiling on the size of holdings by any one household and redistribution of any surplus to the landless and poor' (Caplan, 1972:37)

castes are responsible for fetching fodder, firewood for cooking and water, as well as for much of the agricultural work. The lower castes often work as labourers, stone-breakers and porters. From a very young age, girls of all castes look after younger siblings and grazing cattle. They are also expected to contribute to household chores like water-fetching. Traditionally, sons are favoured over daughters, the latter's schooling seen as a low priority largely because girls leave their home community on marriage whereas sons stay, and look after their parents. As a result, girls tend to drop out of school early, although in this respect change has come more quickly to Mallagaon than elsewhere locally (see below).

Women are considered impure and polluting during menstruation; the Nepali term '*nachune bela*' (do-not-touch time) for menstruation originating from the belief that physical contact with women during this time is polluting; and the term '*bahira*' (outside) for menstruation coming from the practice of women having to sleep outside the house during that time, usually in a lower room with livestock. Some change has occurred; women, although confined, are sometimes allowed to use a proper room of the house and Janakiram hostel-based girls do not have to sleep separately. Menstruating women are not allowed near men or the temple, cannot use the village water sources, or give or receive water from others. Women and their new-born babies are confined, allowed no contact with men for eight days after childbirth. According to one of Mallagaon's two midwives, even they cannot use the '*mool*' for some hours after a delivery, and for ten days they cannot give anyone food or worship in the temple (IN: 30/11/11).

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## RAMKUTI: BAZAAR, SCHOOL HOSTELS, OFFICES AND TEMPLE

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### THE BAZAAR

Seven in the morning; a couple of men are in the bazaar, ten minutes uphill from the village, opening shop. The tailor sits cross-legged on the floor in front of a jumble of coloured cloth, stitching a blouse. With several customers standing at the door and its central location, his shop often seems the most important place, despite his 'low' caste status. A couple of shelves are given over to his son's stock of veterinary medicines.

The shopkeeper, whose wife was the first woman to move here from Mallagaon village, opens his general store with its brand new concrete front looking out of place and its dusty shelves stocked with a medley of biscuits, spices, notebooks, soap. Several women, having walked from neighbouring villages, wait for the chemist; one, too ill to

sit, is lying on a slate slab. The second tailoring shop's wooden shuttered doors open. The owner, having spent the night here guarding his shop, is joined by his wife who works here in her spare time. She tethers her goat outside, where it begins chewing on cloth remnants.

### Ramkuti Bazaar



One of the two non-local midwives, Chandrika, rents a room in the bazaar but keeps herself to herself, only leaving her small front yard when necessary. I ask her to join me drinking tea but, several men being here, she will not; instead she hands me her two-year old son so she can bathe. Twenty years ago, it was rare to see a woman here at all; now there are many, but none sit to pass the time of day; they are all here only with specific purposes. Only once, when all the men were elsewhere after a festival, does Chandrika join me for a relaxed cup of tea. The only Mallagaon village women I see here are Dalits working. Men, on the other hand, gather at the teashops and sit chatting.

The upper and 'untouchable' castes sit apart from each other drinking tea; in one teashop the latter are still obliged to wash their own tea glasses. However, a mixed-caste group of older men forms to play the first of the day's many card games. Later, young men, apparently having little to do, meander into the bazaar and start their own games. Sluggishly, a teashop owner, last to open and smelling of alcohol, brews tea.

Publicly at least, there were no signs of alcohol twenty years ago, and card-playing was a once-yearly festival event.

Everyone is friendly, showing no objection to my presence. I am reminded of my strange identity, neither male nor female. I recall how, twenty years ago, the five-year old daughter of the village family I lived with wrote my name on my trunk, with the middle name used by males of her family. She was probably confused by my 'man's life': scarcely cooking, often sitting in the bazaar and the only female teacher. Now back, with Mahesh my husband here throughout my fieldwork helping me with interpretation and translation, my female identity may become clearer.

Upper and lower caste premises, all owned by Mallagaon's Brahmans, are intermingled. On my arrival this time, I find several general stores, various medical outlets, five teashops run by upper castes, a readymade clothes shop, a household goods cum greengrocer's, two tailoring shops, and various other caste-based businesses which open on occasions, including a blacksmith and a goldsmith. In late autumn, a mobile phone repair shop opens, and alongside it another small tailoring business; then a general store, the first to be part-run by an upper caste woman (non-local), selling dolls, felt pens and brightly coloured packs of sweets alongside sacks of grain. A restaurant selling coca cola and Chinese style food follows.

#### JANAKIRAM HOSTELS

Janakiram staff members express concern lest bad influences, such as alcoholism, will affect the students living in the hostels, which are adjacent to the bazaar. To me, they feel like separate worlds. Eight in the morning, the hostels are humming with children chanting lessons, sitting outside because, as often, the electricity supply is off.

The single tap is shared by over 180 secondary level, hostel-based school (150) and '*campus*' (30) students; the latter are queuing for water which, dribbling slowly, soon dries up. Once again, the seven-kilometre pipe has broken somewhere on its route here; a '*peon*' will spend the day locating and fixing the break. Mahesh has been washing his clothes and two of the queuing girls question him: "So Miss doesn't wash clothes?" "Yes, she does", he replies, "Those are hers", pointing to my clothes in soak, "She will be washing hers later". "Oh! So you do yours and she does hers", say the girls. "No, not always", replies Mahesh, "Sometimes I do hers as well as mine, sometimes she does mine as well as hers" "Oh!" say the girls, "It is not like that here". Soon Mahesh, washing finished, is eating a bowl of soya beans, given by these girls apparently pitying

his plight (FN: 19/11/11). Returning here as a wife, I sometimes feel closer to the women; sometimes people's expectations about appropriate wifely roles make me feel even more of an outsider.

### Janakiram Boys' Hostel



Mahesh and I are accommodated in the girls' hostel, our only option since we chose not to live in Mallagaon village to avoid being too closely identified with any particular family; I have difficulty shaking off my quasi-Brahman identity endowed by my former accommodation. The girls' hostel is the most impartial environment I can hope for, partly because CEW's sponsorship programme ensures a mix of castes.

### CHILDREN'S EDUCATION WORLD (CEW)

CEW sponsors secondary level education in Africa and Asia, selecting students with strong academic potential from poor rural backgrounds, with disadvantaged groups such as the 'untouchable' castes prioritised, and two girls for every one boy sponsored (Nair and Nair, 2005). At my instigation, it has sponsored Janakiram students to live in hostels since 1997, where they receive extra tuition and learn skills including sewing. At the time of my fieldwork, CEW was supporting sixty-five students; the school

principal openly admitted that Janakiram School could not survive without CEW's programme (FN: 04/12/11).

CEW's programme meant that for the first time girls, and Dalits of both genders, were accommodated in hostels, enabling them to concentrate on studies rather than do household chores or daily spend hours walking between home and school (Nair and Nair, 2005). Although some male Dalits had been allowed to live in a hostel prior to this, at that time they had to cook their own food and live in separate rooms.

In 2002, when the first CEW-sponsored scholars passed the School Leaving Certificate (SLC) from Janakiram, the girls among them became the first to pass in the top division in the region; at that time only 6% of girls even sat the exam (ibid). Many of these students went on to become teachers, staying locally, qualified teachers being then in demand. CEW is also seen as the reason for there now sometimes being more girls than boys in a class, whereas previously there were only one or two.

Having secured CEW funding for Janakiram students' education and for girls' hostels, and having returned to Mallagaon on behalf of CEW several times since living here as a teacher, I am closely identified with the organisation. Although I began my PhD fieldwork by attempting to distance myself, I soon realised the inevitability of my CEW identity (explored in Chapter 4).

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#### THE HEALTH POST AND OFFICES

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Ten in the morning, I scramble up the steep hill between the hostels and the Ramkuti offices to Mallagaon's highest building, with a meeting room where sometimes there is sufficient signal strength for internet connectivity. This facility feels incongruous with the room's view of men working the narrow terraced fields, using hand-held ploughshares and oxen; of women carrying loads of buffalo dung, kindling, or fodder. Children have followed me, frantic to see my laptop; only I find its necessary presence intrusive. I recollect my former life here; without electricity, internet, road..., everything seemed simple and idyllic. My desire to arrest this place in a nostalgia-laden time warp is fortunately momentary; I realise how different it was, and is, for me, free to return to modern amenities, than for Mallagaon members whose 'reality' this life is.

#### THE HEALTH POST

Nearby is the health post, a single-bed 'birthing centre' and a small office where medical consultations are carried out by the Community Medical Assistant; although known as 'doctor' he has only intermediate level health education. A woman, having walked several hours, has just given birth. The midwife, a Chhetria who now rents a house in Mallagaon village, proudly informs me that, against the prevalent beliefs about pollution, she has persuaded the father to hold the new-born (FN: 13/04/12).

#### THE VDC

The same building contains the large VDC office, responsible for Mallagaon and eight further wards or village communities. Frequent meetings are held here, involving various sub-committees for village education, road construction, drinking water, health, and community forestry management. Having some control over and responsibility for local development and distribution of state funds, the VDC's remit is local level organisation and delivery of improved services, forming a partnership between local communities and the public sector. During the peak of the Maoist War, its secretary spent four years exiled in the district headquarters, returning and resuming the VDC's normal work only in 2006.

#### THE DEVELOPMENT CENTRE FOR COMMUNITIES (DCC)

Another office belongs to the DCC, an NGO established here in 2049 (1992-1993) by a local Brahman. Its early programmes employed two Voluntary Service Overseas volunteers (VSOs). Concentrating on women's needs, the first of these (1996-1998), Ed, helped secure funding for a diesel-powered mill which, located ten minutes uphill from the bazaar and now run on electricity, is always bustling with women. The DCC's work also involved projects for women, in vegetable growing, forestry, health and income generation (IN: 21/07/11).

The DCC's main donor is Save the Children, with Save the Children UK funding its 'Right to education for Dalit Girls' programme (FN: 12/11/11). The DCC's Executive Officer stated that a combination of scholarships for Dalit girls and awareness raising activities have resulted in a 1:1 ratio of boys and girls, whereas, prior to the programme, Dalit girls did not get to school at all, with secondary school a distant dream (IN: 14/03/12). Its founder says it first secured funding for Dalit girls to stay in the secondary level hostel (IN: 12/11/11), an achievement others accredit to CEW.

Bob, the second DCC-based VSO (1998-2000), helped develop ideas for a ropeway connecting Mallagaon to the main road, giving villagers market access for their products (Shrestha and Dhakal, 2000). A feasibility study concluded that it would benefit 6,000 people, including the marginalised, with farm jobs and ‘stimulation of the local economy’, since the cash crops, vegetables, fruits and herbal products that the ropeway would carry from the area could have met the local towns’ demand (ibid: 6). These ideas relate to Nepali political discourse, with Bhattarai (senior Maoist leader, subsequently Prime Minister) stating that, ‘by commercializing agriculture, unemployment in the agriculture section can be reduced by 25 per cent to 30 per cent’ (in Shakya, 2009:199-200) and Shakya (ibid: 198-199) arguing the need for new approaches to irrigation and the value to Nepal of the commercial cultivation of herbal plants and cash crops rather than the export of ‘primary produce’ to India.

Bob blamed the political environment for the shelving of these environmentally sustainable plans; the local MP promised Mallagaon a road in exchange for votes (IN: 16/07/11). Ten years later, the fair-weather, un-surfaced road (causing annual landslides) was finally completed, without the MP’s help.

Due to the Maoist War, the DCC office moved to the district headquarters in 2004, from where it has since operated; although now active throughout the region, its head office remains in Ramkuti. (FN: 14/03/12).

#### THE YOUTH CENTRE

Nowadays, the DCC funds Mallagaon’s Youth Centre through its Save the Children funded ‘Education for Youth, Youth for Peace and Development’ programme, with five Dalits, including its President, on its fifteen-strong Executive Board, comprised of local youths (IN: 14/03/12). Established in 2064 BS (2007-2008), it helps with local DCC work, including its primary level educational programmes, awareness-raising plays, extra-curricular activities, such as quizzes for students, and youth empowerment. Its main aim is youth mobilisation through the development of skills and capacities; it has a library, disseminates information and runs computer classes. The same programme funds training in specific vocational skills for Dalit youth and provides them support in starting local businesses (IN: 14/03/12).

## OTHER ORGANISATIONS WORKING IN MALLAGAON

Almost innumerable INGOs, NGOs and Community Based Organisations work locally, VDC-facilitated or working through the DCC, indicative of how steeped in ‘development’ Mallagaon, like the rest of Nepal (Shrestha, 1998), is. Other development organisations here include: the Community Development Forum working in HIV AIDs; the (Dalit) Social Improve [*sic*] Development Centre; Poverty Alleviation; the Social Organisation of Volunteers against AIDS and the Mallagaon Community Forest Group (FN: 17/04/12). Apart from the latter and the DCC, these organisations have come to Mallagaon since I left in 1996.

## THE TEMPLE

Searching for solitude, I scramble down another steep slope to the temple. Various male Brahmans take this longer route from village to bazaar, and various students divert here between school and hostels, menstruating girls staying away. They ring a bell, pause to salute the temple gods, and walk on. Sitting on the stone slab behind the temple, I remember various temple festivals held either here or at the more ancient local-deity temple further en route to school. I was always included in these, much as were Dalits; welcome if I stayed outside the temple. (Later, this chapter discusses Hinduism, the religion of the entire community.)

Soon someone arrives to make a phone call, this being one of the few areas with mobile phone reception; my break is over.

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## JANAKIRAM: SCHOOL AND ‘*CAMPUS*’

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Joined by Mahesh, I walk to Janakiram, making way for a mule-train bringing supplies to the hostel kitchens, the local road damaged since the monsoon. Soon we see the fenced off but neglected orchard, while the forest on the hills around us seems both well-used and well-managed. Janakiram looks as it used to, soft honey-coloured local stone and grey slate, but then the modern concrete ‘*Campus*’ building, library and new classrooms, including a computer suite, come into sight. Small groups of children sit in circles in the sun reciting, headed by their teachers.

## Janakiram School

(The '*Campus*', largely hidden by trees, is to the left)



Arriving in time for the one o'clock tea break, I join the three female staff members on their bench a little apart from the men who, inviting Mahesh to join them, form their usual tight huddle around the tea-brewing fire. Again, I feel confused and a little alienated by my shifting identities. In the past, as the only female teacher, I was welcome to join that group and enjoy the jokes. Now, reassigned a place with the rather formal women, I feel cut off, wishing we could all mingle. When the bell rings ending the break, I miss teaching and the respected identity of a school teacher; a Kathmandu-based professor emigrant from Mallagaon suggested I teach staff rather than children as a way of 'paying back' for my time here.

### JANAKIRAM SCHOOL AND EDUCATION IN NEPAL

For political reasons the Rana regime (1846-1950) opposed the education of the Nepali population; consequently, by 1951, Nepal had only 321 primary and 11 secondary schools and the elite, the only people who could afford to do so, educated their sons in India (Shakya, 2009), including some Mallagaon Phularas. During the 1950s, Nepal's schools grew in number so that by 1960 it had 4000 primary and 500 secondary schools (ibid). These came about largely through community-led initiatives (Caddell, 2006), one of which was the founding of Janakiram (see Chapter 5), the third school

established in what is now the Far West Development Region, and quickly becoming known as the best there.

From 2049 BS (1992-1993), rural schools offered the Intermediate Education (IEd) teacher training course, taught to students at the equivalent of sixth-form. Mahesh, from South India and I, employed as the first of three VSO teachers, met in Mallagaon as teachers of this course. As I know from experience, the course helped: enable existing teachers to gain higher qualifications; prevent brain drain; afford opportunities for further education to students unable to move away; and expand the local teaching workforce. At the time, only Janakiram offered the course in the district and its graduates quickly gained local employment.

Nowadays, there are more schools in the area, reflecting the nationwide expansion of education; in the 5 local VDCs alone, there are now 35 schools, including four secondary schools offering the IEd, and two private English medium schools. Hence, Janakiram struggles to remain competitive; it had 600 enrolled in the early 1990s, dropping to 250 during the Maoist War and now picking up to only about 400. This is partly because the wealthiest, including teachers, now educate their children elsewhere; during my fieldwork, there were only two Phulara secondary-level children studying in the school, whereas, twenty years ago there were many.

As Bhatta (2009:6) observes, this trend results ‘in a “pauperization” of public schools<sup>8</sup>... [since] they are becoming places where the children of the poor study’. Janakiram’s hostels may also have negative effect on its provision of education; the extra tuition and skills classes focus on the hostel students, neglecting others.

#### JANAKIRAM ‘*CAMPUS*’

Janakiram ‘*Campus*’, established in 2009, offers the BEd degree. During my fieldwork, there were four girls (three Brahman and one Chhetria) and four boys (two Chhetria and two Dalit) from Mallagaon village studying there. This is indicative of gender and caste stratification: of this age group, all the Brahman boys (currently six), and one Chhetria boy, were elsewhere for Bachelor level education. Due to the proximity of Janakiram, Chhetrias of both genders, unable to afford education elsewhere, study here along with Dalit boys (locally, this level remains inaccessible to Dalit girls).

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<sup>8</sup> Public schools = government funded schools

Owing to the difficulty of getting government accreditation and suitably qualified staff for other courses, the '*Campus*' offers only Education and Commerce qualifications at intermediate level, and only the BEd qualification at undergraduate level. Hence, Janakiram contributes to the local problem, new since I taught there, of qualified teachers' unemployment, illustrated by the following 2012 figures for the district: 800 IEd-qualified candidates sat the exam permitting them to teach to the end of class 8, while 150 BEd-qualified candidates sat the exam permitting them to teach to the end of Class 10 (FN: 03/03/12). Many local unemployed young men have the IEd qualification, while a teashop owner has the BEd and the tailor-cum-vet is studying for it.

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### STEPPING OUT

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My fieldwork days are spent much as described above, chatting informally, mostly with men or lower caste women in the bazaar; upper caste women in the village; teachers at Janakiram; and hostel-based students. Conducting interviews and writing field-notes, fetching water, washing clothes and occasionally cooking, although we usually eat in the hostel. I live a life roughly comparable to other 'outsider' women in salaried employment here, except that, with my husband sharing the daily workload, I have far more time to relax. Mahesh and I go for walks or sit somewhere quiet, but someone, unaware of our notions about privacy, nearly always comes along to chat.

Although I enjoy being in Mallagaon again, the experience is different, less comfortable than before, for reasons difficult to pinpoint. Perhaps, as researcher, probing and exploring more, I am discovering discomfiting aspects, or viewing Mallagaon (and being viewed by it) differently because of my different roles and identities. Perhaps the processes of globalisation I have touched upon have had increasing impact. However, the most significant source of change seems to be the ways Maoism played out in Mallagaon, having had 'physical, financial and psychological impact on Nepal' (Shakya, 2009:152). Later this chapter explores the influence of Maoism on Mallagaon.

Thus the complete immersion in Mallagaon life is rewarding and exhausting. Sometimes it feels good to get away. Even after the road is repaired, we choose to go on foot; the huge VDC expenditure on it angers me and the precipitous route bothers me; the road looks set to collapse again where it zigzags above the stream; water pours down a steep cliff onto it and below it the bank is undermined. A woman we pass asks sulkily why we are not using the road intended for people like us [who can afford the

jeep fare she cannot], which took away her livelihood [portering] (FN: 11/03/12). After this 1½ hour walk, an eight-hour road journey takes us south to Dhangadhi, where we will spend a few days.

### The Road to Mallagaon

(After several months' delay, a JCB digger has arrived to clear the landslide blocking the road)



When I lived here before, just after the 1993 completion of the road connecting the district headquarters to the rest of Nepal, I relied more on lifts in trucks, there being only two buses daily; nowadays buses, minibuses and jeeps are plentiful on this route. From Dhangadhi, it is a twenty-four hour bus journey or a two-hour flight to Kathmandu, where I spent a month at the beginning of my research interviewing emigrants from Mallagaon and getting my research visa, and a month at the end conducting further interviews.

In Dhangadhi, where I now conduct interviews, we stay with some of Mallagaon's upper caste emigrants; Brahmans and Chhetrias from the Far Western hills inhabit much of Dhangadhi. Most people here know about Mallagaon. One young shopkeeper says he is from there; it transpires that his village is a two-hour walk away, but he says he is from Mallagaon because of its Janakiram-endowed prestige (FN: 10/12/11).

Undoubtedly living here is easier, without the drudgery of village life, with more options for salaried employment, reliable roads and public transport, easy access to good schools and hospitals, more commodities in the bazaar, a better electricity supply and stronger TV signal. But I feel ambivalent: although thankful for the town's amenities and the anonymity it allows me, I crave the beauty and peace of Mallagaon and the solicitousness of its people.

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I continue by exploring Hinduism and patron-client relationships, important as two long-standing institutions which influence Mallagaon's practice and discourse. I then consider migration in terms of socio-economic mobility, as a long-term phenomenon which has recently increased, hence causing significant change. Finally, I consider Maoism's influence, especially in terms of how its discourse plays out in Mallagaon.

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### 3.2 HINDUISM

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Recognising theory which explores how religion, specifically Hinduism, manifests itself in socio-cultural understandings and activity to be particularly relevant, I agree with Deneulin and Rakodi (2011), and White *et al* (2012a) who understand religion as social practice lived in a community rather than as personal and potentially detached spirituality. The following discussion relates to how Hinduism manifests in Mallagaon, especially through the caste system considered earlier in this chapter.

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#### HINDUISM AND WELLBEING

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Taking account of both the institutional structuring of society and the agency of individuals, White *et al* (2012a:657) note that religion as '*dharma*' (i.e. Hinduism) 'brings together notions of individual pathways in life with the sense of an underlying moral order that structures them and enables them to be comprehended'. This resonates with the international research partnership 'Religions and Development' (RaD, 2011:2) findings, which suggest that 'everyday lived religion... is primarily the source of an underlying moral order that informs people's ideas about the right way to live and good social relationships'. Understanding wellbeing in terms of '*dharma*' therefore extends wellbeing beyond its personal to its more relational aspects, central to my conceptualisation of it.

One form of *'dharma'*, *'sadharana-dharma'*, 'the duty of conscience' applies to everyone across the castes and has to do with harmonious living and ethical, impartial behaviour (Das, 2012:94). The other, *'sva-dharma'*, caste-specific, is often associated with 'doing visible "good deeds" endorsed by society' (ibid: 49). Both forms of *'dharma'* may contribute to eudaimonic concepts of wellbeing in Mallagaon in that they encourage understandings which involve engagement with life and doing what is worthwhile. Aristotle, on whose ideas eudaimonic wellbeing are based, believed that 'true happiness is found in the expression of virtue – that is, doing what is worth doing' (Ryan and Deci, 2001:145). Meanwhile, Hinduism considers the key to happiness to lie in *'dharma'*, 'the one universal duty of all human beings... the practice of virtue' (Swami Nishpapananda, 2010:1) (emphasis in original).

The four *'Purusharthas'* are the human aims or ideals which form the basis of Hinduism's value system (Pappu, 2004:156) and constitute what is normally undertaken to ensure 'the reward of happiness' (Sharma, 1999:224). They are: *'artha'*, or wealth and power; *kaama*, or desire...; *dharma*, or morality and virtue'; and *moksha*, or liberation' (Pappu, 2004:156) (emphasis added). *'Artha'* and *'kaama'* together correspond to the Good Life, with *'artha'* meaning not only 'wealth' but also having the 'larger connotation of achievement, worldly success, fame and power' and *'kaama'* including physical, intellectual and aesthetic pleasure' (Swami Nishpapananda, 2010:1).

Ideally, *'dharma'* regulates the pursuit of *'artha'* (Sharma, 1999:237), ensuring that wealth is acquired ethically, with material comforts sought only to enable one to perform service, charity and religious duties (ibid). Such practice relates to eudaimonism. However, *'dharma'* can be practiced in many ways, including 'at the expense of *artha* and *kāma*', 'productive of *artha* and *kāma*' but sometimes 'elevating their pursuit' (Sharma, 1999:235), with 'the acquisition of wealth... sometimes glorified' in Hindu sacred literature (ibid: 238). Such practice relates to hedonism.

The ultimate aim of a Hindu's life is *'moksha... mystical experience of the divine'*, providing freedom from suffering, which, achieved through the practice of *'dharma'*, leads to recognising that 'polarities go together', and 'happiness without misery' is impossible (Swami Nishpapananda, 2010:1-2). While it involves renunciation and few attain it (Sharma, 1999), everyone has the potential to achieve *'moksha'*, 'the final goal of human life' (Swami Nishpapananda, 2010:1).

The effort involved suggests that practitioners require a eudaimonic understanding of wellbeing to attain '*moksha*'. However, the resulting acceptance and equanimity can be understood as aspects of hedonic wellbeing. By lowering aspiration, religious beliefs can be 'conducive to subjective well-being' (Inglehart, 2010:369), contributing to SWB's 'presence of positive mood, and the absence of negative mood' (Ryan and Deci, 2001:144) by enabling acceptance of what is negative and unchangeable (Whitman, 2007).

The way the '*Purusharthas*' are practised thus suggests that attempts to categorise Hinduism's values into hedonism and eudaimonism are difficult and may be counterproductive to my attempt to discover understandings of wellbeing as well as of development. As Shrestha (1998:49) states, Hinduism has 'a tendency to play cat-and-mouse with materialism'.

My exploration of '*dharma*' contributes to the empirical evidence which Kashdan *et al* (2008) suggest demonstrates a conceptual overlap between hedonic and eudaimonic wellbeing. It also supports their findings that 'hedonic and eudaimonic processes work in tandem' and that the distinction between the two 'fails to capture the Good Life as it is lived every day by everyday people' (ibid: 226-227). Hence, labelling wellbeing as either hedonic or eudaimonic may lead to artificially imposed constructions of wellbeing, better thought of as a dynamic process (ibid).

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## HINDUISM AND DEVELOPMENT

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While 'religious values and beliefs may encourage altruism, mutual respect and integrity... [they] may also reinforce the status quo, inequality and injustice' and can be 'exclusionary and anti-developmental' (RaD, 2011:4-5). As Tomalin (2006) notes, '*sva-dharma*' enforces inequality, belonging to a stratified social system [such as that of Mallagaon], which disadvantages lower castes and women (ibid: 100), limits people and decreases opportunities for development and equality (Tomalin, 2009). That service to the poor is understood as part of one's '*dharma*' while increasing religious merit (ibid: 43), suggests that upper caste practitioners in Mallagaon may feel a paternalistic benevolence in performing this service for religious merit, while reinforcing societal inequality.

On the other hand, for those who understand '*dharma*' in terms of '*sadharana-dharma*', Hinduism may support human rights, having the potential to overcome inequality

(Tomalin, 2006:100). However, Hinduism may foster an understanding of rights-based approaches to development different from those the Declaration of Human Rights contains; the latter fails to acknowledge how local religions and cultures form social ethics, particularly in terms of duty and responsibility (Tomalin, 2006). Tomalin (ibid: 99) argues that rights-based approaches to development are contestable in the Asian context, where social ethics are more likely understood ‘in terms of duties’.

Relevant to my research are: Hinduism’s shaping of Mallagaon’s value system, including understandings of appropriate aims in life, and of duty and responsibility; the resultant reactions to the relatively recent demand for rights amongst the marginalised; and what these mean for understandings of development and of wellbeing.

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#### ‘SECULAR’ AND ‘RITUAL STATUS’

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Although subsequently criticised for failing to take village networks of interdependence, specialisation and division of labour between castes into account (Dumont, 1970), I find Stevenson’s (1954) exploration of status in Hinduism’s cultural setting useful, Mallagaon being a mixed-caste community.

Stevenson (1954:45) contended that there are two types of status in Hindu society: ‘secular status’ achieved through, for example, ‘skill, education, wealth, land ownership and economic “lines of demarcation” in occupation’ (ibid: 63); and ‘ritual status’ which, based in Hinduism’s beliefs about the purity of the upper castes and impurity of the lower, is manifested through the caste system and precludes the ‘untouchable’ [Dalit] castes (ibid).

How development and/or wellbeing are understood may be affected by the observation that, increasing one’s ‘ritual status’ involves both refraining from actions and occupations prescribed to the lower castes, and performing meritorious acts like temple building (ibid). Understandings can also be affected because menstruating women and ‘untouchable’ Dalit castes are denied ‘ritual status’.

Globalisation, development and Maoism increase the likelihood of Mallagaon community members being aware of, and exposed to, alternatives to the caste system. This may mean that an individual understands wellbeing to lie in, and development to consist of, that which enables him/her to reinforce his/her extant identity by adhering to his/her ‘ritual status’ and/or ‘secular status’. Alternatively, understandings may be

based on the individual's capacity to break, or aspire to break, the bounds of 'ritual status', through increasing 'secular status'. The ability to use, for example, 'symbolic resources' as conceptualised by Zittoun *et al* (2003) (see Chapter 2) to these ends may be considered an important aspect of wellbeing, and what enables their use important aspects of development.

### 3.3 PATRON-CLIENT RELATIONSHIPS

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Although written in the early 1970s, Scott's (1972) analysis of patron-client relationships is relevant. He described the relationship as:

...a special case of dyadic (two-person) ties involving a largely instrumental friendship in which an individual of higher socio-economic status (patron) uses his influence and resources to provide protection and/or benefits for a person of lower status (client) who, for his part, reciprocates by offering general support and assistance, including personal services, to the patron (ibid: 8).

Despite their '*basis in inequality*' (emphasis in original), I agree with Scott's (ibid) argument that such relationships should not be dismissed but rather analysed as a form of 'social bond' that brings together people who are not kin and enables vertical integration.

Such relationships are particularly relevant in Mallagaon where the Brahmans continue to be patrons to many of the community's Chhetrias and Dalits. They can be understood in terms of 'a diffuse pattern of reciprocity', the patron providing not only means of subsistence, but also loans, protection, influence with outsiders, and collective services in the form of, for example, provision of schools or roads (Scott, 1972). The client provides basic labour, usually agricultural, extra services such as fetching firewood, domestic services and small gifts (ibid). Clearly such relationships may be positive for community wellbeing and development, and for both patron and client, if the patron is unexploitative. However, since the relationship is basically in-equitable, the client may often consider the relationship negative, while the patron finds it positive. Meanwhile, depending on the relationship type and available alternatives, both sides may experience a loss of wellbeing when patron-client relationships break down.

Exploring bonded agricultural labour systems in Nepal, Dhakal (2007) notes that patron-client relationships form an essential constituent of hierarchical, caste-based and autonomous communities [like Mallagaon]. Nepali and Pyakuryal's (2011) paper on marginalised communities in Far West Nepal (including the district Mallagaon belongs to) discusses the 'social institutions' whereby agrarian labourers and Dalits are paid in

kind, usually with grain. As noted in Chapter 1, this system, although declining, continues in Mallagaon. Despite the sanctioning of patron-client relationships by aspects of Hinduism, (*'sva-dharma'* and the caste system), there may be a decrease in and dissatisfaction with these forms of traditional, agrarian patron-client relations between landowner and peasant due to Maoism, especially its anti-elite discourse (see Section 3.5).

However 'new vertical links may join peasants to politicians, office-holders, or rural bosses and provide many of the essential services of the older relationship' (Scott, 1972:6), as can be seen occurring in Mallagaon through, for example, community members' increasing access to the district headquarters and its offices. Although Dhakal, in the Nepal context, considers the traditional patron-client system as weakening owing to political parties and NGOs taking over some patron functions (2007), I agree with Hertzog (2011) that the system continues, manifesting through multiple dyads.

Hertzog (ibid: 47-48), exploring how development agencies perpetuate gender inequality in Nepal, recognises patron-client relationships to exist in all sorts of 'power-dependence relations' including 'bureaucrats and clients... husband and wife... feudal lord and vassal'. Placing particular emphasis on gender perspectives and hence male domination, she argues that patronage is 'control and/or domination disguised by the rhetoric of egalitarianism, humanism, feminism' (ibid), with nothing positive in the relationship for the client. However, since 'linking' social capital is understood to be gained through relationships with institutions, including NGOs (Sixsmith and Boneham, 2012), I suggest that sometimes the client may understand such relationships as beneficial.

### 3.4 SOCIO-ECONOMIC MOBILITY, EDUCATION AND MIGRATION

Increased migration is transforming social relations in Mallagaon. This phenomenon, although precipitated by the Maoist War, has for long been a common practice in Nepal in the quest for better livelihoods, either by gaining skills or through investment in formal education (Valentin, 2012). Such migration may be voluntary, even when caused by economic need, or forced, as a result of conflict for example; this distinction is important because the cause of migration leads to different needs and ways of approaching the situation, especially in terms of education (Rao and Hossain, 2012),

inevitably leading to different understandings of development and of wellbeing in relation to migration and education.

Since so many from Mallagaon have migrated out of economic necessity or for improved educational opportunities, Rao's (2010a; 2010b) exploration of migration in terms of education and socio-economic mobility informs my analysis; especially her understanding that the 'social processes through which migration and education interact to shape people's lives, identities and status in society' are as important as the economic aspects (Rao, 2010b:137). Importantly, Rao (ibid: 138-139) emphasises that migration is not only undertaken for economic security, but also to fulfil aspirations for material and symbolic wealth and to gain experience of different places and cultures, with mobility understood as a way of gaining greater equality by changing the dynamic of social domination.

Valentin's (2012:440) research into Nepali migrants to Delhi notes the 'multiple meanings ascribed to education and learning in changing social contexts'. Considering the part that formal and informal learning and education play in mobile livelihoods, she notes that education occurs through experiences beyond the confines of institutions, arguing that migration for education, believed to have transformative powers, should be understood not only in terms of mobility but also as a learning experience in its own right (2012). Meanwhile Rao and Hossain (2012:416) observe that learning: is understood in terms of 'the ability to function effectively in a globalized and increasingly competitive livelihood context'; may be 'highly contextualised, individualized and small-scale'; and can result in activities learnt elsewhere being carried out in the home community, causing change to existing power relations.

This suggests that Mallagaon community members may understand education and migration in terms not only of improved economic wellbeing but also of improved status in the home community, and/or of development in terms of their ability to transform the social order on returning home. Although Rao and Hossain's (2012) paper is specifically concerned with young, socially marginalised men, their observations could equally apply to other marginalised groups such as women. Importantly Rao (2010a) points out that, while the processes involved in education, in the home community or elsewhere, and in migration are potentially transformative, involving human agency, they can also be reproductive, involving static ideas relating to the dominant social order. This suggests Mallagaon community members may value

these processes as aspects of development and/or wellbeing, or consider them negative because they contribute to social reproduction, depending on their socio-economic identities, their reasons for migrating or not migrating, the education/learning context, and personal experience.

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### 3.5 MAOISM IN NEPAL

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#### POLITICAL BACKGROUND

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After the Rana oligarchy (1847-1950) was overthrown (Upreti, 2006:35), a decade-long attempt at democracy was followed by Panchayat Rule (1960-1990), with the king controlling the country (Stokke and Manandhar, 2010). Although he introduced some reforms, including a new 'Country Code' (1963) based on principles of equality, caste-based discrimination persisted (ibid: 12). Popular protests (1989-1990) led to multiparty democracy and a constitutional monarchy; the 1990 Constitution stated for the first time 'that caste discrimination and untouchability were punishable, criminal acts' (Kisan, 2005:65). Civil society and freedom of expression increased and discussion began around 'caste and ethnicity-based discrimination' (Stokke and Manandhar, 2010:13). However, the Hindu social order scarcely changed, being state-protected by the Constitution declaring Nepal a Hindu Kingdom (ibid).

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#### MAOIST WAR

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Maoists and authors condoning their activity, like Sapkota (2010), speak of the 'People's War'; others like Dixit (2011) and Stokke and Manandhar (2010) condemn it as 'insurgency'. For impartiality, I refer to it as the 'Maoist War'.

The 1990s' advocacy against social exclusion and discrimination and demands for inclusion being largely ignored by the political parties and governments, 'accumulated grievances' led to the formation of the 'Nepal Communist Party (Maoist)' and the war it launched (ibid: 13). The murder (not by Maoists) of the king and royal family in 2001, contributed to increasing political instability. Later in 2001, the government deployed the army to fight the Maoists (ibid: 14). The war led to the death of over 13,000 people (ibid).

Some argue that international development caused Nepal's Maoist conflict, specifically the USAID-implemented Rapti Zone Rural Area Development Project which involved expenditure of US\$ 50 million over the 15 year period 1980 to 1995 and ended

immediately before the Maoists launched their armed conflict from the area (Mainali, 2001:125). Supposed to ‘increase the wellbeing of the people... by fulfilling the basic needs of the poor majority’ (ibid: 125), Lal (2001:144) states that it ‘alienated ethnic populations, breeding a generation of youth fed on dreams but denied opportunities for realising them’, while only the elite benefited. As Rappleye (2011:74-75) explains, for those who follow a *‘failed development view’*, development interventions are understood to worsen existent social divisions; although this project may not have directly caused the conflict, they hold the failure of forty years of external aid and interventions to ‘develop’ Nepal responsible (emphasis in original).

During the war, some Maoists were critical of foreign aid for the reasons outlined above. However, in a 2002 interview, Bhattarai (senior Maoist leader, subsequently Prime Minister) more pragmatically stated that while ‘the basic thrust of our economic policy would be self-reliance and abolition of dependency’, the latter having ‘plagued the country’s economy for long’, nonetheless ‘foreign aid and loans which are beneficial to the Nepali people and their economic development’ would be welcome (Thapa, 2003: 335).

Through the course of the war, the Maoists helped to raise the awareness of the marginalised about their ‘right to autonomy, dignity and livelihood’ (Pandey, 2011:387), their ‘ideological thrust... oriented towards expanding the rights base of the poor and the marginal, including women’ (Gautam *et al*, 2003:94). They also promised to ‘transform the pitiful record of development into positive outcomes from which the exploited, the excluded and other socially disabled... groups would benefit most’ (Pandey, 2011:382-383).

These ideas may impact on understandings of development and of wellbeing in Mallagaon, providing alternative discourses to those of the embedded social systems of Hinduism and patron-client relationships.

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#### DISCOURSES IN MALLAGAON DURING THE MAOIST WAR

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Maoist discourse was strongly anti-casteist (Shakya, 2009). For example Bhattarai told Shakya, author of ‘Unleashing Nepal’ (ibid: 138):

Nepal has been bestowed with many resources but the feudal lords were parasitic, extractive and rent-seeking and used these resources only for their own benefit. They were never interested in development but only in leisure and the living of luxurious lives. The Maoist struggle was needed to ensure that this

class could be removed, thereby allowing a model of people's participation in Nepal's future economic development.

In Mallagaon, Maoists forced Brahmans to allow Dalits into their homes and to use their *'mool'*, sent people on awareness-raising courses, took women and Dalits to places usually forbidden to them, and placed women in posts previously held by men.

According to a Phulara emigrant, Maoists indiscriminately targeted individuals in power (even "good people" who had helped others) and institutions connected to them; the 'victims' were mostly Brahman, but sometimes included non-local Chhetrias (IN: 25/09/11). Local Maoist sympathisers, on the other hand, commented that such people fled Mallagaon out of fear of retribution for corruption. The VDC and DCC offices were trashed and the new health post building razed to the ground. It was, however, suggested to me that the climate of violence enabled personal rivalries and resentments to be played out, rather than such activity necessarily being Maoist policy.

On a 2009 CEW visit, I found some older students insolent, disrupting classes while Janakiram staff did nothing. Surprised, having always found the students well-behaved and often, in my eyes, over-disciplined, I wondered how such change had come about. I was told that the students concerned had been "empowered" by the Maoists and that such disruptive, bad behaviour was apparently encouraged by other local schools and teachers, jealous of the recipients of CEW scholarships and of Janakiram's foreign funding and plentiful hostels (Trip Diary, 2009).

Maoist discourse is also relevant here. In 2000, Bhattarai wrote that, 'the present educational institutions should be burnt down', only later explaining that he had not meant 'that one should actually burn down the infrastructure but rather get rid of old ways of thinking, the educational system, the curriculum, the manner in which it is taught and other obstacles' (Thapa, 2003:381). Such discourse may have provided openings for lawlessness.

These examples of how Maoist discourse played out in Mallagaon suggest the extent to which new discourses may affect not only behaviour but also understandings of development and of wellbeing.

### 3.6 CONCLUSION

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By combining the 'thick' description of ethnographic writing (Geertz, 1993 (1973)) based on my field-notes and previous experience in Mallagaon, with factual information

gleaned during fieldwork and from literature on Nepal, I have provided the lived context of my research site. At the same time I have introduced the community, its institutions and its people from my perspective and situated myself there, as a PhD researcher and in my former roles as VSO teacher and CEW staff member.

I have also highlighted the likely importance of institution-based processes and discourses in contributing to the construction of understandings of development and of wellbeing by exploring embedded social practices and values, and more recent social change. The chapter's reflexive contextualisation complements my case study design and ethnographic methodology, explored next.

## CHAPTER 4 METHODOLOGY

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“Take the good and the bad, churn them and get the butter” (FN: 09/11/11).

This was one research participant’s reaction, on discussing my data collection and analysis, to the range of subjects in which I showed interest. It is how I think of the PhD process; including everything of potential relevance and churning to clarify only the pertinent in my thesis. I consider my choice to carry out an ethnographic case study of Mallagaon the best means to achieve this.

### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

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This chapter begins by explaining my research design and approach, emphasising the boundaries of my case study (Stake, 1995), which set necessary limits to the wide-ranging data generated through my interpretivist, discourse-oriented and (as my fieldwork progressed) increasingly critical ethnographic methodology. I emphasise that the processes of analysis and data collection in the field were cyclical and indistinguishable from each other by exploring both in terms of my fieldwork approach and methods. I also discuss my post-fieldwork analysis, through which I chose ‘embedded cases’ (Stake, 2006), informed by a life history approach.

I then reflect on the research process and on the presentation of the final text, involving a reflexive exploration of the part played by my multiple identities and of the ethical dimensions of my research. This chapter shows the contribution made by my husband Mahesh in terms of his overt assistance, especially interpreting during interviews, and less obviously but as importantly, in terms of the insights I gained through being his wife.

### 4.2 RESEARCH DESIGN AND APPROACH

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#### CONSTRUCTING A CASE STUDY OF MALLAGAON

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I have conducted a qualitative case study of Mallagaon in order to increase understanding of issues relating to development and wellbeing, a choice I made prior to my PhD fieldwork; hence my exploration can be considered an ‘*instrumental case study*’ (Stake, 1994:237) (emphasis in original). However, as detailed in Chapter 1, since I knew Mallagaon before my PhD research, and it was specifically in relation to the community that I became interested in issues relating to development and wellbeing,

my exploration could be considered an '*intrinsic case study*', with better understanding of the community or case my aim (ibid) (emphasis in original).

Whether instrumental or intrinsic – there is no clear demarcation between them, as Stake (ibid) observes – I have ensured that the object of my study, Mallagaon, is 'a specific, unique, bounded system' (ibid: 237). As an exploration spanning the more than 20 years I have known the community, one of the boundaries is formed by my case study's time frame. Another is provided by my own definition of the community, which includes Mallagaon village, Janakiram School and the Ramkuti area (bazaar, school hostels, health post, offices and temple). It also includes not only community members living in this area but also people like me who have spent some years living as part of it, those who have emigrated and staff of development-related offices/departments at the district headquarters.

I also consider my research questions to play an important role in determining these boundaries, helping me to conceptualise the 'interrogative boundary' of my field 'as part geographical, part social, part mental construct' (Madden, 2010:53). For example, I inquire into the mediating role of multiple identities in terms of: the physical location of the participants and of Mallagaon; the social differences generated by, for example, caste and gender; and the mental construction of identity according to how participants identify the Mallagaon community and themselves in relation to it.

As detailed later in this chapter, my design includes nine 'embedded cases' which I explore as bounded yet interrelated entities within my case study (Stake, 2006). For example, the boundaries of 'Co-constructing Janakiram School' (Chapter 5) are defined by my focus on the social construction of understandings of development and of wellbeing by those in authority positions; for this purpose I deconstruct discourses in articles written by prominent individuals. Although this 'embedded case' can stand alone, I relate my 'embedded cases' of individuals (Chapters 6 to 9) to it, since part of their focus is on the influence of the dominant discourses explored in Chapter 5.

Although I recognise the criticisms levelled against case studies, that findings cannot be transferred nor theory generated from them, I agree with Walker (1995) that this is actually their strength because, as a result, they can help prevent attempts to make generalisations from too narrow a conceptual understanding. Meanwhile, my 'intimate knowledge of the interconnections among the actors and events' (through researching a community long known to me, and from eight months of immersion there for my PhD

fieldwork) has enabled me to recognise the theoretical significance of my case (Mitchell, 1984:240). My knowledge of Mallagaon enables me to provide the ‘full and thorough knowledge of the particular’ from which such insights may be gained as become relevant ‘in new and foreign contexts’ (Stake, 1978:6).

I consider case study to be useful and appropriate to my research since, as illustrated by my thesis thus far: the social situation is complex and oversimplification would prevent understanding; identities and roles are at stake due to change; and my aim is to understand from the viewpoint of others (Walker / Academia, 2014).

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### TAKING AN ETHNOGRAPHIC APPROACH

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Key to my exploration of local understandings is ‘the ethnographic ethos of *interpretive* study, seeking out emic meanings held by the people within the case’ (Stake, 1994:239-240) (emphasis in original). Informed by Geertz’s ‘interpretive ethnography’, which aims ‘to make available to us answers that others... have given (Geertz, 1993:30 [1973]), I have taken a reflexive and self-questioning approach intended to enable my readers to ‘get inside’, think about, empathise and share the experience (Thomas, 2011),

### A DISCOURSE-ORIENTED APPROACH

Towards the end of my fieldwork, I found the following quote: ‘If you meet the Buddha on the road, kill him’ (Daily Buddhism, 2008). This notion, which I duly noted (FN: 19/07/12), became central to my research process as a reminder to consider no concepts watertight and no methods foolproof. In studying the ways social groups construct, maintain and reproduce their social worlds through discourse practices (Smart, 2012), discourse-created meanings are understood as contingent upon context (Gee and Handford, 2012). Since context is ‘indefinitely large, ranging from local matters... through people’s beliefs, to historical, institutional, and cultural settings’, and consideration of further contextual aspects can always alter one’s interpretation (ibid: 4), I consider it important to maintain uncertainty about the correctness of any interpretation.

The powerful influence of institutions in creating the world of my research participants (Escobar, 1995:107) becoming increasingly clear, my approach was informed by Critical Discourse Analysis and its concern with ‘the *social power* of groups or institutions’ to ‘control the acts and minds of (members of) other groups’ as a result of having a ‘*power base* of privileged access to scarce social resources’ (van Dijk,

2006:354-355) (emphasis in original). Questions central to Critical Discourse Analysis are: ‘How do (more) powerful groups control public discourse?’ and ‘How does such discourse control mind and action of (less) powerful groups...?’ (ibid: 355). This includes exploration into how institutions (i.e. any social group which has existed over a continued period of time) reproduce themselves and their power structures, create their identities and ‘adapt to change’ (Linde, 2006:518).

I explore the discourse analysis tools I used in ‘Introducing Chapters 5 to 10’.

#### INVOLVING CRITICAL ETHNOGRAPHY

Remaining open to uncertainty and reflexively questioning everything, the approach I took to my ethnographic case study shifted during my fieldwork. Initially I intended to ‘observe and explain the social world without intervention or manipulation (to the degree that this is possible)’, as Smart describes the ethnographic endeavour (2012:147). Although requested to continue work with CEW during fieldwork, I terminated my employment. With innumerable requests to me for a CEW studentship within the first weeks of my arrival, I was initially determined to shed my CEW identity:

“To as great an extent as I can... I am distancing myself from CEW and so glad that I can truthfully say that I no longer work for CEW” (FN: 13/10/11).

However, by November-end, asked for further funding, invited to give CEW speeches and thanked for former donations, I admitted to myself the impossibility of discarding this identity. Meanwhile, increasingly distressed by the neglect of the hostels for which I had secured funding and by the resultant negative effects on the girls, I wrote:

“I have no right to be non-interventionist. ...after all the hostels are my ‘charitable gift’ as everyone keeps telling me, and so also my responsibility” (FN: 30/10/11).

Concerned by many issues, including the lack of female and Dalit role models in the school, in December I told Janakiram staff that, as things stood, I would not recommend CEW sponsorship of more students, noting that doing so was:

“...my power, power which I should not be using as an ethnographer. However it is a power I already have and am perceived by all to have whatever I now do or do not do and my conscience will not let me leave this unsaid” (FN: 05/12/11).

Considering it otherwise unethical, from this point I abandoned all efforts to simply observe; I increasingly revealed my standpoint, despite my initial intention of

maintaining impartiality. The more involved I became the less inclination I felt to hide my opinions and the more I wanted to support those I felt committed to.

For these reasons I chose to take a more critical ethnographic approach. ‘Critical ethnography begins with an ethical responsibility to address processes of unfairness or injustice within a particular *lived* domain’ (Madison, 2012:5) (emphasis in original). I felt increasingly the ‘compelling sense of duty and commitment based on principles of human freedom and well-being’ that Madison discusses when she writes of ‘ethical responsibility’ (ibid). Hence I felt compelled to help bring greater equality and freedom (ibid) to Mallagaon; my attempt to do so is illustrated in Chapter 10. I do not see this as opposed to my starting point in a more conventionally ethnographic approach, but useful as a means of critiquing the culture (Thomas, 1993:vii).

The ‘real political task’, as Foucault describes it, is:

...to criticize the workings of institutions that appear to be both neutral and independent, to criticize and attack them in such a manner that the political violence that has always exercised itself obscurely through them will be unmasked, so that one can fight against them (quoted by Madison, 2012:1).

Apart from my involvement in a skills training programme (see Chapter 10), I neither intervened nor advocated, as a fully ‘critical ethnographer’ would set out to do (Madison, 2012), nor did I criticise or fight institutions, except when compelled by reasons described above. However, my discourse-oriented approach makes my entire ethnography a form of critique; through analysis of prevalent discourses, I undertake the unmasking Foucault advocated.

### 4.3 FIELDWORK APPROACH AND METHODS

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Macdonald and Walker (1977:184) state that, to gain access to the data, a researcher conducting case study needs to ‘find vantage points and roles within a web of human relationships without destroying the fabric. The delicacy and subtlety of his instruments is a pre-condition of their validity...’ The ethnographic methods I used, of immersion in the field and participant observation over an eight-month period, helped provide such ‘vantage points’, as did my choice to conduct research in a community I already knew. My ‘instruments’ also included the ethnographic methods of: entering the field with ‘foreshadowed problems’ (Malinowski’s term used by Hammersley and Atkinson, 2010:3); providing ‘thick description’ based on field-notes (Geertz, 1993 [1973]); conducting ethnographic semi-structured interviews which allow the participants to elaborate on areas of concern to them (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2010); and

‘generating’ documents (Mason, 2002). They also included my cyclical data collection and analysis process (Smart, 2012), and the writing up of my case study in ways informed by Van Maanen (1988). I consider it of paramount importance that I brought to all of these ethnographic methods, which I now explore, a reflective ‘frame of mind’ (Stake, 1994:246) in order to ensure their ‘delicacy and subtlety’.

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### ‘FORESHADOWED PROBLEMS’

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To maximise my receptiveness, I began fieldwork with ‘foreshadowed problems’, (Malinowski’s term used by Hammersley and Atkinson, 2010:3) involving broad definitions of community, wellbeing and development, and broad ideas of how I and others might interpret these and the links between them. This process relates to grounded theory (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2010): the deductions I made from pre-existing theory suggesting the foci of my research without preventing me noticing areas beyond (Ezzy, 2002).

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### PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION

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As Chapter 3, ‘Contextualising My Research’, illustrates, I found that to understand my case ‘require[d] experiencing the activity of the case as it occurs in its contexts and in its particular situation’ with the latter shaping not only the activity but how I experienced and interpreted it (Stake, 2006:2). To this end, throughout eight months of fieldwork, I immersed myself in Mallagaon, taking the role of ‘participant-as-observer’, in that I was involved and my real identity was known to the community (Gold, 1958 in Bryman, 2008). Although not employed there as in the past, I considered myself involved because, throughout the research process, I lived in Mallagaon doing some of the daily chores of a village woman, sometimes living a man’s life in the bazaar joining in conversations, and engaging with schoolchildren and teachers. I also became involved through the knitting programme (see Chapter 10).

Hence, I was able to discover much that cannot be told, articulated or formed through interview, including ‘social actions, behaviour, interactions, relationships, events, as well as spatial, locational and temporal... [and] experiential, emotional and bodily dimensions’ (Mason, 2002:84). Indeed, near the beginning of my fieldwork I found that:

“Mahesh being ill gives me the opportunity to know a little of the difficulties of life here and overcomes any romanticising notions I may have. His illness has really made me feel closer to being an insider than much else. Partly because of

the lugging of drinking water, the hand-washing of all the clothes, running around after hot water, invalid-suitable food... and medical help, as well as worrying about what the illness is, the quality of any local diagnosis and prescription here where there are no doctors and... imagining having to arrange for him to be carried down the hill” (FN: 14/10/11).

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### ‘THICK DESCRIPTION’ AND FIELD-NOTES

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Geertz described the ‘intellectual effort’ of providing ‘thick description’ (such as the above passage may be considered) in field-notes as central to ethnography (1993:6 [1973]). Describing such ‘thick description’ as ‘an account of the group’s collective meaning-making activities and resultant conceptual world, as theorized through the disciplinary concepts employed by the researcher in the analysis’, Smart (2012:150) refers to the three analytical strategies Geertz employed (2000 [1983]). These are relevant to my own writing of field-notes, which I define as ‘a process of “analysis-in-description”’ (Emerson *et al*, 1995:105-106).

One of Geertz’s strategies was a ‘concern with linguistic categories’, a ‘focus on key terms that seem, when their meaning is unpacked, to light up a whole way of going at the world’ (ibid: 157). Some such terms were used by community members, as I explore in my data and analysis chapters, including “*thulo maanche*” (“big/important people”) and “*out-knowledge*”.

Geertz (ibid: 158) also showed a ‘concern with the life cycle’ which, including both biological and biographical elements, considers the ‘states and relationships almost everyone experiences’. Shared episodes in the group’s history or in its communal development can be analysed as ‘symbolic artefacts, potentially rich in meaning’ (Smart, 2012:150), providing ‘a structure of hope, fear, desire and disappointment’ (Geertz, 2000:160 (1983)). The founding of Janakiram (see Chapter 5) and the celebration of festivals (see Chapter 6) are significant examples of this.

Finally, Geertz (2000 [1983]) valued ‘convergent data’, the miscellaneous and diverse observations, descriptions and measures which, collected opportunistically, are valuable because the individuals concerned are involved in one another’s lives. Because of my focus on a natural community, on ‘groups of people engaged with one another in multiple ways’, I can ‘turn what looks like a mere collection of heterogeneous material into a mutually reinforcing network of social understandings’ (ibid: 156).

Two extracts from my field-notes illustrate the use of ‘convergent data’, as well as the importance of context and the need for openness to shifting interpretations:

“When she comes to sit at her grindstone, the Dalit skilfully makes Madhab move without touching him. In fact, he seems to have some sense already that he should move away without making any physical contact with her” (FN: 25/11/11).

In Mallagaon village a Dalit, working for a Brahman family, moves a child away from the grindstone (which she needs to use) without touching him since she, according to caste-based Hindu beliefs, would pollute him by physical contact. Based on this extract, I interpreted that nothing had changed in terms of caste-based discrimination; Dalits and the Brahman families they work for accept discriminatory, caste-based practices as a given.

“Madhab – from that ‘high’ Brahman family – is picked up by Aakash the [Dalit] coppersmith/goldsmith today. His mother takes him back and straightaway goes indoors with Madhab. You can see she disapproves, but she doesn’t say anything. Aakash, as by and large a complete outsider, can break the rules which Dalits born and brought up here probably would not dare nor dream of breaking. So the mix up of people in the bazaar helps to break down the barriers” (F/N: 16/05/12).

In Mallagaon bazaar Madhab’s mother, although uncomfortable, says nothing about a Dalit holding her son. The social inclusion Aakash claims for himself is accepted, if reluctantly, by the Brahman woman. Discriminatory practices are after all changing, although only in certain contexts.

#### KEEPING A RECORD OF OBSERVATIONS

Only on reading my field-notes did I realise the significance of the two extracts discussed above when taken together, having written about them with no certainty of their relevance, nor recognition of their connection. The latter event, six months after the first, modified the interpretation I had previously made, demonstrating the value of lengthy immersion and of ‘thick description’. Perhaps because I have always kept diaries, it seemed natural to record everything I was exposed to, realising, as Becker (1996) did, that even apparently irrelevant information proves useful. Although this led to a lengthy, sometimes painful analytical process, I consider my findings the richer for this.

Finding note-taking disruptive to the immediacy of experience and liable to make people feel scrutinised, I preferred to make mental notes. Perhaps again because I am used to keeping diaries, I found this easy. Occasionally, when I knew I would be unable

to write up my observations into field-notes soon enough to rely on memory, I took ‘scratch notes’ as the least disruptive means of recording my observations (Emerson *et al*, 1995).

Goodall (2000:90) advises keeping a separate diary alongside field-notes, to help ensure a balance between ‘self-reflexive accounts of the life of the *writer*’ and ‘the lived experience of *others*’ (emphasis in original). Although I did not do so, finding the attempt to divide the two disruptive to the writing process, this advice informed my field-note writing, ensuring that I included a mix of personal interpretation and more objective description.

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## SAMPLING AND INTERVIEWING

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### SAMPLING

In choosing whom to interview, my first criterion was to include all possible voices. I therefore found as wide a range of people as possible in terms of their age, gender, caste, level of education, type of job, geographical location and levels of authority in or beyond Mallagaon. I also tried to include outsiders (people connected to Mallagaon indirectly, such as district headquarters-based officials), and categories in between, such as emigrants from and non-local people working in Mallagaon.

This process began with ‘convenience sampling’, interviewing participants accessible to me (Bryman, 2004:100). My being known there ensured sufficient numbers and easy access to Mallagaon’s authority figures, including teachers and community leaders with whom I had previously worked and lived. My difficulty lay in my former landlord (VDC secretary) acting as ‘gatekeeper’, either ‘in good faith to facilitate the research, or... to control the findings’ (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995:133-134). For example, he helpfully volunteered to arrange a meeting with Mallagaon village women but all who came were Brahman. As Bob (a former VSO in Mallagaon) suggested, in the past I was probably “managed... corralled”, having been part of a Brahman family, (IN: 16/07/11). I now strove to overcome this, facilitated by Mahesh. His friendship with Dalit men helped me find a key Dalit informant through whom, by ‘snowball sampling’ (Bryman, 2004) I gained access to many, including women.

I conducted over ninety interviews (see Appendix 2), many more than intended for several reasons, including my above-mentioned aim to include a wide range of individuals. The choice of whom to exclude being an ethical issue (Robinson-Pant and

Singal, 2013), I included individuals who asked to be interviewed. Sometimes, I conducted interviews lest I failed to reach others who met similar criteria. Sometimes, I interviewed individuals to reach others. For example, to interview a particular Dalit woman I had to interview her husband also, to avoid offending him. While at one point I considered discounting this interview, he has ended up being the focus of one of my 'embedded cases' (Hari-Dai in Chapter 8).

#### SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS AND INFORMAL CONVERSATIONS

I varied my approach to my planned yet informal in-depth interviews, asking questions I considered most likely to encourage frank responses. My interviews were minimally structured by key questions and areas to cover through the conversation (Madden, 2010). This 'ethnographic interview' approach enabled my understanding 'without imposing any *a priori* categorization' limiting to my inquiry (Punch, 2005:172).

My key questions, often indirect, were designed to allow for a full range of responses without suggesting bias. For example:

- What dreams do you have for your children?
- Which aspects of traditional village life do you find positive and which negative?
- What aspects of Mallagaon can be improved and what is good as it is?
- Do you prefer city or village life?
- What are the biggest changes to have happened over the last twenty years?

If individuals answered only one part of the question, I would repeat the rest; if they only responded in terms of themselves, I would ask them to consider the community, and vice versa.

At other times I asked direct questions about development and about wellbeing, especially to those whose initial responses, levels of education or job-type indicated their readiness to follow this line of inquiry.

I found that taking both approaches revealed two types of understanding. Direct questions often helped establish the discourses prevalent in Mallagaon. Indirect questions, as well as observations, helped reveal more grounded understandings based on personal experience. Meanwhile, if one approach failed, I would try to ask the question in a different way, for example:

“My question about what may be less good about the education system – the way it is delivered, the curriculum on offer – gets no response except that it is good. My question what in his imagination would be good for the area brings forth his opinion of the need for technical and vocational education” (FN: 29/10/11).

As this extract suggests, less direct questioning helped overcome a tendency to provide answers understood as ‘correct’, which individuals assumed I wanted to hear or which they seemed to have adopted, unprocessed, from elsewhere. The less educated, who were also those less used to having their opinions consulted, often felt more at ease and able to answer if I used this approach.

The interviews were informal and conversational, especially if the individual was relaxed and knew Mahesh and/or me well (I explore issues relating to his presence throughout my fieldwork and his role as interpreter in the interviews later in the chapter). This meant that people would go in-depth into areas that interested them and volunteer unsolicited information. Hence some of my analysis is based on directly stated understandings, some on understandings inferred by me.

Often valuable three-way, informal conversations between me, Mahesh and the participant developed after the formal interview:

“So much that is significant is so often said after the interview... This may be for several reasons; the interviewee thinks it is irrelevant to the interview; is not relaxed enough to say it during the interview; does not want to say it during the interview” (FN: 06/11/11).

The chat following Hari-Dai’s interview (see Chapter 8) illustrates the value of this period, suggesting that I perhaps should not have used a recording device. As Back warns, they can silence individuals and lead to staged, socially acceptable versions of selves (2010). Taking heed of the warning against ‘the error... that we mistake the socially shaped account for the authentic voice of truth’ (ibid: 8) yet finding note-taking during interview difficult and disruptive, I found it helpful to combine the less informal recorded interview with a more relaxed post-interview chat. I also found that many participants needed the initial structure in order to focus, while both parts of the interview yielded useful data.

In addition to the interviews, I had many informal conversations with participants individually or in groups, often in the local teashop, in the school hostels or when visiting homes, and took many field-notes based on my observations of them going

about their daily lives. These processes helped prevent my making the ‘error’ referred to by Back (2010) above.

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### COLLECTING AND GENERATING DOCUMENTS

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My research scope remaining broad throughout my fieldwork, I collected many documents. These included texts relating to: NGOs and government bodies involved in Mallagaon, based there or in the district headquarters; tourism, collected in Dhangadhi; the knitting programme I was involved in; and Janakiram, including school textbooks, speeches, facts and figures, and magazines.

I was able to decide which of these documents were useful only after my fieldwork, the decision involving a process described by Mason (2002) as generating rather than collecting documents. Recognition that each text had been prepared for different purposes, for different people and contexts, and with different consequences, and therefore should not be read in isolation merely as forthcoming data, meant that I used knowledge from beyond their confines (*ibid*). Hence, in Chapters 5 and 6 I combine knowledge gleaned from interviews and participant observation with my discourse analysis of texts to explore how institutions structure the circumstances surrounding people’s lives and ideas (Escobar, 1995), and how individuals use language to certain ends. I am thus able to create a ‘total picture of reason, rules, responsibility, authority and community as well as just text, subtext and context’ (Apthorpe, 1996:17).

Elsewhere, I use other documents (see Chapter 10) as supporting evidence.

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### A CYCLICAL APPROACH

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Understanding data collection and analysis as ‘interwoven, influencing one another’ (McMillan, 2008:283), I followed an ethnographic and iterative process of ‘recursive analysis’, analysing and reflecting upon data before collecting more (Smart, 2012:149) on five occasions through my fieldwork. Although many areas I considered important at the time proved central to my thesis, others did not. For example, amongst themes noted in November 2011 (see Appendix 3), migration and the road remain central, communication systems and sanitation do not. By May 2012 (see Appendix 4), I intended to consider development and wellbeing in terms of livelihoods, a specific focus I subsequently dropped, but many other themes I then identified are now central. These include: ‘insider’ ‘outsider’ categories; sources of understandings, for example NGOs

and migrants' experiences; and wellbeing understood as greater equality and independence, and maintenance of indigenous systems.

#### 4.4 ANALYSIS POST FIELDWORK, LEADING TO A MULTI-LAYERED CASE STUDY

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The process described above illustrates the flexibility of the ethnographic case study approach, which enabled me to pursue different themes when in the field. It also meant that, on my return from fieldwork, I could explore the context and theory relating to themes I realised were relevant in the field, including the institutions of Hinduism and patron-client relationships (see Chapter 3), and capital and resources (see Chapter 2).

I began, post fieldwork, with thematic analysis, identifying themes through coding (Ezzy, 2002), keeping in mind the broad themes I had already identified. For example, the road and Janakiram (see Appendix 5) were significant themes, identified by the frequency with which they were discussed and through my observations of their effects on individuals and the community. However, I found the thematic analysis process disjointed, with the connection between the understandings and the individuals who hold them broken.

Deciding that an 'interpretive, integrative, artistic and aesthetic' form of analysis (ibid: 135) would best advance my exploration, I quickly resumed writing, having always found it easier to reflect on experiences thus. I found that the process helped me 'gain insights, see relationships and generate questions for research' (Spradley, 1979:42). This began with an auto-ethnographic response to my fieldwork, part of which has formed the Preamble to this thesis, and moved on to explore critical incidents. This helped me recognise, for example: which individuals provided the richest data; themes, such as the importance to wellbeing of 'ritual' and/or 'secular status'; and the importance of identity in mediating understandings, which later became one of my research questions.

In-depth exploration and analysis of individuals, events and their settings enabled me to explore both development and wellbeing more profoundly than thematic analysis alone would have allowed. When analysing my data thematically, the attempt to separate wellbeing from 'the roundedness of people's lives' made it lose meaning, since wellbeing is 'a complex concept ...embedded in the everyday' (Jha, 2011:34). Similarly, I found my approach better for: exploring how '*the structures of development activity pervade social experience in Nepal*' (Pigg, 1993:46) (emphasis in original);

identifying ‘the indirect repercussions the steps taken to pursue development have on everyday life’ (ibid); and the cultural effects of development in transforming ‘the terms in which social identities are cast and the symbols that mark social differences’ (Pigg, 1992:492).

As I drafted my case study, I thus combined ‘direct interpretation of the individual instance’ with ‘aggregation of instances’ [themes found through coding, which I used to help choose my ‘embedded cases’, and subsequently to triangulate these cases with other findings], thus using the two means identified by Stake for finding new meanings about cases (1995:74).

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### CHOOSING THE ‘EMBEDDED CASES’

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Having decided upon my overall case in advance, I selected my ‘embedded cases’, or ‘case[s] within the case’ (Stake, 2006:26). Stake writes of these choices being made in the field (ibid); however, although I had a sense of which individuals and events I would focus on at that time, I only finalised my choices post-fieldwork, finding that I had detailed data on a wide enough range of individuals and events to allow this approach. My aim being to reveal how individuals understand development and wellbeing rather than to explore themes *per se*, this decision to use ‘embedded cases’ (ibid) based upon individuals was unproblematic.

Having deduced themes through the analysis processes described above, my choice of the events and individuals to base these ‘embedded cases’ on was informed by Mitchell; using analytical induction, I selected the sets of circumstances best demonstrating my theoretical findings and allowing me ‘to establish theoretically valid connections between events and phenomena’ (Mitchell, 1984:239). Serving ‘to make previously obscure theoretical relationships suddenly apparent’, my cases are ‘telling’ rather than ‘typical’ (ibid).

Taking the themes thus far generated (for examples see Appendix 6), my next step was to make excel spreadsheet summaries of the understandings of those (twenty eight of over ninety interviewees) individuals whose ideas I found most relevant to them. From these, I chose the seven individuals focused upon in my ‘embedded cases’ (see Appendix 7 and Chapters 6 to 9) based on the criteria I now describe. These cases are intended to be illustrative and ‘telling’ of the different perspectives I came across and the theory I generated (Mitchell, 1984) rather than representative of types or groups.

Informed by a life history approach, I have aimed to explore macro-issues from the viewpoint of the life experiences of individuals (Stephens, 2007). In doing so, to achieve a balance between the individual and the context of their experiences, I focused on those individuals whose personal experiences [and understandings] I could best relate to their social environment and to the experiences of others in similar circumstances (ibid). To reveal the range of social contexts different community members are exposed to, the individuals I chose to base my 'embedded cases' on are illustrative of different genders, generations, castes, relative power and/or or powerlessness, and location/s (*re* their insider / outsider positions) in relation to Mallagaon (see Appendix 7). For example, these 'embedded cases' encompass all the Mallagaon castes (the Phularas are Brahmans, the Bhandaris are Chhetrias and the Nagaris and Bhuls are Dalits (see the 'Mallagaon Caste Hierarchy', page 66).

I was able to make historical comparisons across time, since several of the seven individuals forming the focus of my 'embedded cases' were well-known to me during the early 1990s; this contributed to the further context which I consider to be 'intrinsically connected to matters of meaning and ongoing interpretation' (Stephens, 2009:14). Meanwhile, two 'embedded cases' of events supplement the contextualisation in the 'embedded cases' of individuals and in Chapter 3 'Contextualising My Research'. One of these is devoted to the founding, more than fifty years ago, of Janakiram through local religious endeavour (Chapter 5), the other to the knitting development intervention which took place during my fieldwork (see Chapter 10). My choice to include in my case study 'embedded cases' of individuals known to me for over twenty years and of events was informed by life history research since, taken together, they have enabled exploration of:

[T]he relationship between two interdependent worlds: that of the individual with their unique life story and that of the past, present and future contextual world through which the individual travels (Stephens, 2007:66).

The level of rapport, considered a priority of life history research (ibid), that existed between me and/or Mahesh and the participants was an important factor in gaining deeper insights; while I had a particularly good relationship with some of the upper castes, his was strong with the Dalit males I have chosen. In some cases, relationships were old and established, in others new. Holliday (2007:159) notes that studies tend not to explicitly show the researcher 'using the experience of her relations with people in the research setting as data', in terms of improving relations with them and 'to increase understanding of the culture generally'. Most of my 'embedded cases' of individuals

benefited from the wider context and detailed data that my relationship with them for over twenty years brought to the analysis.

The multi-layered case study approach I chose also involved my deciding which other ‘people’s activities and perceptions would add most to the portrayal’ (Stake, 2006:26). These I used, along with documents, and my own experiences, observations and field-notes, to triangulate with my ‘embedded cases’.

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#### 4.5 REFLECTING ON THE RESEARCH PROCESS

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##### MULTIPLE IDENTITIES

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My discussion above about my relationships with my research participants suggests the important part played by my shifting, multiple and constantly evolving identities in the research process. On return from fieldwork, reading through my field-notes, I noted more than forty different identities, many of these incompatible with each other, which I have or have had in relation to Mallagaon (see Appendix 8).

These include comparative identities. My identity as a young woman twenty years ago compared to my middle-aged identity now enabled me to recognise how age-related understandings of development and of wellbeing can be. Whereas in the past I felt no anxiety about my health in a remote village, nor about transportation on precipitous roads, during fieldwork I was fearful, resulting in my views changing about the importance of infrastructural development. Meanwhile, my former outsider identity as single, ‘Western’ woman, as opposed to my current insider identity as wife of an Indian from a Hindu family (to Nepalis, India is less ‘foreign’ than other countries) enabled me to see how differently local married women are treated compared to women from abroad. Often even people who had in the past communicated freely with me would now talk to me only through Mahesh; with my ‘insider’ identity I sometimes felt more excluded than I had with my former ‘outsider’ identity.

Identities I did not necessarily own but into which Mallagaon positioned me as a result of my previous roles as teacher and aid worker there, were useful in revealing understandings. Although money was almost never directly stated as important for wellbeing, the frequency of requests for financial assistance, owing to my ‘latent identities’ (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995:153), suggests its importance to people. Sometimes these identities hindered the research process; the status of ‘honorary Brahman’ and ‘honorary man’ accorded to me during my earlier time in Mallagaon

impeded my access to Dalits and to women. Being an ‘insider’ in certain groups made me even more an ‘outsider’ in others. Indeed, I was ‘*simultaneously*... to some extent an insider, and to some extent an outsider’, involving not ‘one continuum but... a multiple series of parallel ones’ with elements of ‘insiderness’ and ‘outsiderness’ coming into different areas of my research (Hellowell, 2006:490) (emphasis in original).

In bringing out the importance of identity and how this affects relationship, I have taken a ‘dialogic’, interpretive approach which ‘interrogates how talk among speakers is interactively (dialogically) produced and performed...’ (Riessman, 2008:105). Such an approach raises ethical questions (Stephens, 2007), especially in terms of how I position myself in relation to my research participants. Therefore I give space to my voice and identities alongside those of my participants, to reveal how ‘issues relating to power, resource and... gender’ framed my interactions in the field (Stephens, 2009:35).

Closely identified with CEW and having in the past sourced both educational and infrastructural funds for Mallagaon, I was aware that some may have agreed to participate in expectation of a return. Although I offered English conversation classes to the teachers, the sessions were not well attended. People had higher expectations of me: at community level, capital funding; at a personal level, provision of CEW scholarships for family members. Stressing my inability to offer either, I nonetheless felt ethically ill at ease.

The relationships of trust I had over a long period with many (having known them, worked with them and shown them my commitment to helping Mallagaon) seemed to enable participants to speak freely, as equals, with me. However, I am aware of the possibility of bias in the interviews, given my roles and theirs in relation to these (mine include white ‘Westerner’, former money-source and teacher; theirs, individual responsible for finding funds for Mallagaon and former student). Sometimes participants seemed to respond according to the ‘setting and role they... [were] positioned in’ (Renganathan, 2009:13). However, concerned with ‘people’s perspectives’ and ‘discursive practices’ rather than with factual information, I consider these ‘identities or social locations (...the patterns of social relationships in which they are enmeshed)’ not a source of bias but a focus of analysis (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2010:180-181). Hence, even identities which complicated the research process increased my understanding.

I am also aware that my social location and identity determined the information I was privy to (ibid), a factor which doubtless contributed to (although, as I explore in Chapter 5, is not the sole reason for) the emphasis on Janakiram in my findings.

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#### ASSISTANCE IN THE FIELD

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There were marked differences in the social locations of me, the researcher and those I researched, of the kind Liamputtong (2007) identifies as problematic to the research process. Such problems were, however, largely obviated by Mahesh's presence and assistance throughout my fieldwork:

"...my race and weaker language skills and previous roles here make me way more of an 'other' than Mahesh and have far more of a negative impact in terms of breaking down barriers of shyness than does his different gender. This gets to the point where I get frustrated that women as well as men tend to talk to him rather than me if we are together. The women also know that he is on their side – he frequently fills up the water vessels of the Dalits at the '*mool*', he offers to carry water for women who look as though they may have problems carrying it for themselves... I do not think that having Mahesh as a man interpreting when interviewing women is making the problems associated with my difference any worse and it may well be reducing them" (FN: 24/03/14).

Indeed, Mahesh's relationships with people contributed in important ways to my research; I noted in several interviews with Dalit men, including Hari-Dai (see Chapter 8) how much more forthcoming they seemed in his presence and how, as already mentioned, his friendships with Dalits gave me initial access to them.

Herrera, an American, writes of the positive contribution made to her 'credibility and legitimacy' in her Egyptian research community by her husband's identity as a Muslim from the east (quoted by Holliday, 2007:154). Mahesh's identities as an Indian and Hindu, and his open advocacy for both Dalit and female equality, helped me in similar ways.

Since most interviews were in Nepali, I took Mahesh's assistance in these, worried that my language skills were limited. I found I usually understood everything but his simultaneous summarising of what participants said confirmed and complemented my understanding and was less disruptive to the participants' flow than verbatim translation. From these recorded interviews, Mahesh later made accurate written translations of what I considered relevant. Sometimes Mahesh asked further questions, usually for clarification, and this helped me utilise nearly-missed opportunities for further elicitation on some themes.

I consider Mahesh (who, although not Nepali, speaks the language fluently) to have been a ‘linguistic mediator’ as described by Androulakis (2013) rather than an interpreter or research assistant. This is because his role was informal, the accuracy of his verbal translations was not my first priority and he was not fully objective; hence his effects on my data are complex (ibid) in ways important to acknowledge. Mahesh’s role was ‘key... during the process of generating and interpreting data’ and empowering community members’ participation (ibid: 375). Therefore, in the following chapters, I acknowledge his part, especially where it particularly influenced the data generated.

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### TRANSLATION OF TERMS

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With all interviews (except a few in English) conducted in Nepali or sometimes in the local language Doteli, the translation of terms is of importance. For those requiring Doteli, a third person, Vikram, whom I also consider a ‘linguistic mediator’, helped. Since I understand some Doteli and he mixed it with Nepali, I noticed some issues with his interpretation. For example, he translated “biggest changes” as “good development”, later arguing in his defence that “*thulo*” (big) and “*raamro*” (good) are the same (IN: 24/03/12). While this revealed an important understanding (big = good) of development in Mallagaon, his diction doubtless affected the interviewee’s response.

‘Development’, translated as *bikas*, is quite unproblematic in that the latter ‘signifies growth, evolution – just as its English equivalent does’ (Pigg, 1993:48). However, I found that Pigg’s observation (made over twenty years ago) that ‘in everyday parlance... *bikas* for the most part means things: especially commodities that come from elsewhere’ (ibid) still holds true. Therefore I made sure to always include indirect questions in eliciting participants’ understandings of development.

The term ‘wellbeing’ having no direct translation in Nepali, I used two words together unless otherwise stated, when asking directly about wellbeing: ‘*Sukh*’ (‘happiness, pleasure), and ‘*santushti*’ (contentment/satisfaction) (DSAL, accessed 04/07/2014). However, based on my own experience in Nepal 20 years ago, I knew that: the word ‘*sukh*’ might lead to the ‘set’ response in which life is understood to consist of ‘*sukh*’ and “*dukh*” (trouble, misfortune, pain, grief, worry (ibid)); and that the word ‘*santushti*’ might lead to the similarly formulaic response that the meeting of basic needs is all that is required to experience contentment. Hence I always also asked each participant indirect questions in eliciting their understandings of wellbeing.

Sometimes access to women and Dalits caused me unanticipated ethical dilemmas. On one occasion, a Brahman migrant from Mallagaon encouraged me to interview his sister, Rekha, also an emigrant. I had known them both as children and the interview was going well when her husband arrived in a rush and stood threateningly over us. Although I attempted to continue, the atmosphere was so tense, with the woman silenced and her husband angrily answering all the questions, that I quickly terminated it (IN: 15/03/12). As Qureshi (2010) found in Pakistan-based research, women may not have the right to give free consent.

I almost gave up my efforts to interview some of Mallagaon's older Dalits, they proved elusive, never refusing to be interviewed yet never available. Although reluctant, they may have felt obliged not to refuse, having possibly been told to cooperate by Brahman community leaders. This may explain why a middle-aged Dalit who had always been friendly became surly and uncommunicative from the day I went to interview him and his wife at his home without prior warning, although I had been assured it was appropriate to do so by Vikram, who came with me for the interview and is of his caste (IN: 24/03/12). As Asif (2010:68) observes in her Pakistan-based research, the 'socially produced consent' he ended up giving is ethically questionable (2010).

On both the occasions described above, I thought my means of gaining access were ethically sound, since some women were free to be interviewed without their husbands' presence or even permission, and other Dalits were happy to be interviewed, but perhaps I was wrong. I became more diplomatic, often soliciting interviews with women through their husbands or at least ensuring their husbands knew about the interview; and I stopped pursuing Dalits and anyone else who behaved evasively.

As these *faux pas* demonstrate, 'culturally sanctioned forms of behaviour... impact on a researcher from a Western environment' working elsewhere (Stephens, 2009:35); awareness of this is important for conducting ethical research. Such ethical dilemmas, emerging only in the field, show the importance of 'valuing the ethical decision making skills learned through participant observation' and of 'learning to understand different communicative practices and values' (Robinson-Pant and Singal, 2013:452).

I began by attempting to get signed consent from everyone I interviewed, a UK university requirement. However, after a month in the field:

“I... decided not to attempt to get any consent forms signed from anybody... Some would find them entirely off putting and irrelevant, perhaps even insulting, others would not be able to read or sign anyway. If I do get those who do realise the reason behind my getting signatures to sign, while not asking others to, it would seem as though I consider those who do sign to have more important things to say and would add to that very differentiation I am trying to move away from” (FN: 11/10/11).

This raises doubts about the relevance of UK ethical regulations in non-UK contexts, similarly questioned by Robinson-Pant and Singal (2013). As Shamin and Qureshi (2013) found in Pakistan, my request that participants sign a written consent form was met with suspicion, being associated with legal documentation. I therefore re-negotiated with the university, obtaining agreement that verbal consent would suffice.

However, at times I found gaining even oral consent problematic. When I asked retired professor Dr. Phulara permission to use his opinions, he snapped, “but of course, why not, it is what I believe” (IN: 21/07/12). All bar one gave me unconditional permission to use my interviews with them in my thesis; this person asked me not to quote certain things he said, which I would not have done anyway, being aware of the harm they might cause. Many others voiced opinions which, although permitted to, I have not used because I see potential harm, unsuspected by them. Much of my data arose from participant observation; while everyone in Mallagaon knew about my research, many probably did not monitor their words and actions constantly in my company. My conscience has decided what to include and exclude.

I also promised my research participants anonymity. However, like Moosa in her Maldives-based research (2013), I quickly questioned the relevance of this commitment. As Dr. Phulara’s words quoted above suggest, many participants proudly took ownership of their beliefs.

Ensuring anonymity, particularly between the research participants, is difficult where there is detailed analysis of a single setting (Murphy and Dingwall, 2007), while in settings where privacy is not seen as a priority, it is questionable whether a concern for the protection of an individual’s identity should be considered an ethical issue (Robinson-Pant, 2005). As I noted early on in my fieldwork:

“Do I need to worry so much about confidential issues in a society in which absolutely everybody seems to know absolutely everything about everybody else? As for getting anyone to sign a paper on which I have promised to keep them anonymous, except in the broader context of the wider world, anonymity is an impossibility however much I change people’s names” (FN: 09/10/11).

However, in accordance with UK ethics’ regulations, I have provided pseudonyms for the village, the school, the participants, the places and names in published texts and their authors. Nonetheless, those who know Mallagaon are likely to be able to identify the people and places concerned.

Ultimately, in terms of being ethically responsible to the participants, my ‘moral sense’ as researcher and my ‘ability to make reasoned decisions in the field’ are more important than any ‘regulative codes of practice or review procedures’ (Murphy and Dingwall, 2007:342). Reflexivity, important throughout my research, is particularly vital here.

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#### 4.6 REFLECTING ON THE FINAL TEXT

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Given my power over the researched in ultimately deciding what this thesis includes and excludes (Murphy and Dingwall, 2007), I consider it imperative to highlight various presentational issues relating to the final written text which contribute to the effective and ethical communication of my findings.

My written thesis is informed by Van Maanen’s (1988) exploration of three types of ethnographic writing: ‘Realist’, ‘Confessional’ and ‘Impressionist’. Although I do not follow conventions of ‘realist’ writing, their tendency to present ‘typical forms’ (ibid) serves as an important reminder to me to avoid the mythmaking tendencies which contribute to Orientalism (Said, 1985). By making my writing ‘highly personalized’ in the way of ‘Confessional Tales’ (ibid: 73) I ensure the reflexivity I consider central to my research. To capture the imagination of my readers and draw them into the world I describe, I adopt some of the conventions of ‘Impressionist Tales’, involving presentation of ‘the doing of the fieldwork rather than simply the doer [Confessional tales] or the done [Realist tales]’ (ibid: 102). Since ‘Impressionist tales’ risk fictionalisation and ‘Confessional tales’ self-absorption to an extent I consider ethically inappropriate for an ethnographic case study, I attempt to combine elements of all three approaches.

Recognising that the ‘ethnographic text... helps to construct the social phenomena it accounts for’ I consider it an ethical imperative to acknowledge and understand the

textual conventions I use and their possible influence over my readers (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2010:202).

To bring greater immediacy and emotional impact I frequently use, as now, the ‘ethnographic present’. Aware, however, of its ‘normative’ effect (Gay y Blaso and Wardle, 2000:83), I intersperse this with use of the past tense. Hence, for example, I bring immediacy to the voices of the individuals and to the events which are the focus of my ‘embedded cases’ by presenting them in the present tense at the beginning of each chapter, but follow each with discussion and analysis using the past tense to refer back to them and to other voices.

My early drafts included many Nepali terms, but now I include only those which form important concepts and cannot be directly translated. This is because I found their use created a ‘depict[ion of] the world in terms of a distinction between “them” and “us” prevalent in colonial and postcolonial discourses (Stirrat’s ideas in the words of Cooke, 2001:105) and so contributed to a form of Said’s (1985) Orientalism.

In some cases, the use of a term also found in English has similar effect. In Nepali, the word “bazaar” simply means a small market selling everyday items, whereas in English it has exotic connotations. Although I have used this term, commonly used in Nepal in both languages, I addressed this issue at the beginning of my thesis.

I had three translators. Two Nepalis translated the documents I have used and Mahesh translated the interviews. Translation was sometimes problematic, as illustrated by the process involved in choosing how to translate Devi’s use of the term ‘*wahaa*’, which means both ‘he’ and ‘she’ (see Chapter 7). Mahesh, translating for me, initially wrote ‘he/she’ and ‘him/her’. I questioned this, thinking it likely that, in the context, Devi was only talking about men, but later noted that, had I asked her, she might have chosen ‘he/she’, or ‘they’, as someone in her social milieu in England probably would (Nair, 2014). My solution of writing “he [she]” may not be ideal but at least by discussing these issues I am drawing attention to the ethical issues involved in translation.

In Chapters 6 to 9, based on individuals, I explain the terms of address that I chose for them. For example, I explore the ethical dilemmas I faced in choosing whether to refer to one participant as ‘*Hari-Dai*’ (Elder Brother Hari) or ‘*Hariji*’ (‘*ji*’ being an honorific), and my decision to refer to another participant as ‘Chuggy’s wife’ rather than use her name (ibid). My choice of address forms has ethical implications as they represent ‘a

special aspect of relational language' (Mehrotra, 1981:121) and are 'always socially loaded' (McConnell-Ginet, 2003:77). Since I am able to restructure 'the power relationship between the researcher and the research participants' through them, I feel a responsibility to present the research as reflectively as possible (Ashraf, 2010:121-122). Hence my concern to explain the choices I have made.

Being aware of whose point of view is being represented and aiming to avoid privileging the viewpoints of some over others, I have included as diverse a range of voices as possible. However, there are ethical issues around not only what I have included but also what I have excluded; the very information I excluded for an ethical reason (for example, its potential to harm) may seem appropriate for inclusion from the ethical perspective that it ensures accurate representation and avoids disappointing participants. This highlights how difficult ethical choices can be, asking one 'to choose between a "right" and a "right"' (ibid: 158).

The pun in the title, 'Writing Relationships' (Nair, 2014) of the article in which I first explored these translation issues in terms of ethics, illustrates that my writing is an effort to put right any mistakes I may have made in Mallagaon, during fieldwork or before.

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#### 4.7 CONCLUSION

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As this chapter has illustrated, I wrote throughout the research process as a means to move 'through successive stages of self-reflection', meaning that my writing in the field, my drafts and re-drafts and the final text were a continuous, seamless process, their boundaries scarcely distinguishable (Richardson and St. Pierre summarised by Denzin and Lincoln, 2005:19). This enabled me to apply a reflexive lens throughout, in relation to not only methodology and fieldwork but also to the final text, showing awareness of the importance of 'ongoing ethical interrogation of the research process' (Robinson-Pant and Singal, 2013:452). This led to my discussing some of the pros and cons of my specific research experience; the latter in most cases having positive potential as a result of my recognition of them and subsequent learning through them.

This reflexivity, and the flexibility of the ethnographic approach I took to my case study, meant that I was able to move from my initial attempts to be impartial towards a stance increasingly informed by critical ethnography. It also led to my choice to use discourse analysis. Meanwhile, the broad theoretical conceptualisations of development

and of wellbeing with which I started my fieldwork meant that I was fully open to the range of understandings held by my research participants, and the iterative process I then followed in generating data, analysing it and relating it to theory enabled me to apply the specific theory most relevant to my findings.

I found my ethnographic methods, including an extended period of immersion in the field, participant observation and semi-structured interviews, ideal to gain the detailed picture of the particular context necessary for my case study. Meanwhile, my choice to include within it nine ‘embedded cases’ made it possible to focus in on a range of specific individuals and events which, taken together, provide a broader picture and opportunities for triangulation.

Before turning to the ‘embedded cases’ of my thesis, I introduce chapters 5 to 10.

## INTRODUCING CHAPTERS 5 TO 10

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### MY APPROACH TO DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

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In using discourse analysis to explore how language is used in texts which are ‘always situated in fields of power’ (Luke, 2000:455), Gee uses ‘speaker’ to mean speaker or writer, and ‘listener’ to mean listener or reader (2011), as I do below. As this suggests, discourse analysis, central to my analysis of written texts in the next two chapters, also informs my analysis of verbal communications throughout my thesis.

Given my relational understandings of wellbeing and of development as contextualised processes, I find Apthorpe’s (1996:19) description of discourse ‘universes [as] relations between people over time and in particular situations and places’ apposite. As Gee (1996:189) recognises, knowledge is not passive but is formed by social and historical circumstances; constantly changing, these are ‘always “interested”, value-laden, and ideological’. Such knowledge is created by discourses, which present usually taken for granted notions about what the normal and correct ways to be and behave are (ibid: ix) in ways I now outline.

I consider important how the speaker’s group discourse is established through the construction of ‘social goods’ (anything a social group considers worthwhile) (Gee, 2002:ix), which may involve setting up ‘socially recognizable and institutionally or culturally normed endeavour[s]’ (Gee, 2011:96-97). Hence, ‘a discourse... identifies appropriate and legitimate ways of practising’ an activity, and of speaking and thinking about it (Grillo, 1997:12). In doing so, language may be used to construct the social identities of both speakers and listeners, affecting relationships between them by treating the listeners in certain ways, positioning them or encouraging them to take up certain identities (Gee, 2011).

Language may also be used to form, manipulate, reproduce or change the context the listener understands there to be; for example, there may be more about the context than the speaker implies by ignoring certain aspects (ibid). Being ‘an intellectual frame’ a discourse “‘is not just a set of words, it is a set of rules about what you can and cannot say” (Barrett, 1995) and about what’ (Gasper and Apthorpe, 1996:4). Hence, language may be used to increase or decrease the importance of certain things, creating or downplaying connections between them, making it imperative to notice what an insider may take for granted but an outsider may find strange (Gee, 2011). Although originally

a complete outsider to my research setting, this reminds me that I risk overlooking much about it that has become familiar to me.

Throughout, I consider why speakers choose their subject matter, considering not only what they say but what they attempt to do through the text, the text's design (including, for example, intertextuality) to further the speaker's aims being crucial (ibid). Meanwhile, considering the genre used in terms of its ideology and social arena is important for exploring texts' reproductive potential (Luke, 2000:458), which may also provide 'instances of "heteroglossia", where different ideologies, [and] struggles over difference... come into play' (ibid: 452).

This discourse-focused overview of language's potential uses enables me to be a 'resistant listener', aware of speakers' intentions regarding listener response (Gee, 2011) as I explore the social construction of understandings of development and of wellbeing in the forthcoming chapters.

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#### STRUCTURING CHAPTERS 5-10

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Each empirical chapter is structured around a different source of insights; Chapters 5 and 6 documentary, Chapters 7 to 9 semi-structured interviews and Chapter 10 critical ethnographic participant observation of a development intervention. However, all the 'embedded cases' comprising these chapters also contain, as means of triangulation, other sources of information, including data sourced from observations made throughout my fieldwork, and from interviews, informal conversations and interactions with many more individuals (from the community and beyond) than those focused upon.

Although each chapter has an overarching theoretical focus, I avoid concentrating exclusively on these, since each also explores data pertaining to all my research questions. I also want to maintain the lived complexity of events (Chapters 5 and 10) and of individuals (Chapters 6 to 9). Although I refer to the theory underpinning my analysis in the following chapters, I have done so implicitly in order not to detract from the immediacy of the narrative style which best expresses the above-mentioned complexity and interrelationships.

## CHAPTER 5 CO-CONSTRUCTING JANAKIRAM SCHOOL

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### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

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I open my data and analysis chapters with an ‘embedded case’ revealing the parts played in shaping understandings of development and of wellbeing by the presentation of two of Mallagaon’s most important institutions, Janakiram School and Hinduism, by powerful community members. I explore seven documents collected during my fieldwork describing the founding of Janakiram, a significant and visible form of ‘development’ in Mallagaon (for the English translation of these texts see Appendix 9).

All the documents were written by upper caste individuals who, being in authority positions are able to create and propagate dominant discourses and understandings, their identities affecting what they present, and how. I analyse the texts in terms of how their authors position themselves in relation to discourses of development and of wellbeing. In particular, the texts enable me to explore the dominant construction of development as the school, and how this affects the ways development and wellbeing are written about, talked about and understood. I include discussion of related understandings, sourced from interviews and observations, of other community members, which help demonstrate ways in which the texts’ discourses are constructed by the more powerful without necessarily reflecting the reality of the less powerful. They also demonstrate how these discourses influence Mallagaon. Exploring the texts as social constructs, I discuss them in terms of how and why the authors create a contextual frame, including or excluding information and presenting it in certain ways.

I also explore the understandings I infer the authors to hold through the ways they construct and choose to present Janakiram’s history, as well as the possible sources of the discourses and understandings they present.

I begin by exploring texts in terms of development and then wellbeing; as mentioned previously I believe that by first considering them separately, their relationship can be better understood.

### 5.2 DISCOURSES OF DEVELOPMENT

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The articles analysed in this section were written for, and published in, Janakiram’s celebratory “Golden Jubilee Souvenir” magazine 2067 BS (2010-2011), for readers emigrated from or living in the local community. A significant number of the former have considerable wealth and hold influential positions in Nepal.

“The Contribution of *Janakiram* High School towards Social Mobilisation” (Appendix 9a), is by Professor Phulara (Brahman), an emigrant from Mallagaon working in a university in Dhangadhi. Having portrayed the area as deprived, he authoritatively discusses the establishment of Janakiram as social reform. I use this article to explore discourses of local deficit, dependency and local community development. Of particular interest is how and why these opposing discourses are presented as compatible. To best explore this, I consider the whole text.

“Looking Back at the Achievements of *Janakiram* Higher Secondary School over the last Fifty Years” (Appendix 9b) is by Prithvirajji (Brahman); a Mallagaon Phulara and formerly a Janakiram headmaster, he now lives in Dhangadhi where he owns, and until his retirement ran, a private school. The article, claiming to be an “historical description”, is more factual than the others.

I focus on these articles because they make use of important but opposing development discourses.

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## LOCAL DEFICIT

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### A “REMOTE PLACE”

“The Contribution of *Janakiram* High School towards Social Mobilisation” by the emigrant Professor Phulara, opens with:

“The Far Western region<sup>9</sup> of Nepal is regarded as the least advanced region in terms of development. For a society to become developed or underdeveloped depends on a range of factors...”

These include:

“The inability of the state to reach people and the creation of a gap between the people and the state [which] pushed this region far away from the national mainstream to the state of isolation”.

The reason given is continuing geographical, linguistic, cultural and economic “gaps” between the area and the rest of Nepal.

Professor Phulara thus opens with a development discourse which presents places away from the mainstream as indubitably “underdeveloped”, despite the emphasis that the remainder of the article places on the importance and success of local development initiatives (explored later).

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<sup>9</sup> Although the division of the country into development regions had not yet occurred when Janakiram was founded, Far Western region is used to refer to the areas which now belong to it.

However, as a university professor in the Far West, the author would be aware that being “remote” need not necessarily involve having less opportunity than those at the centre. He would know that Mallagaon’s economic potential has been recognised precisely because of its location, as revealed by Shrestha and Dhakal’s ropeway survey (2000). Nonetheless, he chooses to begin by focusing on the negative. This may be because it serves to emphasise the “significant effort... made by *Janakiram High School* in the development of education”, since “we can easily imagine what the condition of Doti might have been in those times, and how difficult it might have been to work there, when it is still considered a remote place”.

#### THE ‘LIGHT’ OF EDUCATION

Professor Phulara writes that, prior to Janakiram’s establishment, “the society was lost in the darkness of illiteracy”; Janakiram then “enkindled the light of education and drove away the darkness from the villages”.

Other articles, which I explore more closely later in this chapter, make similar use of these polarising metaphors, creating an image of Janakiram and education in positive opposition to village life, hence perpetuating binaries and polarisation. The articles by Parbatinathji, Trivediji and an MP, Khadkaji, (see Section 5.4 for details) refer to “the light of education”, the latter also refers to “the lamp of education”, and praises Janakiram’s founder, who “kindle[d] the light of awareness in society” and “ke...[pt] away the darkness from people by providing them with education”.

Such metaphors are prevalent in Janakiram’s school books. For example, the Class 7 Social Studies textbook opens its section on Education thus:

Do you know why you go to school? Why do you think there are schools in your village? What happens if people do not study? Perhaps the most significant infrastructure of development is education. Education means acquiring knowledge. Knowledge is the light of life. If we don’t have knowledge our life remains dark (Regmi *et al*: 209:11).

This extract also implies that knowledge comes only from education, which only comes from school; it undermines other sources of knowledge, such as those indigenous to village life.

These ideas may originate with Nepal’s adult literacy programmes. The metaphor of ‘light’ is commonly associated with knowledge, as suggested within Europe by the term ‘the Enlightenment’. It has, however, played a particular role in adult literacy

programmes (not specific to Nepal) with early approaches based on the notion of a ‘one-off shift from “illiteracy” to “literacy”, from darkness to light’ (Street, 2003:85).

I noted similar use of metaphors throughout my fieldwork. For example, following Janakiram’s 51<sup>st</sup> anniversary celebrations, I wrote:

“Too many of the speeches dwell on the tired concept that without education the future will be dark, the bright future education brings. Such meaningless talk fits well with an awful quote written up on the staffroom wall, ‘Education is an ugly person’s beauty’” (FN: 29/11/11).

My strongly negative reaction was firstly because of my aversion to discourses of education promoting forms of development I consider to be locally unhelpful since they undermine village life in the eyes of the villagers themselves; secondly, because similar metaphors seemed to be used as empty flattery:

“A teacher... tells us that seeing us, people from England here, is ‘a big thing’ and that the girls’ hostels ‘opened eyes’, ‘opened the door’ and ‘showed the way’. These phrases feel somewhat empty to me... being repeated as the correct thing to say, said before by someone else and I am uneasy under the flattery. I am not sure to what extent the kind of education the girls are getting is helpful” (FN: 23/10/11).

Meanwhile, various community members, seemingly parroting a discourse meaning little to them, described themselves as “animals”, one man informing me that there was “nothing good about the traditional life of the village – it was very behind and we were like animals. All people were like this” (IN: 24/03/12).

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The concept of isolation and the metaphors explored above belong to the discourse of modernity’s dominant paradigm of economic development, whereby externally driven development deals with the local deficiencies, which, as a concept, it created. Through the use of binaries not only illiteracy but also village life prior to Janakiram is established as dark ignorance, an animal-like existence to be transformed by education, the implication being that there is nothing positive in village life and nothing negative about the education provided.

Such development metaphors are drawn upon in the articles, creating dichotomies to establish the understanding that school education is necessarily positive. Locally, very few individuals directly opposed this view, but perspectives from without the community included that of a former VSO volunteer in Mallagaon, Ed, who described the “sacred cow of schooling” as an “imposed, imported aspect of

modernity” (IN: 21/07/11). Questioning why children should spend so long “incarcerated within four walls” when so many of them come out to a life of dissatisfaction, no longer fitting in as farmers, nor having the skills to compete in the globalised job market, he suggested that schooling should be more holistic; his is an understanding close to my own.

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## DEPENDENCY AND COMMUNITY-BASED DEVELOPMENT

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Despite its opening implying that development capable of redressing local deficit is necessarily sourced from outside, the article soon switches to dependency theory discourses, presenting exogenous factors as causing ‘underdevelopment’. The article focuses emphatically on what the author understands as participatory development, involving empowerment through local activity and ownership, as indicated by its title, “The Contribution of *Janakiram High School* towards Social Mobilisation”.

The article discusses, under subheadings, ways in which the school’s founding contributed to “social change”. Beginning with “People’s Participation”, the author refers to “*shramdaan* (labour donation) of the locals and students” in building the school and temple, exhorting “organizations which are used to depending on donors to carry out development activities” to “learn from this instance... that development can take place through local effort and participation”, and pointing out that “money is not the only resource”.

It is specifically upper castes in authority positions who bemoan the demise of community members’ willingness to carry out ‘*shramdaan*’. For example, the founder’s son, Kuberji, remembering the ‘*shramdaan*’ involved in *Janakiram*’s construction, regretted that nowadays work is done only for pay (IN: 09/05/12) and his wife, remembering the availability of plentiful cheap labour, stated that nowadays people demand more money (IN: 25/11/11). However, no Dalits I spoke to expressed this regret. Professor Phulara implies that the “social asset and capital” which come about through “local effort and participation” and from “labour from the local levels” are necessarily positive for Mallagaon, overlooking the fact that the labour involved may not have been a positive experience for the disadvantaged.

Although acknowledged as a “resource”, Professor Phulara makes no direct mention of the government and UNICEF donations seen as so important by Prithvirajji in enabling

construction (see below), presumably because it would weaken his message that Janakiram developed through “local effort and participation”.

Similarly, although referring to “organizations which are used to depending on donors” he makes no direct mention of Janakiram’s recent dependence on the foreign donor CEW, which its staff emphasised in conversations. These individuals, concerned for Janakiram’s future and believing me to have influence over CEW’s funding decisions, may have considered it expedient to stress this information. However, Professor Phulara, who is not addressing me, may be more concerned about presenting ideas of self-reliant development, as promoted by Maoist discourse against foreign input. During a conversation about recent political changes, CEW’s coordinator told me how Maoists active in Mallagaon suspected foreigners. They:

“...were very, very negative about the funding coming from the west... the first time I came [to Mallagaon in 2005], I went to the school, a couple of Maoists came to interview us, threaten us of even killing us if we wouldn't take their permission when we went there next time” (IN: 03/05/12).

With Maoist rhetoric promoting Nepal’s self-reliance and independence, the article may be attempting to encourage the underprivileged members of Mallagaon to restore participatory community practices by doing unpaid work in future. The article’s devices may be: the suggestion that such labour decreases dependence on foreign donors; the linking of ‘*shramdaan*’ to self-reliant development; and the depiction of ‘*shramdaan*’ as a ‘social good’.

Under “[Inclusive Development and Gender Equality](#)”, the author may be exaggerating about Janakiram providing free education for Dalits and women fifty years ago, before such development ideas became mainstream. While the son of the school’s founder Kuberji remembers him introducing such free education at the school’s inception (IN: 09/05/12), an old Dalit man, at that time a schoolchild, contradicted this (FN: 04/04/12). Another person told me that the free provision began only in 2028 BS (1971-72) (FN: 04/04/12), implying late compliance with government policy rather than path-breaking inclusivity; in 1951 the Ministry of Education ordered ‘government-sponsored and government-aided schools to admit students of untouchable status’ (Caplan, 1972:48).

The paragraph “[Community Ownership](#)” emphasises the local sense of ownership of Janakiram:

“When people have invested their labour and effort in building any institution, they also develop a sense of ownership. The local people had an extensive role in the establishment of this school and in managing the necessary physical resources; people in the village consider it to be their own school.”

Although differently phrased, both sentences begin by stating the type of involvement local people had, and end with reference to their consequent sense of ownership. The first sentence seems to refer to the type of contribution more likely to be made by the lower, labouring castes, “labour and effort”. The second seems to refer to that of the upper castes in authority, “establishment” of Janakiram and “managing... physical resources”. Hence the author implies that the whole community has reason to feel ownership.

My experience suggests that Mallagaon’s upper castes feel this sense of ownership strongly. As one young male Brahman emigrant told me, “the school is known as Mallagaon School rather than Janakiram country-wide, even local people call it Mallagaon School” (IN 10/10/11). Meanwhile another young Phulara, Leelanath, stood for election onto the School Management Committee, and won in December 2011. He felt ownership despite having reasons to feel let down by Janakiram: he had only reached Class 10 (IN: 06/11/11), a poor achievement compared to the usual qualifications of his clan.

I did not, however, find such examples of a sense of ownership amongst the Dalits, possibly because the ‘voluntary’ labour they contributed was enforced by the upper castes. It may also be because they were not consulted, as indicated in the summary of my interview with Dr. Phulara, a senior male Brahman emigrant:

“Most people agreed that Mallagaon land should be given for the school... The Dalits were not consulted since they owned no land” (FN: 21/07/12).

The final area Professor Phulara explores is “Social Mobilization”. Here he states that through “devotional prayers and songs, the recitation of the Ramayana, the staging of plays”, an environment was created for villagers to “come together and share their thoughts and ideas and discuss aspects of social development at a time when there were no means of communication like we have today”. This “bred the feeling among the marginalized people that they needed to be involved in the affairs of development, for example by building schools, temples and roads, etc”.

Stressing the success of social mobilisation even without today’s communication media helps the author paint a positive picture, furthered by the assertion that “...social

mobilisers working in different development projects today cannot even imagine that society can be mobilized this way”.

However, as discussed earlier, probably only some even amongst the upper castes were thus mobilised, and persuaded the rest of Mallagaon to help through their authority and with arguments that money for Janakiram was at stake, as indicated by my interview with Dr. Phulara:

“...the school was informed that the District Education Office had 50,000 [Nepali rupees] for their building, a fund to be provided conditional on Mallagaon giving a comparable amount through their labour etc. People objected, saying that this would be a lot of work, but finally agreed, since 50,000 was a lot of money. ... Most people agreed that Mallagaon land should be given for the school, the few families who disagreed finally gave their land too, even 15 or so years later; seeing the example of others they felt they must...” (FN: 21/07/12).

The discussions referred to above were almost certainly confined to the upper castes. The Dalit Coordinator of the VDC’s Peace Committee mentioned that Dalits did not have a say in the VDC’s programmes until recently (IN: 24/02/12).

Professor Phulara states that Janakiram’s contributions to social mobilisation “look relevant in today’s context” and repeats twice that the present generation can learn much from them. Mallagaon is nowadays less cohesive as a result of social change following the Maoist War (during which several of the Brahman leaders of Mallagaon received death threats), the abolition of the monarchy and increasing exposure to the outside world through, for example, the road (see Chapter 6). This article could be an attempt, by someone from a family used to having leadership roles, to exhort Mallagaon to work together for ‘social good’ as it once did in an idealised past.

Written by someone who, as a university professor, probably knows what is currently considered important in terms of community development, the article may be attempting to boost Mallagaon’s image as a model in participatory development. At the current time of social transformation, with increased concern for and awareness about social equality amongst the marginalised (see Chapters 8, 9 and 10), it may be in Brahman interest to emphasise that they had always understood social equity as a ‘social good’.

The axiomatic presentation of ideas in this article demonstrates which development discourses are considered ‘correct’ amongst the powerful related to Mallagaon. When juxtaposed with the views and experiences of Mallagaon’s disadvantaged, Professor

Phulara's text appears to construct an image of cohesiveness in a community which, in reality, may have always been more fragmented in thought and action.

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#### DEVELOPMENT UNDERSTOOD AS PROJECT-BASED AND EXTERNALLY SOURCED

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“Looking Back at the Achievements of *Janakiram* Higher Secondary School over the last Fifty Years”, by Prithvirajji (a Mallagaon Phulara and former Janakiram headmaster) appears illustrative of, and perhaps helps perpetuate, the specific discourses around Janakiram and education prevalent in Mallagaon, whereby the fame and prestige of the school in terms of its past success and its externally funded infrastructure are considered important. Hence, it contrasts with Professor Phulara's article.

Much of the article lists the positive changes externally initiated projects brought. The Nepal government-initiated “National Education System Project” (1975-1976) is first described. Ten bullet points list the changes, followed by details of: money allocated to teacher salaries by the government; the National Development Service's initiative, involving university students teaching at Janakiram; and the various buildings and equipment the school obtained.

This description is followed by that of the early 1980s “Education and Rural Development Project” which focused on Mallagaon's development region. It details the foreign involvement in it thus:

“...a project was launched with the help of UNESCO. The economic resources required for this project were to be provided by the then His Majesty's Government and other international organizations such as UNDP, UNESCO and AGFUND. ... The CTA [Chief Technical Advisor] of this project was Nicholas Bennett, a British man who was a very experienced educationist.”

Details follow of the financial benefits accruing to Janakiram through its designation as the local resource centre. The focus is on improvements to the school's infrastructure, mentioning money “for the construction of school buildings, playgrounds, fences, and drinking water”. The section ends by reiterating “the improvement in the financial status of the school” described as one of the main sources of Janakiram's reputation, the next sentence stating, “The school gained greater prestige in the district...”

Repetition also suggests the importance to the author of trips abroad:

“...teachers got opportunities for educational tours in many other districts. The Principal of this school, *Prithviraj Phulara*, also got the opportunity to go to Thailand for a 19-day educational trip.”

Prithvirajji refers to himself here in the third person and, at the end of his article, again mentions his Thailand trip using the first person.

Prithvirajji then describes Janakiram after it gained higher secondary school status, again emphasising foreign contacts. Finding it difficult to source teachers with the MEd (Master of Education) required, they “found Mahesh Nair, an Indian national from Kerala” who later brought another named Indian. A Phulara family member “went to the office of VSO and asked Joanna Elliott<sup>10</sup> to be sent as a volunteer” and later Janakiram had two more volunteers. The presence of Indian and foreign volunteer teachers is repeated twice, as is CEW’s educational scholarships for “girls, Dalits and the backward classes”. The British Embassy’s funding of a girls’ hostel is also described.

While using the magazine as a forum to acknowledge and thank foreign sponsors, the author’s naming of foreigners and foreign organisations, and his reiteration, reveals his understandings of development, even where not directly stated. He appears (as he did during the time he was headmaster and I a teacher) to understand development as externally funded, project-based and sourced from links to well-placed, primarily foreign, individual and organisation-based benefactors and sponsors; progress seems associated with outsiders and networks. Likewise, the detailed accounts provided in the article of non-local funding suggest that externally sourced money is considered necessary to initiate projects, despite the early section of the article describing how Janakiram’s founding was initiated by locals who then raised funds.

These understandings belong to discourses of development as modernisation, in which foreign aid and externally sourced projects and funding are understood as development. The article, authored by a prestigious and influential community member, may reinforce such understandings, the prevalence of which amongst all Mallagaon castes I explore in subsequent chapters.

The article’s focus is illustrative of, and perhaps helps form, specific discourses around Janakiram and education whereby its prestige in terms of its past success and its externally funded infrastructure is seen as more important than the quality of the education it now offers. Thus Leelanath, telling me that Mallagaon has headed local development with Janakiram’s prominent role and educational leadership, stated that it is good that nowadays people can come to this place they have heard of and benefit

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<sup>10</sup> My name before marriage

from seeing its buildings (IN: 06/11/11). By contrast, these buildings formed part of my increasing concern during fieldwork about local complacency apropos Janakiram's current condition, with all effort seeming to be spent in constantly requesting me for help in securing foreign aid for infrastructural development. I referred to this concern on at least nine separate occasions in my field-notes (FN: 27/11/11; 04/12/11; 06/02/12; 28/02/12; 02/03/12; 31/03/12; 01/04/12; 06/05/12; and 27/07/12), for example:

“[I am] more concerned than ever that Janakiram suffers from complacency because of the CEW funding and because of the first place it held for so many years” (FN: 06/02/12).

By March I wrote:

“I regret bringing [CEW] money here at all because of the negative effects it has had, and the complacency it seems to have led to” (FN: 02/03/12).

These reactions reveal my own increasing disappointment and shame; I blamed myself for what I considered a decline in Janakiram's quality caused by the funding I had introduced. They also show my understanding, supported by Professor Phulara's article but contradicted by Prithvirajji's, that externally funded aid can be detrimental to development.

Linda, another VSO teacher expressed similar concerns when I asked her if she thought there was anything negative about Mallagaon's development. Referring back to her time there from 1998 to 2000, she said:

“Volunteering role, that idea that someone from far away comes and does a job there ... we represent money and all of those things and that has quite a negative impact because people, I did feel sometimes there was this... dependency mentality... they were dependent on either outsider aid or outsider money and so it was either embodied in the volunteers or in government grants and just being given money to do things rather than depending on their own resources for it” (IN: 16/07/11).

Such dependency, Linda added:

“...seems to go into people's personality in a way as well, not everyone but a lot of people did just think that things were going to be given to them and they didn't really have to make any great effort for it” (IN: 16/07/11).

While foreign support is often understood as very positive for Nepal's development, some, usually 'outsiders', consider its negative implications.

In this section I have explored how various development discourses are taken on board and perpetuated by influential members of Mallagaon, whereby they may be attempting to keep alive social systems beneficial to them. I have also shown evidence that the reality for Mallagaon's marginalised is different from that presented in the texts, suggesting that members of such groups may not share the authors' understandings, as I explore further in subsequent chapters.

### 5.3 THE IMPORTANCE OF SOCIAL, CULTURAL AND ECONOMIC CAPITAL FOR PERSONAL WELLBEING

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Having considered understandings of development based on discourses prevalent in Nepal, I now interpret (in terms of understandings of their personal wellbeing) why the authors of two very different texts focus on naming former Janakiram supporters, and mentioning the exact sums of money involved. Aspects of the authors' identities and the texts' genres help explain this.

I draw again on the former headmaster Prithviraj Phulara's "Looking Back at the Achievements of Janakiram..." (Appendix 9b), as well as on "Poem about the Place" (Appendix 9c) by the VDC secretary (*sachiv*), known as Sachivji<sup>11</sup>. His text is a 258-line poem about Janakiram (forming the bulk of "Glimpses of Ramkut", his epic poem about Mallagaon). In rhyming couplets mixing Nepali and Doteli, it was written when Sachivji was depressed<sup>12</sup> in exile during the Maoist War. Although expressing nostalgia for the past and for his home, the poem, published in 2061 BS (2004-2005), appears to have an audience in mind including VDC members and the wider community of wealthy and influential emigrants.

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#### 'LINKING' SOCIAL CAPITAL

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The understood value of well-placed connections in providing power to act is revealed by Sachivji's reference to individuals who "used their contacts", and to people with "hearts [which] knew how to develop connections and places". Consequently, "Feeling good, in good places, the kind people heard" and made donations.

Meanwhile, the repetition and naming in Prithvirajji's article suggest that the author's development paradigm preferences derive from the prestige that not only Janakiram but he too personally gains through the 'linking capital' afforded by his association with

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<sup>11</sup> *Sachivji* = Secretary with the honorific term of respect *ji* added

<sup>12</sup> Sachivji provided this information to my translator Hikmat Khadka

foreigners. He also names Janakiram's well-placed graduates, noting that amongst its first students to sit the SLC in 2019 BS (1962-63) one was subsequently Prime Minister of Nepal, and another Rector of Tribhuvan University in Kathmandu. Elsewhere, the article states that Janakiram:

“...has remained one of the prestigious schools of the Far West Region. In the 50 years since its inception, some of the alumni have held dignified political positions to lead the country as prime minister, minister and state minister. While hundreds of graduates have held dignified positions, such as doctor, engineer, lawyer, judge, attorney general and professor, hundreds of others are engaged in the respectable profession of teaching. Hundreds of students have been contributing to the development of the country through involvement in business and industries.”

Janakiram is thus positioned as a seat of excellence with the 'linking' social capital achieved through its connections to prestigious and wealthy individuals. While this has brought financial gain for the school, as revealed in my analysis of "Poem about the Place" (see below), the 'symbolic capital' in these connections is important to the authors.

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#### 'CULTURAL CAPITAL' – ATTEMPTING INCLUSIVITY

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Prithvirajji's article hints that the discourse of Janakiram as excelling due to its high-powered graduates is no longer sufficient, that a more inclusive discourse is recognised as necessary to maintain its reputation. The accolade to its graduates provided above is followed by:

“The number of students who dropped out of school because they could not pass the SLC exams is also high. Even though they are not in employment, they are still running their households on the basis of the education they received, and they are improving their lifestyle.”

This sentence, sounding incongruous, seems added as an afterthought. It perhaps reflects recognition that the 'cultural capital' which enables many of Janakiram's upper caste graduates to do so well is not shared by all. It appears to be a nod on the author's part towards an understanding that schooling should be helpful for all members of Mallagaon, not just for those who have the 'cultural capital' to become successful. It also admits that Janakiram has academic failures, and recognises unemployment's prevalence in Mallagaon. With this suggestion that education is nonetheless of value, Prithvirajji, as former headmaster, may be attempting to counter the disillusionment with Janakiram that community members lacking 'cultural capital' increasingly express (see, for example, Chapter 9).

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## ECONOMIC CAPITAL

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Prithvirajji's references to money are detailed and specific, naming exact sums such as the provision by the "National Education System" of "100 percent donation for the teachers' salary at the primary level, 75 percent for teachers at the lower secondary level, and 50 percent at the secondary level" and the Seti Project's "monthly donation equivalent to the salary of a BEd teacher, plus a 100 rupee bonus for the Principal". Meanwhile, having described the need to raise funds to upgrade Janakiram to higher secondary, the Doti District Development Committee and the district headquarters Municipality are named as donors, while "[t]he names of those donating more than 10,000 rupees were listed in the inscription in the school, and that is still there".

Meanwhile, Sachivji's poem names eleven individuals for their financial donations, enabling either Janakiram's opening, or its upgrade to higher secondary. A positive outcome for them is often stated. Thus one named individual:

“...gave a thousand in donation, its worth in those days!  
The name of a man who makes a donation shall live forever”.

Two other named individuals:

“...gave a good donation  
For their support to the organisation, they were recognised by society”

“The school in *Mallagaon* welcomes financial support”, the poem states in a clear bid for further financing, adding as an incentive that:

“Those who made a big donation, their name was inscribed on a plaque  
The greatness of one's status and family thus became known”.

The precise listing of monies and sources in both texts, and the good and lasting reputation they suggest that donors can secure, indicate the importance the authors attach to the symbolic prestige associated with Janakiram's 'economic capital'.

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## IDENTITY AND GENRE

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The authors' different identities and purposes, and the genre and publication fora of the texts affect their content. Published in the school magazine, Prithvirajji's article is presented as 'factual'; it reads like an annual report which acknowledges donors and sponsors to whom, as former headmaster, the author feels indebted. Sachivji's poem, published independently, seems a less probable vehicle for such acknowledgment. However it makes sense if understood as a means by which Mallagaon's VDC secretary, responsible for allocation of development funds and local fundraising,

encourages his readership to make donations by imbuing them with symbolic significance. Both texts imply that their authors understand personal wellbeing to reside in the various forms of capital to which they have access as powerful members of Mallagaon.

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In this section I have inferred from two texts their authors' understandings of the value of various forms of capital in terms of their personal wellbeing. I have also briefly considered the part identity and genre play in shaping what is written. I now move on to explore how discourses from Hinduism are used to promote certain ideas about wellbeing and development.

#### 5.4 TRADITIONAL HINDU VALUES FOR WELLBEING AND DEVELOPMENT

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I now explore how values from Hinduism may be presented as necessary for wellbeing by upper caste people through current discourse about Mallagaon, Janakiram's founder and its foundation fifty years ago. Although wellbeing discourses in Nepal are less explicit than development discourses, I argue that the authors of the texts I analyse draw on and reinforce various religious discourses related to wellbeing, using them to support development discourses.

I return to "Poem about the Place" (Appendix 9c), and use four other texts; the first three published in Janakiram's "Golden Jubilee Souvenir" magazine, 2067 BS (2010-2011), the fourth at the end of Sachivji's epic poem.

"Dr. Chandrakant Phulara: From my Perspective" (Appendix 9d) is by Parbatinathji, a Brahman from a nearby village, a Janakiram graduate and teacher until his retirement in July 2012. It is an anecdotal, affectionate account of Janakiram's founder.

"Mallagaon: A Memory" (Appendix 9e) by Trivediji, the Brahman Chairman and Central Member of the Nepal Disabled Organisation, he is based in the Terai. A Janakiram graduate, he relates its development to positive values, presented as prevalent in Mallagaon when the school was founded.

"The Devotee of Ram at Ramkuti" (Appendix 9f) is by the Chhetria Member of Parliament (MP) Khadkaji. Originally from a nearby village, a Janakiram graduate and

former Secretary of its Management Committee, he describes the founder, before dwelling on his own role in Janakiram's development.

“*Ramkuti Biography*” (Appendix 9g) is by Pandit<sup>13</sup> Chaturvedi, a Brahman from a nearby village and a former member of Janakiram's founding team. It outlines the “historic development” of Ramkuti and discusses the religious basis of Janakiram's foundation.

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### MATERIAL VALUES AND HINDUISM

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The VDC secretary Sachivji's “Poem about the Place” relates monetary donations to Janakiram with Hinduism's concepts of cosmic moral order by indicating that donating positively affects *karma*:

“In this world, *karma* always makes one immortal;  
It keeps one's legacy alive for many ages to come.”

And later:

“The bite of rice and bread, which I am eating, is the fruit of my '*karma*'  
Doti District Development [Committee] gave the highest donation.”

'*Karma*', the essence of which is that 'action determin...[es] the subsequent destiny of the actor' (Babb, 1983:165), can be 'brought to bear on any kind of human circumstance', whether relating to 'transcendental matters', having effect on transmigration (ibid: 171), or relating to the most worldly of human problems and involving immediate cause and effect. The first quote above falls into the former category, the second into the latter. By referring to '*karma*' in both ways, and mentioning a donation in the same rhyming couplet as '*karma*', Sachivji implies that a generous donation can alter both a donor's daily life and destiny positively.

'*Karma*' posits 'a distinctive connection between moral responsibility and destiny', supplying to Hinduism 'a sense of the existence of a wider moral order within which the choices people make in acting mean something' (ibid: 179). Arguably, therefore, Sachivji implies that a righteous donation helps uphold such a 'moral order' (and hence justifies seeking material wellbeing as a religiously sanctioned act). Thus he connects money with religious values. Another example is the suggestion that a donor to Janakiram pleased the goddess of learning, Saraswati. A local:

“...made a donation to the best of his capacity  
Saraswati became pleased; she swelled with delight”.

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<sup>13</sup> Pandit = Pundit – a learned man

Meanwhile:

“Shivaraj *Phulara* was a minister for eighteen months...  
[He] provided huge financial support to the school  
Where Lakṣmi is stable, there lives Saraswati.  
There were other founders too, but most of the credit goes to him.”

The suggestion that learning (“Saraswati”) resides in a place blessed by wealth (“Lakṣmi” being the goddess of wealth) exemplifies Shrestha’s observation that the existence of, and reverence shown to, ‘the goddess of wealth... in the Hindu mythology... means material values have been woven into the fabric of Hinduism, at least in terms of its practice’ (1998:49).

It is noteworthy that, although others tend to regard Dr. Chandrakant as foremost in terms of Janakiram’s founding (see below), Sachivji writes that “most of the credit” goes to the person who secured funding for the school’s development.

Divine recompense for a financial donation is also suggested in the following couplet. The school management:

“...constructed a building for a shop  
To those who gave a selfless donation, Rām<sup>14</sup> gave a boon.”

The “boon” is described as a shop, selling “consumable items” and “pens and notebooks for students”. Help with running a business in Mallagaon is portrayed as a reward from the gods for good deeds. The poem continues by describing the need for health facilities, resulting in there being “four health shops today” and then states that:

“Customers benefited from an increased number of shops; it was a good thing”.

Similarly “*Ramkuti Biography*” by Pandit Chaturvedi also links commerce to religion, noting that the religious organisation set up to build a temple and establish the school recognised the difficulty people experienced in purchasing “even the most basic consumable items” and so “made arrangements to set up a shop right here in order to resolve the problem”.

Interestingly, the first shop was a Brahman-run tea shop selling milk (FN: 25/01/12), both occupations considered at the time inappropriate to the caste. The now very elderly man who ran this shop explained that, fifty years ago, the school teachers had nowhere to go for refreshments since milk was never given to anyone outside one’s

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<sup>14</sup> Hinduism refers to Lord Ram as Maryada Purushottama, literally the perfect man or Lord of Self-Control or Lord of Virtue (Wikipedia, 2013)

family. He did what he described as his “duty”, opening a shop to ensure that the outsiders’ needs were met (FN: 26/20/11).

Other bazaar shopkeepers similarly presented their work primarily as their duty rather than as profit-oriented business. The founder’s son, Kuberji, who runs a medical outlet, argued that there being no other such shops in the area “it was a kind of social service as well as providing... money” (IN: 09/05/12). A young Chhetria, Sudam, described the running of his teashop as “a sort of duty” since at the time it was the only place outsiders could eat at (IN: 30/10/11); the duty of serving one’s guests is also endorsed by Hinduism<sup>15</sup>. A young member of the Phulara clan, Leelanath, claimed that his newly established poultry farm helps him fulfil his aim of helping everyone in Mallagaon. Only Basant, a visiting Brahman from the east of Nepal, directly stated profit as his business objective, saying: “Money is everything, firstly people need money” when asked what he needed for his wellbeing (IN: 06/11/11). This may be because he was away from his own community, to which he may feel other obligations.

The Dalits, on the other hand, appeared not to feel the need to justify their businesses thus. As I explore further in Chapter 9, Vikram, a young Dalit with a bazaar-based business, considers his ability to fend for himself positive for his wellbeing, only considering the voluntary work he carries out in Mallagaon in terms of duty (IN: 04/03/2012).

“Poem about the Place” subtly combines discourses of Hinduism and of modernity, suggesting that donating to Janakiram upholds the ‘moral order’ and presenting material wealth as positive if justified by concepts of duty in Hinduism.

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#### JANAKIRAM’S FOUNDATION AS A RELIGIOUS ENDEAVOUR

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Pandit Chaturvedi’s “*Ramkuti Biography*” describes how local Brahman leaders and intellectuals, including him, founded a religious organisation to build a temple and then a school, in the area which thereafter became known as Ramkuti<sup>16</sup>. However it opens not with this information but by stating that:

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<sup>15</sup> ‘Let your guest be a god unto you’ is part of a mantra from the Taittiriya Upanishad (Vedanta Spiritual Library, 2014) sacred to Hindus and oft-quoted in Mallagaon

<sup>16</sup> Subsequently the school changed location

“In 2014 BS (1957/58), *bhaktiyog*<sup>17</sup> emerged within Dr. *Chandrakant Phulara*, and he developed a sense of devotion for Lord Ram ... He inspired all the villagers to follow on the path of devotion for the Lord [Ram].”

The article continues:

“As he recited the *Rāmāyana*<sup>18</sup>, Dr. *Chandrakant* was highly influenced by the following great mantra:

There is no greater ‘*dharma*’ than helping others  
There is no greater ‘*adharmā*’ than troubling others.”

These lines “inspired him to work for the welfare of the society”, specifically “the development of the education sector... through Hindu human religious development”.

‘*Dharma*’ as used here means ‘the right thing, charity, good deeds and duty’ and ‘*adharmā*’ the opposite. The quotes above preceding the details about the religious organisation and people involved indicate Pandit Chaturvedi’s wish to emphasise Dr. Chandrakant’s role and the importance of his spiritual enlightenment in Mallagaon’s educational development.

That the fulfilment of ‘*dharma*’ is understood by Hinduism to lead to happiness is apparent in the retired teacher’s Parbatinathji’s article about Janakiram’s founder. In another example of intertextuality, he quotes the following ‘*shloka*’<sup>19</sup> which Dr. Chandrakant reportedly expounded upon during morning prayers, when the author was a schoolboy:

“True knowledge gives discipline, from discipline comes worthiness. From worthiness one gets wealth, from wealth one does good deeds [one’s duty / the right thing<sup>20</sup>], from that comes wellbeing.”

The prominent inclusion of ‘*dharma*’ in Pandit Chaturvedi’s article dealing with development therefore suggests that the author wishes to highlight the idea that development, if brought about through the practice of Hinduism, is concomitant with happiness.

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## A MYTHOLOGISED LEADER

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### “GOOD LEADERSHIP”, GROUNDED IN RELIGION

Parbatinathji’s affectionate and anecdotal article, “Dr. *Chandrakant Phulara: From my Perspective*”, opens by stating that the founder:

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<sup>17</sup>*Bhaktiyog* = Attainment of the spiritual goal through devotion

<sup>18</sup> *Ramayana* = An epic telling the story of Ram

<sup>19</sup> The basic verse form of Indian epics

<sup>20</sup> Translator’s note

“...was a personality of multiple talents. He had the unique qualities of courage, patience and dedication. He also had good leadership qualities. He led well the people of his region in the establishment of *Janakiram* Temple at *Mallagaon* in 2014 BS (1957/58), and in the founding of the Primary School and in the setting up of a Secondary School...”

Parbatinathji mentions Dr. Chandrakant giving up a government job despite not being well off, emphasising the extent of his “dedication to social service, which he believed could be carried out through the light of education” and the “selfless... way he got involved in the work” of fundraising. Meanwhile, Pandit Chaturvedi describes him as “[a] special man... [who] was born to serve our society”.

The MP Khadkaji’s article, “The Devotee of Ram at *Ramkuti*”, which states that ‘an ideal and virtuous society was created by following the ideals of Ram, the credit for which goes to Dr *Chandrakant*’ opens by presenting the founder in even more glowing terms, relating his social development work to his spirituality:

“He was of a clean character, and stood firmly on the side of truth. He was never affected by any temptation and was a visionary, highly committed to his duties, democratic, spiritual, and he always followed the path of truth. Such a social philanthropist was Dr. *Phulara* he was able to implant a strong sense of spirituality in the minds of the people and also lit the light of knowledge across villages”.

The article also describes his “caring attitude”, and calls him “an exemplary figure, keeping himself far from materialist temptations”, while:

“...with his efficient guardianship and visionary personality, the parents of the students could feel that their children were studying in an environment suitable for moral and quality education”.

The qualities these extracts focus on relate to the model of a Brahman found in the Hindu ‘*varna*’<sup>21</sup> system, in which Brahmans’ ‘*dharma*’ (duty) is ‘to practise such qualities in life as serenity, purity, discipline and wisdom as well as to express these virtues in their relationships with the world outside’ (Baidya, 2012:114).

The articles add to the idealised portrayal of a religious leader with their descriptions of his lifestyle. “Even now, I think of Dr *Chandrakant Phulara* as if he were from another world”, states the retired teacher Parbatinathji, describing him “as a man clad in dhoti and a yellow towel”, the simple dress of one who has renounced material possessions. Meanwhile, Khadkaji describes him as:

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<sup>21</sup>*Varna* = Hinduism’s fourfold classification of humankind into Brahman, Kshatriya (Chhetria in Nepal), Vaishya (not represented in Mallagaon) and Shudra (equivalent to Dalit in Nepal)

“...the ascetic Dr *Phulara* [who] had detached himself from materialist pursuits, was clad in the dress of a *yogi*<sup>22</sup> and had been living the life of a sage”.

Parbatinathji notes that the founder prioritised the school over his family, while Khadkaji refers to the “holy, spiritual” life he was leading instead of being with his family.

These descriptions present Dr. Chandrakant as leading the life of a ‘*sannyāsin*’, one who is in the final stage of life<sup>23</sup>, ‘still in the world though not of it’ and ‘ready to fade out into a timeless bliss’ (Zaehner, 1992:113). The practice attributed to him is arguably ‘*sadharana-dharma*’, a value system that contributes to community wellbeing, being characterised by social harmony and impartial, ethical behaviour (Das, 2012).

#### THE FOUNDER’S MYTHOLOGICAL STATUS

The retired teacher Parbatinathji, the MP Khadkaji and fellow Janakiram founder Pandit Chaturvedi thus give Dr. Chandrakant almost mythological status as the school’s main founder. Similarly his descendants, by speaking of his association with various renowned individuals, elevate his social position and help to establish his leadership and intellectual superiority, while attributing to him values and practices that promote social wellbeing. Dr. Chandrakant studied an MBBS (medical degree) in India where, according to his son, he was ‘in touch with Nehru<sup>24</sup>, Rabindranath Tagore<sup>25</sup> and Lal Bahadur Shastri<sup>26</sup>’ and was ‘a disciple of Mahatma Gandhi<sup>27</sup>’. This is probably meant figuratively for ‘in touch with the ideas’ of these famous Indians. According to his grandson, Gyana, Dr. Chandrakant then served as a medical doctor in Bajhaang, where, with Khaptad Bhaba<sup>28</sup>, he established the area’s first school.

These descriptions contribute to the image of Dr. Chandrakant as an intellectual and a yogi, and tally with ‘the mythic vision’, in which ‘men appear as incarnations of the

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<sup>22</sup> *Yogi* = one who practices *yoga* - that is the ‘link or union, usually describing the relationship between the soul and God; way to attain the spiritual goal’ (Baidya, 2012:290)

<sup>23</sup> The stages of life: Having ‘absorbed the teachings of the Veda [as a student], reared up sons to continue his line [as a householder], and... offered sacrifice according to his ability [as a forest dweller], he becomes a *sannyāsin*, that is one who is ‘still in the world though not of it’ and ‘ready to fade out into a timeless bliss’ (Zaehner, 1992:113). These ‘stages’ apply only to upper caste men.

<sup>24</sup> Nehru (1889-1964) = First Prime Minister of the Republic of India

<sup>25</sup> Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) = Indian poet

<sup>26</sup> Lal Bahadur Shastri (1904-1966) = Second Prime minister of the Republic of India

<sup>27</sup> Gandhi (1869-1948) = Mahatma Gandhi – leader of Indian nationalism in British-ruled India. He led the country to independence through non-violent civil disobedience

<sup>28</sup> Khaptad Bhaba = Formerly a well-reputed doctor who became a yogi and hermit. He moved to Khaptad, a remote area of Doti, at the age of 60. When he died in 1996 he was reputed to be 130 years old (Facebook, 2013). Other stories about him include: He could speak many languages. He was an Indian freedom fighter. He was in contact with the King of Nepal. He was a CIA agent

archetypal gods because the full and eternal significance of what they are doing appears. They are not just earning livings and raising families and pursuing hobbies'; hence the individual is imbued with 'significance... far beyond anything that he may have in the factual vision' (Watts, 1963:14).

The articles elevate Dr. Chandrakant to a high spiritual position beyond caste-prescribed boundaries. This could be an attempt (considering the authors' backgrounds, and the readership and publication fora of the articles) to encourage community members to continue admiring and emulating the founder. Although Dr. Chandrakant Phulara continues to be revered at Janakiram's public functions, with obeisance paid to his photograph (FN: 29/11/11; 28/01/12), signs of discontent exist, which the authors may be attempting to counter. For example, the local Maoist leader, who subsequently became Janakiram's chairman, mentioned in a speech that the contribution of the many other pioneers in the school's development should be acknowledged (FN: 29/11/11).

While leadership is the traditional privilege of the upper castes, recent social changes owing to Maoism and globalisation may mean that individuals such as the authors feel insecure, their authority undermined and threatened. Gyana, admiring the leadership qualities of his grandfather (Dr. Chandrakant) and others of his generation, felt that Brahman leaders of recent years have been blamed unjustly (IN: 25/09/11). This could explain the articles' emphasis on the qualities explored here and the mythologising of the founder, as possible attempts to establish that none but he could have achieved the educational provision to Mallagaon now enjoyed by all; at a time of social transformation, the upper castes, feeling threatened, may wish to emphasise their value to Mallagaon.

This mythologising of an upper caste individual suggests that the upper caste authors' wellbeing is in part derived from a hierarchical idea of social organisation, by virtue of their sense of belonging to a traditionally-ordered, patron-client system, in which they, as members of the upper caste, are leaders, still heading the religiously sanctioned social hierarchy. Although the founder's leadership qualities and his social development efforts are presented as grounded in '*sadharana-dharma*', the authors seem to prefer the caste-based '*sva-dharma*', which reinforces the social hierarchy.

## WHAT IS LEFT UNSAID

While Dr. Chandrakant doubtless had exceptional leadership skills, the articles as explored thus far construct him as a faultless individual. The MP Khadkaji does likewise, but also refers to a more human side, left unsaid elsewhere.

Couched in a way that maintains the mythological image of Dr. Chandrakant, Khadkaji explains that “just as the moon is eclipsed by the fury of the angry Rāhu<sup>29</sup>, good deeds are, from time to time, polluted by the anger of devilish nature”; the founder showed “the intention of going back to the family life and abandoning the holy spiritual one” when, during a crisis in 2028/2029 BS (1972), people’s “anger and greed... brought about drastic changes in his thoughts”. The reference is to some people protesting against alleged nepotism and inferior teaching at Janakiram, leading to poor academic performance that threatened withdrawal of government support. Elsewhere in the article, Dr. Chandrakant’s human frailty is indirectly stated: “everyone... needs someone to give support”, “to encourage him not to lose patience”, to “provide him with the required energy”, who “can help him fight against the odds” and “who shares both happiness and sorrow with him”.

Khadkaji’s more rounded portrayal of the founder indicates what is excluded from the other texts, hence revealing the extent to which the other articles set up the dominant discourse, mythologising him. Being a Chhetria from another community and now powerful in his own right, Khadkaji may not have felt the vested interest of the other authors in portraying the founder as the model Brahman; he is thus able to depart from the dominant discourse and break its ‘rules’.

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### AN IDEALISED COMMUNITY WITH QUALITIES GROUNDED IN RELIGION

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“*Mallagaon: A Memory*”, in which Janakiram graduate Trivediji relates the school’s development to positive values he presents as locally prevalent when it was founded, opens thus:

“The students... were looked upon by people of the nearby regions with love and affection. The foundational pillars of the school’s development were the then social condition, mutual cooperation and unity. Speaking of the school’s infrastructure construction, much of the construction work happened through ‘*shramdaan*’. In those times, there were no social organizations such as we have today, but people from *Mallagaon* used to unite for community development. Such a feeling was found among the students studying in *Janakiram High*

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<sup>29</sup>Rāhu =The name of a *daitya* or demon (son of Vipracitti and Simhikā) who seizes the sun and moon and thus causes eclipses (explanation provided by the translator)

School. The students used to participate in the construction, and in other activities, of the school.

“There was no bitterness in the relations between the teachers and the students. This can be considered to be one of the important aspects in the physical development of the school and the progress it made in education.”

The extract presents cooperation and unity, dubbed “foundational pillars”, as community values manifested in ‘*shramdaan*’ and congenial to development. This positive “social condition” is placed in the past and is followed by a paragraph stating that student-teacher relations then lacked “bitterness”, implying that the author is contrasting an idealised past with a present-day lack of harmonious relationships.

The emphasis on internally sourced means of development, with reference to the lack then of “social organizations such as we have today”, echoes Professor Phulara’s similar sentiments (see Section 5.2). However, Trivediji’s article differs with its emphasis on the religious basis of qualities, found in Mallagaon’s “disciplined and civilized tradition” and presented as essential for development:

“There was a rule in *Ramkuti* that devotional prayers and songs were sung on occasions like ‘*Ekadashis*’ and ‘*Purnimas*’.<sup>30</sup> The students needed to be present there compulsorily. It can be said such religious activities inspired them to become disciplined”.

This idea is made more explicit by retired teacher Parbatinathji, who also emphasises the lack of discipline in current times. Firstly, he attributes to Dr. Chandrakant the “intent to make students disciplined and teachers dutiful” by addressing them with various sermons. Next he refers to the ‘*shloka*’ (already quoted in a different context) about discipline leading to wellbeing via worthiness, wealth and ‘*dharma*’, thus highlighting the importance of discipline to the attainment of wellbeing:

Finally the author states:

“Now that there is a serious dearth of discipline, I often remember the importance of these words...”

The suggestions that discipline was stronger in the past, that it led to good deeds resulting in wellbeing and that it has religious significance may illustrate the author’s nostalgia for a community lifestyle which, according to him, was based on discipline. This may result from what is perceived to be the Maoist-introduced threat to discipline explored in Chapter 3.

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<sup>30</sup> Ekadashis and Purnimas = fortnightly Hindu occasions

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## A UNITED PAST

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The VDC secretary Sachivji's "Poem about the Place" describes a united past, making frequent reference to everyone's involvement in fundraising, 'shramdaan' and upgrading Janakiram to higher secondary status. "The promising of the land, all of them, thought positively for development"; "[e]veryone considered it their responsibility"; "There was not a single person who didn't bring a thousand"; and, "With everyone's support, the school became higher secondary", after which, "None of the people who hoped to have an education were deprived" (emphasis added).

Sachivji is using hyperbole to paint an idealised picture of a once united community, perhaps in reaction to the perceived lack of unity resulting from more recent political changes. The word "everyone" suggests a very limited idea of community; many members are less sure of Janakiram's benefit to them (see Chapter 9). Many locals of all castes could not afford to donate to the school and their voices went unheard. Accurate portrayal or not, "Poem about the Place" does show that the idea of a united community is important to Sachivji, perhaps because his role as VDC Secretary requires uniting people behind him for Mallagaon's development.

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## WELLBEING: THE ESTABLISHED ORDER

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Sachivji portrays as positive Brahman fulfilment of caste duty. Soon after Janakiram was founded, it experienced financial difficulty and:

"The teachers... received half the salary  
The Brāhmins were engaged in regular worship, none tilled the earth."

By juxtaposing the teachers' sacrifice with the Brahmans' seemingly unrelated actions in the same couplet, Sachivji arguably presents as positive the fulfilment of the traditional Brahman caste occupation of priesthood (here perhaps referring to prayer for Janakiram) and refraining from the 'polluting' activity of ploughing. The words "none tilled the earth" imply that this aspect of the social order has now changed. This I found to be the case; to many Brahmans' regret, they are nowadays sometimes obliged to till their own land, there being fewer willing or available Dalits for this job (FN: 17/02/12).

Here, as in "VDC Wards" (see Chapter 6) Sachivji values social order, involving different groups' dutiful and caste-ordained contributions.

"Poem about the Place" ends:

“Oh, Viṣṇu from Heaven, where are you? Enter every heart  
Thanks to this day and age, who is in whose hands?”

Vishnu, generally regarded by Hindus as the ‘supreme Being’ (Zaehner, 1992:86), ‘is the god who from time to time becomes incarnate in order to rehabilitate the world’, destroying evil-doers and protecting the good (ibid: 91). His next incarnation is expected ‘at the end of this era’ when ‘he will reappear... [to] inaugurate a new and better age’ (ibid). This is the only reference “Poem about the Place” makes to current times. It indicates that the poet is disconcerted by changes to the religion-established order and finds negative the social upheaval concomitant with democracy, the abolition of the monarchy and the Maoist War. Sachivji’s wondering “...who is in whose hands?” indicates that he feels that recent political changes have destroyed the ordered community which his poem presents as positive.

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#### RELATING THESE VALUES TO MALLAGAON TODAY

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Middle aged and elderly Brahman community leaders, such as retired teacher Parbatinathji, member of Janakiram’s founding team Pandit Chaturvedi and VDC secretary Sachivji may emphasise the performance of ‘*dharma*’ for achieving “happiness” or “joy” alongside successful community development, in order to portray development as a result which best occurs within the traditional hierarchy of Hinduism, with a godlike figure leading a disciplined, united and cooperative community. Their texts present a paternalistic, hierarchical and caste-specific practice as a ‘social good’. The authors appear inclined towards understanding ‘*sva-dharma*’, characterised by these aspects, as the best practice to ensure Mallagaon’s wellbeing and development. Notably the inequalities this practice keeps alive benefit the upper castes to which the authors’ belong.

The authors apparently understand their wellbeing to lie in a hierarchical, paternalistic society as described above. Hence the articles are arguably ‘symbolic resources’ used to reinforce ‘social representations’, now perceived as under threat, in which their upper caste authors are powerful and respected.

Other Brahmans in Mallagaon revealed their unhappiness about the threat to the hierarchical form of social wellbeing caused by recent more individualistic tendencies. Dr. Chandrakant’s son Kuberji told me that he dislikes the new “I eat and I get” social ethos, believing that Mallagaon’s wellbeing requires a form of awareness leading to honour, respect and love (IN: 09/05/2012).

The upper castes widely share such understandings. For example DCC-Phularaji, the Brahman DCC founder, bemoaning the loss of cooperation between the upper and Dalit castes, explained that in the past but no longer, Dalits would work in his fields and he would give them loans for weddings (IN: 12/11/11). This exemplifies belief in the value of the patron-client type relationships less explicitly shown as important in the articles explored above.

Dalits scarcely referred to the loss of these values and systems considered so important by the upper castes, although an elderly Dalit woman, Vikram's mother, did refer to a form of love that the older Brahman generation had for Dalits in the past. She remembered being paid 6 rupees for 5 rupees' worth of work, or being given a meal in addition to pay. Considering such munificence a good thing, she regretted its passing (IN: 09/04/12). Her statement also demonstrates that even some clients value the patron-client relationship.

### 5.5 SCHOOL – THE LOCALLY DOMINANT DISCOURSE

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Whatever forms the discourses around Janakiram and education take, the articles, in constructing the school's history in the ways explored above, help explain a phenomenon described to me by Shakti, a young Chhetria of Mallagaon (IN: 14/04/12). Firstly, he stated that, since the ideas executed are always those of the powerful "all the money goes to the school". He then challenged this, explaining that some people without sufficient food and clothing nowadays question the system, saying, "There isn't food, what can the school do? ... There is no water in our fields, what can be done with a school?" However, he added that even such people may nonetheless answer "education" when asked what is important for Mallagaon, because "in our VDC, education has high importance", since "the majority is educated, it is natural to give importance to education". This helps explain the apparently ambivalent attitudes to Janakiram explored in Chapters 8 and 9.

Meanwhile, globalisation may have played its part in influencing the discourse around Janakiram. Dr. Phulara explained that Mallagaon, once virtually self-sufficient, has now become dependent on cash and goods from outside, with the cost of living rising owing to improved transportation and communication. Consequently, whereas in the past local people prioritised starting school and becoming literate, now they ask "what to do?" once literate, "does this education contribute to their happiness and

income to run their daily needs?” Nowadays, therefore, people are thinking in terms of income generation (IN: 21/07/12).

Despite this, the only individual who did not refer to the school or education was Basant, the same young Brahman from east Nepal who openly admitted the importance of money (IN: 06/11/11), as already mentioned. While my identities as a former teacher and a funding source for Janakiram may contribute to the dominance of the school and education in people’s conversations with me, the articles I have analysed here and Shakti’s words quoted above indicate that they anyway dominate the discourses of this particular community, irrespective of my influence.

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## 5.6 CONCLUSION

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I began this chapter by analysing two articles in terms of development discourse, exploring how apparently conflicting ideas of development can be combined to deliver a desired message. In doing so I discovered modernisation discourses, which in one article were cleverly combined with discourses of dependency and community-led participation.

In the next section, I explored possible reasons for authors’ choices to name projects, organisations and donors individually and to specify sums of money given. This may have to do with their understanding of personal wellbeing in terms of (‘linking’) social, cultural and economic capital, and particularly the capacity of these forms of capital to translate into symbolic capital, as sources of prestige. It may also be to do with the genre, fora and purpose of the texts. I also found that an individual’s understandings of development may be affected by how much a particular form of development contributes to that individual’s personal wellbeing, and suggested that this affects what authors present as fact.

I then moved on to consider, by analysing five texts, the ways in which religious discourses, (relating to how wellbeing can be best achieved) are used to support development discourses relating to Janakiram’s founding. Values, including a sense of duty, good leadership, discipline, cooperation and unity understood by the upper castes as positive for community wellbeing, are presented as being grounded in Hinduism and belonging to a lost past. I noted that some consider patron-client relationships of caste-based Hinduism to contribute to personal wellbeing. It is probable that the authors present these values and systems as vital to community development and as grounded in

Hinduism in order to reinforce a hierarchical form of social organisation to counter the threat from greater individualism brought to Mallagaon by recent influences. The articles also seem to be used as vehicles to cajole community members into action and behaviour which the authors consider contribute to community development and which endorse their upper caste roles. That these articles present the particular views of Janakiram's past which their authors wish to convey is made apparent through analysis of what is left unsaid. As such I consider them 'symbolic resources' intended to reinforce the threatened social representation in which the upper castes are respected and powerful.

Finally I considered the extent to which, and reasons why, discourses of schooling and education are dominant in Mallagaon, helping explain apparently ambivalent attitudes to these institutions.

This chapter has focused on the discourses most strongly promoted by the upper castes, including those of development as modernisation, school-related development and Hinduism; they have, over the years, played the largest part in shaping the understandings of development and of wellbeing held in Mallagaon. While the increasingly significant effects of globalisation and political forces (especially Maoist) on what is written and understood has become apparent, the discourses associated with them and their influence on how community members understand development and wellbeing will emerge further in subsequent chapters.

Throughout this chapter I have explored how discourses influence Mallagaon's powerful (upper caste males) and how these powerful construct and shape knowledge, holding and/or choosing to propagate ideas about development and about wellbeing to certain ends, often in reaction to social change. I thus revealed that identities largely mediate the discourses subscribed to, and the understandings of development and of wellbeing held; these can be group (upper caste males in positions of threatened authority) and individual (for example former headmaster or VDC secretary) and include my own. I argued that Mallagaon's marginalised may have different understandings from the powerful, since their 'reality' could be different. By bringing in other voices, supporting or contradicting what I found, I lent credence to my findings and introduced some of these other understandings.

## CHAPTER 6 'SOCIAL GOOD' THROUGH 'RITUAL' AND 'SECULAR STATUS'

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### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

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Having explored the discourses associated with Janakiram's foundation in Chapter 5, I now continue by focusing on one of Mallagaon's most powerful, the secretary of the Village Development Committee, Sachivji, (I analysed his poem about Janakiram's foundation in Chapter 5). I explore the social change he both instigates and regrets and consider whence his favoured discourses originate, how he constructs them and his purposes in doing so.

Later chapters will illustrate ways in which, as a prominent community leader, Sachivji's opinions, explored here, affect those of the less powerful, thus contributing to the social construction of understandings of development and of wellbeing in Mallagaon. I also discuss the possible reasons for his apparently contradictory understandings of both. In particular, I consider the importance to him of various forms of status and how these affect his understandings and his construction of 'social good'. This 'embedded case' is based on further texts he has written (hence I continue to use the discourse analysis approach outlined in 'Introducing Chapters 5 to 10'), my observations, and on interactions, informal conversations and a semi-structured interview with him.

My interview and other conversations with him included more direct questions than with others since, as VDC secretary, he is used to presenting his ideas in terms of development, even if not of wellbeing.

### 6.2 SACHIVJI

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Pushkar Phulara is a Brahman in his mid-fifties; '*sachiv*' (secretary) of the VDC (a permanent post he has held for thirty three years) he is often known as Sachivji. I initially intended using two names for him to emphasise how his identities result in his multiple, sometimes conflicting understandings: 'Pushkarji' when exploring the local culture and the 'ritual status' he gains from it, where his identities as Brahman, priest, community leader, villager and proud descendant seem to play an important role in mediating his understandings of development as indigenous and small-scale, not involving money. '*Sachivji*' when exploring the initiatives he undertakes and plans as VDC Secretary, where his identity mediates his ideas about development as externally

sourced and funded, and large-scale, and where his desire for ‘secular status’ is significant. However, my analysis revealed that this would have oversimplified his overlapping identities.

Sachivji is powerful in Mallagaon, where he has lived all his life except three years in exile, allegedly because of Maoist death threats. Through ceaseless activity, as villager, priest and VDC secretary, he seems to thrive on being needed by Mallagaon and on his involvement with everything happening there, and is equally comfortable in the offices, at the temple, at Janakiram, in the bazaar and in the village, as was the case when I was his family’s paying guest in the 1990s. In addition to economic capital, the ‘secular status’ he gained from the ‘linking capital’ afforded by associating with me, a ‘Westerner’ on a development project, may have allowed him to overcome caste-related qualms other villagers felt about people living in their homes.

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#### DESIRING INFRASTRUCTURAL CHANGE BUT UNCHANGED COMMUNITY VALUES

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In his official capacity, Sachivji is most pleased with his education-related work and states:

“Even though I have not studied to a high level, in my thinking education is the greatest and best thing”.

“I did a lot of work, did a lot of work”, he repeats, “I... gave Janakiram ‘*Campus*’ eight lakh rupees<sup>31</sup> from the VDC.” Proudly stating this as his own initiative, he explains that, through local fundraising campaigns, the VDC has collected thirteen lakh rupees<sup>32</sup> for the BEd ‘*Campus*’. Education, adds Sachivji, has been the biggest VDC expenditure to date.

The financing of formal education is important to Sachivji, perhaps because the activity enhances both his ‘secular status’, as successful VDC secretary, and his ‘ritual status’ as worthy descendant of the clan that founded Janakiram through religious endeavour. In the former role, Sachivji is largely responsible for distributing development funds to Mallagaon; in the latter he seems proud to build on the work of his ancestors, especially through fundraising campaigns for Janakiram. This may explain why “[Poem about the](#)

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<sup>31</sup> Eight lakh rupees = 800,000 rupees (a substantial sum equivalent to about £6,000 at the time of my fieldwork)

<sup>32</sup>Thirteen lakh = 1,300,000 rupees (a substantial sum equivalent to about £9,850 at the time of my fieldwork)

Place” in Sachivji’s “Glimpses of Ramkuti” dwells at greater length on Janakiram’s funding than on any other subject (see Chapter 5).

Seeming uninterested in my attempts to discuss the content of Janakiram’s education, he quickly brings the discussion to the road, explaining that if only it were pitched town-based teachers of skills would come on motorbikes, delivering courses less expensively. At this point, the road, which reached Mallagaon in 2010 although efforts had been made since 1993, takes precedence in Sachivji’s development plans. He considers it important for the whole area’s development, explaining that it has been the VDC’s second biggest expenditure. Finally, a contractor was paid “a fortune” to construct it because:

“Any which way, we must have a road, because everyone was coming to me saying road, road, road.”

Improvement to local agriculture seems a low priority for Sachivji, despite government initiatives to improve farming, his own knowledge about various grains supplied by the Agriculture Department and his role of distributing these to community members. He refers to it only towards the end of the interview, when I ask if there is anything negative about Mallagaon’s traditional life and he explains the value of new farming techniques compared to old ones.

For community wellbeing, Sachivji, in his official role and as Mallagaon villager, considers the local culture and celebration of festivals most important, Describing himself as “the main mobiliser”, and his role “to organise and encourage people to join in” festival celebration. Certainly, he seems happiest when fulfilling this role, doing so in his various identities as VDC office bearer, as villager and as Brahman carrying out religious rites, with energetic involvement.

Neither is there a difference, Sachivji states, between his personal and official aims for development. He talks of creating a ‘*seubaree*’ (apple orchard); an acronym for: ‘*Seva*’ (Service), ‘*Utpadan*’ (Production), ‘*Batabaran*’ (Environment), ‘*Reetirivas*’ (Customs and Traditions)’. He thinks the acronym was coined by an NGO once active in Mallagaon.

Sachivji hopes to find an INGO providing paid work for people who have passed the BEd while making them feel ownership of Mallagaon and responsibility for it, understandings he finds lacking nowadays. Indeed, he seems preoccupied by the change he finds in community members’ attitudes; he is disappointed that “even if it is

their own social need” people no longer fulfil their “duty” to Mallagaon through ‘*shramdaan*’ (labour donation). Whereas in the past people complied when asked to help in construction, now they decline out of laziness; he had to pay people to work on the community-constructed part of the road. Adding that people nowadays won’t even clean around their own water source, he asks, “What kind of a world is this? It is very bad”. Finding his advice ignored, he feels unappreciated.

My interview with Sachivji ended with him saying:

“There are a lot of things. Sometimes I can’t sleep at night, I remember a lot about development, my own concepts”.

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### 6.3 THEMES EMERGING

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Perhaps because of the ‘secular status’ his official identity affords him, Sachivji seems to invest importance in showing that he has the area’s development constantly in mind, that the development ideas he mentioned are his own and that he has been involved in high cost projects involving fundraising and distribution of money.

Notably, Sachivji repeatedly used the first person pronoun, in his interview and in further discussions about the road (see below), thus presenting himself as the main player in community development. He took sole credit for funding decisions initiated with others in Mallagaon or as part of nationwide initiatives, and mentioned specific amounts of big-spending involved. This suggests his pride in, and the ‘secular status’ he gains from, taking leadership roles in the financing of such large-scale infrastructural development. Agricultural projects may be less important to him because farming, basic to indigenous village life, does not confer on him or Mallagaon the higher status that projects relating to road-building or education do.

Sachivji’s attitude to road construction is illustrative both of the status he seems to gain in his own eyes through the part he plays in it, and of his role in the construction of local understandings of development; his preoccupation with it meant he referred to it often, contributing to a community discourse in which it is presented as a necessity and a ‘social good’.

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#### THE ROAD AS A ‘SOCIAL GOOD’ FOR ‘SECULAR STATUS’

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Discussing the road one day, Sachivji told me that his aim is to extend it to the middle of the ‘*lek*’ (flat highland area) in the next five to seven years, then “if all the things

[including herbs] there are preserved... if we pass it out [export], also money will come in”.

Becoming increasingly excited, he added:

“...and another thing, in my reckoning .... Once the road goes there I [can] harvest seasonal fruits.”

Thus, he continued, vehicles delivering goods need not leave empty but instead full of local produce. Therefore:

“...for the production of... the fruit also, I should take money from the VDC and harvest fruit there, must harvest gooseberries, must harvest lemon...”

Sachivji proudly presented these plans as his personal project, again by using the singular personal pronoun. However, Shrestha and Dhakal’s feasibility study of a ropeway for Mallagaon stated that the cash crops, vegetables, fruits and herbal products it would carry from the area could have met the demands of the local towns (2000). Bob, the VSO who, working with the DCC from 1998 to 2000 was instrumental in developing these ideas, told me that when he worked there they used to discuss these ideas for exporting locally produced goods (IN: 16/07/11).

Other community leaders, such as Jungbahadurji, the Chhetria Janakiram ex-headmaster (IN: 12/01/12) and Phularaji the Brahman DCC founder (IN: 12/11/11), spoke of the importance of developing the area’s potential for herb and fruit export, the latter considering this preferable to exporting raw goods to India, although not necessarily linking these ideas to the need for a road. DCC-Phularaji also stated that “good people” would only come to work as teachers in Mallagaon if there was a road (ibid).

The road was thus presented as a scheme to allow individuals involved in development and education easier access, and Mallagaon to benefit economically. As such, Sachivji and others in authority positions construct participation in extending the road as a ‘social good’ which may be hard for community members to dispute. The power over others in the community that such individuals hold through shaping their preferences is suggested by the ways in which even individuals from groups financially disadvantaged by the road (like porters losing their livelihoods to vehicles) reproduced this discourse. The daughter of Hari-Dai the tailor considered the road good to bring people “like yourself” (i.e. me), that is *‘thulo maanche’* (big / important people) who cannot walk (IN: 01/11/11). Another (middle aged, male) Dalit also spoke of the road as “development”, bringing “good people and *‘thulo maanche’*” and goods to Mallagaon

more easily (IN: 24/03/12). On the other hand, others from these groups criticised the road because of the associated loss of income, rejecting this discourse (see Chapter 8).

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### FESTIVALS: CONFIRMING 'RITUAL STATUS' AND ILLUSTRATING A 'SOCIAL GOOD'

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During my fieldwork, as twenty years previously, Sachivji enthusiastically initiated most festival celebrations in his informal capacity as community leader, possibly because they confer 'ritual status' on him as priestly Brahman. How they are organised reflects the hierarchical social order, people doing their "duty" by Mallagaon and showing him the respect he considers his latterly-unpaid due. By caste and profession, Sachivji should lead; his perception of community members failing in their duty arguably originates from his disappointment in no longer being unquestioningly respected.

Jungbahadurji (IN: 12/01/12) considered the demise of festivals symptomatic of community cooperation breaking down:

"In the past there was a system for organising/running the festivals, who does what work, how to do it. Now there is nothing. There is a lot of difference between then and now. After many years, it is possible that these festivals may not even happen because, if a system breaks, then it becomes difficult. In the past, Mallagaon would come together and do one job; there was no attitude that money was needed for this. ... Now, in everything, there will be no work done if there is no money."

Meanwhile, DCC-Phularaji blamed development for the demise of festivals and hence also of cooperation and Mallagaon's identity (IN: 12/11/11). Kusum, studying BEd at Janakiram, and many others of her Brahman caste, argued for the preservation of culture, feeling sorry that nowadays there are fewer festivals (IN: 18/11/11). Few Dalits found anything positive to say about the indigenous culture, except for Roshan who, despite casteism against his people, noted that people used to share good times at festivals and cooperated, working together for Mallagaon (IN: 29/10/11). Usually, however, the lower castes seemed to give little value to festival celebration and ideals such as cooperation important to the upper castes. The upper castes may favour festivals for the afore-mentioned 'ritual status'; however Dalits tended to reject them, even when presented as a 'social good', probably because they are representative of the social system in which they were obliged to fulfil certain roles.

Taking up themes discussed thus far, I now analyse various texts written by Sachivji in order to explore further how and why he presents his understandings of wellbeing and of development.

#### 6.4 ESTABLISHING THE THREATENED SOCIAL ORDER

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##### ESTABLISHING PHULARAS AS PROVIDERS OF ‘SOCIAL GOOD’

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Sachivji’s epic poem “Glimpses of *Ramkuti*” includes the sixteen-line stanza “*Mallagaon*” (see Appendix 10a) which is devoted to ayurveda (indigenous medicine). In it, Sachivji states that “*Mallagaon* became famous because of its medicine” and that:

“Working on *āyurved* throughout Doti  
There was no other village, only *Mallagaon*.”

“*Mallagaon*”, the title, appears twice in this sixteen-line stanza, establishing the centrality, for Sachivji, of indigenous medicine to his community and clan identity.

The stanza continues:

“Medicine was available for free; no one paid with banknotes.  
No one was discriminated against; in everyone’s heart was Rām, Rām”.

A couple of lines later:

“There was no need to buy anything; medicine was manufactured at home”.

This repetition suggests the importance to Sachivji of emphasising that his ancestors’ “service” was provided free, was home-based and non-discriminatory, and was practised with Ram in mind, Ram being a model for *Mallagaon*’s Brahmans (see Chapter 5).

The line, “What is antibiotic compared to *āyurved*?” reveals some ambivalence; Sachivji has funded both his sons to become allopathic medical practitioners and was pleased by the store of antibiotics one son has given him. This suggests that, while he may understand the approaches as complementary, his poem aims to emphasise the value of his clan’s ayurvedic medical tradition as a selfless contribution and a religiously endorsed ‘social good’. The emphasis may also be because of the ‘ritual status’ he gains through his connection to worthy ancestors.

The stanza lists a variety of medicinal plants available in the forest, before exhorting people to:

“Protect the forest; increase greenery; bring everyone back to sense”.

Sachivji opportunistically encourages villagers to preserve the forest, combining his identity as proud descendant with that of the position he held until his exile, Chairman of Mallagaon Forest User's Group.

On one level, "*Mallagaon*" is about the good health, or physical wellbeing, resulting from ayurveda, listing various medicinal plants which "healed every disease". The stanza may also reflect Sachivji's desire to establish his forestry work as well as his ancestors' ayurvedic practice as 'social good'. Probably the depression of exile when he wrote this poem, and the social upheaval and threat to the established order during the then ongoing Maoist War contributed to his idealising the contributions made to Mallagaon by Phularas, including him.

Another short stanza sheds further light on Sachivji's ideas.

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#### ESTABLISHING THE IMPORTANCE OF CASTE-PRESCRIBED DUTY

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"VDC Wards" (Appendix 10b) calls on the people to follow the traditions of their culture:

"Do not wash your hands and mouth on the same plate you have eaten ...  
The priest performs worship; the gardener picks flowers ...  
Let us all know our culture well ...  
Let's place our hands over the fire and take an oath.  
Let us all come together for the development of our village and region."

The importance of knowing one's culture, with emphasis on the different duties of the castes, is juxtaposed with the exhortation that everyone should "come together for ...development" while the "oath" is to be taken over fire, considered sacred in Hindu ritual. Sachivji thus firmly places the responsibility for development on the local villagers and suggests that it best comes about through respect for traditional/religious practice. This indicates his desire to propagate the idea that development can best be achieved by upholding local culture, including its traditional hierarchy, "The priest [i.e. Brahman] performs worship".

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The understandings of development and of wellbeing explored through these stanzas of Sachivji's poem appear grounded in indigenous practice and tradition, do not involve money and seem inseparable from the 'ritual status' he gains through the indigenous culture and his clan's contribution. Perhaps reaction to the social transformation occurring in Mallagaon leads the upper castes, exemplified by Sachivji, to favour and

idealise the past, representing for them the now threatened social order. Written in poetic form, with a readership largely comprised of his own clan, Sachivji seems to use the stanzas analysed above as ‘symbolic resources’ to endorse the threatened social hierarchy and his roles in it.

However, the forms of development presented in these stanzas seem of no greater importance to him than large-scale, infrastructural projects involving high expenditure and external input, perhaps because of the ‘secular status’ the latter afford him. While Sachivji, as VDC secretary, may favour such development interventions because they fulfil his sense of responsibility to the community, the importance to him of the status they provide him is further suggested by the high priority he gave in his interview to the already well-funded, high-profile areas of transportation and education over the improvement of local agricultural practice. Furthermore, although he stated that “education is the greatest and best thing”, it seems to be its financing rather than education *per se* that is most important to him.

#### 6.5 PRESENTING LARGE-SCALE, EXTERNALLY FUNDED DEVELOPMENT AS LOCAL

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I now analyse Sachivji’s article “They would operate like a *Chalise Ghatta*” (Appendix 11), exploring the ways he presents large-scale, externally funded development as local and grassroots, and his possible reasons for doing so. Published in the Janakiram ‘*Campus*’ Magazine 2011, with its likely readership including emigrants from Mallagaon and individuals potentially able to influence funding and development decisions, Sachivji uses the magazine as a forum to argue for the construction of a road further into the VDC, and as a means to solicit support.

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#### DEVELOPMENT DISCOURSES THROUGH METAPHOR

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The simile “like a *chalise ghatta*”, occurring in the title and final sentence, provides the article’s main analogy. A ‘*chalise ghatta*’ is a large water-turbine driven grinding stone<sup>33</sup> familiar to locals. Its radius is forty (*‘chalise’*) thumbs. A large, powerful machine functioning non-stop and offering large-scale production, it can, unlike a home grindstone, grind even grain that has not been sun-dried. It is beneficial for mass grinding for many households. As far as I know, this analogy is Sachivji’s own.

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<sup>33</sup> The ‘*chalise ghatta*’ explanation was provided by my translator Hikmat Khadka who asked Sachivji for it on my behalf

By relating his development ideas to a locally produced, well known and appreciated piece of technology which works effortlessly, Sachivji brings to the development project he has in mind a sense of familiarity, self-sufficiency, local ownership and simplicity. Since such a grindstone is considered capable of grinding anything, the article also suggests that even negative aspects or difficulties encountered in the development project are surmountable. The analogy suggests that, if action is taken in the ways the article advocates, development would spin like a “*chalise ghatta*”, without minor obstacles interfering.

Having referred to various infrastructural aspects of development, “Education, health, agriculture, transportation, forestry, industry, communication”, Sachivji provides the article’s focus through another metaphor. By calling “transportation (road)” “the backbone of development”, he implies that development without a road is spineless, hence weak.

These metaphors indicate Sachivji’s exposure to various development discourses. The “*chalise ghatta*” analogy provides a vivid sense of becoming “self-dependent”. Having listed the various development organisations working in Mallagaon, he concludes that, if his plans succeed, they “would be like a *chalise ghatta*”, i.e. self-run. The article’s presentation of development as community-based and inclusive may have its source in ideas that Sachivji is exposed to through his VDC work, including those of NGOs, and Maoist discourse of self-reliance. The discourse around the road, shared by Dr. Phulara, a retired emigrant professor living in Kathmandu, of the highway as a ‘lifeline’ and feeder roads as ‘the backbone’ of every kind of economic activity, and hence of development (IN: 21/07/12) seems to originate in discourses of modernisation.

Other ideas of development are also evident. Having stated, “This VDC is filled with biodiversity”, the “big lakes, created by nature, and numerous sources of medicinal plants” and the “attractive and beautiful sites that adorn nature” are mentioned. Reference made to the ‘lek’ as the “*Mahabharat lek*” has two effects. By thus naming what is usually known simply as the ‘lek’, Sachivji draws attention to its geographical location within the ‘*Mahabharat*’ (Great Indian) range, thus making the significance of its abundance extend beyond Nepal. Secondly, he links the natural abundance of the area to descriptions of such abundance in the *Mahabharata*, a Hindu religious epic dating from 400 BC–300 AD, thus bringing religious significance to the potential of the area.

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## INFRASTRUCTURAL DEVELOPMENT: THE ROAD AND TOURISM

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The article continues:

“If the road can be built up to the concerned place, there is potential for it to succeed as a tourism region, and this VDC can be introduced as a tourist destination”.

These ideas originate from attempts, within the last five years, to increase tourism in the region, with ‘Beautiful Far West Nepal’ written on buses and in the foyers of Dhangadhi’s new hotels (FN: 07/10/11), and with a book, *Incredible Far West Nepal* (Upreti, 2007). As Sachivji states, if made tourist-friendly, the ‘lek’ would become like Khaptad National Park which, in the same region as Mallagaon, has been developed as a tourist destination and promoted in terms of its natural beauty and biodiversity (ibid).

*Sachivji* does show awareness that developing roads and tourism infrastructure may destroy the natural environment and its biodiversity. Immediately after stating, “What is needed is the protection” of the environment, he adds that “more natural resources or biodiversity” are not needed. While this may be the complacency of one living close to nature whose natural resources are not yet threatened, it is perhaps meant to pre-empt any environmental concerns his plans may create amongst his readers, and persuade them that, provided “government laws and rules” concerning conservation are adhered to, the road and tourism need not interfere with the area’s biodiversity. Importantly, what is left unsaid is that the price for the self-reliant community the article envisages is the vast capital expenditure for building roads and the infrastructure of tourism at the cost of other development, and the inevitable environmental destruction. Sachivji’s apparent lack of concern for the environment here contrasts with the passion he expresses for preserving it in his poem. This can in part be explained by the different fora and purposes of the texts and in part by the competing pulls of ‘secular’ and ‘ritual status’, emphasising how multiple and conflicting Sachivji’s understandings are.

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## COVERING MULTIPLE UNDERSTANDINGS OF DEVELOPMENT

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Although the article leaves unexplored many areas of development important in local understandings, these are referred to in passing, with mention of the ‘effective implementation’ of the various community-based organisations. These include the various educational establishments and “a health post, an ayurvedic clinic, a Youth Information Centre... Samaj Sudhar (Social Reform)” and the “Mallagaon Forest Group”, thus implying that extending the road would resolve development concerns of

community members in areas including education, health, social reform and forest conservation.

As forthcoming chapters reveal, locals of all castes are preoccupied with the need to improve irrigation and the drinking water supply. Immediately following his argument for the road, Sachivji writes:

“To the east of S\_\_\_ stream, there is a big river called D\_\_\_, and to the west flows M\_\_\_. There are abundant sources of hydroelectricity, irrigation and drinking water.”

Three local water sources are named, emphasising the abundance of water as well as providing geographical boundaries and hence identity to the VDC. Without explicitly stating it, the article implies, through the ordering of its subject matter, that the construction of the road would lead to improved water supply.

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### CONFLATING DEVELOPMENT WITH HAPPINESS THROUGH RELIGION

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Further understandings of development, which Sachivji relates to happiness, are revealed in the following passage:

“Let’s not be complacent only because a jeep service operates on the VDC road once in a while. One has to go through 84 lakh [8,400,000] incarnations before one is born as a man, which is the best life there is, and once born as a man, one must do something. Life is short, so let’s think on time; it’s still not too late. If we conserve the Teli *lek* and if we use it to our advantage, then the VDC residents can stay away from disease, hunger and worry, and it can be stated with confidence that it will not be hard to generate a happy livelihood.”

Sachivji exhorts Mallagaon to action through reference to the Hindu belief in reincarnation. In doing so, he conflates road construction through the ‘*lek*’ with its conservation, making the incompatible sound compatible. Furthermore, emphasising that reincarnation as a human is rare and life short, he presents it as a religious imperative to carry out one’s human duty, through speedy action to further his project. He appears to be attempting to transform social values (as in Chapter 5 in relation to donating to Janakiram).

The paragraph then illustrates that, by using the ‘*lek*’ “to our advantage” (wealth and livelihoods from tourism through road construction), ills can be avoided and “happy livelihood[s]” easily generated. The increasingly strong belief in the importance of livelihoods for development and for wellbeing (see subsequent chapters) is reflected here.

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## IDENTITY AND THE PROMOTION OF DEVELOPMENT

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Frequent use of the first person plural pronoun suggests efforts at inclusivity, as in “...our ... VDC”. This rhetorical device also serves as a means to exhort members of the VDC to take appropriate action (emphasis added here and below):

“Let’s not be complacent”, “...let’s think on time”, “If we conserve the Tele *lek* and if we use it to our advantage...”

“...we need to conserve the Mahabharat *lek* and follow government laws and rules. This will lead us to progress and we will not have to rely on others. We will become self-dependent.”

As VDC secretary and Brahman, the author is fulfilling his roles as leader and initiator of action; the pronoun ‘we’ merges his and his readers’ identities, implying joint responsibility and benefit. This contrasts interestingly with his using ‘I’ in various conversations (explored in Section 6.3) when he wished to emphasise his personal contribution.

Sachivji writes that it “is going to take another five to seven years” for the road “to reach all parts of the VDC” if its construction depends solely on VDC resources. Given the article’s potential readership of influential emigrants from Mallagaon, his intention may have been to secure from them private funding, or support in influencing government funding, to complete the construction more quickly.

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The article interweaves diverse understandings of development. By suggesting that a road will realise multiple development aspects, some at odds with each other, Sachivji helps ensure the support even of those who may not benefit from it. This support is solicited by implying throughout that development’s mechanism can run smoothly, despite difficulties, and ensure economic security and wellbeing through livelihoods without environmental damage.

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## 6.6 CONCLUSION

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This chapter has explored the apparently conflicting understandings of development presented by Sachivji. His approach to community development through, for example development of tourism infrastructure, seems to contradict the self-sufficiency and preservation of local culture he advocates elsewhere. His large-scale, high finance, externally sourced, project-based ideas for infrastructural community development relate to a local discourse of development as modernisation, in which development is

equated with external agency and goods. This discourse, discounting the local, seems at odds with his admiration for local, community-led, environmentally sustainable and indigenous development such as his ancestors' ayurvedic practice and his own forest management. It also seems counter to his understanding that wellbeing derives from preservation of the local culture, exemplified by the celebration of festivals.

Sachivji himself merges his conflicting understandings by relating them to the Hindu, caste-based, hierarchical social order and the idea of duty important to him and other Brahmans, thus imbuing them with religious significance. The apparent mismatch between his ideas can be explained if his activities and opinions are understood as means whereby he may, according to his various identities, reinforce his status ('secular' or 'ritual'), hence furthering his personal wellbeing. The latter he also derives from his ability to contribute to Mallagaon, suggesting a relational understanding of wellbeing as a social phenomenon.

Skilfully, through texts and in conversations, Sachivji presents to various ends the multiple understandings he holds, which are partly dictated by the genre of his writing and partly by his target audiences. By presenting projects such as road-building as 'social goods' he promulgates discourses which are hard for other, less powerful community members to dispute. As I argued about the texts in Chapter 5, I have also considered the stanzas of Sachivji's poem explored here as 'symbolic resources', used to endorse the threatened social hierarchy and his and his clan's roles in it.

Sachivji's role in co-constructing understandings of development and of wellbeing in Mallagaon emerges further in the following chapters. In the following three chapters, 'embedded cases', focus on six individuals, extending my exploration beyond the upper castes and males (the foci of Chapters 5 and 6) to include women and Dalits.

## CHAPTER 7    MULTIPLE IDENTITIES, MULTIPLE UNDERSTANDINGS

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### 7.1    INTRODUCTION

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This chapter comprises two ‘embedded cases’, both based on upper caste women: Devi Trivedi, a Brahman emigrant from Mallagaon; and Shanti Bhandari, a Chhetria married into it. I explore the two women’s multiple, often conflicting understandings which reflect the social change Mallagaon is experiencing, the associated discourses and their personal experiences. Particularly significant is how their understandings of development, and of community and personal wellbeing and the relationship between them are mediated by their multiple and shifting identities, differing circumstances and changing roles and aspirations, as well as by the identities they ascribe to the Mallagaon community.

### 7.2    DEVI TRIVEDI

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Devi, in her office at the district hospital, is busy with women waiting to consult her. After several hours, she comes to her staff quarters, apologising for the delay, proudly emphasising her indispensability at work. Her accommodation consists of a single room, seeming to me cramped and dreary, shared with her husband and three children.

A Brahman of the Phulara clan, Devi is in her early forties. She lived in Mallagaon until she was twenty-five, studying at Janakiram to Class 10. When I first met her in 1993 she was at home, awaiting an arranged marriage, and usually helping in the fields, fetching water, washing clothes or cooking. I never found it easy to communicate with her, although she was less than ten years my junior, partly because of what seemed the entirely different socio-cultural worlds we inhabited. Now, however, our worlds are closer, with her emigration from Mallagaon and my marrying into a culture (Indian) closer to hers, and I find her one of the easiest to communicate with amongst everyone I meet during my fieldwork. As my junior, I name her Devi without the honorific ‘*ji*’ suffix.

Devi explains how, in 2051 BS (1994-1995) she left Mallagaon to study as an Auxiliary Nurse Midwife (ANM) in the local, town-based technical school. At the time, nobody in Mallagaon knew about such opportunities but her *binaju* (elder sister’s husband), working in town, explained about the course, suggesting that she study it. Devi’s brothers agreed, although “all the older people used to abuse” them, wondering why

they wanted her to study when she was already too old to marry, and advising them to arrange her marriage. With palpable pride and gratitude, Devi continues:

“My brothers said okay, our sister is old but we will educate her, my brothers educated me... My brothers did very good by me.”

Subsequent to training, Devi married, moved to the district headquarters, and began work in the hospital, where she now provides “counselling in everything”, which she describes in detail.

What would Devi miss about the town if she moved back to Mallagaon? Liking it better where she is, she proudly says:

“My '*servis*' [salaried job] is here. You can ask in the office, I'm not telling lies, you can ask in my office. If I am not there then the patients do not come there. I must stay here for other people. If I am not there, they go to... [my husband's] medical shop and ask... [him] 'Where is Madam?' Now everything is good.”

However, Devi continues:

“Now there is a small problem, my daughter has grown up. I am very worried about her... about her study. Here also there is nothing for her. If you don't go into technical work there is no life. For my daughter there is nothing here. Therefore I must either go to Dhangadhi or Kathmandu.”

Devi wants her daughter to study Intermediate Science, making her eligible to train as a staff nurse or pharmacist, but these courses are unavailable locally. Hence, in two years, when her daughter reaches that level, Devi “will have a big problem.”

Devi's brothers live and work in Mallagaon; she visits annually and finds it “very different” compared to twenty years ago:

“Number one reason, there are no people in Mallagaon village now... lots of people have gone searching for jobs from there... There are no livelihoods there, people sit and drink alcohol. [Then] people did not know much about education... people are [now] giving special attention to studies, going for studies to Dhangadhi and Kathmandu.”

Devi adds that the villages used to be alcohol-free, attributing its prevalence now to unemployment; “There is nothing for '*time-pass*' except drinking and playing cards<sup>34</sup>”.

I query this, suggesting that twenty years ago there was unemployment, yet no apparent alcohol consumption. She replies:

“There was a lot of unemployment but at that time people felt they should work, should farm, 'should respect people bigger than us', '*thulo maanche*' [big/important people] ... Now people think that if they do that kind of work, 'We become very small, we won't do it'. But if they drink they feel very big.”

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<sup>34</sup> Wherever card-playing is mentioned there is the connotation of gambling

Whereas:

“Before most people didn’t say much, they showed respect for their superiors, now everyone says ‘I am bigger than you, he [she] is bigger than him [her]’... Everyone says, ‘We are big, we are big’. Not big for good reasons but only for bad reasons.”

Devi mentions that the Maoists brought gender equality and fairer conditions for servants to Mallagaon:

“How it was in Nepal was that the women had to do all the work and the men could just sit around ... now men and women are equal – the same, it’s good ... everyone has to work in the same way ... People used to keep people lower than themselves as servants and treat them badly ... just to make them work and not giving enough to eat and wear. Now they [the Maoists] have made all that better.”

When I ask Devi what the major changes in Mallagaon regarding development have been, her response seems influenced by my former roles there and a desire to please me:

“After Miss came a lot of change came to the school... Before girls could not have education. Now everybody goes to school, sons and daughters.”

However, this statement matches values she anyway holds, illustrated by her pride in her educational achievement and her aspirations for her daughter.

Nevertheless to move away from a discussion in which Devi may say things to please me, I ask whether she thinks Janakiram’s education could improve to address the situation we had been discussing: unemployment, people considering village work beneath them, lack of respect and excessive drinking. She does not reply but continues:

“The culture of people there is that once they have studied a little higher... people study till SLC, and then they think, ‘There is nobody bigger than us... we have become very big people...’, they have such thinking ... they don’t know who big people are ... they don’t know they have to respect their betters ... one or two people do good work there... and the people there undermine that work.”

Devi refers thrice to the negative effects of the various political parties, blaming them for the ills she sees in Mallagaon. Regarding Mallagaon’s future improvement, she feels:

“After two to four good people come there, just like you... Yes, it’s true. Talking about the road, half the people are trying to make the road and half come to abuse [them] and destroy the road... Some are Maoists, some Congress, some EMaLe<sup>35</sup>. They don’t agree on anything... To do good in Mallagaon, all the people have to move forward as one.”

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<sup>35</sup> EMaLe = Ekikrit Marksbadī ra Leninbadī (Unified Marxist Leninist)

Devi discusses a suggestion she had made that employed emigrants from Mallagaon like herself could give several months' salary for road repair, adding that her scheme could work, "If all of us unite".

For the '*santushti*' (contentment/satisfaction) of Mallagaon, Devi thinks more jobs are needed since:

"People who do not have employment are a little angry with those who do, they feel jealous..."

She suggests training in tailoring or knitting for women; the Cottage and Small Industry Development Board (CSIDB) could give courses, resulting in people having livelihood skills enabling them to "do their own sewing and sewing for others". Thus, she twice repeats, "their minds won't go to other places".

As for the educated, in Mallagaon:

"...everyone has BA ...higher up towards Rosyagaon also there are now BA passes, no one who hasn't passed BA. ... What work can they do now...?"

After pausing, her voice hesitant, she suggests, "it would be best if they [the educated] got some kind of '*servis*'" (salaried job).

Enlisting aspects of Mallagaon life she thinks positive for wellbeing, Devi begins by mentioning the BEd offered by Janakiram '*Campus*' and then talks of the "good agricultural work" possible, especially the vegetables her brother grows. Stating, "Vegetables are the best thing to eat", Devi adds that vegetable farming would be ideal for those who want employment, providing them with plenteous food. She wishes she could encourage this idea in Mallagaon:

"...but these days people don't do agriculture, they don't grow vegetables. People either just drink and sit there or think 'there is nothing we can do'."

Devi's response to my asking, before finishing the interview, if she has anything to add illustrates the issue that has concerned her throughout. "Nothing," she replies, except "it is difficult to... counsel the people there" to modify their opinion that:

"People there think that farming is not to be done, people who farm are bad... that people who try to grow vegetables are not good".

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I now discuss Devi's understandings of development and of wellbeing, relating them to those of other community members. While my focus is on the ways in which her various individual and group identities mediate her ideas, I also explore the ways in which her understandings reflect various discourses dominant in the community and

reveal the importance to Devi of personal status. As a result, I begin to problematise the dichotomising of wellbeing as either hedonic or eudaimonic.

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### UNDERSTANDING COMMUNITY WELLBEING

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Devi considers jobs necessary for Mallagaon because of the jealousy of the unemployed. Similarly, Raghavji, a Brahman teacher, informed me that the past was better “because people didn’t quarrel each other” whereas nowadays, out of jealousy:

“If I have job they quarrel with me ... because... they can’t get any job but I have a job ... my lifestyle is better, bit better than theirs. They start irritation... with me” (IN: 23/10/11).

These ideas reveal the adverse effect social comparison has on people’s lives, as explored later in this chapter. However, poverty as a negative effect of unemployment was not foremost in Devi’s and Raghavji’s minds; instead they worried about the negative feelings of the unemployed towards the employed. This reason is arguably linked to their Brahman identity, their clan suffering least from unemployment.

Devi complained about the lack of respect for ‘*thulo maanche*’, all of whom, in Mallagaon, belong to the upper castes; her main concern was that everyone feels “big” and fails to respect leaders as they did in the past. Her sentiments were shared by Sachivji, who painted a picture of a past in which people knew their place, as opposed to the present in which people no longer do their duty. Their opinions reflect a discourse of social wellbeing possibly derived from Hinduism and suggest the bewilderment of a once revered caste recently experiencing rapid transformation of a familiar and (according to them) well ordered, social system. Such understandings were also expressed by an elderly Brahman Mallagaon village woman, Gopikaji, who stated that Nepal-wide:

“Some say ‘I’m big, I’m big’, nobody’s done any good for the country. People have been made to suffer. There’s bound to be an effect. The king no longer here. ... people in the village are not good, [they] don’t listen to what you say, don’t follow anybody... ‘I am no lesser than you. I have learnt more than you. What are you?’ The Dalits say this. Women say this to men. Men say this to women” (IN: 25/11/11).

Gopikaji’s son Gyana is a male Brahman migrant from Mallagaon similar in age to Devi, who also emigrated after studying SLC. Subsequently, he did an MEd in the UK from 2010 to 2011 and now lives in Kathmandu. He shared Devi’s concerns, explicitly relating good leadership and unity to “social wellbeing” which he described as “one

typical characteristic of my own community” (IN: 25/09/11). Elaborating, he spoke of “the feeling of unity in the small place… a sort of ownership” and “sharing each other burden” meaning that “people make progress year by year”. Gyana gave as examples the sharing of farm work, house construction and mutual support at events such as weddings and funerals. He explained that the “feeling of unity” has now been lost, with “our development in each aspect, not only the physical development, also the social things and harmony, peace and everything… dis-balanced” because of recent political upheaval and the factionalism of local politics, leading to people blaming each other and those in leadership roles. Whereas people used to contribute to Mallagaon, now although “people know their role… they are not accountable and not taking their… responsibilities”. This, he added “could be due to the lack of a good leader… [to] unify the voice and make all the things into transformation”. Such leadership, Gyana added, is impossible without the trust he considers gone from Mallagaon.

Devi’s and Gyana’s identity as Brahman *‘thulo maanche’* may cause them to rue particularly strongly the loss of respect, unity and trust, and the undermining of leaders. Although Bisvas, another Brahman emigrant from nearby Rosyagaon, experiences these aspects of ‘social capital’ as negative, feeling himself in “jail” when he returns home (FN: 26/09/11), loss of unity is usually understood by the traditionally dominant as the downside of Mallagaon’s increased equality.

The articles explored in Chapter 5 also indicate the importance to Phularas of unity behind a good leader. Many consider this loss of unity to have resulted from the factionalism of local politics, particularly Maoist activity. The upper castes’ loss may be seen as gain by others; a middle-aged Dalit woman, the blacksmith’s wife, found it a positive change to be no longer afraid of others (IN: 24/03/12).

Although Devi noted that livelihoods can provide some income, she considered it more important that employed people (according to her) are less involved in local factionalist politics, drinking, or feeling anger and jealousy. Devi understands the advantage of skills programmes primarily from the perspective of her caste: those in authority positions hoping to prevent disunity and discontent in Mallagaon.

Devi spoke of there being “no people in Mallagaon village now” because of emigration for jobs, and of “everyone” having a bachelor degree, reiterating this with, “no one who hasn’t passed BA” (emphasis added). These statements, close to reality only for Mallagaon’s Phularas, suggest division in her mind, perhaps between those who count (the Phularas she identifies with) and those who do not. This matches Sachivji’s ideas (explored in Section 5.4), expressed using similar terminology.

Devi’s categorisation of ‘illiterate’ and ‘educated’ similarly revealed a ‘them and us’ attitude; while local skills training courses would best serve the needs of the former, the educated need white-collar, salaried employment. Although a common slogan, Devi’s claim, “Now, everybody goes to school, sons and daughters” similarly dichotomised Mallagaon and suggests that she was thinking only of her caste; all Mallagaon’s Brahmans go to school but amongst the lower castes there continue to be children who do not (see Appendix 1).

Devi suggested salaried employment for the educated hesitantly, perhaps because she realised that securing such jobs almost inevitably necessitates emigration; she stated that “there are no livelihoods” in Mallagaon. Recognising Mallagaon’s need for good leaders, she probably realised that the emigration of the educated (i.e. those she considers leader material) is negative for Mallagaon’s wellbeing. This is an understanding also held by Gyana (referred to above) who reiterated several times that unity and sense of responsibility may have been lost due to the educated, such as himself, emigrating (IN: 25/09/11).

Devi was positive about vegetable farming, wishing she could “counsel” the people (referring to those she thinks consider farming belittling work) to understand its value. This is the same group to whom she attributed lack of respect, agreement and unity, and unjustifiable feelings of superiority. As I have shown, she understands this group as separate from the educated such as herself and her brother Duttji. The latter, a science teacher dabbling in vegetable farming, may have influenced her understanding that her role is to promote “agricultural work” to improve Mallagaon life. He claimed he was the first (using hired labour) to grow vegetables there, showing others the value of growing them by selling them in the bazaar (IN: 20/02/12). Duttji’s delegating the physical work involved, and Sachivji’s ideas of certain roles for certain people, may have also encouraged Devi’s understanding that all except Phularas should farm in Mallagaon. Devi’s village background, with subsistence farming ancestors, may be

why she considers it best for her (educated) group to eschew agriculture (except as a hobby) and seek education and white-collar jobs. Duttji's discussion about agriculture likewise suggests that 'proper' employment equates with leaving Mallagaon:

"Employment is not everything, people don't have to go away. You can do agriculture even here" (IN: 20/02/14).

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### UNDERSTANDING PERSONAL WELLBEING

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Should she have to leave town, Devi would most miss the counselling aspects of her work. This importance to her of being needed was borne out by my observation of her at work and by her mention of how she would like to support Mallagaon; she felt so strongly about the difficulties she experiences counselling people there that she brought up the topic herself. She seemed very loyal, both as a medical professional to her patients, and as former member of Mallagaon.

Valuing the ability to help others and make a contribution suggests a eudaimonic understanding of wellbeing. It may be important to Devi because women of her family never had the opportunity to do so until her generation; although Brahmans are traditionally in bestowing positions, until recently only their males could do so in public rather than family roles. Leelanath, a young Phulara entrepreneur in Mallagaon, explained to me that his aim is to help everyone there, through his job and by creating a cooperative environment, giving as an example his desire to help the sick by taking them to hospital (IN: 06/11/11).

The status of being a *'thulo maanche'* in her own right (being needed and appreciated, contributing to Mallagaon through counselling and funding the road) seems important to Devi. Similarly Sachivji, another *'thulo maanche'* used to giving advice and being listened to, thrives on making contributions to Mallagaon. In both cases their belief that their contribution is vital to the community enhances their status, suggesting that putting value on being able to bestow has as much to do with hedonic as eudaimonic wellbeing.

Devi's mother was uneducated and has lived in Mallagaon since marriage. Devi is proud to have left such a life behind, studying midwifery and subsequently working in the local district's headquarters. However, despite her positive experience directly resulting from her training and work, she has higher aspirations for her daughter; the locally available midwifery course, despite its positive outcome for her, would be insufficient for the future she has planned for her daughter as a staff nurse or

pharmacist. This causes maternal anxiety about the “problem” of moving to a city, although she is otherwise happy with her achievements for herself.

Similar anxieties assail other upper caste Mallagaon emigrants. The Chhetria Sreedhar, another health professional who has emigrated to Dhangadhi, explained his concern that, just as his Janakiram education was insufficient for him owing to the fast pace of development, his son’s private school education in Dhangadhi may be insufficient “in order for him to reach a level that he has to reach” (IN: 02/10/11). Shifting aspirations, caused by the social and geographical mobility of the more powerful and wealthy, make such mobility particularly important to them. The anxiety such aspirations cause is understood as worthwhile in the overall process.

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### UNDERSTANDING DEVELOPMENT

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Devi’s choice to illustrate the need for unity and good leadership with the difficulties encountered in building the road indicates the latter’s importance to her, possibly influenced by Sachivji, who played a larger part in securing the road than other Mallagaon residents. However, Devi claimed as her own the ideas for funding its repair, indicating that the road matters to her independent of his opinions. The development of transportation systems may matter to her not only in terms of easier access to her natal community, but also for the status she gains through making it known that she can both choose and afford to contribute her salary thus. As a woman who has lower ‘ritual status’ than the men of her caste, even talking about her ability to thus bestow can be understood as a ‘symbolic resource’ used to accrue ‘secular status’.

As a woman whose ‘secular status’ increased through further education, and as a mother who hopes for even greater opportunities for her daughter, Devi seems to understand development primarily in terms of improved opportunities and equality for females. In stating that men and women are now equal and “work in the same way” despite the greater workload women continue to bear, she seems to reproduce, as do other upper caste Mallagaon women such as Gopikaji (IN: 25/11/11), a discourse - perhaps promoted by upper caste men - which celebrates the achievement of gender equality.

Amongst those I spoke to, there were only two Brahman women (including Devi) now belonging to or originating from Mallagaon village who stated gender equality as important; the other was Maya, a teacher who lives elsewhere with her emigrated family during school holidays (IN: 24/02/12). The majority spoke positively of Maoists in

relation to caste rather than gender equality. Aditi, the female Chhetria health post '*peon*', spoke of the Maoists' positive contribution in decreasing caste-based discrimination, but not about their lessening gender discrimination (IN: 01/12/11). Meanwhile, two Brahman girls from Mallagaon, nominally doing BEd while awaiting arranged marriages, praised Janakiram for its support of Dalits, yet did not mention its support of girls (IN: 25/11/11). These comments, made by upper caste young women of Mallagaon suggest that, at the village level, Maoist discourse has had more influence in terms of caste equality than gender equality.

However, Mallagaon Dalit women did speak of the importance of gender equality, as did upper caste women from surrounding areas. Yashoda, a young Bhul woman, noted that skills training for women would contribute to Mallagaon's development (IN: 24/11/11). Two Brahmans, the teacher in charge of the girls' hostel (IN: 10/11/11) and Kusum, a Janakiram BEd student (IN: 18/11/11) stated the importance of education in addressing gender inequality. Meanwhile, Pushpa, a Chhetria health volunteer from a nearby village, involved with various NGOs and considered a leader of women, felt the area could do with stronger women's voices (IN: 19/02/12).

This contrast does not seem related to levels of exposure to Maoists, since all the Mallagaon women were equally exposed to them, but rather to do with women's education levels and their involvement in skills programmes and NGOs, suggesting the influence of these institutions through development discourses which put rights first. In contrast to the lower castes, many upper caste women permanently resident in Mallagaon village have apparently had little such involvement, NGO programmes largely targeting the more marginalised. They have also had less formal education compared to the upper caste non-Mallagaon women I spoke to.

Some women, with defined roles and areas of power within Mallagaon and/or encultured to accept their subjugation as natural, may not even recognise there to be inequality. Asha, an officer working in women's development in the district headquarters, explaining how her ideas about development had changed to a focus on women's rights and empowerment, told me that twelve years ago women were unaware that they had the right to dispute violence from men, let alone feel sufficiently empowered to protest against it (IN: 14/03/12). Although she noted that with the good education provided by Janakiram, Mallagaon is ahead of the rest of the region, she added that the whole region is behind in terms of women's empowerment.

Despite Devi's negativity about the political parties, she noted that the Maoists brought not only gender equality but also fairer conditions for servants. Richer, town-based relatives often have poorer village relatives<sup>36</sup> doing menial jobs for them. Improving servants' circumstances may matter to Devi because until recently her immediate family was a relatively badly off village-based branch of her clan. Devi's identity as someone who may have experienced classism and sexism but not casteism may explain her mentioning Maoist's help for women and servants but not for Dalits.

Devi's emphasis on gender equality, and on both "technical" education and work, without which she considers there to be "no life", are where she diverges markedly from Sachivji's thinking; the differences are explained by her identity as a female beneficiary of a midwifery course (classified locally as "technical").

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I now explore Shanti Bhandari's understandings which have many telling similarities to, and differences from those of Devi Trivedi, as the summing up of both at the end of the chapter will demonstrate.

### 7.3 SHANTI BHANDARI

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The first time I meet Shanti is during a school break, sitting on a bench on Janakiram's balcony alongside the two other female teachers, slightly separate from the male staff, who are huddled together nearer the tea-brewing fire. She has her daughter with her who, too young for school, usually sits alongside her as she teaches Class 1.

Shanti, a Chhetria in her late twenties, married into Mallagaon nine years ago from a village in the neighbouring district. Her husband, who like herself has the IEd, is unemployed. Having left a job in India because of illness, he is now unable to find work. As a married primary school teacher, she is often called "Shanti Madam". I refer to this younger woman as "Shanti".

Shanti's identities shift between the two groups she understands to exist in Mallagaon; the wealthy educated, largely emigrated and the poor "illiterate" remaining behind to "carry loads". Educated, yet living in relative poverty in Mallagaon village, she seems to consider herself in both camps, helping explain her sometimes contradictory understandings of development and of wellbeing.

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<sup>36</sup> Hinduism's ideas about pollution preclude the 'lower' castes from being servants (in some roles) to the upper castes

Comparing the changes in her natal village and in Mallagaon, Shanti says:

“Earlier there was not much development there in... [my natal village]; in the name of development electricity, roads, nothing had gone there. Now [in Mallagaon] because of the name of the school, it is a big school with a name, an old school from long before, because of that and [there is] electricity and a road... Literate people have increased. This kind of development I have seen.”

Amongst these aspects of development, Shanti considers education most important for Mallagaon, without which “nothing can happen”, whereas with it:

“...people become active in their work... there is improvement... as for work ... compared to fools, educated people’s work is better... Be it farming, there is more yield, [they know] which method works... Fools have to take more pains even to produce little... What do illiterate people know? They will be doing the same old customs.”

Shanti equates the “illiterate” with “fools”, contrasting them to the educated. However, in terms of livelihoods, she understands “the educated and the uneducated” as being in the same condition; neither have jobs.

Shanti considers employment for the deprived most important for community wellbeing, because, “they would [then] be like the more privileged people.” Specifically, she recommends an individual be trained, through an organisation, as custodian of a Mallagaon-based agricultural office, tasked with overseeing farmers and teaching new farming methods. She also suggests vocational industries, mentioning bee keeping and pig, goat and chicken farming. Naming some vocational training institutions based in her district of origin which provide courses in such skills, she adds that funding for such projects comes from:

“...foreign countries – INGOs... here there is nothing, in Nepal nothing like this...”

Aware, however, of vocational training initiatives provided by the Nepali government’s CSIDB, I ask Shanti about its work. Animatedly, she describes CSIDB training activities in “things made from local things”, and items villagers make through their own initiative – baskets made from thrown away plastic wrappings and mats from banana leaves. She considers these skills development, since they are old skills being brought back. They are useful not for income, but “good in one’s own family” because they make use of things otherwise wasted.

I wonder if Shanti sees any drawbacks to the Mallagaon community. “Poverty”, she replies, adding:

“The Brahmins are well off; they have put their children in ‘boarding’. People here have no money to send their children to ‘boarding’, it needs money. So,

because of having no money, the children have to study here.... There is no uniformity of education among children.”

Indicating some children grazing bullocks nearby, she adds:

“These have always been poor... neither ahead in education nor in money.... Those [Brahmans] were rich from long ago... in family... and well-educated... They are all on the *‘Terai’*. The poor people stay here and carry loads.”

Meanwhile, she dreams for her children that they “should be on a par with” the privileged, with accommodation in Janakiram’s hostels. She adds that it is difficult since some children get CEW scholarships there while others do not. Those with children not selected:

“...will be sad. ... not everybody can pay and do it ... now [among] all here, there is no one in employment. They are sons and daughters of the poor.”

Shanti, perhaps influenced by my CEW identity, seems to suggest that everyone in Mallagaon (classing all as poor) should be eligible for CEW support, including her own children, despite her knowledge that staff children are not eligible.

I wonder what Shanti considers good about traditional aspects of Mallagaon. She enjoys the entertainment of festivals which, however, polarise the rich and poor:

“Everybody has to celebrate... if on one side there is festivity, on the other poor people’s minds are crying. Someone’s child is eating well, wearing new clothes, the children of the poor are crying.”

Meanwhile, after stating that there has been nothing bad about the development that has thus far taken place, she immediately adds:

“Even after electricity is put in place, money has to be [paid]... [one] can work and pay for the electricity. Now here, if there is no work at all... so what if the road has come, [one] needs money to get on the vehicle on the road... Everything is good for the rich, like motor vehicles. Whatever development comes, the rich are able to do everything... what can the poor do? This is how it is.”

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## UNDERSTANDING DEVELOPMENT

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Before her natal village got electricity and a road Shanti believed “nothing had gone there”. Meanwhile, she stated that “nothing” comes from Nepal in terms of vocational training projects, even though she later showed awareness of Nepali government funded vocational skills training. Similarly discounting the local, members of all Mallagaon’s clans failed to mention locally provided training courses their clan members had received (see Appendix 1), even recently attended adult literacy classes and tailoring courses; the only exception was the knitting course which, since I helped with its setting up, had the status of foreign involvement (FN: 11-15/05/12). These polarised notions

may be promulgated by the discourses of the powerful, like the retired Brahman headmaster (see Chapter 5).

By contrast, reflecting a discourse in which locally sourced, more participatory approaches are valued, Shanti later referred to CSIDB trainings as “development”, her understanding of development seeming to vary according to which of her identities is predominant at the time of speaking. As daughter of a poor family, thriftily using old skills to recycle goods, she classified CSIDB initiatives as development, her pride in it indicated by her animation when describing such activity in her parental home. As salaried teacher, with experience beyond her village’s confines, she may understand larger scale, externally funded projects as the only development that counts.

Although Shanti first referred to electricity, roads and Janakiram, indicating that she understands development as change to infrastructure, her hesitation to fully endorse this type of development soon became apparent. Although she stated that there is nothing bad about such development, she quickly observed that it only benefits the rich. Which understanding she holds may again depend on which of her shifting identities is foremost. As employed teacher, infrastructural development, manifested as Janakiram, benefits her. Identifying herself as a badly paid member of a labouring and subsistence farming clan, the road and electricity (also infrastructural) only exacerbate her recognition of what she lacks. Shanti’s ambivalence suggests that she has not fully processed the notion she presents as her own (the importance of infrastructural development); she at times simply reproduces the understandings of Mallagaon’s most powerful, such as Sachivji. By contrast Devi, a relatively wealthy emigrant, certainly values the road, planning to contribute to its betterment.

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#### UNDERSTANDING COMMUNITY AND PERSONAL WELLBEING

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Shanti believes that employment is most important for community wellbeing; job opportunities matter because they enable the “deprived” to be “like the more privileged”, providing them better opportunities, especially in terms of education. She perhaps considers the resultant greater economic equality important because: her husband is unemployed; her salary as primary school teacher is meagre; and her clan consists primarily of subsistence farmers or labourers. Only in her generation has any Mallagaon-based Bhandari achieved salaried employment. This may also explain her recommendation that an agricultural office be established in Mallagaon. The emphasis she placed on agriculture (the first livelihood she referred to) for the community’s

wellbeing was shared by Devi, who spent her early adulthood as a rural farming woman.

Shanti and Devi both believe that job opportunities are most important for the community's wellbeing; the former's concern is to ensure the poor's parity with the rich, and the latter's to prevent unemployed minds being led astray. Their different reasons reflect their location within and without Mallagaon, as well as their social and economic positions; Shanti identifies with the underprivileged, Devi with the privileged threatened by the discontented underprivileged.

Shanti, like Sachivji and many other upper caste members of Mallagaon, said she enjoys celebrating festivals. However, she may have been merely repeating a discourse popular amongst the wealthier upper castes, since she noted the unhappiness of the poor while the rich celebrate with good food and new clothes. Shanti seems to view poverty as the drawback to life in Mallagaon, her interview revealing her preoccupation with the wealth and privilege of its Brahmans and with the poverty-related problems of everyone else. Bringing this to a personal level, she stated that she wants her children to have the same things as rich children, specifically accommodation in Janakiram's hostels.

Bob, a former VSO who, based in Mallagaon, worked for the DCC from 1998 to 2000, noted that then there was little difference between the poorest Dalit and the wealthiest Brahman; there was 'no one up on the hill with a great big Mercedes', and 'there was a sense of everyone was in that together'. Although 20 years ago I found that the income levels of Mallagaon's castes actually differed widely, it is true that there were few visible signs of this difference. When I mentioned to Bob that, on my 2009 visit, I had observed many more overt signs of wealth amongst some people, he stated, 'that will be the end of community' (IN: 16/07/11). The Brahman emigrant Gyana, illustrating Mallagaon's improved economic wellbeing, stated that all its children now get new sets of clothes at three or four annual festivals, whereas as a child he [from one of the wealthiest families] used to make do with one (IN: 25/09/11). However, when visiting his mother at her home in Mallagaon, and noting the difference between Gyana's nephew in smart new clothes and some Dalit children outside the yard in dirty rags, I noted that "such greater inequality is bound to lead to resentment and reduction of wellbeing" (FN: 25/11/11).

It is relative poverty that causes Shanti some unhappiness; increased opportunities (which she cannot benefit from) for some community members seem to decrease her

contentment. This is suggested by her dissatisfaction about poor children having to study at Janakiram while the richer are in better schools elsewhere; notably she teaches at, and had earlier remarked favourably about, Janakiram. Social comparison undermines her happiness, her self-esteem threatened by her self-perception as lacking in social status, poor and having fewer opportunities than the wealthy. This leads her to doubt the benefits of infrastructural development and accessibility of material goods, which, being available to the rich but denied to her, increase her expectations only to thwart them.

Shanti's concern with relative poverty can be explained by her clan identity; whereas in neighbouring villages there are wealthy Chhetrias with clout, Mallagaon Chhetrias are of low economic status. As former headmaster Jungbahadurji (a Chhetria from a nearby village) put it, the Mallagaon Chhetrias are "slave-types", having been brought there by Phularas to work for them (FN: 10/01/12).

Both Shanti and Devi consider equality important but the former is concerned with economic equality and the latter with gender equality. This can be explained by their different situations. Unlike Devi, wealthier and with wider experience, Shanti is her family's sole breadwinner and may be too preoccupied with making ends meet to consider concepts of gender equality, or may not have had exposure to them. Devi has already benefited from greater gender equality, which has enabled her to migrate and secure a prestigious job; economic equality may not concern her, unencumbered as she is by financial difficulties. Social mobility (that of others in Shanti's case; her own in Devi's) and education have increased the aspirations of both women.

Living in Mallagaon in relative poverty (compared to the social group she aspires to), Shanti's aspirations are not met, and she therefore understands economic advancement as particularly important. As an emigrant, more of Devi's aspirations are fulfilled, but nonetheless she recognises the tension involved in meeting the aspirations she has for her daughter.

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#### UNDERSTANDING COMMUNITY

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Shanti revealed 'them and us' notions; when speaking of "illiterate" "fools" and educated, separating the two groups as mutually opposing. Contrasting the former group to the latter, to which she belongs, seems to give her status in her own eyes. However, when it comes to unemployment and poverty, despite her job, Shanti

identifies herself with everyone else living in Mallagaon. Referring to “the poor people who stay here and carry loads”, she emphasised that everyone living in Mallagaon, including herself, is in this condition. In this case, she understands herself to be part of the local community she seems to look down on. Similarly, a Mallagaon-based Phulara told me that nowadays only “the poor” remain in Mallagaon, despite his obvious wealth, and that of many members of his clan residing there (FN: 13/10/11).

Affecting their ideas about education and employment in Mallagaon, both Devi and Shanti understand the community to comprise two distinct groups. While Devi may be influenced by her female ancestors’ recent illiteracy and poverty, as a successful emigrant she identifies firmly with the educated group. Shanti, well-educated and upper caste, yet relatively poor, seems to shift constantly between the educated and the “illiterate”.

Aditi, also a Bhandari by marriage, also showed understandings which dichotomise life in Mallagaon and outside. Imagining living on the Terai, where she has never been, she dreamed of a big house with lots of land, fields and fruit, and her family living nearby. She contrasted this life to her current situation of hardship (working and carrying loads) in the hills (IN: 01/12/11). The implication seemed to be that there is no work or load-carrying on the Terai.

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#### 7.4 CONCLUSION

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Devi considers white-collar jobs, usually necessitating emigration, appropriate for those with high levels of education, including herself; she believes vocational training, agriculture and skill-based livelihoods are important for the Mallagaon group she excludes herself from. She also believes that the loss of respect and unity amongst the latter group undermines Mallagaon’s wellbeing. These ideas for community wellbeing, which Devi does not relate to development, derive from an idealised past in which everyone fulfilled the roles expected of them in the social hierarchy, did their duty and showed respect to the Brahman leaders. I have argued that they are mediated by her identity as a Brahman related to males such as Sachivji and the authors of the articles (explored in Chapter 5) in positions (recently threatened) of power, who perpetuate these discourses.

Meanwhile gender equality, formal schooling, technical education and work matter to Devi both in terms of development (enabling greater opportunities for women) and wellbeing (providing training leading to professions with status, especially enabling her

position as a bestowing *'thulo maanche'*. Seeming at odds with her respect for the social hierarchy, here she shows understandings of development and of wellbeing relating to equality and an individualistic pursuit and achievement of personal goals. These ideas, probably resulting from her education, her experience outside the community and the influence of Maoism, are important to her female, traditionally marginalised identity.

Also revealing the influence of discourses promulgated by individuals like Sachivji, Shanti understands development as necessarily sourced from elsewhere, hence reflecting the local development as modernisation discourse. However, showing an understanding more grounded in personal experience, she recognises some local interventions as 'development' and agriculture as important for both community and personal wellbeing. Similarly showing the influence of discourses perpetuated by more powerful community members, she refers to festivals as a positive aspect of Mallagaon's past and improvements to infrastructure as development, yet is discontented because, through personal experience, both serve to exacerbate the gap between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots' like herself.

Devi's and Shanti's understandings derive from various discourses now in Mallagaon, and from their more grounded personal experiences. This explains how they can hold such apparently incompatible ideas, as does the part their multiple identities and differing contexts play in which understandings they present and when, and hence in mediating these understandings.

This chapter has also shown that understandings of personal wellbeing often equate with understandings of development. Devi's understandings of the latter are so intimately bound up with her understandings of what constitutes her own, her family's, and/or her caste's wellbeing that they are difficult to categorise separately. Her rapidly changing social identities, from dependent villager to urban, independent professional and mother mediate her understanding of development in important ways. She equates development with opportunities which she has found, from personal experience, improve her own or her family's wellbeing, located outside Mallagaon: equality, better social mobility and status through emigration and education. Shanti, on the other hand, more often equates development with both community and personal wellbeing; for example she understands training for livelihoods to be a development aspect, and the livelihoods themselves as aspects of both community and personal wellbeing. Tending

to contrast herself with Mallagaon's rich, she understands employment, leading to greater economic parity, as important for both personal and community wellbeing.

Affecting their understandings, both Devi and Shanti divide the community into distinct 'them' and 'us' groups. Unlike Devi, who identifies firmly with the educated and sees the community as having needs different from her own, Shanti shifts between seeing herself as part of, and sharing needs with, the community and as separate from it, depending on whether her identity as poor subsistence farmer or educated teacher is dominant.

These findings illustrate that how Devi and Shanti identify Mallagaon, and themselves in relation to it, has a bearing on whether they understand development to relate only to personal wellbeing, or to both personal and community wellbeing. Devi considers herself as separate from Mallagaon; her ideas about personal wellbeing and development are distinct from her ideas about community wellbeing. Shanti sometimes sees herself as part of Mallagaon, in which instances her ideas about development and about both personal and community wellbeing tend to relate.

Shanti's personal wellbeing seems adversely affected by social comparison because it engenders awareness of what she lacks. She has been unable to fulfil her aspirations (inspired by opportunities the wealthy have) for her children. Devi, benefitting from social mobility, can compare her lot to her ancestors' and to the future she would have had were she uneducated; hence her wellbeing is enhanced by social comparison. Nonetheless, her aspirations for her daughter mean that her personal wellbeing, located in the present and the future, seems to be threatened precisely because of the opportunities afforded her by, and aspirations resulting from, her increased social mobility and status.

This chapter has revealed wellbeing as a relational, social process; the women's expectations, and hence positive or negative feelings and understandings, are affected by the comparison of their current status with that of others and with their own past status. Devi seems to value her counselling role as much for the hedonic wellbeing (from being needed and having 'secular status') as for the eudaimonic wellbeing (from being able to help others). This renders a distinction between hedonic and eudaimonic wellbeing largely irrelevant. More significant in terms of analysing understandings is my recognition that status is important to personal wellbeing and that development seems to be understood as that which enables such status. For example, Devi seems to

consider the road to be an important development, bringing easier access to her natal community, but she perhaps values it more for the 'secular status' her ability to contribute financially to its construction confers on her.

Devi's and Shanti's understandings reveal that their own multiple and shifting identities, and how they identify the community, affect their ideas. Meanwhile conversations I had with them show how their understandings of my identity sometimes shaped their responses. Rather than discount their words, my 'latent identities' helped me gain greater understanding of their opinions, illustrating the importance of combining interviews with observations and informal interactions, enabling me to recognise my effects on the data.

## CHAPTER 8 WHAT COUNTS?

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### 8.1 INTRODUCTION

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The following ‘embedded cases’ explore the understandings of an elderly Chhetria couple and a middle-aged Dalit man. Chuggy Bhandari and his wife are upper caste but, working for the Phularas, lack their social status. Hari Nagari, although often central to bazaar life, is marginalised by caste. I am particularly interested in what these three individuals reveal about discourses dominant in the community, and about whose opinions count, to whom and in what contexts. I also place Hari-Dai and Chuggy in the same chapter because, despite their differences, they show similar levels of personal wellbeing.

I begin with Chuggy and his wife. Although interviewed separately, Chuggy contributed to his wife’s interview, and I sometimes have information about and/or make inferences based on situations in which both were involved. After first presenting their voices separately, I therefore analyse them together.

### 8.2 ‘CHUGGY’ BHANDARI AND HIS WIFE

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Chakra Bhandari, known as ‘Chuggy’ by everyone except the young who call him “*Chuggy baje*” (Grandfather Chuggy), is a Chhetria who was born, and has always lived, in Mallagaon. Seventy five years old, he is the second oldest there. The use of his nickname is indicative of the affection felt for him and the low status accorded him.

To reflect Chuggy’s wife’s relative lack of voice, I have not named her. Village women, except those in employment like Shanti, would normally be addressed using kinship terms. Although this suggests lack of independent agency, it also shows the status conferred by family relationships. I rarely knew the names of women senior to me, addressing them as “mother of”, followed by the name of their eldest son. I do not know Chuggy’s wife’s sons, who have emigrated, and I do not know her well enough to call her ‘aunt’ or ‘mother’. Hence I call her “Chuggy’s wife”.

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### CHUGGY

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Chuggy has always farmed, his own and others’ land; “half-half” he says. He has also always worked as a porter. Uneducated, he is only able to write his name. I remember him from two decades ago, seeming already elderly, squatting on the yard wall of Sachivji’s home, waiting to be assigned work or passing the time of day.

Chuggy proudly claims Brahman origin for his clan. Allegedly, his grandfather was a Brahman of a nearby village; his father came to Mallagaon as the offspring of a Brahman man and a Chhetria woman and hence his descendant clan traditionally has status higher than other Chhetrias. Although two of Chuggy's sons live in Dhangadhi, he prefers to stay in Mallagaon; he likes the climate and would certainly remain here if his sons would return. As things are, he and his wife will have to emigrate when too old to manage on their own.

I ask directly what is important for Chuggy's wellbeing; he replies:

“Everything: a buffalo, a cow, my own fields and house. I've not been educated so this is the kind of thing. I can't think about jobs and other things”.

In terms of development, he prioritises “water” because there are no vegetables, nor irrigation. Proudly, he describes various instances of his '*shramdaan*'. About thirty years ago he helped bring piped drinking water to the bazaar and Janakiram hostels. More recently he was involved in a Maoist-initiated scheme, later abandoned, to provide irrigation to the whole VDC.

Continuing his ideas for development, after briefly stating that all salaried jobs are good for the area, Chuggy quickly returns to water. Indicating Sudam, the young teashop shopkeeper then peeling potatoes, Chuggy asks, “How far did the potatoes come? How far did the cucumbers come?” Not waiting for an answer, he continues:

“There is a school here but we need water. Everything comes from the Terai. Water is the most important thing. There is a school here but factories are needed and banks are needed and irrigation is needed.”

School is good for other people but Chuggy questions its relevance for the likes of him. Again gesturing towards the shopkeeper, he says:

“This young boy is running the shop although he has been to school. This is a hardworking boy. He runs this shop here, we come and drink tea. He makes money out of that... This is development.”

“School is the only business here”, Chuggy adds. He points out the value the '*Campus*' has, as a business and for others, noting that a '*Multiple Campus*' would be good “because people otherwise used to have to go to India” for education.

I wonder if he thinks Janakiram could be improved; he replies, “It comes from you and other '*thulo maanche*'”. If Mahesh and I and other '*thulo maanche*' were to, “open a '*Multiple Campus*', it would be good for Mallagaon, we don't know”.

Chuggy places his ideas about Mallagaon's needs in order of importance: Firstly agriculture, which was good in the past but now abandoned by everyone, the younger generation, having gone into other things, is not interested. Secondly commerce; he gives the teashop business as his example. Finally, he considers being an employee the worst, because one works under another.

He considers the advantage of agriculture that, if someone visits, one can feed them and eat oneself whereas, he says, addressing me and Mahesh, "you have the problem of having to go somewhere because you work for someone else<sup>37</sup>, farmers are not in this position".

Since Chuggy often calls Mahesh and me '*thulo maanche*', Mahesh responds that Chuggy is the '*thulo maanche*', being as old as our fathers. We tell him he can walk distances they cannot. Chuggy considers this inability positive, commenting that as '*thulo maanche*' they must have big stomachs from easy living. He mimes sitting idle with such a stomach.

When I comment on the knotted shoulder bags he makes, he says dismissively, "It's nothing".

Chuggy seems to enjoy his hardworking life: appearing content while cheerfully and frequently calling himself a poor man.

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#### CHUGGY'S WIFE

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Chuggy's wife, also Chhetria, is sixty years old and uneducated. She married into Mallagaon aged eleven and, barring occasional visits to her sons in Dhangadhi, has lived there since. Whereas Chuggy is frequently in the bazaar, we have to visit their substantial home in Mallagaon village to meet her.

I try bringing Chuggy's wife into the conversation without offending Chuggy, who seems reluctant to leave the room, answering everything for her. Several attempts, asking about their animals, fail. Chuggy leads the responses, proudly explaining that they have a cow, two calves and two goats. I then bring in a development aspect Mallagaon women often refer to, the mill:

Me: "Do you go to the mill?"

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<sup>37</sup> Chuggy is referring to the difficulty Mahesh and I faced at the time in trying to leave Mallagaon; a shutdown was preventing all transportation throughout Far West Nepal. Chuggy assumed our employers were compelling us to leave.

Chuggy: “Yes she goes.”

Chuggy’s wife: “Yes I go to the mill.”

Chuggy: “A little.”

Me: “Has your work become a little easier since the mill came?”

Chuggy: “Yes easy, very easy.”

Mahesh: “Chuggyji the reason she came to meet her is for her to give her opinion.”

...

Me: “What other changes have happened in this village?”

Chuggy: (Quietly) “A little a little.”

Chuggy’s wife: “A little, a little change.”

Finally Chuggy’s wife contributes, listing things which she cannot do because of age, including going to the mill, cutting buffalo fodder, grinding wheat and carrying loads. Her back aches with such work.

Firewood, water and fodder are their main needs, she says, otherwise they have everything, buying only miscellaneous items from Mallagaon bazaar. Being too old to control a buffalo, they settled on a cow.

I ask Chuggy’s wife if she sometimes goes to Dhangadhi. Animated, she now participates more than Chuggy; “Yes” she says, her sons are there. Between them, they explain about their two eldest sons and six grandchildren. The third son, the most educated, studied as a Community Medical Assistant specialising in *ayurveda* (indigenous medicine). However, having failed the qualifying exam, he is now a watchman in Bombay. As a child, their daughter was killed by a leopard in Mallagaon.

Sounding regretful, they say their grandchildren never come to see them. Instead, they go to Dhangadhi. Chuggy’s wife adds, “If the vehicles were running I’d go but no vehicle is running now”, referring to the shutdown preventing the movement of vehicles throughout Far West Nepal. Anyway, because of their animals, only one of them can leave home at once. “Good!” she exclaims when Chuggy jokes that he will send her with us when we leave. Increasingly enthusiastic, she joins in further conversation about the shutdown, showing her eagerness to visit Dhangadhi.

I ask Chuggy’s wife where she would prefer to live, Mallagaon or Dhangadhi. Chuggy utters something indistinct; she laughingly says, “Eh? Me? I like Dhangadhi”:

“It’s easy, don’t have to carry loads. It’s easy, don’t have to cut fodder. Food and drink, it is very good [in Dhangadhi].”

She would miss “nothing” if she relocated to Dhangadhi permanently. She reiterates, “I’d like to go there”, whereas Chuggy says, “Where you were born is the place you feel love for.”

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### UNDERSTANDING PERSONAL WELLBEING

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Chuggy would rather stay in Mallagaon than move to Dhangadhi whereas his wife would willingly relocate there. Having, as a married woman, already left her birthplace, she does not have the reason (love of birthplace) that makes Chuggy prefer Mallagaon. However, considering that other women married into Mallagaon village, such as a Brahman Janakiram teacher’s wife (FN: 13/09/11), prefer to stay despite their sons’ emigration, Chuggy’s wife’s lack of attachment may be better explained by her only daughter’s tragic death there.

The difficulty she has doing the work expected of her, the animation with which she described her children and grandchildren, and her enthusiasm for travelling to Dhangadhi, suggest that Chuggy’s wife would be happy to live wherever her sons and their families are, to share the workload but also for company. It may also be because, long-since severed from her ancestral home, her sense of belonging and status derive from being with her children. Indeed, the greater contribution she made to the conversation when it concerned them suggests that talking about them is valued by her as a ‘symbolic resource’ which increases her status.

Chuggy listed the relatively simple things that satisfy him; his home, land and livestock. His pride in these and in being able to feed guests indicates his contentment with what he has. It suggests that he understands wellbeing in terms of ‘*santushti*’ (contentment/satisfaction), a concept which seems to derive from Hinduism’s philosophy of acceptance and to relate to ‘Subjective Well-Being’. A retired Chhetria primary school headmaster, now running a teashop in the bazaar expressed this discourse, prevalent in Mallagaon, thus:

“If ‘*santushti*’ is present even having few things is enough, little money is enough. Without ‘*santushti*’, however much wealth there is, it will not be enough” (FN: 11/10/11).

Chuggy recognises that the educated may have other requirements for their wellbeing. The educated Shanti and her husband are also Bhandaris with a home, land and

livestock. However, unlike Chuggy, Shanti seemed discontented, wanting what the privileged of Mallagaon have, probably because she is more educated, and of a younger generation. Her husband, also educated, was not content with farming, wanting salaried employment. Chuggy may be more content than his wife in Mallagaon because she does more work and he misses their family less. Although not in the remit of my research, differences such as those discussed here could also have to do with personality.

As an elderly, female subsistence farmer with emigrant children, convenience is important to Chuggy's wife, who therefore prefers Dhangadhi. Being too old to work would not be an issue were her sons with her; traditionally the daughters-in-law would have taken over. Although she may be content (having simple needs like Chuggy) if living with her sons and their families in Mallagaon, under current circumstances emigrating would make her happier.

Chuggy's consistently cheerful demeanour suggests his contentment despite his low 'secular status', possibly because he, like Sachivji, derives wellbeing from 'ritual status'; Chuggy was quick to emphasise his Brahman connection, indicating that caste status is important to him. This contrasts with his much younger cousin's caginess about the Brahman connection; he said that Bhandaris perhaps came to Mallagaon with the Phularas (FN: 16/05/12). This indicates a changing attitude towards caste; the older generation, like Chuggy, using their Brahman connection as a 'symbolic resource' to demonstrate their 'ritual status', which subsequent generations deny. Chuggy enjoys the status conferred by the alleged illicit origin of the Mallagaon Bhandaris; his cousin seems happy to forfeit the 'higher-born' status, perhaps because of its decreased value in post-Maoist times.

Chuggy's admiration for *'thulo maanche'* and their lifestyles means he stated as positive the inability to walk distances and portliness he associates with such 'important' people. He may have been reproducing a discourse of wellbeing prevalent in poor, rural communities everywhere and embedded in the Nepali language with the same word for 'fat' and 'healthy'. Meanwhile, these understandings, apparently at odds with the contentment he experiences in his own lifestyle, may help explain his pride in his Brahman connections, most of the local *'thulo maanche'* being from that caste. Despite his admiration, he does not seem desirous of joining their ranks. Their experience may be too unfamiliar for him to imagine himself in their position, perhaps

explaining his indifference to the gap in ‘secular status’ between him and the Phularas. Indeed, the pride he takes in his *‘shramdaan’* indicates his comfort as ‘client’ to the ‘patron’ Phularas in Mallagaon’s hierarchical social order. This contrasts to Shanti’s competitiveness with the Phularas; being one of few Chhetria teachers in the predominantly Brahman staffed school makes her closer to (or in some contexts one of) Mallagaon’s *‘thulo maanche’*.

Chuggy never considered leaving the room when I interviewed his wife, possibly because Mahesh was there, although I think he would have stayed anyway. I included an extract from my interview transcript because it illustrates the extent to which Chuggy assumed control, his wife’s unquestioning acceptance of it, and both his and her apparent understanding that her voice does not count. When Mahesh explained that I wanted to hear what she had to say, Chuggy did not quibble, but neither did he completely desist from answering questions addressed to her. I infer from this situation that the social status Chuggy has as husband is important to him.

Meanwhile Chuggy’s wife, who does not appear troubled by her lack of voice, seems to have internalised a belief shared by many Mallagaon women that uneducated women are incapable of expressing themselves. Similarly Gopikaji, although of a powerful Mallagaon family and hence used to having power over others in the community, repeatedly stated that she “knows nothing” when her interview began, revealing this internalised belief, despite later expressing some very definite ideas (IN: 25/11/11). Even young, well-educated Phulara women had difficulties articulating their ideas; for example I noted that Amala, despite her bachelor level degree and her emigration to Dhangadhi, “did not seem to have a voice at all” (FN: 11/12/11). These women may be fulfilling roles expected of them, which although possibly consciously enacted, nonetheless suggest subjugation. Notably, Chuggy’s wife gradually became more vocal, presumably because she sensed her interviewer’s interest (unchallenged by her husband) in her views.

Chuggy’s wife appears to lack the authority and power of some Mallagaon women (like Devi and Shanti) of a younger, more educated generation and may have simply internalised the subservient role expected of her. Possibly the inhibiting effect of husbands’ or brothers’ presence also indicates different personality traits, since across all castes some women seemed affected but others not.

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## UNDERSTANDING PERSONAL WELLBEING AND DEVELOPMENT

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Chuggy values infrastructural development where it directly benefits him. His claim that his wife's work has become "easy" since the mill was built, and her complaint that she could no longer use it suggest that it is a convenience valued by them both. Many, especially women, mentioned the convenience of the mill; only the Dalit tailor's wife noted that it is only good for those with money (IN: 07/03/12).

Chuggy considers water necessary for Mallagaon's development and closely associates it with agriculture (understood by him as small-scale farming), which he considers most important for Mallagaon. He may also value agriculture in terms of independence (not being under an employee), providence (providing food) and means of fulfilling religious duty (see Chapter 5 for the duty of serving one's guests). Hence agriculture is important to Chuggy in terms of both development and personal wellbeing, whereas Devi, not dependent on it, considers it valuable only for the community's wellbeing.

For Chuggy being an employee is less desirable than farming or commerce; in his experience, "agriculture" equates to subsistence farming, and "commerce" to small shops owned and run by one family or by individuals, both involving self-employment. That he farms partly independently, whereas former Bhandari generations survived only by labouring for others, helps explain why self-employment is important to him. He appears sensitive to employees' problems, indicated by his (mistaken) notion that an employer was inconveniencing me and Mahesh. Again, Chuggy's understandings of development and of wellbeing converge: he understands the teashop keeper's successful self-employment as "development"; he considers the independence of self-employment as providing him personal wellbeing. Here he shows more grounded understandings of development than in the following examples.

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## WHOSE UNDERSTANDINGS OF DEVELOPMENT?

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Although Chuggy considers being an employee worse than being self employed, when discussing development he considered all salaried jobs good for the area. This may be because he feels his sons would not have left to pursue such jobs were they available in Mallagaon, or because of the status (derived from local scarcity) of such jobs, associated with teachers and those like Sachivji with '*thulo maanche*' status. He may also be influenced by powerful Mallagaon members who consider salaried jobs superior to self-employment: Jungbahadurji, previously Janakiram headmaster, stated that

technical and vocational skills are important for job creation in Mallagaon “in the event of a government job not being available” (IN: 12/01/12).

Chuggy, considering Mahesh and me ‘*thulo maanche*’, said Mallagaon would benefit if we started a ‘*Multiple Campus*’, adding that he and others like him “don’t know”. This indicates that he understands development as best bequeathed by ‘*thulo maanche*’ from outside Mallagaon, and villagers as uncomprehending about development.

To Chuggy a ‘*Multiple Campus*’ “is very big so must be good”, although he neither knows what one is nor sees its value for people like himself. Although he has definite concepts about work/self-employment, he claimed ignorance about jobs because he is uneducated. He constantly proclaimed himself poor (as did Shanti) despite his substantial home and livestock and the contentment he feels with his simple life. The knotted bags he makes well, he dismissed as “nothing”. Similarly, a hostel cook who comes from another village of poorer Brahmans claimed to have no skills, yet I often saw him making rope and repairing dry stone walls (FN: 06/04/12).

Chuggy may present such ambivalent understandings of development because some of what he says is acquired from the discourses of ‘*thulo maanche*’, repeated in deference to Mahesh and me whom he considers as such. I do not consider such responses invalid since Mahesh’s and my identities enabled insights into the opinions ‘*thulo maanche*’ who deliver development to communities like Mallagaon are likely to hear, the ideas, relating to development as modernisation, held by Mallagaon’s powerful such as Sachivji. However, this ‘embedded case’ does illustrate that taking such voices at face value is problematic; they may be at best incomplete, at worst false representations of a community’s, or even of an individual’s, understandings. This illustrates the importance of combining interview methods with observations and interactions whereby I was also able to discover Chuggy’s more grounded understandings.

Shakti, a young Mallagaon Chhetria, opined that in a community with powerful, educated people where education is considered important, even uneducated people who want food and clothing before education will say that education should have priority (IN: 14/04/12). Chuggy may therefore be caught up in a discourse, which he repeats by habit or with certain audiences; since it does not relate to his experience, it has no adverse effect on him.

However, Chuggy did not entirely subscribe to Mallagaon's dominant discourse (the importance of education) when talking to us, perhaps because he was less influenced by his audience or powerful individuals than some of his statements suggested. Emphasising his point that school cannot be useful for him, an uneducated person, he pointed out that it does not even help those like the highly educated shopkeeper.

Chuggy began two sentences containing ideas for local development with, "There is a school here but..." This indicates that he understands the importance generally given to school but is more concerned with other aspects of development. He is perhaps disillusioned with schooling through personal experience; the only one of Chuggy's sons who studied to a high level now works as a watchman. Maoist discourse against aspects of schooling may have encouraged Chuggy to sometimes contradict Mallagaon's dominant discourse.

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Although 'hearing' Chuggy's wife's voice was difficult, her understandings were implicit yet definite once she began contributing. Chuggy's understandings, although often explicit, were more ambivalent, perhaps because powerful Mallagaon voices contended with his own. Similarly, Hari-Dai presented multiple viewpoints, or 'voices', as his own. Having explored these, I will conclude with an overview of how his, Chuggy's and Chuggy's wife's understandings relate to my thesis.

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### 8.3 HARI NAGARI

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Hari, a Nagari caste Dalit in his mid fifties, has lived all his life in Mallagaon, having travelled only as far as the Terai. Following his caste occupations, he plays the drum at festivals and is a tailor, his relatively prosperous shop in the bazaar often the centre of activity. He lives in a small house in the poorer, Dalit area of Mallagaon.

Hari-Dai says he studied at Janakiram until the end of Class 4, always coming first or second. He adds proudly, "I have a pile of books this high", his hand about four feet from the ground; he has read them all. He shows eclectic knowledge, gleaned from radio, books and visitors to Mallagaon, and an unexpected grasp of English. His father and uncles studied to Class 1.

Since meeting Hari-Dai in 1993, I have always referred to him thus, imitating others and thinking this respectful. Subsequently I realised that some members of the Dalit caste consider this pejorative because the upper castes address/refer to all male Dalits

senior to them to as '*Dai*' (Elder brother) whereas they call upper caste men 'uncle' or 'grandfather' if they are sufficiently older. Although ashamed of my unquestioning collusion in this form of discrimination, I refer to him here as Hari-Dai to be faithful to how I did (and others do) address him, thus revealing a significant aspect of his identity in Mallagaon.

When I ask what positive and negative changes have happened during the last ten to twenty years, Hari-Dai says:

“One could say it was a sort of darkness for education; some light, there was light but rather dim light ... twenty years hence proper light... brilliant light in education. Good improvement has come in... development.”

He refers to CEW and the DCC as the organisations which have helped the area advance educationally, noting the greater number of girls than boys in Janakiram and its surrounding schools. Mentioning CEW again, Hari-Dai says, “UK has done the most help”, so the place “is very advanced” in education. This is “my own view too” he emphasises. He has “eaten a lot of UK salt” (a Hindi expression connoting indebtedness); of his son Roshan he says, “I have only caused him to be born but mother and father was UK” since his education was funded from there.

I ask Hari-Dai if organisations other than CEW and the DCC have helped Mallagaon. Naming various INGOs, he says, “the people who give cannot be called bad”, instead blaming the recipients for not properly utilising aid. For example, he explains, the Dalits and upper castes, given goats, hens or pigs (for rearing), sell them, buy alcohol and gamble with the money, telling the donors the animals died. Distancing himself from such behaviour he adds, it is “useless”; the donor organisations make input without return.

Discussing local development, Hari-Dai refers to the upheaval of the Maoist War, during which “along with development, there was destruction”, including of the VDC building, and “suppression in development” with “trouble for everyone”, including upper and Dalit castes, children and '*thulo maanche*'. Mostly, however, the Maoists contributed positively to development, saying, “We should speak up, it is our right”. He hastens to clarify that they also said this to members of the upper castes who were as poor as Dalits.

Expanding on development, Hari-Dai mentions that “our [Dalit] awareness, intelligence has improved, that we must work, that [kind of] development” has happened. Noting

his own increased awareness, he mentions as proof that he has “become able to talk” with us, despite being a Dalit.

Discussing what he considers bad about life in Nepal, Hari-Dai also elaborates laughingly on what hinders development:

“Nobody in Nepal is without at least a home... nobody from Mahakali in the west to Mechi river [in the East]. There is nobody living in comfort but there is no ‘*dukh*’ [pain/sadness/misery] either. Because we Nepalis are lazy, we don’t want to work. Because of this development is less... No work, no employment, play cards, drink alcohol, that is all there is. Otherwise there is no heaven like Nepal anywhere. No ‘*dukh*’... But our brains don’t work.”

This makes me wonder from where Hari-Dai thinks Mallagaon’s development can best come. He says they must do their own development, having taken so much from “UK organisations”, yet failed. He refers to the land gifted him by the Phulara clan. “The people are very good in Mallagaon, very”, he says, the Phularas of an earlier generation helped the poor, giving everyone, Chhetrias and Dalits, land and houses. However, the land his family was gifted about forty years ago is unfarmed because he lacks paddy seed. He cannot ask for it from us because:

“Something has to be done by oneself too. There must be some production in Nepal too, in villages... Help only from another cannot be... Development by oneself is best.”

“Now there is a garden”, Hari-Dai says of his dream for Mallagaon, but, “how to make the flowers blossom?” The land is fertile and suited to farming, were there enough water; irrigation canals for agriculture are needed, and a better drinking water supply:

“There is the big tap of the Phulara clan, but we have a small tap. There isn’t enough water for us ... The pipe isn’t enough for the... [upper castes] either because their clan is big.”

Since Hari-Dai hints at the greater disadvantage of Dalits relative to upper castes, but frequently reiterates that both groups have similar problems, Mahesh tries to clarify if he feels there is a difference between them. Hari-Dai replies that there is a little inequality remaining. There is now “75%” equality, he states, adding:

“You are also human, I am also human, that concept... still incomplete.”

Hari-Dai proceeds to explain what would help ensure “happiness for everyone”:

“To maintain this garden, all peace and happiness, to make this heaven, everyone [with] a little, little livelihood... livelihood for oneself... and skill... skill programme... skill like... if computer is broken, to mend it... watch repair, if these skills were there ... [Mallagaon] could become a garden.”

I wonder how such skills can be brought to Mallagaon. He suggests that, just as CEW funded tailoring equipment and training for the Janakiram hostel girls, other organisations can be asked, “UK, Japan, America, India”. This is important, he adds, because, with, “neither work in the daytime, nor in the morning, nor in the evening”, people have to go to India to earn money or, “they have to steal”, they quarrel, drink and play cards. However, “if work were there, there would be no chance for all these things”.

I ask Hari-Dai about development in the bazaar; he mentions the road and electricity. Dalits, including himself and his family, used to earn money as porters, carrying goods from the main road to the village, he explains. By evening of the same day they got paid, but now this work is no more. As for electricity, “we have to pay... unnecessarily”; there is load shedding most evenings, just when electricity is needed, yet the rate is 80 rupees a month, whether or not electricity is available.

Hari-Dai needs “*Roti, kapada aur makkaan*”, (“Food, clothing and shelter”, a Hindi political slogan) for his personal wellbeing (*santushti* – contentment/satisfaction). However, he adds that there is “now a little something else”, a concern about livelihoods for his two sons then living in Mallagaon. One of them has post-SLC technical education but no work; “Lots of boys are like this” he adds, even those who have studied to Bachelor level.

After the interview Hari-Dai, hesitating to take tea and biscuits from us, finally accepts them saying, “We Dalits are no dirtier than some of the higher castes”. He mentions that casteism used to be really bad; it was when the Maoists came that it got 75% better. “If there is happiness, there is sadness”, hence worldwide there will be good and bad people he adds. He leaves the room, walking backwards, saying, “You are god for me and my son”.

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#### UNDERSTANDING DEVELOPMENT

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Education was the positive change Hari-Dai first mentioned; his use of the darkness/light metaphor commonplace in Mallagaon suggests the influence of a discourse, perpetuated by members of the upper castes (see Chapter 5), which presents education in positive opposition to village life, reinforcing binaries negative to the community’s self-image.

Hari-Dai noted that Janakiram is ahead in education because of CEW and the DCC. He may have chosen to refer to education first and praise the UK and CEW for the parts they play in Mallagaon's development because of my 'latent identities' as ex-employee of Janakiram and CEW and from his perspective a '*thulo maanche*' and an established and potential funding source and patron. His flattering me as a "god" further suggests this.

Hari-Dai's emphasis on education could have been because: he assumed I wanted to hear about that area of development; education is Mallagaon's dominant development discourse; he recognises its value in terms of the 'symbolic resources' education provides him with; he values the education he has had for the knowledge it has provided him; and/or he is proud of his literacy and his top position in primary school.

Hari-Dai, referring to the two main foreign-funded organisations in Mallagaon (CEW and the DCC) as contributing positive change in terms of education, stated that the UK has given the most help. His mention of these organisations early on in the interview may have been because one of his sons, Roshan, was helped by them both; CEW in education and the DCC in setting up a business in the bazaar. CEW also funds part of Hari-Dai's livelihood, teaching tailoring in the girls' hostel. Hari-Dai even called the UK "mother and father" of his son, suggesting that he considers himself to be in a close, familial form of patron-client relationship with the country, or its representatives such as myself in my CEW identity, whom he may now wish to please. Once Hari-Dai offered to mend Mahesh's broken shoe, justifying his action by saying that Leo Tolstoy was a cobbler (FN: 09/04/12). Cobbling would normally be considered 'polluting' for a tailor, considered 'higher' caste than cobblers. Possibly, he volunteered to do this work because he identifies Mahesh with UK (through me and through CEW), thus treating him as a patron in a patron-client relationship involving reciprocal obligation.

This discussion indicates that, when not asked about development directly, Hari-Dai thinks of it in terms of foreign funding and implementation, as does his suggestion that skills training and livelihoods could best be brought to Mallagaon by organisations like CEW (referring to them synecdochally by their countries' names). However, Hari-Dai talks of self-development when asked directly from where development can best come. Possibly, his statements about self-reliance are part of a discourse he feels he should use about development, one promoted by the Maoists and found in Professor Phulara's and Sachivji's articles. Alternatively, Hari-Dai may believe that both means of development

are needed. He may consider self-reliance best for community development (in which, he mentioned, UK funding had failed) but foreign funding best for development which affects him personally, especially given the benefits CEW has brought his son Roshan.

Hari-Dai spoke of Nepali people's laziness and brainlessness and blamed Nepali recipients, not foreign donors, for the failure of development projects. These notions seem part of the development as modernisation discourse in which failure is understood to be caused by local shortcomings, perpetuated by upper caste community members who, like Devi (Chapter 7) consider themselves separate from the blameworthy group. The example Hari-Dai gave of misspent profits from livestock given by donor agencies is one I heard repeatedly. Ed, a VSO who worked in local development in Mallagaon from 1996 to 1998, told me of a goat project which failed because of local corruption (IN: 21/07/11). Another Dalit told me of a recent project which failed because the individual responsible for purchasing the goats used only half the money and "ate" the rest; the goats he did buy were so scrawny and old that the intended recipients refused them, so he then ate the goats himself (FN: 15/03/12). The principal of the local Technical College, telling me that crores<sup>38</sup> have been spent by INGOs in the area with nothing to show, gave as an example goat-rearing projects in which people simply "ate" the money *and* "ate" the goats (FN: 17/03/12). A young Mallagaon Brahman complained that all the funding goes to Dalits who, unable to see the bigger picture, misuse funds and eat the livestock, while poor members of the upper castes get no funding (FN: 21/03/12).

Unlike most of the upper castes' serious-sounding complaints against Dalits, Hari-Dai's deprecating comments about his caste were jocular, suggesting that he was using a discourse without necessarily believing in it. It does not seem to affect him adversely, just as Chuggy seemed unaffected by the discourse of ignorant locals he subscribes to. Hari-Dai's statements were made without embarrassment and seemingly in the role of commentator on Mallagaon for people involved in development, an identity he assumed with Mahesh and me.

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#### WHAT CONSTITUTES DEVELOPMENT? SHIFTING IDEAS

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Hari-Dai noted that "along with development there was destruction" and "suppression of development" during the Maoist War. Development understood in terms of increased equality gained ground; development understood in terms of infrastructure,

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<sup>38</sup> One crore = 10,000,000

such as the VDC building, suffered. As Jungbahadurji, a former Janakiram headmaster, said (after stating that a positive outcome of the War was development in terms of decrease in casteism) “there should have been a lot of development by now, roads here and there” but, because of the conflict, “Nepal has fallen very much behind”.

CEW’s co-ordinator’s comment about development illustrates a more general shift in understanding development: “There are more things to development than mere development you know” (IN: 03/05/2012). He called infrastructural development and externally sourced commodities “mere development”. This is a Nepali meaning of the term now being replaced to include other ideas about development. He continued by explaining that the shift in understanding was brought about by the Maoists and has occurred at the national level; a process which has been occurring since they “started their agitation... almost 18 years back”. He stated that the Maoists started raising issues about inclusion and exclusion because, since the end of Rana rule in 1950, the political leaders had talked endlessly about development, “wasting money on ...physical infrastructures” while excluding “the marginalised communities like... Dalits and poor”. As a result, people have begun to understand that infrastructure is “the medium of change, medium of development but is not the development itself”. He added that now all the political parties are concerned with inclusion, saying, “we have been investing so much money in so called development... for 62 years and very little has been developed in the mind-set of the people.” These rights-based ideas about development as social equality and inclusion, relatively new to Nepal, seem to have reached the local level as a result of the Maoist War and the work of NGOs.

Indicative of the shift in understandings of development discussed above, it was only when asked about development in the bazaar that Hari-Dai referred to the road and electricity but then quickly pointed out their negative aspects. He was critical of the flat rate for even unused electricity and misses the earning from portering which, as he observed, was a main livelihood for Mallagaon Dalits. Similarly, Shanti argued that the road is useless for the poor and Hari-Dai’s wife, bemoaning the litter arriving with the road, joked that it is good to walk on (IN: 07/03/12). These criticisms expose the exaggeration in Sachivji’s claim that “everyone” wanted the road and contradict

opinions such as Devi's which reinforce the construction of the road as a 'social good' by powerful individuals like Sachivji and DCC-Phularaji.

Also indicating the shift in understandings of development are Hari-Dai's view that development should be for everyone and his obvious efforts to include the upper castes as well as Dalits in each statement, even in relation to the water supply where the upper castes clearly have the advantage. This may also indicate Hari-Dai's contentment in his place in Mallagaon's social hierarchy, or his reluctance to create waves. His apparently inclusive ideas about community development may be to avoid being seen as criticising the upper castes, or out of genuine gratitude to them. Either way, Hari-Dai often showed through his actions an inclusive understanding of development. When Yashoda, a young woman of Mallagaon's 'lowest' (Bhul) caste, set up a new tailoring shop, Hari-Dai supported her (she calls him "father" and often entrusts him with her shop when she is away), not using his 'right' (as a member of the 'higher' tailor caste with traditional monopoly) to oppose this competition.

Hari-Dai's religious beliefs may contribute to his understanding of development as social inclusion, enabling him to disregard caste stigma; Hinduism, understood in terms of '*sadharana-dharma*', involves recognition of mankind's common humanity. Once, watching a drunken man weave past, Hari-Dai commented, "God is in me, in this fly here, in Sir [Mahesh], in Miss [me] and in him [the drunk]" (FN: 27/09/11). Despite his compliance in keeping to his 'place' in the hierarchical social structure, Hari-Dai rejects the '*sva-dharma*' interpretation of Hinduism which promotes caste-prescribed performance of duty. He once described the caste system as the only problem with Hinduism (FN: 18/11/11).

Skilfully, Hari-Dai positions himself in different contexts: as a Dalit brought up in the old social order, he shows gratitude (whether genuine or enacted) for benefits from upper caste patrons; as a Dalit affected by discrimination, he behaves inclusively towards those he could exclude.

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#### UNDERSTANDING COMMUNITY WELLBEING

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Describing his dream for Mallagaon, Hari-Dai spoke metaphorically (perhaps having heard, during VDC meetings, Sachivji's "apple orchard" metaphor) of maintaining the "garden" as "all peace and happiness... heaven", involving the need for water for irrigation and drinking. Water is also important to Chuggy, although the latter, as a

subsistence farmer, related this need to agriculture primarily in terms of development and personal wellbeing. Whereas, having other livelihoods, Hari-Dai, and Devi understand improvements to farming and local livelihoods in relation to community wellbeing, but not to development or personal wellbeing.

Hari-Dai suggested skills programmes for livelihoods, in areas such as computer and watch repair, for ensuring happiness for everyone, perhaps influenced by the success of Vikram's new business (see Chapter 9). Despite his own successful tailoring business, the skills Hari-Dai suggested are 'new', suggesting that he rejects caste-based skills for Mallagaon's wellbeing. Unlike most other Dalits to whom livelihoods are primarily important for overcoming poverty, Hari-Dai's flourishing business perhaps explains his sharing the upper caste view (like Devi's) that livelihoods are important for preventing social ills like excessive drinking, and hence for community wellbeing.

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#### UNDERSTANDING PERSONAL WELLBEING

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*'Roti, kapada aur makkaan'* ("food, clothing and shelter") said Hari-Dai, slipping into Hindi to respond to my direct question about personal wellbeing. His utterance, being a slogan used by India's Indira Gandhi government, is illustrative of Hari-Dai's tendency to present dominant discourses as his own, especially when asked direct questions about development or wellbeing. However, meeting these basic needs, which seems genuinely sufficient for Chuggy, is no longer enough for Hari-Dai, as the discussion below about his sons' livelihoods illustrates. Chuggy observed that his own lack of education explains his ability to derive contentment from the meeting of basic needs and his inability to think about jobs. That education complicates this ability is borne out by Shanti and Hari-Dai.

Hari-Dai's sons often work in his tailoring shop, which does sufficient business to ensure them employment; Roshan also works as a vet in the bazaar. However, when discussing his personal wellbeing, Hari-Dai worried about livelihoods for his sons. This indicates that Hari-Dai has aspirations for them 'higher' not only than their caste occupation but than any Mallagaon bazaar-based livelihood, perhaps because of their higher level of education. Roshan's higher education – in the context of scarcity of local jobs he considers befitting the level of education he has attained – appears to adversely affect Hari-Dai's personal wellbeing. However, his gratitude for CEW's funding of Roshan's education suggests that he considers this son's higher education positive for himself not only for economic advantage but also as a 'symbolic resource'

entitling him, a Dalit, to nurture parental aspirations until recently the luxury of Mallagaon's upper castes.

Hari-Dai's parental aspirations mean that what he understands as positive for community wellbeing (local livelihoods in skills such as watch repair) is different from what he understands as positive for Roshan's wellbeing (a livelihood with higher status and earning power than tailoring or a local veterinary business). Hari-Dai and Devi thus understand requirements for community wellbeing as different from those for personal wellbeing, the latter influenced by concern for their children's wellbeing. Both also recognise the problem of unemployment for the well-qualified.

The aspirations resulting from education mean that, as a female Chhetria teacher told me, education has made people ashamed to plough (IN: 28/02/12). Apparently Mallagaon folk mock those with academic qualifications who farm; instead, the qualified emigrate for salaried employment (ibid). Practical agricultural education is important, this teacher added, especially for villagers who cannot "go immediately to the city", implying that everyone's ultimate aim is emigration (ibid). She appears to understand the shift education brings in aspirations as negative for the community but positive for the personal wellbeing of those who emigrate for salaried jobs.

Hari-Dai derived pleasure from using Hindi with Mahesh whenever possible, and especially to make certain points reflecting his level of education. He took pride in using English words with us, in telling me of his reading, in sharing information gleaned from books or radio, in demonstrating his knowledge of political discourse and in engaging in political discussion. Hari-Dai's identity as a villager, and a Dalit (a caste traditionally considered 'illiterate' and 'ignorant') is relevant here, because demonstrating his accomplishments questions such discriminatory labels.

Once, showing me an atlas other UK volunteers gifted him, he spent a long time reading the names of the various places they, and Mahesh and I, come from (FN: 17/09/11). On another occasion, he showed me a book which has been in his family for generations; since he has not found anyone who can read the ancient script its value for him seems to lie entirely in its symbolic worth (FN: 29/09/11). These incidents are noteworthy because they happened very publicly, and were virtually the only occasions I ever saw anyone with a book in the bazaar. These books, and Hari-Dai's use of his eclectic knowledge, can be interpreted as important to him as 'symbolic resources' which he uses to help improve the 'secular status' (compensating him for lacking 'ritual status')

afforded by his self-education through non-institutional, informal means (radio, reading and visitors).

Having said this, Hari-Dai's accepting attitude and willingness to live with the negative seems to bring him contentment. His statement, "If there is happiness, there is sadness" is an understanding that I often heard when living in Nepal twenty years ago, although during my fieldwork I only heard Hari-Dai using it. It is an understanding which may originate with Hinduism's ideas about '*moksha*', the freedom which comes from mystical experience of god, involving recognition that polarities are inevitable and must be accepted if one is to avoid suffering. Hari-Dai's accepting attitude helps to explain why, although expressing awareness that caste discrimination is negative, he apparently personally feels the negative effects of caste discrimination less than do the younger Dalits. This is also perhaps because he grew up at a time when it went unquestioned in Mallagaon, or because, having benefited from Brahman benevolence he may feel less discriminated against.

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#### 8.4 CONCLUSION

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The understandings of development and of wellbeing presented in this chapter are multiple and sometimes seem contradictory and incompatible, largely because Chuggy, his wife and Hari-Dai reproduced various discourses dominant in Mallagaon which often do not relate to their more grounded personal experience and understandings.

Chuggy spoke of: a '*Multiple Campus*' as necessarily good because of its size; salaried jobs as necessary for development; villagers as ignorant; and '*thulo maanche*' from outside as knowledgeable, positively associating them with inactivity and portliness. Hari-Dai was extremely grateful for his son Roshan's CEW-funded formal education and, seeming to value the UK as a patron, suggested that development funds should come from abroad, wanted opportunities for Roshan outside Mallagaon and reproduced various discourses of local incapacity and ignorance. These ideas belong to the discourse of modernisation as it plays out at the local level in Nepal and show the influence of upper castes in authority-positions, as explored in Chapters 5 and 6. Meanwhile, Chuggy's wife seems to have internalised the belief that she cannot express herself, perhaps perpetuated by the community's males who are those usually consulted.

These understandings do not always relate to the more grounded experience of the individuals who express them; for example, Chuggy also questioned the value of formal

education while Hari-Dai's and Roshan's experiences suggest that Hari-Dai's informal learning has been of as much value as Roshan's formal education. The dominance of the discourse in which formal education is valued to the exclusion of informal learning is in part owing to the influence of individuals, like the authors of Chapter 5's articles, who wish to establish the school's importance to the community in order to emphasise Phulara contribution to Mallagaon's 'social good'.

Such discourses often appear to be reproduced for certain audiences, such as myself, for various reasons including: hope for further financial assistance; the assumption that these are the opinions that people perceived as able to bring development funds to the community would want to hear; and the influence of the community's more powerful. I have argued that this does not invalidate the responses but usefully reveals what outsiders to communities, especially those involved in development interventions, are likely to hear. It also suggests that individuals like Chuggy and Hari-Dai believe that the opinions of the more powerful who perpetuate such discourses, like Sachivji and the former headmaster whose article I explored in Chapter 5, are more valued by outsiders than their own. These reproduced discourses illustrate how important it is that my research included a prolonged period of observation and informal interactions with these individuals, as well as the interviews during which the above ideas were expressed. They also show the value of my asking questions not directly concerning development or wellbeing, as a result of which I discovered more grounded understandings based on personal experience.

Both Chuggy and Hari-Dai showed the influence of discourses from Hinduism. Both mentioned that the fulfilment of basic needs ensures their wellbeing; while this is borne out in Chuggy's happiness with his lifestyle, Hari-Dai's wish for more for his sons suggests that he does not really believe it to be true. Rather, he may have wished to display his knowledge of an Indian government political slogan than believe in the message it contained. However, his actions suggest that he puts into practice, rather than simply talks about, Hinduism's acceptance of polarities in attaining '*moksha*', and its inclusivity through '*sadharana-dharma*'. Although the upper castes perpetuate Hindu discourses, theirs relate more to the caste-prescribed performance of duty found in the practice of '*sva-dharma*' (see Chapter 5), which Hari-Dai rejects. This indicates that the influence of Hinduism on Hari-Dai does not originate with upper caste discourses but is part of his lifestyle.

Hari-Dai's ideas about self-reliant community development may be ones he felt he should present, since his personal experience led him to the opposing opinion that foreign aid is valuable. This and the emphasis on self-reliance found in Professor Phulara's and Sachivji's articles suggest that Maoist discourse, like discourses of modernity, is now understood as a development discourse which certain powerful outsiders may want to hear. That other Maoist-initiated discourses about inclusivity are beginning to replace discourses of modernity at the national level is suggested by the CEW co-ordinator's discussion about infrastructural development now being recognised as the medium of development, with development itself now understood to involve social equality and inclusion. That this has reached the local level is indicated by Hari-Dai and others' ability to counter Sachivji's presentation of the road as a 'social good'.

I have also developed the idea, which emerged in earlier chapters, that status is important to personal wellbeing, even to individuals with such apparently simple needs as Chuggy and his wife. I have argued that talk, and items such as books, are used as 'symbolic resources': Chuggy affirmed his 'ritual status' by discussing his Brahman ancestors; Chuggy's wife her 'secular status' by talking about her emigrated family, especially her sons; and Hari-Dai derived 'secular status' through mentioning and displaying his self-taught knowledge and his books.

The chapter has also further illustrated the argument I developed in Chapter 7 that the individuals focused upon in my 'embedded cases' tend to equate development with personal wellbeing, which they only relate to community wellbeing if their personal wellbeing depends upon that of their community. Hence Chuggy, who is dependent upon farming, stated improvements to the water supply and agriculture as development priorities, valuing them for himself and for Mallagaon. Hari-Dai, however, considered these only in terms of the community's wellbeing; owning a successful tailoring business he is less dependent on them himself and did not consider them in terms of personal wellbeing or development.

While the main purpose of this chapter's 'embedded cases' has been to illustrate, through the exploration of discourses, whose opinions count, to whom and in what contexts, I have also built on my arguments, developed in earlier chapters, about the importance of status, and the interrelationships between development, personal wellbeing and community wellbeing.

## CHAPTER 9 LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES FOR 'SECULAR STATUS'

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### 9.1 INTRODUCTION

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The 'embedded case' of this chapter focuses on Vikram Bhul, a young Dalit entrepreneur. I also refer often to Dinakar, a middle-aged Dalit tailor who works in the bazaar. A cousin of Hari-Dai's, he runs a completely separate tailoring business. Central to this chapter are the exploration of: changing attitudes to Janakiram-provided formal education; the value lower castes place on learning outside the community, especially skills; and the understandings of development and of wellbeing revealed by the use of 'symbolic resources' to further 'secular status'.

### 9.2 VIKRAM BHUL

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Away in town buying goods for his shop, installing electrical wiring in someone's home, repairing a mobile phone, rehearsing a play, opening the Youth Centre, Vikram is perhaps Mallagaon's busiest villager. He belongs to its 'lowest' Dalit clan, Bhul. Of six siblings, Vikram is the youngest and the only one living permanently in Mallagaon.

Vikram studied at Janakiram until Class 10, except for Class 9 in Dhangadhi. Presumably he failed the SLC since he intends to study again to get the certificate so, as he puts it, people will believe in him. Vikram says that I taught him English in Janakiram Primary School in the 1990s "for three or four days maybe", indicating how little he attended. As a former student much younger than me, I refer to Vikram without the honorific '*ji*'.

Vikram says he has learnt how to run a home and family from his father's and brothers' experience working outside Mallagaon, realising that one cannot depend on brothers for help. Consequently, he has learnt to fend for himself, earning his own and his family's keep for seven years; "To this day," he emphasises proudly, "I have had no help, elder, younger brothers, nobody's help..."

To earn a living, Vikram trained in electronics, including radio, television and mobile phone repair and subsequently funded his wife's tailoring course.

Vikram chose these fields thus:

"I saw that in this area tailoring is very important... there are only two tailors and everyone goes to them... As for mobile, TV, radio and... torches... In this area there is no one, such technical people. So I thought that if I learn this and if

I stay in this area, there would be money for two meals a day... in my own home and village... it is better than going elsewhere for work.”

The idea to train in these skills was his own, Vikram says, narrating the story of his career. With no money, little to eat and no one to help him, “thinking, thinking, thinking”, he approached the DCC which funded him to take a Kathmandu-based course, provided by the Centre for Technical Education and Vocational Training (CTEVT), for repairing electronic items, especially television and radio.

Returning to Mallagaon, however, the fact that very few owned televisions sank in, while everyone now had mobile phones with inbuilt radio. Vikram therefore returned to Kathmandu where he worked on a building site to self-fund another CTEVT six-month course which taught him mobile phone repair.

Vikram started his mobile phone repair shop in Ramkuti bazaar, in Brahman-owned premises, in autumn 2011. Several months later, his wife set up her tailoring business in a small room alongside. Adding that both businesses are running well, he volunteers that running one’s own shop is better than a government salaried job. He also advises other Bhuls to spend their money on business rather than on farming tenancies which tie them in.

Vikram contrasts his situation to that of his ancestors when describing the change most important to him:

“My forefathers used to plough to eat [subsist], used to live in India to eat. Now, having learnt a skill, I am able to eat in my own home and village... this is my personal change.”

He is proud that “Dalits have become motivated and enthusiastic” seeing his successful example. He has upper caste customers too, who do not object to his work because it does not involve anything they cannot accept from a Dalit’s hands, such as “water... things cooked in water and oil”. He discusses opening a teashop; the money is good but he cannot because Mallagaon’s upper castes avoid food/drink prepared/served by a Dalit. He already runs the only Mallagaon village shop out of his home, a general store used by upper and lower castes, upper castes even buying oil from him nowadays.

Despite his obvious intelligence, Vikram failed the CEW scholarship exam, probably because of scanty school attendance. Had he passed, he would have secured funding to live in a Janakiram hostel for secondary level education. Speaking about the scholarship’s advantages, he says:

“At times you are made to do this work, at times... that work, a person who studies from home is not able to even hold a book.”

While those with relatively educated parents have the advantage of parental tuition, a poor child such as he was, with “illiterate” parents, can only advance by living in the school hostel, he explains. Proudly, he mentions that he taught his son (now in Class 1) the Nepali and English alphabets and numbers at home, before he started school. Those without this kind of help, he adds, will always be behind; the students CEW chooses are the better performers with relatively high-income parents who have the education to help their children and can afford not to make them do other work.

Vikram stresses that, “Until now there has been no benefit at all from school education”. Modifying this to, “We have become able to recognise written letters... and just about how to do accounts”, he states, “No benefit in any other way. It is not education useful for life”.

Explaining what is important for local development, Vikram says:

“There has been a lot of discussion in the area of education here... looking at the... community... we have such a lot of land, but the people here work through the year... the produce from the land in a year is not enough to eat for three months.”

Vikram suggests that improved irrigation could improve farming. His “No” is emphatic when asked if there has been development in education if not in agriculture. I wonder what would make education more relevant. Vikram suggests vocational skills be taught: tailoring, knitting, house-wiring and repairing electrical items. He volunteers that in China children are taught to do electronic work and start earning when they begin school, looking after themselves without money from parents.

Knowing of Vikram’s involvement with the DCC’s Youth Centre, I ask him for details. He has “been working for the DCC since... [he] was little”. When it started to fund programmes for youth, Vikram and the district headquarters-based DCC coordinator decided to open the Youth Centre. Vikram was made Chairman and given responsibility for running it. The Youth Centre disseminates town-based job opportunity information, as well as information “for the development of youth”, including awareness-raising and empowerment.

Vikram describes the change he considers most important for Mallagaon community:

“In the past [my] people used to, because of the caste [system], [consider] whatever decisions the upper castes made... were right. Even if they were bad, they were considered good. Now [we feel] we should have our own decisions

too... issues about rights... we also have to get our rights... that is a change here... women, men, Dalits, non-Dalits, there is a lot of change amongst them all compared to before.”

I wonder how this happened; Vikram explains that “people have become very knowledgeable, know everything about their own rights and duties”, because of Maoists and various NGOs and INGOs. Vikram’s example is a project run through the Youth Centre to raise HIV-AIDS awareness.

Knowing of a play on this subject to be staged by him in Mallagaon, I ask about it. Vikram, through the local Youth Centre, oversees part of an awareness-raising network of Social Volunteers against HIV-AIDS. This is funded by the Community Development Forum, a national NGO with an office in the district headquarters. Vikram has been involved in their awareness-raising plays for about eight years, now organising and acting in them. He explains their positive role in helping remove the stigma of HIV-AIDS, reducing marginalisation; whereas in the past HIV-positive people were not allowed inside homes, now people even eat with them.

Vikram claims to have “brought a computer course” to Mallagaon through the Youth Centre, considering it important because computer skills are now necessary for any town-based, salaried job and will in a few years be necessary in the local bazaar.

The second training course Vikram mentions, offered to Mallagaon by CSIDB, is carpet-making using thread made from the bark of *‘bhimal’*, a local tree. He dismisses the indigenous rope-making technique using *‘bhimal’* bark:

“Nothing can come out of that skill ... can only make rope... They [CSIDB] teach you to make even carpets out of *‘bhimal’*... What... [is made locally] is only good for ploughing, tying animals and binding fodder... It is not useful for life, it is not of *‘life-skill class’* ... there are many people who have learnt it... It takes two hours to make one rope and people won’t even give 5 rupees for it... A person works for the whole day, doesn’t he need to at least get the morning and evening meal from that?”

Vikram also hopes to become involved in a project for machine production of leaf plates to replace polluting plastic containers.

Vikram has “lived in many places outside”, several half-year periods in Dhangadhi and Kathmandu. Comparing the advantages and disadvantages of life in Dhangadhi and Mallagaon, Vikram’s mind first turns to negative aspects of Terai life where he lost his job through illness. He also considers the hills a safer environment for raising children.

In Dhangadhi:

“If you can keep a child safe he will really advance; if you cannot keep the child safe he will be ruined, even more ruined than he would be here.”

After giving several reasons for preferring Mallagaon, including the climate and society, he describes its disadvantages, and the advantages of Dhangadhi:

“Mallagaon is your village area. There [Dhangadhi], it is a city, there are people from every place, good and bad... all the things [facilities]... roads, are possible... one can meet and mingle with people... As for the disadvantages of this place, until one gets out of here one is like a frog in a well. A frog in a well cannot go anywhere... does not know anything about things outside.”

Clarifying “a frog in a well”, Vikram describes what he terms ‘*out-knowledge*’:

“Knowledge of outside, after going out your good and bad people, good and bad trends, all can be understood. The children there [in Dhangadhi] who have completed Class 2 or 3 have more experience than those who have done IEd and BEd here. They know about everything.”

Although he prefers Mallagaon, his birthplace, Vikram explains that:

“...there is not that much [opportunity here] ... If you live outside good knowledge comes ... It is difficult for poor people to live here and eat... I wouldn't have stayed here if I had the money.”

As for dreams for his son, if he could afford it Vikram would send him to a private, English-medium day school in Dhangadhi. As it is, Vikram sends his son to Janakiram and will later teach him something “technical”, which will include what Vikram has learnt and more, such as computer hardware. For this, Vikram will send him “outside”.

Vikram mentions his nephew in Dhangadhi, who won a national level martial-arts competition and could be chosen for the South Asian level (SAARC) games. He volunteers this as an example of the many “good influences” on the Terai which would make his son “better”.

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### 9.3 UNDERSTANDINGS OF PERSONAL WELLBEING

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#### SKILLS FOR INDEPENDENCE

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Vikram’s anecdote about Chinese children reflects the importance he places on being skilled and economically independent, while the significance to him of being self-made is indicated by his claim that nobody helped him, although he later revealed that the DCC funded his first technical course. The ‘symbolic resources’ and ‘secular status’ his skills afford him, and residing in his identity of independent and self-made businessman, may be important to Vikram because he was the first to achieve such status amongst Mallagaon’s Bhuls. This may explain why he considers it best to run his own business rather than have a government salaried job. Whereas Vikram has

diversified into business, Chuggy continues to farm, but for both the independence of self-employment is preferable to being an employee, despite the greater prestige generally associated with the latter.

Like Vikram (changing direction from TV to mobile phone repair by retraining) other Dalits seem to consider setbacks encountered worthwhile in the pursuit of independence, important to them for reasons beyond material prosperity. Dinakar, a middle-aged Dalit tailor working in Ramkuti bazaar, described how difficult he found his apprenticeship in Punjab (IN: 24/02/12). Wearing torn clothes, he worked all day with only one meal and no pay; once his tailor-master stabbed his hand with scissors for a small mistake. Although badly abused, Dinakar said proudly that he learnt in India skills and new designs as he never could have done in Mallagaon.

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#### FORMAL EDUCATION AT JANAKIRAM SCHOOL

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Vikram plans to study for the School Leaving Certificate (SLC) because it will make people believe in him, despite holding that formal education has failed him and is irrelevant. This is probably for improved status rather than employment since he is earning and happy with his business, while many academically better-qualified youth of his age remain unemployed. Many community members consider certificates (often not used to gain employment) important for their symbolic capital; even Sudam, a successful teashop/restaurant owner in Ramkuti bazaar, wants to study for an MEd, despite his IEd and BEd having failed to secure him a teaching job (IN: 30/10/11).

Vikram said that those like him, with 'illiterate' parents, will fall behind throughout school, lacking the help educated parents give their children; having to work, they are unable to study and secure the partly performance-based CEW scholarship. However, he proudly mentioned that he had been able to give his son pre-school education. Consequently, when talking about CEW, Vikram's self-esteem increased (whereas Shanti's decreased) through social comparison.

As the first of his clan living in Mallagaon to be able to provide his son with the advantage of pre-school education, and the first to be able to contemplate getting the SLC, Vikram's talk about both can be considered 'symbolic resources', used to prove that he is capable of accumulating cultural capital. This is important to him because of not only the head start he gave his son but also the status it confers on him, enabling

him to construct a new ‘educated’ identity, endowed with cultural capital, for himself and for his family.

CEW is usually highly regarded in the area (see Chapter 3) with many of its successful graduates now in higher education or employment; locals present as a model a Dalit girl now studying for a Masters degree in Kathmandu. Despite this, and identifying me with CEW, Vikram felt sufficiently empowered to criticise it and to suggest that only those with ‘cultural capital’ can secure its scholarships, noting that CEW benefits only those who already have greater wealth and more education. Others felt similarly; Dinakar claimed that he used to argue with CEW that the children of the poor not those of school staff should be supported (IN: 24/02/12).

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### A SENSE OF ENTITLEMENT

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Belonging to the first Bhul generation to live independently within Mallagaon, Vikram’s entitlements seem important to him, enabling him to: criticise the formal school education, whereas in the past Dalits tended to concur with the upper castes that it was positive; set up shops in both Mallagaon bazaar and village; and sell oil to the upper castes, despite caste-based restrictions. He also feels able to push caste-imposed boundaries by helping his wife become a tailor in the bazaar, despite there being two other tailoring businesses, both run by members of the ‘higher’ tailor caste.

A sense of entitlement (in the positive sense of the phrase) even if unacted upon, also matters to Vikram, including the right to aspire to actions or possessions. Vikram may never open the teashop of his dreams, being fully aware of local notions about ‘caste-pollution’ that would limit his customer base, but he values the sense of entitlement he nowadays has to consider, and discuss the possibility of, breaking the boundaries of ‘ritual status’ through improved ‘secular status’. The ability to discuss this teashop (and perhaps even run it at a loss) is for Vikram a ‘symbolic resource’ with which he can assert his independence from Mallagaon’s still-dominant hierarchical society.

Vikram’s Dalit identity explains why securing a livelihood in Mallagaon is the personal change most important to him, although he later said he would have emigrated if he could. In considering it better to stay, he may be comparing his situation to that of his forefathers who migrated out of necessity rather than choice, and spent long, difficult periods in India. Like Devi, whose lifestyle and opportunities are so different from her mother’s, Vikram’s sense of worth is probably improved by positive comparison with

his forefathers' lot. He does dream of moving to a Nepali city but as an entitlement rather than as a compulsion through economic necessity.

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### LEADERSHIP, BESTOWING POSITION AND PATRONAGE

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Vikram's friends in the district headquarters call him "Vikram '*Surana*'" (FN: 15/03/12), the surname meaning 'good leader' which he adopted partly to escape his caste identity. It also reflects the importance to him of being a leader, at least of the younger generation; his mother believes that he does not permanently leave Mallagaon because, "he has his organisation", the Youth Centre (FN: 15/02/12) which he largely runs.

For Vikram, leadership is a new, status-enhancing experience for which opportunities are increasing owing to the same societal changes which threaten Sachivji's once taken for granted leadership role. Leadership confers on Mallagaon Brahmans (like the authors of Chapter 5's texts) the authority their caste has traditionally held over the rest of the community. For Vikram, leadership is probably important because of the opportunities it affords him to break such caste-imposed boundaries.

Vikram's pride in the social work he does through the Youth Centre may be due to the 'secular status' it affords him; being from a background traditionally unable to bestow on others, he may derive particular self-worth from doing so now. Meanwhile, Dinakar's claim that he could have earned more money had he not spent so much time working to uplift the downtrodden, indicates that for him also the 'secular status' afforded by helping others is more important than material wealth (IN: 24/02/12).

The value Vikram places on being in a bestowing position was also suggested by: his mentioning the advice he gives clan members; his pride in reducing the prejudice against HIV-AIDS and in being a Dalit role model; his wish to do more acting which for him involves awareness-raising (FN: 07/04/12); and the ownership he claims of community development initiatives which probably originated elsewhere. The school's computer teacher first suggested the Mallagaon-based computing course (IN: 05/05/12), although Vikram presented it as his own idea.

Portraying himself as leader, role model and source of social development ideas, Vikram feels valued by Mallagaon rather than indebted to its upper castes, the potentially uneasy consequences of which are illustrated by Hari-Dai. Instead of being the client of patron-client relationships, Vikram's social work enables him to feel like

and be a patron even of upper caste members who may benefit from the Youth Centre courses or greater awareness about HIV-AIDS. Hence, his involvement in and talk about these activities can be understood as ‘symbolic resources’ which help in his transition to the new social order which allows a Dalit leadership status in the community. The importance of being a patron, able to bestow and being needed, is also borne out by Devi, for whom the experience may be as new as for Vikram because she benefits as much from increased gender equality as Vikram does from increased caste equality.

#### 9.4 UNDERSTANDINGS OF DEVELOPMENT AND PERSONAL WELLBEING

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##### “OUT-KNOWLEDGE”

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Despite the niche Vikram has carved for himself in Mallagaon, and his status there, life elsewhere has allure. The prime attraction the Terai holds for him is the greater knowledge (unavailable locally) he believes he or his son would gain there. ‘*Out-knowledge*’, as Vikram and others in Mallagaon term it, appears to include formal education outside the village, informal learning derived from wider experience (both good and bad) and opportunities which people living in rural areas like Mallagaon are often unaware of, or cannot access. Once, someone from a nearby village explained to me that his son, having passed IEd from Janakiram, is now doing a BEd, not in Janakiram where the course is available, but in a town in order to gain ‘*out-knowledge*’ (FN: 22/02/12). This suggests that, alongside education and certificates, formal and informal learning from outside Mallagaon are also valued.

Vikram’s thirst for ‘*out-knowledge*’ was probably why he dismissed Mallagaon as “your village area” believing that children who stay will be “ruined”; his decisions seem greatly influenced by how much he can access, or dream of accessing, ‘*out-knowledge*’ for himself and his family. The perceived benefits of ‘*out-knowledge*’ outweigh the anxiety he feels about Dhangadhi’s unsafe environment and health risks, and the advantages he finds in the climate and society of Mallagaon.

Shivapriya, a young Chhetria woman who emigrated after studying the IEd at Janakiram, similarly appreciates life in Dhangadhi for the new things that can be learnt, including skills such as knitting and knowledge outside textbooks, especially about coping in the outside world. She will educate her son anywhere except in the villages because there “they don’t have knowledge of outside things” (IN: 10/11/12).

The understanding that urban life brings everything one needs may derive from increased globalisation, the outside world familiarised by radio, television and increased geographical mobility. The value Vikram attaches to *'out-knowledge'* also comes from personal experience; it is from skills training in Kathmandu, not from Janakiram, that Vikram believes he learnt what he required to be a successful businessman.

Dinakar uses his *'out-knowledge'* as a 'symbolic resource' in the local community, as illustrated by his story about gaining entry into a Brahman home to measure a sofa for a cover (IN: 24/02/12). Dinakar explained to the householder, who initially tried to deny him entry and offered to take the measurements himself, that making a sofa cover is complicated and he would rather lose the order than take the responsibility for the work with the Brahman's measurements. The Brahman finally gave in. Later, while stitching the cover, Dinakar realised that it was his skill, not he, that was victorious over the Brahman's casteism and that without his skill he has no value. Dinakar values his tailoring experience in India, despite having had difficulties there, for the skill it provided him; it has contributed to his social mobility by helping him fight the caste hierarchy with 'secular status' in a way probably inconceivable to Hari-Dai.

The desire to break the caste hierarchy affects Dinakar's aspirations for his son, his narration of which is a 'symbolic resource', an imagined future in which his son's profession enables him to break caste-imposed restrictions. He wants him to become a doctor rather than a teacher, practising in a small place like Mallagaon because he could thus improve people's health and, more importantly, their mind-sets. Dinakar explained that people could not show discrimination to his son if he were a doctor; he would be allowed to go inside an upper caste home, even to the woman of the family who, if ill, would be unable to come outside (IN: 24/02/12).

Vikram and Dinakar understand temporary migration for work or training as positive because of the *'out-knowledge'* thus gained; although both men value such learning for the social mobility and status it affords them and their families, Dinakar's aspirations for his son involve staying in Mallagaon, whereas Vikram's involve emigration.

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#### 'LIFE-SKILL CLASS'

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Vikram lacks regard for indigenous skills. Rope-making, for example, he stated was "not useful for life", perhaps because he associates it with the marginalisation and discrimination of his ancestors who worked as labourers for the Brahmans and made

ties for ploughshares as their caste occupation. Vikram showed appreciation for such skills when manifested as carpet-making, illustrating that he values indigenous skills only if transformed into new, more financially rewarding ones with greater perceived dignity.

Similarly disparaging indigenous skills, a middle-aged Bhul claimed to have “no skills” despite possessing his caste-based skill of making ploughshare ties and his later-acquired skill of stone-masonry, which he used to build his own home (IN: 24/03/12). A Dalit of the Kaami (blacksmith) caste mentioned being a stone mason and carpenter, but omitted his caste-based skill of knife-making (IN: 24/03/12). It is an understanding also shared by upper caste members; Chuggy dismissed his bag-making skill as “nothing”. It can be explained by the association of these skills with caste, and/or with the poverty and low status of their ancestors who depended on them. That these skills were, and often still are, paid for in kind also explains people’s reluctance to learn and use them; craftspeople dislike this barter system, several Dalits told me, because what they receive is too little for the effort and time spent.

Vikram also disparaged the rope-making skill because many people have it, showing that he values only rare skills, recognising their potential for demand in the market. This understanding was evident in his choice to retrain; he realised the low demand locally for radio and television repair, and, noticing that people used their phones increasingly but no one locally had the skill to repair them, saw in mobile phone repair better potential financial rewards.

At CSIDB, a Nepal-government organisation for skills training, a staff member stated that the courses they run in Mallagaon help development by giving “...one person the skill and then that one person teaches ten more people and they all are able to provide for themselves and their families” (IN: 17/03/12). In Vikram’s experience however, this ‘cascade effect’ understanding of skills training for development is unhelpful. His thinking matches a Brahman’s (from another part of Nepal, involved for thirty years in INGO development work in the district) who argued that a product can have a market in a small village only if no more than one person is producing it (IN: 17/03/12). Yashoda, Vikram’s wife, expressed a similar idea, that for employability it would be best if some were given some kinds of training, others other kinds, in skills such as her own, tailoring (IN: 24/11/11).

It may be because of Vikram's understanding of the market that he did not dismiss indigenous skills outright. He has after all established his wife's business, recognising that demand for tailoring exceeds supply. He may also have chosen this skill for her because tailoring has come to be seen as suitable for women of all castes as a means of earning extra cash. Janakiram readily took up CEW's offer of funding tailoring courses in the girls' hostel where mostly upper caste girls live, and girls whom I interviewed there valued this skill. Daya, a Chhetria about to sit her IEd exams, planned to buy a sewing machine and use the tailoring skills she had learnt to earn a living, recognising that since there were no teaching vacancies, her qualification would not help her (IN: 29/02/12).

The category of skills Vikram unequivocally understands as important consists of 'new skills' such as mobile phone repair, probably because they bear no relationship to indigenous village life and hence come with no caste or poverty stigma attached, and because they have benefited him. Roshan, a tailor by caste, showed similar understandings of new skills; despite his proficiency in sewing and getting plentiful business, he hoped to buy a computer and set up a photography business (FN: 27/02/12).

Unlike school education ("not useful for life"), Vikram considers training in new skills useful, and hence understands such training as development. Although the training ideas discussed in his interview (computing, carpet-making and machine-made leaf plates) did not actually originate with him, it is significant that he took ownership of them. His former training and bazaar-based business demonstrate that he did not merely pay lip-service to but had taken on board the importance of training in new skills for small-scale business ventures. Vikram seems to appreciate his skills for more than their financial rewards, given the importance he gave to the independence and status he has achieved through them.

The above discussion illustrates that for Vikram to consider a skill in terms of development it must be what he called "of *'life-skill class'*". As such it should: not be widely known by others in the area; have local demand; have potential for higher income; and be either an indigenous skill transformed or a new one. These ideas were shared by Asha, involved in women's development in the district headquarters. She advocated training in new skills including: electrical wiring, because there are few trained electricians locally available; haircutting, since nowadays even many women get

their hair cut; and automobile repair, given the increasing number of vehicles there (IN: 14/03/12). The DCC is the most likely initial source of Vikram's understanding of the importance of *'life-skill class'* skills; it funded him and the Youth Centre, and he has been involved with its work for many years.

Vikram's understanding that vocational skills are positive for development seems more carefully considered than do similar ideas suggested by Devi, Shanti and Hari-Dai. This could be because of his close involvement with the DCC but also because he has grounded, personal experience of their effect on his own wellbeing. This contrasts with Devi's impersonal understanding of vocational skills in terms of community wellbeing. Even Hari-Dai's ideas that new skills like watch repair would be of likely benefit to Mallagaon are disconnected from his own experience and aspirations. Training and work in vocational skills were often equated with community wellbeing but not with development by those who, polarising Mallagaon into distinct groups of 'them and us', consider themselves as 'other' than the community under discussion. Vikram and Dinakar, on the other hand, equate training and work in vocational skills with personal wellbeing and therefore also understand them as development.

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## 9.5 UNDERSTANDINGS OF DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNITY WELLBEING

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### AWARENESS, EMPOWERMENT AND RIGHTS

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Vikram's opinion that the most important change for Mallagaon is increased Dalit awareness and rights tallies with the independence and sense of entitlement important to him (see Section 9.3), which come about through empowerment. It is important to him that, whereas in the past Dalits used to accept even "bad" upper caste decisions, they now have sufficient voice and knowledge, and hence power to make their own decisions. This is demonstrated by Vikram's decisions to retrain and to set up his wife's business, and by his ability and confidence to criticise the formal school system.

Whereas Devi (as a female) referred to equality only in terms of gender and improved rights for servants (probably within her own caste), for Vikram (as a Dalit), awareness and equality are important beyond caste-discrimination. Verbalised in Vikram's interview, this is demonstrated through: his commitment to the Youth Centre, with its aims of increasing youth awareness and empowerment; his involvement in HIV-AIDS awareness-raising plays, which he proudly connected to reduced marginalisation of the HIV positive; and the support he gives his wife Yashoda's business. Although in the

latter case his motive may be financial gain, his encouragement of it indicates a shift in thinking. In contrast to Yashoda, who runs her business independent of Vikram, Hari-Dai's wife, of an older generation, was not even aware what remuneration she received for sewing for the hostel-based students, all such business being taken care of by Hari-Dai (IN: 07/03/12).

Vikram gave credit to Maoists, NGO and INGOs for increasing Dalit awareness. His own awareness seems to originate largely from the Community Development Forum, an NGO established in 1994 which works in partnership with Save the Children and has an office in the district headquarters, with programmes including social mobilisation and HIV-AIDS awareness (FN: 15/03/12). Meeting Vikram in the district headquarters, I realised how at home he is in its offices and how much he benefits from the 'linking' capital afforded him by his connections with the DCC and other NGOs. Keshab, a Kaami Dalit similar in age to Vikram who comes from a nearby village and studied at Janakiram with a CEW scholarship, has experience which also suggests NGO contribution to increased Dalit awareness. Having worked for the DCC and the Feminist Dalit Organisation in advocacy for human rights, anti-discrimination and awareness building, he recognised their importance (IN: 30/10/11). He also said that he could not have become what he is today, a teacher, without the CEW scholarship.

Gyana, a Brahman, spoke positively of Maoist grass-roots level sensitisation of people about discrimination, empowering them and enabling them to participate (IN: 25/09/11). However Karna, a Mallagaon Dalit who left as a schoolboy to join the Maoists and subsequently became a Section Commander, considered the Maoist ideals, which he described as the liberation of the poor and bringing the marginalised forward, still only "a dream" in his birthplace (IN: 04/12/11). As a revolutionary, he perhaps considers more rapid and radical change to be necessary than do his father (Hari-Dai), Vikram or Gyana.

Many of the upper castes regretted what they perceived as the loss of a sense of responsibility in Mallagaon, blaming the political parties; the Brahman head of Janakiram '*Campus*' said:

'People are more conscious about their rights... [and] about their freedom but... less considerate about what they have to do... I think they forget their responsibilities' (IN: 07/11/11).

Such attitudes were blamed, by people in authority positions like Sachivji, for the demise of '*shramdaan*' and other cooperative work for Mallagaon's good.

However, Vikram noted that Maoism, INGOs and NGOs have brought increased awareness to Dalits of not only their rights but also their “duties”. He, Keshab (secretary of the DCC), and Dinakar, who works for the social welfare of Mallagaon (IN: 24/02/12), seemed to have a strong sense of duty and responsibility, as well as of their own rights. This suggests that the marginalised have not necessarily lost their sense of responsibility but have been empowered to perform their duty as they choose, opportunities to do so having been provided by NGOs in ways other than those condoned by Mallagaon’s patron-client hierarchy or by ideas of ‘duty’ laid down by the caste-based practice of *‘sva-dharma’*. While Vikram thought it important for Mallagaon that Dalits no longer blindly follow upper caste decisions, Devi and other upper castes considered such change to be disrespectful.

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## 9.6 UNDERSTANDINGS OF DEVELOPMENT

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### NOT IMPROVED BY A JANAKIRAM EDUCATION

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When asked what kinds of development are important for Mallagaon, Vikram’s statement that “there has been a lot of discussion in the area of education here” shows his awareness that, for many in Mallagaon, education is an important aspect of development. Although he noted that he learnt only accounting and basic literacy in school, his experience suggests he has succeeded despite inadequate schooling, and explains his opinion that there has been no development in education.

Similarly, Dinakar noted that “nothing” about his school education had helped in his business, but subsequently mentioned that school taught him addition and subtraction (IN: 24/02/12). Another Dalit, Aakash the goldsmith, said school had not helped him, although his wife interjected that it enabled him to do his accounts (IN: 06/03/12). Despite the help, albeit limited, that formal schooling has given them, these Dalits’ first reaction was to state that it had been no help at all. In this they appear influenced by Maoist discourse which opposes formal schooling, and hence Mallagaon’s dominant discourse of schooling as entirely positive.

Aditi, a young Chhetria woman with a daughter in Class 1, felt unhappy with Janakiram’s standard of education because it does not enable its students to become engineers or doctors (IN: 01/12/11). This shows Janakiram’s education now being questioned by upper as well as Dalit castes, a situation partly caused by the Phularas who – although responsible for and proud of Janakiram – nowadays send most of their

children to study elsewhere. I was struck, at a school function, by the scarcity of Phulara children in contrast to the many studying there twenty years ago (FN: 19/01/12). Meanwhile, the only upper caste staff children studying at the secondary level in Janakiram were those who got a free place in the hostel because a parent was doing hostel duty there. The example of Mallagaon's influential, including descendants of Janakiram's founders and current teachers, sending their children away for schooling may be undermining the perceived worth of its education.

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### “BIG” = “GOOD”

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Despite Vikram's life experience, in which relatively modest NGO support has helped him, it is noteworthy that (see Chapter 4) when he helped me interview, he translated “biggest changes” as “good development”, subsequently explaining that “big” and “good” have the same meaning (FN: 24/03/12). This reveals an understanding similar to Chuggy's who, not knowing what a *Multiple Campus* is, nonetheless stated that “it is very big so must be good”.

Both men seem to be verbalising a local discourse which has little bearing on their actual lives, perpetuated by those in authority positions like Sachivji and Janakiram's retired Brahman headmaster, who favour large-scale, high-finance projects.

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### AGRICULTURE

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My direct question about development caused Vikram to talk about farming and the need for improved irrigation. In introducing the subject, his mention of a great deal of local discussion about education suggests that, in contrast, he thinks that insufficient emphasis has been placed on agriculture, since he immediately continued by discussing the latter's insufficiency. Interestingly, Chuggy also linked school and agriculture to the same end.

Vikram, like Chuggy, considered improvements to agriculture primarily in terms of development, whereas Devi and Shanti discussed them in terms of community wellbeing, while agriculture is low on Sachivji's list of development priorities. This indicates that those who are (or until recently were) dependent on farming are the ones who see agriculture in terms of development, probably because their lifestyles are more agrarian. However much he may want to escape this life, Vikram has first-hand experience of having insufficient food. Conversely, those like Devi and Sachivji who are no longer dependent on farming, understand the agriculture-reliant of Mallagaon as

a group other than their own, and expressed concern for its wellbeing only on an impersonal (community) level.

## 9.7 CONCLUSION

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This chapter has illustrated the value invested, by lower caste members, in what is encapsulated in a new discourse of '*out-knowledge*'. This encompasses formal and informal learning gained through migration and short-term experience outside Mallagaon. The perceived value of '*out-knowledge*' goes beyond financial gain and includes achieving social mobility, especially on return to Mallagaon.

The term '*life-skill class*', apparently coined by Vikram in what may be a nascent discourse, relates either to '*out-knowledge*' skills, such as mobile phone repair or updated tailoring skills, or to new skills such as carpet-making evolved from indigenous ones like rope-making. Such skills are valued as an aspect of development and for the socio-economic mobility they afford. I have argued that they often become 'symbolic resources', enabling Dalits to achieve independence and 'secular status' in a context of caste-based preclusion from the 'ritual status' of the upper castes.

Meanwhile, indigenous skills, especially if caste-based, are usually dismissed, arguably because they are financially unviable and are associated with discrimination and marginalisation. This attitude springs from the development as modernisation discourse as it plays out in Nepal, denigrating the small-scale and local and equating 'biggest change' with 'good development', as Vikram did despite his positive experiences with small-scale change.

Meanwhile, the discourse of Janakiram's excellence (see Chapter 5) is increasingly questioned; many Dalits stated that its education was useless (despite also admitting to learning some helpful skills there) and questioned the social reproduction caused by Janakiram's major donor, CEW. This relatively new counter-discourse probably derives from: Maoist discourse; the more practical learning gained through '*out-knowledge*'; and from the example set by upper caste staff members sending their children elsewhere for education. Despite this, the cultural capital provided by formal education and certificates is valued; I have argued that Vikram's talk about these is a 'symbolic resource' which he uses to affirm his 'secular status'.

Vikram's understandings of development relate to those of personal wellbeing. Important to him as aspects of development are awareness, empowerment and greater

equality, bringing him personal wellbeing through a degree of social freedom relative to his clan. This personal wellbeing involves independence, leadership, a sense of entitlement and ability to help others in the community. While this suggests a eudaimonic conception of personal wellbeing involving the intrinsic goals of autonomy, competence and relatedness, Vikram's current status seems most important to him. This seems largely defined by his ability (gained chiefly from *'out-knowledge'*) to use 'symbolic resources' to overcome social taboos and achieve 'secular status', an extrinsic goal associated with hedonic wellbeing. This brings into question, as have earlier chapters, the usefulness of defining wellbeing as eudaimonic or hedonic.

For Vikram, development and community wellbeing equate to farming, whereas development and personal wellbeing equate to the escape (and the means of escape – *'out-knowledge'* and *'life-skill class'* skills) from the agrarian lifestyle. Although Vikram subscribes to certain discourses seemingly incompatible with his usually grounded understandings, he seems in general less directly influenced than other participants by powerful individuals such as Sachivji. While his personality plays a part, this may largely be due to his hard-won economic independence, 'secular status', and power to break free from the patron-client relationship.

## CHAPTER 10 KNITTING AS A DEVELOPMENT INTERVENTION

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### 10.1 INTRODUCTION

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Based on a small-scale development intervention for which I was partly responsible, this ‘embedded case’ reveals my understanding of the importance of Dalits’ and women’s rights. For reasons relating to the poorly implemented CEW project for which I felt responsible (explored in Chapter 4), I felt compelled to become active in my research location, my actions becoming more politicised than I had originally intended. I initiated and helped organise training, with the main purpose of ensuring that a Mallagaon Dalit woman, (a profile Janakiram normally overlooks) would be employed to teach knitting to and be a role model for the female students in Janakiram’s hostels.

Exploring relationships of power and the value given to skills, I reveal that development and wellbeing are better understood as a web of processes rather than isolated outcomes. I also show that understandings of development and of wellbeing are relational and are therefore best explored in terms of interrelationships between institutions, groups and individuals.

The chapter opens with an account of the knitting programme based on my field and interview notes, in which Mahesh and I are ‘actors’ amongst many. I follow this with analysis based on the main emerging themes (most of which I have already touched upon in earlier chapters) and relate what I find to my other observations and conversations in Mallagaon and beyond.

### 10.2 KNITTING IN MALLAGAON

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Between housework, looking after her toddler and doing her BEd, Shivapriya, a young Chhetria woman, delightedly knits items for her family and gifts for me and Mahesh. In return, she only wants us to tell everyone she made them. She learnt knitting from her neighbour in Dhangadhi and enjoys living there, mainly because she can learn skills which she never could have learnt in her hill village near Mallagaon. Sometimes, Shivapriya earns money running knitting courses in Dhangadhi. When she saves enough, she plans to learn machine knitting and then buy a knitting machine; she is more interested in starting her own business than in teaching.

Meanwhile, in Mallagaon various Brahman and Chhetria women suggest that skills including knitting should be taught in the school hostels and in the wider community, to

help the poor generate income. Some of the women remember Janakiram's hostel-based girls being taught to use DCC-funded knitting machines about fifteen years ago. However, the course lasted less than a year, for which various explanations are given: no one local could repair the machines; the trainer left Mallagaon to marry; the Maoist War started. Now the knitting machines lie rusting outside the girls' hostel.

The hostels' in-charge, Raghav Sir, and Janakiram School's headmaster consider knitting a good skill to teach the hostel-based girls again; they plan to apply for CEW funding. Since CEW also wants a hostel-based girls' knitting programme, Mahesh and I consider funding this as payment for our food and accommodation in the girls' hostel, its management having refused our money. Everyone considers it a good idea.

However, nobody in Mallagaon knits well enough to conduct the classes. Duttji, a teacher, suggests that Janakiram create a permanent post for a skills trainer. I suggest a female Janakiram graduate; the teacher reminds me that all girls leave the area on marriage. Mahesh suggests Yashoda, a young Dalit woman married into Mallagaon; a trained tailor, she already knows basic knitting and is looking for further income sources. The teacher says he will make this suggestion at the next Janakiram Management Committee Meeting.

Recalling Shivapriya's expertise, and knowing other local women want to learn knitting, Mahesh and I suggest she be invited to train the people of the VDC villages, with Yashoda as one of the trainees. Sachivji (VDC secretary), Shivapriya and Yashoda all agree.

Towards the end of January, former Janakiram headmaster Jungbahadurji (Shivapriya's father) suggests to Sachivji that the VDC fund allocated to vocational skills training be used for this community-based knitting programme. But Sachivji appears reluctant to release this fund, and suggests we make the programme larger-scale, bringing someone to repair the knitting machines as the first step; he requests Mahesh and me, as '*thulo manche*', to approach the head of the CSIDB's local branch for funds. Meanwhile, Raghav Sir expects CEW to purchase knitting machines, stating that girls taught to use them could later start knitting businesses. Mahesh, Jungbahadurji and I argue for hand-knitting, using the VDC fund. Mahesh continues, arguing that small-scale hand-knitting is potentially more useful for the girls, since soon after graduation they may be unable

to afford knitting machines. *Sachivji* finally agrees to release NRs. 30,000<sup>39</sup> allocated yearly to his VDC for “Projects for skills training for the production of small items” (see Appendix 12); Shivapriya will be the trainer.

Yashoda needs to learn to knit well in time to start teaching in mid April, the new school year. However, by mid February Janakiram has neither informed her about the community-based knitting course nor discussed her teaching knitting in the hostel (let alone the proposed permanent post for her as Janakiram skills trainer). Raghav Sir explains that Mallagaon is a “backward place”, hence the delay. Yashoda is unsurprised; everything gets delayed here, she explains. Eventually a meeting of potential trainees from the whole VDC area is held, but Yashoda is absent; apparently she was not informed, despite her place on Janakiram’s Management Committee as female Dalit representative.

A new Dalit committee forms for running the community-based knitting training; the VDC should now give it the funds. After phone-negotiations with this committee over her pay, Shivapriya arrives. For the couple of days before the programme begins, she is often in the bazaar, always with the sweater she is currently knitting for her father, looking relaxed and at home either in the new shop, run by a non-local Chhetria woman, or sitting with some female Dalit tailors outside their family shop.

Finally, in the second half of March, the formal inauguration of the community-based knitting programme takes place in a room at the mill, a ten-minute walk uphill from Ramkuti bazaar. On benches at one end sit seven Brahman men, the youngest in his fifties, including political party representatives and other powerful community members, such as *Sachivji*. On a separate bench away from them are a couple of young Dalit men, the oldest in his thirties; they are leaders, including Vikram, forming the knitting committee. All the men sit on benches, the women on the floor at the other end of the room facing them. The local Maoist party representative (a male Brahman and Chairman of Janakiram’s Management Committee) moves from a bench to join the female Dalit trainees on the floor. Twenty are expected; seven turn up. The only females sitting with the men are Shivapriya and I. Mahesh and I had sat on the floor but the programme organisers moved us onto the benches and later asked us to give speeches.

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<sup>39</sup> 30,000 Nepali rupees, a substantial sum (at the time equivalent to approximately £225)

The meeting, although chaired by a Dalit, is dominated by speeches from Brahman men. One warns that if this ends up like previous projects aimed at Dalits, it had better not be done at all; other Brahmans echo this sentiment. Janakiram's Chairman later explains that the project referred to provided one *lakh*<sup>40</sup> rupees about three years before to Dalits who spent it on goats, eaten immediately rather than reared for profit.

Meanwhile, Vikram sits writing in the programme logbook (see Appendix 13a):

“Today, on 22 March 2012, a sewing and knitting training programme was organised with the purpose to build skills necessary for the bright future of the Dalit women of... [the] VDC so they are equipped with vocational skills to work and support themselves throughout their lives.”

The logbook also records (see Appendix 13b) that:

“The committee unanimously approved the decision that party representatives and the VDC Secretary shall evaluate and control the training programme from time to time during the training period.”

Vikram also writes the copy for the inauguration's planned broadcast on FM radio, including the specific mention of foreign involvement: “There were two chief guests: British citizens Mahesh Nair and Joanna” (see Appendix 13c).

Over the fifteen-day programme numbers vary between ten and sixteen, trainees not attending when they have other household or farm work to do. One Dalit man appears often, apparently monitoring the course. There are usually several small children in the room. Shivapriya says six of the women are doing well, that three of them could easily use their skill later, including Yashoda, who knits well, with determination. She is the one who most often sits close to Shivapriya, who usually remains on the bench, giving help when requested and occasionally checking up on others. During these four-hour afternoon sessions, participants often sing, appearing proud of their work, concentrating hard and usually reluctant to leave. Sometimes, they bring grain for grinding at the mill. I join some sessions, also knitting, sometimes on the bench with Shivapriya, sometimes on the floor with the trainees. Mahesh keeps away from the sessions, mistakenly believing this will dissuade other men from hijacking this women's programme.

On the programme's second day, I ask one of the trainees, Bhavani, what the most important aspect of development is. She replies:

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<sup>40</sup> One lakh or 100,000 Nepali rupees, a very substantial sum (at the time equivalent to approximately £750)

“Change for women. How can women go ahead? Women cannot speak for themselves here so if there are more training programmes like the knitting one, if skill based training programmes are given more it would be good for women...”

If women get taught many skills they would be able to go elsewhere and teach others, she continues.

After about ten days, most of the trainees (some having started with a basic ability to knit, others completely new to knitting) are making doll-size hats, jerseys and booties since there is shortage of wool, despite money left unspent in the fund. Shivapriya was instructed to ask the women to make full-size items and then undo them, so that there would be sufficient wool for the course. Neither she nor the women want to do this, so they make minute clothes, a few fit for small babies; the one-month old, brought every day, is soon modelling booties.

There is much backbiting and mistrust about the fund; I hear various accusations about it being misspent, or not spent but misappropriated by one party or another. By the end, there is officially NRs. 4,400 (see Appendix 13d) unspent of the allocated NRs. 30,000 (see Appendix 12). Shivapriya says that trainees, without post-programme practice, often forget what they learn; she suggests spending the remaining funds on wool for each trainee to practice. Later, both Vikram and Yashoda speak of plans to do this.

Shivapriya keeps getting criticised for failing to teach all trainees to make all the items. One evening towards the course’s end, she warns that she may not continue under such circumstances. I promise to join her in the meeting about it the next day.

During the session before the meeting, Shivapriya is tense. The trainees, cheerful as ever, hide a committee member’s basket as a practical joke. Six Dalit men attend the meeting; all the trainees having gone home, Shivapriya and I are the only women there. While Vikram, Yashoda’s husband, keeps silent, the rest pressurise Shivapriya for an extra three days’ teaching for the few trainees who have not learnt (mainly due to non-attendance) to make all the items. She is their “little sister” and this, they argue, is her sisterly duty; how can they have failures in their first such venture? Finally, they say they will phone Shivapriya’s father Jungbahadurji, thinking he will persuade her. Their attitude surprises me, especially since some of them have complained about being on the receiving end of such dominance from the upper castes.

Shivapriya resists the men's pressure. The programme ends on schedule and a farewell ceremony is held. Shivapriya and the trainees get certificates. The committee has spent considerable time finding the means to design and print them.

Yashoda is thankful; whether or not she ends up teaching knitting at the hostel, she now plans to sell knitted goods from her new tailoring shop. I wonder if she finds it difficult as a woman setting up business in the bazaar. She says:

“Of course it is difficult, why would it not be difficult? Lots of men come round, some saying something, others saying something else. It is a situation I do not really like but I have to run my business so I will do it. It would have been better if lots more women came...”

Yashoda and Vikram both ask separately, on several occasions, for confirmation that Yashoda will teach knitting at the hostel; Yashoda once asks what “England” has said about her work. Plans to employ Yashoda to teach the hostel girls knitting notwithstanding, the headmaster attempts to persuade Shivapriya to take this post.

One day Vikram overhears me complimenting another trainee's knitting and looks displeased. He and Yashoda seem unconvinced by Mahesh's and my reassurances that we are working towards Yashoda being the hostel-based trainer.

By the end of May, my fieldwork is over. The hostel knitting classes should have been underway but there is a political shutdown throughout the Far West; the necessary materials cannot be purchased, Janakiram is closed and hostel-based students living within walking distance sent home because of shortage of supplies. This is also the explanation given for the women not having further wool for knitting practice. Despite this apparently valid reason, I am full of mistrust: Could not the materials have been purchased before the shutdown started? Will Janakiram Management Committee renege on their commitment to employ Yashoda after I leave Mallagaon?<sup>41</sup>

Questioning more than ever the value of any form of externally initiated and funded development programme, I have to leave before the shutdown lifts.

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### 10.3 UNDERSTANDINGS OF MALLAGAON'S MORE POWERFUL

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#### EXTERNALLY FUNDED AND LARGE-SCALE FOR STATUS

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The DCC funded the first programme's knitting machines, considered inappropriate by Ed, the former VSO who worked as the DCC's 'Management Training Adviser' from

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<sup>41</sup> Although belatedly, Yashoda was eventually employed to teach knitting, but not as a permanent skills trainer

1996 to 1998; the second set came from India but the first was from Japan and it was impossible to get spare parts (IN: 21/07/11). Their unsuitability is demonstrated by the short-lived course and the machines falling into disrepair and disuse. Despite this, Sachivji wanted them repaired rather than spend funds on hand-knitting, while Raghav Sir hoped to purchase new knitting machines with CEW funding. Demonstrably lacking in value in terms of actual use, the machines may be popular for their symbolic value through the status such externally funded and sourced equipment brings.

Similarly, DCC-Phularaji had income generation ideas stymied by the lack of funds for the type of equipment he considered necessary (IN: 12/11/11). An example is the production of medicinal oil from the locally abundant spice, *'timur'*<sup>42</sup>. Visiting a mill located in a nearby village, I saw a small press, which the mill owner assured me was inexpensive and fit for this purpose. However, DCC-Phularaji wanted a processing plant requiring funds, he stated, from donors such as the World Bank.

At the time I noted:

“There is certainly a pattern that people at least acknowledge the need for... vocational education and livelihoods, but there is also a pattern of wanting the biggest things possible to go along with them – a mill for the production of *'timur'* oil, water cleaning plant for the production of mineral water, knitting machines (rusting), a machine to make leaf plates... NB: Any of these things already here are not used and are in a state of disrepair” (FN: 30/01/12).

Many of Mallagaon's most powerful are keen to implement showcase projects involving larger scale funding than necessary, externally initiated ideas and externally sourced equipment, relating to Prithvirajji and Sachivji's ideas (see Chapters 5 and 6). These may be understood to secure them and their community good reputation and the potential of attracting further external aid to Mallagaon. As I wrote in my field-notes:

“Development may be important not in its own right, so the fact that nothing works properly or... fall[s] into disrepair doesn't matter to people, but for the prestige it gives to people and to the place” (FN: 11/11/11).

Mallagaon's powerful upper castes, and hence the institutions they act through (the DCC, VDC and Janakiram) sometimes have ideas for Mallagaon's development which, related to their desire for prestige and status, are not always grounded in the needs of its members.

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<sup>42</sup> Szechuan pepper

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## LOCAL AND SMALL-SCALE

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By contrast, Mahesh argued for a VDC-funded hand-knitting programme, pointing out its usefulness over machine-knitting because of the girls' limited potential buying power. Even Shivapriya, a relatively wealthy member of the upper castes who has begun to make her own income through knitting, recognised that a knitting machine would only benefit her at a later stage. Mahesh's understanding of development as revealed here seems practical, participatory and community-oriented. As a foreigner and initiator of the knitting programmes, Mahesh was powerful in this context and those in positions of authority in relation to the knitting intervention concurred with him. Possibly Mallagaon community leaders resented their overt power being taken away but concurred out of expediency since their agreement was not heartfelt (except Jungbahadurji's), as suggested by the ways in which they later covertly exerted their power through inaction. Sachivji delayed initiating the community-based programme, and Janakiram's Management Committee delayed ensuring that Yashoda trained the girls to knit and failed to offer her permanent employment.

Shivapriya's father Jungbahadurji (Chhetria, former Janakiram headmaster) is unusual amongst the local upper castes in that he too argued for hand-knitting rather than machine-knitting and suggested that VDC funds be used for the community-based programme. This understanding that available development funds should be spent on local, small-scale projects may be the result of his experience in Dhangadhi and other parts of Nepal. Even if his actions had a selfish motive (ensuring income for his daughter) they show an open-minded attitude in giving his daughter freedom (not normal in his milieu) to manage her own time and income. A similar example is Vikram's setting up of Yashoda's tailoring business. The type of training courses promoted by the DCC, such as Vikram's course which it funded, suggest that it also promotes small-scale, locally relevant courses despite its chairman DCC-Phularaji's inclination towards larger scale funding (see above).

It was only Jungbahadurji and I (both of us also outsiders) who openly and fully agreed with Mahesh. While those relatively lacking in power, such as Yashoda, appreciated the programme and may hold similar opinions, the likelihood of their understandings being heard or acted upon is very slight, given the apparent resistance even to the ideas of '*thulo maanche*', (as Jungbahadurji, Mahesh and I are considered).

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## PATRON-CLIENT RELATIONSHIPS

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Although the committee members and the chairman of the inauguration meeting were Dalits, the Brahman men attending gave warning speeches. This paternalistic attitude may reveal the Brahmans' understanding that they have ultimate control and power over such development programmes; the party representatives and the VDC Secretary [all Brahman] maintained the right to "evaluate and control the training programme from time to time" (see Appendix 13b). Their patronage also suggests that they doubted the Dalits' ability to handle their own affairs (the familiar story of a failed goat-rearing project retold at the inauguration demonstrates this point), indicating a hierarchical patron-client attitude.

However, a shift in this hierarchy was suggested by the ages of the two groups of men involved; the Brahmans all fifty plus, the Dalit committee all under forty, suggesting that only younger Dalit men are sufficiently empowered to help organise community-based programmes. The absence of the upper castes' younger generation (most having emigrated) perhaps facilitates this empowerment. This is reflected by earlier 'embedded cases': Sachivji, older and upper caste, seems threatened by his reduced power. Hari-Dai, an older Dalit, takes no leadership despite having some influence. Devi, a younger upper caste emigrant, wishes to do more (but does not or cannot) for Mallagaon. Dinakar and Vikram, younger Dalits, take leadership roles in Mallagaon.

At the programme inauguration, the Dalit men, like the Brahmans, took for granted their seats on benches while the women sat on the floor and, to the extent allowed by the Brahmans, they assumed responsibility for running the programme meant exclusively for women. Hence Dalit men became 'patrons' and Dalit women 'clients'. Whereas the caste divide may have narrowed (at least amongst men), the gender divide appears not to have, except for women (such as Shivapriya and myself on benches) empowered by outsider (potentially useful, hence worthy of respect) status.

While Dalit men allowed (probably unwillingly) Brahman men to organise, evaluate and control their programmes, they felt entitled and seemed able to dominate and exercise power over women, including attempts to dominate those of 'higher' caste, albeit in the absence of their men. Taking on a male group identity, they attempted to cross caste boundaries, calling Shivapriya "little sister" and assuming her upper caste father would take their side against her. In doing so, they appeared to draw on notions of a cohesive community and concomitant social capital. Like their Brahman

counterparts, the Dalit men appeared to understand themselves as entitled to control development programmes despite women being the only beneficiaries. In contrast to the Brahmans, the Dalit men's power was specific to this context and may therefore have meant all the more to them.

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### RESTRICTED NOTIONS OF PARTICIPATION

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While the motive may have been positive discrimination, the VDC's choice to spend funds for men and women of any caste (see Appendix 12) only on Dalit women suggests an understanding of knitting as a gendered skill required only by female Dalits, despite there being poor males and females of the upper castes as well as male Dalits in the VDC who could benefit from the skill. This suggests 'them and us' notions of community, with gender and caste boundaries.

Yashoda was excluded from the programme's initial meeting, perhaps because the powerful upper castes considered her doubly unqualified, as Dalit and as woman, to implement (therefore 'bestow') development projects, when her 'place' in Mallagaon's social hierarchy and in development projects is to be bestowed upon. This may also explain why Duttji, the upper caste teacher who suggested that Janakiram create a permanent post for a skills trainer, abandoned the idea.

Many Brahman and Chhetria women in Mallagaon, exemplified by Devi (Chapter 7), considered vocational skills and livelihoods beneficial to Mallagaon's poor, not to the educated like themselves. This suggests the understanding that vocational skills programmes are for a Mallagaon sub-community from which they distance themselves. Shivapriya was an exception, perhaps because, although originally from a local village, she has spent at least five years in Dhangadhi, or perhaps because she learnt knitting informally rather than through a programme placing her as needy recipient.

The programme's location at the mill facilitated the trainees' attendance in that they could combine it with work, suggesting efforts by the organisers towards social inclusion. However, apart from Janakiram's chairman's sitting on the floor with the women, the programme's organisation, and its inaugural meeting's social grouping, suggested otherwise. The programme's committee consisted of Dalit men, with no question of women's involvement at that level. The Dalit men's understanding of female participation seemed confined to allowing their women (thus themselves indirectly) economic benefit through mastering a money-earning skill, but no agency.

That Yashoda did not receive information suggests deliberate intent to avoid training her to knit and thus avoid employing her to teach knitting or other skills. Meanwhile, despite verbal commitments from staff suggesting interest in employing her, she heard nothing from the Janakiram Committee about progress regarding the plan. This indicates that the social inclusion of women and Dalits and the importance of having female and Dalit staff as role models were perceived as low priority (or even threatening) by the upper caste members of Janakiram's Management Committee. Yashoda's place on this Committee as female Dalit representative appears tokenistic; the acquiescence of Janakiram staff to Mahesh's and my suggestion about employing Yashoda may have been to appease its major donor, CEW, with which we were identified.

My original suggestion that a Janakiram female graduate be employed as a permanent skills trainer was made with the intention of furthering opportunities for women and helping ensure that Janakiram provided female role models. However, my identity as an outsider meant that, although familiar with the society, I momentarily forgot that female graduates would leave the area on marriage. This serves as an example of a well-intentioned idea from an outsider which, if implemented, would not have succeeded; a reason given for the early termination of the machine-knitting programme was that the trainer left for marriage.

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#### LOCAL INCAPACITY

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The politically caused, month-long shutdown of transportation, town-based shops, schools and government offices throughout Far West Nepal undoubtedly had an adverse effect on the timely implementation of the hostel-based knitting programme; however this shutdown seemed to become an excuse. The trainees never received the wool for practising their new skill; had there been the will, there was enough time before the shutdown began to purchase the materials needed for this and for the proposed hostel programme.

This lack of will and Raghav Sir's excuse for the hostel-based programme's failure – that Mallagaon is a “backward place” – seem part of a discourse in which a community internalises its incapacity to develop. Issues like political troubles may then be used to support this discourse which undermines local initiative. Showing a similar attitude, a local Chhetria woman who had lived in India until her marriage, comparing development there with local development, said:

“Any kind of production is development... The difference is that things in India work but here unfortunately nothing works, probably because it is a backward place” (IN: 10/02/12).

This attitude was also prevalent in the school hostels where the explanation given for not keeping the washing and toilet facilities clean and in a state of repair was the “general state of Nepal” (FN: 09/05/12). However, as I noted, “things can move very fast when necessary”, as they did when Janakiram faced the threat of termination of CEW support (*ibid*).

In a comment reflecting this discourse of local incapacity, a Chhetria man from a nearby village doing some work on the school buildings said, as I left Mallagaon for a holiday:

“...when the people who show the way leave, we go to sleep and will be woken up only when they return” (FN: 06/12/11).

The concept that only externally initiated and funded, large-scale development is valid may fuel this discourse, perhaps originating with big-budget, showcase development agency projects and reinforced by members of the upper castes because such projects increase their status. These ideas, and that of local incapacity, relate to the development discourse of modernisation as played out at the local level (explored in earlier chapters); they also seem to contribute to the complacency I noted in Chapter 5.

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### CONTRIBUTING TO MISTRUST

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To what extent there was actual misuse of the community-based knitting programme fund is unclear. What is certain is the mistrust expressed by individuals about each other’s use of the funds. The backbiting involved is a common occurrence anywhere, but nonetheless indicates that the injection of, and the responsibility for, even small-scale development funds opens the way for corruption. It also demonstrates, through the mistrust resulting, how easily well-intentioned projects can have negative implications. The knitting programme did make positive contributions: the trainees’ enjoyment; their feeling of autonomy from learning a skill; and their later success in knitting. However, the experience strengthened my understanding that the value of any form of externally initiated and funded development programme (even if funded by the Nepal government), is questionable. Although political influences are understood to be the cause for breakdown of trust in Mallagaon (see Chapter 7), my own understanding is that externally funded development interventions are also to blame.

### SKILLS LEADING TO WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT AND INCLUSION

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Shivapriya's trainees missed sessions when work demanded it, brought small children with them and combined their attendance with mill visits. They seemed lacking (or not utilising) agency in the debate about extending the programme; they did not discuss this with Shivapriya and left before the meeting. However, Bhavani (the female tailor and a trainee on the programme) showed such agency when I spoke to her individually. She understood training in skills such as knitting to contribute to "change", empowering women to "go ahead" and "speak for themselves" which she considered the most important aspect of development. She understood such "change" to involve going elsewhere as teachers, enabled by having a skill. This understanding of development coincides with Vikram's of development and personal wellbeing, improved by '*out-knowledge*'. Bhavani has visited Mumbai, where her husband worked as a tailor; this doubtless widened her understanding of what can be gained outside the village. Meanwhile, being herself a tailor may have contributed to her understanding of the value of skills for women. She could also have been influenced by how Shivapriya's independence seems connected to her mobility-enabling skill (going elsewhere to teach knitting), as discussed below.

Bhavani, and probably other trainees, valued the knitting programme not merely for the potential income considered important by their men, but also because it facilitated change for women, in terms of speaking for themselves and being heard. Few men I spoke to mentioned improved women's rights as important for development; an exception was Vikram who spoke of the importance of "change" for women as well as for Dalits, and supported Yashoda's knitting training, just as he supported her tailoring business. However, its importance to him may in practice be for the potential financial benefit.

Shivapriya may understand the status her skill confers on her as important, taking it for granted she should sit on the bench while the trainees sat on the floor. This seemed to be because of the 'secular status' her skill and role as trainer gave her despite her gender, rather than because of the 'ritual status' of Chhetria 'superiority' over Dalits; she was happy to be in close physical proximity with the Dalit trainees when they joined her on the bench, and in the bazaar. Her wish that Mahesh and I tell everyone that she made the items she gifted us indicates the importance to her of the status knitting

confers on her, and/or suggests that she was motivated by the potential of economic advancement and resultant independence through the business opportunities her skill opened up. Like Vikram, Shivapriya's skill also gave her a sense of entitlement, shown in the confidence with which she argued for higher payment and in her ability to withstand the considerable pressure put on her to extend the programme.

Yashoda planned to sell knitted goods in the bazaar. In addition to the income, it may be the independence of having her own business which made knitting and tailoring important enough to her to withstand the negativity she encountered. It seemed important to her (as to Vikram) to be entitled to attempt to break caste-imposed, and in her case gender-imposed, boundaries. Also like Vikram, she may consider skills programmes important because they provide her with the 'symbolic resources' to attain 'secular status'; the tailoring programme she undertook enabled her to set up a bazaar-based business in a sector traditionally monopolised by a caste 'higher' than hers and the knitting programme enabled her (eventually) to teach a predominantly upper caste student body.

Bhavani, Shivapriya and Yashoda thus showed an understanding of skills as 'symbolic resources' used to gain 'secular status', their understood value extending beyond economic remuneration.

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#### 'SYMBOLIC RESOURCES', 'LINKING' SOCIAL CAPITAL AND CULTURAL CAPITAL

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The importance of foreign involvement to the Dalit knitting committee was suggested by the inauguration broadcast's specific mention of Mahesh's and my British nationality. Similarly, wondering what "England" had said about her work, rather than referring to CEW or to Mahesh and me, Yashoda (like Hari-Dai) emphasised the foreign country as donor, rather than the organisation or individuals. This may be because having such a connection raised her self esteem, making her, from the most marginalised group, feel more powerful. Although the knitting committee and Yashoda are relatively powerless in Mallagaon, they do have some power to use, as 'symbolic resources', the radio announcement, and talk about the 'linking' social capital available to them through foreign connections, to increase their standing in the community.

Meanwhile, the Dalit knitting committee took much trouble to make and present the certificates, suggesting their pride in being able to bestow on others, and their

recognition of the cultural and symbolic capital certificates contain, also recognised by the Brahman girls and their families in relation to marriage, and by Vikram and Sudam, the bazaar-based teashop owner. Had the committee taken this trouble to obtain more wool, the women could have practised their skill later.

These examples suggest that, as Dalits lacking power relative to Brahmans and Chhetrias, the knitting committee members may have valued the inauguration and farewell ceremonies and their power to provide certificates to others as ‘symbolic resources’ giving them opportunities to demonstrate their ability to bestow, hence increasing their status in situations in which they otherwise lack it owing to the caste hierarchy. Such status seemed more valued than the personal development, or even earning potential, of the recipients.

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### OPENING NEW SPACES FOR WOMEN

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Knitting in hand, Shivapriya seemed able to use the bazaar as a place of leisure:

“Shivapriya... and the shopkeeper [female] are both sitting in the shop knitting, various other women are inside [shopping] sitting on sacks of dry goods and the shopkeeper [male] is weighing out the fish. ... It is especially good to see women sitting relaxed in a Ramkuti bazaar shop” (FN: 28/03/12).

Shivapriya’s use of the bazaar was unusual amongst upper caste women. Two Brahman girls in their twenties, of a similar age to Shivapriya, told me that they go there only occasionally to buy essentials but never to wander or sit around (IN: 25/11/11). Even the (Brahman) midwife Chandrika who rents a room in the bazaar never sat anywhere outside her tiny courtyard, except the one day she joined me at the teashop, feeling able to because almost all the men were resting after festival celebrations (FN: 09/03/12). This indicates that, if she felt able to, she would use the bazaar as a place of leisure more often. As she observed, men come there to sit around, women only when there is work to do (IN: 10/05/12).

On the other hand, the women of the Dalit tailoring caste:

“...work in the bazaar tailoring and are relaxed around the place, with their small children and goats in tow” (FN: 28/01/12).

Whereas Dalit women could enjoy being in the bazaar, probably because their work justified their being there, the upper caste girls appeared constricted by their relative wealth and status.

Shivapriya, although upper caste, had a skill which occupied her while in the bazaar, apparently enabling her to feel comfortable in this male-dominated environment, giving her the power to use and enjoy spaces in ways not usually possible for an upper caste woman. This may also have been because, being no longer in her home environment, she could break the conventions of social engagement more easily than could locals, suggesting that the power and wellbeing her knitting gives her is context-specific.

Although qualified to teach, Shivapriya planned to start her own business, an option her knitting skills brought her. Like Vikram, Shivapriya understands self-employment as superior to being an employee; their skills bring them respect and freedom.

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### LIMITED OPPORTUNITIES

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Yashoda reacted with determined patience to male and upper caste unwillingness to employ her at Janakiram, to the negative comments about her business from men in the bazaar and to the apparently deliberate attempts to exclude her from the community-based knitting programme. She was resigned to things taking a long time yet persistent in following up about the teaching post with me. She seemed to understand that, as a Bhul woman (Mallagaon's most marginalised) things would inevitably be difficult for her and that putting herself in situations in which she might experience discrimination was worthwhile, and perhaps inevitable, in the process of attaining her overall goals. Aware that she may not get the post at Janakiram, she was nonetheless thankful for the knitting programme; her 'low' Dalit and gender status seemed to ensure that she appreciated any efforts to improve her situation, even as she realised these might fail.

Vikram's jealous reaction to my complimenting the knitting of another trainee was natural; there was only one part-time job available in knitting which appeared withheld. It relates to his understanding (see Chapter 9) that there should only be one person per community trained in any given skill. It also suggests that training groups in one skill is neither useful for income generation nor conducive to amicability. Vikram and Yashoda's doubts about her securing the trainer's post indicate that the poorer beneficiaries of development programmes experience and hence perceive limits (for example job availability) to the positive outcomes of development interventions such as the knitting programme.

## 10.5 CONCLUSION

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My discussion has shown that different people exercise power individually, in groups and institutionally in different ways at different times and in different social settings according to their gender, caste and age identities. As such, power is clearly relational and context-specific; for example the male Dalit group is relatively powerful in relation to the female Dalit group but relatively powerless in relation to upper caste males and the institutions they operate through. Meanwhile, the Chhetria trainer Shivapriya is powerful in relation to the Dalit female group but less so in relation to the male Dalit group. Younger male Dalits seem more powerful than older male Dalits, probably because of their greater formal and informal learning, their exposure to NGOs and Maoism. They have also been enabled to exercise power by the migration of the younger generations of the upper castes.

Taking these dynamics into account, I have explored how understandings of development and of wellbeing play out in practice. The relatively powerful Brahmans and male Dalits tend towards understandings of development which reinforce their place in the caste and/or gender hierarchy, entertaining ‘them and us’ notions which allow Dalits and/or females limited empowerment.

Upper caste desire for status is evident in understandings that tend to favour large-scale, external funding and projects less grounded in local needs, although this appears to be shifting to include recognition (at least amongst individuals from outside Mallagaon) that smaller scale, local development is beneficial. Being in authority positions, their ideas are reflected by the institutions through which they operate and can fuel certain prevalent development discourses, such as notions of local incapacity and of only externally sourced development being worthwhile.

The Dalits, powerless relative to upper caste males, also showed a desire for status through the ways in which they made use of, or spoke about, their relationships with foreigners, and gave weight to the certificates and the inauguration and closing ceremonies. Meanwhile, the Dalit women considered improved skills important for helping provide not only economic advancement but also empowerment. Relatively powerless gender-wise, Shivapriya’s skill brought her leisure opportunities and the ability to use the physical space of the bazaar in ways men, powerful in these contexts, took for granted. Taking Lukes’s (2005) classification, these are examples of the

‘power to’ be or to act which seems particularly valued by those most lacking in ‘power over’.

‘[P]ower over’ (ibid) manifested as: paternalism in the Brahmans’ attitude to the Dalit knitting committee and the trainees, which in some cases involved a failure to act and hence an abuse of power; domination in the Dalit committee’s attitude to Shivapriya; and authority in Shivapriya’s attitude to the committee and to the trainees.

That mistrust can result from well-intentioned development interventions is my own understanding, not expressed by community members. Although, with understandings grounded in personal experience, some of the Dalit recipients of the development intervention did recognise it as less beneficial than those in authority assumed, such negative experience was considered worthwhile in attaining desired goals. This suggests that wellbeing is understood as both a process and an outcome.

## CHAPTER 11 THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF UNDERSTANDINGS OF DEVELOPMENT AND OF WELLBEING

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In this chapter, I pick up the major themes emerging from the ‘embedded cases’ of the Mallagaon case study, explicitly relating them to my theoretical framework and noting throughout the mediating role of identity. I begin by exploring the interplay of institutional structures and human agency in the social construction of understandings of development and of wellbeing through discourses prevalent in Mallagaon. I then explore how these understandings are affected by the desire for status, achieved through the use of ‘symbolic resources’. After discussing the interrelationship between individuals’ understandings of development, and of personal and community wellbeing, I provide an overview of my findings, relating them to my subsidiary research questions.

### 11.1 THE INSTITUTIONAL FORMS OF SOCIAL ORGANISATION

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Taking 6’s (2012) ‘Hierarchy’, ‘Individualism’ and ‘Enclave’ forms of social organisation, I explore the ways in which these, by providing ‘guiding tropes that structure sense-making...’ (ibid: 132), shape understandings of development and of wellbeing in Mallagaon through institutionalised discourses.

#### THE ‘HIERARCHY’ INSTITUTIONAL FORM OF SOCIAL ORGANISATION

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Under ‘Hierarchy’, wellbeing is presented as ‘psychosocial prospering’ through the ‘appropriate and skilled performance of ascribed or achieved place in [the] social order’ (ibid:134). My analysis suggests that powerful members of the upper castes contribute to the construction of understandings of development and of wellbeing in Mallagaon by reinforcing discourses relating to this form of social organisation. This is because it is integral to their value systems and sense of wellbeing since, within Mallagaon, they benefit from being at the ‘top’ of the caste-based social hierarchy and from being patrons in the patron-client relationship.

#### THROUGH HINDUISM-DERIVED DISCOURSE

By considering the balance of power within the Hindu community of Mallagaon, I have been able to recognise how discourses of Hinduism are embedded in and find expression through social practice and ways of thinking. The basis of ‘Hierarchy’ is ‘[i]ndividual fulfilment of collectively recognized status [and] defined role’ (ibid). This

explains the importance placed, by those with vested interests in the hierarchical system, on the portrayal (in Chapter 5's articles) of Mallagaon as a united, thriving community, successfully developing because its disciplined and cooperative members carry out their caste-prescribed duty under exemplary leadership. This is achieved through the ways Chandrakantji is portrayed as this leader, and virtues like obedience, discipline and '*shramdaan*' are promoted as befitting his followers and beneficial to Janakiram's and hence Mallagaon's development. Parbatinathji (Chapter 5) quoted a Sanskrit '*shloka*', drawing on the authority of the language and of Hinduism to emphasise that the outcomes of discipline are worthiness, wealth, right action and ultimately wellbeing. Meanwhile, the 'Hierarchy' 'myth', involving the '[g]lory of [the] ordered cosmos and dangers of disorder' (ibid), explains the emphasis these authors put on social order, as ordained by '*sva-dharma*'.

The proponents of 'Hierarchy' reacted strongly when they perceived threats from relatively new alternative forms of social organisation, brought by globalisation processes and Maoism (see below). Thus Sachivji bemoaned the loss of a sense of duty in Mallagaon; Devi and Gyana regretted the loss of respect, trust and unity; and Devi and Hari-Dai reacted strongly against alcohol consumption and card-playing/gambling.

Other understandings of development and of wellbeing deriving from discourses of Hinduism also relate to 6's (2012) 'Hierarchy'. The articles concerning Janakiram's founder suggest that personal and community wellbeing, and successful development, are understood to depend not only on the inequitable practice of '*sva-dharma*' but also on the equitable practice of '*sadharana-dharma*'. This is achieved by portraying a man who, performing his duty with ascetic and ethical impartiality, brings social harmony (Das, 2012) and wellbeing to Mallagaon through the development of Janakiram as a religious endeavour, while living the life of a '*yogi*' in the Hindu tradition.

Various Hindu discourses lead to understandings of personal wellbeing which appear to relate to 'Subjective Well-Being' involving satisfaction and positive mood (Ryan and Deci, 2001), especially amongst those less affected by modernisation. These provide rare examples of understandings of personal wellbeing which did not relate to understandings of development. Chuggy and Hari-Dai's stated contentment and simple needs, while doubtless partly personality-related, seems derived from a '*sadharana-dharma*' discourse of asceticism. The importance to Chuggy of being able to serve guests is endorsed by Hinduism's emphasis on treating a guest like a god, a discourse

often repeated in Mallagaon. These understandings relate to the ‘Hierarchy’ emphasis on the ‘continuity of a great tradition’ (6, 2012:134). Meanwhile, ideas relating to the ‘Hierarchy’ belief in the irrelevance of individual assertion (6, 2012) are reflected in Hari-Dai’s acceptance and equanimity. These may in part be derived from Hinduism’s no ‘happiness without misery’ concept (Swami Nishpapananda, 2010:1-2), especially since he frequently referred to these polarities as inseparable. These examples suggest that happiness does not simply occur but is defined by culture and religion (White, 2013).

#### THROUGH DISCOURSES OF DEVELOPMENT AS MODERNISATION

Discourses of development as modernisation as manifested in Nepal, presenting development as something of ‘non-local origin’ (Pigg, 1993:48) and ‘foreign’ (Shakya, 2009:113) are also important to Mallagaon’s upper castes, helping them maintain their power-positions in the social hierarchy. This is demonstrated by Prithvirajji’s article “[Looking Back at the Achievements of Janakiram ...](#)” in which, aligning himself with such modernisation discourse, he gains a sense of prestige. Similarly, various Brahman Mallagaon leaders including Sachivji, Raghav Sir and DCC-Phularaji extolled large-scale, externally funded development projects which help confer status on them. Their ideas for community development and wellbeing may derive from development discourses in which a single external solution is considered capable of solving everything, which gained ground in the 1990s (Nyamwaya, 1997).

When questioned about development, those with less power over others (e.g. Chuggy and Vikram) often appeared to adopt such dominant development discourses, which express the interests of authority figures. Chuggy stated that a ‘*Multiple Campus*’ and salaried jobs must be good for Mallagaon’s development and showed admiration for the sedentary lifestyle of ‘*thulo maanche*’. Both he and Vikram revealed an understanding that anything big is necessarily good. Shanti spoke of the importance of infrastructure. Various community members claimed to have no skills. These understandings may derive from the discourses of authority figures, suggested by the same participants’ more grounded responses based on personal experience and generated when not talking directly about development. Chuggy considered school irrelevant, was well-contented with his simple, small-scale farming life, felt the benefits of his good health, and considered self-employment important for his personal wellbeing. Vikram was proud of the independence he had gained in running a small-scale business. Shanti noted that the road and electricity, only of use to the rich, are negative for Mallagaon. The very

individuals who claimed to have no skills made daily use of various highly specialised skills.

This section shows that the experience of development some Mallagaon members have causes them ‘to separate the social space of development activity from the social space of everyday life’ as Pigg (1993:53) noted about Nepalis more than two decades ago. This leads to their voicing ‘official’ development ideas at odds with understandings revealed through personal experience or when discussing wellbeing.

#### BY USING DISCOURSES TO SPECIFIC ENDS

Combining discourses of development as modernisation and discourses of wellbeing as fulfilment of ‘*sva-dharma*’, texts in Chapter 5 emphasise Janakiram’s status: its development under the leadership of a Phulara with a cooperative, disciplined and dutiful community behind him; its foreign-funded infrastructure; its famous alumni; and its international connections. This contributes to a specific discourse around the importance of education to development, whereby the fame and prestige of Janakiram in terms of its past success, its infrastructure and its connections are given more importance than the education it provides. This can be explained by the powerful upper castes’ desire to promote ‘Hierarchy’ as the ‘social good’ – i.e. anything a social group considers worthwhile (Gee, 2002) – presenting it as the means to achieve community wellbeing through the development of Janakiram as a centre of educational excellence.

Despite their vested interest in externally sourced development, upper castes controlling development interventions in Mallagaon promote self-sufficient, community-led, participatory development, including Professor Phulara in “*The Contribution of Janakiram High School towards Social Mobilisation*” and Sachivji in “*They would operate like a Chalise Ghatta*”. These ideas derive from NGOs working in Mallagaon and may be intended to counter Maoist discourse critical of Nepal’s dependency (e.g. Bhattarai, 2002 in Thapa, 2003). Professor Phulara’s article opens with a discourse of ‘remoteness and isolation’ apparently intended ‘to color the way specific development programs are represented’ in Nepal (Pigg, 1993:47). Used alongside discourses of dependency, the opening serves to emphasise the success of a local development initiative. Meanwhile, he and Trivediji (“*Mallagaon: A Memory*”) use development concepts which convey ‘Western’ ideas but actually have independent, indigenous origins (Bulloch, 2014). Both articles demonstrate the extent to which Janakiram’s development through local religious endeavour matches more recent, externally sourced

ideas of participatory community development, which stress the importance of local creativity and ownership (Chambers, 2007).

Sachivji's texts call upon Hindu discourses of wellbeing and duty to promote his ideas for development and to encourage social transformation: financial donations for Janakiram, commerce in the bazaar, involvement in the protection of local forests and the construction of a road. His article combines discourses of self-sufficient, sustainable development, possibly sourced from Shrestha and Dhakal's (2000) Mallagaon ropeway feasibility study, with arguments to gain support for the road. His argument, despite its 'bottom-up' development discourse, seems based on the assumption that the community can only develop with technical and material input from outside.

These are some of the many examples of expedient use of discourses to promote personal agendas, where 'local development actors master multiple development notions and use these for their own ends', 'manipulat...[ing] development for their own "projects"' (Hilhorst, 2003:100). The articles explored in Chapter 5 make use of a wide range of discourse techniques, for example (as illustrated above) 'heteroglossia' to bring different ideologies together (Luke, 2000). By combining various incompatible development discourses their authors promote the ideas they wish to promulgate, thereby maintaining their power to control development funding decisions and to shape other community members' opinions and preferences.

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#### THE 'ENCLAVE' AND 'INDIVIDUALISM' INSTITUTIONAL FORMS OF SOCIAL ORGANISATION

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The 'Enclave' form, brought to Mallagaon by Maoism, recognises wellbeing as the 'enactment of shared principles' based on a commitment to withstand pressure from the extant controlling and limiting social order (ibid). The 'Individualism' form prioritises material wealth and understands wellbeing to lie in the 'successful individual pursuit and achievement of personal objectives over the course of life', with 'individual effort and merit...rewarded' and 'individual assertion' considered important (ibid). Mallagaon has been exposed to 'Individualism' by development organisations including CEW and the DCC, and through globalisation and individuals' experience in urban, more modernised contexts. I now relate these forms of social organisation to the shift in the perceptions of some Mallagaon members that has occurred since I lived there 20 years ago.

## THROUGH ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT DISCOURSES

Through the 'Enclave' and 'Individualism' forms of social organisation, Mallagaon has been exposed to development discourses other than those explored under 'Hierarchy'. 20 years ago there appeared to be limited public discourses from which alternative viewpoints could be sourced, meaning that many in Mallagaon lacked exposure to the values and knowledge necessary to challenge the dominant discourses (Van Dijk, 2006). However, on my return for fieldwork, the situation had changed. Most noticeably, I found understandings that development equates to social inclusion and equality, especially amongst disadvantaged groups (e.g. male Dalits Vikram, Dinakar and Hari-Dai, and female Brahman Devi) who have been exposed to various external discourses such as those brought by Maoism and NGOs.

Vikram, believing that Maoists and local NGOs have contributed to Mallagaon's development, understands his personal wellbeing to lie in having achieved financial independence and in freedom from the oppressive caste and patron-client relationships. Dinakar is proud that his tailoring skill enabled him to break caste-imposed boundaries. Both have personal objectives based in the future, the meeting of which is important to them. Vikram and Keshab also derive personal wellbeing through their social work, enabled by NGO initiatives and Maoism, involving awareness-raising based on shared principles of empowerment and equality and very different from '*shramdaan*' which, initiated by upper caste community leaders, the Dalits identify with the 'Hierarchy' form of social organisation and therefore hold in low regard.

Devi's ideas for Mallagaon's wellbeing seem structured by the 'Hierarchy' form which, having 'community order' as its core value (6, 2012:139-140), is beneficial to her Brahman caste. Her ideas comprised a well ordered social system involving unity and respect for '*thulo maanche*' leaders, requiring vocational jobs to keep individuals occupied, untempted by alcohol and undiverted by political factionalism. However, her understanding of development, benefiting her as a woman, focused on gender equality especially in terms of education; her experience of it leading her to understand personal wellbeing as social mobility and status. These understandings seem enabled by the 'Individualism' and 'Enclave' forms, with core values 'liberty' and 'equality' respectively (6, 2012:139), to which she has been exposed through education, her experience outside Mallagaon and Maoism.

#### THROUGH 'OUT-KNOWLEDGE' AND THE 'PROJECT OF THE SELF'

Similar to Ereaut and Whiting's (2008:13) finding in the UK, personal wellbeing seems increasingly understood in Mallagaon in terms of 'the project of the self', involving 'self-responsibility', 'independence' 'skills' and 'economic success'. Dalits Vikram and Dinakar understand their learning experiences outside Mallagaon in terms of development while Bhavani considers vocational skills important for empowering women by providing opportunities for experience outside the community. Such experiences are valued by marginalised individuals for increasing their self-reliance and decreasing their inequality on return to Mallagaon, thus enabling them to gain personal wellbeing through their increased status and ability to reject the dominant 'Hierarchy'. Meanwhile, Brahman but female, Devi valued technical education for the greater gender equality and independence it has afforded her.

These ideas are encapsulated in a positive community discourse around '*out-knowledge*' which relates to Rao's (2010b) and Valentin's (2012) explorations of migration in terms of education and socio-economic mobility.

#### BECOMING 'ARTICULATE', REMAINING 'MUTED'

While awareness and equality were considered important by almost all Mallagaon Dalits in caste terms and by Dalit women in gender terms, only upper caste women living *outside* Mallagaon village referred to gender equality, despite Mallagaon's upper caste women being in some ways more marginalised than Dalit women relative to same-caste menfolk. This may be explained by: NGO programmes targeting the empowerment of marginalised groups (Geiser, 2005); the Maoist War's greater focus on caste than on gender (Sapkota, 2010); and the level of education of the women of all castes marrying into Mallagaon having been until recent generations limited (see Appendix 1). Meanwhile, Mallagaon's Dalit women, having to earn out of economic necessity, are less constrained by their domestic roles and hence have greater mobility and are on a more equal footing with men of their caste. This is illustrated by the contrast between their freedom to relax in Mallagaon bazaar and upper caste women's discomfort in being there unless for a specific purpose.

This means that in some contexts Mallagaon's upper caste women have less agency and voice than its Dalit women, explained by the latter's greater exposure to institutional forms of social organisation and the related alternative discourses relatively new to Mallagaon. Using Ardener's terms, in this context Dalit women are able to join in the

‘dominant communicative system[s]’ in the society, enabling them to be more ‘articulate’, whereas upper caste women remain more ‘muted’ (1975:22), as exemplified by the similar-in-age female Dalits’ ability to discuss their ideas of development (e.g. Bhavani and Yashoda) in contrast to upper castes’ lack of self-expression (e.g. Amala).

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### HUMAN AGENCY

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As a result of the increased choice, awareness and empowerment brought by the range of institutional forms of social organisation (6, 2012) and associated discourses now found in Mallagaon, individuals have increased ability and freedom to express and form new ideas and discourses, and to counter those disseminated by the dominant. The multiple institutionalised public discourses now found in Mallagaon are picked up and used, or rejected, by its members in various ways, revealing the part played by human agency in the social construction of understandings of development and of wellbeing. It also reveals the importance of agency to people’s sense of wellbeing (White, 2013).

### QUESTIONING THE ESTABLISHED ‘SOCIAL GOOD’

I now consider the ways in which Janakiram School, the road and large-scale agricultural projects, set up by those in authority as ‘socially recognizable and institutionally or culturally normed endeavour[s]’ (Gee, 2011:96-97) and hence as ‘social goods’ (Gee, 2002:ix), are increasingly questioned by less powerful community members.

Although many continued to reproduce the dominant discourse of Janakiram School’s excellence, there is no longer the ‘unconditional faith towards education or schooling’ that Parajuli (2008:32) found in Mallagaon between 1999 and 2004. This may be because: Maoist discourse questioned the existing system of formal education (Bhattarai, 2000 in Thapa, 2003); marginalised individuals have gained independence through education and work opportunities provided them by CEW and the DCC; and Maoism has brought them empowerment in terms of increased awareness and voice.

Vikram believes that Maoists and NGOs have contributed to development, while Keshab recognises CEW’s positive contribution to his personal wellbeing in terms of the increased opportunities afforded him. However, they and other marginalised community members such as Dinakar and Aakash openly criticised Janakiram and CEW. Their understandings of the negative part played by these institutions may be caused by: lack of employment for the qualified; the influential wealthy, especially

teachers, sending their children elsewhere for education; and CEW's failure to oversee its projects on the ground, leading to scholarships often going to the wealthy and caste segregation in the hostels. These factors have led to a new discourse in which Janakiram is portrayed as irrelevant and those who provide education as unfairly favouring the better off and excluding the poor. Social reproduction as negative for personal wellbeing was mostly, though not exclusively, an understanding held by the more marginalised, since they have grounded experience of its negative implications. Whereas in the early 1990s ideas that foreign aid had only helped the already privileged of Nepal and contributed to social reproduction were controversial (Pigg, 1992), in Mallagaon I found such understandings now prevalent and uncontroversial.

Perpetuating a discourse common in Nepal, Sachivji and others in authority-positions (like DCC-Phularaji) construed the road as essential for the successful development of the area. This was done through labelling metaphors (see Escobar, 1995; 1998), and by arguing that without a road no '*thulo maanche*' would come to help Mallagaon. While Hari-Dai's daughter, Kalyani, reproduced this dominant discourse (IN: 01/11/11), Hari-Dai and Shanti criticised the road, having seen that it helps only the wealthy, and deprives people of jobs. Meanwhile, Hari-Dai's wife was critical of the mill (DCC-established and widely considered an externally funded development project benefiting all women) because her experience had shown her that the poor cannot afford to use it (IN: 07/03/12).

Sachivji and DCC-Phularaji also favour agricultural, cash-generating development projects involving herb and fruit production and major investment. The latter saw more financial reward in manufacturing and distributing products than in exporting raw materials to India. These ideas seem derived from current Nepali political discourse about agriculture (e.g. Bhattarai in Shakya, 2009), although the ropeway feasibility study for Mallagaon (Shrestha and Dhakal, 2000) may have impacted local discourses more.

However, other community members, their daily lives directly affected by agriculture, had more grounded ideas born out of personal experience. For Mallagaon's wellbeing, Shanti made specific suggestions: an agricultural office with a custodian who would oversee farmers and teach new methods; and vocational agricultural industries such as bee-keeping. Meanwhile, Chuggy considered irrigation and small-scale agricultural production of prime importance for development and personal wellbeing.

## SHIFTING IDEAS ABOUT LOCAL SELF-EMPLOYMENT AND SKILLS

Discourses of development as needing to be brought in from elsewhere and as lacking at the local level (explored by Pigg, 1992; 1993 and Shrestha 1995; 1998) continue to fuel an understanding of development (expressed by Chuggy) as something local people neither identify with nor take ownership of. Individuals like Aditi, Shanti and Devi dichotomised rural and urban life, and the local skilled stonemason stated that Mallagaon would sleep until my return. Others, failing to recognise their indigenous skills as valid, considered themselves “ignorant”, living like “animals” and belonging to a “backward place”. Hari-Dai wanted “employment” for his son, despite the latter’s skilled jobs in Mallagaon.

However, I found new discourses and understandings which value local self-employment using ‘new’ skills as much as salaried employment elsewhere. Shivapriya said she would prefer to establish a knitting business than teach, while Vikram and Yashoda recognised ‘new’ skills in terms of both development and personal wellbeing. Born out of personal experience, Vikram’s *‘life-skill class’* discourse, whose concept (if not terminology) was shared by others, shows the influence of several factors. These include: his success as a recipient of targeted programmes, which have provided him with skills and employment; the failure of various CSIDB-provided skills training courses in enabling people to secure an income; and the high number of qualified yet unemployed local teachers. These factors seem to have contributed to a local understanding that, as a result of having *‘life-skill class’* skills, positive work opportunities are to be had through self-employment in the informal sector rather than in formal employment.

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The forms of social organisation explored in Section 11.1 provide the means whereby people make sense of their lives and hence achieve wellbeing (6, 2012). The Phularas being Mallagaon’s most powerful, the dominant, long-embedded Mallagaon discourses (including development as modernisation, Janakiram as development and wellbeing, and wellbeing as *‘sva-dharma’*) favour them, leading to their understanding that wellbeing resides in the ‘Hierarchy’ institutional form of social organisation and development as that which promotes it. Marginalised individuals often adopt new, alternative discourses residing in the ‘Enclave’ and ‘Individualism’ forms of social organisation relatively new to the community. Introduced by Maoism and globalisation

processes including development organisations involved in Mallagaon, and through individuals' experience outside the community, they facilitate social change and tend to be taken up by those who benefit least from the 'Hierarchy' form.

Analysing my data using 6's (2012) forms of social organisation has enabled me to explore how understandings in Mallagaon are structured by forces, especially institutionalised discourses, external to individuals. Although I have argued that individuals showed agency in adopting or rejecting these various discourses, 6's approach has been less useful in exploring understandings caused by processes occurring at the personal level. For this reason, I now turn to Zittoun *et al's* (2003) 'symbolic resources'. Their approach helps to explain which of 6's (2012) institutionalised forms of social organisations and concomitant discourses my research participants take up or reject, by enabling me to consider how the desire for status affects their understandings of development and of wellbeing.

### 11.2 'SYMBOLIC RESOURCES' AND 'SOCIAL REPRESENTATIONS'

I now build on Zittoun *et al's* (2003) exploration of people's agency in putting to practical use, as 'symbolic resources', things accessible to them, a process which may occur through 'narrative, identity, actions or skills' (ibid: 417), in order to challenge or reinforce 'social representations'. The latter, being discourse-based societal structures, may sometimes constrain this process (ibid). I use this phenomenon as a means to explore understandings of development and of wellbeing, arguing that some individuals, especially the marginalised, understand development as that which enables their use of 'symbolic resources' and wellbeing as the personal status this use affords them. Other individuals, especially the more powerful, sometimes understand their wellbeing to be reduced as a result of the increased opportunities for the marginalised to challenge 'social representations'.

Within this exploration, I also consider Sen's (1984; 1993; 1999) ideas about freedom and Bourdieu's symbolic and cultural capital (2010 [1984]; 2002 [1986]; 1991) in exploring which 'symbolic resources' are important to people and why. Throughout my argument I follow Stevenson's (1954) classification of status as 'secular' and/or 'ritual', apposite in research into a mixed-caste community and enabling me to consider the extent to which identities affect which 'symbolic resources' and 'social representations' are valued.

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## REINFORCING ‘SOCIAL REPRESENTATIONS’ AND ‘RITUAL STATUS’ WITH ‘SYMBOLIC RESOURCES’

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The socially embedded practices and values of patron-client relationships (Scott, 1972) and of Hinduism as ‘*sva-dharma*’ (Das, 2012) can be considered ‘social representations’, defined as ‘a collective phenomenon pertaining to a community which is co-constructed by individuals in their daily talk and action’ (Wagner *et al*, 1999). They are valued as extant social structures (Zittoun *et al*, 2003), especially by Mallagaon Brahmins. This includes the local culture and traditions Sachivji considers important for both community and personal wellbeing, like the celebration of festivals. These ‘social representations’ encapsulate qualities considered necessary for the community’s development and wellbeing, including cooperation, unity, discipline, good leadership, respect for ‘*thulo maanche*’, and dutifulness. These aspects of an idealised community, which Phularas (e.g. Sachivji, Gyana and Devi) discussed as qualities lost to Mallagaon through political factionalism, relate to the trust and reciprocity of social capital (Putnam, 2000), indicated at the community level by cooperation, social cohesion and members working together for mutual benefit (Sixsmith and Boneham, 2012). They are valued by upper caste members for the personal wellbeing resulting from the part they play in ensuring their place in the hierarchical, caste-based community structure. However, members of the lower castes rarely referred to these as aspects of community wellbeing, probably because they felt disadvantaged by the ‘social representations’ of the traditional caste and patron-client systems. These systems, reliant on inequitable relationships, form the framework for values that denied their ancestors access to ‘symbolic resources’. Instead Dalits (e.g. Vikram) understand both community wellbeing and development to lie in new ‘social representations’ which value awareness, empowerment and rights for marginalised groups, and enable Dalits access to ‘symbolic resources’.

The texts explored in Chapter 5, emphasising aspects of development and of community wellbeing necessary for the survival of the traditional society, can be considered ‘symbolic resources’, used by the upper castes to reinforce surviving social practices for resisting social transformation. As Gee (1996:132) observed, people’s positions in discourses are ‘standpoints taken up... in... relation to other... opposing discourses’. The ‘social representations’ of the threatened hierarchical system and the ‘symbolic resources’ reinstating it aid the personal wellbeing of the upper castes by reinforcing their ‘ritual status’. Sachivji’s poem “*Mallagaon*” reveals the personal wellbeing he

derives from being a descendant of practitioners of ayurvedic medicine (a Brahmanical role) who safeguarded Mallagaon's health. Meanwhile, his actions as priest and leader reveal his pleasure in reinforcing Mallagaon's 'social representations' by following his caste duties. Many of the Brahmans show an understanding (reflected in Chapter 5's texts) that group and/or personal 'ritual status' comes from meritorious deeds like building schools.

Chuggy's pride in his Brahman blood suggests that he transforms the illegitimate birth of his ancestor into a 'symbolic resource', gaining personal wellbeing through the 'ritual status' he derives from it. His cousin's embarrassed caginess about the same connection suggests that the social transformation occurring in Mallagaon is changing the outlook of younger Chhetrias.

The Dalits I spoke to found little positive about the dominant social system, although an elderly Dalit woman regretted the loss of protection from the Phularas, a form of protection Scott (1972) noted 'clients' can have in the patron-client relationship. Meanwhile, a young Dalit man missed the past cooperation in Mallagaon. However, Dalits rarely shared the Phulara appreciation of religious festivals and of Phulara ancestors' good deeds.

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#### USING 'SYMBOLIC RESOURCES' FOR 'SECULAR STATUS', FREEDOM AND POWER

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Valued as means towards social transformation, 'symbolic resources' threaten the status of the powerful upper castes, but improve that of the lower castes; marginalised individuals, especially but not exclusively younger Mallagaon Dalits, value 'symbolic resources' for affording them 'secular status' and enabling them to challenge the 'ritual status' of the upper castes.

#### 'SYMBOLIC RESOURCES' FOR 'EXTERNAL' EFFECT

Despite the power of Mallagaon's dominant 'social representations' to limit people's access to 'symbolic resources' by shaping their identities and actions, I found individuals using their skills as 'symbolic resources' in pragmatic and proactive ways to recreate themselves in the positions they aspire to. For example: Dinakar's tailoring skill, giving him hitherto denied access to an upper caste home; Vikram's Mallagaon village-based general store, with which he challenges caste-imposed restrictions; Vikram's bazaar-based business, liberating him from the patron-client ties that

traditionally bind his clan; and Yashoda's determined pursuit of a tailoring and knitting career, bringing her status despite odds against her.

Hari-Dai gains 'secular status' and hence personal wellbeing from his informal learning. His showing me his books and discussing their contents in public places and his frequent use of English and Hindi are examples of 'cultural thing[s]' (Zittoun *et al*, 2003:418) used as 'symbolic resources' being drawn upon 'with certain motivations, a desired use, for which the resources themselves are creatively elaborated' (ibid:437). Hari-Dai's use of them is perhaps intended to cause others to attribute greater status to him by relocating him as knowledgeable and self-taught from the 'ignorant' and uneducated positions often attributed to his Dalit caste.

Until recently excluded from formal organisations, civic participation seems particularly important to Dalits and women. Newer development institutions enable Dalit participation, valued by younger males (e.g. Dinakar and Vikram), who use their identities as individuals involved in community development organisations as 'symbolic resources' bringing them 'secular status'. Meanwhile, Devi understands development in terms of the greater gender equality which enabled her to gain her hospital-based position, which contributes to her personal wellbeing by providing her opportunities to bestow on others.

Similarly, Vikram's and Dinakar's identities as social workers are 'symbolic resources' which enable them to seize leadership and 'bestowing' roles usually monopolised by the upper castes. Vikram recognises development in terms of the awareness, empowerment and rights which enable him to do so, and derives personal wellbeing by becoming a form of patron through his social work, giving to instead of receiving from Mallagaon. Whereas Dalits like Hari-Dai, who have benefited from patron-client relationships, consider their personal wellbeing enhanced by the reciprocity Scott (1972) noted in such relationships, younger Dalits derive personal wellbeing from eschewing them.

These examples illustrate the use of 'symbolic resources' for 'external' effect (Zittoun *et al*, 2003) and the '*derivative* importance of freedom' (Sen, 1999:292) and of 'entitlement' (ibid: 162) (emphasis in original) to Mallagaon's marginalised Dalits and women, usually of the younger generations, in enabling them to achieve valued outcomes of personal benefit, and contribute to social change. Hence they cherish livelihoods not only in economic terms but also as resources for making life meaningful (Gough *et al*, 2007).

Some upper caste males rued these social changes, perhaps because they diminish their personal wellbeing by threatening the embedded ‘social representations’ in which they are powerful relative to Dalits and women of all castes. Parbatinathji’s and Sachivji’s texts, and many Mallagaon Brahmans’ verbal opinions, reveal that they consider it negative for Mallagaon’s wellbeing that people fail to carry out their responsibilities to the community. Through not acknowledging, for example, Vikram’s and Dinakar’s social welfare work for Mallagaon, they appear to credit as ‘social contribution’ only good deeds prescribed by traditional patron-client or ‘*sva-dharma*’ rules. Their negative reactions were sometimes accompanied by bewilderment; both Devi and an elderly Brahman woman living in Mallagaon were distressed that everyone now considered him or herself “big”. Meanwhile, DCC-Phularaji regretted the loss of cooperation between the upper and Dalit castes in terms of patron-client relationships. Since all three claimed to value equality, their distress may not have been caused by the loss of their traditional ‘superior’ status but by the perceived undermining of their caste’s benign patronage and positive contribution to community development.

Sen’s observation that freedom involves both the ‘*processes* that allow freedom of actions and decisions, and the actual *opportunities* that people have, given their personal and social circumstances’ (1993:17) (emphasis in original) is relevant. Mallagaon’s Dalits understand development to lie in social change processes (brought by Maoism, NGOs and education) which lead to greater caste equality, and hence to opportunities for adapting to social change by using ‘symbolic resources’ to attain status and hence personal wellbeing in ways explored above. However, the caste hierarchy and patriarchal nature of Mallagaon form ‘social representations’ which, by structuring people’s identities and related actions, constrain their access to ‘symbolic resource’ use (Zittoun *et al* 2003). Those marginalised by these social structures, usually Dalits and women, considered their wellbeing sometimes reduced by lack of opportunity for ‘symbolic resource’ use available to the more powerful. Yashoda believed (despite reassurances) that her caste and gender status would hinder her appointment as knitting trainer.

#### ‘SYMBOLIC RESOURCES’ FOR ‘INTERNAL’ EFFECT

I found various individuals using talk as a ‘symbolic resource’ for ‘internal’ effect, enabling them to regulate their emotions and change their own representations of their lives, by enhancing their sense of their own status, and hence their personal wellbeing. For example: Vikram’s discussions about his desire, despite the success of his existing

business, to do more acting in social-awareness plays, open a bazaar-based teashop, and migrate to enable his son to have a better education; Dinakar's dream of his son becoming a medical doctor able to enter upper caste homes; Chuggy's wife's animated discussion about her children and the possibility of her emigration to be with them; and Devi's discussion about her idea of contributing her salary to road construction.

These examples of '*well-being freedom*' (Sen, 1984:201) illustrate the '*intrinsic importance of freedom*' to individuals (Sen, 1999:292) (emphasis in original). These individuals value choice, opportunities not necessarily pursued and their sense of entitlement to dream of alternative futures and/or roles in community development formerly denied them. The examples also suggest that sometimes individuals use 'symbolic resources' without full awareness or conscious intent (Zittoun *et al*, 2003).

#### COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT RELATED USES OF 'SYMBOLIC RESOURCES'

Although only Basant (who is non-local) directly stated the importance of money for personal wellbeing, it has pragmatic and symbolic value for members of all Mallagaon's groups. Prithvirajji's and Sachivji's texts' detailed listing of donors and donations and the positive reputation they suggest that donors can secure is arguably a practical use of a 'symbolic resource' to secure further funds for Janakiram. Sachivji and other Brahman community leaders may never secure the large-scale development infrastructure and projects involving major funding (in education, transportation, tourism, irrigation and drinking water) that they desire. They may nonetheless gain 'secular status' (and thereby personal wellbeing) by portraying themselves (hence using their identities as 'symbolic resources') as authoritative enough to understand and lobby for such projects for Mallagaon.

Other community development related uses of 'symbolic resources' were: the Dalit knitting committee's wielding of power over the Chhetria trainer Shivapriya and its emphasis on foreign involvement in the project; and Hari-Dai and Yashoda synechdocally naming foreign countries as funders. The latter examples are comparable to Sachivji's poem naming prestigious donors to, and Prithvirajji's article naming famous graduates of, Janakiram and the latter's emphasis on his connections with foreigners. However, as Brahmans access to these assets is a social given traditionally denied to the Dalits and therefore may be better understood as 'linking' social capital. However, in Hari-Dai's and Yashoda's cases access to the connections, being newer and therefore less permanent, may be better understood in terms of 'symbolic resources'.

The importance to these Mallagaon Dalits of foreign involvement suggests that they value new forms of patron-client relationship as a resource even as they reject Brahman patronage, perhaps because the new overseas patrons do not stigmatise them for their caste as the traditional Brahman patrons do/did.

Shivapriya, the knitting trainer, powerful as a Chhetria amidst Dalit trainees but less powerful as a woman amidst Mallagaon's men, apparently values the act of knitting, (given credibility through her role as knitting trainer in the community run development intervention), as a 'symbolic resource' empowering her to use the social space of the bazaar for leisure as normally only men feel able to.

These examples demonstrate the ways in which 'development projects provide symbolic resources in the local [power] competition', with 'signs and symbols of power and status provided at the "interface" between projects and communities' (Mosse, 1997:276).

#### 'SYMBOLIC RESOURCES' FOR SYMBOLIC AND CULTURAL CAPITAL

I argue here that the means whereby cultural and symbolic capital can be attained are valued as 'symbolic resources'. As Bourdieu (2002 [1986]) observed, school certificates can provide individuals with symbolic capital autonomous from the inherited cultural capital they may or may not have. Mallagaon's young Phulara girls and their families openly disregard the BEd certificate as proof of skills gained and as means of securing a teaching job, but openly value its potential in helping procure wealthier, urban-dwelling husbands. They thus value the means (i.e. their ability to study at bachelor level) whereby they can gain the symbolic capital of the certificate as 'a symbolic resource', enabling them to maintain their apex position in the social hierarchy. Mallagaon's past abuse of CEW's selection policy can be understood as a 'symbolic resource' used to the same end; by providing scholarships to the already relatively privileged, the upper castes helped ensure that the symbolic capital contained in certificates maintained its value through scarcity and social reproduction (ibid). Meanwhile, marginalised individuals valued school certificates despite finding formal education irrelevant; Vikram's very mention of his intention to get the SLC certificate is a 'symbolic resource' to increase his 'secular status'. Another significant 'symbolic resource' (also leading to increased status) is the ability to bestow that the Dalit knitting committee demonstrated by taking trouble over providing certificates for the knitting trainees.

Vikram, revealing that he values ‘the domestic transmission of cultural capital’ (Bourdieu, 2002:282 [1986]) in achieving ‘secular status’, also gained personal wellbeing by using his economic independence as a ‘symbolic resource’ by discussing it as sufficient to provide his son with pre-school education. Perhaps as a consequence of Dalits beginning to access cultural capital, Mallagaon’s wealthy now send their children elsewhere for education, an action which I consider a ‘symbolic resource’ used to reinforce a ‘social representation’ that favours them; by ‘step[ping] up their investments... [they] maintain the relative scarcity of their qualifications and, consequently, their position in the class [or caste] structure’ (Bourdieu, 2010 [1984]). Devi, although satisfied for herself by her local midwifery qualification, plans to educate her daughter in Kathmandu to gain a nursing qualification. Meanwhile, the less privileged (e.g. Vikram and Shanti) dream of sending their children away for further education.

This discussion has revealed how important cultural and symbolic capital are in understandings of personal wellbeing amongst individuals in Mallagaon, with ‘symbolic resources’ valued as means to attain or retain such capital and hence ‘secular status’. It also illustrates that, while formal schooling can help transform society through the social mobility it affords, it may also reproduce societal inequalities (Rao, 2010a), helping explain apparently ambivalent and contradictory understandings of formal education’s worth as an aspect of development.

The physical institution of Janakiram and its history were also used as ‘symbolic resources’ to reinforce the status-enhancing ‘social representation’ of Phulara contributions to Mallagaon’s development. Janakiram’s prestigious buildings, its foreign connections and its famous graduates were presented in Prithvirajji’s and Sachivji’s texts, and stated by many individuals across the castes from both within and without Mallagaon. Mallagaon’s resultant prestige as a centre of educational excellence throughout Far West Nepal is important to its members, and has meant that Janakiram attracts good teachers and was able to start ‘*campus*’-level education, which in turn contributes to the understood value of Janakiram in terms of both Mallagaon’s development and wellbeing.

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In this section I explored the use of ‘symbolic resources’ to secure ‘ritual’ and/or ‘secular status’ to ‘external’ or ‘internal’ effect, through reinforcing or challenging

‘social representations’. The discussion has illustrated that there are increasing opportunities for individuals in Mallagaon to exercise agency in their choice and use of ‘symbolic resources’, hence contributing to the co-construction of understandings of development and of wellbeing. It has also revealed the role of identity in mediating these understandings.

#### 11.4 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN UNDERSTANDINGS OF DEVELOPMENT AND OF WELLBEING

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##### BEYOND THE ‘WEB OF WELLNESS’ APPROACH

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I began by considering Prilleltensky and Prilleltensky’s ‘web of wellness’ (2006; 2012) approach, with its interdependent ‘site’, ‘sign’, ‘source’ and ‘strategy’ categories, the best means of conceptualising the relationship between understandings of development and of wellbeing of individuals in Mallagaon. I then rejected it for not reflecting the complexities I found, probably because the authors’ are discussing policy rather than exploring lived realities. It was usually impossible to attempt to completely separate out understandings of development and of wellbeing into the authors’ categories.

Nonetheless, initially applying the approach, I found an emerging pattern; individuals in Mallagaon tend to understand development as that which enables their personal wellbeing. For example, Devi’s personal wellbeing (‘site’) is reflected in her being needed and in a position to bestow (‘sign’). This derives from her social status as a *‘thulo maanche’* (‘source’) which is promoted by greater gender equality, especially in terms of formal education (‘strategy’). Devi’s understandings of the ‘sign’ and ‘source’ relate to personal wellbeing, but the ‘strategy’ relates to development. As this example indicates, her understandings of wellbeing and development are interrelated; without the success of the development ‘strategy’, Devi’s personal wellbeing could not be met.

Often, I found that personal wellbeing is understood as concomitant with development, and community wellbeing as something distinct from development. The exceptions are when individuals identify closely enough with Mallagaon for their understandings of its wellbeing to overlap with their understandings of their personal wellbeing as status. Hence the understood relationship between development and wellbeing has to do with the identity individuals confer on Mallagaon, and how they position themselves in relation to it.

## IDENTIFYING THE COMMUNITY

Devi's and Hari-Dai's understandings of development as related to personal but not community wellbeing suggest that their means of identifying the Mallagaon community depends upon an exclusive construction of 'otherness' (Gray, 2002). Relatively powerful, they tend to polarise communities within Mallagaon. Devi understands development as greater gender equality, especially in terms of education, while her personal wellbeing resides in the social mobility and status her education has afforded her. She lives elsewhere but identifies with the educated upper caste of her natal community, whose wellbeing she thinks white-collar jobs elsewhere would improve. Meanwhile, she believes Mallagaon's wellbeing could be achieved through provision of local vocational livelihoods, and improved farming opportunities for the unemployed, primarily lower caste Mallagaon group she cannot identify with. Hari-Dai understands development as greater Dalit equality, and personal wellbeing in terms of the new employment (non-local and not caste-based) opportunities this greater equality affords his son Roshan. Roshan being well-educated means Hari-Dai's aspirations for this son's wellbeing (and hence his own) differ from his understandings of community wellbeing, for which he advocated vocational jobs based on 'new skills'.

Some of Chuggy and Vikram's understandings (those grounded in personal experience) show overlapping understandings of development, and of personal wellbeing and community wellbeing and suggest that they think of community in terms of its 'core' meaning, occupation and/or activity (Gray, 2002). Hence, Chuggy understands development to lie in agricultural production and irrigation, community wellbeing in opportunities for self-employment through agriculture, and personal wellbeing in being a self-employed farmer with land, livestock and sufficient food for oneself and guests. Vikram believes that Maoism and NGOs have contributed to development, and that community wellbeing is enhanced by the awareness, empowerment and rights for marginalised groups brought by these institutions. Meanwhile he recognises his personal wellbeing as based on the ability these aspects of development have given him to be an independent businessman in Mallagaon.

Sachivji's understanding of community seems premised on the concept that the community's quintessence is its shared values (Kempny, 2002) based on concepts of '*sva-dharma*'. He believes local development succeeded in the past because individuals performed caste-prescribed roles, behaving in ways he considers integral to both community and personal wellbeing, perhaps because his own wellbeing was thus

increased. However, his understanding that the community is a social entity based around cooperation and unity of action neglects domineering hierarchies, inequality and discrimination (Carney *et al.*, 2007) and was therefore rarely shared by Mallagaon's under-privileged.

However, the relationship between people's understandings of development and of wellbeing is not as static as this discussion suggests; individuals' multiple, shifting identities mediate their multiple, shifting ideas of development and of wellbeing. Sometimes they felt they belonged to the community they thought of when discussing it, sometimes not. Shanti, identifying with Mallagaon's poor, understands development as small-scale local production of goods, and personal and community wellbeing to lie in local training in vocational skills. However, when identifying with the wealthier, more powerful educated, she discounts the local, believing development best if sourced from elsewhere, and gaining personal wellbeing through her 'secular status' as a teacher. The wealthy upper castes, concerned with their 'ritual status' in Mallagaon, consider education, represented by Janakiram, integral to local development, to their personal wellbeing and to community wellbeing. Yet, when concerned with their 'secular status', they understand personal wellbeing to lie in socio-economic mobility and their ability to send their children elsewhere for education.

As this section has revealed, understandings of development and of wellbeing depend not only on which of people's multiple identities are uppermost but also on how they identify the community and themselves in relation to it.

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### 11.5 RELATING TO MY RESEARCH QUESTIONS

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In this section, I return to my research questions, relating the findings discussed in this chapter to them.

#### ***What understandings of development are dominant in Mallagaon?***

I found understandings of development which emphasise: the satisfaction of needs such as food security [through a concern for agriculture and irrigation] and education (Copestake, 2008); and social justice in terms of 'equity of esteem and opportunity', involving recognition of the negative impact of 'persistent inequality, racial-class hierarchy and social exclusion' (ibid: 579-580). Marginalised community members seem to have been empowered to hold such understandings by NGOs, Maoism and experience as migrants. There has been a particularly significant increase in

understandings of development as social justice; arguably this is largely because such development enables marginalised individuals to use ‘symbolic’ resources to attain ‘secular status’ and hence change Mallagaon’s dominant ‘social representations’ which disadvantage them.

I also found an emphasis on ‘community solidarity’, involving ‘local, vernacular and religious views’ (ibid) especially derived from Hinduism and relating to the Phulara clan’s past educational and medical contributions to the community. These are largely promoted by the upper castes as means to maintain their power-position and ‘ritual status’ in Mallagaon’s hierarchical systems and used in conjunction with understandings derived from discourses of sustainable and/or participatory development to promote certain ends.

Owing to the social transformation that has occurred in the last two decades, and perhaps also because of the community-led development of Janakiram through religiously inspired endeavour, understandings derived from discourses of modernisation are less dominant in Mallagaon than Pigg (1992; 1993) found them to be in Nepal in the early 1990s. Nonetheless, local perceptions of development continue to be influenced by understandings focusing on externally sourced aid, undermining local endeavour. These understandings are promoted by upper-caste discourses because they help maintain the ‘Hierarchy’ form of social organisation which favours and brings status to the upper castes. The emphasis I found on the pursuit of private material self-interest also relates to this development paradigm (Copestake, 2008).

These development understandings, dominant in Mallagaon, relate to Copestake’s discursive positions: ‘Needs first’, ‘Rights first’, ‘Local first’ and ‘Income first’ (2008:579).

***How do individuals and groups within Mallagaon understand personal and community wellbeing?***

As Copestake observes, the discursive positions referred to above reflect ‘contrasting and partial views of wellbeing’ (2008:579). Similarly, my participants’ understandings of development are reflected in their understandings of wellbeing. The latter can be summarised using White’s (2010:160) four-part definition. The value invested in ‘Doing well’ is evident in the increasingly individualistic pursuit of material welfare and better employment opportunities. The importance placed on ‘Doing good’ is seen

in terms of the values shared by groups within Mallagaon relating to how society should be, including: a united community based on caste and patron-client systems; social transformation through increased awareness and empowerment of the marginalised; the fulfilment of duty and responsibility; and the importance to people of civic participation through being able to contribute to their community. The weight attached to 'Feeling well', in terms of feeling comfortable in society, is shown in the emphasis placed on feeling trust and being valued, and on having social networks to call upon. Finally, the importance of 'Feeling good', relating to personal perceptions and sense of satisfaction (ibid), is apparent in the understandings of acceptance and equanimity derived from Hinduism and in the anxieties engendered by social comparison. I also found it implicit in the value placed on 'secular' and/or 'ritual status', and on the ability to exercise agency.

The importance of status in understandings of wellbeing suggests the irrelevance of thinking in terms of eudaimonic or hedonic wellbeing, the former concerning engagement with life, fulfilment of potential (Shah and Peck, 2005) and how well a person functions (Ryan and Deci, 2001); the latter concerning pleasure attainment and pain avoidance (ibid). The value Phularas place on their paternalistic benevolence in Mallagaon and their meritorious development of Janakiram suggests a eudaimonic understanding of wellbeing, with happiness realised through virtuous activity (Ryan and Deci, 2001). However, hedonic wellbeing aspects, involving the presence of positive mood, and the absence of negative mood (ibid:144), may also be involved, as suggested by the value invested in using 'symbolic resources' for 'secular' and/or 'ritual status'.

Meanwhile, Hari-Dai's acceptance and positive mood, resulting from his recognition that there can be no happiness without sadness, suggests hedonic wellbeing, yet the effort required in attaining such acceptance suggests a eudaimonic understanding of wellbeing. The pleasure the Dalits Vikram and Dinakar gain through conducting social welfare activity suggests eudaimonic altruism, but may be owing to the hedonic wellbeing derived from the 'secular status' and 'social wellbeing' that the use of 'symbolic resources' in contributing to society affords them. Vikram's and Devi's striving to better themselves and to realise their own and their children's full potential may suggest a eudaimonic understanding in terms of Psychological Well-Being (Ryff, 1995 in Ryan and Deci, 2001) but seems also connected to a hedonic wish to maximise their families' 'secular status' and, in doing so, challenge the constraints put on them by

Mallagaon's 'social representations' which marginalise them (Vikram as a Dalit, Devi as a woman).

Apart from the understandings contained in White's (2010) wellbeing definition 'Feeling Good', explored above, there was little to distinguish between my research participants' understandings of personal wellbeing and of community wellbeing. Both were understood to include White's (ibid) material, social and human elements, with wellbeing more commonly understood as a multi-dimensional, relational, context-specific process [as well as outcome] existing in collective, culturally defined values rather than in the individualistic terms of psychology (White, 2010; 2013).

***How do understandings of development and of wellbeing in Mallagaon interrelate?***

In most cases, individuals in Mallagaon understand development as concomitant with personal wellbeing as status. For example, Vikram understands empowerment, equality and rights as aspects of development because these allow him to train in skills and set up a business, giving him the independence and 'secular status' central to his personal wellbeing.

Whether or not development is understood as concomitant with community wellbeing as well as personal wellbeing depends upon how people identify Mallagaon, and upon their individual and group identities in relation to it. Usually, community wellbeing is considered congruent with personal wellbeing and with development by those who feel they belong to the community (i.e. the Mallagaon group they think of as the 'Mallagaon community') whose wellbeing they are discussing at the time. However, they separate development and personal wellbeing from community wellbeing if they do not feel they belong to the community under discussion. In the latter cases, community wellbeing is understood in impersonal terms. Sometimes, however, the more powerful had ideas for community development which relate to their personal wellbeing. This may not be because they consider themselves part of the community which would benefit from the development concerned but because of the personal status gained through the realisation of such ideas. An example is the 'secular status' Sachivji accrues through the externally funded, large-scale development projects he advocates for the community.

***How are understandings of development and of wellbeing socially constructed in Mallagaon?***

Taking 6's (2012) exploration of the 'institutional form[s] of social organization' and how these enable people to make sense of their social world, I have found that understandings of development and of wellbeing in Mallagaon are largely shaped by the desire to reinforce or resist 6's (2012) 'Hierarchy', 'Individualism' and 'Enclave' forms of social organisation.

These institutional forms of social organisation both lead to and are promoted by various discourses either embedded in Mallagaon or more recently introduced. Individuals showed increasing agency in forming their own opinions and counter-discourses due to: an increasing range of discourses to choose from; the increasing opportunities afforded by political processes, especially Maoist; and processes of development and globalisation, including experiences outside Mallagaon.

The ways these institutional forms manifest in Mallagaon and the value conferred on them can be thought of in terms of 'social representations'. Taking Zittoun *et al's* notion of 'symbolic resources' (2003) I have explored the multiple ways in which people exercise agency to use such resources to increase their standing in their own eyes and to increase their 'ritual' and/or 'secular status' in the community in order to challenge or reinforce these 'social representations'. This enabled me to explore understandings of development and of wellbeing from a different perspective to that offered by 6 (2012), leading to the recognition that understandings are affected by how individuals perceive their status to be increased or undermined.

***How do individual and group identities mediate socially constructed understandings of development and of wellbeing?***

My discussion has illustrated the extent to which my research participants' multiple individual and group identities (especially of caste and gender) and the identities they give Mallagaon, all of which are dependent on context and concomitant discourses, mediate their understandings of development and of wellbeing.

There are also notable age-related shifts in understandings of both development and of wellbeing; these are evident when comparing Hari-Dai's (older Dalit) to Vikram's (younger Dalit), or Chuggy's (Older Chhetria) to Shanti's (younger Chhetria) understandings. The differences may be because of the greater exposure of the younger

to alternative discourses and the increased opportunities they have to use and benefit from 'symbolic resources'. How individuals understand development and wellbeing, and how they relate these understandings to each other, depends on how they position themselves – i.e. their 'situated identities' (Gee, 1999) – in relation to others, including outsiders like me, other individuals or groups within Mallagaon, and Mallagaon itself.

The dialogic approach (Riessman, 2008; Stephens, 2009) I have taken reveals that my research participants' perceptions of me and Mahesh as powerful may sometimes have led them to voice particular understandings based on discourses long-dominant in Mallagaon. While these do not necessarily reflect their more grounded perceptions, they are nonetheless important in revealing what these individuals perceive those in authority positions to value. There being 'power structures and hierarchies' in relationships between 'developers' (with whom Mahesh and I are identified) and those being 'developed' (Kaufmann, 1997:107), this tended to happen more often when discussing development but less often when discussing wellbeing, perhaps because Mallagaon's wellbeing discourses are not associated with powerful outsiders.

Hence an individual's overtly stated understandings sometimes differ from one another and from those more implicit in my data, with each individual simultaneously holding multiple, sometimes conflicting views. This does not render any point of view false but shows the importance of exploring how and why this happens, and of recognising that all opinions should be taken seriously.

## CHAPTER 12 CONCLUSION

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### 12.1 CONSIDERING MY THEORETICAL APPROACH

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My aim of exploring the multiple understandings of individuals and the discourses on which these are based informed my thesis. To this end, I began my theoretical chapter and my fieldwork with deliberately broad definitions of development and of wellbeing. Avoiding a focus on specific theories and taking an explorative, discourse-oriented approach enabled me to explore my research participants' understandings rather than impose mine upon them. This was why I shifted from my initial focus (on sustainable development and wellbeing) to a broad framework which facilitated an open exploration.

Although my approach was informed by post-development theory, I was able to overcome any tendencies to impose my own post-development ideas of the threat to wellbeing provided by development (Escobar, 1995; Shrestha, 1998). Theorising as relational processes both development (Mosse, 1998) and wellbeing (White, 2010) enabled me to fathom the understandings held by my research participants as socially constructed discourses.

It is noteworthy that, before I explored theory relating to the interrelationship of development and wellbeing, I considered them separately. Doing so helped ensure that I did not conflate the two by considering wellbeing only in relation to development, as happens in most existing research into wellbeing in developing countries (e.g. Gough and McGregor, 2007). It also enabled me to explore the understandings of development and of wellbeing held by my research participants properly, including overlapping and separate notions. It also meant that, in the context of Nepal which is steeped in development (Shrestha, 1995) and hence in related institutionalised discourses, I could, through an exploration of the less familiar notion of wellbeing, better reach people's more grounded understandings and realise the important part played by status. I was also able to discover notions of personal wellbeing unrelated to development, such as acceptance and contentment with a frugal lifestyle deriving from Hinduism.

By allowing broadly defined theories to shape my initially general interpretations and to sensitise me to data, I was able to choose the more detailed theory best suited to my exploration (Ezzy, 2002) post-fieldwork. Especially significant in providing me with a means to analyse understandings of development and of wellbeing at multiple levels were: G's (2012) 'institutional form[s] of social organisation' and their effect on sense-

making, and Zittoun *et al's* (2003) 'symbolic resources' in constructing new meanings in periods of change. The former meant that I could explore understandings as institutionalised discourses, structured by forces external to individuals. The latter enabled me to consider them as more subjectively held, internal processes, affected by individuals' desire for status both in relation to others and to their self-image. By taking these theories in conjunction, I discovered that my research participants adopt or reject different development and wellbeing discourses according to their ideas of how best to attain or retain status. This, a process mediated by multiple, constantly shifting identities and social contexts, results in an individual often holding multiple, sometimes apparently conflicting understandings.

These theories helped me to discover that individuals in Mallagaon often understand development to lie in that which helps further their personal wellbeing by: helping them to exercise agency in either reinforcing the indigenous social order or challenging it through various discourses and 'symbolic resources'; and by providing the means to further their 'ritual' and/or 'secular status'. While understandings of development often relate to those of personal wellbeing, these understandings are concomitant with ideas for community wellbeing only amongst individuals whose personal wellbeing is dependent upon that of their community.

The analysis process helped me recognise which contextual aspects I needed to detail in constructing my case study. For example, while aware of Maoism's and the caste system's likely significance before beginning my research, my fieldwork findings and the theories detailed above led me to focus on aspects of Hinduism apart from those relating to caste, as well as on patron-client relationships and the learning experiences afforded by migration.

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## 12.2 CONSIDERING MY METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

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### THE ETHNOGRAPHIC CASE STUDY PROCESS

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Although my intention on starting fieldwork was to carry with me a blank canvas, I had perhaps inadvertently sketched in certain features (e.g. villagers' denigration of the local) because of my previous experience in Mallagaon. My prolonged immersion in the field and daily contact with my research participants meant I overcame this potential for bias; during eight fieldwork months, I made some areas more defined, some less, as I realised which were more relevant or less to the overall picture, repeatedly blurring the

focus on areas such as this denigration of the local and detailing others, like the status derived from Janakiram, and through training in skills. Leaving Mallagaon with better defined perspectives, on return from my fieldwork, having analysed my data and explored further theory, I could finally add the minutiae to the canvas through the presentation of ‘embedded cases’ and of the contextual detail (including my descriptions of Mallagaon village, Janakiram School and the Ramkuti area of offices, shops and school hostels) providing the boundaries and setting of my case study.

Macdonald and Walker (1977:182) described case study as ‘the way of the artist who... through the portrayal of a single instance locked in time and circumstance... communicates enduring truths about the human condition’. Framed by the boundaries of my case study, my research involved prolonged participant observation and immersion in the field and a reiterative, interpretive and deductive means of collecting and revisiting data. Hence, focusing on the particular, I had the time and openness required to overcome my biases and to avoid reaching hasty conclusions and was able to recognise and overcome the fact that my interview data provided only a partial account by triangulating it with data from informal conversations and observations. Had I spent four instead of eight months in the field, and conducted research in a community previously unknown to me, my findings, although not false, would have been less telling than now.

By presenting my findings as a ‘telling’ case study of Mallagaon I have been able to present theoretically sound, detailed and particular data, rather than provide the ‘summary statements’ about patterns of belief or behaviour typical of ethnography (Mitchell, 1984). Importantly, I have been able to recognise ‘the dynamic, changing nature of the data within and between the various contexts involved in the field’ (Stephens, 2009:47) through the inclusion of, and triangulation within and between, ‘embedded studies’ of the complex stories of seven individuals and two specific events within my Mallagaon case study. This enabled my exploration of multiple and shifting ways of understanding both development and wellbeing and how these are mediated by identities and contexts which I could have missed had I viewed the social groups in Mallagaon collectively and thus inappropriately identified individuals and groups within it as a whole.

As highlighted in the Preamble and Introduction (Chapter 1) to my thesis, it is easy to slip into essentialism and exoticism, especially when researching a community still

relatively untouched by many aspects of modernity. Even as I began writing, I was tempted to present individuals and events as typical, exaggerating certain characteristics as one might in writing a novel. However, by focusing on individuals, I believe I have made the ‘appropriate claims’ which, like Holliday (2007), I consider ethically important, achieving this by creating ‘images’ of those researched to ‘promote understanding of their humanity’ rather than ‘reduc...[ing] and packag...[ing] them’ (ibid: 164-165). For their open acceptance of me over more than twenty years, I owe it to my research participants to write about them thus.

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### LEARNING THROUGH DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

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The ‘discourse-oriented’ approach of Geertz’s ‘interpretive ethnography’ (1993 [1973]) and my textual discourse analysis, informed by Gee (1996; 1999; 2011; 2012), has helped me recognise how structure and agency shape not only my research participants’ understandings, but also, as importantly, my own. Through increasing awareness of the discourses influencing me, I was more easily able to understand how much geographical, social and political contexts affect people. Consequently, rather than criticise my research participants’ often conflicting ideas, considering them duplicitous as I sometimes used to, I hope that I have portrayed them as sincere and simply engaging, as we all do, with multiple discourses.

My increasing awareness that meanings created by discourses are dependent on context (Gee and Handford, 2012) made me conscious of the powerful role of my ‘latent identities’ (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995) as teacher and source of educational funds. While these identities may partly explain the emphasis some research participants placed on education, my data chapters have shown that education as manifested in Janakiram plays a particularly significant part in informing understandings of development and of wellbeing in Mallagaon. My reflexive, ‘dialogic approach’ (Riessman 2008: Stephens 2009), recognising the importance of identity and positionality, meant that I used my ‘latent identities’ as a positive means of exploring perspectives and discursive practices, rather than consider them cause for concern as potential sources of bias (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2010: 181).

Throughout my research, I have been fearful of committing the ‘epistemological racism’ which Scheurich, (1997:132 in Trahar 2011) thinks occurs when ‘the fundamental influence of ethnicity in shaping interpretations of reality is ignored, or given only minimal attention’ (Trahar, 2011:41). This has at times made me question my right to

do research in a country not my own. However, I believe these risks, provided they are recognised through reflexivity, can be outweighed by the benefits of being an outsider. This is because individuals more marginal to a discourse or a culture ‘often have insights into the workings of these... that more mainstream members do not’ (Gee, 1996:140). The discourses one is a member of, being acquired subconsciously, are harder to critique, whereas one is more likely to be consciously reflective about those one has had to learn (ibid). This process began for me early on when, as a primary school child, I first had to adapt to discourses beyond those of my family. Brought up in a large vicarage isolated from the village, I always felt something of an outsider, able to fit in anywhere but to a limited extent and conscious of needing to adapt. It was simply another step in the process of mastering other discourses when, twenty years ago, I went to Nepal and strove to adapt to living and working in Mallagaon. Subsequently, the processes involved in analysing the discourses and related understandings of development and of wellbeing I came across during my fieldwork increased my own ability to be critically aware both of the discourses in Mallagaon and of those I am influenced by in the UK and elsewhere. Having for many years considered myself disadvantaged by being an outsider, I now recognise the advantages; having ‘meta-knowledge’ of discourses making me better able to understand them, and resist them if necessary (ibid).

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### 12.3 IMPLICATIONS

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#### FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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##### RECOGNISING MULTIPLE DISCOURSES

My research makes explicit that each individual engages with many discourses which often reveal inconsistent and incompatible values (Gee, 2002). As Bulloch (2014:184) observes:

At the heart of ideas about development... are sets of paradoxical values about how one should live and how society should operate. These paradoxical values vary not simply between different groups but can be held simultaneously by any given individual, each being accorded primacy in different contexts.

Understandings of both development and wellbeing are consequently not monolithic and fixed, but multiple and in constant flux, meaning that to take any opinion at face value or to understand it as representative of a whole community is folly, especially since subaltern individuals tend to voice dominant discourses which do not necessarily express their own (Rogers, 2004). Development decisions, often resulting from brief

visits to a community, are likely to favour the opinions endorsed by a community's most influential and powerful. As this thesis has indicated, development practitioners should be sensitive not only to differences corresponding to gender, age and social status within a community but also to the different ideals any given individual is likely to have (Bulloch, 2014). They also need to be aware that what they consider as the best development for wellbeing may differ from the understandings of others involved.

#### THE IMPORTANCE OF STATUS

My recognition that people often understand development as that which furthers their personal wellbeing as status helps explain why individuals often fail to take rural, community-based development projects seriously and squander development funds; they cannot relate the projects to their personal wellbeing. This relates to Dudley's (1993) argument that a development intervention idea, even if 'reasonable' and 'recognizable' will fail if it does not also provide 'self-respect' through being considered appropriate by people in their circumstances. The securing of large-scale development projects for Mallagaon increases the status of the community's leaders who handle development funds, hence their enthusiasm for projects such as CEW's. However, the actual implementation of the project as intended by CEW may not further their status; hence community leaders' failure to ensure that CEW's project was properly implemented.

This suggests that rural development projects may be more successful if headed by, and targeted towards, community members who, identifying with their community, have ideas for its wellbeing concomitant with their ideas for development and for personal wellbeing as status. It also suggests that development projects for community wellbeing should be designed to help ensure that individuals can secure their personal wellbeing in the community concerned.

Vikram is the local leader of the Youth Centre and, identifying with his community, runs social development projects through it, which further not only Mallagaon's wellbeing but also his own in terms of the 'secular status' his involvement affords him. I believe that the contribution this makes to his 'self-respect' makes it less likely that he will leave Mallagaon and more likely that he will continue working for its wellbeing and the wellbeing of the individuals within it. As Kagan and Kilroy (2012) argue, community wellbeing is comprised of wellbeing both *in* and *of* the community.

There is growing recognition of the failure of development to bring about wellbeing (despite its claim to work to that end) both internationally (e.g. Stiglitz, 2002) and within Nepal (e.g. Shrestha, 1998) through its exacerbation of inequalities. One of the world's poorest countries, Nepal continues to depend on foreign aid (BBC, 2014), the latter accounting for 22% of the national budget in the Financial Year 2013-2014 and covering most of the country's development expenditure (Government of Nepal, 2014). Significantly, of the US\$ 0.96 billion total disbursement of overseas development aid to Nepal (which does not include INGO disbursement of approximately US\$ 40.8 million) in the Financial Year 2012-2013, the UK provided 9.4%, making it Nepal's third biggest donor after the World Bank Group and the Asian Development Bank, and as such the highest bi-lateral donor (ibid).

In this context, I consider my research important because, while recognising that development may be essential and inevitable, it illustrates the importance of questioning international development as the dominant hegemony both in donor and recipient discourses. Proper acknowledgement of the predominant importance of personal status to individuals may reduce the risk of development projects being diverted for the sake of the status of only a few elite individuals, leading to the failure of projects at best or civil war at worst. As White (2013) argues, there is need for the 'bigger vision' offered by wellbeing rather than by development, the former affording personal, relational, moral and political meaning not necessarily found in the latter.

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#### FOR EDUCATION

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My thesis has focused on Janakiram School as a key institution in Mallagaon, with positive and negative discourses relating to it shaping understandings of development and of wellbeing there. Underlying this has been my exploration of the extent to which formal education at Janakiram reinforces or helps to challenge inequalities in wellbeing within the community.

While I have revealed positive aspects of Janakiram and formal education in Mallagaon, I have also illustrated their negative effects. As mentioned in my Introduction (Chapter 1), I share Illich's (1971:1) concerns about the negative effects of formal schooling, which he argued have led, world-wide, to 'social polarization and psychological impotence'. Meanwhile, the 'quality, relevance... and legitimacy' of Nepal's formal education system is now questioned at all levels of society (Bhatta, 2009:5), including by my research participants.

Nepal's 2009 to 2015 'School Sector Reform Programme', the largest ongoing, externally funded programme in Nepal (Government of Nepal, 2014), aims 'to improve the quality and relevance of school education' (Government of Nepal 2009:1). In order to do so, I believe that most importantly teachers need to equip students with the 'liberating literacy' described by Gee (1996:144) as 'a meta-Discourse (a set of meta-words, meta-values, meta-beliefs)' which enables the critique of other discourses and how they shape us and 'situate us in society'. This need not necessarily be with the aim of displacing any particular discourses, but to 'draw attention to the processes that underpin the dominance of some stories and the marginalization of others' (White, 2013:198) with the goal of empowering people to choose whether to subscribe to them or not, and to resist them where necessary (Gee, 1996). This is especially important since it is through people's 'use of multiple discourses that social patterns are negotiated, power distributed and development shaped' (Hilhorst, 2003:101), thus improving or reducing wellbeing. As Belton (2014:319) argues, to help achieve wellbeing, education should no longer be 'dominated by *outcomes*... [but] instead attend to the provision of learning *processes* which cultivate... fully functioning individuals' by advancing their 'knowledge... critical skills... [and] capacity to contribute to the betterment of society' (emphasis in original).

Although I did not conduct school-based research, I share Macdonald and Walker's (1977:189) belief that case study research's 'real prize is the prospect of developing techniques and procedures which can be used by schools and ancillary agencies'. Having worked as a teacher in the UK and in Nepal, and as development worker for an educational organisation based in the former country and active in the latter, I would like to use this research to create a resource (perhaps in the form of teaching and learning ideas) for teachers and development practitioners of both countries. Providing a practical application for my academic work, this would be with the aim of fostering, amongst 'developers' and those 'being developed' alike, Gee's (1996:144) 'liberating literacy', both through formal education and through the ways development projects are undertaken. My ultimate aim is to contribute to the wellbeing of communities and of all the individuals who comprise them.

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## APPENDICES

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### APPENDIX 1      DETAILS ABOUT MALLAGAON'S CLANS

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*Collected May 2012*

*This information was collected from members of each clan within the three castes of Mallagaon (see 'Mallagaon Caste Hierarchy', page 66) and is presented here according to the caste hierarchy from 'highest' to 'lowest'; pseudonyms are in italics.*

#### **Traditional occupation**

***Phulara***: Priests, teachers, *ayurvedic* (relating to indigenous medicine) doctors; intellectual roles.

***Bhandari***: Farming

***Thapa***: Farming for themselves and for others.

***Kaami***: Blacksmiths. Now only one person knows the traditional skill.

***Nagari***: Sewing, drumming (caste name derives from the *nagara* drum) during festivals etc. and agricultural work.

***Bhul***: Tanners making plough ties. Only one person still does this work, but only sometimes. These days the ties are made out of plastic; everyone makes their own.

#### **Current Occupation**

***Phulara***: Many *Phularas* are government employees – 4 *Phulara* males teach at *Janakiram*, and 2 in a village on the main road (one of these two was a headmaster and the other is currently a headmaster). There are also 2 retired teachers and two VDC secretaries (one is the secretary of the VDC Mallagaon belongs to and the other is the secretary of a neighbouring VDC). Most of these men live alone in Mallagaon while their families live on the Terai. A couple of young *Phulara* men live in *Mallagaon* and some young women of the clan are awaiting arranged marriages while being educated. Only three *Phulara* men of the younger generation live in Mallagaon; they are in full-time work (two with a poultry business and one as a chemist in his family run business) in *Mallagaon*. A few men of the older generation are shopkeepers in *Ramkuti* bazaar.

A large number of *Phularas* are on the Terai, teaching or running schools (some own the schools) or working with NGOs or INGOs. One *Phulara* retired as Rector of

Tribhuvan University, many are medical doctors – one of these doctors was also in the National Planning Commission, and is now chairman of a government medical college in Dhangadhi. There are also many well-known *Phulara* eye specialists, some with PhDs. One of these is with the UN and another is permanently resident in the US.

**Thapa:** In *Mallagaon*, most farm their own or others' land. Two have salaried occupations: one as a 'part-time' postman working only occasionally and one as a campus 'peon'. There is also a builder who does carpentry and any of work that he can get. Around May 2012, he opened a teashop near *Janakiram*. One *Thapa* runs a teashop which was run for many decades by his (now dead) grandfather, who was a fireman in India, returned in 1971-72 to *Mallagaon* and started this shop. Another *Thapa* works as a 'peon' in a 'Campus' in Dhangadhi.

**Bhandari:** Salaried jobs held by the VDC 'peon' (male), the health post 'peon' (female) and a *Janakiram* teacher (female). No mention was made of the last two till prompted. The majority do agricultural work, about one-third farming their own land and two-thirds working as agricultural labourers for others who own land. *Shakti Bhandari*, who works as a Community Medical Assistant in another village nearer the main road and has a private medical outlet there, is normally resident in *Mallagaon* where his immediate family lives. In Dhangadhi, *Mallagaon Bhandari* families work in a poultry farm and in a hotel.

**Kaami:** One young man once taught adult literacy classes in *Mallagaon*; an elderly man has a contract to supply firewood daily for the *Janakiram* hostel mess. All others work either as farm labourers for landowners in *Mallagaon* or as unskilled or semi-skilled labourers (usually in Indian or Terai hotels as cooks or waiters, or in building construction).

**Nagari:** All Nagari men and women resident in *Mallagaon* do tailoring work; *Hari-dai*'s father spent 13 years in India as a tailor's apprentice and later as a tailor, but *Hari-Dai* never went to India. No Nagaris in *Mallagaon* have salaried occupations except *Roshan* who was funded for a short period by the VDC to teach adult literacy classes in various villages in the VDC. *Roshan* also has his not too flourishing (according to him) business as a vet.

**Bhul:** Many men have migrated to India and work there as watchmen, cooks and waiters. Most Bhul men in *Mallagaon* have been to India to work at some point in their

lives, have come back, and do consider going there again. The pattern is to go for 2 to 3 years and come back for a few months with the intention of not returning to India, and then changing their minds and going back to India due to food and livelihood shortages back home. Women also sometimes join their spouses in India for a few months. In *Mallagaon* all Bhuls work as farmers or farm labourers except *Vikram* and *Yashoda*; these two have businesses in the bazaar (electronic gadget repair and tailoring respectively).

### **Numbers of Clan members in *Mallagaon* and their land/housing status**

***Phulara***: 13 *Phulara* families live in *Mallagaon*, consisting cumulatively of 41 people. There were about 20 families here 18 years ago. Almost all the families still in *Mallagaon* have second homes on the Terai. The *Phulara* families have migrated for convenience, for education and to acquire more fertile land on the Terai. *Sachivji* and one of his elder brothers have no home there but own land.

Of the 18 *Phulara*-owned houses in the village, 16 are currently lived in by *Phularas*, one is empty and one has been let. 4 of these houses are new. There are 25 homes of *Mallagaon Phularas* in *Dhangadhi*, including second homes of those remaining in *Mallagaon* and main homes of those who have fully migrated. 6-7 *Phulara* families had land in *Dhangadhi* more than 20 years ago but most bought land there 10-15 years ago.

***Bhandari***: 7 families, cumulatively consisting of 25 people live in 3 houses (1 new and 2 old) in *Mallagaon*. 2 families live on the Terai. Some have returned after stints in India, working as watchmen. Although I was told that no *Bhandari* now living in *Mallagaon* owns land or a home on the Terai, a couple of men mentioned during interviews or chats that they own homes there.

***Thapa***: Of the total of about 29 original *Mallagaon Thapas*, 20 live in *Dhangadhi* in 2 families, 9 (originally of one family) live in *Mallagaon* in 3 houses. Those who have moved outside the village did so 7-8 years ago. Originally the *Mallagaon Thapas* had only one house, which was pulled down and 3 houses built 10-12 years ago.

***Kaami***: 9 or 10 families, cumulatively consisting of up to 40 people live in *Mallagaon* in 3 houses. Some are now in a position to build their own houses; one of their 3 houses was built two years ago and another is now under construction. 7 or 8 family members are in India; they tend to stay there for about 2 years, then return and go back again.

There is one family living on the Terai; no member of this family has a salaried job, and the income is from working as farm labourers or as labourers in India. Another family now lives permanently in Mumbai, India. It was unclear but there may be one family in Mallagaon which does not own the house it lives in.

**Nagari:** 14 of one family live in one house in *Mallagaon*; 3 of these people were in Dhangadhi at the time of my fieldwork but all of them were expected to return. There are 4 Nagari families in neighbouring *Rosyagaon* where the *Mallagaon* Nagaris lived until a *Phulara* family gifted *Hari-Dai's* father land and the home they live in. *Hari-dai's* brother has a home in Dhangadhi.

**Bhul:** 3 families, cumulatively consisting of 35 people, live in 6 houses in *Mallagaon*. 12 people in 4 families live in Dhangadhi. 7 people work in India although their families live in their *Mallagaon* homes. Bhuls now own their own houses but no farming land. They either work on the land and half the produce goes to the landowner and half to them, or they have a tenancy agreement as follows: The tenant gives the landlord a large sum of money for the land; the landlord gets the interest on the money and the tenant the produce from the land; when the agreement comes to an end, the tenant returns the land to the landlord and the landlord returns the money first paid (without the interest subsequently earned) to the tenant.

### **Education**

**Phulara:** *Phulara* males of wealthier families used to go to India for education, a trend which started as early as the beginning of the 20th century and continued until *Janakiram* opened. There are possibly 100 *Mallagaon Phularas* currently studying outside the village. Many *Phularas* (now in their fifties) studied in India after studying up to Class 10 in *Janakiram*. Many male *Phularas* are well qualified with Masters and PhD degrees.

Amongst the women, the oldest living generation are literate up to Class 1 or Class 2 and the next generation (now in their fifties) has studied up to Class 8 or SLC on average. The sister-in-law of Kuberji (son of *Chandrakantji*, the founder of *Janakiram*) is an exception, she had a BA. The first *Phulara* girl to pass SLC from *Janakiram* is now in her late fifties or early sixties. Nowadays, most *Phulara* girls study up to bachelor level to get better matches in marriage, and continue their education after marriage only if their husbands consent. During the time of fieldwork, 3 *Phulara* girls

were (as they themselves explained) doing the BEd while waiting for marriages to be arranged for them by their families, with the clear idea of the degree certificate being useful for marriage and not for a career. Nowadays almost all young *Phulara* children, including girls, study outside the village, usually in places like Dhangadhi or Kathmandu. There is one teenage girl with learning difficulties in the village who has stopped going to school.

**Bhandari:** All *Bhandari* children of school age go to school. Currently 7 are in school and none are in further education. One has an IEd and another the Community Medical Assistant (CMA) certificate; the latter is the most educated of the *Mallagaon Bhandaris*. In the older generations there are only a few literate people (some of whom are able to read the Hindu religious texts), but the younger generation is mostly literate. No *Bhandari* has left *Mallagaon* for secondary level education.

**Thapa:** The best educated of the *Mallagaon Thapas* left education after reaching the second year of the 3 year BEd course. Another (in his twenties) continued studies to Class 11. Yet another of similar age studied to Class 5 while his brother had no education, his generation's average education level being end of primary and his father's generation's being very early basic education like learning the alphabet. Engaged in jobs, it did not occur to them, they say, to get education until this generation. Now there are 8 *Thapa* children in total in *Mallagaon*, 6 of whom are school going age, all attending school.

**Kaami:** There are about 20 *Kaami* children of school going age and all go to school. However even many of the generation in their twenties started school only at the age of 10 and not all stayed in school for long. All of this generation are considered literate by their clan, as even the women can write their names. One *Kaami* in his twenties has now completed his first year of BEd at *Janakiram*; only 2 Dalits of his generation did SLC there according to him: himself and *Roshan Nagari*, another *Janakiram* BEd student. This young man's father's generation had no education; those over 55 years old cannot write even their names.

**Nagari:** Those now of school going age are in school. *Roshan* is the most educated, with a Junior Technical Assistant (JTA) veterinary qualification and now doing his third year of BEd at *Janakiram*. His father, *Hari-dai*, studied to Class 4 and is literate, as are *Roshan's* uncles who studied up to Class 1 or Class 2.

**Bhul:** There are about 20 Bhul children in the village and all go to school. *Vikram's* generation was the first to go to school. *Vikram* and the daughter of another Bhul have studied up to Class 10 level, and yet another Bhul is studying IEd in Dhangadhi; no other *Mallagaon* Bhul has reached this level. Though *Janakiram* sources – all upper caste – say that all *Mallagaon* children of school age attend school, I have found and verified that some Bhul children do not attend school regularly, though they are all registered as students there.

### **Education or vocational skills programmes received outside school**

**Phulara:** In the case of skills programmes available to all, the *Phularas* are allowed to take part only after the marginalised clans have done so, while other programmes are only available to the marginalised clans.

**Bhandari:** They have received no training according to the *Bhandaris* I spoke to, and feel they have no new (as opposed to indigenous) skills.

**Thapa:** No *Thapa* said they received any kind of skills training, although one said he learnt the skills he has from practical experience at work.

**Kaami:** The *Kaamis* I spoke to said they have had no skills training; one of them did not mention his wife's attendance at the knitting programme (see Chapter 10) and none mentioned the adult literacy classes many *Kaamis* went to.

**Nagari:** *Roshan* received the JTA training earlier mentioned and his sister-in-law the knitting training which is discussed in Chapter 10. *Hari-dai's* wife had formal training in sewing (although she already knew how to sew), got a certificate, and feels she has learnt something new. Notably, all of these skills training programmes were mentioned only when prompted.

**Bhul:** Only *Vikram* and *Yashoda* have received any training (the former in electronic gadget repair and the latter in tailoring).

In the case of all castes, training like knitting and classes like those in adult literacy were not mentioned until prompted and there seemed to be an unwillingness to consider these as skills or knowledge.

APPENDIX 2 INTERVIEWEES

*Pseudonyms (provided only for those mentioned in my thesis) in italics; interview dates in square brackets; and caste (only of those forming the Mallagaon community, including emigrants from it) in uppercase bold.*

<b>Ex-volunteers of Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO), UK, previously working in Mallagaon</b>	
MALE	FEMALE
<i>Bob</i> [16/07/2011]	<i>Linda</i> [16/07/2011]
<i>Ed</i> [21/07/2011]	
<b>Officials or employees of institutions, organisations or departments relevant to Mallagaon</b>	
MALE	FEMALE
District Education Officer, Doti [12/03/2012]	
<i>Development Centre for Communities (DCC) Executive Officer</i> [14/03/2012]	<i>Asha</i> [14/03/2012], requested anonymity
Community Development Forum (CDF) staff member [15/03/2012]	
District Development Committee (DDC) staff member [16/03/2012]	
Principal, Seti Technical School (STS), Doti [16/03/2012]	
3 Cottage and Small Industry Development Board (CSIDB) staff members [17/03/2012]	
INGO staff member [17/03/2012]	
<i>Children's Education World (CEW) Nepal Co-ordinator</i> [03/05/2012]	
Joint Secretary, Ministry of Education, Kathmandu [26/07/2012]	
Professor of Kathmandu University [27/07/2012]	
<b>Emigrants from Mallagaon or environs to Doti District's Headquarters or Kathmandu or Dhangadhi</b>	
MALE	FEMALE
<i>Gyana</i> [25/09/2011]; <b>BRAHMAN</b>	
<i>Bisvas</i> [01/10/2011]; <b>BRAHMAN</b>	
<i>Sreedhar</i> [02/10/2011]; <b>CHHETRIA</b>	
Young <i>Phulara</i> emigrant to Kathmandu 1 [10/10/2011 and 12/07/12]; <b>BRAHMAN</b>	
Young <i>Phulara</i> emigrant to Kathmandu 2 [23/10/2011]; <b>BRAHMAN</b>	
<i>Keshab</i> [29/10/2011]; <b>DALIT</b>	
<i>DCC-Phularaji</i> [12/11/2011]; <b>BRAHMAN</b>	
Middle-aged <i>Phulara</i> emigrant to Dhangadhi [10/12/2011]; <b>BRAHMAN</b>	

<i>Amala Phulara's</i> brother [11/12/2011]; <b>BRAHMAN</b>	<i>Amala Phulara</i> [11/12/2011]; <b>BRAHMAN</b>
	<i>Shivapriya</i> [11/01/2012]; <b>CHHETRIA</b>
<i>Jungbahadurji</i> , Former Headmaster of Janakiram school [12/01/2012]; <b>CHHETRIA</b>	
	<i>Rekha</i> [15/03/2012]; <b>BRAHMAN</b>
	<i>Devi Trivedi</i> [16/03/2012]; <b>BRAHMAN</b>
<i>Dr. Phulara</i> , retired professor [21/07/12]; <b>BRAHMAN</b>	
<b>Janakiram students, parents and staff</b>	
MALE	FEMALE
<i>Raghavji</i> [23/10/2011]; <b>BRAHMAN</b>	
Head of <i>Janakiram</i> Campus [07/11/2011]; <b>BRAHMAN</b>	
	Teacher in charge of Girls' Hostel [10/11/2011]; <b>BRAHMAN</b>
	<i>Kusum</i> [18/11/2011], <i>BEd</i> student; <b>BRAHMAN</b>
	<i>Janakiram</i> Campus teacher's wife [21/11/2011]; <b>BRAHMAN</b>
Headmaster of <i>Janakiram</i> School [03/12/2011]; <b>CHHETRIA</b>	
<i>Pushpa's</i> husband [13/02/2012], hostel cook; <b>CHHETRIA</b>	
<i>Janakiram</i> non-local English Teacher [16/02/2012]; <b>BRAHMAN</b>	
	<i>Pushpa</i> [19/02/2012]; <b>CHHETRIA</b>
	<i>Chhetria</i> Teacher [28/02/2012]; <b>CHHETRIA</b>
	2 Class 12 students, one of them <i>Daya</i> [29/02/2012]; <b>CHHETRIAS</b>
<i>BEd</i> student group [02/03/2012]; <b>BRAHMANS</b> and <b>CHHETRIAS</b>	
<i>Janakiram</i> Schoolteacher from east Nepal [03/03/2012]; <b>BRAHMAN</b>	
<i>Parbatinathji</i> [06/03/2012]; <b>BRAHMAN</b>	
Class 12 student [21/03/2012]; <b>CHHETRIA</b>	
<i>Janakiram</i> Computer Teacher [05/04/2012]; <b>CHHETRIA</b>	
2 <i>Janakiram</i> school students, Class 8 and Class 10 [16/05/2012]; <b>BRAHMAN</b> and <b>CHHETRIA</b>	2 <i>Janakiram</i> school students, Class 8 and Class 10 [16/05/2012]; <b>CHHETRIAS</b>

<b><i>Mallagaon Bhandari Clan</i></b>	
MALE	FEMALE
	<i>Aditi Bhandari</i> health post peon [01/12/2011]; <b>CHHETRIA</b>
	<i>Shanti Bhandari</i> [17/02/2012]; <b>CHHETRIA</b>
<i>Shakti Bhandari</i> [14/04/2012]; <b>CHHETRIA</b>	
<i>Chakra 'Chuggy' Bhandari</i> [16/05/2012]; <b>CHHETRIA</b>	
	<i>Chuggy's wife</i> [17/05/2012]; <b>CHHETRIA</b>
<b><i>Mallagaon Bhul Clan</i></b>	
MALE	FEMALE
	<i>Yashoda Bhul</i> [24/11/2011]; <b>DALIT</b>
<i>Vikram Bhul</i> [04/03/2012]; <b>DALIT</b>	
Middle-aged Bhul [24/03/2012]; <b>DALIT</b>	Wife of middle-aged Bhul [24/03/2012]; <b>DALIT</b>
	<i>Vikram's mother</i> [09/04/2012]; <b>DALIT</b>
<b><i>Mallagaon Kaami Clan</i></b>	
MALE	FEMALE
Mallagaon Blacksmith [24/03/2012]; <b>DALIT</b>	Mallagaon Blacksmith's wife [24/03/2012]; <b>DALIT</b>
<b><i>Mallagaon Nagari Clan</i></b>	
MALE	FEMALE
<i>Hari Nagari or Hari-dai</i> [18/10/11]; <b>DALIT</b>	
<i>Roshan Nagari</i> [29/10/2011]; <b>DALIT</b>	
	<i>Kalyani Nagari</i> [01/11/2011]; <b>DALIT</b>
<i>Karna Nagari</i> ex-Maoist Army Section Commander [04/12/2011]; <b>DALIT</b>	
	Hari-dai's wife [07/03/2012]; <b>DALIT</b>
	<i>Karna Nagari's wife</i> [05/04/2012]; <b>CHHETRIA</b> by birth, married into <b>DALIT</b> family
<b><i>Mallagaon Phulara Clan</i></b>	
MALE	FEMALE
	<i>Phulara</i> BEd student 1 [30/10/2011]; <b>BRAHMAN</b>
<i>Leelanath Phulara</i> [06/11/2011]; <b>BRAHMAN</b>	
<i>Pushkar Phulara or Sachivji</i> [18/11/2011]; <b>BRAHMAN</b>	

	<i>Gopika Phulara</i> [25/11/2011]; <b>BRAHMAN</b>
	<i>Phulara</i> BEd students 2 and 3 [25/11/2011]; <b>BRAHMAN</b>
<i>Duttji</i> [20/02/2012]; <b>BRAHMAN</b>	
	<i>Mallagaon Phulara</i> group of women, headed by <i>Maya</i> [24/02/2012]; all <b>BRAHMANS</b>
<i>Kuber Phulara</i> [09/05/2012]; <b>BRAHMAN</b>	
<b><i>Mallagaon Thapa Clan</i></b>	
MALE	FEMALE
Young <i>Thapa</i> shopkeeper/carpenter [06/04/2012]; <b>CHHETRIA</b>	
<i>Mallagaon</i> Postman [06/04/2012]; <b>CHHETRIA</b>	
<b><i>Ramkuti bazaar interviewees</i></b>	
MALE	FEMALE
<i>Basant</i> [06/11/2011]; <b>BRAHMAN</b>	
<i>Sudam Ramkuti</i> teashop owner [30/10/2011]; <b>CHHETRIA</b>	
	Midwife living in <i>Mallagaon</i> village, working at <i>Ramkuti</i> health post [30/11/2011]; <b>CHHETRIA</b>
Elderly <i>Phulara</i> shopkeeper, <i>Ramkuti</i> bazaar [16/02/2012]; <b>BRAHMAN</b>	
	<i>Bhavani Nagari</i> [23/03/2012]; <b>DALIT</b>
<i>Dinakar Nagari</i> [24/02/2012]; <b>DALIT</b>	
Shopkeeper from neighbouring village [26/02/2012]; <b>CHHETRIA</b>	
Father of deceased ex-student [26/02/2012]; <b>CHHETRIA</b>	
<i>Aakash</i> [06/03/2012], Goldsmith; <b>DALIT</b>	
	<i>Chandrika</i> , midwife living in <i>Ramkuti</i> bazaar [10/04/2012]; <b>BRAHMAN</b>
Young <i>Phulara</i> shopkeeper, <i>Ramkuti</i> bazaar [08/05/2012]; <b>BRAHMAN</b>	Female non-local shopkeeper [08/05/2012]; <b>CHHETRIA</b>

Technical and Vocational Education and Entrepreneurship

Need for technical and vocational education. A surplus of teachers in the area but education is the only subject offered at Janakiram at the higher level. Small-scale businesses – need for and presence of new ones (bazaar based)

Becoming 'Deskilled'

People say that there is no work for their children here but there is work – just not the kind of work they have ambition for, for their children. Or the children can no longer do the work that is available here – they have become 'deskilled' for a traditional kind of life, by education. Meanwhile the new skill which the education is supposed to provide has fallen short. People are also 'deskilled' by development – for example who here can repair the road and the electricity when it goes wrong? And there is not the infrastructure to easily bring those who can repair these things here, so life becomes more frustrating

'Baato' – the road / the way

The road: Leads to inequality so jealousy. Generally seen as positive but it shows up the effect of inequalities, what with nearby villagers' resentment of the '*phayta*' (benefit, advantage) it brings to the Mallagaon people. People also say that mosquitoes came with the road.

The road brings consumables and conveniences so '*thulo maanche*' may come – doctors, teachers. It is seen by the locals as useful in attracting '*thulo maanche*' rather than being seen as of direct use for them, the locals. It is seen as having direct benefit only by shopkeepers in the bazaar. It gives more direct and quicker access to medical care. Motorbike travel

The road in its literal sense is itself important for many reasons – the informal and non formal education it brings being amongst these.

The metaphorical sense of '*baato*' is important – education showing the way, the grandfathers who showed the way, Mallagaon has become an example to other places, the '*thulo maanche*' who come here or may come here because of the road and who show the way.

The road brings controversy and inequality and so reduces wellbeing. It brings goods and conveniences and so increases wellbeing. The road enables business and entrepreneurship. It means that more educated people may come to live here, who in turn show the way.

#### Who are the components of development for (i.e. road, electricity)?

The discourse around development seems to be that it is not for me but for my family / children / community and to help encourage '*thulo maanche*' to come here by facilitating their access to and time in Mallagaon.

Conveniences, including the road, seem to be seen as not having importance in their own right but rather for the '*thulo maanche*' or, indirectly, for what the '*thulo maanche*' bring here. Likewise money is important in an abstract way. People seem happy to live on in the way they have always lived, not making much use of or showing many signs of, their wealth. Perhaps having money is prestige enough. People seem happy to let the wind take them wherever it may blow them – to go with the flow.

So, development may be important not in its own right – so nothing works properly or is allowed to fall into disrepair – but for the prestige it gives to people and to the place – we have got a white teacher here – she may not be able to teach but she is an advertisement for the school. The advertisement factor.

#### Sanitation

Increase in dirt, litter, poor sanitation, concrete not being regularly cleaned, filthy eating area, burning of plastic and mercury bulbs. This is a theme which preoccupies me and Mahesh but not many others. The lack of hygiene in people's understandings of development

#### Poorly Implemented development

Such as water pipes, redundant taps and wastage of water and poor infrastructure for water distribution; preoccupies me and Mahesh, doesn't seem to preoccupy others

#### Power

The Maovadi – both positive and negative effects. People know their rights, there is greater caste equality but people have lost a sense of responsibility.

Phulara family power as a negative; a stranglehold, caste discrimination. Phulara family example – esp of the grandfathers – as a positive; their benevolence.

Community ties – the loss of which have some positive and some negative implications

### 'Thulo Maanche'

'Thulo maanche' – having one's own, the road bringing them to Mallagaon, being one, their need for conveniences

### Migration

Relocation of families or parts of families: Migration – wealthy families, or parts of them, going to the Terai; Second homes; male family members going for work in India; Children leaving for further education and job opportunities; husbands and wives in two locations to get two salaries

### Communication Systems

Mobile phones, facebook, computers, internet facility, radios – symbols of modernity, compare to actual use. Mostly seen as important by those who live outside the village, possibly especially young men

### Medical care

Importance of Mallagaon's health post and medical shop. Need for nearby hospital. Foreigners seen as doctors. Raghavji calls the health post here a 'hospital' showing its importance to him. Unqualified medical practitioners are called doctors. Poor women in the bazaar waiting for treatment

### External (foreign) agency in development

The need for, the pros and cons of, the negative implications of; *Children's Education World*; VSO; Norway, Save the Children Nepal.

Despite my being an outsider, people are saying in interviews that development should come from the Nepali Government, the VDC, themselves. I am pleased about this because the bias I would expect given my former roles here would be in the direction of favouring development that comes from overseas. Less emphasis than expected on the foreign external agency of 'bikas'

### External Influences

The role played by external influences (from the media, from travel, from India etc) on: ways of dressing and accessories; ways of talking; ways of constructing new concepts such as what is beautiful; ways of seeing one's own place; cooking; public physical contact; use of concrete; second homes on the Terai.

Signifiers of modernity: TVs, mobile phones, motorbikes and new clothes and concrete second homes on the Terai, making fashion statements.

### Traditional Life

Festivals; pros and cons of ceremony and ritual. Pros and cons of community ties weakening. Qualities of village close-to-nature life: patience, cooperation, unity, trust. Casteism.

### Nature

The natural world: deforestation, loss of wildlife, erosion, the road, tree planting, flowers, irrigation, life in nature, understanding of natural processes, vegetables. Increase in mosquitoes.

### Alcohol

Increased consumption of alcohol; hopelessness. Education leads to disillusionment because of no job opportunities, leads to drinking. Nothing to do, envy.

<b>Development understood as</b>	<b>Source of understanding</b>	<b>Understood by</b>	<b>Wellbeing understood as</b>
White Collar Livelihoods	Academic Education	Insider-Outsider i.e. Janakiram teachers; Phulara family. Complete Insiders i.e. labourers	Personal financial wellbeing; escape from indigenous systems; infrastructure
Technical Livelihoods	Technical Education STS and government	Insider-Outsider	Individual and community financial wellbeing; community development and wellbeing; prevention of brain drain and migration; infrastructure
Vocational Livelihoods	Extra-curricular and community based trainings; VDC; Children's Education World	Some lower caste Insiders and Insider-Outsider-Returned	Wellbeing for discriminated against groups - women and lower castes - some financial independence; greater equality
'Dream Scheme' Livelihoods (i.e. large-scale, externally funded and unlikely to come to fruition)	INGOs, Government	Insiders, Insider-Outsider and Outsider-Insider; people in positions of power in relation to community	Community wellbeing, prevention of migration; wealth of area; infrastructure; equality
Bazaar Based Livelihoods	Experience as migrants in India and on the Terai; local need	Outsider-Insider; Insiders with some experience outside	Social justice; integration; community wellbeing

APPENDIX 5 THEMES POST-FIELDWORK: THE ROAD AND JANAKIRAM SCHOOL AND CAMPUS

September 2012



December 2012

**Development As Education**  
**(Janakiram School and Hostels)**

<b>The initiative</b>	<b>Positive for wellbeing</b>	<b>Negative for wellbeing</b>	<b>Further comments on understandings of development and of wellbeing</b>
Brahman access to education in India	Highly educated individuals; motivation for wellbeing of the community; positive example in the community	Inequalities; hierarchy; jealousy	
The Foundation of the school	Community generated enterprise; from within; strong identity; pride in ancestors; status of the school and hence of the village community; equality	Phulara stranglehold, complacency - resting on laurels; lack of equality as shown by no role models for lower castes and girls and actual ways in which lower castes and girls are or have been treated	Development is a religious and social local enterprise; development as education for literacy and knowledge
Continued community support of the school	Identity; community initiative for fundraising; positive role of girls and Dalits in fundraising activities	Excessive VDC funding of school compared to other development initiatives; Pant stranglehold; guilt of migrants with plans but no time to help	

<p>Vocational skills training</p>	<p>Income generation</p>	<p>Opportunities presented but not taken seriously enough by staff to be a genuine option for students (i.e. sewing programme and Daya) leading to resentment and discontent</p>	<p>Vocational skills training disregarded because development equated to large-scale in perceptions of the powerful; development as education for jobs; development as social inclusion</p>
<p>The Children's Education World programme and the school hostels</p>	<p>Social capital / capabilities and agency; jobs in future; social inclusion - gender and caste equality; personal financial gain</p>	<p>Complacency; perpetuation of caste and gender inequalities through the hidden curriculum and the increased divide between poorer day students and richer or scholarship hostel students ; dependency; mal-development / under-development / social reproduction theory; loss of skills needed to live locally (cooking, ploughing); disadvantages for both upper and lower castes</p>	<p>Development and wellbeing can be gained from outside funding bodies, initiatives from within the community may be discounted as development; dependency theory; Development as social inclusion</p>

**Development as Education**  
**(perceived needs for Janakiram School and Hostels)**

<b>The initiative</b>	<b>Positive for wellbeing</b>	<b>Negative for wellbeing</b>	<b>Further comments on understandings of development and of wellbeing</b>
Practical education	Learning by example		
Government intervention to improve exam systems and evaluation	Properly qualified graduates - there are jobs for those who have the knowledge as well as just the certificate		
Education for jobs - Provision of technical education	Jobs in the community; regeneration of community; no need to import people with skills; local maintenance of infrastructure etc. Qualifications for working outside the community	Expensive; Govt programmes in this area tend to mean any one school can only provide one type of technical course so again in future there will be the problem of too many people qualified in one area; brain drain	Development and wellbeing lie in large-scale programmes; development is for 'others', i.e. for the (poor) left behind in the community
Diversification	More relevant range of skills for the community		
Specialisation	More relevant education for acquiring skills needed for a job		
The need for obedience and discipline			

**Development as Education**  
**(Schooling outside the community)**

<b>The initiative</b>	<b>Positive for wellbeing</b>	<b>Negative for wellbeing</b>	<b>Further comments on understandings of development and of wellbeing</b>
English medium education while living with migrated family members, or causing migration of full family	Migration - remittances to families improve economic wellbeing of village; positive examples of individuals' improved wellbeing for others to emulate; <i>'out-knowledge'</i>	Migration - loss of community leadership; loss of unity; brain drain; increased inequalities; less financial and personal investment in local school; family split up; migration even when not what really want - disadvantaging the traditionally advantaged	Development and wellbeing are elsewhere; development is financial wellbeing (economic capital); Development is <i>'outknowledge'</i> (cultural capital?)

**Development as Livelihoods**  
**(The bazaar – businesses and entrepreneurship in the community)**

<b>The initiative</b>	<b>Positive for wellbeing</b>	<b>Negative for wellbeing</b>	<b>Further comments on understandings of development and of wellbeing</b>
Personal spaces	Social mix up (card games; women esp Dalits relaxed in the bazaar; common water source; relative freedom for lower castes and women when dominant male Phularas absent)	Alcoholism; violence; difficulties for discriminated against groups	Development as social inclusion

<p>Vocational skills training leading to livelihoods funded by the DCC and the VDC</p>	<p>Equality: Independent income for women; breakdown of caste distinctions esp in new skills; skills training may overcome jobs being often seen as appropriate only for women or lower castes; may prevent migration out of economic necessity; income from skills training giving opportunity for corruption and so personal financial wellbeing; reduction in migration out of economic necessity</p>	<p>Maintains caste distinctions by supporting caste based occupations; seen as suitable specifically for women and lower castes so maintains gender and caste discrimination; jealousy resulting from limited opportunities; income from skills training giving opportunity for corruption and so to group or community loss of opportunity and resentment towards those who gain as a result of corruption; breakdown of trust and hence of unity in the community</p>	<p>Development as social inclusion; indigenous skills tend not to be seen as part of development and so are shunned or not regarded as skills at all (with the exception of tailoring). This connects to development understood as elsewhere and to 'outknowledge'</p>
<p>Businesses</p>	<p>Individuals' financial wellbeing; Equality through unavoidable social mix; experience in India bringing less discrimination; learning about social inclusion through example</p>	<p>Casteism shown by some businesses; restrictions for those who would like to run a certain business but cannot owing to their caste or gender</p>	<p>Development as capitalism; development as social inclusion; importance of inclusive development learnt from the Maovadi</p>

### Development as Social Inclusion

<b>The initiative</b>	<b>Positive for wellbeing</b>	<b>Negative for wellbeing</b>	<b>Further comments on understandings of development and of wellbeing</b>
The Maovadi and Democracy (also see above where social inclusion is referred to)	Awareness; democratisation, empowerment, emancipation, social equality; reduction of fear amongst Dalits	Everyone considers themselves 'big'; awareness of rights but not of responsibilities; breakdown of trust and hence of unity in the community; less voluntary work carried out in the community; lack of local workforce with people unwilling to do jobs they consider to be beneath them; loss of upper caste paternalism / benevolence toward lower castes; loss of obedience, discipline and respect	Development as social inclusion

APPENDIX 7 INDIVIDUALS FORMING THE FOCUS OF  
'EMBEDDED CASES'

February 2013

<b>PUSHKAR PHULARA</b> <b>GENDER: Male; CASTE: Brahman; AGE: 50s; EDUCATION: Class 10</b> <b>ROLE: VDC Secretary</b>				
<b>Relationship to village</b>	<b>Learning from</b>	<b>Wellbeing (as status) taking form of</b>	<b>Understandings of development</b>	<b>Implications for wellbeing</b>
Insider (but 4-5 years during Maoist War spent in District Headquarters out of fear for his life)	NGOs, INGOs, discourses of development dominant in Nepali idea of <i>bikas</i> ; 2011 Nepal year of tourism; input of politicians in local development	Show, social service, prominence in community	Large-scale: the road, the school, development of the area as a tourist attraction, dream schemes	Lack of funding for other development needs; school as a showpiece rather than having quality; road and campus to exclusion of other development; personal bewilderment at breakdown of respect
<b>DEVI TRIVEDI</b> <b>GENDER: Female; CASTE: Brahman; AGE: 40s; EDUCATION: ANM</b> <b>ROLE: Health Counsellor and Midwife in a Hospital</b>				
<b>Relationship to village</b>	<b>Learning from</b>	<b>Wellbeing (as status) taking form of</b>	<b>Understandings of development</b>	<b>Implications for wellbeing</b>
Insider → Outsider	Technical education	Being needed; being a leader / counsellor	Technical education leading to opportunities; gender equality; leadership and unity	Empowerment, especially of women, personal financial wellbeing; brain drain and loss of leaders, the educated etc; community breakdown

<b>SHANTI BHANDARI</b> GENDER: <b>Female</b> ; CASTE: <b>Chhetria</b> ; AGE: <b>30s</b> ; EDUCATION: <b>IED</b> ROLE: <b>Primary School Teacher</b>				
<b>Relationship to village</b>	<b>Learning from</b>	<b>Wellbeing (as status) taking form of</b>	<b>Understandings of development</b>	<b>Implications for wellbeing</b>
Outsider → Insider since marriage (parental home Dadeldhura)	Formal schooling in Dadeldhura; development in Dadeldhura	Jealous striving for what others have; investing hopes in the next generation; desire for more money etc.	Under-development; livelihoods and businesses; materialistic consumerism; learning by example; local; external	Village life despised, life elsewhere striven for → breakdown of community, migration, unhappiness caused by negative comparison
<b>CHUGGY BHANDHARI</b> GENDER: <b>Male</b> ; CASTE: <b>Chhetria</b> ; AGE: <b>70s</b> ; EDUCATION: <b>None formally</b> ROLE: <b>Small-scale farmer and porter</b>				
<b>Relationship to village</b>	<b>Learning from</b>	<b>Wellbeing (as status) taking form of</b>	<b>Understandings of development</b>	<b>Implications for wellbeing</b>
Insider (visits to son in Dhangadhi)	Indigenous ways; discourses of development	Little concern for status in own life although shows pride in connection to Brahmans. Ambivalence shown in big change = good development	Local needs i.e water (drinking and irrigation) and small-scale businesses. Alongside factories, school campus (big scale)	Content with what has, has sensibly scaled ideas for community development. Ambivalence in his subscribing to discourse of local incapacity → undermining of local skills
<b>CHUGGY BHANDHARI's WIFE</b> GENDER: <b>Female</b> ; CASTE: <b>Chhetria</b> ; AGE: <b>60s</b> ; EDUCATION: <b>None formally</b> ROLE: <b>Housewife, previously farmer and porter</b>				
<b>Relationship to village</b>	<b>Learning from</b>	<b>Wellbeing (as status) taking form of</b>	<b>Understandings of development</b>	<b>Implications for wellbeing</b>
Insider (visits to son in Dhangadhi). Pre-marriage (long in past) outsider	Indigenous ways; discourses of development; personal experience	Little concern for status although implicit in her role in her family	That which brings convenience (e.g. the mill) and access to emigrated sons (e.g. the road)	Content with what she has but reduced by sons' emigration.

<b>HARI NAGARI</b> GENDER: <b>Male</b> ; CASTE: <b>Dalit</b> ; AGE: <b>50s</b> ; EDUCATION: <b>Class 5</b> ROLE: <b>Tailor</b> (following <b>caste-based</b> occupation)				
<b>Relationship to village</b>	<b>Learning from</b>	<b>Wellbeing (as status) taking form of</b>	<b>Understandings of development</b>	<b>Implications for wellbeing</b>
Insider	NGOs, INGOs; VDC; self-education (reading, radio); caste skill learnt from his father	Pride in own education, work and job. (Also shows acceptance and gratitude)	Blocked by laziness of Nepalis; should be self development since unable to make best of foreign development. Yet hopes for help from CEW etc; skills training for livelihoods	More vibrant community life, overly accepting of way things are may perpetuate social imbalances
<b>VIKRAM BHUL</b> GENDER: <b>Male</b> ; CASTE: <b>Dalit</b> ; AGE: <b>20s</b> ; EDUCATION: <b>Class 10</b> ROLE: <b>Self-employed electrician and mobile phone repair</b>				
<b>Relationship to village</b>	<b>Learning from</b>	<b>Wellbeing (as status) taking form of</b>	<b>Understandings of development</b>	<b>Implications for wellbeing</b>
Insider except for periods of 6 months spent in Kathmandu and Dhangadhi	Vocational skills training; Maovadi; experience outside the village; <i>DCC</i> and <i>CDF</i>	Self made, independent, running own business, having a voice, doing social service (awareness raising)	Entrepreneurial, self employment opportunities, vocational trainings, Empowerment and social justice, 'out-knowledge' elsewhere; PW weak selection policy	Self esteem, pride; strengthening of local community in terms of what is available in bazaar, greater equality and life in the bazaar; awareness raising and empowerment of the marginalised, restoration of community, migration; social reproduction

*September 2012 on return from Fieldwork*

Single woman (formerly)

Stereotypical 'western' woman

Middle-aged, married woman

Wife of a Hindu Indian (so relatively local and perceived by the community as having the same culture as them)

Mahesh's wife

Daughter-in-law

Honorary man

Incapable

Children's Education World

VSO volunteer (formerly)

Having one single identity with other former VSOs in the community

Teacher

Aid worker

Source of funds and one who has provided funds

A means to get to the UK

One with 'source force', having power and so able to access things and exert pressure

A *'thulo maanche'*

An *'aaphno maanche'* (feeling mean when not acting that role as one 'belonging to the community and so there to help them, yet unable to in the ways some hope)

One to be flattered

A god / a famous doer of social services such as Florence Nightingale

One with freedom

An invalid

The wife of an invalid

Honorary Brahman

One having the rights of the upper castes

A former member of Sachivji's household

Beholden

A guest

A lower caste

A menstruating woman

A foreigner – one from ‘across the seven seas’

Very wealthy

A stranger

An outsider (the road makes things easier for you)

An insider

One who is ‘developed’ (unable to cook and walk) and from a developed country

A provider of medicine

A friend of women

Alien to women

A knitter

A purchaser of goods

A business proponent

A source of advice

A girls’ hostel member

Guest of the school

A critical ethnographer – advocate of Dalits and women. And concerning use, repair and maintenance of development infrastructure

Researcher

## APPENDIX 9A

**The Contribution of Janakiram High School towards Social Mobilization**

by Prof. Phulara Kailali Multiple Campus

*From Janakiram's 'Golden Jubilee Souvenir' magazine 2067 (2010-2011), pp.46-47, translated by Ram K Tiwari*

>>46>> The Far-Western region of Nepal is regarded as the least advanced region in terms of development. For a society to become developed or underdeveloped depends on a range of factors, such as the representation of that region at decision-making levels, the share of the people of that region in national resources and property, the importance given to the issues of that region, and the level of initiatives taken locally for development.

These are some of the indicators which explain how a society becomes developed or not. The abovementioned factors have a role – direct or indirect – in shaping the big regional disparity that we see in Nepal. In fact, the way the rulers and administrators (at the central level) tend to see and treat this region has been almost the same since the Rana regime till date. The people of this region have frequently been suppressed by the rulers, and the state has not been that sensitive to the problems faced by them. Because of this there has not been a fundamental change in the status of this place no matter who comes to power. The inability of the state to reach people and the creation of a gap between the people and the state pushed this region far away from the national mainstream to the state of isolation. There are different kinds of gaps that have kept this region isolated from others, such as geographical gap, language gap, cultural gap, economic gap etc. Despite this, there have been efforts for social change from the local levels. One such significant effort was made by *Janakiram* High School in the development of education in this region, and especially in Doti district.

Some fifty years ago, when the society was lost in the darkness of illiteracy, *Janakiram* High School first enkindled the light of education and drove away darkness from the villages. If we talk in the whole context of Nepal, there are only few educational institutions which have been established locally and have run for such a long time without any interruption. We can easily imagine what the condition of Doti might have been in those times, and how difficult it might have been to work there, when it is still considered a remote place. If we look at the achievements of *Janakiram* High School so far, we find that there have been efforts for social reform using the means of education. Under the leadership of social reformer Dr. *Chandrakant Phulara* and with the support of the locals, a movement for social change took place from the days of its establishment.

Study and research of the contributions made by *Janakiram* High School look relevant in today's context in different respects, such as:

**People's Participation:** The place where *Janakiram* High School and its buildings are situated now was earlier known as [REDACTED] hill under *Mallagaon* VDC. The different

buildings constructed on the hill, such as the school building, the hostel, Ram Mandir (Temple) were constructed through *shramdaan* (labour donation) of the locals and students. Maybe every student who studied here in the initial days of its establishment remembers this fact well. Every Friday, students contributed labour in one way/form or another. >>47>> Now organizations which are used to depending on donors to carry out development activities should learn from this instance of the High School that development can take place through local effort and participation.

In fact, money is not the only resource. If labour from the local levels can be properly utilized and if there is proper leadership, social asset and capital can be created, as evidenced by the case of this school.

Inclusive Development and Gender Equality are some of the topics many people are familiar with today, and are taken as the models of development. But half a century ago, with the founding of *Janakiram* High School, the Dalits and women were provided with free education and their access to school was improved. It was an effective effort towards inclusive development and gender equality – a step taken some 50 years ago.

Community Ownership is one other thing. When people have invested their labour and effort in building any institution, they also develop a sense of ownership. The local people had an extensive role in the establishment of this school and in managing the necessary physical resources; people in the villages consider it to be their own school.

Social Mobilization is another important thing to learn from *Janakiram* High School. A certain means is required in order to drive a society towards a certain direction, means through which people can come together and share their thoughts and ideas. In the context of *Janakiram* High School, such means were Mahesh Ramayan Sabha and *Janakiram* Mandir. The devotional prayers and songs, the recitation of Ramayan, the staging of plays, etc. created an environment for villagers to come together and share their thoughts and ideas and discuss aspects of social development at a time when there were no means of communication like we have today. Along with prayers and songs, there were discussions related to social awareness, which bred the feeling among the marginalized people that they needed to be involved in the affairs of social development, for example by building schools, temples, roads, etc. The social mobilisers working in different development projects today cannot even imagine that society can be mobilized this way.

In sum, the present generation of today can learn a great deal from how *Janakiram* High School was established and how it gradually evolved into a high school, a higher secondary school, and a Bachelor level college. Likewise, by studying how it was able to contribute to the development of education in that region, how it was successful in social mobilization, the present generation can learn a lot.

**Looking Back at the Achievements of Janakiram Higher Secondary School  
over the Last Fifty Years**

by Prithviraj Phulara, Ex-Principal, Janakiram Higher Secondary School

*From Janakiram's 'Golden Jubilee Souvenir' magazine 2067 (2010-2011), pp.46-47,  
translated by Ram K Tiwari*

>>32>> In this Smarika [Souvenir] which is being published on the occasion of the Golden Jubilee of Janakiram Higher Secondary School of Mallagaon, Doti, I attempt to make an account of the historical background of the school, the challenges and constraints in running it, the progress made by it and the contribution made by the school to the locals here. I am doing this on the basis of my long-term involvement with the school. This article can be considered as an historical description of the school.

**The historical context in the establishment of the school:**

Despite the political changes which began in 2007 BS (1950-1951), for many years there was failure to establish schools in the rural areas of the Far-West. The lack of education was breeding poverty, unemployment, superstition and social malpractices such as human trafficking. The status of women was not that satisfactory. The condition of the Dalits was pathetic. There was a striking need to overthrow these social ills and a social change was deemed very necessary. In this context, Dr. Chandrakant Phulara decided to leave his government job and dedicate himself to bringing about change in society. With that determination in mind, he held some discussions with the intellectuals and educationists of [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] Garkha, and decided to form a social organisation through which they could organize programmes of education and community development. Based on this, a social organisation called Mahesh Ramayana Sabha was set up in 2014 BS (1957-1958). The local intellectuals and educationists were involved in it. This organisation then built the Ram Mandir (Temple) on the hill of [REDACTED] in order to create spiritual and religious awareness. The place was then named as *Ramkuti*. Later they decided to open an educational institution at the same place, to which the locals there assured that they would provide necessary help. Then the donation drives started, the erection of the buildings of the schools was started, and labour support from the locals was taken. In the same year of 2014 BS (1957-1958), this organisation started the *Ramkuti* Primary School. In 2016 BS (1959-1960), Sanskrit [REDACTED] was also opened in this place. The writer of this article was also involved in these different institutions from the year 2014 BS, and worked as a non-paid teacher in the Primary School for 6 months.

In the election held in 2015 BS (1958-1959), [REDACTED] Phulara gained victory and was later made Minister of Forestry. [REDACTED] Phulara then advised Dr. Chandrakant Phulara to open a high school in *Ramkuti*, and also assured him that permission to run the school would be provided. Then he made the then MPs [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] submit the application to open the school. He helped gain a donation from the government in 2016 BS (1959-1960), and also to acquire the permission to open the school in the year 2017 BS (1960-1961).

### **The running of *Janakiram High School*:**

*Janakiram High School* was formally inaugurated by the then Chief of Doti Region, Mr. [REDACTED] on 15<sup>th</sup> of Jestha, 2017 BS (1960-1961). I was made the acting Principal of the School until a headmaster was appointed. Teaching was conducted through teachers working at other local educational establishments. >>33>> Efforts were also made to search for new teachers, while in the meantime, the teachers of [REDACTED] Public High School, making various demands, resigned en masse. So Dr. *Chandrakant Phulara* and I went to Silgadhi and brought two of those teachers from there...

Dr. *Chandrakant Phulara* was a person of talents. He lived a simple lifestyle, and was known for his white kurtha, white lungi, and yellow towel around his neck. He had the capacity and experience to mobilise the necessary human and economic resources for the construction of the school buildings. Moreover, people had faith in him, which made the managerial aspect of the school strong. Similarly, the ability of the Principal... to create a disciplined environment in the school and to run the teaching activities smoothly caused the school to be renowned far and wide. Because of its fame, students from all districts of the Far-West started coming to the school. Initially grades 6 to 8 were run in the school and in the year 2019 BS (1962-1963), the first batch of students took the SLC exams. In the first batch taking SLC exams, 3 passed, including... [2 who later became] the Prime Minister of Nepal... [and] the Rector of Tribhuvan University. The construction of buildings started in the year 2014 BS (1957-1958), and by 2016 BS (1959-1960), the primary school and Sanskrit school buildings were completed. The building of the High School was constructed in 2017 BS (1960-1961), and in the mean time, the buildings for the hostel were also constructed. Students coming from far places used to stay in the hostel. There was no facility for meals in the mess, and hence the students used to cook food in their own rooms and cleaned it themselves. So from the year 2017 BS (1960-1961) to 2022 BS (1965-1966), this school was known as the best school. ... The students during that time were disciplined, virtuous and dedicated to studies. They got happily involved in the construction works of the school such as in carrying stones, timber, drinking water pipes and such difficult tasks. Students also contributed labour (*shramdaan*) to build a small library building by themselves. When educational institutions were opened in *Ramkuti*, a small town emerged. A health post was built in 2021 BS (1964-1965). There were shops of some renowned merchants... and consequently this place ended up turning into a small trading centre. In the Ram Mandir of *Ramkuti*, the students and teachers used to get involved in singing devotional songs and prayers on the occasions of Purnima, Ekadashi, Sankranti, etc. The worship, and the offerings made, by the Swami...in the mornings and evenings and his blowing of the conch used to thrill the whole of *Ramkuti*.

### **The condition of school during 2023 BS (1966-1967) to 2032 BS (1975-1976):**

When... [the] Headmaster [resigned] in 2022 BS (1965-1966), I took the responsibility of Acting Headmaster for a year. The old teachers started leaving, and we had to bring in teachers from India to run the school. The new teachers were inexperienced, and the teachers kept on changing frequently. This affected the quality of teaching in the school.

Moreover, the management of the school was not that active either. So the number of students started decreasing. I had been to Kathmandu to do my Bachelor of Education from 2024 BS (1967-1968) to 2026 BS (1969-1970), and to do a 15-month training course in 2028 BS (1971-1972). During this period, Dr. *Chandrakant Phulara* resigned from the post of Secretary. After his resignation... [others] took over that post. Most of the teachers at that time were from the *Phulara* family, which was met by some opposition from the locals. >>34>> Upon realizing this opposition, the teachers from the *Phulara* family resigned from the school. I was in Kathmandu during that time for my studies. During that time period, [various] *Phularas* [and others] and *Prithviraj Phulara* consecutively took the post of Headmaster of the school. Thus, for various reasons such as frequent turnover of teachers, instability in the Management Committee, and changing Headmasters, there was a negative impact on the school, and it was not able to perform well in the SLC exams. The school's loss went as high as 45,000 rupees, and was borne by *Prithviraj Phulara* and some other teachers. One positive thing during this period was the donation of 50,000, provided by the Former Prime Minister [REDACTED], for the construction of a school building.

### **The school after the implementation of the National Education System (2028-2032):**

The National Education System Project was implemented in Doti from 1<sup>st</sup> of Paus, 2032. The implementation of this project brought about many changes in the sector of education in the country.

Changes brought about by this project:

- Determination of the national objectives of education
- Determination of the structure and organisation of schools
- Improvement in the curriculum and textbooks
- Improvement in the education administration and supervision system
- Emphasis on vocational education
- Improvement to the examination system
- Provision of mandatory training for teachers
- Introduction of clear policy regarding financial support to schools
- Start of National Development Service
- Effective implementation of the Education Rules

After the project was implemented, our school also saw many new changes. First, a survey of the school was carried out. Based on the report by the survey team, the school was divided into three levels: primary level for grades 1-3, lower secondary level for grades 4-7, and secondary level for grades 8-10. Similarly, the number of teachers was allocated according to the number of students in each level. So, one teacher's seat was allocated at the primary level, two at the lower secondary level and five at the secondary level. In the course of reorganizing the subjects, some teachers from this school were transferred to other schools. Likewise, the school would also get 100 percent donation for the teachers' salary at the primary level, 75 percent for teachers' salary at the lower secondary level, and 50 percent at the secondary level. New subjects were also introduced based on the curriculum. Agriculture was made a vocational subject. The materials necessary for science laboratories and the equipment necessary for agriculture

were also provided by the Education Office. A workshop hall was also built for agriculture. There were also changes in the examination system, with internal and external evaluation. The teachers would be busy filling in the evaluation forms. The Management Committee was converted into a Supporting Committee, and again Dr. *Chandrakant Phulara* was nominated as the President of the Supporting Committee. The National Development Service (NDS) programme was launched. In the first year of this programme, three NDS students were assigned to work in this school. This process of NDS students coming to our school continued for another three or four years. The hiring of teachers and officials from its private source put a financial burden on the school. The financial condition of the school could not improve because it could not increase the tuition fees for students. The District Education Officer and Supervisors would come to school to supervise the activities in the school. In 2038 BS (1981-1982), the curriculum was amended, and some changes were made to the structure and organisation of the school. Grades 1-5 were considered to be the primary level, grades 6-8 the lower secondary level, and grades 9-10 the secondary level. It was also during this time that some improvements were made regarding the teaching and learning in the schools. >>35>> Activities were held at the district level to encourage extra-curricular activities, and this brought new energy among the students and teachers. The loss that had been incurred by the school until the year 2032 BS (1975-1976) was covered. The school moved to the new building being constructed... in 2033 BS (1976-1977).

When the “Education and Rural Development Project” started in Seti zone, many changes took place in the school. I find it necessary to shed some light on those changes.

The rural places of Nepal had been backward in respect of development in education. So in order to improve this situation, a project was launched with the help of UNESCO. The economic resources required for this project were to be provided by the then His Majesty’s Government and other international organizations such as UNDP, UNESCO and AGFUND. The first experiment of this project was carried out in Seti Zone in 2038 BS (1981-1982). The CTA of this project was Nicholas Bennet, a British man who was a very experienced educationist. This project caused big changes in the field of education. It came up with the following programmes to improve the field of education:

- Establishment of Resource Centres and group schools
- Running of classes for adult education and classes related to trafficking of girls
- Setting up of reading centers in villages
- Introduction of short-term and long-term training
- Construction of buildings and improvements in infrastructure

This project was launched in two Resource Centres of Doti... [one being] *Mallagaon*... A total of 16 Resource Centres were established in Doti. The activities of the whole project were to be carried out from the Resource Centres, and hence the Centres had to be made financially sound. This was the objective of the project too. The duties of the Resource Centres were the following:

- Supervision of group schools and holding of Friday meetings of teachers
- Running of classes for adult education and classes related to trafficking of girls
- Setting up of reading centres in villages

- Organisation of extra-curricular activities at the Resource Centre level

As *Janakiram* Secondary School was located in *Mallagaon*, the Resource Centre established there was called *Mallagaon* Resource Centre. To run this Centre, the project would provide a monthly donation equivalent to the salary of a B.Ed. teacher, plus a 100 rupee bonus for the Principal. It would also provide the Centre with a lump sum in order to run training courses and to provide food. Besides these, the project would also provide money for the construction of school buildings, playgrounds, fences, and drinking water. Initially there were 12 schools under this Resource Centre. The duration of this project was of 5 years initially, which was later extended by 5 more years, making it a 10-year project. The teachers of this Resource Centre actively participated in the activities undertaken during the project phase, and so it was ranked as the first among the other Centres of the district. During the project, the teachers under this Centre were provided with training and this improved the teaching and learning environment of the school. In addition to that, there was also improvement in the financial status of the school. The school gained greater prestige in the district, and the teachers got opportunities for educational tours in many other districts. The Principal of this school *Prithviraj Phulara*, also got the opportunity to go to Thailand for a 19-day educational trip. During the final years of the project, however, there was not much activity in the school, and the achievement began to decline.

#### **After the project:**

New schools were established in the area nearby this school. The number of students was decreasing, and there was a need for better management of the school and for increasing the number of students, as well as for proper management of the hostel. >>36>> [REDACTED] was given the responsibility of running the hostel. When the mess was run, it attracted students from faraway places and the number of students increased. After the hostel facilities were run, it also brought improvements to the SLC results, a trend which is continuing till today.

#### **After being a higher secondary school:**

When the Higher Secondary Education Board was set up in 2049 BS (1992-1993), a donation collection drive took place in order, in the first instance, to acquire affiliation from the Board. The rule was that one had to deposit a fixed amount of 400,000 rupees in order to gain affiliation from the Board. So for this Dr. *Chandrakant Phulara* collected donations in Kathmandu and Kailali. The members of the School Management Committee, and the school teachers, participated in the collection of donations from the villages nearby the school and in the neighbouring VDC of [REDACTED]. Aid was received from the Doti District Development Committee and the Silgadhi Municipality. Most of the teachers and officials of this Resource Centre donated a month's salary for the purpose. The names of those donating more than 10,000 rupees were listed in the inscription in the school, and that is still there. So, when the Board gave affiliation to 38 schools in 2049 BS (1992-1993), this school was in the 38th position. To run a higher secondary school in a village there was a difficult task in those days. It was also difficult to find a teacher with a Master's degree to teach English. But fortunately enough we found Mahesh Nair, an Indian national from Kerala, who was teaching in

Pabitra Boarding School in Silgadhi, who came to our school and taught English for a year. [A teacher] ...from Doti Campus came to teach part-time as a teacher of Nepali. In the second year, Mahesh Nair brought us another Indian named Sanjaya Kumar Naudiyal to teach English. Similarly, [a *Phulara*] taught Nepali part-time in the following year. The other subjects were taught by the secondary level teachers of *Janakiram* Secondary School. ...

In around 2051 BS (1994-1995), demands were made of volunteers. Dr. [REDACTED] *Phulara* went to the office of VSO and asked Joanna Elliott to be sent as a volunteer. After Joanna served as a volunteer for a three-year term, the school also got volunteers for two more terms. The service done by Joanna Elliott is praiseworthy. She arranged for assistance by the British Embassy in the construction of a girls' hostel, and also for scholarships from *CEW* of Great Britain for girls, Dalits and the backward classes, which are still in place. In this way, the period after 2039 BS (1982-1983) was a rather pleasant one for the school. To get upgraded to higher secondary school, to have VSO volunteers serve in the school, to have constructed the girls' hostel from the British Embassy and to receive *CEW* scholarships for the students are good achievements during this period. So until 2057 BS (2000-2001) the time when I retired from service in the school, the condition of the school was very good, and this is much the same to date.

This school, which was named *Janakiram*, with the objective of inspiring the people of this region to lead an ideal life similar to that of Lord Rama's, has remained one of the prestigious schools of the Far-West region. In the 50 years since its inception, some of the alumni have held dignified political positions to lead the country as prime minister, minister and state minister. >>37>> While hundreds of graduates have held dignified positions, such as doctor, engineer, lawyer, judge, attorney general and professor, hundreds of others are engaged in the respectable profession of teaching. Hundreds of students have been contributing to the development of the country through involvement in business and industries. The number of students who dropped out of school because they could not pass the SLC exams is also high. Even though they are not in employment, they are still running their households on the basis of the education they received, and they are improving their lifestyle. In the early days of establishment, the number of girl students was low but has increased a great deal now. Most of the girls have passed SLC and are engaged in higher studies. Although the school had aimed to provide free education for Dalits, who have been for ages lagging far behind in education, their number was very low in the beginning years. Now their number is also seen to be gradually increasing. Many of them have passed SLC and are involved in further higher studies, and many have got jobs too. In this way, many students have benefitted from this school. As far as I have learnt, the reality is that for whatever progress the school has made ever since its establishment, the credit should go to the selfless service of the social workers and well-wishers of education. During my tenure as Principal, all the teachers played a cooperative role; they were actively involved in the teaching activities; and they provided the necessary support for construction, etc. All this helped raise the standard of the school to newer heights. We also got enough help from the local people towards the development of the school. People from the school's surrounds... helped a great deal in the construction of the school, by, for example,

carrying loads of wood, leveling the land, etc. The school also considered the VDCs of [REDACTED] as its surroundings because the students of these VDCs have been studying in the school since its establishment. People of that region have also shown ownership of the school by making donations when higher secondary education was launched in the school.

Indian teachers also made an important contribution to the school from the days of its establishment. Because there were no Nepali teachers available, Indian teachers were brought to teach English, Maths and Science. [Named Indians] have carried out their teaching service in the school. The school also received the support of NDS students, and the volunteers from VSO and Peace Corps also contributed to the development of the school. The contribution made by Joanna Elliott from VSO is laudable, and the people of this region will remember her contributions forever.

I feel honoured to have got the chance to serve the school from its initial days. I got many opportunities of learning throughout the duration of my service there. I got the chance to study BEd as the teacher-in-service and also to have the 15-month training programme. As the Principal, I had a chance to go for many training programmes in different places. Similarly, with the support of the Seti Project, I also got the opportunity to go to Thailand on a 19-day trip. Being the Principal, I also got cordial support and honour from the people of this locality and the whole region. I received great honour from the school family and the locals when I had to go for mandatory retirement from my service. I am very much grateful for the honour.

But what contribution I have made to the school, and what good or bad behaviour I have shown are something that the school family and the people should evaluate.

I wish for the further progress and prosperity of the school.

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## APPENDIX 9C

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*From Ramkuti Jhalak [Glimpses of Ramkuti] by Pushkar Phulara, 2061 BS (2004-2005), translated by Hikmat Khadka*

### **Poem about the Place**

Some are still buds; some have blossomed; others are sprouting

May the *Rāmkuti* Temple always blossom like lotus.

Śiva is on the foothills; Gaurī is in proximity; [this is the] land of Rām and Sitā's residence

In this world, *karma* always makes one immortal; it keeps one's legacy alive for ages to come.

In the middle of Bel Caukā and *Rāmkuti* is [REDACTED], the lineage deity  
Everyone always follows the lineage deity [as their leader] and works [with him guiding them].

With a tiger as her vehicle, [a female deity] regularly goes around; her name is Durgā  
She is the younger sister of [REDACTED]; she has eight hands, who brings an end to the suffering of all kinds.

*Aṣṭami tithi* is the day for her worship, for the people who are interested  
I used to go for an audience of the sacred stone every time; I am so far away now, what  
can I do?

A hundred years ago, this [place] was known as [redacted]  
Around the first day of Bhādra, they used to offer *olko goli*.  
Preceding that, here the *Khadka* were influential  
The honeybees fed on their mustard and destroyed their entire crop.  
He whose arm was strong had things done as he said  
Not that [my] eyes witnessed [this], [I] heard what was told.  
[redacted] was the agricultural field where the *Khadka* planted mustard  
Seeing this, all the honeybees sat on mustard crops.  
The *Khadka* tied a string to the leg of the honeybee  
Keep [this] mustard of mine, [he said, as he] flared up with rage.  
The honeybees used to come to [redacted] to suckle on the mustard  
I have written what was told [to me]; God knows the reality.  
He used force; his soul became rusty  
I am dying for your sake; please worship me.  
A *pitar* [ancestor] from the *Rosyagaon* village even died  
The residents of *Rosyagaon* began to worship [her]; [she] became [redacted].  
Say the elderly of *Rosyagaon*, the legacy, hitherto, are  
Śiva, [redacted], [redacted], [redacted]: a journey to these four holy places.  
Some of [redacted]'s territory [belongs to the people of] the village of *Mallagaon*  
[I wonder] whether God created the soil of this place.  
When it's monsoon, vetch and gram lentils are sown in *Mallagaon*  
[I wonder] whether [redacted], the lineage deity, created this place.  
[redacted] is the powerful one in the [redacted] everyone knows  
[Our] ancestors started a tradition; we all followed it.

With [redacted], the deity [redacted] forged a ritual bond  
Either the ungrateful person runs the country, or the clever one does.  
I will play a round of music, my ritual bond friend, you take to the dance floor  
Saying *this is an offer from my ritual bond friend*, he became the first to dance.  
Above [redacted] and [redacted], there is a large pilgrimage spot  
Pure people enter that greatly sacred place.  
The power of the [redacted] deity is such that one can dance up to their knees in burning  
coal without being hurt  
The sense of devotion is strong; all the people from that place are pure.  
The *tithi* of the deity falls during the festival in Kārtik  
In whose favour the [redacted] deity is, in his dreams a serpent shall appear.  
On the night of *caturdaśī*, worship is performed for that very [redacted]  
Forgive me the ignorance; I shall say what I know.  
A list of items committed to [redacted] has been prepared  
No one is interested [anymore] in the culture and lineage deity.  
In those days, the ritual offering for the [redacted] deity was collected from the [redacted]  
By asking for five fistfuls of husked rice from every doorstep.  
[The collector] didn't mind the rain and shine; he collected the ritual offering from the  
[redacted]

The untamed growth of vegetation of Bhadau left him in great exhaustion.  
The ritual offering collector rested above the village of [redacted]  
Sleep came to the tired man; sleep became his friend.

When he woke up, it was past the time to make the offering at dawn  
The ritual offering collector was embarrassed; the ritual offering remained at the [redacted].  
In the location, where the ritual offering was left behind, fruits were all ripe  
The residents of the [redacted] were seeking an audience of the [redacted] [deity] in close  
vicinity.

The good people from the garkhā committed to raising funds  
The promising [people] of the land, all of them, thought positively for development.  
[redacted], [redacted] and also Chandrakant  
And [redacted], [redacted], [redacted].

They used their contacts; everyone considered it their responsibility  
There was not a single person who didn't bring a thousand; the money was collected.  
Whether it was out of kindness or fear, [but] how honest [the people were]  
Fundraising meetings were held every Friday.  
Preserving the tradition, from Doti's [redacted] village  
Attaching value to culture, was a person named [redacted].  
He attached great importance to culture and tradition  
[redacted] made a donation of 500 [rupees].

In 1971 BS (1960-1961), the secondary school opened; in 1972 (1961-1962)  
[redacted] from [redacted] [invited fundraisers to meet him at the] Kailālī Land Tax Office.  
He gave a thousand [rupees] in donation, [imagine] its worth in those days  
The name of a man who makes a donation shall live on forever.

The teachers in those days received half the salary  
The Brāhmins were engaged in regular worship, none tilled the earth.  
A teacher from outside was offered a higher salary  
He only took some [of that money] for his food expenses, considering a close friend.  
For 200 Indian rupees, [redacted] came to serve  
[He experienced] great difficulty and worked hard; his name shall live on.  
[redacted] received 200 Nepali rupees  
He did well in the job he was asked to do, considering the organisation his own.

While some money was paid as salary, other was saved in the trust fund  
[...] spoke of constructing a building, with the enthusiasm he possessed in those times.

The time for laying the foundation stone was determined  
A building resembling a palace was constructed; building-worship and purification  
rituals were performed.

The school incurred a loss; the salaries that were paid were only half  
*Don't worry, I'm here [to protect you]*, said the deity [redacted].

The people of two regions voted for [redacted], who won  
The Rāñā regime collapsed because of the power of the gun.  
[redacted] was a minister for 18 months

Water supply arrived in Shilgadhi Bazaar, away went [people's] thirst.

The minister provided huge financial support to the school

Where Lakṣmi is stable, there lives Saraswati.

There were other founders, too, but most of the credit goes to him

While I try hard to control my heart, I fail to do so.

The *nyāu* bird likes the melodies of spring

Bāje's voice reverberated like a trumpet and a harmonium.

There are many types of addiction, one of which is of social service

Complete with brain and brawn, as though having won over destiny.

At the [Rām] Mandir, he had employed [redacted]

Seasons repeat every year, but people once departed never return.  
Bāje wore a yellow *kurtā*, his *dhoti* was also of the same colour  
[He made people work on the construction] in mornings and evenings when it was not  
so hot.

Around the temple grew mango and guava trees  
Were there other people to help, or did you complete the work alone?

Some called him a nobleman, while others called him a *jogī*  
A man called [redacted] was his big supporter.  
Sometimes I am nostalgic about the school; today I am nostalgic about the forest  
Mangoes and guavas were consumed during the prayer, I wonder if they are raw now.  
The organisation constructed a building for a shop  
To those who gave a selfless donation, [Lord] Rām gave a boon.  
That shop made available pens and notebooks for students  
It also sold consumable items, what a wonderful thing!  
Health [facilities] also became necessary for the people and for the school  
Land also became available for the construction of a health facility.  
A health centre was opened, which I also saw [with my own eyes]  
[redacted] was the doctor, [I know from memory] so I have written.  
Even in a place like this, there are four health shops today  
Customers benefited from an increased number of shops; it was a good thing.  
[When it came to] contributing labour to the organisation, and also donating funds  
[redacted] *gāun* was not backward, no matter what task it was.  
The Seti Project gave a school building  
When carrying timber [for the building], one person even lost his life.  
His name was [redacted]; he was from [redacted] *gāun*  
His father's name was [redacted].  
Every village in [redacted] has contributed their sweat  
There isn't a single person, or a single group, that has not contributed.  
[redacted] accepted a contract, considering it his own task  
The ground was levelled with oxen; people were pleasantly surprised by the oxen  
contribution.

Some of the work was accomplished through contract, other through contribution of  
labour

[As a result] the hill became a level field, thank God!  
God's prayer, devotion: Sitā, Lakṣmaṇ, Rām  
[redacted] spoke up for the organisation, bringing up practical matters.  
He was considered an important basis for operating the organisation  
He was a lover of the organisation, a lover of the place; he knew from the heart.  
His son, [redacted], for two years  
Became headmaster, participating as a teacher.  
Even in those times, the school did well at this place  
His home was close by; for that reason he lived in the village.  
At the time, [redacted] used to work as a teacher  
He devoted his heart and soul for a social cause.  
The drinking water project arrived with his great support  
In order to collect free labour, he migrated from village to village.  
The population of the *Khadka* was the largest; they did a great job  
The school moved to [redacted]; the burden of moving fell on communal shoulders.  
The timber from [redacted] in [redacted] needed to be transferred to the other side of the river  
[Seti]

The river in December, with its freezing water, was a killer.  
Members were [redacted], [redacted] and [redacted].  
A social worker teacher from [redacted] was [redacted].  
If I were to name everyone, whose names should I mention? This was everyone's  
devotion

In everyone's hearts lies the power of [the Goddess] Saraswati.  
In 2024 BS (1967-1968), a shop was opened  
Work was done for the benefit of the organisation, regardless of loss to self.

The drinking water project arrived; they reached up to [redacted]  
Saying *the Pundit shall take them away*, all the notorious people hid away.  
For his society, Pundit [redacted]  
Gave suggestions to the organisation, by participating himself.  
For some time, [redacted] worked as headmaster  
*How he beats his pupils*, teachers used to say.  
[redacted] was a student; [redacted] was the headmaster  
The administration was strong; if asked to stand up, [the pupils] had to freeze.  
Gazes the serpent from Lord Śiva's head  
Education lovers, now let us go for the higher secondary level.  
From 2017 BS (1960-1961) to 2049 (1992-1993), this was a secondary school  
In order to upgrade it to the higher secondary level, [the people of] the [redacted] came  
together.

Not only [redacted], but also [redacted]  
[redacted], [redacted] and [redacted].  
The places [redacted] and [redacted] are in [redacted], on the other side of the River Seti  
Please protect the families of kind and gentle people.  
The entire [redacted] fell in the [redacted] VDC  
Now that [redacted] and [redacted] are closer together, we might meet again some time.  
Staff and teachers [donated their] one month's salary  
Schools opened everywhere; in some places, clubs were set up.  
*The school has run us into a loss*, said some ignorant people  
Even in broad daylight, there was darkness in their hearts; the night cried forever.  
When they must die, pigeons die together  
Look where man has reached; we are stuck with the same old mindset.

Some people are such in our [redacted]  
They hide from society, in the Bhadaure monsoon.  
There is no dearth of buildings; the teachers are also there  
Look where man has reached; contemplate in your hearts.  
A [redacted] brother made a donation to the best of his capacity  
Saraswati became pleased; she *swelled* with delight.  
Staff and teachers were all supportive  
None of the people who hoped to have an education were deprived.  
[redacted] from Kailali was in Kathmandu  
He made every contribution he needed to make for the organisation.  
With Doctor *bāje*, Dr. [redacted]  
In Kathmandu, he took the lead, filling his heart with thrill and colour.  
He supported the organisation, as a relative  
All of the desired tasks were accomplished within a week.  
People from Silgadhi Bazaar were in Kathmandu  
They donated to the school; their hearts were big.

Silgadhi and *Mallagaon* are the same [not different]  
Their hearts knew how to develop connections and places.  
With everyone's support, the school became higher secondary  
Feeling good, in good places, the kind people heard [our plight].  
[redacted] and [redacted] gave a good donation  
For their support to the organisation, they were recognised by society.  
[redacted] and [redacted] ([redacted]) made a donation  
At dusk, the portrait of the village was painted in their hearts.

Those who remember this soil are men from this land  
They are far-sighted, high thinkers and very rich in their hearts.  
Some went on to become prime ministers; others became educators  
The trees of the role they assumed grew taller; they shone like stars in the sky.  
A bite of rice and bread, which I am eating, is the fruit of my *karma*  
Doti District Development [Committee] gave the highest donation.  
[redacted] made the second highest donation  
Villages lit up; society has become bright today.  
Dr. *Chandrakant* made the third highest donation  
His heart became peaceful after noting the progress made by the higher secondary  
school.

Protect us; forgive us, oh, Goddess Kālikā  
Dipayal Silgadhi Municipality made the fourth highest donation.  
They donated from 10 to 30 thousand bank notes  
The school in *Mallagaon* welcomes financial support.  
Those who made a big donation, their name was inscribed on a plaque  
The greatness of one's status and family thus became known.  
[redacted] was the chairman of the higher secondary school  
Visionary and high thinking, service was provided free of charge.  
The headmaster and chairman spoke every day  
The idea of opening a hostel was conceived.  
To learn more about opening a hostel, they went to Silgadhi  
They gathered the information and knowledge they required to do so.  
At the centre, Dr. *Phulara* did all the work  
The villages and places have been identified in society today.

Lighting up a lamp of education, oh, the star of west [Nepal]  
Friends and families, brothers and relatives, with support from everyone.  
The hostel was constructed; girls were admitted  
People worked for the welfare of the organisation, removing worries of the heart.  
A demand for a VSO volunteer was made for two years  
For a social cause, Joanna came to participate  
Although she had come for two years, she stayed three  
She partook in [people's] happiness and sorrow, entirely like a local.  
For the poor, Joanna brought in *CEW*  
She herself identified the poor and bright girls.  
Even in 2015 BS (1958-1959), he already had an IA  
He was the only person from our region to have a high degree.  
The secondary school received permanent authorisation; the position of headmaster was  
offered [to him]  
Even during temporary status, he was the one, who else?  
He provided continuous service as headmaster

A ripe papaya is needed as a source of Vitamin A.  
An experienced local, this was *Prithviraj Phulara*  
From the very beginning to his retirement, he went nowhere else.  
The vines of arum and pumpkin are sources of vitamin  
No songs of praise, for this son of learning, will ever be enough.  
Now, this place has become the residence of Saraswati  
Translate science into practice; remember the history.  
Whatever task was assigned was done well; a report was submitted  
*Janakiram* became a model school in west [Nepal].

Has the hunger been satiated, oh, the soil of this earth  
Some of the things I wrote from practical knowledge, others from advice.  
The headmaster after *Prithviraj* was *Jungbahadur*  
To work wholeheartedly was also his ambition.  
From being a student of this school, he went on to become a headmaster  
He now works as a social mobiliser.  
Oh, Viśṇu from Heaven, where are you? Enter every heart  
Times have changed, who is in whose hands?

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#### APPENDIX 9D

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#### **Dr Chandrakant: From my Perspective**

by *Parbatinath*, Teacher, *Janakiram* Higher Secondary School

*From Janakiram's 'Golden Jubilee Souvenir' magazine 2067 (2010-2011), pp.46-47,  
translated by Ram K Tiwari*

>>28>> Dr. *Chandrakant* was a personality of multiple talents. He had the unique qualities of courage, patience and dedication. He also had good leadership qualities. He led well the people of his region in the establishment of *Janakiram* Temple at *Mallagaon* in 2014 BS (1957-1958), and in the founding of the Primary School and in the setting up of a Secondary School like *Janakiram* High School. From his family sources, it is learnt that he was born on 19th of Mangsir, 1976 BS (1919-1920). I knew him only since the year 2015 BS (1958-1959). Dr. *Chandrakant* had a handsome physique and a sound mind in a sound body. He had a fair complexion and was tall, and his sweet speech could enchant anyone. 15<sup>th</sup> of Jestha 2011 (1954-1955) was a very important date for the people of this region, because an establishment offering higher education, such as *Janakiram* High School, was being established here. It was however a matter of great challenge to have it established here in those times. This is because there were no schools in most of the district headquarters of Nepal then. So, in such a context, how could schools be set up in the villages? Nowadays, it has become commonplace to have high schools; high schools, higher secondary schools and educational institutions for bachelors' and masters' studies are found in almost all places.

Dr. *Phulara* was relentlessly involved in the advancement of the High School from the year 2017 BS (1960-1961) onwards. He had a habit of addressing the students and teachers of the school during the time of morning assembly prayers. It might have been

his intent to make students disciplined and teachers dutiful through various kinds of *upadesh* (teaching, preaching, sermon, exhortation). I vividly remember the speech given by him in one of the assembly prayers. I was a student of grade 10 then when he recited a Sanskrit shloka and explained the meaning to us. The Sanskrit shloka was:

‘True knowledge gives discipline, from discipline comes worthiness.  
From worthiness one gets wealth, from wealth one does good deeds [one’s duty/ the  
right thing], from that comes wellbeing.’<sup>43</sup>

Now that there is a serious dearth of discipline, I often remember the importance of these words as expressed by Dr. *Phulara*. It was his common habit to deliver such lectures in the morning prayers every day, and to take part in the Friday programmes.

Even now, I think of Dr. *Chandrakant Phulara* as if he were from another world. There used to be different devotional prayers and songs being played in *Ramkuti* Temple almost every day. The students living in the hostel and the other public used to participate in such prayers and songs. Dr. *Phulara* used to play the harmonium during those sessions and his way of playing was of a very attractive type. It could lure everybody. Along with that talent for playing the harmonium, he was also a good singer. His artistic skills could make everyone become immersed in the songs and prayers for the divine. ...

[The area]... was called *Ramkuti* later after some time, which can be heard at times today. But the name *Mallagaon* has been more popular than otherwise. Dr. *Chandrakant* was talented in delivering speeches, singing songs, playing musical instruments. But that was not all. He also had the skills of carpentry, and, when the buildings were being constructed in the school, he used to get involved in it and teach others how to do things. >>29>> He had the knowledge of construction and carpentry. The buildings that he was involved in constructing are no longer present, but when they were, they were in a good condition. So, when he was directly involved in construction work along with the workers there, doesn’t it show his dedication to his work? Dr. *Phulara* was therefore dedicated and hard-working.

I also remember another incident related to Dr. *Phulara*. He had the holy objective of improving the educational status of the school, of having quality education and of discouraging any acts of cheating among students. I was taking the exams of grade 8 then, and, when I was passing my answer sheet to one of my friends, Dr. *Phulara* got hold of it, and slapped me a couple of times. So, readers, you can imagine how dedicated he was in different activities in the school.

Time is ever changing. A single person cannot provide leadership for a long time. But isn’t Dr. *Phulara*’s uninterrupted involvement in the school from 2017 BS (1960-1961) to 2032 BS (1975-1976) a big contribution to the field of education? However, he still provided leadership for a few more years after 2032 BS (1975-1976).

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<sup>43</sup> Translation of the shloka from: <http://blog.practicalsanskrit.com/2009/07/knowledge-leads-to-happiness.html> (Site accessed 02/04/13)

In 2049 BS (1992-1993), when efforts were being made to upgrade the high school to the higher secondary level, Dr. *Phulara* was staying in retirement in Kailali. But he again became active in this plan. We, the teachers in the hills, were involved in collecting finances under the leadership of Principal *Prithviraj Phulara*, while Dr. *Phulara* was involved in collecting donations from the towns like Kathmandu. Although he was old, nothing stopped him from making contributions to the field of education; he was active without pause. I also remember an incident when he had come to the hills in the course of collecting donations, and, upon seeing us not being that active, he got a bit angry with us.

While he was worthy of our respect, he was also a guardian to us all. Regarding the qualities he had, there is another quality that must not be forgotten at any cost. He was selfless in the way he got involved in the work, and he didn't devote much time towards his family. In the initial days, as I remember, as a man clad in dhoti and a yellow towel, he used to visit door to door collecting donations. So, he made a big contribution in accumulating a big sum of money when this education institution was being founded. Although he had 2 wives, 8 sons and 4 daughters in his family, he did not put his family over the school in terms of priority. Where can we find such a quality now? But let us also remember that those who do good deeds are rewarded with good fruits. His family and offspring have prospered quite a lot owing to his deeds.

The extent of his dedication to social service is shown by the fact that he gave up a government job. His parents had passed away when he was young, and his economic condition was not that strong. Despite that, he had faith in and dedication to social service, which he believed could be carried out through the light of education. It was this faith that caused him to quit the government job and made him relentlessly involved in the sector of education.

Dr. *Chandrakant* had yet another quality: the ability to make decisions. He could take decisions in favour of the school no matter what circumstances he was in, and how risky it was. For instance, in 2028 BS (1971-1972), the teachers of the school resigned en masse from their job for a local reason. Dr. *Phulara* accepted the resignation without showing any signs of panic. This incident shows clearly that he had a great ability to make decisions.

No words are adequate to appreciate Dr. *Phulara*. And words from this ignorant mind of mine cannot be adequate either. I would like to request everyone to preserve and sustain the contributions made by him, and to establish a Foundation under his name to honour his contribution. And with that Foundation, let us all get involved in the betterment of education. It would be a real homage to him.

Mallagaon: A Memory

by [REDACTED] Trivedi Chairman and Central Member Nepal Disabled Organisation,  
Kailali.

*From Janakiram's 'Golden Jubilee Souvenir' magazine 2067 (2010-2011), pp.46-47,  
translated by Ram K Tiwari*

>>78>> The students of *Ramkuti* were looked upon by people of the nearby regions with love and affection. The foundational pillars of the school's development were the then social condition, mutual cooperation and unity. Speaking of the school's infrastructure construction, much of the construction work happened through *shramdaan*. In those times, there were no social organizations such as we have today, but people from the community used to unite for community development. Problems were solved, no matter what type they were. >>79>> Such a feeling was found among the students studying in *Janakiram* High School. The students used to participate in the construction, and in other activities, of the school.

There was no bitterness in the relations between the teachers and students. This can be considered to be one of the important aspects in the physical development of the school and the progress it made in education. The students used to accomplish their duties and responsibilities, given to them by the school administration. The students from the hilly regions used to flood into the school for studies, in those times. Studying at *Ramkuti* was like studying in Gurukul. The students from neighbouring villages would come to stay in the hostel. There was a good hostel facility too. There was no problem for students coming from faraway places to find a place to stay. The students used to study in their own rooms from 7 to 10 in the evening and from 4 to 7 in the morning. The teachers used to come for regular inspection. Once, a mess (for meal) was also started, but it could not continue for long.

The all-dimensional development of *Janakiram* High School was possible with the leadership of the respectable personality Dr. *Chandrakant Phulara* and the support from the education-loving of the region. This trend of development is still in place today. It can be believed that a disciplined and civilized tradition is the foundation stone for the development of an institution. At a time when there were no other schools except for [REDACTED] Public High School, it was due to the support of the education-loving and intelligent personality Dr. *Chandrakant Phulara* and others that *Janakiram* High School was able to shed the light of education in the Far-West region.

There was a rule in *Ramkuti* that devotional prayers and songs were sung on occasions like *Ekadashis* and *Purnimas*.<sup>44</sup> The students needed to be present there compulsorily. It can be said such religious activities inspired them to become disciplined. Although at the time the curriculum did not include extra (curricular) activities, they still took place at the school. In the year 2021 BS (1964-1965), in the last week of the month *Jestha*, a debate programme was held between the grade 10 students of *Janakiram* High School and [REDACTED] Public High School. Our team stood in the first position by securing 195 points. The organizer and sponsor of this programme was *Doti Hospital*. On some

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<sup>44</sup>Both fortnightly Hindu occasions.

occasions, there used to be singing competitions in the school. It was during the months of Mansir-Poush in 2020 BS (1963) that the Zonal Commissioner Mohan Bahadur Singh came to our school. To honour his coming there, we staged a play called “Ranke bhut” (a fire-torch bearing ghost). These were some of the types of extra-curricular activities in the school.

The environment during that time was *Janakiram*-prevailing. Such was the coincidence that the name of the temple was *Janakiram*, the name of the high school was *Janakiram*, the name of the Sanskrit school was *Janakiram*, and the Principal of our school was also *Janakiram*. More, the founders and those in the Management Committee were the devotees of Ram. It was such a unique instance.

*Janakiram* High School has been able to produce personalities such as politicians, professors, doctors, lawyers, teachers and social workers. So, an overall assessment indicates that the educational history of this school has been very strong and fertile.

Finally, I wish for the rapid progress of this institution. We have all been pleased to know that the school is going to celebrate its golden jubilee on the 15<sup>th</sup> of Jestha this year. I wish it success.

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#### APPENDIX 9F

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#### **The Devotee of Ram at Ramkuti**

by [REDACTED] Khadka... Doti

*From Janakiram's 'Golden Jubilee Souvenir' magazine 2067 (2010-2011), pp.46-47, translated by Ram K Tiwari*

>>39>> Ramayan Sabha was born (established) at [REDACTED] of Mallagaon village in [REDACTED] VDC, and then with the establishment of *Janakiram* Temple, the place became a very holy site of pilgrimage. And with the establishment of the Sanskrit School and *Janakiram* High School, this beautiful spiritual and holy land also earned fame for being a land of education and academics. The credit for this goes to Dr. *Chandrakant Phulara*. Born in a high class, *Phulara* had got education of Ayurveda even during the Rana rule. He was of a clean character, and stood firmly on the side of truth. He was never affected by any temptation and was a visionary, highly committed to his duties, democratic, spiritual, and he always followed the path of truth. Such a social philanthropist was Dr. *Phulara*, he was able to implant a strong sense of spirituality in the minds of the people and also lit the light of knowledge across villages. With an appropriate choice of qualified teachers, with a soft-spoken voice, cordial relations with his fellow teachers and caring attitude with the students, Dr. *Phulara* had made the whole school seem like a single family. He was an exemplary figure, keeping himself far from materialist temptations, and with his efficient guardianship and visionary personality, the parents of the students could feel that their children were studying in an environment suitable for moral and quality education.

But everyone – be it a politician, social reformer or a great human being – needs someone to give support in each and every step he takes, and someone experienced, selfless, with whom he can have a fruitful discussion regarding his future plans. Such support should also come from someone who encourages him not to lose patience even in the most difficult circumstances, and who shares both happiness and sorrow with him together. No matter how firmly determined a person is, his supporters provide him with the required energy, and can help him fight against the odds that he faces in his path of progress. There were some friends who accompanied Dr. *Phulara* too. In his frequent company were persons like... [four other named founders of the school including 3 *Phularas*], but of them the closest ones were... [2 *Phularas*]. Dr. *Phulara* was detached from materialist temptations and family life, but two... [others] were spiritually oriented and looked like ascetics in emotional and psychological respects. They were detached from their families and household chores, and they almost always spent all their time in Dr. *Phulara*'s proximity. This made it seem as though, although their bodies were different, they had a single heart and soul. Like Malasapati and Shyamalaji accompanying Shirdi Sai Baba, the two... accompanied Dr. *Phulara* always. They used to support each other and do things together. The aura of Dr. *Phulara*'s ascetic and meditative personality would brighten everyone who came nearby him. He used to deal with every dilemma and doubt with the verses of the Holy Gita and other scriptures. >>40>> And although I had to interrupt my studies, I experienced a lot of psychological change in my life, along with heightened confidence because of Dr. *Phulara*'s company. The two... who used to accompany Dr. *Phulara* often were also the personalities of good character, truthfulness, religious, spiritual and socially well-recognised. It created a good impression in society too. Dr. *Phulara* always had a smiling face. We used to see these three, the trio always together. When they met students, they used to have smiling faces and a pleasant disposition. In the hut of *Ramkuti* lived... [a learned person who had become so] through self-study, who used to distribute fresh fruits which he had grown himself.

People used to get scared to walk on the hills of... [the area] even during the broad daylight. It used to be the place of *Khadka* but later became vacant with his exploitation and suppression of people there. People used to believe that ghosts roamed around in the daytime, and that they might encounter some. In the year 2014 BS (1957-1958), Ram Mandir was established there with the tireless effort of Dr. *Phulara*. Then there were the sounds of conches and prayers where previously one could hear jackals howling. With such sounds, fears were blown away from the hearts of people and confidence grew. The sound of the blowing conch in the morning and evening made it seem that awareness had awakened in that region, that spirituality had been generated and that the suppressed, sinful feelings of people traversed the horizon, together with the sound of the blowing conch. The parents used to feel as if the sounds of conches were inviting them to send their children for education. The festivities during Ram Nawami and during the school anniversary used to attract more people to education.

Although the ascetic Dr. *Phulara* had detached himself from materialist pursuits, was clad in the dress of a yogi, and had been living the life of a sage, he was not free of

criticisms from people. *Phulara* used to hold discourses related to yoga and spirituality, and used to organise different activities in order to raise spiritual consciousness among the people. He was able to keep away the darkness from people by providing them with education. In the then existing circumstances, it was also natural for Dr. *Phulara* to get criticised because he was doing something new.

In 2017 BS (1960-1961), when there was the government of Nepali Congress, and [REDACTED] *Phulara* was the Minister of Forestry, a policy was adopted which stated that each constituency would have a high school. Based on this policy, financial support was provided, along with permission to establish one high school, and thereby this school was inaugurated in Jestha 15, 2017 BS (1960-1961). [A named individual] ...became the Headmaster. Likewise, *Prithviraj Phulara* also played an important role in the management of the school, by giving up his studies halfway. Other teachers also have had an important role during this process, by which the school became well-reputed in the Far-West. The students of this school were later able to occupy very important positions and responsibilities in the country. The former Prime Minister, [REDACTED], is one of the products/graduates of this school.

After an institution reaches an apex of progress, it is difficult to maintain the position and keep intact its reputation and glory. There are ups and downs in the lives of humans. >> 41>>So are there ups and downs for institutions, and the challenges facing institutions can be so huge that they can throw them into a tsunami of troubles. The beneficial words of spirituality, virtuous thoughts and yoga darshan (philosophy) reached out to people's minds, while the bright light of education was emitting its rays afar. But just as the moon is eclipsed by the fury of the angry Rāhu<sup>45</sup>, good deeds are, from time to time, polluted by the anger of devilish nature. Once, one such big fate hit *Janakiram* High School. It was during 2028/2029 BS (1972) during the months of winter. The school had failed to pass its students in SLC for three consecutive years, and the financial support from the Department of Education was about to stop. Intellectuals, social workers and other local officials had gathered to discuss the school's failure in SLC and consequential termination of financial support. When Dr. [REDACTED] was a Member of the National Panchayat, the school had received 50,000 rupees from UNICEF, to which the government would add 50,000 rupees and another 100,000 would be collected from the people. The money collected thus would be used to construct a model building. But the government would not grant that money unless it supervised the school and saw whether it would continue to exist or not. The 50,000 rupees that was received from UNICEF was inadequate to construct a building because it was too small an amount even to buy timber and stones. More, the land in which *Janakiram* School was then located was not enough to construct a building modeled by UNICEF. So it was a difficult moment indeed, and the real strength of society is known in the time of crisis like that. In this gathering, the people vented their anger against the school administration for not giving jobs to their people, for not waiving the fees of their children, for failing their children. So such expressions of anger and greed hurt Dr. *Phulara*, who lived with a clean and selfless heart, and brought about drastic changes in

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<sup>45</sup>Rāhu =The name of a *daitya* or demon (son of Vipracitti and Simhikā) who seizes the sun and moon and thus causes eclipses; -- (pop.) a troublesome fellow. [Iw. Sk. id.] (Explanation provided by the translator)

his thoughts. Even teachers, who had been working for a lower salary to add ghee to the lamp of education, had the golden opportunity to be relieved of their place and responsibilities. The deep and inner desire of these diligent academic folks, who emitted the light of education and had been forcibly tethered to the chain of duty, to abandon their place was fulfilled. “So who is responsible for bringing this school to such a condition now?” shouted... [a named individual]. He then went on to say: “Where are the wood and stones of [redacted] which was established in 2004 BS (1947-1948) and was torn down?” He was carrying a long stick and was shouting thus. The entire hall of gathering was reined in by silence. People started worrying whether something bad was imminent. In the meantime, [a named individual] ...added, “When the school was running well, you were making this school a centre of jobs for your kith and kin, and now when the school is at a loss, you are asking us to bear that loss?” So, thinking that the debate would take bitter turns, I said, “So when the school has such good and qualified subject teachers, why did the school achieve no results in the SLC exams for three long years?” That was a question which made many feel I had asked something inappropriate.

In this way, that was such a gathering of people, in which the questions raised hurt many. >>42>> Many also doubted why Dr. *Phulara* had shown the intention of going back to the family life by abandoning the holy spiritual one. Was such a change happening just because of the gathering, or was it because of the unsatisfactory behaviour of the fellow teachers? Or was it because he felt that he had done much for society through education by putting his family last, but later he was only rewarded with criticism rather than awards and praise, and so he was so hurt that he decided to go back to family life again? On this topic, if someone such as an historian would write his biography, he would definitely recognise the incomparable contribution that he had made for society. The academic folks, who had been relieved of their responsibilities, found even better places. Among them, some teachers abandoned the place, but they embedded in their hearts a sense of service, and have continued to work, directly or indirectly, for the progress of the school and the region. That big gathering, which ended up with such rounds of accusations, had made the students and parents worried that Dr. *Phulara* would resign forever, and that the teachers would also leave the school. It was an environment of uncertainty, and such an unexpected event was certainly a setback for the students – the hopes of the future.

I was studying in Kathmandu. I had completed my I.Sc. and was trying to get admitted onto the B.A. So, some time after that incident occurred, another big gathering was called at *Ramkuti*. Those who had spoken ill earlier did not attend it. But that was a day in which my life would take a new turn. It is not enough that one sets a goal. There isn't an alternative to treading along quietly on the path of destiny. I do not know the exact date in which that meeting was held, but it was the same gathering in which Dr. *Phulara* proposed me as the Secretary of Management of *Janakiram* High School. To this, my uncle... asked Dr. *Phulara* and everyone present there not to give me that opportunity because it was a big responsibility, and also, because I was a student, instead others should support me in my studies. So he said, “[redacted] is only a disciple of the society. We first need to make him a capable person, and make him someone who is

able to put forward his ideas in front of the whole world. After he becomes so, I would be happy for however big a responsibility he is given. But now, at a stage when he has an immature mind and a young life, he shouldn't be given a responsibility which was previously taken up by a notable and highly acclaimed personality." Then I made some request to all of them, and I remember the words I used in the course of that request. I said, requesting them, "It is everyone's duty to help me complete my studies and move ahead. Time and space have important meanings in a person's life. If someone reaches the right place at the right time, his life reaches the height of progress, but instead if someone neglects these, he has to face decline. >>43>> For instance, if a big boulder is falling from a steep hill, and if someone comes in the way of the boulder in the nick of time, it will result in an accident. Similar can be said of a bullet and someone who is in its way. Therefore, it is important that a person recognise the significance of time and place. A person should fulfill the responsibility he is given in the right way in the right place. I don't think I have that ability to shoulder the responsibility at this point of time. I haven't completed my studies, and hence provide me with the opportunities for studies, and relieve me of this responsibility." Then Dr. *Phulara* started telling many spiritual stories and moral verses. His personality was insurmountable, and his oratorical skills incomparable. So his words left me impressed and I got inspired to serve my society. He also promised that he would guide me in the future steps ahead. Prior to that, all the teachers had resigned... *Prithviraj Phulara* was in Kathmandu to do his B.Ed., or was preparing to leave for there. So everyone else except *Prithviraj* had resigned. The life of all the students had plunged into darkness. My uncle was a highly religious and dedicated person. He was worried about me, my future and especially how I, an immature person, could be able to take up the responsibility which previously Dr. *Phulara* had carried out. He was also worried whether I was able to face something bitter and challenging, such as Dr. *Phulara* had to face when working in this sector in society. His worry was also that I had to interrupt my studies and that I had to bear more economic burden, and that I had a short-sightedness in vision. I thought that everyone should get the fruits of his effort. I also needed to serve the society in which I was born, and that was my responsibility towards my birthplace, I thought. I had to remain far from my family and I was also heading towards uncertainties. In some ways my dreams had been shattered. >>44>>To keep my mind in control, I started remembering what George Bernard Shaw had said in his one act plays. God had not created us for nothing. Rather, he had created us to complete some of the duties which he had not completed doing. After we do our duties, God pulls up the ropes of our lives and that's the end. I was also inspired by the conversation between a bishop and a traveler in the book "Pundit's Puddle". There the traveler asks the bishop where he is going. To this, the bishop says, "I'm going to meet God in heaven." Then the traveler asks him again, "At times, I feel like asking God why he gives ways for injustice, epidemics and poverty in society." "What's stopping you from asking that", the bishop said. Then the traveler said, "Because I fear what response I would give him if he asks me that question."

We should be quite aware of our responsibilities before we ask others' questions. I want to shorten all of my stories relating to my involvement in *Ramkuti*, which in fact would suffice to become a book. I found honesty in Dr. *Phulara*. In his book... I found him

mentioning that he had transferred to me the responsibilities which he was previously carrying out. There is a struggle between those who want to make histories and those who want to erase them. The practice of evaluating a person's work also inspires the future generations to carry out social work. It is a matter of sheer injustice to corrupt someone's character and disfigure someone in the pages of history. After I took up that responsibility, I was able to bring teachers from India. I also taught English and other subjects when needed. I also got the support of the locals there in constructing the building with the money received from UNICEF and the government. I would like to thank all those who supported in the course. Thanks are due to... [named individuals] who helped a lot in constructing the building, [redacted] who helped acquire slates for the roof of the building, ...the Treasurer of the Construction Committee, the teachers and everyone from 8 VDCs who contributed free labour. While I was in *Ramkuti*, I also wrote... giving a voice against social malpractices. A different book could be written about different incidents there. Nothing written about Dr *Phulara* would suffice. To really recognise his contribution and really honour him, the name of the school should be Dr. *Chandrakant* College. His drops of sweat are found in the stones and land of the place. His words of inspiration run around there. On the occasion of this Golden Jubilee, I would like to express my hearty thanks and respect to the people of that place who have contributed significantly in the development of the school. >>45>> Their contributions will last forever.

People of *Ramkuti* had a deep respect for Lord Ram. They would try to adopt the character of Lord Ram. An ideal and virtuous society was created by following the ideals of Ram. The credit for this goes to Dr. *Chandrakant Phulara*. It is a matter of great fortune for all of us to have his presence in that place. Selfless and dedicated people are the jewels of any society, and inspiration for the upcoming generations. The challenges faced by such people give more inspiration and courage for others. May persons like Dr. *Chandrakant Phulara* be born, and kindle the light of awareness in society always. It is important that the graduates of that institution (*Janakiram* High School), who have reached high social positions, become involved in uplifting it in whatever ways they can. It is also the responsibility of everyone to become responsible to the land and institution in which he was born, brought up, educated and acquired the skills and knowledge to stand out in the world. May we hope that the institution will prosper.

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## APPENDIX 9G

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### **Ramkuti Biography**

by Pundit [redacted] *Chaturvedi*

*From Ramkuti Jhalak [Glimpses of Ramkuti] (Place introduction) by Pushkar Phulara, 2061 BS (2004-2005), translated by Hikmat Khadka*

*Pushkarjī*, you requested me tell you about the historic development in relation to the establishment of *Janakiram* Higher Secondary School in *Ramkuti*. Please listen to what I

know. In 2014 BS (1957/58), *bhaktiyog* emerged within Dr. *Chandrakant Phulara*, and he developed a sense of devotion for Lord Rām. Subsequently, he began to recite the chapters from the Rāmāyaṇa, which contains the biography of Lord Rām. He inspired all the villagers to follow on the path of devotion for the Lord. In that process, he instilled in everyone a sense of respect for Lord Rām and Kṛṣṇa, as people worshipped them and sang their *bhajans*. After winning people’s respect for such an auspicious task, there emerged a concept of having a particular location, where people could offer worship and sing *bhajans*. The village’s old water tap was repaired, and at this very location, the Kṛṣṇa Mandir was constructed with participation from the general public, and a statue of Lord Kṛṣṇa was installed for religious purposes. As he recited the Rāmāyaṇa, Dr. *Chandrakant* was highly influenced by the following great mantra:

‘There is no greater dharma than helping others  
There is no greater adharma than troubling others’<sup>46</sup>

This inspired him to work for the welfare of the society. First of all, he chose the development of the education sector. Also, he wanted to be engaged in social service through *Hindu mānav dhārmik bikās* (Hindu human religious development). So one day, in 2014 BS (1957/58), he summoned... [me and other named individuals] and everyone from the surrounding villages. In their presence, he proposed his thoughts. There was a special discussion on the kind of action plan that was required for the implementation of his noble thoughts. It was realised that the programme would be more effective and successful if we worked through an organisation. A decision was made to form the Mahesh Rāmāyaṇa Sabhā as an organisation. In its executive body, which was led by Dr. *Chandrakant* ... [other named individuals held other positions], [I], [redacted] *Chaturvedi* was under-secretary. His *kayak vācik* (oratory skills) and physical contribution is especially memorable. Similarly, the executive body of the Rāmāyaṇa Sabhā... decided to construct a temple for Lord Rām as a central venue to hold recitations from the Rāmāyaṇa in order to publicise the religious aspects; to hold sermons relating to the good character of Lord Rām; and to carry out other tasks. After completing their primary level of schooling, students from far-west Nepal, who wanted to study Sanskrit, needed to go to India [in those days]. So as part of the social initiative, a decision was made to establish a secondary school with the purposes to minimise the trouble [attached to going to study in India] and to promote Sanskrit education locally. There was a question of funds for the construction of a school building. The Rāmāyaṇa Sabhā decided that anyone who donated Rs. 35 in aggregate would have access to free education for their children. This is how the fundraising campaign was started. Funds were raised at the local level and utilised in the construction of the Rām Mandir and a school building. This is how the school was inaugurated. [A *Phulara*] ...was appointed as teacher. *Pushkarji*, let us recall one historic moment. On the day we inaugurated the primary school, Doctor *bāje*, ... [other named *Phularas* and I] went to [redacted]. We took our students with us for the inauguration... This was in 2014 BS (1957/58). We sat under a pine tree near the Rām Mandir. I prayed to Lord Gaṇeś. Uncle [redacted] said to me, “Let us also pray to [redacted], our lineage deity.” ... After a few days, we went to Kailali via [redacted] to raise funds. Our team consisted of Doctor *bāje*... [and other named local Brahmins]. Fundraising was a success.

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<sup>46</sup> Translation of the mantra is from <http://www.speakingtree.in/spiritual-blogs/seekers/god-and-i/PARHIT-SARIS-DHARMA-NAHI-BHAI> (Site accessed 02/04/2013)

Then for the second round, Doctor *bāje* travelled to [redacted] *gāun*, [redacted] *gāun*, [redacted] *gāun*, Silgadhi Bazaar, etc. in the Doti district. I was also with him on the [redacted] trip; I have forgotten the others [who had accompanied us]. In any case, fundraising for the school in these various places went well. The Sanskrit school was inaugurated. I became the first teacher. The school received [government] authorisation. Classes were taught up to pre-matriculation. The elected government of 2015 BS (1959) decided to establish a high school in every constituency. In the case of Doti's southern constituency, a high school was inaugurated in our very village. [At the time,] [redacted] was in the cabinet. Financial support [of Rs.7,500] for one year was made available as an advance payment. The credit for this goes to him. The school made good progress in terms of imparting an education. In those days, there were no transportation facilities. In order to purchase even the most basic consumable items, people from this region had to travel to the headquarter-towns of Doti and Dadeldhura. The Rāmāyaṇa Sabhā realised this difficulty and made arrangements to set up a shop right here in order to resolve the problem. A rest house was constructed [near the Rām Mandir] to meet the requirements of visiting saints and hermits. All of these facilities were integrated under the name of *Ramkuti*.

Later, in 2032 BS (1975/76), after the new education system was launched, a new rule that came into effect did not allow two schools to be based in the same place. In accordance with that rule, the Sanskrit school was discontinued. Unlike nowadays, in those days there was no budgetary allocation from the government. The construction of the school buildings became possible because of small fundraising initiatives, and the donation and contribution of labour from the local residents. Later, in 2049 BS (1992/93), the concept of upgrading the secondary school to the higher secondary level emerged. Doctor *bāje* made an enormous contribution in materialising that concept. He went to Kathmandu to raise funds from the Ḍoṭelī society [resident in Kathmandu]. *Bāje* wishes well for the school's future. ... I have presented this report of mine in the presence of Doctor *bāje*. If there are any errors or anything important missing in the subject matter I have presented, I request you to read in corrected form. Please hear from Doctor *bāje* himself. A special man like him was born to serve our society. We must remember him in the ages to come. Doctor *bāje* says, "All of the things which [Pundit] [redacted] *Chaturvedi* has said are accurate. For this task, financial support was received especially from the *Phulara* families living in *Mallagaon* and [redacted], and laudable land donation was made by *Mallagaon*...

*From Ramkuti Jhalak [Glimpses of Ramkuti] by Pushkar Phulara, 2061 BS (2004-2005), translated by Hikmat Khadka*

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APPENDIX 10A

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Mallagaon

Apart from *jalmāsi*, *āumāsi*, the bread healed  
Working on *āyurved* throughout Doti  
There was no other village, only *Mallagaon*  
Medicine was provided for free; no one paid with banknotes.  
Medicine was available at home; work was like service  
No one was discriminated against; in everyone's heart was Rām, Rām.  
Protect the forest; increase greenery; bring everyone back to sense  
*Avrakh*, *daśmulā*, *riṣṭa*, thanks to *āyurved*.  
For the *bijayasār* water, the roots of the *pipal* tree  
There was no need to buy anything; medicine was manufactured at home.  
*Jogrāj*, *hajmulā*, on top that even *curṇa*  
*Labhañādī*, *sitoplādhi*: they healed every disease.  
What is antibiotic compared to *āyurved*?  
The one who knew how to take it and follow the course [benefited from] the power of  
*āyurved*.  
*Mallagaon* became famous because of its medicine  
The land that is beautiful is *Paṭani*; man becomes known for his service.

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APPENDIX 10B

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VDC Wards

■■■■, ■■■■, ■■■■ and ■■■■ are settlements of 100 households  
Some of the VDC residents have migrated to the flatlands; count the rest.  
*Mallagaon*, ■■■■, *Rosyagaon*, ■■■■, ■■■■  
If all VDC residents migrate to the flatlands, what will become of the villages?  
Come together to discuss, oh brothers, do not disunite  
Do not wash your hands and mouth on the same plate you have eaten.  
Keep away the plate you have eaten on, then wash up  
The priest performs worship; the gardener picks flowers.  
The pure offering is of barley; the wedding offering is silver  
Let us all know our culture well.  
In order to cook, we place a pot on a tripod stove  
Let's place our hands over the fire and take an oath.  
Let us all come together for the development of our village and region  
There was never a brewery in the village.  
Although an old tradition, let us put an end to drinking and gambling  
Let summer arrive, but not any epidemics.  
■■■■ [*lek*] is our pillow; we have a water source  
We could have thought about a canal; let us develop a good habit.  
If we had an agricultural field, we would have had to weed it during the two days of  
heavy rainfall  
We would have all given it a thought; what's in your heart?

## APPENDIX 11 “THEY WOULD OPERATE LIKE A ‘CHALISE GHATTA’”

by Pushkar Phulara, VDC Secretary, Mallagaon, Doti

Published in the Janakiram Campus Magazine 2011, p.43, translated by Hikmat Khadka

“There are many kinds of development. Education, health, agriculture, transportation, forestry, industry, communication, etc. are examples of development. But the backbone of development is transportation (road). The construction of the road has reached the mid-part of our VDC, but for it to reach all parts of the VDC, with its own means and resources, is going to take another five to seven years. This VDC is filled with biodiversity. At the top of this VDC is the massive Mahabharat *lek*, where there are big lakes, created by nature, and numerous sources of medicinal plants. There are attractive and beautiful sites that adorn nature. If the road can be built up to the concerned place, there is potential for it to succeed as a tourism region, and this VDC can be introduced as a tourist destination. To the east of S\_\_\_ stream, there is a big river called D\_\_\_, and to the west flows M\_\_\_. There are abundant sources of hydroelectricity, irrigation and drinking water. What is needed is the protection [of environment], not more natural resources or biodiversity. Let’s not be complacent only because a jeep service operates on the VDC road once in a while. One has to go through 84 *lakh* incarnations before one is born as a man, which is the best life there is, and once born as a man, one must do something. Life is short, so let’s think on time; it’s still not too late. If we conserve the Tele *lek*, and if we use it to our advantage, then the VDC residents<sup>47</sup> can stay away from disease, hunger and worry, and it can be stated with confidence that it will not be hard to generate a happy livelihood.

“With regard to educational development, this VDC has in operation six primary schools, a secondary school, a higher secondary school and a B.Ed. campus. Other organisations [institutions/establishments] in operation in this VDC include a health post, an *ayurvedic* clinic, a Youth Information Centre, the *Development Centre for Communities (DCC)*, *Samaj Sudhar* (Social Reform), *Shova Sanjal* (network/alliance), CARE Nepal, Dalit FEDO, clubs and the community forest. In order for the effective implementation of these organisations, we need to conserve the Mahabharat *lek* and follow government law and rules. This will lead us to progress, and we will not have to rely on others. We will become self-dependent. The organisations in our periphery would be like a *chalise ghatta*, [running by] themselves.”

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<sup>47</sup> The original text has *bhatta* (funds) rather than *janata* (residents). The translator queried this with the author, who explained that it was a printing error and should have read *janata*

APPENDIX 12      EXTRACT FROM VDC BUDGET

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Translated by Hikmat Khadka. Photo of the original Nepali text follows the translation by Hikmat Khadka. *(The excerpt quoted in my thesis is in bold text)*

Extracts from the '[Budgetary] plan for expenses to be made on programmes/projects from the funds/donation/contribution received for this VDC in FY 2068/69 (2012 AD)'

Funds available after 35% (deduction) for target groups 553468.85

10% women 1,77,110

For health organisation/s 100,000

Cleanliness and hygiene 10,000

Drinking water supply, literacy programme, public awareness 20,000

Procurement of seeds 10,000

Procurement of fruit 15,000

Women Cooperative policy legislation, etc. 10,000

Women adult literacy, awareness on *chhaupadi* tradition 10,000

Support from the Trust 2110

Children

Funds available for children (after?) 10% (reduction?) 1,77,110

The decision to allocate the funds under the following headings was approved:

School repair and maintenance 44,000

From the schools operated with private resources, (funds allocated)

For [REDACTED] Primary School 12,000

For [REDACTED] Primary School 12,000

For the construction of a two-room building for [REDACTED] Private School 10,000

For the construction of a two-room building for [REDACTED] Private School 10,000

For social capacity building, medicine, treatment, etc., environmental reform 40,000

For the institutional development of children's club 20,000

Support for scholarship children 40,000

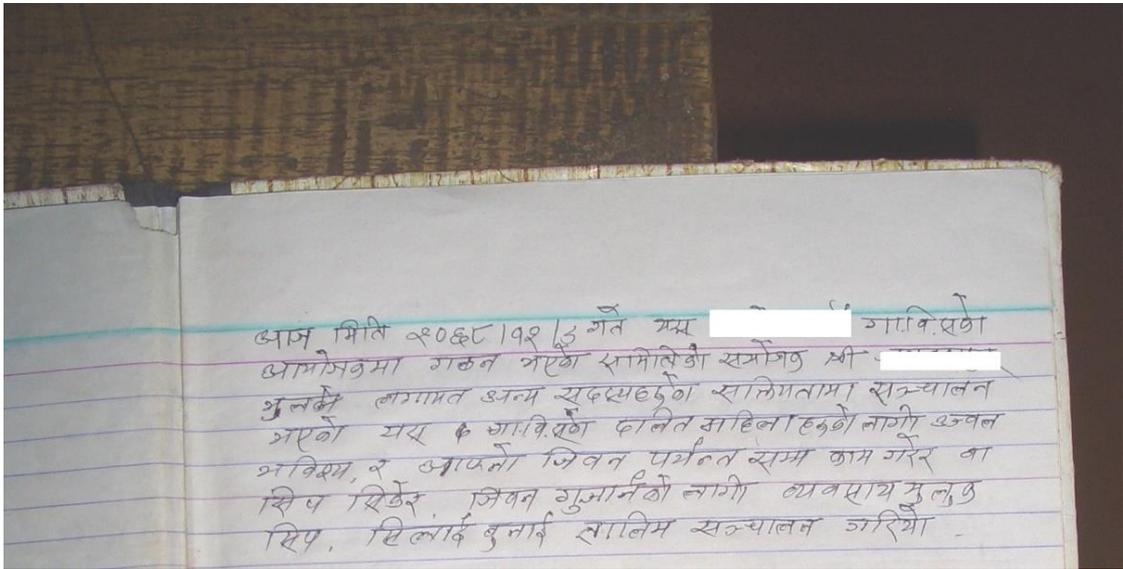


APPENDIX 13      EXTRACTS FROM THE KNITTING PROGRAMME  
LOGBOOK

Photos of the original Nepali text follow the translations by Hikmat Khadka. (*The excerpts quoted in my thesis are in bold text*)

APPENDIX 13A

Today, on 22 March 2012 (2068-12-09), a sewing and knitting training was organised with the purpose to build skills necessary for the bright future of the Dalit women of [REDACTED] VDC so they are equipped with vocational skills to work and support themselves throughout their lives. The training was organised by the committee set up under this [REDACTED] VDC, which is run with active participation from [REDACTED] Bhul as coordinator and others.



APPENDIX 13B

Proposals

- 1 - Regarding [provision of] snacks
- 2 - Regarding making rules
- 3 - Regarding evaluating from time to time

Decisions

- 1 - In relation to Proposal no. 1, the decision made by the committee, formed under the [REDACTED] VDC, to provide a daily snack allowance of Rs. 5 to every participant and trainer of the sewing and knitting training was unanimously approved.
- 2 - In relation to Proposal no. 2, it was deemed necessary to have a set of rules to apply throughout the duration of the training period. The following rules were unanimously approved:

1 -> Classes to begin at 1:00 pm and end at 5:00 pm every day.

2 -> Trainer to enforce the rules and to make participants active, while remaining active himself/herself.

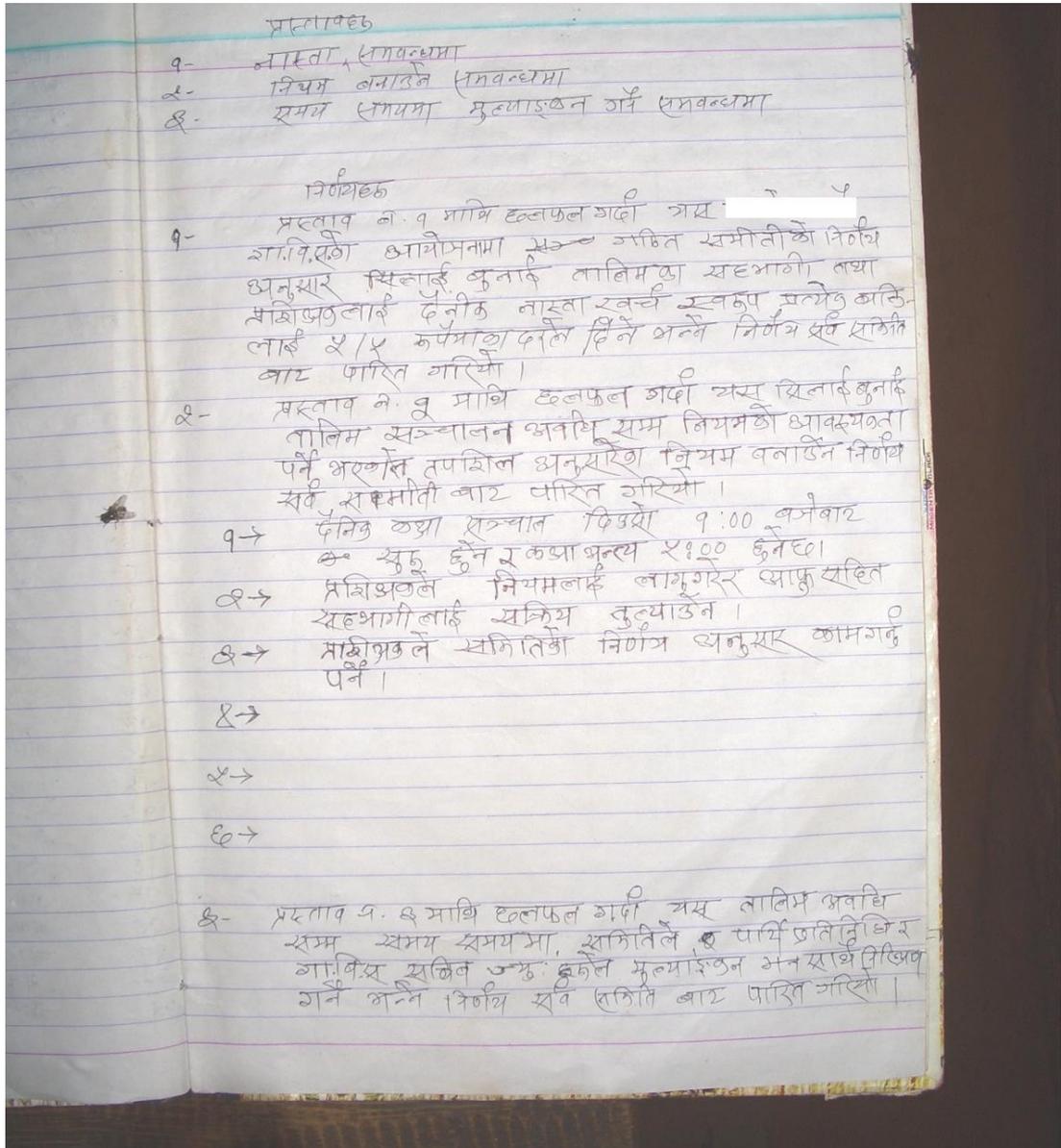
3 -> Trainer to work in line with the committee's decisions.

4 ->

5 ->

6 ->

3 - In relation to Proposal no. 3, the committee unanimously approved the decision that party representatives and the VDC Secretary shall evaluate and control the training from time to time during the training period.

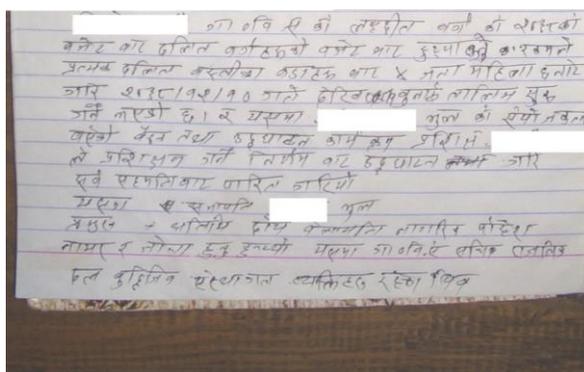


APPENDIX 13C

With the money allocated for the Dalit group, from the budget for targeted/focused groups of [redacted] VDC for 2012 (2067-2068 BS), four women from the wards of every Dalit settlement will be chosen (to participate in) a knitting training to begin from 23 March 2012 (2068-12-10). A meeting held under the coordination of [redacted] Bhul unanimously approved the decision to inaugurate the training with [redacted] as the trainer.

[The inauguration event was] chaired by [redacted] Bhul.

**There were two chief guests: British citizens Mahesh Nair and Joanna.** Also present were VDC Secretary, [representatives of] political parties, intellectuals and organization representatives.



APPENDIX 13D

Expenditure report

Trainer fee and wool and needle expenses	Rs. 17000
Travel expenses and food	Rs. 3000
Tea and snacks for participants	Rs. 3500
Certificates	Rs. 1100
[Stationery] materials/ items	Rs. 500
Tea and snacks for committee members	Rs. 500
	<b>Rs. 25600</b>

