

# Chapter 3

## 3.1 Marginalised Kumals of Sankhuwasabha in Socio-economic and Cultural Measure

### 1. Background

Nepal is a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, multi-religious, multi-cultural and geographically diverse country. Whenever we introduce our country, as Nepal these are the terms that we would start with. The foreigners also take these special features as the basis of description of Nepal. Geographical, social, economic, culture and human resources and heritage work to knit together various regions, sub-regions and locations. They also highlight the state of diversity and differing situation while the abundant natural resources inherent in every region and location spread the importance of Nepal across the world.

The Nepali society decorated with its distinct identity of special ethnicities, religions and languages takes pride in it, which is positive. Geographically, this country is divided into the mountains, hills and the Tarai. In fact this diversity is our identity and also a source of our heritage.

Nepal is home to people with various ethnicities, languages and religion. There are 125 ethnic groups who speak 123 different languages in the country.<sup>1</sup>

Of the various ethnic groups residing in Nepal, the indigenous nationalities are one of the major groups. Indigenous nationalities are the ethnic groups or communities who have their own mother tongue and traditions, distinct cultural identity, distinct social structure and written or unwritten history. There are 35.2 per cent indigenous nationalities living in Nepal.

The Government of Nepal has enlisted 59 ethnic groups as indigenous nationalities. They have been categorized into five groups including endangered, highly marginalized, marginalized, disadvantaged and advantaged. Of them the highly marginalized groups including Siyar, Majhi, Lhomi, Dhanuk Thudam, Chepang, Santhal(Satar), Jhangad, Thami, Bote, Danuwar and Baramu.<sup>2</sup> Likewise, the marginalized include Amat, Aathpahariya, Uraw, Karmarong, Kirat Koicha, Kurmi, Kumal, Kewat, Kewarat, Kocha, Khadiya, Khampa, Gaderiya, Gangai, Gonda, Ghyalsumdo Narpa, Ngiyang, Chumba, Jirel, Tahasakchylung, Dhokpya, Tajpuriya, Tamang, Thapalya Byasi, Thami, Tharu, Thudam, Darai and Danuwar.<sup>3</sup>

1. National Census, 2011, Central Bureau of Statistics

2. Nepal Human Rights Year Book, 2018, INSEC

3. Report of the high-level task force constituted by the Council of Ministers on 30 Baisakh, 2067 to review the list of indigenous nationalities.

Among the indigenous nationalities, the Kumal ethnic group is also a major group with its own distinct language, tradition, culture, custom and religion. This ethnic group is concentrated at Tumlingtar in ward no. 9 of Khandbari municipality. The place of origin of the Kumal ethnic groups of Tumlingtar is said to be Lamjung. There is also a legend that the Kumals of Tumlingtar were actually part of the army of Prithivi Narayan Shah but after crossing Arun river they decided to stay back there upon liking the land in Tumlingtar.<sup>4</sup> Likewise, the Kumals are also found living in Arun rural municipality of Bhojpur, and in Lamjung, Gulmi, Arghakhanchi, Palpa, Tanahu and Syangja.<sup>5</sup> Not only in these locations, but they have now migrated to almost the majority of the parts of the country. Of them, an effort has been made in this study to explore the economic, social and cultural status of the Kumal ethnic group living in ward no. 9 of Khandbari municipality, Sindhupalchowk.

According to the present geographical division of Nepal, Sankhuwasabha that falls under Province no. 1 and under then Koshi zone of eastern development region is a district with diversity like that of the country. In the latest restructuring of the state, this district was divided into one electoral constituency for the House of Representatives and two constituencies to the provincial assembly. Sankhuwasabha district is geographically diverse and is known as with the best topography on the basis of bio-diversity and natural resources.

World renowned Himalayan range, popular rivers, streams, ponds and lakes with hundreds of species of birds, aquatic animals, medical plants, flowers, the world's deepest valley, Arun

and the people of various ethnicities that live here makes this district unique, with added attraction of the indigenous art, culture, costume and social traditions of the ethnic groups. Renewed researchers of nature and geography believe that the sacred heaven lies in the lap of the Himalayas that is situation in the north of this district.

The world's deepest valley, Arun is located 14 kilometers south of Khandbari, the headquarters of this district. The valley borders the Sabha river in the east, Arun river in the west and south and the Deurali forest in the north. Though people from all ethnicities reside in this valley, located in the eastern banks of the sacred Arun river, the Kumal ethnic group is a majority here. Though there is no concrete evidence to tell when and where did they arrive here from, they are believed to be residing here since thousands of years.<sup>6</sup>

In the previous era, the Kumals were known as Kumbhakar, Kumhar and Kumahal. In Sanskrit, the word Kumbha means earthenware or pitcher. As the ancestral profession of this community is making earthenware, they were known as Kumbhakar, Kumahar and Kumahal. These words later led to the word Kumal.<sup>7</sup>

The Kumals live only in Tumlingtar in Khandbari municipality, ward no. 9 in the district. There has been a drastic change in the daily life and life style of the Kumal community here after the construction of the Hile-Khandbari road under the Mid-hill highway and daily flights on the Kathmandu-Biratnagar-Tumlingtar route. This study has been carried out with the purpose of drawing the attention of the stakeholders towards bringing the Kumal community into the mainstream of the state after studying the economic,

4. Dr Matrika Timsena, Khandbari municipality souvenir, 2056

5. Gyawali Damodar, Population studies, page no. 134

6. Based on conversation with Bhubhan Halide, chair of Nepal Kumal Society Reforms Committee

7. Based on conversation with Researcher Dr Matrika Timsena

social and culture situation of this marginalized community.

## 2. Objective of the Study

- To acquire information about the socio-economic and cultural situation of the Kumal community.
- To identify the problems of the Kumal community and their solutions.
- To take stock of the state of implementation of the policy and programmes introduced by the State for the indigenous nationalities.
- To know about the impact on the targeted community due to failure of effective implementation of the government's policy and programmes.
- To highlight the problems of the Kumal community and draw the attention of the stakeholder agencies to bringing them to the mainstream of the State.

## 3. Rationale of the Study

Humans by nature like to learn new things, visit new places, find new facts and gain new experience and based on it tries to use it for the greater good of the majority people. As a result, any place or ethnic groups with important features become a centre of attraction. It is also important in the 21<sup>st</sup> century to know what the special features of a particular ethnic group are. A study like this is important to explore the history, social origin of any community, its eagerness to learn, self-knowing, rapidly changing society, relations between nature and humans and the impact of social and cultural contact. This study explores the financial situation, profession, language, culture, health and education of the marginalized Kumal community.

Studying the impact of globalization in today's world to life and the globe, and sensitizing the stakeholders about it is the need of the day. It is also essential to bring out with priority the impact it is

having on the marginalized communities. Monitoring and evaluation of the state of implementation of the government's policy and programmes targeted on this community is another pertinent issue. It would be relevant to study what the obstacles are to the initiatives being taken for socio-economic and cultural development following the political change in the country.

This write-up related to the marginalized Kumal community living in Tumlingtar of Sankhuwasabha has been prepared with a focus on the aforementioned issues. This study is expected to become a good reference material and important document to understand the state of the Kumal community not only for the district but for the country as a whole. As a result, this highlights the present situation of the Kumal community while also becoming an importance resource material for development of any policy, plans and programmes for this community in the future.

## 4. Methodology

- Observation tour
- Discussion
- Interview
- Explanation
- Study and use of secondary reference materials

## 5. Limitation of the Study

- This study is only focused on the marginalized Kumal ethnic group, that fall under indigenous nationalities and live in Tumlingtar in ward no. 9 of Khandbari municipality, Sankhuwasabha.
- This study talks about the socio-economic and cultural dimension of the marginalized Kumal group.
- Effort has been made in the study to understand the status of implementation of the policy and programmes introduced by the State for the indigenous nationalities.

- Information used in the study has been collected from both primary and secondary sources.
- In order to understand the situation of the Kumal community, the views of the concerned community and other stakeholders have also been included.

## 6. Habitat and Population

The population of the Kumal community in Nepal was 99,389 as per the national census 2011.<sup>8</sup> The number increased to reach 121,196 in 2012. This number increased to 121,196 in 2012.<sup>9</sup> This community is found living in Arun rural municipality of Bhojpur, and in more than 60 districts of Nepal including among others Palpa, Nuwakot, Okhaldhunga, Dhankuta, Ramechhap, Sindhuli and Pyuthan.

In Sankhuwasabha, they live only in Tumlingtar in ward no. 1 of Khandbari municipality. There is no accurate data of the Kumals living in Tumlingtar. As per the 2011 Census, the population of Kumal community in the district is 896 including 494 male and 401 female. The number was 870 in the previous Census in 2001. This shows that the population of the community is increasing.<sup>10</sup>

## 7. Profession and Financial Situation

The ancestral profession of this community is pottery. Livestock and fish farming, and other agriculture works are their side profession. Their family profession however has fallen into a crisis due to increasing use of plastic, aluminum and steel utensils. As a result, the youth from this community have left behind their family profession, and are attracted towards agriculture, animal husbandry, business and trade, government service

and foreign employment.

With the objective of protecting and preserving their own ethnicity, religion, art, culture and civilization the Kumal community is carrying out a campaign of social development by constructing a community building. The area where the Kumal live suffers from water scarcity, as a result they do not grow paddy, the staple food. However, water for irrigation has been supply through the lift irrigation system. And the major cash crops here are different species of pulse, beans, mustard seeds, millet, maize, sesame etc. They grow and sell these to make an income.

As the country began taking strides in development leading to infrastructure projects in the area where the Kumal community live, it brought about a complete change in their daily activities, profession and income. According to International Labour Organization Convention 169, 'Governments shall ensure that, whenever appropriate, studies are carried out, in co-operation with the peoples concerned, to assess the social, spiritual, cultural and environmental impact on them of planned development activities. The results of these studies shall be considered as fundamental criteria for the implementation of these activities'.<sup>11</sup> But these provisions have not been fully followed while implement development projects in the area where the Kumal community live.

It is now very difficult to find any Kumal family depending on the traditional profession. The Kumal communities who have changed with time are improving their financial situation but it is not sufficient for a quality life. The details of the Kumals living in Tumlingtar and their involvement in profession other than family profession, agriculture, livestock is as follows:

8. National Census, 2001, ethnic demographic details

9. National Census, 2011, summary result/table :4, ethnic details of population

10. District Development Plan, Sankhuwasabha, F/Y 2016/17

11. ILO Convention no. 169, Article 7 (3)

S.No.	Employment	Women	Men	Total	Remarks
1.	Teaching	2	2	4	
2.	Police	2	0	2	
3.	Army	2	1	3	
4.	Health worker	1	1	2	

## 8. Social and Culture Situation

Even within the Kumal community social and culture diversity can be found. The eastern Kumals are divided into seven castes. In Arun valley Kumals with seven surnames including Alide, Dudhpau, Mudula, Dhale, Pokharel, Naula and Pathak live. Interestingly, Kumal with all the seven surnames cannot be found elsewhere but in Tumlingtar there is representative family of all the surnames.<sup>12</sup> Even though there is a difference in terms of geography and surname that the culture and traditions that the Kumal community follows, the major culture and traditions that they follow are as given below:

### a. Birth rituals

The Kumal society follow good norms like a pregnant woman should not carry heavy load, should not walk a long distance and should eat notorious food. However, they also believe in superstition including that they should not cross a river and not jump over the string used to tie the livestock. The child birth is carried out in their homes with the help of elderly women and the midwife in the village. They have also started seeking help of the health centre and health volunteers are they were established in the village. After child birth, the new mother and her child is kept at a corner in the house. After the delivery, umbilical cord is buried in the courtyard and the lactating mother service with meat and rice beer/liquor.

### b. Naming of the child

Like in other community, this is also a mandatory custom in the Kumal community. After the child is birth, the naming of the child is carried within five to seven or nine days. The naming is done from the married female member of the same family. If not, then by daughters from the brothers family does not ritual. On the day, the house is cleaned with cow dung, the new mother is given a bath, the relatives are invited and a cock in case of a son and a hen in case of a daughter are butchered. Then the daughters in the family sprinkle cow urine in all four corners and show the baby to the Sun. At the end, a holy thread is tied to the limb, waist, and neck and in the right hand of the father and left hand of the mother. Earlier, the baby was named after the day s/he was born. This practice is now slowly fading away.

### c. Rice feeding ceremony/chewar

As the baby grows; there is a custom of rice feeding ceremony and chewar or the first haircut of the baby. The baby is fed with rice for the first time when the baby becomes six months to one year old. Likewise, the baby's maternal uncle does the first haircut. If there is no maternal uncle then the nearest one in the family will do the honours. During both the rituals, family relatives come to give their blessings to the child. Chewar is also known as *Chulo Chadaune* in their local language. During the chewar, the maternal uncle makes the first haircut and

presents the baby boy a topi or cap and gold/silver ornaments. As per the custom, the father and mother should not see the Chewar rituals while the concerned child should be allowed to see the hair from the first haircut.

#### **d. Marriage custom**

As only married life can lead to the birth of a child, marriage is regarded as the source of child birth. Traditionally and as per religious norms, the Kumal community goes to the god only if a son is born. And there is belief that you will not be a slave in the next life. The Kumals also believe that the debt of the father is waived off only after he becomes a father and he will go to heaven after death. These norms and values make marriage inevitable, which also drives the cycle of recreation.

#### **(1) Arranged marriage**

In this kind of marriage, the person who makes all the arrangement from the starting to the end is called the Kasa-laya (or the marriage fixer). It starts with the boy's family going to the girl's house in the evening with a pong (small clay pot full with liquor) and a chicken. This process takes place for three times, and on the third and final time it is accepted by the girl's family and the marriage is fixed. On the day of the marriage, the groom dressed in *daural suruwal*, *patuka*, *topi*, *feta* and holding a khukuri in the waist heads to the bride's home along with the *janti* or members of the marriage procession. After welcoming and serving food to the groom's side by the bride's family, the rituals called *Bhurukchukne*, *Prittri nimtaune*, *Jhuhuri chuhaune* and *Sampuwa* are performed.

In the courtyard, four wooden sticks will be stuck to the ground and all the four tied together in the top. Then

the bride and groom walk around it, followed by father and mother of the bride, sprinkling rice beer and other clapping. This custom is called the *Bhurukchukne*. Rice, oil-fed lamp, vermilion, copper water jar, betel nut and holy leaves are kept on a leaf plate. The elderly from both the bride and groom's family sit around it. Every one of them carries one item each. And they start calling the ancestors name and leave the items on a banana leaf. This is called the *Prittri nimtaune* custom. In the meantime, people splash water at the bride's mother (as a fun activity), which is called the *Jhuhuri chuhaune* custom.

After the bride reaches the groom's house, there is custom of filling up pulse and rice on a wooden or earthen pot turn-by-turn. This is done for three times and is called the *Nadiya*. Then the bride is asked to step on pipal tree leaves while entering the house. The bride and the groom also worship the ancestors and bow down to them. Then there is a practice where the bride touches the feet of her mother-in-law and her husband, and drinks water after washing it. Finally, the arranged marriage comes to an end with an introduction with all the members of the family and relatives.<sup>13</sup>

#### **(2) Love marriage**

A boy and a girl falling in love after meeting in the market, in the farm, on the way or while visiting a family and then eloping is called the love marriage. During this kind of marriage, the couple go to some place, take a vow and then the boy puts vermilion and pote on the girl to perform the marriage. Even though the Kumal community is quite liberal in terms of love marriage, it's very strict when it comes to marriage with the Dalit community and within incest relations.

13. Tamang Chabilal, dissertation on the social and cultural situation of the Kumal community in Khandbari municipality, Sankhuwasabha district

### **(3) Marriage by stealing or force**

In this kind of marriage, it is not necessary that the boy and girl like one another. After the boy likes the girl, he was forcibly take her away by carrying her or dragging her when she is collecting drinking water from the water tap or spout, working in the farm, in the market, grazing cattle or collecting fodder in the forest. This custom was highly prevalent few years ago. The boy friends help to carry the girl or push her from the back towards the boys' home. The girl who is brought to the boys' home in this manner is locked up for four to five days, and then asked if she is willing or unwilling. If the girl is willing then the boy's family go to the girl's home with the Pong and fix the marriage by paying back for the theft. But if the girl is not willing, then some cash is paid to the Jimmuwal or the head of the village and the girl is handed back to her family. This practice gradually decreased after the Civil Code was enforced in Nepal.

### **(4) Widow or widower marriage**

The death of the husband or wife leads to a widow or widower. If a person becomes a widow or widower in a comparatively younger age, then they can marry again. This is called the widow or widower marriage. This marriage can take place between a widow and widower, and even with another boy/girl. Even though our society has not prohibited second marriage of the widower, this freedom is not given to the widow. But in the Kumal community, there is no prohibition for the marriage of a widow or widower.

### **(5) Jari marriage/jari custom**

The Jari custom has been practiced in the Kumal community since ancient times. If a woman does not like her husband for various reasons and gets married to another man or if someone marries by convincing, by fraud or through any

other way a married woman then such marriage is called Jari marriage. In case of such marriage, the second husband has to return back the ornaments of the first wife and also pay some cash. In the Kumal society, no matter how many times a woman marries, if the last husband pays back the Jari then she will not face hatred or backlash in the society. But if such woman is married to another boy then the girl's parents need to be paid, called the Rita. Though this kind of marriage continues to take place, the practice of paying the jari has come to an end.

### **e. Death rituals**

The Kumal community follow their own death rituals. In case of a death in this community, they perform the death rituals for seven, nine or ten days. If an aged person dies then the death rituals will be carried out for nine to ten days and if it is a child then it will be completed in five days. The cremation is carried out different considering the nature of the death. The death is differentiated between natural and unnatural death. If someone dies during medical treatment then it would be natural whereas it will be unnatural if the death is due to any natural disaster or any incident.

Earlier, if anyone died of a natural cause, then there was a practice of burying the dead on the bank of the river. But now except the infants all are cremated by burning to ashes. There is a belief that upon death a daughter of the Kumal community turns into air while the son becomes the clan. As a result, the household head will sacrifice a cock annually on a stone symbolizing the clan for the death of the son and a hen for the daughter after installing a bamboo pole with colourful flags symbolizing the air. It is this clan and the air that the Kumal community here worship. In this ritual, the son-in-law performs the role of the purohit or priest. On the final day of the ritual, the

Some Terms of Kumal Mother Tongue and Its Meaning			
Kumal	Nepali	Kumal	Nepali
Anwai	Aama	Tinmar	Naramro
Mui	Maile	Anguri	Aunla
Karai	Garnu	Kaisan	Kasto
Khawar	Khanu	Mati	Mato
Matare	Gothalo	Toreharan	Timiharu

*Source: Based on conversation with local resident Ram Bahadur Kumal*

brothers gather, take a bath in the river and free themselves from the mourning after eating salt, oil, fish, meat and cow urine.<sup>14</sup>

#### f. Religion

The Kumal community worship the natural religion. The religion they follow is called the 'Bon religion'. They worship the nature. However, in the census, their religion has been noted down to be Hindu. Some of the Kumals are presently practicing Christian and Kirant religion.<sup>15</sup>

#### g. Language

The people from the Kumal community in Tumlingtar do not speak their mother tongue. However, they are aware that they have their mother tongue. Majority of them speak the national language, Nepali. Even though who know how to speak the Kumal language speak it with only people from their own society. And speak in Nepali with members of other communities. Those who learn this language also use it very rarely. People of this community say that others would look down upon them and insult them if they speak in their mother tongue.

#### h. Costume

The traditional costume worn by the Kumal women include a chocolate coloured *Chaubandi*, light black *Fariya*, red/brown *ghalek* and *Khurpato* in the

waist. As ornaments, they wear yellow and green coloured *pote*, *Naugedi mala*, *madwari*, *fuli* and *chura*. The men wear white Daura, white Kachad, black half-coat and blue coloured patuka and black bhadgaunle topi. But nowadays, only few members of the Kumal community are found wearing their traditional attire.

#### i. Festivals

Kumal community are the nature worshippers. They worship the river, streams, forest, gods and goddesses, air, clan, Simebhume nag and nagini and the Devi. Maghe Sankranti is their main festival. Likewise, they also observe as festivals Dashain, Tihar, Baisakh Poornima, Teej etc. The Kumal community do more pooja than observing festivals. The Kumals of Tumlingtar observe all the above-mentioned festivals.

Likewise, as a culture they perform the Annadhanyadeu pooja, Nauledeu or Byauni pooja, Gurumukhi pooja, Dhul pooja, Nayadeu or Jangali pooja and worship the khuda or their weapons. The Annadhanyadeu pooja is carried out in the month of Bhadra before harvesting maize. During this custom, two hens and a cock are sacrificed at the maize field. Nauledeu or Byauni pooja is observed in the Kumal community on the eighth day or astami of Dashain festival where one of the piglets born during the year from every birth by

14. Based on conversation with Bhubhan Halide, chair of Nepal Kumal Society Reforms Committee

15. Ibid

the pig is kept aside as Naulideu or Byauni.

Likewise, Gurumukhi pooja is performed by the brothers of the same family with the surname Dhale. On the day of this pooja, no person other than with the Dhale surname are present, and even married daughters from the same family are not allowed to take part. The Dhul pooja is carried out twice in a year in the month of Kattik and Falgun. During this pooja, all the people of the village gather in the jungle or on the trunk of a big tree, where they sacrifice a black baby goat, a pair of pigeons and a pair of chicken. This is also called the Sansari pooja while the Khunda pooja is held in the Kumal community since ancient times on Mahanawami or the ninth day of Dashain festival.

#### **j. Health**

The health situation of the Kumal community is found to be normal due to their lifestyle, eating habits and treatment method. There are very few educated people in this society, which is due to lack of awareness. Traditionally, they consume tobacco, alcohol and different kinds of rice beer. There is scarcity of water in the Kumal settlement in Tumlingtar. As kitchen and living room are together, the children and women's health has been affected. Still today, the Kumals trust the faith healers/shamans more than the health workers. There are very few members of the Kumal community that arrive for treatment at the District Hospital in Khandbari. Of the 1,348 people who came for service at the District Hospital, only 14 men and 9 women from the Kumal community came for health examination and treatment.

#### **k. Education**

The Constitution of Nepal, 2015, part 3, guarantees right to education of all

under fundamental rights. But the people from the Kumal community are backward in terms of education. There are no curriculum and text books in the mother tongue of this community. As a result, the children are deprived of the opportunities to learn in their mother tongue. They don't usually enroll their children in school, and even if they do the dropout rate is serious in the community. Anthropologist Dor Bahadur Bista had pointed out long before that 'if attention is not paid and they are not provided with education and skills as per the time to bring them in equal terms with all, then it would be very difficult for them to survive.'<sup>16</sup> The state of education of the Kumals living in Tumlingtar of Sankhuwasabha is as follows:

S.No.	Level	Total
1.	SLC/SEE	80
2.	Certificate level/+2	26
3.	B.Ed.	17
4.	M.Ed.	2

Of the 993 students at the Mankamana Ratna Ambika Higher Secondary School in Tumlingtar, 507 are students from the Kumal community. According to Kubed Prasad Bhetwal, the Head Teacher of the School, the rate of drop out in Kumal students is very high. Even though 80 per cent of the students who enroll in Grade 1 are from the Kumal community, it comes down to 40 per cent by they reach Grade 5 and only 20 per cent in Grade 10. The attendance of the Kumal students in the school is also very low, Bhetwal said.

#### **1. Affiliation to social organisations/institutions**

There are various organisations established for the protection of the Kumal community. The Kumal people are affiliated to Nepal Kumal Uplift Association, Nepal Kumal Women's Uplift Associa-

16. Dor Bahadur Bista, Sabai Jat ko Fulbari, page 48

tion, Nepal Kumal Students' Association and other social organisations. They are represented in the Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities through these organisations. The budget allocated by the state for the indigenous nationalities is used by the Kumal community through this institution.

### **m. Entertainment**

The Kumal community living in Tumlingtar in the east of Nepal have their own unique dance, song and cultural activities. They also copy entertainment activities from other communities and region. Maruni dance is the traditional dance of the Kumal community, which is gradually disappearing. Those who knew the dance have forgotten while the new generation are not interested in it. Maruni dance begins from Tihar and runs until Ekadashi. In this dance, two men have an important role. Of them one acts as a boy while another becomes the Maruni dressed in women attire. So after the Maruni is decorated, the gods of the Kumal clan is worshipped in the village. However, they accept that their traditional dance has now become almost extinct due to influence of radio, television and internet. On the other hand, there is also lack of awareness about preserving their culture.<sup>17</sup>

## **9. Major problems**

The marginalized Kumal ethnic group living in Tumlingtar in ward no. 9 of Khandbari municipality, Sankhuwasabha are behind or left behind in socio-economic and cultural terms. The major problems seen in the community are as follows:

### **a. Poor financial situation**

Poverty is in general a problem of the country but the Kumal community here are very poor. On the one hand their

traditional profession is subsistence-oriented while on the other that is also gradually heading towards extinction. As a result of which they have not been able to lift themselves out of poverty. They do not have the status to run any sustainable and big business that gives them immediate return. As the compulsion to spend in their festivals and culture has also contributed to keeping them in poverty.

### **b. Educationally backward**

The educational level of the Kumal people living in Sankhuwasabha district has not improved. There are only few from the Kumal community who have completed higher education. The children are not enrolled to school in the first place and if they are, they drop out in between. They are also not attracted towards education as there is no provision for them to read and write in their mother tongue.

### **c. Traditional skills and profession in crisis**

Pottery was the major profession but it is now facing a crisis as they have not been able to gain skills-oriented knowledge in a scientific manner about the profession. They are spending more time and labour but not getting equal returns. Hence, the newer generation is no longer interested in pottery. Furthermore, difficultly to find a place for extraction of mud and deforestation leading to scarcity of firewood required to bake the earthenware are causing obstacles in their profession. Rising cost of production is also a major reason to put their profession into a crisis, which can be described as follows:

#### **Investment in pottery**

- i. It will take at least 7 days to produce an earthenware by carrying a sack or 40 kgs of mud from the

---

17. Based on conversation with Khandbari municipality ward no. 9 chair Tikaram Kumal

nearest pit. This can produce 5 paini (claypot used to prepare liquor) or 20 clay pots.

- ii. They carry sand from the river and dry hay from the jungle. They need two loads of firewood worth one thousand rupees to bake the raw earthenware.
- iii. So, in terms of the daily wage of 500 to 800 rupees, the investment in one paini is at least 2000 rupees and 1000 rupee in a claypot. The minimum market price of these products are 2000 rupees for paini and 800 rupees for the claypot.

#### **d. Market**

The plastic utensil prepared in a modern way and that look prettier comparatively last longer, while the well-off use better and expensive metal products. And this has decreased the attraction towards earthenware in the people. And the calculation above showed that there is a loss in producing and selling an earthenware. But a bamboo basket carried on the back that is prepared during leisure time can be easily sold if it is taken to the market in Chainpur, Bahrabise, Khandbari or Dingla of Bhojpur. And this has contributed some extent to the household expenses. As a result, this community still believes that the income generation would increase if this profession is given continuity.<sup>18</sup>

#### **e. Near-extinct mother tongue**

Even though the Kumal community has its own distinct language, it is in a state of extinction for lack of use. The major reason for the mother tongue to be disappearing is the elders do not speak to their children in their own language and it is also not a means of teaching and learning in the school. Also, lack of a separate script of Kumal language, low publication

of reading materials in this language and media too not publishing materials in Kumal language have weakened the state of this language.

#### **f. Lack of awareness and conservative mentality**

If though one cannot say that the Kumal community is very behind in terms of education it is not difficult to count the number of people who have completed higher education in this community. The educated people do not want to utilize the household goods to make an income. And with people who have skills and knowledge migrating, the problems in the village continue to exist in the same state. Along with the changing times, people are not working scientifically. And the Kumal community has lagged behind, left behind as they have not been able to adjust to the changing circumstances.<sup>19</sup>

#### **g. Alcoholism and high spending habit**

The Kumal community people have a high spending habit, which is one of the major reasons behind their poor economic condition. There is a tradition to use rice beer/liquor in every festival, culture, tradition and other events. Producing rice beer to offer it to the clan god, guest and self is like a mandatory rule. As a result, the number of people into alcoholism is high in this community. In the Kumal community there is no prohibition for women and men of all ages to consume alcohol.

#### **h. Problems related to policy**

The Government of Nepal's policy and programmes have not been able to address the problems of the Kumal community. The local bodies resource mobilization and management procedures, 2069 (2013) had included a specific bud-

18. Based on conversation with local resident Ram Bahadur Kumal

19. Based on conversation with Khandbari municipality ward no. 9 chair Tikaram Kumal

get and programme for the indigenous nationalities. However, the new budget formulation guidelines, 2018 does not make it mandatory to allocate budget and programmes for the targeted groups and communities. As a result, there is a possibility that the backward Kumal ethnic community will be pushed further from the mainstream of the State.

## **10. Policy and programmes for the uplift of Kumal community**

### **a. Programmes run by Non-government organisations**

No non-government organization have supported the development of the Kumal community living in Tumlingtar

### **b. Local government's budget, policy and programme**

As per the government's policy and programme, under the targeted group development programme, until last fiscal year at least 10 per cent budget had to be allocated for women and children and 15 per cent for the indigenous nationalities, people with disabilities, disadvantaged groups, Dalit, elderly citizens, Madhesi and Muslim.<sup>20</sup> Even though there was no specific budget for the Kumal community budget had been allocated to the wards where they lived. This budget was used to expand roads and spend on sanitation, drinking water, various skills-oriented training.

However, the budget formulation guidelines, 2018 enforced along with the restructuring of the state has removed the policy provisions to invest in the targeted group. In the fiscal year, 2018/19 budget, policy and programmes, the Khandbari municipality talks about preserving the language and culture and maintaining social harmony and unity, but not specified

to be it for the Kumal community.<sup>21</sup> In the same fiscal year, the Khandbari municipality has allocated a budget of 100,000 for putting a compound wall and a gate at the building of Nepal Kumar Advancement Committee in Tumlingtar.

## **11. Conclusion**

The marginalized Kumal communities are not very strong from the economic, social and cultural perspective. And there is no exception to the Kumal community that lives in ward no. 9 of Khandbari municipality, Sankhuwasabha district. Along with the change in every sector of the society, their language, culture, tradition and customary skills and profession is in a state of extinction. This community has not been able to adjust itself as per the time in course of making a living. As a result, the Kumal communities have not been included in the mainstream of the State.

It seems necessary to reach up to the Sindhu valley civilization in order to explore the ethological history of this community who have become Kumal due to their profession and skills or social requirements. Because one of the belief is that this ethnic group originates from the Sindhu civilization and expanded through India and other regions. But due to lack of sufficient historical evidence, there is not concrete foundation to take this as a truth. The people who live in various parts of Nepal and have skills and knowledge in pottery are the Tarai Kumal, Newar Kumal and the Jatkumal or Majhi Kumal. It is also not ascertained whether in ancient times, these sub-caste groups were one or had distinct ethnic identity.

Whatever the reason, it is a fact that the Kumals are now gradually losing their identity. As a result, the State should not only limit the policies and pro-

20. Local bodies resource mobilization and management procedures, 2069, page 13 and 14

21. Annual town development plan (policy, programme and budget) of Khandbari municipality, fiscal year 2018/19, page 6

grammes made for them to papers but effectively implement them in practice. Only then, there is a probability for them to come out of the circle of exclusion and marginalization.

## 12. Recommendations

The following activities needs to be carried out in order to consolidate the economic, social and cultural situation of the Kumal community:

- Initiative should be taken to make them financially strong by converting their subsistence profession into income generating one.
- The Kumal themselves and the state should take the initiative to protect and preserve their mother tongue.
- There should be a provision of education in mother tongue to uplift their education standard, and scholarship should be provided to promote a favourable atmosphere for education.
- The Kumal community needs to be alert of minimizing exorbitant expenditures in the name of following culture and traditions.
- Sanitation and awareness programmes should be organized to consolidate the health condition. Sufficient information should be provided to women about reproductive health.
- This community should be pre-informed while running infrastructure projects in their locality, and they should also get an opportunity to be a part of it.

## References

1. National Census 2011
2. National Census 2001, ethnicity wise population details
3. INSEC, Nepal Human Rights Year Book 2018
4. Report of the High-level task force formed by the Council of Ministers on 30 Baisakh 30, 2067 to review the list of indigenous nationalities
5. Dr. Timsena Matrika, Khandbari municipality souvenir 2056
6. Gyawali Damodar, Population studies, page no. 134
7. National Census 2011, brief result/table M 4, ethnic/ethnicity details of the population
8. District Development Plan, Sankhuwasabha, F/Y 2016/17
9. ILO Convention no. 169, Article 7 (3)
10. Tamang Chabi Lal, Dissertation on the social and cultural situation of the Kumal community of Tumlingtar in Khandbari municipality, Sankhuwasabha district
11. Constitution of Nepal (2015), Part 3, Fundamental rights and duties
12. Dor Bahadur Bista, Sabai Jaatko Fulbari, page 48
13. Local bodies resource mobilization and management procedures, 2069, page 13 and 14
14. Annual Development Plan (policy, programme and budget) of Khanbari municipality, Fiscal Year 2018/2019, page 6

