

**Change in Motion:  
Tradition, Modernity, and  
A Shifting Tamang Identity**

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**Dedicated to Buddha, Bimala, Pramila, Pema, and everyone at Dharmadhatu.  
With my deepest respect and thanks.**

## Table of Contents

<b>Introduction</b> .....	p
<b>Chapter 1:</b> A Historical/Political/Social starting point.....	p
<b>Chapter 2:</b> Personal Narratives	
- Muna Moktan.....	p
- Buddha Tsering Moktan.....	p
- Pramila Yonzan.....	p
<b>Chapter 3:</b> Analysis : Tradition, Modernity, and Identity.....	p
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	p
<b>Appendix</b>	
<b>Bibliography</b>	
<b>Suggestions for Further Research</b>	

## **Introduction**

I first met Buddha Tsering Moktan (also known as Buddha Lama) at a decidedly awkward gathering of mostly Western Buddhists defending their appropriated identities to me – the suspicious outsider with a tape recorder. Buddha stood out to me immediately as the only non-westerner present, observing the scene with dark and sparking eyes, clearly entertained. “I am Tamang,” he identified himself to me, “I was raised Buddhist, but in my childhood I never knew there was a religion called Buddhism. Everything I have studied about Buddhism has been in the English Language.” Buddha’s peers – the group of them currently studying at the Rangjung Yeshe Institute’s Shedra in Boudha – gave way when he spoke. And, in fact, he spoke with more clarity and awareness than all of the westerners present. I had to wonder, simply at first, what does it mean to be Tamang? How has it come to be that this young man from a small village near the Tibet border of Nepal is here, surrounded by (relatively/assumably) wealthy white westerners who have traveled to Nepal to become Buddhist? Why is Buddha their classmate? Why – or is he – learning about his own religion in a foreign language?

Just as my mind was about to run wild, concerned with politics of linguistics and East-West power structures, Buddha said to me; “After graduation I want to go back into my community, into my villages, and to teach about this (Buddhism) in the local language, in the local manor, to the ladies, and to the normal people.” This put a new twist on the western influence I had become so distressed by during my travels. Here was a man with a vision, and alternative take on change and the effects of modernity in his homeland. Buddha sipped quietly on his tea, no doubt gauging my inability to fully comprehend him. I had no framework, no post-modern theory to

assist me. I only saw my East-West, Good-Bad, Tradition-Modernity dichotomies blurring before my eyes.

A week later, Buddha took me to his office, introducing me to his family, his friends, his friend's friends, extended relatives, employees, neighbors: All young Tamangs with heavy histories and vivid dreams. The group of them took me in, and for two weeks I did little more than sit with them and listen to their stories, asking questions along the way, tape recording our conversations when I could, bit by bit developing my current understanding of their lives and their hopes.

After hundreds of years of Tamang oppression and exploitation, my friends are the pioneers, the trail blazers. Their stories should be taken as just that – extraordinary. But in acknowledging the “extra – ordinary” quality of their stories, we must simultaneously become aware of the lives of the majority of young Tamangs in Kathmandu today: Uneducated, overworked, underpaid, uprooted, and painfully exploited and marginalized.

What follows is not an exploration of Tamangs as a people, so much as it is the start to an exploration of change, possibility, the evolution of society today, and the interactions that occur, the doors that open, when boundaries of people, places, language, and ideas begin to shift and blend. This is a look at transformation in process - change in motion. It is a study of possibility.

After a discussion on the historical, political, economic and social framework for situating the Tamang in Nepalese society, I will let my friends speak – maintaining the integrity of their first person narratives as best as possible – based off of several weeks of conversations and interviews, both formal and informal. While the arrangement and editing of their narratives is my own work, the words remain their own. Only three narratives are presented here due to time constraints. However, many

more valuable conversations were had that I have been forced to omit at this point in time, in order to maintain my chosen format. The final section is my analysis, assisted by outside sources but primarily informed by my time spent with Buddha and his Tamang community, including his family, employees at Dharmadatu, thangka painters, and students. This work is just a start, it is inherently limited in scope, and is by no means an extensive study.

Thank you to **Peter Moran**, for pushing me in this direction and for helping me to conceptualize this project, despite my initial hesitations.

Thank you to **Hubert Decler** for encouraging me to let my friends speak for themselves and for providing such valuable information.

Most significantly, all of my gratitude and deepest respect to **Buddha, Pramila, Bimala, Pema, Prakos**, and everyone at **Dharmadatu**, for being generous beyond my wildest expectations, for teaching me, inspiring me, and sharing with me.

If I have made any mistakes or formed any incorrect understandings, I hope to be corrected and forgiven. This has been (and will continue to be) a tremendous learning experience. With love, admiration, and blessings: **Thank you.**

Chapter One  
**Focused Discrimination:**  
**A Historical, Social, Political, and Economic Framework**

*“Yangna Yamhu Makye, yangna Kerong makye.  
 Parki sala kenna, tomtom rere chungsum”*

“Neither born in Kathmandu, nor in Kyirong, Born in the middle ground, weak, unclothed, and hungry.”<sup>1</sup>

The current socio-political and economic status of Tamangs can only be understood through a historical lens which places Tamang individuals and villages in a particular location characterized by marginalization and exploitation. Though, as Ben Campbell identifies in “Heavy Loads of Tamang Identity,” there is no homogeneous or singularly unified Tamang identity or history, the term “Tamang” (meaning, in Tibetan, either “horse trader” or “cavalry<sup>2</sup>”) denotes the largest ethnic group among Tibeto-Burman speaking peoples of the Himalayan region, making up 18-20% of Nepal’s population.<sup>3</sup> Tamangs have their own language, unique lifestyle, and religious beliefs.<sup>4</sup> Primarily populating the areas surrounding the Kathmandu valley and areas bordering Tibet, the Tamang individual straddles both a Tibetan cultural identity and a Nepali nationality. According to Bahadur Bista in Peoples of Nepal, Tamangs originally came from Tibet, and though they “have not preserved Tibetan art, culture, or religion intact...almost all that they have today is Tibetan in origin”<sup>5</sup>. Ethnic groups of Nepal, however, do not exist in isolation, and Tamang religious culture reflects the influence of Buddhist, Shamanic, as well as Hindu beliefs.

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<sup>1</sup> Ben Campbell, “The Heavy Loads of Tamang Identity,” from Nationalism and Ethnicity in a Hindu Kingdom: The Politics of Culture in Contemporary Nepal. Harwood Academic Publishers, Amsterdam: 1997.p.215 (A traditional Tamang song)

<sup>2</sup> The precise translation here is debatable, and I encountered both answers repeatedly during my research.

<sup>3</sup> Parshuram Tamang, “Tamangs Under the Shadow,” Himal Magazine: May/June 1992. p25

<sup>4</sup> *ibid*

<sup>5</sup> Bahadur Bista, Peoples of Nepal. Rathna Pustak Bhandar Publishers, Kathmandu: 1980. p54-55

Tamangs locate a space of extreme otherness in Nepali ethnic narratives, and not in typically complimentary ways. The derogatory term, “bhote,” connoting dirty, beef-eating Buddhists, has been assigned to the Tamangs, set apart for their unique cultural, familial, religious, and linguistic differences<sup>6</sup>. Furthermore, the imposed caste system has worked to control and determine the fundamental ways in which Tamangs are situated in Nepali society, both historically and in the present :

Groups in Nepal can not be considered in isolation; they gain their “essences” in relation to other groups and the critical forces for understanding these relational processes are to be found in the formation of the state of Nepal, which placed groups into categories of superordinate and subordinate tempered in the cultural constructions of the high Caste Hindu rulers<sup>7</sup> .

This imposed Caste system, identified in Holmberg’s work Order in Paradox, was taken from the Hindu tradition of governance and rule and was implemented in Nepal in 1859 with the aim to “induct the hill ethnic people of Nepal under the four-tier Hindu hierarchy.”<sup>8</sup> Tamangs, as a non-Hindu ethnic group, were categorized as “*pani chalney*” Sudras, and were caste as the lowest among the hill ethnics who were in the *pani chalney* division.<sup>9</sup> The caste system, identifying Tamangs as nearly the lowest of the low, can further be understood as a strategic, political move by those ruling Kathmandu. Because the Tamang nation (as the collection of Tamang villages and tribes can now be referred to) occupies the strategically significant region encircling the Kathmandu Valley<sup>10</sup>, “Kathmandu’s rulers thought it best to bring them forcibly under central rule and exploit them enough that the community could never rise”<sup>11</sup> .

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<sup>6</sup>Ben Campbell, p 216

<sup>7</sup>, David Holmberg, Order in Paradox: Myth, Ritual, and Exchange Among Nepal’s Tamang. Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, Delhi: 2005. p x

<sup>8</sup> Tamang, p 25

<sup>9</sup> *ibid*

<sup>10</sup> See appendix for map.

<sup>11</sup> Tamang, p 26

Thus became the institutionalized, focused, and strategic discrimination and exploitation of Tamangs; a burden which has taken its toll on Tamang communities. A far cry from a threat to central authority, Tamangs became the ready labor reserve pool for the rulers in Kathmandu: a subordinate status which has been well maintained in fields social and political as well as economic. During the years of the Gorkhali conquest and during the Rana years, Tamangs found themselves in various forms of bonded labor, serving as menial laborers for the rulers and courtier class. Parshuram Tamang identifies a handful of these jobs, including: cutting trails, portering, running mail, keeping palaces clean, gardening, agricultural labor, herding, maintaining hookahs, and holding umbrellas<sup>12</sup>. A practice particularly damaging for Tamang women, a system of importing women – “scores of female retainers, some of whom served as concubines”<sup>13</sup> to serve in Rana palaces became all too common during this time.

Today, Tamang communities are undergoing drastic transformations. According to Holmberg, “The most obvious transformations in Tamang village life in the last two decades can be attributed to a general process of the dissipation of local insularity”<sup>14</sup>. Whereas, traditionally, “most villagers remained based in their home territory extracting an existence – for many a marginal existence – from subsistence farming,”<sup>15</sup> increasingly and accelerating rapidly, Tamangs are leaving villages and migrating to urban areas, primarily Kathmandu. It is the younger generations of Tamangs in particular – the sons and daughters of the villages – who come to Kathmandu in search of wage labor as an alternative to the limitations of village life in a modern world:

<sup>12</sup> *ibid*

<sup>13</sup> *ibid*

<sup>14</sup> Holmberg, p xiv

<sup>15</sup> *ibid*

The draw of Kathmandu's cash economy and the bright city lights has emptied the Tamang hamlets of all but the infants, the aged and the infirm. Strength, intelligence, skill and initiative have seeped out of Tamang hillsides.<sup>16</sup>

Indeed, as modern education gains value and importance in contemporary Nepalese culture and the world economy, young Tamangs are finding it not just alluring, but necessary, to leave their villages in search of higher education. Additionally, economic deprivation in the villages and the Maoist takeovers have, in many cases, worked as "push" factors for the large scale Tamang migrations into cities. Thus, traditional Tamang village culture is disintegrating, and a new society of young, urban Tamangs is taking its place, fully entwined in the Kathmandu economy.

While young Tamangs may be able to leave their villages, it has proven to be far more difficult to escape an ethnic and national history of exploitation and subservience: "The migrants arrive in Kathmandu to serve as the underclass, as domestics, and as carpet weavers living in dilapidated shanties, unhygienic rooming houses, and working rickshaws and push-carts"<sup>17</sup>. In 1992, when Parshuram Tamang, as the head of the Tamang nation, wrote the article "Tamangs Under the Shadow," he was able to identify 50% of porters, practically all rickshaw pullers, almost the entire lowest rungs of the trekking trade, 90% of thangka<sup>18</sup> laborers, and 75% of all carpet weaving laborers, as Tamangs.<sup>19</sup> As an additional point of labor concern, Tamang women, particularly vulnerable to exploitation, are working in large numbers as prostitutes and night dancers in Kathmandu clubs, or "being sucked into the Bombay

<sup>16</sup> Tamang, p 27

<sup>17</sup> ibid

<sup>18</sup> Thangkas are traditional Buddhist religious paintings.

<sup>19</sup> ibid

sex industry – the latest form of commoditizing Tamang Labour power.”<sup>20</sup> Tamangs, perhaps more than any other ethnic hill community, are now engaged in the flesh trade.<sup>21</sup> Though now located in Kathmandu city life, the status quo has, overwhelmingly, merely been transplanted from a rural to urban setting, rendering Tamangs once again to the status of exploited laborers for the higher castes of Nepalese society.

In contemporary social and economic politics, the presence of Tibetan refugees in the Kathmandu Valley since 1959 has further complicated the Tamang trajectory within the greater Nepalese economy. Tibetan refugees settling in Nepal introduced two new major economic enterprises to the Nepalese economy: Thangka painting, and Tibetan carpet weaving. The opening of these businesses in the early ‘60s, gaining momentum over the last 40 years due to increasing numbers of Western patrons, has contributed significantly to the numbers of Tamangs working in Kathmandu. Tamang laborers now dominate both businesses, while the bulk of profits go to Newar, Nepali, or Tibetan businessmen.<sup>22</sup> Working conditions in both enterprises are exploitative and poor, but uneducated and uprooted Tamangs with no other options have easily fallen into the undesirable factory working conditions<sup>23</sup>. Thus the majority of Tamangs find themselves, though Nepalese and living within their own nation, experiencing a lower standard of living than that of most Tibetan refugees, displaced and country-less as they are.

The psychological effects of economic deprivation, political discrimination, and social marginalization have no doubt been severe, yet it is important here to recognize the agency and active resistance of the Tamang community which has thus

<sup>20</sup> Campbell, p 220

<sup>21</sup> Tamang, p 27

<sup>22</sup> Tamang, p 26

<sup>23</sup> Buddha Tsering Moktan, interview, 11-27-05.

far been rendered invisible. While Parshuram Tamang states that Tamangs have “developed a culture of silence, accepting their lot as defined without a challenge,”<sup>24</sup> his internalized victimhood overlooks a history of Tamang resistance, self preservation, and survival. Anthropologists such as David Holmberg have recognized a historical trend of defiance - the production of an oppositional dynamic of reciprocity:

The earliest recorded Tamang encounters with the kings of Gorkha who were later to consolidate Nepal was one of active opposition...there is no question that as the state formed, an oppositional relation framed encounters...the characterizations of Tamang made by the authorities of state and vice versa reveal conflict and mutual distrust....Tamang regularly challenged state exploitation and mocked the representative authorities of the state<sup>25</sup>

It remains true that Tamangs lack fair political representation, and that they have been systematically and economically subordinated for generations, yet it is unfair and highly problematic to assume that Tamangs have accepted this status as willing and powerless victims to state and cultural oppression. Although Jon Burbank makes the mistake of putting the blame for economic shortcomings on the Tamang communities for this very reason he characterizes Tamangs briefly as being “well known for their resistance to and suspicion of outside authority”<sup>26</sup>. The reciprocity of otherness – characterized here by suspicion – is a valid form of resisting a system of institutionalized subjugation, and works as a significant complicating dynamic in understanding Tamang-Nepali systems of power.

Furthermore, in this context, identity politics should be taken as a form of active resistance. The maintenance and insistence upon a unique Tamang identity, straddling worlds and blurring categories as it may be, is used to preserve the integrity and psychological health of an ethnic group under fire. For example, Tamangs self

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<sup>24</sup> Tamang, p 27

<sup>25</sup> Holmberg, p xiii

<sup>26</sup> Jon Burbank, Culture Shock! Nepal . Graphic Arts Centre Publishing, Portland: 1992. p 54

identification as “Buddhist” is not merely a product of tradition. It is, additionally, an active act of defiance in a Hindu kingdom. After suffering as a group under years of neglect, distrust, exploitation, and repression from the centre, it should not come as a surprise that there is a solid and thriving Tamang identity, even -or perhaps one should say especially- in urban Kathmandu. More recently, in light of democracy movements in Nepal, ethnic identity politics have found a place in national political organizing,<sup>27</sup> and Tamangs have been a strong participant in this change.

In 1980, Bahadur Bista wrote the following of Tamang communities:

Tamangs have... been greatly exploited. A few are sending their children to the new free primary schools provided by the government. Some Tamangs are even to be found studying in institutions of higher education, and a few seem to be taking interest in political matters’<sup>28</sup>

Note the surprise and apprehension in Bista’s commentary, as well as the value placed on the novel significance of Tamangs becoming both educated and politically active. Though 25 years outdated, Bista’s writing identifies, to a meaningful extent, new trends in the developing narratives of Tamang identity in the context of a country and ethnic community in transition. The following narratives fall in opposition to Parshuram Tamang’s depiction of the Tamang people as ‘silently waiting’ for a chance to rise up from the bottom of Nepalese society, though they in no way work to devalue the challenges faced by Tamangs, both historically and today.

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<sup>27</sup> Holmberg, p xii

<sup>28</sup> Bista, p 61

**Muna Moktan**<sup>29</sup>

I have struggled from the bottom. From the beginning. From the very scrap level. But if I work hard, if it is difficult for me, then I am helping to make it easier for others. I am the first girl to leave Makawanpur – my village. The first to be on her own. I am also the first girl from my village to paint thangkas. I have no education, you know, in my village a girl's education is not so important.

When I was fifteen, I said to my mother, "I'm not going to school, I'm not doing anything, I want to be doing something!" So my mother spoke to her brother – my uncle – who is a thangka painter. He was trained by another person in the village, but even this was unusual. There are not many thangka painters typically in villages. But he agreed to take me in. I was very happy with the thangka painting, very happy to be doing something. I only knew two things about thangkas then. I knew, one, that this was something they call a thangka. And two, that it belongs to Buddhist stuff. We were a Buddhist community, yes, but that's not how we thought of it then. It was just part of life. I had thought sometimes of being a nun, when I saw nothing else for me to do, so because of this interest I had, my uncle took me around to ceremonies, and I began to learn a little about Buddhism.

When I was seventeen, I decided to leave the village, to come to Kathmandu. Women are always kept and protected by their brothers or their fathers in the village. Women are never to be independent or alone. So my mother was not happy with me leaving; she was always trying to stop me. The thought of seeing a girl on her own, with no men to protect her, was very shocking. They did not allow me to leave for very long time, but still, I left. But now, my uncle has visited me, he has seen that I am okay, and has convinced my mother to allow me to be here. Now my family says

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<sup>29</sup> This narrative comes from a single interview on 12-04-05, Translated by Buddha Tsering Moktan.

“It’s okay, you can do it.” I visit one time a year, for Dasain festival<sup>30</sup>, but I stay here in Kathmandu for Losar.<sup>31</sup>

When I came to Kathmandu, I had nothing. No money. At first nowhere to stay. I had to borrow money for clothes, and I slept on a mat. I had no rug even. I was seventeen, and I found a job in a thangka workshop. There were six men and me – the only woman. As the only woman then, I had to never go with them, never talk with them. I kept alone, and was okay. I was told that for a woman to be painting thangkas is a bad thing, that it will bring her bad merit. But each year I see the number of women thangka artists increasing, so now I know that this is not true. Later I left that workshop, and started my own, as supervisor. But I have left that too.

Now, I am twenty, and I live with five other women. All Tamang women, all thangka artists. One is in college, but the rest of us, we have no education. Now we are taking tutoring, learning math and reading, and some English too. But even if you don’t have education, thangka can bring a sustainable job. So five or six years ago, the girls who came were more uneducated than now. Traditionally, women do not get involved in business. We just do home and farming. Now it’s changing, and I think becoming easier for others. Now, thangka provides jobs for women. In Boudha now, maybe there are 1,000 Tamang girls in thangka workshops, and they are coming now with more education. They take morning classes, then thangka paint in the day. If they have an education, then they can find other jobs, and they will leave thangka painting. But I have no education, all I know is thangka.

In Kathmandu, I live near many different people, we see different things. So from thangka and from seeing ceremonies in Kathmandu, I have seen that I am a Buddhist. Yes, I have become aware that I am a Buddhist. And I am happy to be

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<sup>30</sup> Dasain is a National Nepali holiday, not traditionally celebrated in Tamang communities.

<sup>31</sup> Losar is the Tibetan New Year, and is traditionally the largest celebration in Tamang communities.

known as a Buddhist, to say “I am a Buddhist,” but I also go to Hindu temple, and other things, and do that with no problem too. And I am learning too, taking a class for thangka artists about Buddhism. I have become very interested in the Dharma.

Some of my friends, they only take thangka painting as a profession, as a way to make money. But for me, I want to be doing something for the Tamang culture, and as I said, thangka is all I know. I have brought two girls from my village to Kathmandu. They are both under twenty, and wanted to learn a skill. One wanted to go to college but could not pay the tuition, so she will study thangka then go back to school. I am helping other girls with transition from village to city; I am setting them up, and finding workshops that I know will not mistreat them, finding them places to stay. I check in on them and know that they are okay. And their parents are proud; they say “our girls are better than our boys! They are bringing us money and taking care of us.”

So I, too, am happy and proud. My goal is to help other women thangka artists. If I work hard, I am helping to make it easier for others. This is just the start. This is only the beginning.

**Buddha Tsering Moktan**<sup>32</sup>

I was born in 1972, in the village of Ratankot. Growing up in the village, we never saw white people. We thought ‘oh, they must be so heavenly, must be like gods.’ We thought ‘oh, they are so pure, even their waste must be white!’ We wondered things like this, but mostly we were scared of them. We are culturally almost all Tibetan, but we are more Nepalese by heart, by feeling. We have more at stake in Nepalese culture. When I was growing up, the only options for a Tamang, other than agriculture, was to join the Nepalese or Indian army, or do coal mine work in India. I remember the songs they sang in the village about those who died in the mine. Also some people became truck drivers, and we thought ‘oh my god, he is so lucky that he is driving this truck!’

My father was always in favor of modernization, so he made sure I went to school. I went all the way up to 10<sup>th</sup> standard, the end of high school. When I got my S.L.C.<sup>33</sup>, my father said he would support me no longer. I asked for 500 Rupees. He gave me 300.

When I was seventeen, I went to Kathmandu with all ten of the students who graduated with me. Of the group of us, only two are still here. The others found it too difficult in the city, they couldn’t survive. But my older brother had already been here for six years, painting thangkas, so he set me up in that business. This was 1987, when all young Tamangs were leaving their villages, all boys either driving cabs and

<sup>32</sup> Also known as Buddha Lama, this narrative comes from a series of informal and formal interviews, between 11-18 and 12-10. Significant formal interviews/recordings for this work were held on 11-18, 11-27, and 12-04.

<sup>33</sup> School Leaving Certificate, commonly called the S.L.C

rickshaws, or working in thangka workshops. I began painting thangkas, but then, because of my brother, got a job in a thangka shop in Durbar marg.

It was there in the shop that I first came in contact with Westerners. At first I was so scared of them, as a Tamang boy. But I liked the sound of the English, and I would always listen carefully and pay attention when I heard them speaking. This was my first interaction with the western world, and it was like a world university education, seeing all these people from Europe or America. I began to learn English so that I could sell the thangkas to the foreigners who came in, so that I could speak with them. And then I became interested in the art, curious about what it all meant. And also to be a good salesman, so I began to study the books. And this is how I became very interested in Buddhism.

I stayed for ten years working at that thangka shop, and I became a very good salesman. I have left the country twice – both times to Australia for the thangka exhibition. It was in Australia when I was 26 that I became self aware and discovered who I am. A professor came to the thangka exhibition, and he heard me speaking, explaining a piece, and he asked me to come give a lecture for the university. They made all these signs, “Buddha Lama on the Buddhist View of Mandala.” I didn’t know what I was doing, I had no notes, and they were not expecting someone so young, they thought I was going to be some old Lama. But I spoke, for maybe 45 minutes, and they liked it. And that’s when I found out who I am: That I could really do something. But in my mind, I was thinking of my life in the village, and I told myself that I must study more.

Now, I am studying about Buddhism at the Yeshe institute in Boudha<sup>34</sup>. In my childhood, I never knew there was a religion called Buddhism, it was just part of life.

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<sup>34</sup> Rangjung Yeshe Institute’s Shedra Studies Program was established by Cukyi Nyima Rinpoche in order to expand the scope of Dharma teachings to non-Tibetan (primarily Western) students of Buddhism. See also: <http://www.shedra.com>

The concept of Buddhism is entirely modern to indigenous communities. We don't practice traditionally. Like traditionally, meditation, cleansing your mind and stuff, that's like totally new. For lay people in Buddhist communities, these things are like studying modern science. Like a new genre of literature or philosophy, though we were Buddhists for 800, 1200 years.

I've studied whatever I know about Buddhism so far, I've studied it in the English language. It's not available in Tamang language, neither in Nepali. Tibetan language is inaccessible for many, and is very difficult for us to understand. So, so far, whatever I've learned about Buddhism is in English language. My ability to read and write English gave me this opportunity to study Buddhism.

The change that the West has brought is very good for the lay people, is very good for those people who are suppressed in the name of religion. Those people are at least getting access to a certain degree of knowledge which was, before, preserved in a very small room. Buddhism is opened up not just to the West, but for easterners too. It's so easily accessible. If that modern system of education (at Yeshe) had not developed ...For me, being a Tamang boy, to get this knowledge, no! You'd have to put yourself into slavery. Which I cannot do.

Now, these teachings are readily accessible to anybody who can still speak English. But if you can't speak English, it's still very difficult. My objective of study in this institute, after my graduation, I want to go back into my community, into my villages, and to teach about this in the local language, in the local manor, to the ladies, and to the normal people.

The students at the Shedra, they are good students, but as far as their integrity to mankind, to the sentient beings whom everyday they aspire to liberty, they are not 100%. They are doing everything for their own survival. From the first cry of the

baby, it's about survival. In the name of all holy beings, we all cry for survival. So- if we are all doing it for survival, how can we ignore the bottom of human society crying for survival? As a student of religion, where you aspire for enlightenment of all sentient beings, demonstrating great compassion, everyday, and yet you don't do something substantial and are instead, 'oh, I need a new car', you know...these things really bother me. We must aspire, but we must also do work. I believe this is what the West can show us.

Whatever the achievements that have been made in the West, is amazing and mankind must accept it as a fact that it is not given, it is worked for. In the East, we pray that these things will be given by god, like god is like electric power. In the East we are still worshipping, but all this we pray for, we never have. Everything must be through our own hands and hard work, that is the bottom line, and that's what the West proves and demonstrates. You make a choice, you can live with so called spirituality and live like a third world country, or you can press something new and challenging, and be like the first world.

I am doing my best to establish an institution, I don't know if it will work, but it's from a balanced view of East and West. Modernization cannot be stopped, so we have to modernize ourselves, we have to control that. Global culture, global brotherhood and sisterhood, modernization – you can't stop it, but it should be managed. I have a daughter, I cannot ask her to be like my mom, she will fight with me! But I can say look, this is the reality, this is what it's all about. The way is education. And here, state run school education, is total crap, and totally lawless. Then the private schools, all the books come from Delhi, and there's nothing about Nepal.

So I have started this nonprofit organization; the Dharmadatu Foundation<sup>35</sup>, to help educate and to help empower. Part of this mission is to contribute to reducing illiteracy, joblessness, and to help achieve the peaceful transformation of our societies from traditional into modern. Right now, I am teaching a class for Tamang women, teaching some about the Dharma, reading the Tibetan scriptures. And on Saturdays I also hold a class for the Thangka painters, teaching about the correct iconography, and also some about the roll of the workers in the market.

So I think, if I work as a person in society, if I am a social person, I will raise these issues, these issues of inequality, injustices, and discrimination in society. And if not, I will live an isolated life, will think nothing about the world. But if I am to think, then I will raise these issues that are making me crazy. People say to me, ‘you idiot, why are you studying this Buddhism, why doing these things, leave Nepal,’ all this stuff. And so I say, ‘what you say is not wrong. You are entirely right. But even if I am an idiot, I must at least try.’ My process has been like struggling my own identity. Now people realize, okay, this guy isn’t going to give up.

**Pramila Yonzan**<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Registered as an official non-profit organization of Nepal, Dharmadhatu, meaning the expanse of genuine reality, is now in its third year of establishment. For more information see also: [www.dhatu.com](http://www.dhatu.com) and [www.artofhimalaya.com](http://www.artofhimalaya.com)

<sup>36</sup> Pramila’s narrative is based off of a series of informal interviews between 11-27 and 12-04, though the majority is taken from a formal interview/recording, held on 12-02, which includes dialogue between Pramila and her sister Bimala. Some of that conversation has been included without due credit to Bimala, for the sake of a coherent narrative.

I come from the village of Lisankhu, in the district of Sindhupalchok, near the Tibet border. I remember very little about my life in the village because I came here when I was so young, six or seven. But when I see my pictures, now, then I remember.

Women in the village suffered a lot- their lives are very bad in the village. They are not educated, the only job is farming – agriculture. Even when we were kids, we had to work very hard, going and bringing the wood, going and bringing the water. In our village at that time we had no water, so we had to go get the water, and it is very far away. When we go to get the water, we have to go down the mountain, and coming up is very steep, carrying the water. As a child I was scared but excited doing that.

In our village, the girl goes to school, but they have to do and finish all the work at home first. After she does all the things at home, then she can go to school. Even now, the same thing is still happening in the village. First priority goes to work. Work is before education, so even the girls are very big, like fifteen or sixteen years old, and they are studying in standard grade five or six. In our village still nowadays, men dominate culture. Tamang men are all day playing, drinking alcohol, and outside, while women are working washing clothes, farming, taking care of animals.

There was one girl in our village, I remember, she was married when she was just nine years old, and came to her father in laws home, and she grew up there, and was working all her life, and her husband he died because of this drinking, and she had to take care of all the children, and she was always bothered and being beaten by her father in law, and her husband's sister also beats her. She was fourteen or fifteen when she had her first child, so now her health is not good. I know she now has psychological problems because of this abuse.

But my parents are different, my father never beat my mom, he never drank alcohol, because he is a priest, a lama. And my grandfather and great grandfather were priests too. My big brother has learned some things, like how to do puja, but everyone from my village just wanted to come to Kathmandu, settle down doing different things, so everything is left. The village now has many Maoists, and just old people.

When I was growing up, my brothers, they were all over in Kathmandu, and they were a little bit settled, so they brought me and my sisters here for education. Bimala, and me – we came to Kathmandu and started living with our brothers. Because I was the youngest, my parents, they loved me a lot, and I used to love them a lot, and so I cried! I used to cry, they used to cry. I remember that. It was hard for me. I was just a kid, with no mom and dad. My brother and sister in law, and my sister Bimala, they were my mom and dad. They used to care for me.

I studied in private school. But my sister, because she came when she was already grown up, twelve or thirteen, it was harder for her to get. She went up to grade ten in government school, and then got married when she was 17. Then she got pregnant, and stopped her education. After ten years, she returned to college, and now she is in the 12<sup>th</sup> grade. Before, in Nepal, the culture only allowed women to go to school or college until they were married. Because then, after you get married, you have to take care of in laws, mother in law, father in law, brother in law, washing, dishes, gardening, cleaning house, all the responsibility on you. But now, even after you are married, then you can still go to school. So it's changing.

Other girls from the Tamang villages, they thought if they came to Kathmandu they can get good job and earn money, but it's not like that in Kathmandu! They don't find any kind of a job or a proper place to work, so they are doing that kind of

prostitute work to make money, to have a “higher life”, carrying mobile and everything. They don't have any money so they do this kind of job. In Nepal, untouchable people, the lower caste, mostly they do this kind of job and Tamang too because they are not educated. They come to Kathmandu and do prostitute job, at like age thirteen or fourteen. No other options, or otherwise, they can go for carpet weaving. They can come here for that job, but it's very hard. The men they come for thangka, the women for carpet. It's very hard for the women.

When I was in 11<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> standard, if a boy came to talk to me, I would get so nervous, I would start crying, I would go ‘what is wrong with me, why is this boy coming to talk to me.’ Really, being proposed to by a boy used to be such a big deal, I used to cry and tell my sisters. It was a very big issue for me because I was afraid because when my brothers or fathers heard of such things they would scold me. They think it is the fault of the girl not for the boy. They will scold the girls: you are provoking, you are doing this, you are doing that. So there are lots of restrictions on women, like no walking out alone after 5pm. But after my 13<sup>th</sup> standard, a change came over me. I knew that I am not lower than anyone, and I would go “yeah, I am something! I am something!” Now I don't feel any hesitation to talk to anybody, anyone, I can talk to boys no problem. I have changed. My education helped very much. So it makes a change to you, to be able to speak English properly, or to be smart, then everyone will praise you. But to get that praise, you have to work very hard.

I am the first person to graduate in our village - and in our family also. I am the first to do graduation from grade 15 standard. I felt, there is nobody in my family to graduate, so I'll be the one to do it. I don't know how it came to me, it just did! And now, my wish, my dream, is to do masters. After that, I want my PhD too. This

transformation came to me, and my parents, they are very happy. So whenever they meet someone new, my parents say “yeah my daughter did graduation and now she is going for her masters, we are so lucky.” You know, it has been a topic for family members, to talk about she is doing this, she is doing that. My brothers, they used to tell me I couldn’t do this, but now they have seen, and they are proud too.

I’ll keep up my studies, and then, I’ll do some job, and then get married. I don’t want to do a job being under someone. I tried one job in Kathmandu, in an office. It was difficult to do my studies at the same time, and I was there for a month but they never paid me! My family, they said, ‘why are you doing this? Get a good job after your studies.’

In my sister’s time, when you were fourteen or fifteen, then they would press you saying you have to get married. I’m 23 now. My family knows me, they know who I am, and they know I will do my studies first. I do want to get married. Very seldom do Tamang girls marry Nepali boys. I don’t know if I’ll marry the same, Tamang, I don’t know. If I find somebody from out of my cast, as long as he understands me, I’ll marry him. There will be people who have problems, they will be very angry, they will want me to marry within the same culture. They will try to turn me. In my parent’s generation, the reason for getting married was to bring somebody who will work hard in the home, look after the home, that’s why they would get married. But now you can’t do that, you need a partner who will understand you, who you can live with fully comfortably. I want to be able to say yeah my husband is great, and have him say yeah my wife is great. Equal like that.

Women are getting stronger. Nowadays, girls are more involved than the boys. They are listening to western music, and watching Hollywood movies. Now the girls don’t go for Nepali or Hindi music, they go for western music, western movies. They

see the girls fighting in movies, talking back to men, so now the girls are becoming the same. We are saying 'we are not going to bend down in front of men! No!' If women take it positively, it depends what you take from it, the influence of the west can be good, especially for the women. Now my sister is in America, in Washington, but I don't want to live there. I think America is just something to go and see, then come back.

Even though we Tamangs are culturally Tibetan, young Tibetans now are so different, they used to call me for disco and night clubs, going here, going there. They never talk about studies. They always think about parties, and money. It makes me feel not close with them. But yeah, I am Buddhist. I know how to do puja, and I go to the temple and stuff like that, but it's not so much. I'll do it if I feel comfortable with it. Maybe it's because growing up I was away from my father, he was not raising me. Instead, in Kathmandu, I was raised surrounded by Hindus and Hindu society, and so I grew up a bit mixed. I am mixed now, because in our school growing up my friends were Hindu, and I am Buddhist! Now my friends are all Nepali, but no Tamang.

But I feel strongly Tamang, and now people are being more conscious about Tamang culture, they have started celebrating Tamang New Year, Losar, they have started raising some voices for Tamangs, people are doing things for Tamangs. Also now, since two years ago, my mother has moved in with me. It's very different, now someone is here to take care of me, to be concerned with me. In our community, in our culture, we can't act freely with our elders. There is no communication, not so much interaction. They don't know us, and we don't know them. Every younger has to respect the elder. But now I believe my brother, my family, now they are all changing. The women in the family, they used to wear saris and things, but now they

have stopped, and they walk alone, not always having to rely on their husbands. I know these things are changing.

Chapter 3:

### **Tradition, Modernity, and Identity**

Inherent within the narratives of Muna, Buddha, and Pramila, are issues of tradition, modernity, and identity. To negotiate a personal identity (itself certainly a western influenced conception) in a changing heterogeneous world of mixed messages and mixed cultures is clearly a complex, multi-layered journey. On one hand, young Tamangs in Kathmandu are bound by the chains of a history of marginalization and exploitation, but on the other hand, those very chains are closely related to their roots and cultural heritage. Is it possible to negotiate a life path which neither conforms to an oppressive ethnic history nor rejects in its entirety the cultural identity of the oppressed? Modernity has provided the opportunity, has opened the doors, for a re-defining of what it means to be Tamang, on both personal and communal levels.

Muna, Buddha, and Pramila all acknowledge, to varying degrees, how their self-definition, their initial cognitive moments of self-realization, were born out of contact with 'the other.' While self consciousness may very well be a characteristic of modernity, in places like Kathmandu where westerners are merely an addition to an already diverse and cosmopolitan city, I argue that self consciousness is, additionally, an outcome of encountering difference. For example, Muna becomes aware of her Buddhist identity when in contact with Hindu neighbors whom she feels different to. At the same time, however, she is influenced by her surroundings, and will partake in Hindu activities. Buddha, likewise, only becomes aware of a religion called Buddhism

when he leaves his village and encounters both those different from him – be they westerners, Tibetan Buddhists, or co-workers.

But what exactly does the production of self consciousness look like? What, precisely, is the identity that is being recognized? Particularly in the case of Buddha, who is studying Tibetan Buddhism surrounded by Westerners, for him to say that all he has learned about Buddhism is in the English language, is to somehow discredit seventeen years of his Buddhist upbringing prior to definition. While Buddha would deny having internalized a hierarchy of what is ‘correct’ Buddhist practice, he is studying his own religion via a foreign vehicle, one shaped primarily for an academic, Western crowd. To whatever extent this gives him a sense of his Tamang Buddhist identity, it is simultaneously the production of a new one. Additionally, Buddha’s interest in Buddhism was initially produced via (or at least surrounded by) the commercial market – as a selling tactic to Western consumers. Especially in Australia, when he is given to opportunity to speak at a Western university, Buddha’s Buddhist self consciousness is innately tangled within the perceptions of ‘the other,’ which has given him an internalized sense of self.

Pramila’s experience of self awareness, unlike Buddhas, was largely formed by her relationship with education, not a Buddhist understanding. The identity of being an educated woman – an educated Tamang woman – is what led her to declare: “I am someone!” Pramila enjoys the praise and attention she earns within the Tamang community for having achieved her high level of education, transforming her from a shy girl to a brave young woman. Her sense of self then is largely linked to community. It is because of being a Tamang woman, the first to graduate from her village, that Pramila has gained her sense of self. Additionally, her discussion of the

positive influences of the West on women in Nepal shows the ways in which self consciousness is likewise linked to the larger world of difference and modernity.

Although modernity can largely be held responsible for the clear disintegration and dissolving of traditional village life (note Pramila's casual mention of her village now being only populated by old people, and even so, her parents have now moved to Kathmandu too), it has not necessarily destroyed cultural ties with such success. Perhaps there are Tamangs today in Kathmandu who have entirely severed those connections to their roots, but out of those whom I encountered, their feelings of connectedness to their culture were largely intact. In fact, it may be that in an atmosphere of such otherness and difference, recognition of one's Tamang ties appears even more significant than it was during traditional village life.

As members of the younger generation, not only do Muna, Buddha, and Pramila maintain their Tamang identities in Kathmandu, but they further express a powerful sense of responsibility toward their culture. Muna, Buddha, and Pramila are able to clearly identify as Tamang, to feel bound to their community even back in the villages, but they do not feel bound to what it has historically meant to be Tamang. Pramila does not want to have a job working under someone, Muna has actively fought off male dependency, and Buddha has broken away from employment all together in order to start his non-profit foundation.

Muna, Buddha, and Pramila (what was not mentioned in Pramila's narrative is that she is responsible for bookkeeping at Dharmadhatu) are committed to supporting their Tamang communities. The sons and daughters who once broke away, speeding up the destruction of tradition and village life, are now working to help their own community, rather than thinking only of themselves and their city lives in Kathmandu. A common thread is their concern for helping others with the transition from village

life to modern city life – in other words, to help break the cycle of Tamang exploitation. When Muna explains how she helps Tamang girls who come from the village to Kathmandu, what she is really doing is ensuring that these women do not fall into the same patterns as past generations of Tamang women. Likewise, Buddha's foundation, propelled by Buddhist ideals, is currently a resource for Tamang women and Thangka painters to access potentially empowering information. Duty to one's community can here be redefined as the responsibility one feels to change and shift one's community onto a new path.

The notion of proving oneself to family and community provides yet another common thread between the three narratives presented. Pramila has proven herself through education, Muna has proven herself by her ability to survive successfully in Kathmandu, and Buddha is working to prove himself to all those who deem him an 'idiot' for not following a more 'acceptable' lifestyle. This notion requires the recognition of opposition and resistance within their communities, but additionally recognizes the doubt and marginalization from the broader Nepali society which they are forced to fight against. It becomes then a double struggle – one of shifting the traditional Tamang cultural understanding of what is acceptable as well as shifting the societal rules and assumptions about what a Tamang can be. Success for Muna, Buddha, and Pramila means more than their own personal survival and more than paving the path to make life better for other Tamangs. Success additionally means the ability to work on and within a society of opposition, and to succeed.

Modernity, while undeniably bulldozing valuable traditions and ways of life into the grave yard of history, has opened up new opportunities for changing the course of history, and for redefining identity within a newly flexible societal framework. During periods of change, structures of power and control are called into

question, and for Tamangs, modernity has provided just such an opportunity. I want to be careful, however, to not over state myself. Modernity has provided Tamangs with the opportunity, and those individuals such as Muna, Buddha, and Pramila, are working to make life different for future generations, but it remains that Tamangs in Kathmandu are still, primarily and overwhelmingly, the exploited laboring class. These voices have, unfortunately, been ignored and silenced in this research.

Even educational institutions, so often understood as the best vehicle for social change, are built around conceptions of privilege, class, and social discrimination. Government schools are considered inadequate, of notoriously poor quality. Furthermore, English is not taught in government schools to the extent that it is taught in private schools, and since English is the language used in higher education, higher education is virtually barred from many who could not afford a private education. While Pramila was able to attend private school, she recognizes that this was only because she came from a high rung in Tamang society as the daughter of her village's lama. Though this social status is invisible in the greater Kathmandu society, she came from a background with a relative amount of privilege.

Meanwhile, Muna, with her lack of education and inability to speak English, is unable to use education as her vehicle for change. Instead, she uses her work as a Thangka painter and her influence over the girls she cares for to serve her purpose of social change. However, now that she has established herself in Kathmandu, she has chosen to have a tutor and attend (Buddha's) classes for thangka painters. Likewise for Pramila's sister Bimala, who is now attending grade 12 after getting married and having a child, life in Kathmandu has provided these women with educational opportunities which break patterns of tradition.

Especially for Tamang women, modernity has provided a window of opportunity for breaking away from a male dominated, patriarchal society which situated women as second class citizens. Be it via education or the influence of western films, systems of male domination have clearly become under fire as women strike out on their own in Kathmandu. However, it has already been made clear that the majority of Tamang women are not as lucky as Pramila, Bimala, and Muna. As one of the most vulnerable groups coming now to Kathmandu – uneducated, poor, and alone – Tamang girls falling into the Kathmandu sex labor industry are, most likely, not finding modern city life to be empowering in the same ways as the women in the narratives presented.

Religion within a modern context is another point of interest within all three narratives. The dislocation from village life to modern city life has, without a doubt, its effect on an individual's sense of spirituality. Young Tamangs make the transition from village Buddhist upbringings almost entirely lacking in spiritual consciousness or self awareness, into a heterogeneous context in which not only Tibetans are studying Buddhism in monastic settings but far traveled westerners are too. Today, many of the young monks in Boudha's 'Tibetan' monasteries are Tamangs<sup>37</sup>, and at the Shedra, Buddha is only one of five Nepali students. The high numbers of Tamangs in the Thangka business no doubt means that large numbers of Buddhist Tamangs are becoming aware of Buddhism in a context highly different from that of the village. Buddha describes Buddhism in the village as more of a culture or tradition than an institutionalized religious practice, as it is now seen in Kathmandu, surrounded by monasteries, rinpoches, and high lamas.

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<sup>37</sup> Holmberg, p xix

There exists, according to a variety of people I encountered in Boudha, a type of Buddhist/spiritual renaissance, in which ethnic groups such as the Tamang are becoming highly interested in Buddhist practice, a type of re-vitalization process in the works. How much does this renewed interest have to do with the powerful interest of the West in Tibetans and Tibetan Buddhism? How much does it have to do with the social currency of being a Tibetan Buddhist that is no doubt lost on Tamangs, reminded often of the success of their Tibetan Buddhist counterparts? Whatever the cause, precisely, it is clear that the religious understandings of Tamangs are shifting, just as sure as the lifestyles of Tibetan refugees are changing in exile.

Perhaps we can characterize the relationship between religion and modernity as the ‘opening up’ of religious knowledge and practice. Without entirely repeating Buddha’s commentary on the incredible accessibility of religious knowledge for those able to read English, one can conclude that the west’s interest in Buddhism has drastically impacted the current practices of Buddhism, particularly in Boudha. For example, for a fee, westerners and Tamangs alike can attend a seminar delivered by a certain rinpoche on ‘secret tantric practices,’ placing spiritual knowledge, even ‘secret’ knowledge, on the market<sup>38</sup>.

Buddha’s plan, as he explained, is to use this new level of accessibility of religious knowledge, and to bring it to the underprivileged, less fortunate people who are unable to pay for spiritual practice and unable to read Tibetan or English. In this way, an entire structure of religious power dynamics is being overturned, in which religion, spirituality, and knowledge is no longer a privileged position. It works as a de-institutionalization of spirituality, taking it out of the patriarchal monastery, and out of the hands of those with enough money to buy it.

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<sup>38</sup> Personal observation in attendance at a Buddhist seminar in Boudha, 11-25-05.

However, it is interesting that the form of Buddhism taught to Buddha at the Shendra, or practiced by Pramila and Muna when they go to the temple, is not the same form that was practiced in their Tamang villages. Traditional Tamang villages practiced a form of Buddhist spirituality without temples, without monks, and much more based off of shamanic or ritualistic practices<sup>39</sup>. Perhaps this shines light on the current monopoly held by Tibetan Buddhists, which, now based in exile, is effecting the indigenous populations of Nepal.

It is interesting that both Buddha and Pramila express more than just a lack of identification with the Tibetan refugees also living in Kathmandu. Though culturally Tibetan and self identified as Buddhist, the two groups – Tamang and Tibetan – have not allied themselves with one another. Pramila’s impression of young Tibetans as only concerned with the ‘Three M’s’ (money, mobile, and motorcycle), and Buddha’s strong identification as a Nepali, exposes underlying tensions, perhaps of the economic sort, between the two ethnic ‘new arrivals.’ While Tibetans are more economically successful than even most Nepalis, the Tamangs remain primarily at the bottom. Within the modern, economically driven society, economic discrepancies may prove to be far more effective than even cultural and religious sameness.

An additional point on Modernity and religion is that where religions and people no longer exist in isolation, there is now an open exchange and coexistence of religious practice and identity. For example, the influence of growing up with Hindu friends has no doubt had its influence on Pramila, who understands herself as ‘mixed.’ And Muna likewise participates in Hindu religious practices. Early on in my time spent with Buddha, he took me to Pushpatinath Temple, the sacred Hindu site - rather

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<sup>39</sup> David H. Holmberg, *Paradox in Order: Myth, Ritual, and Exchange Among Nepal’s Tamang*.

than a Buddhist temple as one could have expected. This is modernity: religions and people no longer existing in isolation, defining oneself by what one is not, but

simultaneously incorporating and learning from those differences, the non-traditional practices.

### Conclusion

As with everything, the social, economic, and political status of Tamangs in a modernizing society is complex and multi sided. With every loss there is a gain, with every change there remains a stronger resistance to that change. Village life is lost, Tamangs are uprooted, marginalized, and exploited, but women are breaking free from male domination and education is becoming, less and less, a privilege of the elites. Contemporary Nepalese political society is shifting to recognize indigenous identities at just the moment in which those identities are opening up, modernizing, and becoming increasingly less traditional. And religiously, while Tamangs in Kathmandu may experience the 'discovery' of their spiritual Buddhist identity, they are simultaneously influenced by the Nepalese Hindu society and may be discovering a Buddhist practice which is highly influenced by the West.

All of these are examples of the blurring of boundaries, cultural exchange, the loss of traditional patterns of living, and the creation of new paths for living. In essence, they are the effects of modernity, as illustrated by Tamangs working to situate themselves within a new, and ever shifting, societal framework. Those who are 'the firsts,' are always the ones who face the most opposition, who struggle the most, and who find themselves with the most to prove. But as Muna described in her narrative, it is her belief that life can now be easier for those who come after her, that her actions and achievements will not go unnoticed. This understanding of self significance is also expressed by Pramila ('I am something!') and Buddha, who share the identity of one who is working for change, on levels both personal and social. Modernity means change, a transformation of the traditional, and for Tamangs, it also

means an opportunity to create an alternative historical narrative, a new story to be told, a new Tamang identity in the modern world.

#### B) Research Methodology:

Throughout this paper I have attempted to make clear my methodology, biases, and research limitations. This work is primarily based on informal interviews, supplemented by a handful of formal interviews and outside anthropological sources. My bias is clear: I am writing about people whom I admire and call my friends. This has, without a doubt, affected my analysis. Additionally, I do not hesitate to point out the severe limitations of my research. I spoke only with members of the younger generation of Tamangs and to individuals who are relatively financially stable, educated (or working to become educated), and living in Kathmandu. Though I visited the Tamang village Sankhu, it serves only as a visual point of reference in this paper due to time constraints.

#### C) ISP Advisor

Peter Moran has kindly been my advisor for this project. He received his BA from Tufts University in 1986; and both his MA (1990) and PhD (1998) in cultural anthropology from the University of Washington in Seattle. He has studied in Nepal and Tibet, and has taught both anthropology and religion. Peter Moran's book, Buddhism Observed: Travelers, Exiles and Tibetan Dharma in Kathmandu was published by RoutledgeCurzon in 2004. He now works for the Fulbright Commission in Kathmandu.

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### **Suggestions for Further Research**

1) An exploration of elderly Tamangs and their opinions and experiences with modernity and identity.

2) A study of uneducated and currently exploited Tamangs and their experiences.

3) A study of Tamang resistance, which I only briefly mentioned, both historical and contemporary.

For those interested in developing further research, my ISP main contact is Buddha Lama: dharmadhatu@hons.com.np