

INTERGENERATIONAL KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER AND ITS INFLUENCE ON
GENDER NORMS IN THARU FAMILIES OF SAPTARI DISTRICT: AN
ENTHOGRAPHIC STUDY

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AN ABSTRACT

of the dissertation of *Rachana Thapa* for the degree of *Master of Philosophy in Development Studies*, presented on *15 June 2026*, entitled *Intergenerational Knowledge Transfer and its Influence on Gender Norms in Tharu Families of Saptari District: An Ethnographic Study*.

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This ethnographic study explores how the transmission of knowledge across generations forms and influences gender roles in the Tharu society in Saptari District. The Tharu are one of Nepal's indigenous communities with very strong cultural practices in daily life; information, values, livelihood skills, and social expectations seem to be transmitted through everyday interactions within families. While previous studies have largely focused on gender or Indigenous knowledge individually, less attention has been paid to how intergenerational transmission also shapes, reinforces, and even changes gender roles within Tharu households.

The study essentially used an ethnographic research approach based on an interpretivist paradigm and was also informed by gender schema theory, feminist family theory, and intersectionality. The information was collected through participant observation, informal conversation, and in-depth interviews, and then continued through active involvement with multigenerational Tharu families. The research really looked at how various generations communicate, talk things out, and pass on everyday practices and information, and how gender expectations are carried through the everyday routine.

The findings reveal that gender roles are mostly taught through informal interactions and processes within the family. Elders, especially parents and grandparents, are important for passing on cultural values, livelihood skills, and gendered expectations through observation, participation, storytelling, songs, and

shared family routines. The study also observed that social developments such as schooling, labor migration, mechanization, digitalization, and broader economic changes are straining traditional gender expectations. In the younger generation, individuals are starting to question and renegotiate expectations around household responsibilities, education, occupation, and who gets to decide. Consequently, the transfer of knowledge across generations serves both as a mechanism for preserving cultural practices and as a forum for resisting and gradually transforming gender norms.

The study shows that indigenous knowledge systems and informal family learning methods need recognition because they help to understand the development and change of gender norms throughout history. The educational and development programs need to recognize family knowledge and community learning methods, according to the study, which aims to achieve gender equality and social inclusion.

.....

15 June 2026

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शोध सार

विकास शिक्षामा दर्शनशास्त्रको स्नातकोत्तर उपाधिका लागि रचना थापाको शोधप्रबन्धको शीर्षक “सप्तरी जिल्लाका थारु परिवारहरूमा अन्तरपुस्तीय ज्ञान हस्तान्तरण तथा यसको लैङ्गिक मान्यतामा प्रभाव: एक इथ्नोग्राफीक अध्ययन” १ असार २०८३ मा प्रस्तुत गरिएको थियो।

.....
सह. प्रा. इन्द्रमणि राई, पीएचडी
शोध निर्देशक

यस इथ्नोग्राफीक अध्ययनले पुस्ता-पुस्ताबीच ज्ञानको हस्तान्तरणले थारु समाजमा लैङ्गिक भूमिकाहरू कसरी निर्माण र प्रभाव पार्छ भन्ने कुरा अन्वेषण गरेको छ। थारु नेपालका आदिवासी समुदायमध्ये एक हुन्, जसको दैनिक जीवनमा बलियो सांस्कृतिक अभ्यासहरू पाइन्छन्; जानकारी, मूल्य, जीविकोपार्जन सीप, तथा सामाजिक अपेक्षाहरू परिवारभित्रको दैनिक अन्तरक्रियामार्फत हस्तान्तरण हुने देखिन्छ। अघिल्ला अध्ययनहरूले प्रायः लैङ्गिकता वा आदिवासी ज्ञानलाई अलग-अलग रूपमा केन्द्रित गरे पनि अन्तरपुस्तीय हस्तान्तरणले थारु परिवारभित्र लैङ्गिक भूमिकाहरूलाई कसरी आकार दिन्छ, सुदृढ पार्छ वा परिवर्तन गर्छ भन्ने पक्षमा कम ध्यान दिएको पाइन्छ।

अध्ययनले व्याख्यात्मक प्रतिमानमा आधारित नृवंशशास्त्रीय अनुसन्धान विधि प्रयोग गरेको छ, जसलाई Gender Schema Theory, Feminist Family Theory, तथा Intersectionality बाट पनि सूचित गरिएको छ। तथ्याङ्क सहभागी अवलोकन, अनौपचारिक संवाद, तथा गहिरो अन्तर्वार्तामार्फत सङ्कलन गरिएको थियो, र बहुपुस्तीय थारु परिवारहरूसँग सक्रिय संलग्नतामार्फत निरन्तरता दिइएको थियो। अनुसन्धानले विभिन्न पुस्ताहरूले कसरी संवाद गर्छन्, विचार आदानप्रदान गर्छन्, र दैनिक अभ्यास तथा जानकारी हस्तान्तरण गर्छन् भन्ने कुरामा ध्यान केन्द्रित गरेको छ, साथै लैङ्गिक अपेक्षाहरू दैनिक दिनचर्यामा कसरी समावेश हुन्छन् भन्ने पनि अध्ययन गरिएको छ।

परिवारभित्रका अनौपचारिक अन्तरक्रिया तथा प्रक्रियामार्फत सिकाइन्छन्। विशेषतः अभिभावक तथा हजुरबुबा-हजुरआमाहरूले अवलोकन, सहभागिता, कथा सुनाउने, गीत गाउने, तथा साझा पारिवारिक दिनचर्यामार्फत सांस्कृतिक मूल्य, जीविकोपार्जन सीप, तथा लैङ्गिक अपेक्षाहरू हस्तान्तरण गर्ने महत्त्वपूर्ण भूमिका खेल्छन्। अध्ययनले विद्यालय शिक्षा, श्रम प्रवास, मेशिन प्रयोग, डिजिटलाइजेशन, तथा व्यापक आर्थिक परिवर्तनहरूले परम्परागत लैङ्गिक अपेक्षाहरूमा दबाब सिर्जना गरेको पनि देखाएको छ। नयाँ पुस्तामा घरायसी जिम्मेवारी, शिक्षा, पेशा, तथा निर्णय गर्ने अधिकारबारे प्रश्न उठाउन र पुनःवार्ता गर्न थालेको पाइन्छ। यसरी, पुस्ता-पुस्ताबीचको ज्ञान हस्तान्तरणले सांस्कृतिक अभ्यासहरूलाई जोगाउने संयन्त्रको

रूपमा मात्र नभई लैङ्गिक मान्यताहरूलाई चुनौती दिने र क्रमशः रूपान्तरण गर्ने मंचको रूपमा पनि काम गरेको छ।

अध्ययनले देखाएको छ कि आदिवासी ज्ञान प्रणाली तथा पारिवारिक अनौपचारिक सिकाइका विधिहरूलाई मान्यता दिन आवश्यक छ, किनभने यी विधिहरूले इतिहासभर लैङ्गिक मान्यताहरूको विकास तथा परिवर्तन बुझ्न सहयोग पुर्याउँछन्। अध्ययनले शैक्षिक तथा विकास कार्यक्रमहरूले पारिवारिक ज्ञान तथा सामुदायिक सिकाइका विधिहरूलाई मान्यता दिनुपर्ने आवश्यकता औल्याएको छ, जसको उद्देश्य लैङ्गिक समानता तथा सामाजिक समावेशीकरण हासिल गर्नु हो।

.....

१ असार २०८३

रचना थापा

उपाधि उम्मेदवार

This dissertation, entitled *Intergenerational Knowledge Transfer and its Influence on Gender Norms in Tharu Families of Saptari District: An Ethnographic Study*, was presented by *Rachana Thapa* on 15 June 2026.

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is my original work, and it has not been submitted for candidature for any other degree at any other university.

.....

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DEDICATION

I sincerely dedicate this work to all the community parenting facilitators, community-based organizations, and community supervisors who are close to the community. And to my beloved mother-in-law, Bhola Devi Chaudhary, and Daughter, Tasmina Chaudhary, in honor of their motivation, support, and guidance that helped me achieve this result, and, above all, for the amazing information from the fieldwork. It has always been their dream to see me earn my highest degree and attend my convocation, which has continually motivated me and served as a source of moral guidance on my journey as a development worker.

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ABBREVIATIONS

IK	Indigenous knowledge
IK	Intergenerational Knowledge
ITGR	Inter-Generational Transmission of Gender Roles
ITK	Indigenous Technological Knowledge
KU	Kathmandu University
KUSOED	Kathmandu University School of Education
LPP	Legitimate Peripheral Participation
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
TV	Television
UN	United Nation
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
WB	World Bank
WDR	World Development Report

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the overall introductory aspects of this dissertation. It mainly highlights the nature and rationale of the issues, the problem statement, the study's purpose, and the research question it sought to address. While developing the chapter, a detailed introductory orientation is provided, along with supporting literature, to ensure a comprehensive understanding for readers.

I started my career in the development sector in 1999. As a Program Officer with the Action Aid-funded Sponsorship Program, I have noticed a significant disparity in the preservation and transmission of indigenous knowledge between the older and younger generations within the Tharu community. Traditional practices unique to the community are diminishing due to the influence of modern schooling practices. I tried my best to do the assigned task on time. Based on my performance, the entire group was quite positive towards me in many ways because they were convinced by my work.

I began working as a Disaster Risk Reduction Coordinator in 2010. During that time, I came to deeply understand how important indigenous knowledge is in helping families and communities survive and recover from disasters. This knowledge, passed down from one generation to another, carries practical coping mechanisms and life-saving approaches that reduce risk and strengthen resilience. It is closely connected to nature, culture, and everyday life.

I have learned over time that this traditional knowledge does more than help communities resolve problems. It subtly influences family roles, gender norms, and values. These old traditions and convictions often shape how men, women, girls, and boys share their responsibilities. I have been working in Child Protection and the Child Rights Governance since 2014, encouraging parents to use positive parenting at home and in their community. This study has led me to think about parenting education as an informal way to gain knowledge that arises organically from observing, doing, and talking with people every day, rather than from books.

Particularly in the Tharu culture, my experience has shown me how indigenous knowledge and everyday life are transmitted from one generation to the next. I have also considered how challenging it is for people of all ages to learn and

act in a rapidly evolving world. Boys and girls commonly inherit their families' values, expectations, and actions, which can, frequently, unintentionally alter their gender identities and responsibilities within the family and, subsequently, in society.

The study was conducted among the Tharu community, one of Nepal's Indigenous communities. Therefore, while intergenerational learning takes place, both indigenous knowledge and gender roles are transmitted within the family through observation and everyday practices, mostly through elders' learning, which is passed down to the younger generation.

I have also reflected on the challenges both older and younger generations face in shaping knowledge and behavior in a rapidly changing context. Often, without conscious intention, families pass down attitudes, expectations, and behaviors to girls and boys that shape gender identities and roles within the family and eventually in society. They are a significant but often unnoticed part of society, everyday life, and the connections that shape how children grow up, learn, and understand their place in the world.

Intergenerational Learning as a Social Literacy Practice

Intergenerational learning has long been practiced in indigenous communities, including the Tharu communities in Nepal, where know-how, cultural values, habits, and life skills are passed from one generation to the next through daily social and community encounters. Even though formal intergenerational programs began to attract worldwide attention in the late 1970s, the underlying practice has existed for centuries in many traditional societies.

Intergenerational learning is not a new technique, but it was brought to public policy attention through the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) programs in the late twentieth century. Such information, cultural values, skills, and social practices have been handed down through generations in the daily interactions and communal life of indigenous and traditional groups around the world, including the Tharu indigenous people of Nepal. Promoting Intergenerational Learning Policies, Research and Networking (UNESCO, 2000) was the most important of them because it was mostly a review of earlier work. This work has also been supported by Hatton-Yeo and Ohsako (1999), who noted that the indigenous community has many traditional ways of managing their lifestyle. Al-Azami (2006) and Newman and Hatton-Yeo (2008) state that inter-generational

learning usually entails the transfer of information, skills, attitudes, and habits between younger and older individuals in a two-way process.

This process includes individuals' reflection on their own knowledge and beliefs, as well as learning about the beliefs of earlier generations (Boström & Schmidt-Hertha, 2017). This is an opportunity for older people to pass on their knowledge, wisdom, and talents to younger generations, helping keep them active, increasing social and cultural awareness, and, in so doing, strengthening the bonds and positive relationships within the younger generation.

The phenomenon known as intergenerational transmission occurs in families when parents pass on traits to their children, including social norms, financial resources, beliefs, and behaviors (Chi & Yu, 2011; D'Addio, 2007). Additionally, parents may pass on traits to their children.

Intergenerational knowledge transmission in indigenous communities is not just a family system. As elders of the community, parents, Spiritual leaders (Dhami), and other traditional knowledge holders also help in passing on cultural values, customary practices, gender norms, oral histories, and social behaviors from one generation to another. Inter-Generational Transmission of Gender Roles (ITGR) especially intersectionality within family setting attention has received less in research on inter-generational transmission in the family than other topics, such as anxiety (Murray et al., 2008), parenting style (Capaldi et al., 2008), antisocial behavior (Thornberry et al., 2003), academic achievement (Chi & Yu, 2011), poverty (Zhang, 2013), etc. There is a proverb that goes, "Children see children do." This is because younger generations acquire knowledge through direct observation of older generations at home and in families. The significance of the historian position for Asian grandparents was highlighted by Kamo (1998).

Younger generations often acquire their cultural heritage and resilience skills through stories and the lived experiences passed down by older generations.

At the same time, older people can learn new technologies and modern practices from the younger generation. When different generations live together, it helps grandchildren develop a strong sense of ethnic identity and better understand their cultural values. As Landry-Meyer and Newman (2004) explain, grandparents who take care of their grandchildren often do so to keep their family history and cultural traditions alive.

Elders in a family play an essential role as caretakers, spending more time transmitting cultural values, family customs, norms, and indigenous knowledge to younger generations, all of which evolve through systematic learning. Thus, inter-generational knowledge contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of the role the older generation plays in forming family structures and maintaining cultural continuity. It also helps to learn about cultures and values, and to build trust, connectivity, and family dynamics. These connections help us deepen our understanding of both universal and culturally specific aspects of family dynamics in the intergenerational learning environment.

Socialization is the continuous process by which young children learn to become members of society. It is the way children learn the rules, values, and traditions of the location they live in. In their day-to-day contacts with family, friends and institutions, they develop their sense of identity, attachment and responsibility.

Sandra Bem's gender schema theory is a helpful explanation of how toddlers learn gender roles, but it has several drawbacks. Bem (2000) left out all three components, the historical contexts and cultural differences, and the changing social environments that influence the formation of gender roles. There is insufficient evidence for intersectionality, or the interaction of diverse identity factors such as race, gender, and cultural background, within the theory. Despite these shortcomings, Bem's framework remains the dominant theoretical model academics use to analyze how children internalize the gender binary system present in their social environment.

Inter-generational learning is a form of social literacy that enables families and communities to pass on their beliefs, standards, and behavioral patterns from one generation to the next. The youngest members of society begin to understand social expectations and gender-specific obligations through their everyday activities, storytelling, rituals, and shared work.

Family scripts provide people with covert guidelines for interpreting events and acting in situations. Scripts provide restrictions on what can and cannot be done. Scripts affect how individuals think and behave. There is little room for people to express their personal qualities. This is how children learn gender roles.

Children learn gender roles through their daily interactions with older family members. They observe the behavioral patterns and expectations of older family members and then model their own behavior on them. Family scripts exemplify this process by providing people with hidden rules that guide their understanding of events

and their behavior in specific situations. These scripts contain rules that specify what actions are permissible and forbidden, and determine how people think and act, while leaving little room for their personal attributes to be expressed.

Social reproduction is one of the fundamental processes by which societal norms and gender patterns are handed down from one generation to the next, more or less continuously. The accepted and implemented behaviors of people are thereby passed on throughout time (Namysłowska, 2020; Schützenberger, 2017).

Decolonizing perspectives often challenge Western ideas of what constitutes legitimate information and learning. Close community ties, oral traditions, rituals, shared memory, and spiritual practices, among other means, have been used in many Indigenous cultures, including Tharu communities, to pass on information across generations. In this sense, Indigenous epistemologies tend to lean toward relationship-based learning and lived experience, such as learning embedded into everyday life, rather than formal institutional education. If we really want to understand inter-generational learning amongst Tharu people, we need to go beyond Western educational templates and understand how Indigenous systems generate knowledge and pass it on. Kharel (2019) argues that the anthropological literature on Tharu society has mostly focused on cultural practices, folklore, rituals, and social structure, which show how cultural knowledge, values, and traditions are passed on and preserved across generations in the community.

Also, Aryal et al. (2019) argue that in rural Nepal, intergenerational continuity is a significant factor in determining occupational patterns. This is because knowledge of farming and jobs is generally passed down from father to son, even as education and migration gradually draw younger generations away from agriculture.

Informal Learning Approaches

Informal learning encompasses customs, beliefs, and everyday social practices through which individuals acquire knowledge of their cultural and social world (Schmidt-Hertha, 2014). ways of knowledge transmission include customs and beliefs, as well as gaining knowledge of these diverse social and cultural practices (Schmidt-Hertha, 2014), Informal Knowledge transfer encompasses a wide range of social, value, norms and culture activities of everyday life which consist of societal norms and values that inherited from elder generation to younger step by step shaping by observing, experiencing and perceiving the world through story telling or interpretation in a family.

The younger Tharu community in Saptari uses modern technology such as cellphones, motorbikes, and TVs. But even with these newer influences, their older cultural know-how, practices, and heritage still matter a lot. For example, cattle are both material and non-material components of their cultural legacy and are closely connected to traditional grazing practices (Tugjamba, 2025). In their free time, it's quite normal for youth to help their families with grazing, goats, and cows, too. The informal learning process is prevailing and popular among adolescents. Late adolescence and early adulthood are years of shifting priorities, growing independence, and greater responsibility (Brussoni & Boon, 1998). Thus, the transition from adolescence to adulthood often entails significant life changes that affect the nature and quality of relationships in both the old and the new generations.

Youth can feel like this sort of delicate in-between moment, from childhood into adulthood, where young people slowly start to probe their independence and, without realizing it, become more at ease sharing their thoughts and emotions with family members they trust. In the Tharu communities, as in many rural areas, elderly family members often take on a meaningful role during this phase. They listen patiently, offer careful guidance, and stand by adolescents as they try to make decisions on their own. That sort of family backing makes it easier for youth to build confidence, gain practical life skills, and step toward adulthood more smoothly.

At the same time, this stage of life is very closely tied to gender socialization, almost as if it can't really be separated. As youths grow, they are not only trying to become someone on the inside but also learning what it means to be a boy or a girl in their own society. These ideas don't just come on their own; they are made and remade through daily interactions within families, communities, and even local institutions.

In the Tharu context, cultural traditions, livelihood practices, and shifting social expectations all play a role, ultimately shaping how young people understand gender roles. Because of that, youth and gender socialization feel deeply connected; they shape how young people see themselves, and also where they think they belong in society.

Tharu Community

The Tharu are an indigenous community concentrated across the Terai; in Saptari (Madhesh Province), they maintain agrarian livelihoods, extended-family structures, and rich ritual practices. These features shape how intergenerational

knowledge (IK) moves across generations and how gender norms are reproduced or renegotiated. In Madhesh, the population is predominantly Hindu and linguistically Maithili-speaking, with a significant Tharu presence; settlement patterns remain largely rural, with only a few urban centers. This demographic context matters for my inquiry because rural residence, language ecology, and exposure to migration all mediate IK transmission and gendered divisions of labor.

Table 1

Population Distribution

Area	Total Population	Male n (%)	Female n (%)
Nepal	29,164,578	14,253,551 (48.87%)	14,911,027 (51.13%)
Madhesh Province	6,114,600	3,065,751 (50.14%)	3,048,849 (49.86%)

(National Statistics Office [NSO], 2023)

Table 2

Major Mother Tongues Spoken in Madhesh Province

Ethnic Group	Percentage (%)
Yadav	14.78
Muslim	11.58
Tharu	5.26
Teli	5.09
Koiri/Kushwaha	4.56
Other Ethnic Groups (Total = 116)	Remaining

(NSO, 2023)

Table 3***Major Ethnic Groups in Madhesh Province***

Language	Percentage (%)
Maithili	45.30
Bhojpuri	18.57
Bajjika	14.65
Nepali	6.67
Urdu	5.88
Other Languages (Total = 62)	Remaining

(NSO, 2023)

Table 4***Religious Distribution in Madhesh Province***

Religion	Percentage (%)
Hindu	82.8
Muslim	9.0
Buddhist	4.4
Kirat	3.0
Christian	1.3

(NSO, 2023)

Table 5***Urban–Rural Population Distribution in Madhesh Province***

Area Type	Population (n)	Percentage (%)
Urban	5,380,242	79
Rural	734,358	21
Total	6,114,600	100

(NSO, 2023)

The Tharu population in Madhesh Province comprises 5.26% of the province's total population and maintains its indigenous cultural traditions and social systems as

a distinct people. The dissertation investigates how Tharu families transfer knowledge across generations to establish and maintain gender norms, roles, and expectations through their daily activities and cultural values and beliefs.

The Tharu community in Saptari has a unique cultural environment because people need to pass down their knowledge of social practices, indigenous knowledge, norms, values, and the complete learning process to their family members.

The Tharu community needs researchers to study how older people pass down their knowledge, as this process shapes social values that affect gender roles and community norms. This research seeks to review the literature on the intergenerational transmission of knowledge, the roles of men and women in this process, and its impact on gender relations between the elderly and the youth.

The Tharu community is an ethnic group residing in the Terai region of Nepal and India. In the Tharu community, men are traditionally engaged in farming, small businesses, cattle grazing, fishing, and hunting, while women are responsible for household work such as cooking, cleaning, and childrearing, and for going to the market to sell crops and vegetables.

In the same way, in a Tharu Community, youth living with the older generation are gaining more knowledge, skills, cultural values, and respect for one another. In many cases, children are more likely to be close to their maternal grandparents and to participate in decision-making processes that lead to life-changing outcomes.

Many older people reach out to younger generations to learn how gender roles impact their lives and how to manage seasonal disruptions. This relationship helps share traditional knowledge in activities such as cooking, preparing food for the rainy season, and weaving with Sikki (Vetiver Plant), Kansgrass (feather top grass), and elephant grass. These materials are not only helpful in reducing seasonal flooding and land erosion threats but also in preserving food and using home remedies during floods.

The young members of the Tharu Community acquire knowledge, skills, cultural values and beliefs, and mutual respect through their experiences with older family members. The research shows that young children develop closer connections with their maternal grandparents when they participate in important decision-making activities that shape life-changing choices.

The Tharu community maintains a female-based kinship system, which enables women to serve as primary cultural educators and tradition preservers within their society. The research has shown that parents pass their gender role beliefs to their adolescent children, yet there is insufficient evidence to determine which parent has a stronger effect, as most studies have focused on mothers (Davis 2007; Klann et al., 2018). It means that parents pass their gender role beliefs to their adolescent children, yet there is insufficient evidence to determine which parent has a stronger effect.

Statement of the Problem

Often, education has been associated with formal means of learning. Government and non-government mechanisms highlight schooling as a major indicator of development. Such approaches hardly value the learning that takes place at home, in the family, and in the community. One major approach is intergenerational learning, in which two or three generations participate in the learning process. An important form of informal learning is what people often call intergenerational learning, in which two or three generations share knowledge, beliefs, skills, and everyday social norms. In that process, kids and teens do not just pick up useful know-how and cultural practices; they also begin to internalize social expectations regarding gender roles and responsibilities.

People develop their gender role attitudes during childhood and adolescence, and these attitudes continue to shape their life paths. Research shows that early gender role attitudes lead to two outcomes: labor market participation and resulting wage disparities, as well as diminished social welfare and reduced opportunities for higher-status jobs (England, 2011; Farré & Vella, 2013). The process through which parents transmit their gender norms to their children establishes a fundamental mechanism that sustains gender-based work division while strengthening male dominance in organizational leadership and decision-making positions throughout different cultures. The existing system demonstrates that gender inequality exists because of human behavior, but it actually takes root during the initial stages of social development, which occurs inside families and throughout communities.

Nepal's patriarchal social structure contributes to pushing gender inequality forward, mostly because it steers educational chances, daily household responsibilities, and the whole set of expectations about what boys and girls will supposedly do later. Even though the Policy Framework for Education Development

in Nepal acknowledges that inequities in access and participation persist, social norms quietly shape where families decide to invest their money and effort in schooling. Many households treat daughters' schooling as if it won't pay off in the long run, because marriage is usually understood as moving into another household rather than staying "here" (Raynor, 2005). Parents may prioritize sons' education because they expect sons to support them financially, emotionally, socially, mentally, and spiritually during their retirement years, while daughters face limited opportunities to work. The different educational access that these explanations support creates gendered home responsibilities, together with household authority roles that exist between men and women. Educational investment becomes a tool for reinforcing patriarchal gender norms because it creates a system that favors men over women.

Urbanization, labor migration, industrial employment, and increased educational opportunities for women are gradually changing family dynamics and structures. Women do not necessarily have to stay at home, and men do not necessarily have to work. More families now need two incomes, and more men are helping with tasks such as cleaning and caring for their children.

However, such changes do not always happen as planned. Grandparents, parents, and children in the same family may have different views on what it means to be a "good" man or woman. Normally, older people make decisions based on what they have learned and experienced in their own lives. On the other hand, young people are affected by factors such as education, the news, moving to a new country, technology, and economic changes. These differences could make daily life unpleasant, confusing, or difficult to manage. It is because they have to deal with changes in the economy and society simultaneously, even as their rigidly held ideas remain the same.

Gender equality and education are fundamental drivers of social and economic progress as evidenced in the global development discourse. The World Bank advances gender equality as a key development goal in its World Development Report 2012: Gender Equality and Development, arguing that it is 'smart economics' that enhances productivity and creates better future outcomes (World Bank, 2012). The World Development Report 2018: Learning to Realize Education's Promise presents education as a force that can transform society, yet it fails to address how school systems create or perpetuate gender-based disparities (World Bank, 2018).

The process of transmitting gender norms from one generation to the next constitutes a major barrier that prevents women from achieving equal educational and occupational and social status as their male counterparts, despite the existence of better educational opportunities and public commitments to gender equality (Okan, 2024). The research requires locally based studies that investigate the development of gender attitudes across generations, while identifying the main structural problems that underlie the observed differences.

Purpose of the Study

The study examines how intergenerational knowledge transfer within Tharu families and communities in Saptari District establishes and reinforces gender roles across generations. Typically, gender norms, cultural practices, livelihood skills, and family duties are passed on through routine interactions between older and younger generations.

Research Questions

1. How does informal learning of gender roles take place in the Tharu families?
2. How do youths understand the intergenerational learning of gender roles in their life?
3. How does intergenerational knowledge influence gender roles in a family?

Significance of the Study

This study examines how Tharu elders transmit their knowledge to the younger generation while highlighting the difficulties younger people encounter in their educational process. The study connects Sustainable Development Goals 4 and 5 by examining how intergenerational knowledge transfer affects gender equality and empowerment in the region. The research provides results that influence cultural preservation, gender norms, and indigenous knowledge in educational contexts.

Women and girls represent about half of the world's population, which means they have an equal ability to contribute to society, the economy, and political institutions. The existence of gender inequality produces harmful outcomes that lead to women and girls facing discrimination and create negative effects that extend to men and their whole communities.

The educational disadvantages lead to future generations suffering from decreased academic performance and health problems. The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has promoted gender equality through education as the primary means of achieving sustainable

development since 2000 (UNESCO, 2000). After the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were completed, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) established gender equality as the essential requirement for achieving both economic development and social advancement. Sustainable Development Goals 3 (Good Health and Well-Being), 4 (Quality Education), and 5 (Gender Equality) specifically address the health and educational needs of girls, as well as their progress toward gender equality (United Nations [UN], 2015).

Research existing by academic institutions, international organizations, civil society groups, and governmental bodies has examined how gender affects development. Yet, current conditions indicate that effective gender change must begin at home. Families pass down knowledge from one generation to another, either maintaining existing gender rules or creating new gender standards that warrant further investigation.

SDG 4 aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong education opportunities for all. In addition, target 4.1 (to ensure free and equitable high-quality primary and secondary education that can bring appropriate and effective learning effects to all boys and girls by 2030) and target 4.2 (to ensure that all boys and girls have access to quality early childhood development, child care and pre-primary education by 2030 so that they are ready for primary education) expressly point out securing the girls' right to education.

Limitations of the Study

This study was conducted within the multigenerational Tharu family structure. Because of time, resource, and access constraints, a limited number of family members from one community were able to participate in the study, limiting prospects for broader triangulation of information. These findings may not be generalizable to all Tharu communities or other indigenous populations, as they do not fully capture the range of demographic, geographic, cultural, and social circumstances that may influence participants' experiences and perceptions.

The research examines the transmission of indigenous knowledge between older and younger family members and how this process unconsciously influences gender roles. It doesn't quite explore every form of indigenous knowledge or bring in all community members who could help shape a more holistic understanding of how knowledge moves across generations. The time constraints of the research period also hampered the amount of information collection and analysis, especially as the study

covered the experiences and everyday activities of two generations. Despite these limitations, the present study contributes to a better understanding of intergenerational knowledge transmission and provides insights for the creation of educational systems that enhance cultural learning, social values, family ties, and community development.

Organization of the Dissertation

The dissertation consists of eight chapters. Chapter one introduces the background of the research, the context, the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, the research questions, the relevance, and the limitations of the study. Chapter Two is an analysis of the research on inter-generational knowledge transfer, informal learning, gender role socialization, Indigenous knowledge systems, and the theoretical frameworks that govern the study. Chapter Three describes the research methodology, including the interpretivist paradigm, ethnographic research design, study area, participant selection, data collection methods, ethical considerations, and data analysis procedures. Chapter Four presents the research findings from the ethnographic fieldwork. This chapter is concerned with the transmission of indigenous knowledge and gender roles through intergenerational learning of the Tharu families. The findings are discussed in relation to the current literature and theoretical perspectives, according to the study topic, in Chapters Five, Six, and Seven. Finally, the conclusions, consequences, recommendations, and proposals for future research are presented in Chapter Eight.

Chapter Summary

This chapter defines the framework by describing the study's background and purpose. It emphasizes the importance of inter-generational information transfer in the Tharu culture and how it influences gender roles through informal learning. This chapter established the framework for the study's background and purpose. It explained the importance of Inter-generational knowledge transfer in the Tharu household and how this learning influences gender roles through informal learning. It describes the problem, objectives, research questions, significance and limitations of the study. The chapter also highlights the significance of indigenous knowledge, family-based learning, and gender socialization in Nepal's changing social context.

These parts together provide the basis for the investigation. The second section offers a survey of the literature and theoretical perspectives on inter-generational knowledge transfer, Indigenous knowledge systems, informal learning, gender role socialization, and the Tharu community.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter synthesizes key theoretical and empirical literature on the intergenerational transmission of gender norms, the transmission of indigenous knowledge, and the family as the primary site of socialization. The research opens with definitions and explanations of gender and gender norms, then presents intergenerational knowledge transfer theories that recognize families as agents of gender socialization, examines indigenous and local knowledge systems through the lens of gender power dynamics, and concludes by identifying research gaps that drive the current study.

Gender and Gender Norms

The historical definition of gender roles includes assigning specific behaviors, responsibilities, and societal expectations to people based on their biological sex (West & Zimmerman, 1987). The religious rationale for the sexual division of labor between men and women posited that God instituted sexual distinctions; hence, women ought to be subordinate to men due to their reproductive responsibilities, while men assume the role of provider (Lerner, 1986). 150 years ago, this was the only way to keep women down. In the eighteenth century, as the religious argument lost its power, the conservative justification for women's inferiority became "scientific.

Women are lower and more subordinate due to their biology and their role as mothers; that is why women are less involved in public life (Lerner, 1986). The social structure of Nepalese society operates under patriarchal norms that result in male dominance across most areas of life (Gurung, 2025). Similarly, Thapa (2013) stated that society establishes clear gender divisions, assigning women to caregiving and domestic duties while men serve as primary breadwinners. The existing expectations receive reinforcement through religious, cultural, and legal frameworks, which lead to systemic exclusion of women from society, especially among Dalit and Janajati groups, who encounter multiple types of discrimination based on their caste, ethnicity, and gender.

People's roles in society undergo constant transformation as cultural, economic, and social dynamics shape their development. In this regard, Chaudhary

and Pokhrel (2024) stated that the research on Nepalese families indicates that women who migrate for work and send back remittances to their families generate new household patterns and power structures because they take more decision-making power and financial control when their male relatives are not present, which leads to changes in traditional gender roles that families have passed down through time.

Research has shown that parents transmit their gender-role beliefs through ideological frames that can support or oppose traditional family norms, and thus the beliefs children pass on from one generation to another (Ward & Grower, 2020). The researchers studied people's experiences of family-based gender-role duties using a phenomenological approach. The approach uses discussions of gender ideology to show how structural elements and family functions work together to establish gender norms (Davis & Greenstein, 2020). Knowledge of gender differences is derived from two variables: age and patterns of social interaction.

Young males have more opportunities to acquire general knowledge than females because of their wider social networks and mobility, which gives them access to multiple sources of information. But women in Terai (Tharu/Madhesi) communities of Nepal are confined to the domestic space due to sociocultural norms (Bajracharya, 1994; Pradhan, 1984). The study reveals a form of interplay between societal structures and what families do, and also explains how institutional variables, such as parental leave legislation, shape the circumstances that allow for changes in gender norms later in life. Parents serve as role models and provide direct instruction on how masculinity and femininity are taught (Chen & Chen, 2023). Women tend to be more informed than men when it comes to traditional knowledge, especially seed selection and the maintenance of agricultural preservation methods (Fernandez & Tick, 1994; Paudel et al., 2020). Social institutions and everyday practice are intertwined in the creation and reproduction of gender norms and roles. Similarly, Bourdieu (2001) discusses patriarchal relations as a form of symbolic violence that allows society to recognize and normalize its power relations.

The gender hierarchies that exist in society become established as permanent social structures because they are embedded in family systems, marriage customs, religious practices, and educational institutions. The patterns of social behavior in society create gender norms that define suitable roles for men and women, assigning men to positions of power and decision-making while assigning women to domestic tasks and caregiving.

Acharya and Bennett (1982) explain that social norms in Nepalese society prevent women from participating in economic development activities by restricting women's access to decision-making opportunities and essential resources.

The importance of gender equality has been widely recognized, in part due to the SDGs following the MDGs, which demonstrate that gender equality is a vital condition and goal for economic and social development. In line with this, academia, international organizations, civil society, and governments have carried out various studies on the impact of gender on development.

Global development agendas like the Sustainable Development Goals SDGs, especially SDGs 3 about health and well-being, 4 education, and 5 gender equality, kind of aim to help empower girls and women's well-being more directly.

However, within families, gender roles are still very much constructed through intergenerational learning and cultural practices. In other words, what is advocated at the global level often encounters and is transformed by everyday life. This ethnographic study examines how these large-scale global objectives play out on the ground, specifically among the Tharu community in Saptari District.

Socialization in the Tharu Community

Cultural transmission is a core element shaping human conduct because it enables communities to pass on their values, knowledge, and traditional practices to future generations (Cavalli-Sforza & Feldman, 1981). The process enables individuals to connect their personal growth with the cultural practices of their community, fostering the development of their unique identities and the shared social practices they observe.

Gender stereotypes start to form when children create their first understanding of gender, which leads them to understand the social expectations of their gender identity. The process of socialization expects people to follow social norms, which are transmitted by media, religious institutions, educational systems, families, peer groups, and workplaces as socialization agents (Little & McGivern, 2013). The family unit serves as the most powerful socializing agent because children learn to expect different treatment and face different social standards based on their gender from their earliest childhood moments.

Young Tharus learn cultural values, gender roles, and livelihood skills through intergenerational processes of close observation, listening to stories, and participation

in everyday communal activities. This style of informal learning is also widespread in many other Indigenous and rural communities (Stevens, 2008; UNESCO, 2010).

Indigenous knowledge systems, which encompass knowledge, skills, and values, become practical tools for daily life through experiential learning (Barnhardt & Kawagley, 2005; Batibo, 2009). In the Tharu culture, young people learn culturally relevant knowledge not only through listening, reading, storytelling, and ritual songs, but also by doing so at home. This is somewhat different from conventional schooling, which in many cases does not genuinely value indigenous knowledge and can overlook local practices and traditions. In practice, cultural transfer and this form of learning by doing are interconnected, ensuring that gender norms are preserved and shared expertise continues from one generation to the next.

Stories are not simply found in our recollections; they actively shape our memories, knowledge, and beliefs (Achank & Berman, 2002). Similarly, the folktales of the Tharu community serve to maintain their traditional cultural and indigenous knowledge systems. Their folktales are based on the relationship of the Tharu tribe with nature, myth, religion, knowledge systems, socio-cultural, and economic ethos. The narrator is somebody from the community who is a good storyteller and knows about folktales.

Although it is often assumed that the Tharu community places equal value on sons and daughters, social changes are gradually reshaping traditional ideas about gender within the community (Adhikari, 2024; Grimaldi, 2022). The community has established new social duties for women because existing gender roles required women to fulfill their traditional obligations. The socialization process establishes two types of parental control over children: structural and symbolic.

Knowledge transfer from older people to their younger counterparts shapes the gender roles the younger generation will adopt. The study shows that girls acquire practical skills and knowledge about household chores, agricultural work, and craft activities through direct observation and apprenticeship with their mothers.

Some participants observed that young boys are becoming less involved in cooking, household chores, kitchen gardening, and other traditional skills because educational systems currently separate them from these activities, resulting in their social withdrawal and limiting their ability to gain essential life skills that will help them attain independence in the future. Positive changes and gender-related issues must persist.

The process of changing and redefining the gender roles in society requires both public campaigning and the implementation of national and international regulations. Adhikari (2022) also stated that societal development requires men to embrace their responsibilities.

Culture Transmission Indigenous Knowledge in the Tharu Community

The Tharu community is an indigenous group in Saptari District of Madhesh Province. It has its own traditions and practices, in which almost all parents are involved in household chores, agricultural work, jobs, and cultural and social events and rituals. The study explored how the older generation can transfer their indigenous knowledge and the impact of gender roles on Tharu children.

The Tharu are a distinct ethnic community of the Terai region, a rich strip of lowlands running along the foothills of Himalayas in Northern India. Ethnographically, they constitute a homogeneous cultural cluster characterized by their agricultural expertise, artisan skills, and strong socio-cultural ties to their ancestral lands (Chaudhary 2018; Guneratne, 2022). Tharu have maintained a vibrant cultural identity shaped by environmental factors and historical experiences.

The process of IK transformation creates gender roles that define how men and women should behave in their respective roles. The different duties of men and women lead to shared responsibilities for creating and sharing knowledge between the two groups. The women maintain traditional ecological knowledge through seed management, food preparation, crafting, and ritualistic activities, and the men are involved in land management and community decision-making.

Agriculture has been the main occupation for the Tharu in the Western Tarai. Tharu women are crucial in sustaining the vitality of agricultural knowledge and daily practices, and help in conserving the traditional glutinous Anadi rice varieties. However, men are more concerned with the attributes related to production and yield (Chaudhary, 2022). Cultural norms in different societies have defined the type of agricultural work women and men should do; they specify that men should work the plow and the cart and build the barn, while women should do household chores and care for children. The social construction of masculinity prescribes that outdoor work, requiring physical strength, is proper work for men, while domestic work is appropriate work for women.

Migration and mechanization have brought significant changes to the agricultural system, as women are now involved in crop threshing with mechanical

threshers, although men still dominate operations with large machinery. The new system has created additional work responsibilities for women, decreasing their need to depend on men to carry out certain tasks. Tharu elder women are also involved in managerial decision-making, such as farm management, resource allocation, and household spending.

The proportions of men and women who contribute to farm management decisions vary across communities (Bennet & Acharya, 1982). Women share farm work and participate equally in selecting seeds, planting, and harvesting, and this is gradually transmitted to the younger generation through every day norms and practices.

Elder generation involvement at home provides rich knowledge and skill transfer to the young generation, which is helpful for life skills and learning through doing, and this needs to be addressed in the local curriculum. Inclusion-related issues will be identified and addressed at all levels of education (policy 10.29.6). Tharu's use a number of different ways to pass down IK to future generations. The process requires participation from community teachers, experienced members, and elders. Elders and seasoned adults serve as the primary protectors who transmit traditional skills, crafts, and oral traditions (Smith, 2012; Stevens, 2008). The main protectors of traditional medicine, farming knowledge, and indigenous crafts are these individuals, who transmit their expertise through oral stories, practical demonstrations, and apprenticeship programs (Carol, 2012; Stevens, 2008).

Families also play a big role in passing on cultural beliefs, customs, and useful skills to future generations, which can unknowingly shape gender roles. The research findings indicate that all participants gained substantial knowledge from the study. This intergenerational communication process ensures that cultural heritage and Indigenous knowledge are transmitted to future generations, including information and skills about duties, farming, family culture, social conventions, and values learned from parents, grandparents, older siblings, and other family members, shaping gender roles. In this support, Trommsdorff (2009) noted that "cultural transmission impacts the community and change across generations". This study is therefore necessary to explore the process of cultural transmission and understand how values and beliefs are passed down and maintained through the folktales of the Tharu people.

Theoretical Framework

Elders may reinforce gendered expectations and teach children about appropriate actions and roles as part of the clear transmission of cultural values and ideas from one generation to the next through everyday life activities, storytelling, cultural song, language, and customs. However, it is important to consider how changes in social and gender norms could influence the transfer of knowledge across generations. In the early twenty-first century, there has been increased attention to the dynamic, bidirectional nature of children's learning, with adults and children influencing one another through their interactions (Hayes et al., 2017).

Feminists argue that the origins of gender stereotypes are socially constructed, not permanent differences between men and women. The stereotypes confine women to domestic roles and nurturing responsibilities, and men to strong leadership and the rationality required for public roles. Feminist scholars argue that these assumptions limit individual choice and reinforce existing power imbalances within the family, community, and institutional systems. The process of establishing gender stereotypes through social systems and daily activities creates persistent social inequality that limits women's opportunities for advancement.

Gender stereotypes are deeply embedded in the cultural practices of the Tharu of Saptari District and continue to permeate informal ways of transferring knowledge from one person to the next. Through participation in everyday activities, real-life experiences, singing, storytelling and home and farm duties, the Children normally learn social skills within their own families. From a young age, girls are encouraged to take on caregiving roles, cooking, crafts, and household chores, while boys are pushed into farm work, caring for livestock, handling travel-related duties, and eventually stepping into community leadership. The multigenerational family environment is the primary way people acquire these patterns, which they learn through observation and practice rather than formal teaching methods.

The development of gender identity in children occurs through their learning process, which they acquire from their cultural environment. Then there's the practice of favoring sons, together with the symbolic authority of the main house male, plus different kinds of movement rights, which somehow build a system that holds on to power imbalances by tying itself to broader patriarchal structures. When these beliefs and behaviors get passed, step by step, from elders to the younger generation, you end up with persistent structural gender inequalities, and these then shape Tharu family

competencies as well as community social values, based on Tharu cultural norms (Steward et al., 2021).

The process of internalizing gender norms is not a one-time event but a gradual process that occurs in the context of everyday interaction in families and communities. Children watch how their elders behave, speak, and divide labor, and at an early age they learn about what is expected from girls and boys. Some of the expectations are communicated directly, through instruction or correction, while others are communicated indirectly, through approval, silence, or habitual practices. Repeated experiences across individuals' life courses are important in the development of their self-perceptions. This study builds on previous research on the inter-generational transmission of gender roles by applying Gender Schema Theory (Bem, 2000) and perspectives from Contemporary Feminist Family Science (Baber & Allen, 1992; Ferree, 2010).

The family, schools, and media together present gender roles as natural and unchangeable instead of showing them as socially developed constructs. Young people learn to control their behavior, changing the way they speak, dress, move and participate in activities to conform to social norms, so they are not disapproved of and excluded. Gender norms are transmitted from one generation to another through subtle social pressures and explicit teaching (Charlesworth & Banaji, 2022).

People use intersectionality to analyze how parents and children in families negotiate their respective gender obligations and social expectations. The negotiations between parties depend on their gender identity, but also on various factors such as ethnicity, social class, age, generation, disability, and ability to function (Bilge & Collins, 2016). From this perspective, the study of intergenerational knowledge transfer enables researchers to investigate how marginalized communities establish, challenge, or change their gender norms. The research also helps develop methods that effectively address the complex social factors shaping family relationships and expectations about gender roles.

It is important for people to understand intergenerational learning within family relationships, since older and younger family members often have different cultural backgrounds and may have difficulty communicating. People should understand the process as a developing situation in which multiple social positions and power relationships among different groups create (Peltola et al., 2017).

The process of chaining, which studies how families pass down traditional gender norms through their everyday practices and informal educational means. The phrase “breaking the chain” refers to moments when young people question, modify and resist the social expectations that regulate their actions. The processes that happen in families establish direct links between two separate processes: first, people learning gender roles and performing them, and then changing those roles across generations. The patterns provide feminist critiques of patriarchal family systems, showing that household arrangements tend to create male dominance while devaluing women’s work and their autonomy in decision-making.

The current time requires people to fight against existing family-based social inequalities, as these structures allow gender-based power imbalances to continue to exist (Ferree, 2010; Risman, 2018). Intersectionality shows that different social identities, together with existing structural inequalities, create unique experiences for people and shape their life chances. The concept establishes that gender is a social construct that can be understood by examining various aspects, including class, ethnicity, cultural background, and social standing, as these factors combine to create different forms of social advantage and disadvantage. This perspective shows how social systems and family structures, together with community practices, create the basis for gender roles and expectations, which people learn through cultural knowledge transfer between generations (Crenshaw, 1991)

Chapter Summary

This chapter examined the literature on gender, gender norms, inter-generational knowledge transfer, indigenous knowledge and family socialization. It pointed out that families are the primary environment in which children learn cultural values, indigenous knowledge, and gender roles through observation, involvement, storytelling, and daily activities. The review also found that social developments like as education, migration and industrialization are affecting the traditional transmission of knowledge and gender norms in the Tharu society. Finally, the chapter introduced Gender Schema Theory, Contemporary Feminist Family Science and Intersectionality as the theoretical framework for this study and pointed out the research gap that calls for the study of intergenerational knowledge transfer and gender role transmission among Tharu community in Saptari District.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The chapter introduces the research framework, which examines how Tharu families transmit knowledge across generations and how this practice shapes their gender behavior. The study employs a specific research paradigm, specific philosophical beliefs, and an ethnographic method to conduct its investigation. The chapter provides information about the research site and subjects and describes the methods used to collect data, including participant observation, informal discussions, and in-depth interviews conducted during the fieldwork. The section provides a comprehensive overview of data analysis and interpretation processes, along with the methods researchers use to ensure research quality, maintain credibility, and adhere to ethical practices. The researchers chose their research methods based on their fieldwork experiences and their developing understanding of social and cultural dynamics that emerged during their research.

Philosophical Consideration

The philosophical presumptions helped me understand and modify the most appropriate research design for my study's data collection and analysis. The social dimension of meaning served as the foundation of my study's ontology. I believed that multiple social realities functioned as essential components of human nature. The interpretive paradigm was exciting because it allowed exploration of different theoretical perspectives and diverse viewpoints. In this support, Pretorius (2024) stated that the research paradigm comprised three elements: ontological and epistemological assumptions, axiological values, and research methods.

Ontology Assumption

The educational system needed a special approach to integrate ontological beliefs into inter-generational knowledge transfer by examining the perspectives of the elderly and the young and tracing their educational achievements. The educational process required educators to understand the different perspectives involved in knowledge exchange, as this was important for understanding how knowledge is shared between different groups. The material had to be presented in a way that both generations could understand, whilst also recognizing the unique perspectives each brings. The process of transferring knowledge from one generation to another requires

both precise restatement and effective communication methods that account for different systems of understanding. Qualitative research methods allow researchers to explore complex social environments by observing people's daily lives, social behavior, and cultural practices in real settings (Sithole, 2025).

Social reality in qualitative research emerges from human social interactions, which people use to construct their understanding of existence (Pretorius, 2024). Tharu elders and youth understand reality differently, which affects their everyday behavior and the way they share knowledge.

Epistemological Assumptions

I stand by the epistemological assumption that humans learn through observation and interaction with other humans. Epistemology is the study of the nature and scope of knowledge, belief systems, and methods of justification and the processes used to establish truth and reality (Asmawi & Alam, 2024). The research discusses how people acquire knowledge through their real-life experiences and social interactions.

The fieldwork provided a variety of perspectives through face-to-face interactions with participants, allowing them to share their personal experiences and opinions and encouraging more in-depth conversations. The research looked at how cultural and traditional practices enable families and communities to transmit knowledge from generation to generation.

The family system implemented these practices to establish social standards defining the expected behavior of men and women within their domestic roles. In this support, Asmawi and Alam (2024) stated that this study sought to understand how people learn from their daily experiences and social interactions. It tried to understand reality through social and cultural systems of validation.

Axiological Assumptions

Inter-generational learning was defined as the informal means of passing down knowledge, customs, and values, as well as the development of skills and abilities within the family, with the secondary aim of ensuring that the younger generations maintain a strong sense of their own history and culture, and acting as a constant link between them (Hanks & Ponzetti, 2004). Research literature production involves knowledge creation through my personal viewpoints, including my thoughts on the process.

The pedagogical argument demands an exact description of its axiological underpinnings, as the model needs this knowledge to build the axiological base (Fratte, 1986). This element is integral to the identity of the Tharu and Nepali civilizations. Value theory (axiology). Axiology has three branches: ethics, pragmatics, and aesthetics.

My Research Paradigm: Interpretive

The study adopted an interpretivist research paradigm to explore social reality by interpreting individuals' personal experiences. Research paradigms are shared belief systems that guide researchers' actions and approaches within a research community (Haq & Yasin, 2025). People build their reality through the social and cultural relationships they have with others. The researchers used interpretivist research methods to examine how Tharu community members transmit knowledge to their children and how this tradition shapes the development of gender roles within families and communities.

Ethnographers have traditionally studied diverse cultural contexts to understand the linguistic and social practices of different communities. In this regard, it can also be understood that ethnographic and qualitative research approaches require researchers to interact closely with participants and observe their behaviors, gestures, and verbal expressions in natural settings in order to gain deeper insights into their lived experiences and social practices. The Tharu community uses particular cultural customs that help them pass down knowledge to younger generations, while these customs also establish the gender roles that govern their domestic activities.

This study adopted an interpretative paradigm and ethnographic research approach to better understand the participants' experiences and perceptions of daily interactions between older and younger generations in their cultural context. This allowed the researcher to spend enough time with the participants, enabling them to share their experiences and reflect on them within different social and cultural contexts. The study will be conducted in Saptari's (pseudonym) Kohobar Municipality from March 2024 to December 2024, with multiple trips in between. The research may take longer than anticipated due to several unforeseen events that could delay my studies.

Method of Inquiry: Ethnography

My philosophical guiding principles are grounded in ethical standards and value systems that are reflected in knowledge transfer practices between the older and

younger generations in the Tharu community. The study has identified axiological values that influenced the perception of their own behavior by the younger participants through the practice of cultural values and customary traditions, as well as the gender role expectations they have learned from their families and communities.

Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) describe the key characteristics of ethnographic research. Ethnographic studies, first of all, are concentrated on a limited number of cases. Researchers use these cases to examine particular social settings or groups and understand their social practices. Researchers use flexible data collection methods to gather information because these methods do not require them to impose predefined categories on study participants. Ethnographers examine human behavior by studying people as they engage in their daily activities, including monitoring their social interactions in authentic environments rather than controlled research settings. The process of analyzing ethnographic data requires researchers to understand the significance and outcomes of the human activities they have recorded during their investigation.

The study employed an ethnographic approach to explore how youngsters learn Indigenous knowledge practices in the everyday lives of Tharu families, which, in essence, influence gender roles within the family from an intergenerational perspective. Ethnography studies human behavior through research conducted in their real-world environments. Ethnographic research requires researchers to become part of the social environment which they study by collecting data through direct observation and listening to people while conducting both casual talks and structured interviews (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007)

I conducted fieldwork to study how people interact through informal conversations and formal interviews, using these to discover the values, beliefs, attitudes, and social standards held by Tharu families in Saptari District, among both elder family members and their younger children. Fife (2005) states that researchers conducting ethnographic fieldwork need to spend time observing how their study participants live their everyday lives to understand community members' cultural and social practices within their local context. Through this approach, ethnography enables the researcher to examine the social and cultural practices of a particular group and interpret the meanings embedded in their everyday activities and interactions.

Selection of the Research Site

The Tharus are the largest indigenous ethnic group of Nepal's Terai region. There are many subgroups of the Tharu people, each with its own cultural traditions, social structures, and regional identities. Although the term "Tharu" is used to refer to the entire community, anthropological research shows the Tharu community's internal diversity and identifies groups such as the Rana, Dangaura, Kochila, Chitwaniya, and Kathariya, each associated with specific geographic locations and cultural practices (Kharel, 2019). The Eastern Tharu communities in the eastern Terai comprise the Khatianabi, Houjhadar, and Gagchhadar sub-groups in Saptari and Siraha districts. Tharu communities share socio-cultural characteristics that link them to agricultural activities, forest resource use, and village social systems that govern their daily interactions and cultural customs (Kharel, 2021).

The study was conducted in Kohobar Municipality (a pseudonym for the study area) in Saptari District, which has a large Tharu community. The Tharu households in this region have preserved their traditional agricultural practices and the use of local natural resources to sustain their cultural traditions and social customs. The study population could be accessed through the numerous settlements near forested areas where community members rely on natural resources for survival and economic needs.

The main research site is Mohanpur (pseudonym), a Tharu settlement in Kohobar Municipality, 20 kilometers away from Ramailo city. The researcher conducted fieldwork by staying in her home ward together with her mother-in-law, which enabled her to meet community members frequently. The extended family system persists in many households because different generations of family members, including grandparents, parents, children, and other relatives, choose to live together.

Mohanpur is a mixed community with around 75 households, including 40 households of the Tharu tole and 35 households of various other groups, including Madheshi, Mushar, Chamar, Tamang, and Magar, as well as a few Brahmin and Kshatriya families in the adjoining tole. The Tharu community in this settlement follows Hinduism culturally.

However, the Tharu community still remains socially and culturally dominant within the locality, even if things feel a bit more mixed at times. Most Tharu households maintain close kinship ties, and several families continue extended or joint-family living arrangements in which grandparents, parents, children, and married

sons often live in the same household compound. These multigenerational living setups offered useful context for seeing how intergenerational learning actually happens and how gender roles are passed along in the everyday routines of family life.

The village is surrounded by paddy fields, seasonal wetlands, bamboo forests, and open agricultural areas, where most families depend on farming, caring for livestock, wage labor, and seasonal migration for their daily maintenance. The physical setup of the location is a combination of continuity and slow social transformation. Besides modern cement houses built with remittance income and labor migration, there are traditional mud houses with thatched or tin roofs.

The majority of the population is mainly engaged in agriculture. Some men and young people work in formal jobs or go to cities to study or work. Women are involved in agriculture and household activities such as weeding, harvesting, caring for children, fetching water, washing clothes, weaving baskets, and making woolen goods. Elderly men of the Tharu community spend their time weaving fishing nets, bamboo fences, baskets, and furniture. Some members of the community commute daily to nearby towns like Pseudonym Ramilo or the Rajgadh city area for work or small businesses.

Family members have important knowledge that enables them to keep the household running even though they do not have formal authority in decision-making. The income women earn from agricultural work funds vital household expenses, including food, children's education, and healthcare (Khanal et al., 2024). The distribution of power within households in Tharu communities stems from gender roles, work duties, and access to resources, which in turn affect their ability to transmit practical knowledge.

Research Participants

The anthropological method enabled me to conduct fieldwork in family settings after I developed criteria for selecting two to three families, each consisting of four to six members from different age groups. The families involved in the study included elderly individuals and adults with children from their extended families.

I selected older-generation members who were willing to share their stories because they had valuable experiences and knowledge of indigenous customs, cultural beliefs, rituals, and practices used in their daily lives. I selected younger family members because they were practicing the cultural traditions that their elders taught

them. I chose to study this group to see how people interacted in the routine activities of their homes. Ethnographers employ participant observation as their primary research method to study cultural traditions and social behavior in their natural environments.

The researchers chose among four levels of participant engagement, including complete observation and three other roles that range from observer to participant. The researchers use these roles to maintain a balance between active social involvement and structured observation while collecting data on actual social settings (O'Connor, 2005).

The family triad's acceptance requirements varied across generations, and certain expectations applied specifically to daughters, mothers, aunts, grandmothers, grandfathers, fathers, uncles, and sons. The study focused on intergenerational knowledge transfer by collecting data from both women's and men's perspectives as they exchanged cultural practices and values that were naturally transmitted to younger family members within the household. Young Girls were particularly involved in learning these practices, whereas young boys and men were often engaged in attending school or earning a livelihood. According to Adhikari (2024), research in Nepal suggests that Tharu women play important roles in maintaining traditional household and farming practices, as well as the indigenous knowledge system passed down over time to future generations.

Introducing Tharu Families

In this study, I gathered information through detailed observations to understand the cultural norms, values, and ways of learning between the elder and younger generations in the Tharu community. The Tharu people have been residing in the Tarai region of Nepal for many centuries and historical documents have traced their presence to the fifth to seventh centuries though not always clearly.

The Tharu community is culturally diverse; it includes several subgroups, such as Kathariya, Dangaura, Rana, Sonaha, Danuwar, Chitwaniya, and Kochila, and each shows little difference in language, customs, and everyday cultural practices. And within all those groups, the Kochila Tharu are mostly found in the eastern districts of Saptari and Siraha, where they are often referred to as Saptariya Tharu (Krauskopff, 1995). The initial stage of this research consisted of gathering detailed data through fieldwork in these neighborhoods on issues such as family structure, living standards, and the work patterns of men, women, and children.

The early investigators sought to record a social world which they assumed was normative but about which neither academics nor policymakers had full knowledge. Their socially reform-oriented work was based on the assumption of a single reality that had to be thoroughly scrutinized through systematically designed and executed fieldwork (Deegan & Hill, 1987).

I observed the context, initiated informal discussions with family members, and conducted in-depth interviews to collect the data. Family trials for the interviews took place in a variety of settings. Interviews with the elder and younger generations were conducted at their principal residences to accommodate participants' age, health, and comfort in familiar surroundings (Glesne, 2006).

The interviews were conducted in family settings while simultaneously observing cultural, ritual, and indigenous practices in use at home. Three families were selected for the study based on the criteria provided. Interactions and social practices were closely observed to understand how intergenerational learning occurs and how gender roles form within the Tharu community. The following were my research participants for the study.

Being in the Field

Khohobar village is a typical Tharu community. And it opened up an opportunity for me to explore the possibilities of my research, which I was quite unsure about during my first visit. I was actually pretty excited when I headed to Kohobar for research from my place, Bardibas. It was a sunny day and the sky was very clear. I had all the energy and enthusiasm required for the very start of my research. So, with a smiling face, I reached my home village house in Kanakpur.

My mother-in-law and other family members were very happy to see me, welcoming me with smiles. After a brief conversation and a drink of water, I asked my mother-in-law to take me to Khobar, and she agreed to introduce me to her adjoining village neighbor's family there. My nephew happily joined us to visit Khobar after a few criteria were briefed, so we headed out with her to Kopila Devi's house first. She is a tall woman with grey hair, dark-skinned, and her head covered with a veil. She didn't speak much with me, but my mother-in-law explained her purpose for being there, and I added that all the information would be confidential. They can voluntarily leave the conversations in between if they feel uncomfortable; family was approachable. We had all the conversations in the Tharu language, and in between, my nephew helped me translate a few words. I observe the bamboo fencing,

a big well in front of the house, which was again covered with a bamboo shield to protect the lamb, goats, and even the roadside dust, for safe drinking water.

We walked to another family 6-7 minutes to another house. Unfortunately, we didn't find all the family members; only one elderly father, aged 65, was cleaning around. He informed us that everyone is out of the home for marketing; therefore, we left that home. On his suggestion, we headed to Virendra and Shabi's house. We didn't talk much on the way, as the road was very dusty and smoky. Shabi had a two-story old-style house made of mud and cement on the roadside. The separate kitchen house near that two-story building was where Misha and Anuradha were busy chopping vegetables and cooking food. Usually, in hill areas, cattle are kept in the backyard of the house, but I notice that houses are dense and the cattle are kept in front of the house.

My mother-in-law introduced me to her and I explained my intentions, she again asked me do I get some earning collecting the family information, I smiled and again explained the purpose of visit and we fixed the date and time for conversation and I am thankful to my mother-in-law and nephew for their tremendous help to find my participants and left. I thanked her for her time.

My mother-in-law was very excited. While I was talking to her, I could see her curiosity about how I was going to interact with the family. I expressed my interest in going with another family who were practicing witchcraft rituals and connecting with spiritual energies; however, she refused to go with that family, and we went with the next family, full of questions and curiosity. I followed her to a narrow path called "Sanghuro Galli". On the way, I asked where we were going. There, she explained that she was taking me to the purba tole of Kohobar village, where people usually take an afternoon nap in the house.

After a short 3-4-minute walk, we reached Purba Tole, a place with a large yard, a temple, a tubewell, and bamboo bushes near the house. When I reached there, my face glowed all of a sudden because of what I saw. Ah! Here I was: a perfect place for my research. I could imagine my research participant's face in each of the family members. This is how my research journey began. (Field note, 19th Dec 2023, 11:30 am). Initially, I thought it would be easy to identify the extended family, as my professor suggested, by introducing myself to them as a research student from Kathmandu University.

So, I followed the same, but I was surprised it took time to find out the extended family, and not willing to take part in conversations, it got me quite nervous. For a while, I didn't know what to do. But I was happy that my mother-in-law helped me identify the extended family, and I explained KU and studies to them. Then I sat with them and observed the children playing in the yard. Some children were taking turns to fill the water in the pots. After almost an hour, I started my conversation with them, telling them about myself and making general inquiries with them, like whose children they were. And why is everyone gathered there? Was it an everyday ritual or was it some special occasion? They felt a little comfortable and opened up with me. I had a general conversation with them and said that I would be visiting regularly. From the cluster of families sitting there, I chose my participants and got started with interviewing. They opened up more over the following days, and things became more flexible for me to observe and continue with my research.

Family 1 P1

My first participant in the study was Kopila Devi, a 53-year-old woman. She is married at seventeen and has two sons and a daughter. She now lives with a son, daughter-in-law, and two grandchildren. Her husband was five years older than she was. Throughout her life, she has managed the household, been to community women's group meetings, helped her neighbors with community rituals and celebrations, cared for her grandchildren, and worked with her husband on the family farm. As a mother and grandma, she is an important conduit of traditional information to the younger generation, teaching her daughter how to do home duties, Khohobar painting, and basket-making to help preserve cultural traditions and gendered skills within the family.

Family 1 P2

My second participant was Shyamlal Chaudhary, 58, who is the family leader and the major decision-maker in the household and in agricultural management. He spends most of his time on the family farm and oversees marketing of paddy, rice, and seasonal vegetables in local markets. His wife, Kopila Devi, and his elder son, Sanjeet, help him in these tasks. Shyamlal has a close relationship with Sanjeet, through whom he has passed on valuable agricultural knowledge and practical skills, including basic carpentry, bamboo fencing, bamboo-strip making, and the production of various farming tools and equipment. Family conversations about productivity in farming, household management, and decisions about their livelihood are mostly

among Shyamlal, Kopila Devi, and Sanjeet, who collectively manage the family's economic and social concerns.

Family 1 P3

Sobita Chaudhary, 31 years old, was my third participant, a daughter-in-law of the family, who spends her time cooking, cleaning, and washing the family's clothes. She is the mother of a 12-year-old son and a 3-year-old daughter, and they attend a nearby preschool. Since other family members leave early for work, she is solely responsible for taking care of her children, from feeding them to dressing them in the morning. Children go to school with other children in the village. She feeds her goats and cows, does her household chores, and in the afternoon she goes to the forest to look after her cattle, collect firewood, and gather fodder. Even her mother-in-law looked after her children and entirely took care of them while she worked in the fields.

Family 1 P4

The fourth participant in the study is Sanjeet, aged 39, who is the eldest son in the family. He is a carpenter in his community and in other villages and nearby towns. Besides his carpentry work, he helps his father, Shyamlal, with agricultural work and other household responsibilities, such as chopping fodder, building fences, and making a fishing net. He spends most of his time with his father, and these shared activities contribute significantly to the family's livelihood. Sanjeet said that he will look for job opportunities abroad in the future to earn more money and help his family financially.

My main participant was *Sanjeet*, during breaks, I spoke briefly with his younger brother, Manjeet, aged 19; however, his participation was limited due to work commitments. Manjeet was unmarried and worked as a mechanic at a motorbike repair garage near the local market. He had been working for 2 years in a garage in Kathmandu and had developed his mechanical skills in Kailali. Because he is mostly at work and not at home often, he has only limited encounters and conversations with family members.

Family 2 P5

Shabi, aged 42, was my fifth participant. During her household visit, her sister-in-law, Anuradha, was preparing food for the family, and also took part in the conversation with us. Shabi was cutting vegetables. Shabi holds a strong position within the household, where she is mainly responsible for household management and

also supports her husband, Virendra, in daily family matters. Family members share household responsibilities. Shabi's daughter-in-law, Anuradha, and Shabi's daughter, Misha, help her mother with domestic tasks. Shabi's elder daughter, Mahima, was married at the early age of sixteen. Her son, Vishal, is currently learning Korean in preparation for seeking employment abroad.

Shabi's brother-in-law, Surendra, helps the family in a pretty consistent way by doing agricultural labor and operating a small poultry venture in the village. Meanwhile, their father-in-law is quite elderly, yet he still maintains an advisory role, such as telling his sons what to do, guiding farm-related tasks, and shaping everyday household choices.

In general, the house shows a kind of shared family setup where responsibilities shift across age groups, blending domestic duties with farming work, and even those migration-minded expectations people pursue for a better future.

Family 2 P6

Virendra, aged 48, in a major decision-making role in the family, was my sixth participant. Together with his wife, Shabi, he manages the household and agricultural tasks. At the time of the visit, he had just returned from the farm and was seen cleaning his muddy hands and feet before joining the conversation. He said he was proud of his eldest daughter, Mahima, who visits the family frequently and helps on the farm throughout the paddy, wheat, and pulse planting seasons.

He also mentioned throughout the conversation that his father has been his primary source of agricultural knowledge, which he continues to apply in his own farming practices. Sometimes his son, Vishal, comes to the field and helps him relieve the workload. Overall, Virendra's role shows a combination of leadership in family decision-making and engagement in agricultural livelihood, fostered by intergenerational support.

Family 2 P7

My seventh participant was Misha, aged 24, Virendra and Shabi's younger daughter. She completed her Grade 10 and then enrolled in secondary (+2). But she quit school after failing the exams.

Misha has several chores at home, including cleaning, washing dishes, taking care of her younger sibling, and studying on her own for 2 hours. Her aunt is the family's principal cook, but Misha helps in the kitchen, serving the other family

members. She also grazes goats at times, and is learning to embroider from her aunt and older sister.

She is especially close to her mother and aunt and often discusses her opinions and experiences with them. She also has a wonderful relationship with her father, and she feels comfortable talking about serious stuff with her father, too. Her experiences are typical of the pattern of domestic work, skill development, and family support that constitute the everyday reality of young women in the household.

Family 3 P8

My eighth participant is Bano Devi, mother of three sons, one daughter, two daughters-in-law, two little grandchildren, and her husband. Currently, she is at home with her elder daughter-in-law, Rubina, her husband, and her tiny grandchildren, while her elder son, second son, and second daughter-in-law are living in Gaurighat (pseudonym) city near the adjoining district, where they run a garage and do carpentry work, and her younger son is unmarried and working as a carpenter in Ramechap district.

Family 3 P9

My ninth participant was Rubina, aged 24, the daughter-in-law of Bano Devi, who got married in her early twenties. She lived with her mother-in-law and father-in-law, taking care of household chores and children, supporting Bano Devi in weaving baskets and mats, and caring for the home cattle and the farm. She was busy cooking a meal and cleaning animal sheds side by side. She has one baby boy, is close to her sister-in-law, Sushmita, and shares their opinions over phone calls.

Family 3 P10

My tenth participant was Pachu, a 63-year-old person. On my visit, he was seated near the cow shed, repairing a hen cage by attaching nails to bamboo strips. He was a quiet and reserved man, one who would rather say less and express himself through his daily activities. He spent a lot of time working in agriculture and livestock management, making ropes for animals and maintaining farm equipment. He did not actively participate in the daily operations of the household, unlike the male members of the other two households. But he had vast traditional agricultural knowledge and practical skills from years of farming. He was vital in transmitting indigenous farming knowledge and values to younger family members, mostly through observation, participation, and day-to-day interaction.

Analyzing, Meaning Making, and Interpretation

The qualitative research studies failed to clearly present their data analysis methodologies, and the methodologies they did present often contained terms used incorrectly or inaccurately labeled (Sandelowski & Barroso, 2003; Sandelowski, 2010). Once the responses were coded into themes and issues, each response was analyzed through its specific keywords. The peer review process was useful in identifying potential biases in the research by prompting consideration of alternative explanations and providing a check on the scientific rigor of the methodology. My focus on transparency, methodological rigor and continuous evaluation of research procedures improved the validity of the research process.

Qualitative researchers needed to establish a coding framework to identify analytically significant elements in the data. Most coding frameworks consisted of a collection of code organized into higher-order categories, along with code definitions and sample data segments. The coding frame was used as an analytical tool to process the data, transforming raw data into a conceptual framework (Gaskell, 2000).

I was aware of my research's influence on the participants and the field environment (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Participants were drawn from family environments in which both older and younger family members shared their experiences of daily life and cultural practices. I validated my findings through two separate verification processes during data collection and analysis, and made multiple field visits to verify results with study participants. Gubrium (1988) explained that structural ethnographies produce research findings that reveal either the social structures of the studied community or the locally constructed meanings that people assign to their cultural practices.

Quality Standard

In my ethnographic study, three basic quality standards were considered, including credibility, transferability, and confirmability. Credibility is defined by Shenton (2004) as the research process that establishes a social and cultural reality of the subject matter under study. The process of assessing involves determining the validity of a truth claim by examining the researcher's attributes, the study's circumstances, and the phenomena under study. The standard is particularly important as it evaluates ethnographic data in qualitative research contexts. I used triangulation as my primary method to establish research credibility. I used participant ethnography to study intergenerational knowledge transfer, following guidelines.

The results were cross-checked using triangulation across multiple methods, such as observing daily activities, informal discussions, and semi-structured interviews. The study combined these research methods to gather information from participants, which helped verify their cultural practices and study behaviors, thereby improving the study's credibility. Similar strategies for trustworthiness, such as methodological transparency, reflexivity, and triangulation, are widely discussed in the qualitative research literature.

To ensure transferability, detailed descriptions of the research setting, participants, and cultural practices were provided to enable readers to assess whether the findings can be transferred to other settings. Similarly, Shenton (2004) stated that confirmability was achieved by keeping clear records of field notes, interviews, and observations to ground the findings in participants' experiences rather than the researcher's bias.

Ethical Consideration

In a qualitative study, ethical considerations have particular resonance given the in-depth nature of the research process (Arifin, 2018). Ethical concerns become more salient when conducting face-to-face interviews with a family group. In the same way that informants are individuals with rights that influence ethical behavior, ethnographers are also people with identities that influence study methodology.

They may become stressed while expressing their feelings during the interview session (Arifin, 2018). I gradually enter the conversation with respect, initially in an informal way. Between conversations, I provided clear information about the study's purpose and procedures, obtained written informed consent from each participant, ensured that the information would be used for the dissertation, and kept all conversations confidential.

In every research process, I kept participants' identities confidential, provided participants with an enabling environment during formal and informal discussions, and obtained informed written consent. Thus, it takes a little more time and helps me become familiar with the participants, as I can speak the local Tharu language and understand what they actually want to share during the conversation.

I explained that the participants participated voluntarily and could always step back, leave the study, or refuse to answer any question at any time, with no pressure. To preserve privacy, pseudonyms were used, and all data collected through interviews, observations, and field notes were kept confidential and securely archived.

The ethnographic study involved observing the participants' daily lives and creating trusted relationships with them throughout the fieldwork period. I found myself spending time with family members in their homes, observing what they did in their everyday lives, but also simply sitting in the quiet moments, having informal discussions, and keeping to their pace even when it felt slow.

I knew that they were willing to share their experiences. I knew relational ethics were involved, so I kept interactions respectful, protected the participants' privacy, and tried not to disrupt their usual routines, even in small ways. I was also aware of local cultural norms. I always considered how my own background, beliefs, and interactions with participants would influence the research process and my understanding of the findings. In this regard, Li (2008) also noted that unforeseen ethical concerns can arise after fieldwork begins. The choices were guided by principles such as respect, neutrality, and safeguarding vulnerable participants, so that dignity, rights, and well-being could be protected throughout the study.

Chapter Summary

This chapter presents my philosophical considerations and research paradigm, which are guided by the research methodology. I have justified interpretive ethnography through interviews and observations of cultural practices of intergenerational knowledge transfer and their influence on gender norms among Tharu families, who are my participants. Explaining the inter-generational transfer that unknowingly shapes gender roles in everyday practices and roles, I also briefly introduced my research participants. I also presented my ethical commitment and justification in the research, demonstrating the ontological and philosophical perspective. Here, I have tried to answer, in detail, why and how each component of the research paradigm of research design works.

CHAPTER IV

INTERGENERATIONAL LEARNING, CULTURAL CONTINUITY, AND CHANGING GENDER ROLES IN THARU FAMILIES

The data for this study is based on ethnographic observations and informal conversations with three Tharu families in the district of Saptari. The study examines inter-generational learning through field research and the ways in which families pass on their cultural heritage from older to younger generations. The study demonstrates that people develop vital skills through their day-to-day activities, such as farming, managing their households, crafting, and observing community customs.

The chapter reveals that gender roles influence the educational opportunities available in domestic spaces. Women are responsible for all household chores, caring for family members, and performing traditional craft duties, while men spend most of their time engaged in agriculture and other income-generating activities. This creates a division of home chores and work roles between men and women. The research demonstrates that people develop new social patterns as they embrace modern life, educational systems, and working abroad, and use advanced technologies.

The chapter demonstrates how traditional knowledge is maintained through daily activities, family relationships, and cultural customs, while facing challenges posed by new economic developments and the desires of young people.

Collective Force of Learning

1st Jan 2024, 9:15 AM, When I went to Kopila Devi and Shyamlal's house, which is quite near to my house, I realized I had never spoken in depth with the family before. I felt a bit awkward about what the family might be thinking about me, but they were very approachable. I went there with my mother-in-law and my nephew, who is in grade 12, which helped them be more open in the conversation.

Kopila Devi put a (patiya) mat in the open yard of their house where we sat, and Shyamlal took a bamboo-made tool and sat a bit farther from us. In the Tharu culture, they never sit together or speak directly with their daughter-in-law. Since I belong to the Chettri community, they assumed I could speak with the male family member, so he spoke comfortably during the conversation. Sobita, their daughter-in-law, was a little far away cooking a meal for the family, and their younger son was sitting nearby in another hut in the same yard.

I began by remarking that everyone was at home on that day. With a smile, she confirmed that only Sanjeet had gone to work. She happily shared that she takes care of and monitors all household matters and even actively participates in agricultural activities. She also said that she did such work on the family farm, like on a khet, whenever required. They have harvested the paddy, and now they are getting the land ready for wheat and flaxseed.

Her participation in household management and agricultural work indicates that Tharu women have a heavy workload and an appropriate level of authority within the household. This highlights the important role that older women play in making decisions in the home and bearing the responsibilities of livelihood, even if all this goes unnoticed.

The conversation continued with crops; I asked about the involvement of other family members in the farm work. I sought to know whether her sons had the skills needed for tasks such as preparing the fallow paddy field, properly handling paddy seedlings, understanding cultivation step by step, and properly seeding and harvesting paddy.

On this, the couple shared that the elder son (badhka beta) is skillful, knows all the work, and even cooks for the family if they get sick. She added that they never asked Manjeet, the younger son, to do any household work. He opens the goats, gives the cattle water, and works in a garage.

Then I asked again whether he worked with them in the kitchen garden or helped at home with preparing fences, as Shyamlal was cutting bamboo in front of us. In response, she added that he never shows interest or does any work himself, and they never ask him to do it because he does not work properly (dhanga purayera) and does not follow the techniques. Therefore, he is never involved in farm or household work, so he works in the garage.

Nowadays, there is a slight change in the community's harvesting practices. People rent tractors and cutting machines, and rarely use bullock carts to collect straw for cattle. It is expensive to keep bulls year-round, so the practice of using bulls for harvesting and preparing paddy (daun garne) is gradually shifting toward new technology.

Modernity and Migration

Kopila Devi added that both sons want to go abroad to earn more income. She said she wants to send the younger son abroad, but while talking with the garage

proprietor, he suggested that the elder son could go anywhere to work, whereas the younger son still needs more time to learn and should not be sent now. In this sense, the family is becoming more protective of Manjeet. She added that they had convinced Sanjeet that they had recently purchased a piece of land and now needed to settle some debts related to it. Once those debts are cleared, they can then consider taking a loan to pursue additional income opportunities.

I don't know what is going on in his mind nowadays. I asked, "*Do you want him to go abroad to earn?*" She replied that she neither wants to force him nor wants to stop him. If she forces him and he gets into trouble in the process, it will upset him. In the case of Manjeet, the couple is still not convinced that he could work or go overseas to earn.

During the conversation, I covered how the different family members thought about the opportunities available to the daughter and the sons. And they sort of laughed while talking about what could happen later for their daughter, Rita, aged 28, like, yes, those prospects were not really taken seriously, not in a serious way. "Girls are less exposed to the outside world generally, so they may face more problems in unknown places," said Kopila Devi. She said, "Chauri logh ke dekhhal sunal nai rahiche, chauri logh ke dimagh kani kamm hainche, chauri logh ke dimagh dosre rang ke haiche," and you can hear the notion in it, that girls have less practice and less capacity to handle events beyond their own community. This is showing how gender-based expectations get passed down inside the family, and they impact what everyone expects from daughters, their capacity to move around, their decisions, and even their future options. Those beliefs also become a form of intergenerational learning in which girls are taught to remain in protective household or community settings, while boys are considered better able to engage with the outside world.

Farming and Modernization

I further asked Kopila Devi whether they have any family discussions that involve disagreement. She added, "*Yes, mostly in farm work.*" I suggested that it's time for this plantation, where her son suggests kinds of seeds, tools, and patterns, and they just follow their son's decision. I further added, "*Who takes care of household chores?*" On that, she added that her daughter-in-law mostly does household work like cooking, cleaning, washing, and taking care of children, goats, and cattle at home, whereas she helps her with grocery shopping and small marketing-related work. When I asked about their children's education, they informed me that both sons

completed grade 10, while their daughter completed higher secondary education before being married off in the adjoining municipality.

I asked how Rita is doing, as she often visits them. On that, the couple proudly shared that their daughter is very skillful; she can do all household chores easily and, in addition, knit, craft, and prepare a basket of (Sikki) elephant grass and (Kohobar) wall painting. She entered one of the houses and brought a colorful basket with extra design, woven in wool, which looks attractive and is usually used for marriage, festivals, and worship; they distribute some to neighbors and sell some in the market as well.

Rita got this skill from her mother, but now she has added extra woolen warp to make it more attractive and stronger, so it can be used for more than 10 years. She praised her daughter, saying that although she visits her parental home occasionally, she helps her mother and sister-in-law with household chores and farm work, and knits woolen mufflers and sweaters for the family. I asked her, “Does your daughter-in-law, Sobita, do knitting, sewing, and painting?” She nodded her head and said that Sobita is often busy with cleaning, cooking, and taking her goats to the forest. In between, she collects fodder and firewood and returns home in the evening. She has never been interested in learning or practicing knitting and crafting.

I asked them: as everyone is staying in the same home, there might sometimes be disagreements (baat kata kaat) or different opinions in a family. On that, she giggled and said it happens in every house. Likewise, in the farm, they suggest, “Let’s do cauliflower,” and the sons show a different opinion: “No, let’s go with another crop.” Sometimes Manjeet never initiates any work at home, and that upsets Sanjeet over such small things.

Figure 2

Kothi to Store Rice



While observing around, I saw a clay pot (Kothi) for storing rice and grain, with its lower outlet and upper lid sealed with a clay-and-cow-dung mixture for long-term storage, made by the Tharu community. These clay pots, which lack the insulation of tin cans, play a significant role in

Figure 1

Basket Made of Feather



temperature management by maintaining a steady internal temperature and reducing pest risk. Matchstick boxes are also put inside the pot. The strong repellent properties of phosphorus in matchsticks help prevent infestation.

I inquired who made the kothi. She replied that she makes it, and Rita helps her complete it. It takes a week to finish the task. I asked her again whether Sobita gets involved. She shared that her daughter-in-law never shows interest in such work, but she knows how to make a handmade fire stove (Chulo). I asked her again, “*After you, there will be no one to prepare such kothi, pots, or bins?*” She replied that nowadays people don’t want to learn or spend time; they go to the market and bring big drums or plastic bins to store food, which is much more convenient and easier for the younger generation. Making a handmade bin (kothi) takes 15 days and needs at least four people to carry it and place it inside the home.

Shyamlal remarked on a recent shift in village lifestyles, noting that cemented houses are becoming increasingly common. Even the traditional earthen yards are now being plastered. “*Young people these days don’t want to spend time cutting unwanted grass, cleaning, and regularly plastering the yard with buffalo or cow dung. Now, they can simply wash it down with water,*” he said, talking about the trend he observed.

I then asked again, “*Where do you thresh the paddy?*” The family recalled that in the past, rice was threshed in the yard using bullocks. “But now, we thresh it on our own farm using a threshing machine,” they explained. This method, they said, helps them avoid dust and eliminates the need to hire a bullock cart to transport the paddy straw, which used to cost them NPR 500. “It has made our lives much easier,” Kopila Devi added, “*Money is necessary to improve your work efficiency.*”

I asked Shyamlal how he spends his days at home now. He shared that he spends most of his time planting and weaving traditional straw ropes. After a moment, he paused and explained, “*Lately, I’ve stopped weaving the straw ropes and started using bamboo strips to knot the fences, as they help prevent blue cow (Neel Gai) from entering my yard and destroying the plantation.*” He added further, “*For household purposes, I also weave bamboo baskets, but I don’t make them for others or for selling.*” He added, “*Nowadays, young girls and boys spend more time in school, and in the evening, they hang out on TV and mobile and don’t want to learn such skills, keep on talking and noticing the bamboo fence.*” I inquired whether any of his sons possess a skill and what he is doing right now. He responded with a light smile that

nowadays the young generation avoids hard work. In the past, their yard was more expensive, so he decided to make a single hut. For this, he needed some bamboo and Sanjeet helped him cut it in different sizes. With his knot-tying skills, Manjeet helped them put the pieces together using nails and a bamboo spiral. They had a problem when they had to make a fence out of wild grass as they didn't know how to make a rope or tie knots. It took a lot of effort on his part to motivate and guide them through this. He had to push hard to make them work as they were showing less interest. I expressed my concern to him about continuing a certain work in the family, to which he replied with a comforting smile that their children would take over someday, earn good money, and the work would continue. He compared the current conditions to the construction of a permanent cement wall that would remain intact for an extended period.

As we concluded our conversation, I noticed that the house wall was adorned with a beautiful flower painting using local pink, red, and green colors on mist-white mud. In the Tharu language, this style of painting is called Khobar wall painting. I asked Kopila Devi, *“Who else in your family does Kohobar painting at home?”* She smiled and quickly mentioned her daughter, Rita. I then asked about Sobita, her daughter-in-law, and she shared that Sobita has never shown any interest.

I further inquired if she had ever asked Sobita or tried doing it together. Kopila Devi stated that she never asked Sobita, but Sobita showed no interest in learning or discussing the matter. She added that if Sobita ever showed any interest, she would teach her; otherwise, she would approach neighbors for help at festival times.

Learning Influence on Gender Roles in a Family

The interview took place around 8:30 AM, while Sobita was preparing food for her family. She kept cooking, sort of attending to household management, during most of the talk. When we discussed her brief time at school, she laughed a bit as she talked about that little incident. The place felt busy, and children were getting ready to go to school. Her multitasking during the conversation really showed how demanding her daily domestic routine is, and how she handles everything at once, without

Figure 3

Jhutki Keeping a Seed for Paddy



stopping much. I started the conversation with Sobita, the daughter-in-law, by asking how many children she has. She got married 11 years ago, when she was 23-25. She said she has a 12-year-old son and a 3-year-old daughter who are now in school. Her son is in 5th grade, and her daughter just started school. When I asked her whether she had ever attended school. She chuckled and recounted an incident from the first day, when the teacher punished her by hitting her with a stick. As a result, she left school and decided not to pursue her education any further. She added she mostly engaged in household chores, cleaning, cooking, washing, making cow dung cake for fuel, and feeding her children's list of work. In the afternoon, she goes to the forest to gaze at the goats, collect fodder, and gather firewood, then goes back home in the evening and starts cooking again. During the conversation, she was cooking a meal for the family and the children to send them to school on time.

I asked Sobita again whether she was interested in exploring different areas of work and whether her mother-in-law had encouraged her to learn new skills.

Sobita laughed reluctantly and said that she is mostly concerned with cooking and looking after her children. Then I asked if she had time to interact with her mother-in-law, given her household chores and time spent in the forest. She said they talk during lunch or dinner, but they don't have long conversations. She said the elders in the family look after the kitchen garden and the farm, and she seldom goes to the market to sell vegetables or buy household items.

Sobita spoke in clear, confident Tharu with a strong local Nepali accent. Her tone was warm and lively, particularly when she was talking of cooking and community festivals.

She does not like to participate in market activities (Jhayu laghxa), and this responsibility now lies on the shoulders of her senior family members. She will have to take responsibility when she is much older. She happily shared that she is an expert at cooking a variety of dishes, including traditional Tharu dishes, and is willing to help neighbors with celebrations, festivals, and marriage ceremonies. She was very eager to talk about these community activities, but seemed reluctant to continue the interview. She quickly called her children to get ready for school and was planning to go to the forest to graze the goat, her only source of income. I got the context, finished the interview, and also thanked the family for sharing those really amazing experiences.

I visited the family on 19 September 2024, around 12.30 p.m., Sanjeet Chaudhary had come home from work to have his lunch. He worked as a carpenter in the nearby area of Siswani.

Our conversation began with his education, during which he shared that he had completed Grade 10 and then began working on the farm, where he learned to plow from his father. He practiced every day by accompanying his father to the farm from the age of 15. He also mentioned that his father would dig the soil while he would plow the field, which he described as the only work he could do as a farmer's son. After leaving school, he took up carpentry work in Kathmandu and, after two to three months, moved to Nuwakot to further develop his skills.

As the son of a farmer, I enquired further about how he developed his interest in crafting. He disclosed, "I chose to craft instead of working on a farm since I had seen my father working hard in the heat, which is really challenging." It took him three years to learn carpentry. Initially, he practiced furniture making, where he was provided with two meals a day, and he desired a job close to home. I enquired whether many individuals express a desire to travel abroad for employment after acquiring skills. I asked people about their intentions to seek overseas work opportunities after they completed their training.

The agent did not provide them with the full details of the job responsibilities and pay structure because he wanted to relocate. He showed them his expired first passport as identification. He has not renewed his passport for a year and is thinking of going after his brother's wedding is completed. He said that after COVID, the need for carpentry work has diminished. Yesterday was his first day at work after three months of idleness at home, as he has decided to move abroad. He shared his daily routine, saying that at home he usually takes care of cattle such as cows and goats, plows the farm and works as a carpenter at a furniture shop.

I enquired once more about the frequency of your conversations with your father. He said that his father stays mainly busy on the farm and that we don't often meet. If there is an essential matter, we talk; we are all preoccupied with our own tasks.

We then shifted our conversation to traditional practices within the Tharu community. Sanjeet recalled that his uncle had told him the marriage customs of that period were reflected in it. When his father married his mother, he had to pay 50 or 55 Rupees to the bride's family. During his marriage, the practice of giving dowries, such

as motorcycles, was uncommon among Tharu families. Instead, he received a simple bicycle and some furniture. He further stated that the trend has improved significantly during his sister's marriage; he provided the groom with an amount equivalent to the price of a motorbike, as his brother-in-law was the only son in his family, and the funds would help him start a small business. He stated that having a bike has become common. Regarding his brother's marriage, he is unsure, as his brother will marry a girl of his own choice. Whether he will receive one or not is something only he would know. Regarding your father's marriage, there was no tradition of cash or motorbike demands in the Tharu community. How have these practices been shaped?

Sanjeet said the practice is not traditionally Tharu but has been influenced by Shah and Mahoto families (Madhesi Community), who demand dowries, including motorbikes. In many Tharu households, particularly those with well-educated sons, there is a growing tendency to demand motorbikes (Falana le bike liyo bihe ma), citing others who received them as wedding gifts. Consequently, economically poorer families feel compelled to comply, as neighboring communities increasingly influence this expectation.

Sanjeet's statement included information about the daughter who had received a cooking pot, a bucket, an oil can, and other items as her ration. The newlywed wife needed the items she received as her ration because they would help her prepare meals without feeling social pressure from her family. The present day requires more than one motorbike for complete transportation needs. They are now expected to offer items such as furniture valued at 300,000, refrigerators, and LED televisions, which are symbolic of evolving trends.

I inquire Sanjeet, is your wife mainly occupied with housework and has some income from selling cattle? Who makes the key financial decisions in the family? He mentioned that major decisions are made by him, his father, and his mother. He also consults with his wife and brother. To purchase agricultural land, he sold his wife's jewelry and took out a loan for another piece of land.

Continuity of Traditional Knowledge and Gender role

After we finished our first family visit, my nephew and I wanted to see another family. The house was only occupied by her daughter-in-law because the other family members weren't at home, so we decided to visit another family.

We left Kopila Devi's place on January 2, 2024, and started the day's walk from Shabi's house at 8:30 AM sharp, a ten-minute walk. Anuradha and her sister-in-

law were at the Shabi house because Anuradha was preparing food for her family, while her sister-in-law helped by cutting vegetables.

My family had two members who joined the conversation. The family showed their readiness to speak with me, so I repeated my explanation of the visit and requested that they provide written consent. Shabi was willing to talk to me about the subject. She said, "This is a good cause." I asked how many members were in the family. She said that there are 11. The family members are a single unit, as they all live together; no one lives separately from the group. Mahima got married while her son, Vishal, studied Korean in Kathmandu. She giggled and said, "He came. The man said, "What are you doing?" The man said, "*We are having a conversation.*" *My mother-in-law said, "Bidhyarthi chiye ta."* She is a student, and he joined in.

The first question I asked her was who managed the home responsibilities and which tasks she completed. She normally performs agricultural work and domestic duties while helping her sister-in-law, Anuradha, who cooks for the family, grows vegetables and paddy, and handles all other domestic activities. The grandmother laughed with happiness while she confirmed her granddaughter's existence. Misha, aged 24, studied up to the twelfth grade but was unable to pass the Higher Secondary level. As a result, she did not continue her education. After Mahima's marriage last year.

I wanted to know the household responsibilities of both Mahima and Misha, so I asked her about their chores, and she confirmed they did them together. Once more, I asked Sabhi, "What other skills does Mahima know about household work?" She replied that Mahima used to do all the household chores while she was in school and had even received training in sewing and electrical wiring. She stated that although she doesn't work much on the wire these days, she is familiar with planting, harvesting paddies, and plunking seeds, all agriculture-related tasks, and taking care of buffaloes and goats, tasks that farmers usually perform. Now that she is married, she continues all those tasks as a housewife.

Regarding Misha, she was studying in grade twelve while also taking the goats to graze in the forest. Misha spoke in Nepali with a noticeable Tharu accent. Her speech was clear and easy to understand, and she responded confidently to questions. I asked her again, "*Isn't it too late to be in 12th grade at 24?*" She laughed, saying, "She hasn't passed out yet. What should I do?" She added that Misha used to do all

household tasks as well, including making goitha (cow dung cakes), cooking, collecting fodder, and grazing goats.

“Does she always follow what you're assigning?” I asked to Shabi, and she replied:

She said that Misha listened to tasks with a laugh (laughter) but rather refused to follow orders when work was pending, about which she became irritated. The younger generation is losing interest in learning the traditional skills, especially those needed to make objects used in major celebrations such as feasts, festivals, and marriage ceremonies.

Their distinctive way of life is closely tied to an agricultural calendar, making them a unique community.

“Bhakari,” the storage and preservation of food grains (mainly unthreshed rice), are well-built structures made of split bamboo and strips, and are often used to store wheat and paddy to keep rodents and insects out. When I asked who had built the Bhakari, she said that it had been purchased. She continued, explaining that she used the skill to build mud storage containers, called Kothi, to store rice, a skill Misha has not yet learned. However, Misha can build a firewood mud stove used for cooking. She said that no one builds Kothis anymore since they become less common and less popular over time. The past workers created a thick plaster by mixing clay, manure, and fine straw. Mixing dung and rice husk with clay strengthened the structure, and the dung also helped repel pests.

In the past, since houses were made of straw and mud, there was a greater risk of accidental fires, but people could still survive because the rice stored in the Kothi would not burn. Today, with the trend toward building concrete houses, this traditional practice has declined.

Shabi continued, saying that “Kohobar” Tharu wall paintings were traditionally painted on mud walls. She further added that nowadays plastic bins in different colors are available on the market, and younger generations are not interested in learning traditional weaving or crafting skills, especially the famous Tharu Kohobar painting. This involves decorating house walls during marriages and other rituals, using compasses, broken bangles, and natural colors. However, the Tharu community continues to observe their traditional customs during the New Year, Dashami, and Holi.

On food storage, Shabi said, *“For long-term storage, the lower outlet and the upper lid are sealed with a plaster of clay and cow dung.”* Clay pots are called “Kothi” and are important in managing the temperature. This results in a stable indoor temperature and a lower risk of pests.

I also noticed that in the storage pots they used a matchbox. The phosphorus in matches is a strong repellent that keeps insects away. Dried vegetables and rice are stored; similarly, mango pickle is made with oil and stored for more than three years, prepared by each family member. I saw a rake for potato storage. A rake is used to store potatoes. The rake is cylindrical and constructed from thin bamboo rods woven together with jute thread.

Maintaining relative humidity prevents early rotting and sprouting of potatoes, thereby extending post-harvest life. Similarly, the women at home do craftwork such as weaving mats and making various kinds of baskets using yarn and wild sugarcane (Kash) grass, which is called daliya, dhama, and dhakiya. Similarly, elephant grass and straw are used for mats, and Shabai is used to make rope and other handmade baskets. All these materials are useful in marriage ceremonies, feasts, and festivals.

Shabi added that the Tharu people have distinctive customs and practices that have helped them maintain their agriculture through festivals. They pass this knowledge down to the next generation, and this agricultural practice has been ongoing for a long time, alongside cultural practices.

Akhari/Kadhuwa Pakhari: On 1st Ashar, around June 15, they start the paddy plantation in the field with a celebration called (Gublaghi), the first time of planting, where they cook a variety of vegetable fries, curd, jackfruits, beaten rice, and daalpuri, and feed farmers and women who support the plantation. They do this by dividing the work among neighbors and completing all the planting within a month. At the end of Ashar in the Nepalese calendar, in the second week of July, people celebrate “Kadhuwapakhari” to mark the completion of the rice planting. To be barna means taking a break from farming and spending time with family. They believe that the last remaining plantations are not allowed to be completed on Saturday and Sunday. This is not considered a good ending day of the plantation, so it will be completed on Monday, Tuesday, and Friday. On this day, they worship and celebrate by cooking and serving the family rice pudding, beaten rice, and curd. Planting rice at the right time increases yields of subsequent wheat and rice crops.

Chauthichand: Chauthichand, celebrated on the day of the Ganesh Chaturthi festival, is observed by worshipping the moon. On the evening of the occasion, puwa (sweet cake), kheer (rice pudding), and other offerings are made to the moon. The worshiper keeps a fast all day and eats only after the evening puja. It is said that this puja is done for children's well-being and for the person who tamed many cattle, as those cattle are a source of income. This festival also aligns with their occupational culture and is fast kept by both men and women at home.

Tihar (Sukrati): Oil lamps are lit for the occasion, which, according to the Tharu, help reduce the impact of insect pests on their agricultural activities. Nighttime field pests are attracted to light, and light traps effectively help reduce agricultural insect pests. On this day, they also place their traditional plow inside their homes to signify the completion of numerous agricultural tasks, including weeding, hoeing, and other related activities. On Govardhan Puja, all agricultural tools, including plows, spades, axes, scales, and weights, undergo washing, oiling, rice-flour paste, and vermilion sprinkling. The process starts with cow dung, which they use to create godaha/godahaini (in human form), then place in the gahli (cow shed) for overnight storage. The next day, the godaha (Refers to a herd or multitude of cows)/godahaini (Refers to a type of small plant) is transformed into chirpi (dung cake), which is dried before being stored in a secure location.

Neman: Neman, celebrated in November, is a ritual honoring the new harvest. On this day, the chirpi made during Shukrati is used to light a fire, cook the first grain harvested from the field, and offer it to the home deity. The Tharus consume the newly harvested grain only after celebrating Neman. The abovementioned cultural values are transmitted to the next generation through feasts, festivals, and other occasions, where they are learned by observing and experiencing them in day-to-day life, and later become cultural traditions passed from the older generation to the younger one.

Changing Aspirations, Migration, and Impact on Intergenerational Learning

Shabi and Virendra's 22-year-old son, Vishal Chaudhary, is currently learning the Korean language in Kathmandu. According to Virendra, when Vishal returns home during the holidays, he often wanders around the village because there are many family members at home and little work left for him. However, he does help with

some tasks when asked. Shabi added with a smile, *“Since he is still a child, what will he do in front of his parents?”*

When I asked whether Vishal was familiar with other agricultural tasks such as tending plantations, caring for cattle, or collecting fodder, she replied that he had not been involved in such work. Occasionally, he accompanies his father to the fields, where he helps prepare the paddy field using a spade, but he does not know how to plow. As a student, he only helps his father with a few small tasks around the house.

Shabi further explained that, as farmers with limited income, they could not fully support their children’s education. Therefore, Vishal decided to study Korean and take a loan so he could eventually work in Korea. Being the only son, he is expected to support the family in the future.

Virendra, 48, shared that in the Tharu culture, people tend to speak less. He mentioned that he himself spoke little with his father and that he feels his son is learning the same habit. He explained that he never formally taught his son farming, as it brings little income, although the boy sometimes helps with digging, fixing fences, and small-net fishing, but not with using a proper jaal. Virendra also noted that his father knew many herbal remedies, some of which he still remembers, but his children are largely unfamiliar with them, as modern medicine has largely replaced these traditional practices.

In the Tharu tradition, parents and children did not hide their concerns; daughters advised on health matters. Mahima often comes to our house to help with household and agricultural work, and we consider her our daughter who cares for us. Anuradha handles all domestic activities, including cleaning, cooking, milking, drying paddy, and caring for children, while Shabi works on the farm and assists Anuradha at home, and Misha assists with cooking. The children learned many skills at their parents’ homes, such as making mud stoves, storage bins, and cow dung cakes.

Misha spends her day cleaning, washing dishes, caring for her younger siblings, and studying for 2 hours. Misha assists her aunt by helping in the kitchen and serving food to their relatives. She also sometimes grazes goats and learns stitching from her aunt and sister. She feels closest to her mother and aunt, but also shares her thoughts with her father.

She said, “My neighbors put pressure on families about things that happened when my sister wasn’t married. I’m in the same phase, and they tell different stories and ask my parents when I’m getting married.” Out of fear, my mother and father

sometimes yell at me to make me aware of the importance of avoiding wrong decisions and maintaining discipline to preserve family prestige. At those times, I feel proud of my parents because they continue to guide me with good suggestions.

I asked whether she had any disagreements with the family. She added, “I get into arguments with my parents sometimes because they yell at me for no apparent reason when I arrive home late at night from markets and fairs, and sometimes because I tease my younger sibling.” The family was busy with their work, so I ended the conversation by thanking them for the rich insights into how intergenerational relationships unfold in family settings.

Everyday Learning and locally led household management

As part of my study, I visited the third household on September 20, 2024, at 10:30 AM Bano Devi is married and has three sons and one daughter. She also has two young grandchildren and two daughters-in-law. At the time of my visit, her elder daughter-in-law, Rubina, her husband, and their small children were at home with the family. Her eldest son, along with her second son and second daughter-in-law, has migrated to Gaurighat (pseudonym) in an adjoining District, where they run a garage and do carpentry work. The youngest son is still single and works as a carpenter in Ramechhap District.

Bano Devi shared that Rubina married Ram’s eldest son seven years ago after his first wife passed away from illness. In the household, the women are responsible for feeding the cows, cleaning the sheds, cooking, doing household chores, and offering prayers every morning.

I asked Bano Devi how Rubina learned about her responsibilities as a new bride. Smiling, she explained that Rubina did not know how to cook when she first arrived. According to Bano Devi, in the Tharu culture, a newly married bride begins cooking on auspicious days, Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. On those days, she invites older neighbors to taste the food she prepares. The first time Rubina entered the kitchen, she felt nervous. Bano Devi taught Rubina cooking skills and showed her the proper way to serve food. Rubina

Figure 4

Dhakiya Use in Rituals Made of Elephant



learned to speak respectfully with elders while doing household chores. She used humor to create a cheerful atmosphere during her work.

The second time I asked about Rubina's education, Bano Devi smiled while she changed the topic. She said Rubina had studied up to class 7, and her younger daughter-in-law, Sumita, had completed grade 10. She said all her children had completed high school. Her elder daughter completed her +2 education and proved to be an excellent student. She passed the teacher licensing examination.

Yet she suddenly started acting weird. The family consulted Doctors, healers, and exorcists. She fully recovered and is doing well after marriage and having children. She went on to say that she taught her daughter to respect, care for, and oppose older people. She said that I taught her to weave baskets, perform rituals to worship God, prepare Prasad, and make handmade curd.

In the yard, I saw a tall bamboo pole with a red flag on it, representing Lord Hanuman. In the yard, there was a tall bamboo pole with a red flag on it. The flag stood for Lord Hanuman. People think it provides strong protection for the family.

Bano Devi explained that she was gradually transferring the responsibility of lighting the worship lamp to Rubina, carefully teaching her the ritual steps. She spoke as she combined her instructions with soft laughter. She also reflected on her experience of weaving baskets from cane grass and wool, smiling as she noted that none of her daughters-in-law had fully learned the skill. Still, Rubina had begun learning knitting instead.

“After you, who will continue weaving baskets?” I asked her again.

Bano Devi laughed for quite a while before replying, “I am still guiding her.” She explained that Rubina sometimes works on a basket alongside her, though her technique is still not very refined. “*She will learn gradually,*” she added.

According to Bano Devi, these baskets are mainly used at weddings and festivals and are not sold commercially. She continued sharing stories from her earlier life. She recalled chopping firewood, twisting jute rope late at night, and preparing farmland with a spade. It was hard to sustain food and education for the extended family as their father was working in Kathmandu. Their income from traditional farming was limited, so she taught Rubina how to knot jute rope to support the household.

Agricultural practices have changed significantly in recent years. New varieties of seedlings and improved irrigation practices through water pumps have

made farming easier,” said Bano Devi. I asked further about how her son had shifted to a new occupation, such as starting a garage and learning carpentry to earn an income. She explained that her eldest son knew how to drive both heavy and light vehicles and had gone to Saudi Arabia for employment. Unfortunately, his wife later became seriously ill, and the family had to spend more than NPR 700,000 on her treatment, which pushed them into debt. Despite all their efforts, they were unable to save her. Because of this difficult situation, her second and youngest sons decided to discontinue their education and instead focus on learning practical skills so they could start earning money and support the family.

I asked Bano Devi whether, since her eldest daughter-in-law had completed her higher secondary education, she had wished to support her daughters-in-law in continuing their studies. She replied that she had encouraged them to pursue their education, but they were unable to continue. Eventually, she began teaching them household chores and how to manage the home. She explained that all the family members hand their earnings over to her, and she manages the finances carefully. Now the household is free of debt. Everyone lives together in harmony, supporting and respecting each other.

Culture Continuity and Skill Transfer in the Joint Family

Rubina married Ram at 19, although she had completed only Grade 7. When she was married, she began her day helping her mother-in-law, whom she calls “*Mommy*,” with household chores. Rubina gets up early in the morning to clean the house and the sheds for the cows and goats, feed them, wash the dishes, and prepare meals for the family. She also goes to the forest to gather fodder and to make cow dung cakes for fuel.

When I asked whether she goes to the market to sell vegetables or livestock, she laughed briefly and replied, “*No, Mommy and Papa handle all the marketing work.*” She added that she had learned all the household tasks from her mother-in-law. When I asked how she manages her personal expenses, she laughed and said, “*Mummy gives me.*” With a quick smile, she added that Ram also takes care of her personal expenses.

I asked her again how often she talked to her brother-in-law and sister-in-law, including Ram. She chuckled and said that they talked a lot, generally about everyday things like what they had cooked for dinner that day or when they would be home. When I asked her further about how often they went home, she said they normally

went home during festivals. She said that her sister-in-law, Sumita, is like a friend to her. Rubina takes care of the family and the farm in the village. In Gaighat, she handles household duties and manages modest funds. She also said that they made traditional dishes like Daal Puri and other foods together to take home to their parents' home.

Rubina chuckled and shared that she now knows all the rituals she learned from her mother-in-law and can manage all household chores independently. Additionally, she is responsible for the children and cattle. She had not yet learned to weave a straw mat, a basket, a clay storage bin (“Kothi”), “Bhakari,” the storage and preservation of food grains (mainly unthreshed rice), and well-built structures made of split bamboo and strips. She went on to say that she had learned a lot from her, and I will continue to learn. Her mother has learned to cut wood now! Currently, people no longer go into the forest to gather firewood due to stringent regulations. Women used to be excited to go into the forest to gather firewood to sell and buy jewelry made of gold and silver. She continued to articulate her views while laughing.

Men’s Support in Household Management

Pachhu sat near the cow shed, working on a hen cage, carefully fixing nails to bamboo strips. When asked how he helps his wife, he responded quickly,

I always tell my sons and daughter-in-law to stay united as a family while the elders are alive and living together. I also encourage them to learn a skill and earn money to buy agricultural land, just as we, as parents, have always advised.

Pachhu mentioned that at home, it’s just him, his wife, one daughter-in-law, and the grandchildren, as the rest of the family is away in other districts for work. He spends most of his time on farming, plowing, digging soil, and planting crops every day, while his wife brings him breakfast (kalo). He smiled and said he learned all his agricultural and handicraft skills from his parents.

When I asked about his marriage, he laughed nervously, admitting he didn’t know the exact date since his elder brother and his wife had arranged it. He went on to share that he learned carpentry from a friend and his brother-in-law while helping renovate several houses, and gradually, all his sons picked up the skills by working alongside him.

Pachhu also reflected on Tharu traditions, saying that as children, they used to sit together and eat from the same plate. *“It was a way to talk, learn, and share our feelings with each other,”* he said, his eyes lighting up with nostalgia.

Figure 5*Fishing Net (Chach)*

Pachhu noted that many landowners have switched to using tractors for plowing, but they still keep bulls. *“Tractors need proper paths to reach the fields, but bulls can move across the land easily,”* he said. He went on to explain that bulls are also used to transport crops in bullock

carts, and sometimes they can even be rented out for extra income. He proudly said that he does all of the farm work with the help of his younger son, wife, and daughter-in-law. He also stressed how useful and adaptable the bulls are in their daily lives.

Looking ahead, Pachhu shared that once the family earns well, they plan to build a nice house and arrange the younger son's marriage. For farmers, he stressed, practical skills such as knotting jute ropes, building bamboo fences, making bamboo strips, and managing cattle are essential.

These houses are made of mud, straw, bamboo, and, increasingly, cement and bricks to withstand the humid heat of the Terai. This reflects the Tharu's practical and eco-friendly way of life. These skills, passed down at home, are considered even more important than formal education and remain a vital part of life for the Tharu community. He chuckled again, revealing a special talent for knitting fish traps, a skill the children have not yet learned since everyone is often away from home. In his youth, he fished and sold the catch to support the family, but now he fishes mainly for food. He said that, looking back on those early years, he realized that overfishing for profit was a mistake that ultimately led him to focus on craftwork. After completing the conversation, we thanked the family and returned home.

The chapter examined intergenerational learning, which Tharu families practice through their daily agricultural work and household duties, their traditional crafts production, and their participation in cultural celebrations. The research results indicate that households are the primary setting in which families transmit knowledge and skills to their members. The younger family members develop their skills by observing older family members at work and helping them with their daily responsibilities, and they take on new tasks.

The family environment serves as an essential space that enables families to maintain their cultural traditions and vocational skills across generations. In conclusion, the process of gender socialization in families is strongly influenced by family background.

Parents use their own gender beliefs and expectations to teach their children about social interaction, thereby creating better opportunities for their future (Perales et al., 2021). Studies on knowledge transmission between generations demonstrate that parents have a considerable impact on children's views of gender roles. In this support, Li et al. (2024) stated that parents' perspectives on gender equality or traditional gender roles will shape the gender expectations that children develop.

Chapter Summary

This chapter covers family Interactions, field observations, field notes, and in-depth interactions with three Tharu families in Saptari district. It captures the passing on of information between generations in the home, through the everyday lives of families, farming, household chores, traditional crafts, caring for others, and cultural practices.

The chapter documents actual experiences, conversations, and everyday activities of family members that demonstrate how indigenous knowledge, values, and gender roles are learned through observation, participation, and informal interaction across generations. It also records the changing realities experienced by the families, including migration, formal education, modernization, and shifting aspirations, as observed during the fieldwork.

The Results reveal that the most important sites for learning indigenous knowledge and gender roles are households, particularly through observation, participation, and shared experiences. That portion remains quite strong; Elders are still the primary source for passing on skills and cultural values. But urbanization, migration, formal schooling, and even changing life goals have evolved how learning used to function. Still, many traditional practices are being lost, but some indigenous abilities are gradually fading among the younger generations. That poses substantial hurdles to maintaining Tharu cultural knowledge and the gendered traditions that accompany it.

CHAPTER V

INFORMAL LEARNING PROCESS IN THARU FAMILIES

The younger generation needs to learn from multiple sources because no single source can provide all essential values, skills, and knowledge. The presence of elderly people becomes essential because they help transfer knowledge through informal methods and inter-generational learning. The older generation has more knowledge and experience and needs to help and guide the younger generation. The Tharu community relies on its parents, grandparents, and other family members to pass down its traditional knowledge, practices, and values.

The individuals who provide information to these individuals show two different patterns of information sharing. The members of the Tharu community share their Indigenous knowledge, skills, and values with others from different age groups, genders, and skill levels. The Tharu people need three specific teaching methods to learn Indigenous knowledge. The three methods of teaching Indigenous knowledge to Tharu people include storytelling, observation, and practical experience. (Niure, 2014, 2019; Niure et al., 2026). The community teaches young people through active community participation, observing skilled workers, and listening to elders' stories. To learn certain occupations directly, such as farming, fishing, hunting, and construction, apprenticeships and hands-on practice are also essential (Stevens, 2008; UNESCO, 2010).

One participant from Family 2 shared, *"We typically learn about our roles and responsibilities in the family and community from our parents."* In the Tharu community, fathers often play an important role in teaching sons a range of skills, values, and practical knowledge. They commonly guide them in activities such as cultivating land, managing resources, and seeking employment opportunities outside the community.

These approaches stress the importance of learning through practice in practice settings. Indigenous community-based knowledge, skills, and values are practical and immediately useful for everyday life (Barnhardt & Kawagley, 2005; Batibo, 2009). Even if formal education systems do not appreciate traditional teaching methods and Indigenous knowledge, the Tharu culture encourages learning through experience through hands-on interaction with natural and social environments.

The findings of this study show that all participants reported learning significant knowledge and skills from their parents, grandparents, older siblings, and other family members. These practices may include many areas that can have an impact, such as parenting skills, farm practices, family cultural events, and social norms and values.

Elder brothers also contribute by teaching younger family members about their responsibilities toward their ancestors and the family, as well as practical skills such as making bedsteads and other male-associated handicrafts. One informant explained that intergenerational indigenous knowledge is exchanged through the parents in Tharu society.

Parents act as guardians of cultural heritage by transmitting it through oral traditions, experiential learning, apprenticeships, and cultural activities (Stevens, 2008). The findings show that daughters receive guidance about their gender roles from their grandmothers, mothers, and elder sisters, while sons receive similar guidance from their grandfathers, fathers, and elder brothers.

The Tharu society mirrors its traditional social system in its gender-based skill-transfer system, which functions through male and female roles (Niure, 2019). Similarly, the study's findings are consistent with previous research (Magni, 2017; Smith, 2012; Stevens, 2008) that illustrates the importance of families in the transfer of Indigenous knowledge from one generation to the next. Extended family members play an important role in transmitting cultural heritage, language, and traditional practices, and in helping to create a sense of shared identity among individuals.

Open Family Discussion and Interaction

The Tharu family members acquire knowledge through their everyday conversations, which they conduct inside their home. The family members hold their discussions during their dining time, farm work breaks, and pre-event community time. The home environment provides children with informal learning opportunities through these home-based discussions. The elders pass on their personal knowledge during family discussions, including historical family stories and important life lessons. The various subjects of these discussions help children gain a comprehensive understanding of farming methods, familial bonds, the social expectations of different genders, and the ability to manage their own emotions.

These families consistently engage in meaningful conversations. One member from each of the three families shared a similar experience:

My grandfather talks about how crops were harvested before tractors existed during our evening dinners. He also explains the changes that have occurred over time and the reasons for them. Everyone in the family listens attentively and asks questions. Through these discussions, I learned about rainfall patterns and how to water crops properly.

Family members need to have conversations with each other because these interactions help children learn both cultural values and literacy skills. Chaudhary (2024) shows that students who engage in these interactions can deepen their understanding of their cultural heritage and traditional identity.

The daily discussions people in rural areas engage in as a common practice foster a learning environment that leads children to study their environment because they lack access to schools. Niure (2019), in his comparative research on Indigenous education systems, explains that family conversations connect Indigenous knowledge systems with formal education. The research shows that families use informal learning methods to help their children succeed in school.

Sanjeet from Family 1 explained, “Baba does not have the authority to make all the decisions. The decision about what to plant this year is ours, as Baba wants to hear our opinions. Basically, this statement is an example of a participatory decision-making process within the family, where household members are encouraged to speak up about what they think and help make those important agricultural choices (Shrestha, 2025). This willingness of the father to speak with and consider his offspring's opinions also suggests a more democratic distribution of authority (at least in his home) rather than a rigidly top-down structure. He explains how one seed performs better than another and which plants grow best in our soil conditions. He also advises us to develop an understanding of the land because it is our source of food. The above statement shows that not only do younger people learn the skill, but elders also learn the new plantation pattern from the younger generation.

In the Tharu community, such conversations form an important part of informal learning. Family members encourage active participation in decision-making by asking children questions and inviting them to share their opinions. The practice enables children to learn decision-making processes by understanding the processes that guide their actions. Tharu children acquire practical knowledge through their interactions while learning important values, including family roles, gender norms, and emotional regulation. Learning in Tharu families is not really distinct from

everyday life; it flows alongside everything else. Youth learn through observation and by participating in farming processes, livestock rearing, forest-related activities, household chores, and even cultural celebrations. Learning by experience in this way allows young people to acquire practical know-how and cultural understanding relevant to the social and economic life of the Tharu community.

The family dialogue is an intergenerational literacy practice in which older family members pass on their knowledge to younger family members, thereby reflecting UNESCO's standards. The process of learning from daily conversations lays a foundation that enables people to learn throughout their lives and supports their ongoing growth.

Supporting the discourse, Sharma (2017) explains that informal discussions are essential tools that help rural communities develop both their intellectual abilities and their moral character by deepening their understanding of religious beliefs and preserving their cultural heritage.

A member of Family 2, a teenage girl, contributed the following statement:

The women in my family share their thoughts about village events and news during their work sessions.” The women explain the purpose behind traditional practices. I do not ask questions, but I listen, and know the meaning of our customs.

There are two purposes for the discussions: to pass on the cultural legacy to younger generations and to pass on practical knowledge. The family members use these discussions to communicate their values and moral beliefs, thereby fostering understanding among them. Similarly, Niure (2019) demonstrates that unplanned family discussions are vital to children's social skill development because these conversations teach them about the intricate links among their family duties, cultural norms, and traditional practices.

The conversational space in Tharu houses supports children's growth by enabling self-reflection, research activities, and education about their community's traditions and values. The cultural stories that people share during discussions are strongly connected to their cultural past, which young people feel compelled to protect for their future descendants.

This practice needs to be analyzed through the lens of symbolic interactionism, which holds that social interactions create meaning and that people construct their identities through social symbols (Blumer, 1969). Tharu families use

their ancestral traditions, land histories, and customary traditions as a crucial source of cultural knowledge transmission, which affects their personal identities.

The established connection between Vygotsky's (1978) Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) concept through the process. The theory states that learning occurs when more experienced people, such as parents or elders, help children thoroughly understand complex information. The parents and teachers guide the students through dialogue to build their understanding and social skills to use in the future.

Freire's (1970) dialogical education shows the importance of respect, mutual understanding, and active participation in the learning process. The elders use their conversations with the younger generation to share knowledge, setting up a learning space where both groups can exchange ideas. The young people gain practical skills, emotional intelligence and analytical abilities through activities that teach them why traditions and community decisions are made.

Demonstration as a Powerful Tool for Informal Learning

The Tharu community uses demonstration as its primary educational method, teaching its people about their cultural traditions during their regular household work. Children learn skills by observing their older family members, who later demonstrate them to them for learning. Tharu children develop practical skills through demonstrations of farming methods, handicraft techniques, ritual practices, and livestock care, along with the corresponding cultural values and traditions.

Tharu households depend on their senior members, including grandmothers, fathers, and mothers, to demonstrate skills that possess both cultural importance and technical value. The grandmother who spins wool and the father who plows the field demonstrate technical skills that also convey cultural values of communal responsibility, perseverance, and patience. The learning process begins when children observe these activities, and researchers encourage them to practice them as their skills and confidence grow.

A member of Family 3 shared the following story about his past experiences:

I have seen my grandmother spin wool and knot thread since I was a little child. She never said, 'Come, I will teach you.' I learned the skill by myself at age ten because I had acquired physical knowledge of the procedure through watching her work.

A boy from Family 1 described his agricultural education through these words:

I accompany Baba to the fields whenever he takes the oxen. He works without speaking to anybody. I observe him closely as he yokes the oxen and operates the plow equipment. When Baba gets tired, he hands me the plow.

The girl from Family 2 explained how she studied ritual art:

Every year during the celebration, Mummy creates a 'khubar' wall painting on the wall. I observed her complete process of making rice paste and drawing flowers. The previous year, she asked me to give it a try. I followed her method precisely as she had done it.

The demonstration in family contexts serves as an unspoken educational method that transmits essential skills and cultural traditions to others without direct instruction. The process of informal learning through family activities permeates every moment people share together, yet most people do not notice it; it plays a key role in how children grow up. Through repeated tasks, children internalize practical skills and social roles that shape their identity and deepen their sense of belonging to their community.

This educational approach is consistent with Bandura's (1977) Observational Learning Theory, which states that people learn by observing others, especially children and especially those who are emotionally and socially significant in their lives. Children learn technical skills and cultural values naturally by observing and learning from their elders and other family members.

Legitimate Peripheral Participation (LPP) is a concept introduced by Lave and Wenger (1991) to describe the learning process in which learners develop skills and confidence and move from peripheral onlookers to active participants.

The Tharu family system embodies this fundamental idea of experiential learning through the movement of people from observing on the periphery to full participation. The demonstration, as a learning method, is also an important mechanism for preserving cultural heritage. Connell (2005) describes how indigenous children learn gendered roles through daily demonstrations and social interactions. These performances represent and reinforce the social and cultural prescriptions for masculine and feminine roles in Tharu families, thereby perpetuating existing norms and the gendered division of labor. The Tharu community illustrates traditional gender roles through their learning pattern, which reflects their cultural and social

behavior. Boys are taught agricultural skills that demonstrate their male role, while girls engage in ritual art and domestic cultural practices (Connell, 2005).

Parents and Elders as Role Models, Animators, and Facilitators of Learning

In Tharu families, the home environment is the primary setting for informal learning, and parents, elders, and siblings are the primary educational authorities. Learning occurs when children observe the world around them, which allows them to gain knowledge and learn from their peers. This process allows people to pass on their knowledge to others without the need for formal education during their routine home activities. Children acquire basic skills by directly interacting with their parents, who teach them appropriate behavior. Fathers play a primary role in shaping how their children approach educational activities.

Parents fulfill two roles for their children: as both motivators and storytellers who share their personal life stories. A member of Family 1 shared in an interview:

Baba instructs us to continue learning even when we feel drained from fieldwork. He explained that he did not attend school because of work. He shares his life experiences with me, which makes me want to finish my education as he did. He doesn't scold me; he tells stories.

Children acquire new skills through Social Learning Theory by observing and following the actions and beliefs of established role models (Bandura, 1977). Fathers serve as role models who teach their children to value education and develop persistence through their actions.

Tharu mothers serve as the primary teachers, teaching their children essential life skills such as cooking, preparing for rituals, and doing household work. A Family 2 member explained their mother's responsibilities:

Our family considers our mother our primary educator. She demonstrates all essential skills through direct observation without labeling it as educational. My mother teaches us all cooking techniques, guest etiquette, and standards of ritual purity, which she learned from our grandmother. Through her teaching, I discovered both useful life skills and the ancestral customs of our house.

The Vygotsky (1978) Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) framework posits that people learn new skills through their work with others who provide structured guidance. Mothers show their children daily practices through their demonstrations and their teaching of fundamental work principles. Children develop

their practical skills alongside their cultural and spiritual understanding in their daily activities.

Sharma (2017) explains that in rural communities of Nepal, practical skills and religious knowledge are passed on through active participation in daily work and ritual activities. Young people learn farming skills, ethical values and traditional cultural knowledge through hands-on experience in agriculture.

The study revealed that family conversations incorporating value-based stories and cultural heritage elements contribute to children's literacy development and intellectual growth, enabling them to achieve their full potential (Chaudhary, 2024).

The method of learning is directly related to Freire's (1970) theory of dialogical education, which requires interaction between students and teachers. The educational method of the Tharu family is not limited to typical classroom teaching; children learn by observing their parents and participating in their public and private family activities. The next generation learns essential cultural elements through parents and elders who pass down their expertise and values, and help shape their identity.

Children learn from their parents because they can see how their parents act in everyday family situations, including those involving both older and younger members. Elders model expected behaviors as they teach children about their actions, which reinforce family norms, social responsibilities, and cultural identity. Tharu family members learn through their everyday social interactions, which are part of their family life.

Learning through Reciprocal Support (Mutual Help & Support)

The Tharu households and communities are based on reciprocity as the primary means of acquiring knowledge through informal learning. The community's communal work systems allow children to learn by doing, through hands-on activities that require active involvement and parental support. It is used to develop skills by sharing responsibilities through the process of this community-based system of mutual support.

The elders teach the young with gentle gestures and small corrections. The children learn by repetition, slowly grasping the rhythms and meanings of each task. Through their interactions, the two parties develop durable learners who know how to observe, participate, and adapt.

A daughter-in-law from Family 3 shared her experience of learning alongside her mother:

I join my mummy every time she goes to cut the grass. I started without any ability to carry the load. The process of learning cutting techniques and bundle securing methods became my expertise through practice. She assigned me full task control after I reached a sufficient experience level in my work.

A son from Family 1 described learning from his father while farming:

I stay with my father because he allows me to accompany him when he drives the oxen. I handle the rope, and I fix the plow tool. His teaching method is to demonstrate first, then let me try the task myself. He told me I would remember the mistake because I experienced it firsthand after I made it. I did remember the event.

The Tharu family system uses reciprocal learning to develop educational skills and moral character through mutual assistance between its members. The meaning systems in this context enable children to participate in activities that require their active engagement rather than making them do repetitive work. Through this activity, children acquire knowledge of operational tools and work methods, monsoon-season timekeeping, ethical responsibilities toward their family members, and the proper use of community assets.

The social development process in this environment involves three important elements, namely social belonging, collective responsibility and multiple levels of duty. Freire (1970) describes this combination of reflection and action as praxis and emphasizes how assisting others changes the helper and the recipient and determines the identities of both.

Children develop skills through active participation in family and community activities, where they practice the skills and then develop them with guidance from their parents throughout the learning process. People develop their behavior through their environment, including family and community ties, while those who take action use their personal power to create change in their surroundings. People share their knowledge and skills through collaborative support programs, thereby increasing a community's social cohesion.

Rogoff et al. (2014) argue that the educational approach of Learning by Observing and Pitching In (LOPI) provides an opportunity for students to participate in group activities through their communal work. According to Subedi (2022), the

Tharu community and other Nepali communities have a tradition of learning by doing. It's not just about developing practical skills either. When girls assist their mothers with household chores, they gain practical skills and early reading and pattern recognition skills, which Chaudhary (2024) found to be crucial for cognitive development and pre-academic abilities.

The children perform shared work duties to survive while they learn about their culture and the social norms governing gender differences and appropriate ethical behavior. Through mutual support, they develop social manners that direct their behavior with others.

Tharu families create educational spaces that provide children with formal studies and opportunities to learn through their families' and communities' activities. Knowledge is a shared experience that people develop through their active interactions with one another.

The method shows how learning becomes part of a child's real life, because every action gives them an opportunity to learn new things and to modify their actions by paying attention to others. Learning has two functions: it aids people and helps children grasp how their family and community duties extend to all their relations. Mutual help within Tharu families is not confined to the execution of basic chores but is a vital process that links generations and molds a child's family and community identity.

The theme is supported by Symbolic Interactionism (Blumer, 1969), which holds that people use tools and gestures to create shared experiences of help that serve as symbols confirming their family and community identity. The interpretive perspective shows that learning reciprocal support creates a relational ontology, since learning occurs through active involvement and community activities. Knowledge exists as an experiential process that people validate through their involvement in daily activities. The axiology establishes a framework for collective social responsibility, which extends to both helping others and accepting help as educational activities that enhance shared identity and moral obligations.

Learning through Participation in Ceremonies and Rituals

The Tharu community conducts ceremonies that serve as fundamental educational platforms, teaching children about spiritual beliefs and cultural heritage. The body of rituals provides deep educational experiences through which people learn by experiencing the different elements of sound and rhythm, tangible atmospheres,

and different tracks. The process of learning begins when children participate in cultural activities, as this enables them to understand cultural practices more deeply.

According to this learning method, people form their identity through cultural and spiritual activities, which reflects a belief in relational ontology. The theme centers on experiential knowledge, as learning occurs through two processes: direct participation and silent observation, with no connection to formal teaching. The children, through their ritual participation, discover both the ritual execution methods and the associated values, which include respect for ancestry, spiritual continuity, and community harmony. Ritual practices function as active educational systems that help children build their cultural identity while learning to manage their responsibilities towards both family members and the community.

A participant from Family 2 described how ritual participation during agricultural festivals became an important learning experience:

My father asked me to observe carefully how he worshipped at Sukrathi/Tihar, the festival of lights. We cleaned and oiled agricultural tools and wooden doors before the ritual. While performing the worship, he told me, 'Understand it, don't just do it.' At first, I did not understand the task, but the following year, I helped him prepare the jute-stick lamp. He smiled and said that I was ready.

A mother from Family 1 showed her daughter how to create “Kobhar” Tharu wall paintings for their upcoming ceremony, such as the New Year. Once the mother allowed her daughter to try and design herself and contented herself with gentle corrections and explanations of the meaning of the symbols. *"I let her draw one first, then I corrected her lines and explained which patterns represent the gods and which ones protect the household."* The daughter learned through this process that “Kobhar” painting holds a deeper meaning because it serves as more than just an art form.

Kopila Devi and her husband proudly shared that their daughter is very skillful. They confidently said that she can easily manage household work, while also developing skills in knitting, crafting, basket weaving using sikki (elephant grass), and (Kohobar) Tharu wall painting.

Bano Devi entered one of the houses and brought a colorful basket decorated with added woolen designs. The complicated wool weaving made the basket look better and last longer. She said that people often use these kinds of baskets at

weddings and religious occasions. Some are also given to neighbors or sold at the local market.

Bano Devi said she learned basket weaving from her mother but later added more woolen weaving to make the basket more durable and attractive. She said that the new design would enable the basket to last for more than a decade. She took pride in talking about her daughter, whom she described as someone who helps with household chores and farm work, though she visits her family home infrequently. She knits woolen mufflers and sweaters, which she gives to her family members.

The results are consistent with social learning theory, which posits that children learn new behaviors and skills through observing and imitating the important people in their lives, including their parents. Bandura (1977) believed that parents act as primary role models and that children slowly adopt their behaviors and practices.

A daughter-in-law of Family 3 narrated her household routine as a newly married woman. The mother-in-law said that her daughter-in-law learned to cook as she had no previous experience. Tharu cultural practices require newly married brides to start cooking on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. The bride prepares food for elderly neighbours who come to her house to taste her cooking.

The mother-in-law taught her daughter-in-law how to cook, prepare food properly, and serve it to others. The mother taught her daughter-in-law how to respect older people when talking to them and how to fulfill her duties at home, sharing past experiences that made the mother laugh.

The mother-in-law continued to tell how she had slowly started teaching her daughter-in-law to light the home worship lamp, showing her how to do it correctly. She displayed her proficiency at weaving when she spoke of making baskets from kan grass (kash ko phool) and wool, since her daughters-in-law were not yet fully skilled in this art. Her elder daughter-in-law had learned knitting, but she wanted her daughters-in-law to learn other skills.

When asked, after you, who will continue weaving baskets? She laughed for a while before responding, I am still guiding her. She explained that her daughter-in-law sometimes works with her while weaving baskets, although her technique is not yet refined. She will learn gradually, according to what she said.

The stories show that ritual learning is not confined to ceremonial activities. The rituals demonstrate how the participants embody their underlying values. The

people involved in ritual activities learn about ceremonial procedures and their full meaning, including ancestral heritage and community traditions. Continuous participation in rituals allows young people to build their cultural identity while learning about traditional practices that they will pass through the ages.

Supporting the discourse, Geertz (1973) argues that people learn through rituals by experiencing them. He calls this “thick description,” suggesting that rituals have many meanings that go beyond what people can see. Ritual practices are not only performances but are imbued with deeper cultural and symbolic meanings.

Kobhar art is produced at festivals for more than an aesthetic purpose, it is a religious art form that connects people to their faith and the divine. Bloch (1989) shows that rituals are instruments of social reproduction through which cultural values, gender roles, and spiritual awareness are transmitted from one generation to the next. The values of a culture become known through the physical actions and ritual practices, which allow participants to experience its cultural meanings. Children achieve a complete understanding of traditions through active participation, enabling them to grasp their meanings rather than learning through theoretical concepts.

Embodied learning has also been identified as an important aspect of Indigenous education research. Glassman and Erdem (2014) found that children acquire cultural knowledge through embodied practices, and this knowledge transfer is more effective than textual or verbal instruction. Children learn about their culture through participation in the daily cultural activities and ceremonial events, which engage their senses and emotions.

Participation in ceremonial events introduces children to gender roles, religious practices, and family responsibilities (Sharma, 2017). Folk traditions and ritual practices serve as educational systems that pass on ethical standards and community responsibilities from one generation to another (Baral & Paudyal, 2025).

The theoretical basis of this theme is symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1969), which describes the symbols used in rituals as a means of communicating cultural meanings. Active participation in rituals allows children to learn their expected roles in social duties, as well as the basic social, spiritual, and community values embedded in these traditions. The framework enables children to understand social customs through active participation in community rituals meaningful to local culture.

Rituals create educational opportunities that enable people to learn through active participation in cultural practices and to develop essential skills and knowledge

about their cultural heritage. The learning process establishes a deep experiential link between people and their religious and traditional cultural heritage through their physical experiences of spiritual and cultural practices.

Storytelling Stories and Experiences from Elders

The Tharu storytelling tradition, passed down in households, serves as an essential means for people to acquire knowledge without formal education, though it remains less common than other learning methods. In the Tharu society, stories serve as a vehicle for transmitting traditional knowledge, moral teachings, and environmental understanding from one generation to the next.

The stories people tell in daily life serve as informal educational content that people share during breaks, communal dining, and religious and festive occasions. Listeners gain knowledge by listening to stories, which they process through emotional connections with the storyteller while reflecting on their own personal experiences. These stories help children become emotionally intelligent, gain respect for their elders, and learn the importance of preserving cultural heritage and essential life skills.

A mother of Family 1 said:

I don't often tell bedtime stories, but when I do, I tell stories from the past. I tell stories about our worship practices, which we do before our planting activities, and about how the river changed its course after a festival. These things happened when I was young, and I want to remember them the way my elders do.

A grandfather from family 1 reflected on storytelling at family dinners, saying that these dinners should be times for people to express their opinions and learn from one another. The grandfather pointed out that today's boys and girls at school spend more time than previous generations, and their evenings are spent watching television and using mobile phones, which makes them less interested in learning traditional skills like bamboo weaving.

The father answered with a light smile when asked whether his sons had learned these skills. The younger generation nowadays avoids hard work.

A young girl from Family 2 described her emotional connection with her mother and aunt:

If my mother goes away for two or three days, I don't feel lonely because I can talk to my aunt or even my father about how I'm feeling. My neighbors put

pressure on families about things that happened when my sister wasn't married. I'm in the same phase, and they ask my parents when I'm getting married.

She added that sometimes, out of fear, her parents yell at her to make her aware of the need to make the right decisions and maintain discipline to uphold family prestige. She concluded: "At those times, I feel proud of my parents because they continuously guide me with good suggestions."

A father from Family 3 recalled his experience of listening to stories in the family yard, where his father explained traditional practices: "*People used to trade seeds rather than purchase them from neighbors. Our land speaks to us, but only if we listen.*" At the time, he could not fully grasp the meaning, but now, walking across the agricultural fields, he understands the wisdom embedded in these narratives.

Tharu families use their storytelling traditions to entertain and teach their members important social values, essential life skills, and fundamental ethical principles. Through storytelling, elders transmit their cultural knowledge along with their emotional insights, which encompass aspects of human strength, family commitment, and spiritual comprehension. Through storytelling, the younger generation develops awareness of their ancestral and cultural heritage, as this practice connects them to family histories spanning multiple generations. The traditional stories that people pass down through oral tradition retain their vital importance because they serve as the primary way young individuals connect with past events and their place in society. Storytelling is the process of communicating events and experiences through words, images, sounds, or gestures. Fundamentally, it is a historic way of transmitting knowledge, values, and wisdom (Ginz, 2001).

The Tharu indigenous pedagogical method of storytelling matches with Cajete's (1994) definition of storytelling as a sacred science that transmits knowledge through traditional communal practices. The Tharu community uses oral literacy as its primary means of transmitting knowledge because this practice enables them to share it.

Dyson and Genishi (2005) state that storytelling is the chief way children use to understand the social world and make meaning of their everyday experiences. Narratives allow children to understand their cultural heritage and community practices and to form emotional ties to others. Stories are also the vehicles through

which people acquire practical skills and ethical values, such as agricultural techniques, environmental practices, and community standards.

Sharma (2017) states that studying rural storytelling in Nepal improves cognitive empathy and memory among Nepali audiences. Through storytelling, children learn family values and social bonds more than with formal education. Similarly, Subedi (2022) refers to the oral knowledge-transmission process as “intuitive literacy” that goes beyond Western literacy systems and has profound social effects.

As Hooks (1994) points out, stories teach lessons through emotional bonds that link the storyteller to the audience and thus help people understand the story better. The practice of storytelling serves as an educational method that helps students to develop emotional links to historical knowledge while gaining vital skills and ethical principles through its narrative structure. Participants reported learning about family history, cultural traditions, and social values from stories shared by elder family members. So, storytelling became one of the means by which cultural information and lived experiences were transmitted across generations, inside Tharu homes.

The main learning framework is personal relationships, where children learn by sharing experiences with their teachers and older relatives. Storytelling is the primary means by which Tharu households pass on their essential cultural values, moral teachings, and family history. Through these stories, children learn how to live in their community, understand the importance of certain traditions, and learn the reasons for customary practices that preserve ancestral wisdom.

The elders of the community maintain their identity across generations through their role as cultural guardians, transmitting ancestral knowledge through traditional stories. Stories carry the ideas of diverse civilizations, traditions, customs, values, beliefs, and ways of living (Ladzekpo et al., 2024). Anecdotes or stories are used to teach facts, experiences, knowledge, and daily activities.

Chapter Summary

The chapter explored the informal learning of knowledge among Tharu families, as it has been demonstrated that knowledge is conveyed through people's daily activities, family relationships, and the upholding of cultural traditions.

The research found that parents, along with grandparents and other family members, influence children's development by passing down knowledge across

generations. Children learn knowledge by observing, demonstrating, storytelling, and talking with others about farming, family operations, ceremonial practices, and social behavior.

People learn knowledge by discovering content that exists independently of instructional guidance. Through daily family activities, such as eating together, telling stories, and making decisions as a family, family members develop their ability to think critically, manage their emotions, understand different cultures, and strengthen their moral standards.

Children prepare things up through demonstration-based instruction, observing first, then doing it for real, and they join in rituals, ceremonies, and other kinds of lived practices that provide authentic learning opportunities that deepen their cultural and spiritual progress. Meanwhile, families and neighborhoods reciprocally help each other, so responsibilities are shared and social ties form between people from different backgrounds, almost as if it all holds together.

The chapter shows the Tharu people's informal learning methods, such as holistic education, experiential learning, and interconnected systems. The program provides them with practical skills and encourages the development of their cultural heritage and identity. Children learn to take on their responsibilities forever by participating in household and community activities and understanding the importance of passing down family traditions, building social relationships, and protecting the community values from generation to generation.

CHAPTER VI

TRANSFORMATIONS IN INTERGENERATIONAL LEARNING AND INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE

The informal learning of family members in the home environment is an important aspect of the family's education and development. The family environment is very important to children as they learn knowledge, skills, and values that are essential in their formative years and can have lasting effects. Young people learn from their elders and exchange knowledge with them in their families. In the Tharu community of Eastern Nepal, multigenerational families live together, and children, parents, and grandparents share their daily activities. The family environment provides opportunities for cultural transmission, storytelling, and communal interactions that develop through its complex relationship with the community's social and cultural systems. The traditional family structure has begun to change due to migration to new places, exposure to modern educational methods, economic changes, and the advent of new technologies.

The study examines how Tharu youth perceive intergenerational learning and how they share traditional knowledge and social traditions in their interactions with each other. The study explores how social changes affect the transmission of traditional knowledge from one generation to another. The study will explore how these changes create challenges and opportunities that influence the community's cultural identity and its ability to resist cultural changes.

Indigenous knowledge (IK) is an important repository of wisdom acquired and passed down through generations in indigenous communities such as the Tharu in Nepal (Havemann, 2015; Magni, 2017), and includes many traditional techniques from agriculture to environmental conservation.

Indigenous Knowledge (IK) exists through storytelling, training sessions, and cultural activities, which demonstrate its value to people in marginalized communities (Stevens, 2008). Indigenous Knowledge has been excluded from mainstream educational systems according to scholars who researched the topic (Barnhardt & Kawagley, 2005; UNESCO, 2016). Currently, at the national and international levels, organizations are working to decolonize educational systems by incorporating

indigenous knowledge and teaching methods to create better learning experiences for all students (Ewulley et al., 2023; Silva et al., 2023).

The family can be a hub for complementary support, influence and education in several ways. While certain influences may be systematic and deliberate, many factors affecting each family member can be informal and coincidental. Shared values, expectations, goals, knowledge, beliefs, skills, attitudes, and the dialect utilized evolve from the diverse domestic activities undertaken by family members. These activities may include engaging in play, conversing about one another, and participating in specialized endeavors such as farming, gardening, fishing, local marketing, and sitting around the traditional stove, “firewood stove”. We are currently experiencing an era in which novel information and communication technologies are permeating households and lifestyles at various levels.

Technologies are increasingly embedded in households and everyday life in many dimensions. Communication and communication technology are becoming increasingly pervasive in households and everyday life in many dimensions. The process of explaining how older family members transmit their knowledge and wisdom requires straightforwardness, as their knowledge is a permanent body of knowledge that families will continue to pass down over time.

Some skills and knowledge are passed down from generation to generation, while others are constantly changing. Human society is constantly changing, driven by scientific and technological progress as well as significant social and cultural shifts.

As society’s expectations evolve, social dynamics shift, and core values are understood, directly impacting how people pursue their personal growth. Families do not function as official educational institutions; although they comprise adults and children, the learning environment may differ significantly from the structured, goal-oriented requirements inherent in formal educational initiatives. In this regard, Newman and Hatton-Yeo (2008) stated that the primary challenge in maintaining family learning environments will require establishing intergenerational programs and an extrafamilial framework to address an existing problem they believe affects some of the children who attend school.

Shifting Work Preference in the Tharu Community

The results indicate a significant generational shift in Tharu youth's perceptions and valuations of different kinds of work. The younger generation now

prefers wage work, technical careers, and overseas work opportunities, while the elders remain committed to farming, craft work, and skill-based activities.

This change is economic but also symbolic, indicating a shift in the symbolic understanding of work in the family and the impact of everyday family interactions on identity formation, role negotiation, and the social inclusion of marginalized groups, especially unaccompanied young Tharu and young people who have to change jobs to make ends meet. In this process, the nature of qualitative methods, symbolic interactionism, and ethnomethodology (Blumer, 1986; Garfinkel, 2002) are used in this study to examine how family disputes over role responsibilities indicate power dynamics that influence young people's choices between two life pathways.

Tharu youth today do not view agricultural work through the same cultural lens as their ancestors. Boys like Manjeet from Family 1 and Vishal from Family 2 view agricultural labor as hard work that creates unstable conditions and prevents them from advancing professionally. The two men express interest in carpentry and mechanical work, as well as in overseas job training, because they now view these activities as valuable. Modernity, independence, and their future prospects are depicted using technical instruments such as hammers, engine parts, and Korean-language books. According to the principles of symbolic interactionism, social interaction produces new meanings that people use to create social understanding.

Young people saw the problems of their elders: the uncertainty of income, the hard work, and the dependence on the seasons. People now define 'good work' through their experiences of duty, because Blumer showed that people react to things based on what those things mean to them (Blumer, 1986). Similarly, Eraut (1997) points out that modern cultures often value formal academic and market-oriented skills more than informal learning techniques.

This is why young Tharu people are changing their job preferences. Family 2: Both Virendra and Shabi emphasize the continuing relevance of traditional culture in agricultural food storage practices, such as the Kothi and the potato rake, and in the preservation of agricultural customs associated with festivals such as Akhari/Kaduwapakhari, Chautichadh, Sukhrati (Tihar), and Maghi. Each festival is rich with symbolic meaning tied to the agricultural occupation, which is the primary identity of the Tharu Families. The religious life of the Tharu community is primarily oriented around farming, but it also possesses its unique divinities and rituals that set it apart. Maghi, celebrated on the first day of the Nepali month of Magh, is one of the

most significant holidays for them. People celebrate the Tharu New Year with feasting, dancing and making collective decisions.

Tharu elders demonstrate their farming abilities through their reliable work, which leads them to celebrate all planting times of Akhari/Kaduwapakhari and their religious holiday, Asare Puja, a rain-invocation ceremony for the agricultural season. The practice requires animal offerings to the divine as a sacrifice to secure profitable harvests. Aghan, a post-harvest festival, is also extensively celebrated, during which the rice produce is venerated, and communal feasts are organized, a distinctive cultural feature within Tharu spiritual practices (Gautam, 1994). The current generation has a minimal understanding of this practice, which has largely been abandoned.

Tharu families display traditional female skills through their practice of kohbar wall painting and sikki (vetiver grass) weaving, and their execution of ritual cooking, grain storage preparation, and craft-making activities.

The younger generation of Tharu families perceives their traditional female skills, including kohbar (Tharu wall painting), sikki (vetiver grass) weaving, ritual cooking, grain storage preparation, and craft-making, as less valuable because they require physical effort. In this note, Eraut (1997) presents informal home learning, which occurs through caregiving, crafting, and community work, as an undervalued educational method because it lacks institutional recognition and does not provide financial rewards.

The theoretical framework explains why Sobita and other daughters-in-law show no desire to learn traditional practices, as they view these customs as symbols of unpaid work, gender duties, and restricted personal freedom. Similarly, Eraut (1997) criticizes the hierarchy that affords more modern career options, better financial outcomes, and social status, leading young people to choose carpentry and mechanical work, education, and jobs abroad.

Technological Adaptation in the Tharu Community

Tharu families are embracing technology by adopting new tools to replace the old farming methods and by shifting from kothis to modern storage bins. From a symbolic interactionist perspective, people construct their social identities through their interactions with others (Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Blumer, 1969). The social groups decide which technologies to adopt by choosing which tools to include in the

common workspace. Through social interactions, people come to understand things, which allows them to collectively decide which tools will meet their needs.

The acceptance of modern agricultural methods by Tharu families exemplifies the social process of building and transforming shared cultural knowledge through dialogue. The villagers discuss family issues at the meal table, during work breaks in the fields, and before community events. Elders and younger members exchange stories, compare historical and contemporary behaviors, and analyze the impact of technological advances on their lives.

Symbolic interactionism emphasizes the social construction of meaning rather than its imposition. Sanjeet in Family 1 explicitly refers to the decision of planting as not only the father's. The whole family participates in evaluating the performance of different seeds and the land's response to changing conditions. The tractor is not limited to its mechanical functions; it also represents joint responsibility, respect across generations, and a modern agricultural identity. Baba's insistence that his sons understand the significance of certain seeds and the necessity of owning the land positions technology as a means of ensuring the family's survival, not as a departure from tradition.

Another important change is observed in storage technologies. Families indicated that the traditional handmade mud storage bin, known as a kothi, which was historically used to store grains and dried vegetables, is being replaced by plastic drums. Kopila Devi observed that young people avoid spending two weeks building the kothi because they prefer to buy plastic bins from stores. The research results show that traditional knowledge systems face a major problem: their transmission across generations has been steadily declining.

Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivist theory demonstrates how people develop knowledge through cultural tools and social interactions. The study shows that younger people are rapidly losing interest in indigenous knowledge systems as traditional educational methods and modern lifestyles dominate their lives. Traditional methods of production require specialized skills, manual labor, or maintenance, whereas these are not required in the manufacturing process of plastic containers. Therefore, plastic containers take less time to produce.

Changing Learning Dynamics

The three reference families have demonstrated that Tharu families have adopted new ways of learning, moving from the traditional Indigenous Knowledge

transmission methods through practice to modern educational methods that select specific knowledge for formal education. The traditional Indigenous Knowledge systems of many Tharu communities are increasingly threatened by modern development, increased access to formal education, youth migration and changing expectations of formal educational achievement.

The experiences of Families 1, 2 and 3 show trends that Niure (2024) flagged in his research about how the older Indigenous Knowledge transfer ways are declining among Tharu communities. Supporting the discourse, an empirical study conducted by Lamsal (2023) also touches on cultural and behavioral shifts, showing changes in household arrangement, livelihoods, and even learning habits. The gathered data basically illustrates how intergenerational learning in today's Tharu homes looks different now, and also how parts of the practice have lost some of their effectiveness.

The educational system, along with their desire to migrate to another country, served as a force that shaped their educational needs. Vishal, the eldest son, spends most of his time looking for work abroad and only to a limited extent participates in agricultural work and household chores. His father's statement, "study and foreign employment are more important than field work" highlights how family expectations influenced his family, according to research from Surkhet that found that Tharu parents now see education and overseas work as their main ways to economic success.

According to Chaudhary (1999), the Tharu people continue to follow their agricultural traditions as it is still their main source of income. The community demonstrates its capacity to change through the growing commitment to wage employment and business creation as well as international job opportunities that have developed in local cities and in the face of economic challenges. In this regard, K.C. (1995) research shows that Indigenous communities change their economic activities due to modernization and globalization through their existing occupational patterns.

The school system requires students to complete their academic work and prepare for migration and exams, leading to poor attendance in traditional educational institutions. Misha and her sister's education includes completing their household chores without learning about cultural activities such as weaving, crafting, and organizing festivals. The children are less interested in traditional practices as demonstrated by their displeasure in making traditional items. The mother's comment, "*Today's children don't know how to make baskets or kothis anymore*" highlights a distinct generational gap in learning new skills. Niure (2024) states that young people

do not value indigenous knowledge as they believe that traditional wisdom is not useful in today's world. These events certainly support that idea.

This change takes place in the educational curricula of the elder and younger boys in Family 1. The eldest son was taught agricultural skills by his father who taught him how to fence, excavate soil, prepare fields and check seed success. Fence, excavate soil, prepare fields and analyze seed success.

This learning style is a conventional apprenticeship because the pupil learns from his father through continuous practice (Niure, 2024). Stevens (2008) and UNESCO (2010) demonstrate that children acquire specialized skills through hands-on practice and apprenticeships in farming, building, hunting, and fishing.

The younger boy shows less activity than his brother. The father said that his son "never works properly" because he prefers to rest or use his phone. This disengagement results in fewer opportunities to learn Indigenous Knowledge practices. Niure (2024) states that the transmission of Indigenous Knowledge (IK) is compromised when children do not partake in daily agricultural and cultural activities.

In the younger generation, there is no longer any learning of craft skills as their families have moved away from building kothi structures out of mud for storing grain to using plastic bins, he adds. The move from traditional mud-and-thatch houses to more modern cement-and-tile homes with modern amenities marks an improvement in living standards and changing cultural standards, says K.C. (1995) found in his research.

Material culture shifts often get linked to social transformations such as upward mobility, and even attempts at assimilating into what's seen as the mainstream socio-economic order (Sapkota & Nain, 2025).

As the analysis reads it, the alterations in the Tharu household patterns seem to track the same socio-economic currents described in more recent scholarly work. In particular, the sharing and passing on of Indigenous Knowledge within Indigenous Knowledge systems tends to hinge on three key drivers: a steady decline in experiential learning, reduced day-to-day contact between generations, changing expectations from parents, and an increased push toward modern knowledge. Overall, this study indicates that Indigenous Knowledge systems are still functioning in a very real sense, through lived participation and cultural regard, but these core ingredients are, currently, weakening (Niure, 2024).

Modernization and Lifestyle Shift

Tharu communities today practice modern ways of living because their daily life patterns have shifted. The family history of their family shows evidence of modernization when their personal experiences are compared with current scientific studies (Grimaldi, 2022; Joshi, 2024; Niure, 2024; Paudel, 2021; Sharma, 2021; Sapkota & Nain, 2025).

The literature of this study presents academic concepts that demonstrate how families handle modernization challenges that affect their home environments, driven by changes in gender roles and educational customs across different family generations.

The change in farming methods is the most obvious manifestation of modernization in the family's experience. Elderly family members distinctly recall how agricultural work formerly required communal effort and collaboration.

"Previously, we employed bullocks for threshing," Shyamlal stated, "but now we utilize a machine. It is more efficient, and we complete the task more quickly." His remark directly corresponds with Sharma's (2021) statement that technology has emerged as a key attribute of Tharu agriculture. Machines decrease workload and save time, and this enhanced efficiency is appreciated by the family. Nevertheless, the family's narrative uncovers an aspect that the literature often addresses only superficially: the emotional nature of this transition. Shyamlal also recalled how threshing with bullocks required neighbors to gather, laugh together, and share food. "Currently," he stated softly, "the level of engagement has decreased. Sapkota and Nain (2025) demonstrates that modernization produces a "thinking of social time" that causes individuals to need to work less and social bonds to fade away, as everyone does their own jobs fast. The family demonstrates tangible results through its activities as its members employ modern techniques for their work despite knowing that such methods will be detrimental to their social well-being. Literature's characters are often seen to be proud of their achievements, but also full of regret.

The academic statement of intergenerational learning aligns only partially with its actual implementation. Niure (2024) indicates that Tharu children lose their Indigenous Knowledge because they spend more time at schools or using mobile devices and television than at home with their elders.

The family members confirm the transformation during conversation. The mother said: "Young boys and girls spend their daytime school hours watching

television and using mobile devices in the evening. “They refuse to learn those skills. According to her mother-in-law, the daughter-in-law shows no desire to learn knitting or painting, skills her mother-in-law had taught her. The family's story expands the existing understanding of their case.

Rita continues her work as a basket weaver and garment maker, and "kothi" handmade grain storage container designer while she develops new techniques that use woolen threads to create stronger basket handles. The modern world offers fewer opportunities for people to learn through direct experience with others from different generations, although people still possess the ability to create and decide for themselves.

Modernization, migration and exposure to outside influences have led to changes in religious practice. The younger Tharus may take less involvement in traditional rituals, preferring Hindu or Buddhist ceremonies, or even secular ones. However, there is also a revivalist tendency where community leaders and youth organizations are fighting to maintain Tharu language, traditions, and festivals as markers of ethnic identity (Chaudhary, 2018).

Adolescents prefer to maintain cultural traditions that align with their personal interests and self-identified cultural group. The cultural continuity of traditional knowledge systems shows that modern social changes will not determine their future solely on the basis of this particular social change.

The modernization processes of contemporary society operate through the major influence of people who want to migrate to other locations, which is the main factor driving social change.

In terms of future career pathways, the Tharu youth in the Paudel (2021) study seems more willing, these days, to take up non- agricultural jobs, with that idea of international employment and global labor markets. It's like they're leaning toward overseas work, and broader labour opportunities. The boys of Family One and Family Three exhibit this specific pattern of behavior

The parents said, "Both of our sons want to explore abroad." For them, migration is not only a job option but a way to enhance family status. Sanjeet articulated, “If I go overseas, we can improve our quality of life. I tried earlier, but due to COVID-19, I had to postpone. Furthermore, the father of Family Two says that his only son is learning Korean with the intention of moving abroad, as he believes that working abroad is a necessary step for advancement. Young individuals are urged

to migrate to southern cities due to the scarcity of formal employment opportunities (Edwin & Glover, 2016). Economic conditions in the region affect the decision to remain at home for financial gain in later life. Individuals migrate to optimize their financial well-being. The younger son, Manjeet, was disheartened by the garage owner: “He requires additional time to acquire knowledge.” The parents believe their son needs more time before he can travel independently. These ambivalences indicate that modernization through migration encompasses narratives of uncertainty, familial bargaining, and safety concerns, dimensions sometimes neglected in structural assessments. Modernization is not just about opportunity, it is also about readiness, risk assessment and relational decision making.

The material culture of the household also clearly shows the impact of modernization. Plastic baskets are replacing the handmade sikki (vetiver grass) or bamboo baskets, cement houses are replacing the mud-plastered courtyards, and store-bought apparel is preferred to the handwoven costumes. Mothers from Family 1 and Family 2 explained this shift simply: “Plastic bin is cheap. Why make a kothi (handmade artistic container to store grain)?” This pattern is consistent with the sociocultural shifts outlined by Niure (2024), who observes that as exposure to contemporary education, Western values, and new livelihoods reshapes their sense of usefulness and relevance, younger generations are distancing themselves from time-consuming traditional skills. The family’s daughter-in-law shows less interest in knitting wool and making sikki (vetiver grass) baskets, which has negative effects on the younger generation.

Niure (2024) states that formal education, together with modern technology, creates new paths for young people, diminishing the value of Indigenous abilities learned through practical experience, observation, and household engagement.

In this context, modernization represents a shared understanding within the household: traditional behaviors are recognized but are no longer essential for economic or social survival. Traditional skills decline not due to conflict, but because of what Niure (2024) describes as a “shift in learning environments,” in which formal education, mass media, and Western epistemology supplant community-oriented, experiential learning. The families’ accounts support this pattern: elderly members continue to value ancient crafts, yet they acknowledge that contemporary life provides little incentive for young people to engage in these practices.

Intergenerational Knowledge Loss in the Tharu Community

The field narrative findings indicate that the Tharu community is at a critical juncture, leading to the erosion of traditional knowledge passed down through generations. The Tharu people have a rich Indigenous Technological Knowledge (ITK), and they apply it in their everyday subsistence activities; however, the family of Kopila Devi and the household of Shyamlal are examples of how modernization, shifting work habits, and gender-based knowledge-transfer barriers have caused these practices to decline.

The loss of food storage methods, rope-making skills, bamboo weaving techniques, and house construction knowledge is more than just a practical shift; it demonstrates how different generations experience cultural separation.

The Newar community of Kathmandu Valley showcases their culture through their postharvest processing techniques and spice usage (Tamang, 2016), while people in the Hill Region preserve their maize through their traditional storage practices (Atreya et al., 2025), and the Tharu community of Nepal's Tarai uses its traditional methods for storing potatoes and grains (Chaudhary et al., 2022).

However, the younger generation in the observed family is no longer involved in the time-consuming, laborious task of making kothi (a traditional homemade storage container), which takes about 15 days and requires considerable skill and collective effort. Metal drums and commercial plastic containers are now replacing the traditional storage systems for items.

The agricultural research field demonstrates this shift through findings that market alternatives, together with mechanization, pose a threat to traditional techniques by reducing their current functional value.

Governmental and non-governmental organizations encourage villages to store in aluminum and plastic bins, but the Tharu still prefer and use the "Kothi" (traditional homemade storage container) as their primary storage method. Many of the women surveyed in the village have been experimenting with aluminum and plastic containers for grain storage since 2014.

Compared to "Kothi" (a traditional homemade storage container), rice and other grains stored in tin storage bins are of inferior quality. The grain stored in tin gets green, black, and seedy within a year. The flood issue in the village has led to a decline in the use of "Kothi" (a traditional, homemade storage container). Rather, individuals are keeping food in plastic barrels and plastic containers. It floats on the

water during floods, so it must be secured with robust poles to prevent it from drifting away. Recurring flooding and convenient access to plastic dumpsters have diminished the utilization of “Kothi”, (traditional homemade storage container), The substitution of “Kothi ”(traditional and artistic homemade storage container), with commercially produced containers not only transforms household material culture but also signifies a disruption in the transmission of skills including clay preparation, layering, drying techniques, pest prevention methods, and the communal collaboration traditionally linked to constructing these structures.

The older generation's acknowledgment that "after us, no one will create this" highlights the fragility of this cultural technology.

The traditional methods of ropemaking and bamboo-strip knotting show the same pattern of operational interruptions that first appeared in their initial implementation. Shyamlal, Virendra and Pachu; the sons of the three families, tell us that they have replaced natural fiber ropes with strips of bamboo to fence their yards, because of the growing ecological problems that require protection from wild animals. The sons’ limited ability to learn the techniques indicates their devotion to their training in the craft, which is causing a decline in traditional skills. The present generation needs guidance before they begin developing the traditional skills of knotting, weaving, and ropemaking, which have been passed down through direct observation and practice.

The primary explanation for knowledge loss in history is that machines are taking over work that used to be done by human labor. The family story demonstrates how traditional farming practices that required manual labor for paddy threshing and oxen field work and straw removal are now being done by threshing machines and tractors. The decline in the number of agricultural machines used by farmers is impressive.

The integration of crop harvesters with other technological innovations has reduced the demands on women (Paudel, 2024), whereas the thresher has increased their workload. In past years, it was the duty of males to thresh crops by trampling them with cattle. Most men now work with tractors, harvesters, and threshers. The organization needs to train women for their jobs or train them to use machines to reduce their workload.

Wind blowers (fans) help women to winnow more efficiently. Crafts, ecological knowledge, ceremonial art, farming methods and gendered skills are being

replaced by mechanization, migration, contemporary education and changing desires. Indigenous knowledge is disappearing slowly but surely, not through intentional absence but through the gradual restructuring of intentions, technology, and roles.

The loss of skills and knowledge over generations also leads to the gradual erosion of cultural identity, intergenerational relationships, and community resilience in a quieter way. The narrative of this Tharu family is a sort of depiction of that change, highlighting the risk when information that used to be part of regular everyday life begins to be lost unless people intentionally take steps to preserve it, document it, and bring it back again into families and communities.

Chapter Summary

This study examines changes in intergenerational learning systems among Tharu families in Eastern Nepal, driven by contemporary social and technological shifts that have altered their mode of knowledge transfer.

Tharu homes became cultural spaces where residents learned about farming, rituals, and gender knowledge through participation in work activities and by observing others (Atreya et al., 2025; Tamang, 2016). The data show that younger people now prefer formal education and digital media to advance their social mobility ambitions. The chapter uses symbolic interactionism and Eraut's informal learning theory to show how family members construct work identity and knowledge through ongoing interactions, leading young people to view traditional methods as no longer useful or valuable in present-day society.

The process of modernization introduces changes to domestic life by influencing work preferences, driving technological innovation, and affecting family dynamics. The elderly regard farming, craft-making, and ritual knowledge as important cultural traditions, whereas young people prefer technical jobs, paid work, and overseas employment, believing these choices will lead to financial success and social mobility (Paudel, 2024). The transition from traditional agricultural tools and storage techniques to modern mechanized farming systems and industrially manufactured products causes the Indigenous Knowledge to decline because it prevents people from learning through practical experience throughout their life (Chaudhary et al., 2022; Vygotsky, 1978).

CHAPTER VII

GENDER, KNOWLEDGE TRANSMISSION AND INEQUALITY

Gender roles play an important part in how individuals learn to interact in society. They are socially constructed expectations of personality, behavior, and gender identity. These roles are developed over long periods of time in particular cultural contexts and refer to a set of behavioral norms related to gender awareness and identity. People learn about gender roles through social interactions, such as watching others and learning from their behavior.

Psychologists such as Sandra Bem argue that one cognitive process that is extremely difficult to suppress is the tendency to categorize people into social groups, particularly by gender (Bem, 2000). Their major factor is what it actually looks like in terms of gender. When we are categorizing other people into gender - based classification systems for us.

The process of dividing people into two groups named "men" and "women" leads people to believe that all members of each group share identical traits, which contradicts the fact that both groups contain multiple common traits. In this support, Bem (2000) stated that gender polarization establishes an artificial boundary that separates men from women, thereby strengthening existing gender stereotypes while making it harder to change these stereotypes in the future.

The economic growth of women who need to reach their full potential for economic success is hindered by traditional practices that shape societal norms. The common belief that women hold exclusive duty for giving birth and raising children limits their ability to participate in development work, while it maintains their lower status compared to men.

Acharya and Bennett (1982) argued that women's economic contributions are essential for economic development because such participation enhances their decision-making authority and social status. In this regard, it is also stated that Tharu women play an essential role, which enables them to make choices about household matters. Senior male household members maintain control over family decisions, property, and main household spending, yet other family members can participate in the decision-making process. Supporting this discourse, Acharya and Bennett (1982)

stated that senior male members, along with other adult household members, usually consider women's preferences when deciding on domestic issues.

Tharu women make major contributions that help their families achieve better socio-economic status, but their work remains hidden from both their family members and the entire community. According to the Central Bureau of Statistics (2021), women form about 50 percent of Nepal's population, yet their economic contributions remain undervalued because traditional gender roles continue to exist, especially in rural areas.

Gendered Division of Labor and Knowledge Transmission

The study examines the gendered division of labor that leads to the development of different cultivation methods across the stages of crop production. The study then emphasizes how Postharvest work shapes knowledge sharing along gender lines, with a particular focus on women's work, which is devalued as informal learning. The functions of current storage systems in the Tharu community are carried out in accordance with established practices (Chaudhary, 2025).

Women have always been involved in farming at all stages, including managing crops after harvest (Rajaure, 1981). Tharu women possess knowledge of the ideal grain moisture content required for harvesting and storage. The Tharu women build various storage systems and protect and share seed genetic material, helping their agricultural communities become more resilient.

The demographic pattern in their households, driven by men migrating in search of work, leads women to take on leadership roles in their communities. The gender-based labor distribution pattern in Tharu households shapes different ways of passing down knowledge, leading to conflicts and disruptions in intergenerational knowledge transfer among Family 1, Family 2, and Family 3. The daily work of the women from Family 1, Family 2, and Family 3 shows how their activities are part of larger social systems that allow them to transmit Indigenous knowledge.

Family traditions are shared within a generation and then passed down to descendants. Intergenerational transmission is a process of passing values, ideas, and behaviors from one generation to the next (Mazurek, 2024). The intergenerational transmission of family stories is considered from different perspectives, including the types of family narratives (Fivush & Merrill, 2016; McLean, 2008; McLean & Breen, 2016).

Intergenerational knowledge related to agricultural practices is significant. The protection of plants and the maintenance of agricultural biodiversity are explained through three main areas: minimal use of external resources, protection of genetic materials, and environmental sustainability (Fitzwater, 1970; Warren, 1991; World Bank, 2004).

Field observations from the three families indicate a developing disruption in the continuity of this gendered knowledge system. Women in younger generations, particularly Sobita from Family 1 and the daughters of Shabi in Family 2, demonstrate minimal involvement in traditional craft-making, storage techniques such as “Kothi” (a traditional, artistic, homemade storage container), construction, and ritual arts, including Khobar Tharu wall painting.

This pattern is consistent with the growing number of studies on the intergenerational decline of indigenous knowledge, which results from current educational practices, migration patterns, and changing career aspirations among rural youth (Muszyński, 2022). Women have historically passed down Intergenerational local knowledge through apprenticeship, observation, and participation. The educational methods women have used to transmit local knowledge are increasingly difficult to implement.

The narratives demonstrated that gendered labor operates as a system that assigns work responsibilities and determines who will acquire expertise (Agarwal, 1994). Tharu women manage all essential tasks for their community, including post-harvest storage, household handicraft production, goat herding, firewood collection, and festival preparation. Men perform activities that include plowing, construction, and knot-tying for fences, as well as wage labor or migration.

The family environment has the most immediate and powerful influence on the development of children’s gender roles. Parents convey gender-specific beliefs, behaviors, social norms, and decision-making practices to their children, which continues the pattern of intergenerational transmission. The process of social status transmission from parents to children involves parents passing on their abilities and attitudes to their children (Chen & Chen, 2020).

The mother-in-law (Kopila) and daughter (Rita) of Family 1 hold responsibility for preserving “Khobar” Tharu wall painting, “Kothi” handmade grain storage container making, and “sikki vetiver plant weaving the creation of wool embroidered festival baskets. The domains of knowledge remain inaccessible to

Sobita, who performs the most demanding tasks in her daily schedule. Her daily activities, which include cooking, cleaning, parenting, and goat grazing, demonstrate the gendered "reproductive labor" that feminist literature defines.

A woman develops her understanding of independence through her parenting approach, which enables her to manage household responsibilities while restricting her access to educational opportunities (Elson 2003). The skills that she needs to learn, artistic wall design and weaving, and bin production, remain outside her reach. Traditional patriarchal family structures establish more distinct gender boundaries than matriarchal family systems, which are typically found in rural areas or in egalitarian family systems (Erzeybek, 2015). Although this study does not explicitly address the impact of modernization on gender relations, the findings pose an important question about the future position of women's indigenous knowledge. In today's educational and economic systems, in which formal knowledge is increasingly privileged, women's traditional skills and cultural knowledge may become less apparent or less respected. Such alterations might have implications for the generally gender-egalitarian social arrangements found in Tharu community studies.

The two girls from Family 2 combine their educational activities with their work responsibilities, while Shabi and her sister-in-law take care of both their children and their farm duties. The proficient work of Mahima, which includes sewing and electrical wiring, becomes invisible to society because of the expectation that she will adopt the housewife role after marriage, as this situation aligns with collective household theory, which posits that intra-household negotiations shape women's access to resources and opportunities (Chiappori 1992).

Family 3's joint family system enables family members to learn together. Still, it enforces strict gender divisions that require women to perform domestic tasks, religious duties, agricultural work, basket weaving, and post-harvest processing. At the same time, men take care of carpentry, automobile work, woodcutting, and plowing activities. The father-in-law recalls how young people would sit around the table and learn the ways of society, showing how apprenticeship was once a natural part of the family unit, a process disrupted by migration, the routines of education and the use of digital technologies.

Intergenerational narratives are a notable form of narrative that encompass stories concerning representatives of one generation for another. They represent a

category of family narratives encompassed within the ecological systems model of family narratives (Fivush & Merrill, 2016).

To sum up, the oral histories of Sobita, Shabi, and Bano Devi together reveal the enduring yet changing persistence of gendered division of labor, thereby breaking the continuity of Indigenous knowledge. The older women were skilled in food preservation, craftsmanship, and agricultural practices, but the younger generation's lack of interest, not a sign of carelessness but a reflection of socioeconomic shifts, is widening the knowledge gap. The active participation of men in traditional agricultural work and craft industries results in decreased skill transfer between them and others. The traditional practices of constructing "Kothi" (handmade grain storage), artistic containers, weaving kans plant (vetiver) baskets, binding bamboo rope, and preserving "Khobar" Tharu wall paintings are gradually declining in practice.

Indigenous knowledge is a key component of Indigenous cultural identity and climate-resilient livelihoods, but is diminishing in intergenerational transmission through gendered pathways. It advocates for the development of dedicated spaces for intergenerational learning, where domestic labor is intertwined with educational activities and cultural practices, as such spaces do not currently exist. The stories reveal that society needs to acknowledge and support women who are in the process of passing Tharu traditional knowledge in their homes through their work. It is becoming increasingly difficult for Kopila Devi, Shabi, and Bano Devi to pass this knowledge on to future generations.

Symbolic Role and Gender Inequality

Bourdieu (2001) argues that symbolic violence occurs when the dominant groups accept deference, perceiving inequality as a natural part of life, moral stories, and emotional interactions. These traditions are maintained over the years by the women in charge, helping preserve their heritage.

All four families were recorded during the study. The everyday life of Kopila Devi's family shows how their rural Tharu culture influences their gender roles in three ways: their cultural background, what they learned from their parents, and how socioeconomic situations are changing. During the research process, the "Khobar" Tharu wall painting in Kopila's house featured creative patterns indicating that she was a Tharu traditional knowledge keeper.

The connection also indicates that Shukla and Agarwal (2024) found that people transfer cultural, culinary, and craft knowledge from one generation to another through gendered channels that depend on their relationship with the other person and on what they think the other person understands. The daughter inherits the cultural legacy, and the daughter-in-law does not. There are power structures between women.

Sobita's story is an example of how women's roles are defined by symbolic expectations that cut off their capabilities. After her marriage at a young age, she could only attend school for a short period because a teacher's punishment discouraged her from continuing her education. Her daily life now includes household chores such as caring for her children, grazing goats, and collecting firewood. The study findings show that women in rural Nepal perform physical labor that requires sustained effort, yet is regarded by society as their natural duty.

Sobita's shy laugh in response to the question about her desire to acquire new skills revealed her dedication to her cooking and childcare duties, which stemmed from her strong belief in traditional gender roles. Research on intergenerational patterns shows that families pass down behavioral patterns, communication methods, and emotional responses across generations (Benson et al., 1993). The review of the intergenerational learning literature shows that people who receive praise for their household chores and those who avoid criticism adopt socially accepted behavior patterns because these behaviors are reinforced by both methods (Gadsden & Hall, 1996). Sobita demonstrates her limited relationship with her mother-in-law, who contacts her only at mealtimes, illustrating how hierarchical family systems create emotional barriers that prevent people from sharing skills, having important conversations, and developing their potential.

Studies the effects of modernization on Tharu family home environments (Kandel, 2018). Local Madhesi communities sustain their cultural identity through traditional dowry systems that assign women's household duties and require goods and furniture for weddings.

Sanjeet from Family 1 explained that Tharu's wedding customs required his parents to spend about 50 to 55 rupees for their parents' wedding, and at his own wedding, the only significant item he brought was a bicycle, whereas his sister's wedding expenses were equivalent to the cost of a motorbike. He noted that such demands have become common because people tend to imitate others, saying, "Falana le bike liyo bihe ma" ("So-and-so brought a motorbike to their wedding").

This example illustrates how Tharu communities adopt elements of external cultures, as modernization and increased community contact influence traditional practices (Kandel, 2018). The rising demand for motorcycles shows how men now express their masculine identity through contemporary fashion, using it to achieve social status. At the same time, women continue to maintain their traditional social positions, which have remained constant throughout history.

Sobita does not go to markets and is uncomfortable doing so; her elders handle all buying and selling. Research shows that women in rural Nepal have economic challenges due to the social association of mobility, public engagement, and financial decision-making with men (Singh & Bhandari, 2012). Women were primarily responsible for household finances in nuclear families, while men were in charge of them in joint family systems.

In rural Nepal, research on intergenerational power dynamics in household financial management is available. They are Lu Gram, Skordis-Worrall, Mannell, Manandhar, Saville, and Morrison. They mainly show that women's economic visibility is limited, as mobility, public participation, and financial decision-making are predominantly associated with men.

Virendra's family life shows how Tharu societies create gender roles through the transmission of cultural traditions from one generation to the next. Vishal's limited participation in household chores and farm work is acceptable to the family because he is deemed the "future breadwinner" and will leave home to work and provide financially for his family (Field notes, personal communication, 2025).

This echoes Bourdieu's (2001) view that gendered divisions of labor are seen as 'natural' within social structures and are supported by familial and cultural norms that place males in public and economically valuable roles and deny them domestic roles. Vishal's emotional disconnect from his father also aligns with Bourdieu's view of masculine socialization as characterized by restraint and symbolic dominance.

Daughters and daughters-in-law are given responsibilities for childcare, domestic work, and caregiving. The activities of Mahima, Anu, and Misha, who engaged in cooking, cleaning, milking, drying paddy, and childcare, explain how early society introduced gender-specific tasks for girls (Field notes, personal communication, 2025). Gender discrimination in household decision-making is prevalent in all parts of Nepal, which is further worsened by the combined effects of caste and class, cultural and religious, and geographical factors, especially its rural

areas (Acharya & Bennett, 1982). Decision-making involves various aspects of human life, including household tasks and duties in both the public and private sectors.

Sapkota and Nain (2025) describes the Tharu experience through his research on the Tharu people, who live according to traditional cultural practices while facing modern pressures. In my field notes, I documented Misha's difficulties with marriage, discipline, and family reputation. The household of Bano Devi offers a lens into how Tharu joint-family systems engender gender roles and discrimination through the constant performance of symbolic gender differences.

Women define their identities through their roles as domestic laborers, including cooking, performing religious rituals, and caring for others. Rubina's entry into domestic work, as shown by her cooking days and her elder ritual performance evaluations, exemplifies the social structure that describe as a patrilocal system, in which a daughter-in-law is expected to learn household duties and obedience from her senior female relatives. Her minimal education and reliance on her mother-in-law for her personal needs render her economically disempowered through gender discrimination.

Chapter Summary

The chapter examines the role of intergenerational knowledge transmission in shaping gender dynamics in Tharu households and the effects of these dynamics on the retention and loss of Indigenous knowledge. The research showed that the most important determinant of the rightful ownership of traditional knowledge is the gendered division of labor. Women are responsible for managing activities such as post-harvest processing, household crafts, storage systems, and cultural rites, while men are responsible for plowing, building, and wage work.

The chapter presents three family stories to illustrate how women have used tangible learning, observation, and participation to pass on knowledge about farming, crafts, and symbols throughout history. Modern pressures, which involve moving, attending school, and changing goals, make it harder to transmit traditional knowledge, which is why younger women show less interest in activities such as Khobar Tharu wall painting, kans (vetiver) weaving, and kothi building (a handmade artistic container for storing grain).

The chapter examines how the cultural norms of rural Nepal distribute structural inequalities through their established gender roles. Women are depicted as

nurturing household figures, while men assume roles in public representation and economic control. The symbolic requirements of the system create displays of what Bourdieu describes as symbolic violence because women adopt sacrifice values and modesty standards and domesticity practices as their essential moral duties.

The chapter demonstrates how the cultural norms of rural Nepal create and continue to restrict existing structural social inequalities. Women act as caregivers who maintain their families, and fathers protect their families by holding public positions that include making financial decisions. The symbolic demands of society create conditions in which women experience what Bourdieu terms symbolic violence, as they perceive devotion, modesty, and domestic duties as fundamental ethical principles that constitute their very being.

The experiences of Sobita, Shabi, and Bano Devi and their families illustrate how the symbolic functions of society determine which women can gain access to work opportunities, which emotions they can express, and which powers they can exercise in their homes. The chapter demonstrates that Intergenerational Indigenous knowledge provides essential support to Tharu communities in preserving their cultural identity and safeguarding their local knowledge, which relies on consistent practice and is presently threatened by shifting gender roles and new economic forces. Knowledge gaps have widened because men persist in holding rigid gender roles, men migrate for work, women do not have access to education, and young people seek new career goals. The chapter demonstrates that intergenerational learning spaces and formal recognition of women's capacities are both important to preserve traditional customs and to rectify existing gender inequalities

CHAPTER VIII

RECAPITULATION, CONCLUSION, AND IMPLICATIONS

The research was conducted to investigate the transmission of indigenous knowledge between households and its role in shaping gender roles, responsibilities, and expectations across generations. The study examined the transfer of knowledge between Tharu families and its influence on gender perceptions. The research used indigenous knowledge as a cultural resource, serving as a mechanism for sustaining social values and identity through traditional indigenous knowledge systems.

The researcher employed this method to study how people learn traditional knowledge in their daily activities and their social and cultural interactions. The theoretical status of ethnography, which depends on the essential work of its practitioners, is achieved through their most significant contributions. Dell Hymes's body of work serves a dual purpose: to recover the historical origins of his extensive ethnographic research and to develop a theoretical foundation for ethnographic studies (Hymes, 1964, 1983; 1972, 1996). The study's findings show that knowledge is transmitted within Tharu families through informal learning processes based on life experiences across generations. Children learn traditional skills and cultural values by observing their parents and grandparents as they engage in day-to-day household chores.

The indigenous knowledge system uses food preparation, agricultural labor, weaving of kans grass (vetiver plant), and traditional rituals as major platforms for knowledge transfer. These activities help young people learn practical skills as well as the importance of cultural values and social norms.

The study found that gender roles within the family influence the transmission of indigenous knowledge. Women are primarily responsible for the preservation and transmission of knowledge related to household work, food processing and storage methods, and traditional crafts, while men are more involved in agricultural activities, external economic work, and community decision-making. These patterns of knowledge transfer maintain the gender-specific division of labor within families.

The findings show that the Tharu indigenous knowledge systems are undergoing change due to the community's interaction with formal education, technological advancement, and wider socio-economic influences. There is a

tendency among younger generations to place greater value on formal education and spend less time on traditional family roles.

The decline of traditional knowledge systems in indigenous cultures is linked to the reduced ability of indigenous knowledge holders to transmit knowledge to younger generations. The research highlights the ongoing significance of indigenous knowledge systems in promoting family unity, preserving cultural heritage, and supporting community development, thereby confirming their continued relevance.

The Tharu community's main reliance is on intergenerational knowledge transfer to sustain cultural values and social norms. The study concluded that the development of gender norms and social roles among Tharu families in Saptari District during childhood is an important factor in intergenerational knowledge transfer. Indigenous knowledge transfer occurs through everyday activities and socio-cultural contacts, especially in family settings, where older people teach younger ones by observing and participating together, and through shared experiences.

The study reveals that women are the custodians of many traditional indigenous knowledge systems, including home management practices, handicraft skills, food storage techniques, and cultural practices. Women are the primary carriers of indigenous knowledge to children through their daily activities and, therefore, the custodians of indigenous knowledge for their communities.

The social system undermines women who preserve cultural knowledge by upholding gender norms that grant men authority over decision-making. The research shows that traditional knowledge systems change with social transformations. Formal education, migration, and increasing contact with foreign countries have changed how knowledge is transmitted and valued within families. Today's youth are less interested in traditional cultural practices, which would lead to a permanent decline in indigenous knowledge.

The study shows that indigenous knowledge is a valuable resource that helps people to maintain their cultural identity and build community strength. The community continues to use traditional methods, including weaving, agricultural practices, food storage techniques, and ritual art forms, to gain both functional benefits and cultural significance.

The preservation and recognition of these knowledge systems should be essential, as they protect cultural heritage and foster a better understanding of gender roles and more effective methods of social contribution. The study demonstrates that

indigenous knowledge is a key cultural asset that must be preserved and that indigenous women play a central role in transmitting these traditions over time.

Recapitulation of the Study

The first chapter of the study describes the research problem and presents the study's purpose and importance, along with the research plan. The section provides a broad overview of research related to the main research problem.

The research examined the process of knowledge transfer between generations within Tharu families in Saptari District and also studied the impact of informal education on gender roles, cultural identity, and daily routines. Anthropological methods such as participant observation, informal conversation, and in-depth interviews with multigenerational family members were used in the research.

The analysis adopted an interpretivist lens, allowing the researchers to explore learning as a process that unfolds through social interaction and cultural transmission within family and community contexts. Intergenerational learning is usually conceptualized as a relational and contextualized process (Ho, 2010; Stephan, 2021). Knowledge, values, and cultural practices are transmitted in Tharu households through routine everyday activities and interactions among household members.

The study results show that the older family members are the main custodians of traditional indigenous knowledge. The older generation imparts important knowledge of agriculture and food acquisition, the use of herbal medicines, and traditional crafts like basket weaving and khobar painting. The younger generation learns about family responsibilities, gender roles, and their family heritage through observation, listening to stories, helping older family members, and participating in everyday family life and agricultural work. The knowledge is transferred through natural, everyday experience rather than formal education. Similar findings from other studies underscore the important role of community elders in the preservation of traditional ecological knowledge amid substantial social and economic transformations (Okui, 2021; Yembuu, 2021).

Studies show that the main way knowledge is passed from one generation to the next is through informal learning via observation, collaborative work and storytelling (Dublin, 2012; O'Hara, 2013). The study found that knowledge transfer is evolving. Processes of modernization, including greater access to formal education, labor migration, exposure to new technologies, and changing employment aspirations among younger generations, have influenced the way families acquire, transmit, and

exchange information. Younger men are less interested in acquiring specific domestic or agricultural skills associated with native knowledge systems, which are being gradually driven to extinction by global trends (Okui, 2021). Girls spend more time on household duties, which society considers women's work. The learning patterns followed by boys and girls lead to different educational outcomes because they contribute to the formation of gender norms within the Tharu community, which socialize its members into particular gender roles (Kabeer, 2015; Yang et al., 2021).

In summary, the study shows that members of the Tharu community use intergenerational learning to preserve their cultural knowledge but face increasing challenges from socio-economic change, migration, educational transformation, and changing family structures. The process lies between cultural continuity and ongoing socio-economic change. The findings show how traditional knowledge systems are declining amid changing gender roles and cultural experiences among younger generations (Chaudhary & Agrawal, 2021; Pillemer, 2022).

Youngsters today are not following traditional customs anymore which require long-term cultural dedication and practice. The research has three main findings. The study notes that elders, particularly grandmothers, are the primary custodians of traditional knowledge. Their practical knowledge of rituals, agricultural practices, craft skills, and home management activities forms the basis of their role in safeguarding cultural heritage (Fuller-Thomson, 2005; Niure, 2024).

The study findings highlight the importance of intergenerational learning in preserving cultural knowledge among the Tharu community, but this process is becoming increasingly vulnerable. This process is used to preserve cultural practices in the face of changing social and economic conditions. In this regard, Chaudhary (2022) and Pillemer (2022) presented their findings to global concerns on three major issues, including the decline of traditional knowledge systems, shifts in gender norms, and changing cultural practices of young people

Conclusion

The study shows that the primary means of transmitting, maintaining, and negotiating knowledge, values, and gender roles is intergenerational knowledge transfer within Tharu families. The study is set in an Indigenous Tharu village and suggests that knowledge transferred from older to younger generations encompasses indigenous knowledge, cultural traditions, livelihood skills, and gendered expectations. This learning is not through formal instruction but through daily family

life, where youngsters see and participate in household and agricultural activities, hear stories, take part in cultural rites, and interact with parents and grandparents.

The findings answer the first research question, showing that the informal learning of gender roles begins in early childhood. Children learn what it means to be a girl or a boy by observing the usual day-to-day behaviors of family members. Girls are gradually introduced to caring responsibilities, household chores, cooking, storage management, and agricultural work, while boys are pushed toward working outside, managing animals, moving around more, and stepping into community responsibilities. Based on the above discussion, these expectations become normalized because they are embedded in family life and everyday cultural practices, rather than being clearly articulated as a “this is what you must do” directive.

In other words, they get absorbed into the daily rhythm of family life and into long-term cultural ritual, not so much through direct, overt instruction, and after a while, it just feels normal, or at least like it always was. That’s why it often happens almost quietly, like some familiar beat that sticks to you, even if you didn’t notice it at first.

The study also partially answers the second research question, indicating that young people are not only passive recipients of cultural knowledge. While many youths still value ancestral wisdom, maintain strong respect for elders, and try to hold on to cultural traditions, they also often rework inherited gender norms, especially with the advent of formal education, migration, technology, increased exposure to media, and shifting economic conditions. So inter-generational learning is no longer just one straight line; it becomes dynamic, with continuity still present but change, too. Some old gender expectations persist, while others are challenged or negotiated, and in some cases, slowly transformed.

Finally, the study answers the last research question by showing that inter-generational knowledge transfer contributes to the preservation of indigenous knowledge and the reproduction of gender relations.

The procedures that maintain cultural richness might also end up keeping unequal gender expectations, because knowledge is passed down within patriarchal social structures, which is kind of business as usual. Yet the facts also point to the real potential of inter-generational learning to improve things. Families are starting to change traditional gender roles but still preserve essential cultural values. As Women

take on more responsibilities in education, income generation, and storage, and young males get more involved in going overseas, agriculture, and skilled-based jobs.

In conclusion, the results suggest that intergenerational knowledge transmission cannot be seen only as cultural preservation. It works more like a continuous social process, through which families build their identities, pass on values, and also negotiate relationships of power. In that sense, they even help shape the future generations. The home then becomes, in effect, the primary educational institution where indigenous knowledge and gender identities are formed, long before children enter formal school.

The study contributes to the literature by somewhat bringing together intergenerational learning, indigenous knowledge, and gender role socialization, within the context of the Tharu community. What it reveals is that informal family learning is important to achieving those broader social and educational benefits. Therefore, to promote gender equality without undermining indigenous knowledge systems, it is vital to understand how gender norms are mediated within families.

Implications for Policy

The shift from the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) has made clear that gender equality is both a fundamental requirement and a critical objective for economic and social development, a concept now widely accepted.

Various groups, including academic institutions, international organizations, civil society organizations, and government agencies, have explored how gender affects development through their research. The three Sustainable Development Goals, SDG 4, SDG 5, and SDG 10, show that challenges affecting girls and women need immediate attention.

SDG 4 aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. The Tharu community preserves its cultural heritage through Tharu indigenous knowledge, which education systems and policy processes use to advance efforts to counter their historical social exclusion.

The development program is designed on an inclusive approach, where local customs are respected while delivering equal outcomes. This is in line with the SDG guideline of “leave no one behind”. Policy frameworks should recognize Tharu ecological and cultural knowledge as legitimate traditional knowledge systems that need formal recognition. The research shows that Indigenous knowledge must be

protected to enhance community resilience and safeguard ecosystems (Chaudhary & Agrawal, 2021; Okui, 2021). Local education programs can include traditional methods such as basket weaving, flood management, and herbal medicine, as well as government regulation of local cultural heritage.

The knowledge held by older individuals needs more recognition than it currently receives. According to Pillemer (2008, 2022), elders' role in knowledge transmission is their primary function, which explains why local governments need to build community learning spaces for elders who possess knowledge and serve as resource persons. The community facilitators who receive stipends and recognition awards through policy incentives will remain active in their work.

SDG 5, which aims to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls, is also highly relevant. Traditional norms impose formidable barriers to women's empowerment, necessitating research to identify effective, culturally sensitive solutions. Gender-responsive policies are important given the heavy burden women shoulder for the transmission of culture (Kabeer, 2015; Yang et al., 2021). Policy development will establish mechanisms to document and assess women's knowledge and to provide gender-fair support through programming initiatives. This approach is consistent with a broader call to reduce patriarchal constraints within cultural and economic institutions.

Implication for Education

The curricula boards of Nepal can and should incorporate Tharu indigenous knowledge (IK) into education. This requirement is due to the fact that Tharu students gain a better learning experience through their Tharu cultural heritage, which offers useful ways to solve real-life challenges.

The present educational system in Nepal offers mother-tongue education, in which Tharu educators use traditional teaching techniques to connect formal education with local knowledge. Effective implementation and recognition of the system need stronger policy-level integration. Local educational institutions and local government should incorporate Local Knowledge into school curricula to promote learning.

Research on intergenerational literacy and learning (Ling, 2021; Stephan, 2021) demonstrates that local cultural knowledge should be incorporated into formal educational systems. Similarly, educational programs should incorporate agricultural

techniques, artisanal crafts, oral traditions, and ecological knowledge, as these help build bridges between generations and strengthen cultural identity.

Community partnerships with Schools can collaborate with Local Government, local elders, and cultural practitioners to co-create learning experiences that align with Dublin (2012), which also emphasizes community-embedded educational practice. The educational curriculum needs to implement Gender-Inclusive Pedagogies that enable both boys and girls to choose from a range of traditional skills beyond their existing gender roles. In this support, Yang et al. (2021) and Kabeer (2015) have shown that when children adhere to traditional gender roles, their learning and engagement are limited.

Implications for Community Development

A community of practice starts from the work of development workers and community-based organizations that create intergenerational learning hubs. These intergenerational learning hubs enable young people and older adults to share their skills, because research shows that cross-generational engagement provides both emotional and social benefits (Duflos et al., 2020; O'Hara, 2013).

The community needs to participate in revitalizing Tharu cultural industries while modernizing industrial operations and integrating technological advancements with educational programs.

The training programs and local entrepreneurship initiatives will help people learn handicraft production skills, specifically dhakiya (basket) weaving and kans (vetiver) grass mat manufacturing. Basnet's (2001) study demonstrated the existence of Tharu craftsmanship.

The Tharu of Nepal are showing their resilience to climate change in three ways that blend their traditional knowledge with modern agricultural practices and community-based management of floods and droughts. Their main goal is to reduce post-harvest losses and to shield major food sources against natural calamities using traditional construction methods and the involvement of local communities.

Local communities that have evolved and are managed by women mainly use traditional grain storage systems that can prevent insect and fungal infestations, rodent attacks, and weather-related damage to harvested crops. Maintaining traditional ecological knowledge, such as flood-control strategies and methods of food preservation, is key to developing resilience to climate change. The Mongolian case study (Yembuu, 2021) shows that communities that develop strong intergenerational

knowledge networks to serve their citizens are more resilient to environmental adversity. The research demonstrates that intergenerational learning impacts social identity, retention of cultural heritage, and gender relations.

Active collaboration among policymakers, educators, and community organizations is required for the survival of Indigenous knowledge within the Tharu community. The practice of intergenerational learning is an effective way to build cultural resilience through social cohesion, fostering sustainable development and enabling young people to participate alongside their elders.

To Future Researcher

Research using methods different from those used in Saptari can be conducted elsewhere. I reached my study objectives by developing experiences that allowed me to hear all participants' stories about intergenerational knowledge transmission, and I connected their stories to my own experiences as an outside observer.

The study investigates important issues that extend beyond its core research area. If families appreciate strong relationships and show profound concern for one another, why are more and more families moving towards nuclear family structures that make it harder to pass information down from one generation to the next? Storytelling, which once served as an active means of cultural knowledge exchange, has lost its ability to connect people to their cultural heritage and to teach children school and social skills. Why not put more effort into keeping these traditions, ingrained in our culture, alive?

My Closing Thought

In over 18 years of development work, I have seen major changes in the indigenous Tharu knowledge system, especially in the context of youth migration, urbanization, and changing life ambitions among younger generations. These changes seem to have reduced the likelihood of transmitting and practicing some forms of traditional knowledge, but other cultural practices and knowledge are being retained within families and communities. The community members used to perform daily tasks through basket weaving, food preservation, storytelling, and ecological knowledge, but now only a few people practice these skills, which have lost their societal importance. This research shows that local cultural activities create a strong attraction that society approves of and form a core component of our identity.

Based on the above discussion, these techniques are based on lived experience and are culturally embedded ways of producing knowledge that cannot be reproduced

with formal education. The Tharu culture maintains indigenous knowledge as a complete cultural system, enabling elders to pass on their values, gender practices, and worldviews to their children. Home remedies, cooking, crafts, farming, and livestock grazing provide children with excellent opportunities to develop relationship skills, understand their duties, and learn about their role in society. It can be stated that indigenous systems enable communities to maintain their cultural identity while using local resources that Nepali households can afford, thereby achieving economic stability.

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