

**Hotels, *Bhattis* and Porters: Dimensions and Dynamism of Power in Tourism
of Khumbu**

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Abstract

Tourism development in Khumbu region of Nepal created multiple opportunities to the local Sherpa and other in-migrants in one hand and at the same time it created different segments and layers among various tourism stakeholders. As the tourism began in Khumbu, some people operated hotels, bhattis, shops whereas others were employed as trekking staffs and porters. This article deals with the various dimensions and dynamism of power relationship among hotels, bhattis and porters. Based on the field work, I applied both participant and non-participant observation, unstructured interviews and kuragrphy as the major techniques for the primary data collection. The data reveals that hotels, bhattis and porters are indispensable parts of tourism in Khumbu. Each component is essential for the continuation of tourism in Khumbu. However, they exercise various forms of power over others. Judging through the laymen's eyes, their roles and relationships seem to be normal and natural but it is not the reality. The reality is that they are framed within a certain stamp of everyday power relationships. The hotels, bhattis and porters are intertwined in different power dimensions. They each exercise various forms of power to control the resources. Hotel owner Sherpas are powerful because of their economic prosperity and higher social status. Being local/insiders and their legacy in tourism and mountaineering are the additional indicators to rank them higher than other two components. They use different forms of power to influence and adjust each other. The power they exercise is not constant; it is a dynamic.

Keywords: Sherpa, non-Sherpa, status, relationships, migration

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Tourism development in the Khumbu region of Nepal has not only diversified the local people's occupation but also encouraged short-term and long-term in-migration and out-migration of Sherpa and non-Sherpa. Short-term migration towards Khumbu is employment in different tourism sectors such as trekking, domestic work, or work in hotels and lodges. The short-term migrants are job seekers. Whereas, the purpose of long-term migration toward Khumbu is entrepreneurship or business. The people who migrated for business operated hotels, lodge *bhatti*, shops, and so on in Khumbu. The hotels, *bhattis*, and shops are job givers to other people who are job seekers or short-term migrants in the area (Shrestha, 2018a).

Hotels, *bhatti*, and porters are the key elements of trekking tourism in the Khumbu region of Nepal. The tourism of the Khumbu region would be incomplete in the absence of any one of these. Hotels serve the tourists for the accommodation and other logistics. *Bhatti* welcomes Nepali guests, and trekking employees including the porters for food and accommodation whereas the porters carry the luggage of the tourists throughout the trekking in the Khumbu region. Simply, these elements have their own roles, relationships, duties and responsibilities but are indispensable for a successful trekking. The hotels, *bhatti* and porters have different roles, relationships and expectations in Khumbu. Each of them requires the others' existence for their survival. Interestingly, these elements survive in love-hate and conflictual relationships. In such a situation, this paper examines their roles, dynamic love-hate relationships and different expectations in the study area.

Research Objectives

The main aim of this paper is to examine the ways that the hotels, *bhattis* and the porters interact with each other. Keeping the concept of anthropology of power in centre, this article deals with the various dimensions and dynamism of power relationship among hotels, *bhattis* and porters in the study area. In addition to this, the paper explores the perceptions that they make for each other.

Research Methods

This is an ethnographic research. In-depth unstructured interviews and both participant and non-participant observation were the main techniques for collecting the information. I made several field visits in Khumbu in 2013, 2015, 2018 and 2020. I participated in trekking up to Gorakshep (near Everest base camp). I observed the behavior of hotel owners, *bhatti* owners and porters in the study area. In addition to this, I conducted unstructured interviews with hotel and *bhatti* owners and the trekking porters in Khumbu and in Kathmandu. Kuragraphy was another way of collecting the information. I had several informal talks with the informants. I updated the data in 2024.

Tourism in Khumbu

Khumbu is one of the major tourist destinations in Nepal. The region is popular for trekking, mountaineering and Sherpa culture. Thousands of tourists visit Khumbu every year for trekking and mountaineering. But, Khumbu region of Nepal was dominantly an agro-pastoral community before 1950 (Kunwar, 1989). The Sherpa as an indigenous people who produced only potatoes and buckwheat (Basnet, 2020) because of high altitude. In addition to this, there was a history of Sherpas' involvement in trans-Himalayan trade with Tibet and working in tourism as porters in Sikkim and Darjeeling (Stevens, 1993 and Ortner, 1999).

Khumbu was developed as the major tourists' destination after 1950. Scaling Mt. Everest by Tenzing Norgay and Sir Edmund Hillary in 1953, construction of Tenzing Hillary Airport in Lukla in 1964, establishment of Sagarmatha National Park in 1976 were the main causes for fostering the growth of tourists in the region. These events opened the door of opportunities for many Sherpa families in the tourism sectors as porters, *sirdars* (guides), domestic workers and hotel and lodge owners (Shrestha, 2018a). The Sherpa became able to establish their own hotel and lodges on the trekking trails and they also operated trekking and mountaineering expedition companies in Kathmandu. Simultaneously, it pushed the Sherpas' out-migration from the Khumbu region along with the tragic death of Sherpa in the mountains during the high altitude trekking and mountaineering.

The construction of hotels, lodges and other tourism related businesses have increased with the growing numbers of tourists every year in the Khumbu region. The first data of tourists'

arrivals at Khumbu from the government level was recorded in 1980. In that year, 5836 tourists visited Khumbu (Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation-MOCTCA, 2013). But the data from the informal section show that the number of tourists visited Khumbu was higher than the total population of Khumbu region in the year 1970. In 1970, the total population of Khumbu was 2761 and it was 3108 in the year 1982 (Pawson, Stanford, & Adams, 1984). However, their data excluded the number of tourists who visited Khumbu in those years.

In 1950, Nepal government allowed a small group of American and British mountaineers to visit Khumbu for survey of Mt. Everest (Rowell, 1980, c.f. Stevens, 1988). Hornbein (as cited in Stevens, 1988) stated that after 1950 expeditions became a fact of life in Khumbu during the pre-monsoon climbing season. The British came to Mt. Everest in 1951 and 1953, Cho Oyu in 1954, and Swiss came in 1952, 1955 and 1956. These mountaineers employed hundreds of high altitude porters and they were predominantly Sherpa who were paid Rs. 7.50 per day. The paid amount was seven times more than any agricultural labour in Khumbu (Fuerer-Haimendorf, 1975). Table 1 details about arrival of tourists in Khumbu in different years.

Table 1

Number of tourists visited Khumbu in different years

Year	Number of Tourists visited Khumbu
1980	5836
1985	8347
1990	11,314
1995	14,997
2000	26683
2005	19522
2010	32084
2015	34412
2020	32636
2023	52499

Source: Nepal Tourism Statistics, 2024

Bjonness (1980) stated that about 1400 trekkers per year were visiting Khumbu by 1970 and increased to 3200 in the year 1972-73 (Mishra, 1973). Hence, the increased number of tourists created various opportunities to the local people.

In 2011 the total population of three different VDCs of Khumbu (Chaurikharka, Namche and Khumjung now Khumbu Pasang Lhamu Rural Municipality) was 7161 and it was 8720 in 2021 (CBS, 2011; 2021). The number of tourists was almost six times more than the number of local residents in Khumbu including non-Sherpa. The number of tourists increased every year and reached to 34,645 in the year 2011 and 52499 in 2023 (MOCTCA, 2024). However, the arrivals of tourists were not constant. The numbers were fluctuating due to the various internal and external reasons such as the earthquake and Indian blockade in 2015 and world-wide effects of Covid 19 in 2019 onwards. The given data includes only foreign tourists and excludes their assistants such as guide, other staffs and porters along with domestic tourists. The governments of Nepal do not keep any records of domestic tourists and trekking employees such as the porters, guides and other staffs.

The evidences show that the people of Khumbu have interacted directly with many visitors from the different parts of the world. These interactions of the hosts and guests have multiple effects on the host communities like Khumbu. The number of hotels, lodges, *bhatti*, and other ordinary shops has increased year by year. Similarly, number of Sherpa and non-Sherpa people have migrated towards the Khumbu region searching for the better opportunities. Migration of these people for employment, business and domestic works segmented Khumbu into different clusters socially, culturally, economically and psychologically. The following section of this paper tries to analyze the dynamic roles, relations and reciprocity among the hotels, *bhattis* and porters in the study area.

The Hotels: Symbols of Status and Power of Sherpa

Tourism development encouraged the people to operate tourism business in the major trekking trails in Khumbu. As the number of tourists increased, people invested in hotel, lodges and *bhatti* to serve the tourists. The construction of hotel, lodges and *bhatti* not only fulfilled the tourists' requirements but also made Khumbu a platform to interact with various types of people migrated from different parts of the world.

The hotels are operated mostly by Sherpa. These hotels symbolize the owners' status in the community. The status is visible. The aim of decorating the hotels is not only to attract the trekkers to visit and stay at their hotel but also for their status which symbolizes their power in the community. A hotel owner stated:

I am a local Sherpa and operated this hotel long ago. I worked as a trekking guide too. I was elected as the village leader several times. This hotel is not only for business but it supports to my local politics. (Personal communication with Mr. Sherpa, October, 2018).

Mr. Sherpa has a sound socio-economic and political status in the village. He collected donations from foreigners and distributed to the people during earthquake in 2015 to impress the people and maintain his social status.

The physical structures of the hotels show distinct 'Sherpaness'. The names of the hotels have incorporated the sense of place and Sherpaness. For example, some names are Hotel Everest, Khumbu Hotel and some names reflect the Tibet and Sherpa beginning from Potala- a Tibetan Palace and Sherpa such as Sherpa Lodge and Coffee shop.

The outer structures of hotels are quite beautiful. Although the hotels were made by stone and cement, the stones are cut in the same size which add extra-ordinary beauty to their hotels. The interior of each hotel is attractive. The stone wall is covered by wood to protect from cold. The wall is decorated by pictures and posters of mountains. The photos of Dalai Lama and Buddhism related posters were hanging on the walls which made the dining hall beautiful.

There is a huge competition among the hotel owners. The competition within Sherpa hotel owners is not very visible because they do not want to criticize each other. But there are rivalry relations between Sherpa and non-Sherpa hotel owners. "The non-Sherpa hotel owners cannot run the hotels for long-term due to heavy expenses. They cannot manage a flight ticket for the guests too because they do not have access with airlines," a Sherpa hotel owner stated.

The non-Sherpa hotel owners who have operated hotel in rent are compelled to provide much facilities to both tourists and Nepali guides for sustaining their business because they have to pay high rental amount and have to manage staff salaries and profit too. But this situation is not seen in case of the Sherpa hotel owners who have their own hotel, should not pay rent to others.

Such cases of conflict and competition for business are not new for tourists' destinations. The cases of battle over guiding rights and conflict for the hotel business were studied in Indonesia (Adams, 1997); there is competition for good jobs in Tibet (Hillman, 2017). All the hotel owners have a strategy to make their guests happy and satisfied. In addition to this, they keep good relations to trekking companies and guides who send the tourists to their hotel in each trekking season.

The hotels and lodges are the symbols of wealth and power. Power of the hotel owner in the community is embedded to the physical structure of hotel and the number of tourists visit to his/her hotel. It means that social and economic status of a hotel owner is determined by the business from tourism and structure and appearance of the hotels. Hence, Hotels in Khumbu, hence, not only exercised their economic power but they are the symbol of political power, acquired social and cultural significance and should be understood for their salience in status and power contestations (Lim, 2007).

The Bhattis: Symbol of non-Sherpa and marginalized people

The word *Bhatti* is popular in Nepal. The *bhatti* is presented in Nepali cinema as local liquor shop where mostly low category people gather in every evening for drinking alcohol. Nepali *Brihat Sabdakosh* (2067 B. S.) defines *bhatti* as a. liquor factory b. liquor shop and c. a place for liquor consumption (p. 962).

Similarly, the term *bhatti* indicates local liquor shop in Kathmandu in which people consume local liquor everyday mostly in the evening. But the *bhatti* in Khumbu region refers to small lodges and restaurants operated for serving the porters and other Nepali people on the trekking trails. The *bhatti* of Khumbu is not limited to selling and buying the alcohol as it is in Kathmandu but it has its own stories, meanings and activities embedded to the society and culture. The *bhatti* has incorporated the various forms of power and economy that the people enjoyed in Khumbu.

The *bhattis* are involved in small business but supportive to big hotels for serving the Nepali porters and staffs to whom the big hotels do not welcome. The structure of *bhatti* is different than those of the hotel and lodge. The *bhattis* are operated in small houses (sometimes

calls *chappro*- a small hut) without any interior and exterior design. The structure itself is enough to say about the socio-economic condition of its operators.

The *bhattis* in Khumbu symbolize three things. The first, the owners are mostly non-Sherpa; the second, most of them are in-migrants and the third their business is related to the trekking porters.

The non-Sherpa *bhatti* owners are migrated from various parts of Nepal with their own stories and expectations. A *bhatti* owner migrated before 20 year tells “I migrated Khumbu after my second marriage. I was a porter at first lately I operated *bhatti*”. Hence, second marriage is the cause of his migration and *Bhatti* operation. I found another case of migration and operation of *bhatti* in Lukla by Mr. Shrestha. Mr. Shrestha has also a story of inter-caste marriage. Mr. Shrestha tells:

I married without family consent and was not accepted by my family. We stayed outside the home, struggled for survival. I got a government job later. The government transferred me Khumbu. I came with my family and operated *Bhatti* along with my job (Personal communication with Mr. Shrestha, January, 2020).

These are some cases that tell why people migrate and operate *bhatti* in Khumbu. I got several such cases about the migration and operation of *bhatti* in Khumbu.

The Porters: Bottom of the layers

The porters are the key components of trekking in the Khumbu region. Porters carry luggage of the tourists that weighs about 30 KG. Carrying the load in their back and taking that into the destination each day is the work/duty of the porters. Generally, porters receive the luggage in the morning and submit to the concerned tourists in the evening. The porters are unknown about the things inside the luggage but they handle it very carefully. Porters earn Nepali rupees 2000 to 2500 per day. The trekking company does not provide food and drinks. The porters should manage their expenditure from the wages they get.

In Khumbu, porters are mostly non-Sherpa (Rai, Tamang, Kshetri, Magar, etc.) outsiders who have come from lower region of Solukhumbu and adjacent districts for seasonal work. There are few Sherpa porters but they are not from Khumbu region, they also come from outer

parts of Khumbu. It means the Sherpa of Khumbu rarely do such a hard job. The Khumbu Sherpa are guides, mountaineers, trekking company owners, or doing big tourism businesses in Khumbu and other parts of Nepal.

The porters are at the bottom socially, psychologically and economically (Shrestha, 2018b; Frydendlund, 2017). Hence, the porters are almost powerless people in the structure of tourism in Khumbu. They are at the bottom because they work in low wage, cannot spend much and unable to stay at the hotels during the trekking. But the porters are the main guests of the *bhattis*. The porters enjoy staying at the *bhatti* rather than other places because of the similarities in their economic class and the freedom that the porters get at the *bhattis* and economic necessity for both compelled each other to stay together. Porters spend much in Lukla rather than other trekking trails because Lukla is the last destination for the tourists from where they fly back to Kathmandu.

The porters should not pay extra amount for lodging in *bhatti*. They spend their extra time by staying at *bhatti* because the porters have to wait some days for the next trekking. And sometimes they have to wait for months to get the trekking in Khumbu. The *bhatti* owners manage their food, drinks and other necessities of the porters in credit even if they do not have money or job. When the porters get trekking and come back with their wages, they pay their dues to the *bhatti* owners. The *bhatti* owners not only serve them by providing food, drinks and sometimes lending money but also help them by searching clients. In the trekking season, the porters from their village make calls to the owners for managing jobs in the trekking as staffs or porters. The owner who has an access to trekking companies in Kathmandu is able to manage the jobs. As the *bhatti* owner become able to manage jobs for them and call the porters, the porters come with some gifts especially the local products of their village.

Dimensions and dynamism of Power among Hotels, Bhattis and Porters

Hotel, *bhatti* and porters have close, intimate and reciprocal relationships in Khumbu. These components are interdependent in everyday life. Generally, hotels and *bhattis* do not compete each other but their perception towards each other seems conflictual. The hotel lodge owners state *bhatti* owners as '*bichara*' (sympathy for poor and vulnerable). Mr. F. Sherpa, a hotel owner at Lukla stated that "the *bhattis* are '*bichara*' and they (the owner) also have to do

something for their survival (struggling for their survival) and are not from the Sherpa community” (Personal communication with Mr. Sherpa, November, 2018).

This sympathy towards *bhatti* owners symbolizes their power and position in the community. I saw two things in this statement. The first, *bhatti* owners are poor and struggling for their survival. These people are unable to keep their voices strongly in the community. It is because they are not only poor but they are the migrants and not the local. The second shows the ethnic feeling or ethnocentrism. It also indicates how the hotel, lodge owners judge and perceive the non-Sherpa *bhatti* owners. Similarly, Mr. P. Sherpa, a hotel owner and local Sherpa in Khumbu states:

There is the need of small things (*bhatti*) to run big one (hotel/lodge). The big cannot be run without smalls. *Bhattis* also have good business now because the porters cannot sleep at the expensive rooms of big hotels and they need a place to sleep. *Bhattis* welcome them to promote their business because the porters and other trekking staffs spend much amount of money on the last day of trekking (Personal communication with Mr. Sherpa, November, 2018).

Mr. Sherpa explains the necessity of the *bhatti* to run big hotels because *bhatti* give service to porters. The presence of *bhatti* has helped the hotels to manage porters in trekking because the hotels do not provide accommodation service for the porters.

The hotel owners blame the *bhatti* owners for not participating in local activities like tree plantation and festival celebration. So, there seems to be conflict between them. Mr. T. Sherpa stated, “a *bhatti* owner refused to take part in tree plantation and I took all fire wood from his kitchen. I also advised him to go to his own village to carry wood for fire” (Personal communication with Mr. Sherpa, November 2020). They are blamed for deforestation because they all are in-migrants. However, the *bhatti* owners refused it and stated that the local hotel/lodge owners were jealous to their deeds and criticized frequently in different matters like use of natural resources and attending at the social functions.

Bhatti owners have different eyes to see and judge the hotel/lodge owners in Lukla. The business of hotel/lodge owner is big. The guests for *bhatti* and hotel are also different. The hotel and lodges depend upon the tourists but *bhatti* depends upon the Nepali guests. Even though their

clients are different, they are not made for each other; their relations are sometimes functional, dynamic and fluctuating. The *bhatti* owners said that there was discrimination on natural resources distribution between *bhatti* owners and hotel/lodge owners. Mr. Shrestha, a *bhatti* owner states:

Before some years, the hotel/lodge owners blamed us for doing nothing to the community welfare and nature conservation. They discriminated us for distributing the fire wood and other resources. But now the level of discrimination is decreasing due to the increased population of the outsiders (Personal communication with Mr. Shrestha, October, 2020).

The hotel/lodge owners are the Sherpa. They are Buddhist. The Buddhist believes on non-violence. Although they eat meat but there is the restriction of killing animals and birds in Khumbu. But the *bhatti* owners are non-Sherpa. These people have a culture of animal sacrifice. I found some ideological conflict in this regard too. The Sherpa has filed a case against non-Sherpa Hindu for sacrificing the goats in Lukla. Besides these, the non-Sherpa informants stated that the Sherpa who own hotel and lodge in Khumbu feel superior and try to suppress them (*hamilai hepchhan*).

Interestingly, the non-Sherpa people made negative comments about Sherpas as being self-centric doing anything (wrong deeds) for money. The tourists have a good faith on Sherpa. This faith is not only because of the work of present Sherpa but it is also because of the Tenzing Norgay Sherpa and the Sherpas before the rise of tourism in Khumbu. “The hotel/lodge owner Sherpas are selling the faith of their forefathers as being good Sherpa,” a Bhatti owner stated. Such a criticism is also a form of resistance; form of power often exercised by a weaker component in the society.

I found another reason for the conflict between Hotel owners and *bhattis* about noise made by the porters after drinking alcohol. The porters consume much alcohol at the last day of the trekking. On that day the porters even sing and dance producing noise. The noise disturbs the tourists who are staying at the hotel. It is why the hotel/lodge owners complain against *bhatti* owners.

As porters are also a major component of tourism in Khumbu, they have a love-hate relationship with hotels and *bhatti*. The hotel and lodge owners always look for the good payable

tourists but porters cannot afford it, that's why the porters have almost no place to stay at the hotels. I observed that generally the porters would come twice in the hotels where their guests stay; evening with the luggage of the tourists and morning to take the same. I observed not much interaction between porters and hotel/lodge owners. It seems like they are not made for each other. The owners generally do not expect the porters to be at their dining hall.

The porters blame the hotel owners for treating them as third class citizen of Khumbu. When asked about their relationships with the hotel owners a porter shared his grief:

We were three people at Dingboche, one Sherpa and other two non Sherpa including me. The hotel / lodge owner discriminated us even in tea cup but I resisted and raised the question about difference in a tea cup. The Sherpa stated Rungba and Dungba (dominating words: rugnba- parbate people and dungba- dhakre, people who carry load) for non-Sherpa people at Khumbu (Personal communication with Mr. Kshetri, November, 2018).

The perceptions of the porters are rightly represented in the writings of Frydenlund (2017). The narratives of a Khaling Rai porter shows the 'death of humanity in Khumbu'. It reflects the hotel owners' heavy commercialization due to the over flow of tourists in Khumbu. Frydenlund presents:

I am treated like an animal by the lodge owners and trekking companies. The money is good, but after paying for my own food and lodging in the expensive upper Khumbu, there isn't much left give my mother, I also feel humiliated because I am not allowed in lodges and must sleep in porter's shelters (Frydenlund , 2017 p, 31).

The dining halls of hotels are warm due to its central heating system. The hall is found full of guests who pay more than any other ordinary Nepali customers. In Gorakshep, I observed the lodge owner not allowing the porters to be in the dining hall during the trekking. It shows the economic power of hotel owner and the way they exercise the power on the porters. In Nepal, it is our hospitality to respect the people who come to our home in the evening. But chasing out people from home and dinning has indicated the change in value system of the hotel owners in Khumbu. It is one of the best examples of commercialization of value; the tourism has brought in Khumbu.

But the hotel owners' statement is quite different about porters. When I asked him why the big hotel/lodge owners do not allow the porters to stay at their hotel, Mr. B. Sherpa states:

The porters do not enjoy at the big hotels because they hesitate of entertaining in front of the guests that they have travelled together. They expect good relations with the tourists and do not expect bad complain in trekking office. If we give them room too they do not stay with us. They feel free in the *bhattis*' (Personal communication with Mr. Sherpa, November, 2018).

Now, we move to see how the porters and *Bhattis* behave with each other. The porters and the *bhattis* are made for each other. The porters are the main guests of the *bhattis*. The porters enjoy staying at the *bhatti* rather than other places because of the similarities in their social and economic class and the freedom that the porters get at the *bhattis*; and economic necessity for both compelled each other to stay together. The porters would not earn much money in trekking but they enjoy a lot in the last day of their trekking. The enjoyment is not because of getting extra amount of money as tips or some used or unused garments of the tourists but because of the end of their hard days of the trekking in Khumbu. Hence, the *bhattis* are guest house for the porters and The porters are the source of earnings to the *bhatti* owners.

The price of food and drinks in *bhatti* are lower than the other hotels and lodges in Khumbu. The *bhatti* owners respect the clients and serve them. They both survive in the reciprocity that the survival of one depends upon the presence of the other. Mr. A. Giri, who fled to Lukla after his second marriage from Khotang and operated *bhatti*, tells about such reciprocity. Mr. Giri states, "I manage the porters to trekking company along with running my *Bhatti*. I pay Rs. 100000 per annum as rent. I also manage logistics to the porters even in the off-seasons" (personal communication with Mr. Giri, November, 2018).

Mr. Giri has dual roles in Lukla a) managing the necessities for the porters to their day to day lives in his *bhatti* and b) managing the porters for trekking companies. Management of the porters to the trekking companies is related to the *bhatti* owner's social position. The *bhatti* owner who could manage the job for porters has higher social status in their community (porters' community) because the owner is the job provider to the porters as the trekking companies and the *bhatti* keep reciprocal business relationship. The porters offer beer or wine after the trekking.

The porters also bring their local production such as rice, vegetable and sometimes chicken as *koseli* (gift) from their home while coming to seek a job. Such a gift is not just for maintaining social relationship between *bhatti* owner and porter. The gift compels *bhatti* owner to manage job to the porter. Hence, the gift has both social and economic values for tourism in Khumbu. A porter states, "we bring *koseli* (vegetable, fruits, chicken, etc.) to *bhatti* owner for securing the job in trekking because I stay at my village (lower Solu) during off season of trekking. He calls me when he fixes my job" (Personal communication with Mr. Kshetri, November, 2018).

On the other hand, management of the porter's job has helped Mr. Giri to ensure many guests at his *bhatti*. The *bhatti* owners at Khumbu have their own particular guests who always stay at their *bhatti*. The porters should not pay extra amount for lodging.

Conclusion

Power has social, political, economic, psychological and cultural dimensions, whereas, resistance is also a sort of power exercise. The hotels, *bhattis* and porters are intertwined in different power dimensions. They each exercise various forms of power to control the resources. Hotels owner Sherpas are powerful because of their economic prosperity, higher social status. Being insiders and their legacy in tourism and mountaineering are the additional indicators to rank them higher than other two components in Khumbu.

Through the layman's eyes, one sees that these segments are well adjusted with harmonious relationships; which is a thin description. Each component has a particular job which are different in nature. There seems no business competition or contradictory relationships. But, while unfolding the layers of the tourism system (a thick description) in Khumbu, the scenes different than what seems in front of the stage.

Power is embedded in everyday lives. The hotels, *bhattis* and porters exercise different dimensions of power. Each segments are divided as insiders-outsiders, rich- poor, big-small and exercise their power accessing and controlling the social, cultural, natural and economic resources. Hence, they are not only "performing their functional roles" but also "constantly negotiating of power, authority and the control of definition of reality" (Cheong & Miller, 2000). The hotels and *bhattis* owners, and the porters are not only doing their functionally defined roles but they each are structured within the network of power. Their everyday decision making process

and behavior pattern is influenced and determined by the power of each other.

The power is omnipresent in tourism. Power as an “ability of a person or social unit to influence the conduct and decision making of another...” (Adams, 1977:388) determines the behavior of another segment of tourism in Khumbu. However, the application of power is in both tangible and intangible forms in tourism. The hotels in Khumbu symbolize the power and authority of its owners. The owners’ social and economic status is symbolized by the structure of hotels and visit of tourists in his/her hotels.

Social networks are also the sources of power production and reproduction. Cohen (1976:23) states that “power inheres in social relationships and relations of power are aspects of social relationships”. The hotel owners produce and reproduce power through the social and economic networks with trekking companies, guides and the tourists. The economic power is symbolized through their business but the business depends upon the owners’ relationships with trekking companies and guides. Hence, there is intangible power application on hotel owners by trekking companies and the guides.

Carrier and Macleod (2010) have well argued that the power is useful to bear in mind when considering the interplay between individual people, groups and organizations where tourism is influencing particular sectors. So as the case in Khumbu, different individual, groups and organization are influencing the behavior of each other. The patterns of relationship between the porters and *bhatti* owners are influenced by social and economic power. They survive in reciprocity and enjoy symmetrical power relations. In contrast, there is an absolute power domination of hotel owners on the porters and *bhattis*. Blaming the *bhatti* owners as the main cause of deforestation, forcing them to take part in cultural practices and restriction for porters to be in a dining hall are some of the examples of absolute power domination of hotel owners. The exercise of power on porters is tangible whereas hotel owners exercise symbolic and intangible power on the *bhatti* owners. Resistance is another form of power exercise. The *bhatti* owners and the porters resist against hotel owners. They criticize the hotel owners and sometimes disobey them.

These forms of love and hate relationships are produced due to the structural inequality brought by tourism in Khumbu. The unequal social structure has configured a common interest

group, i.e., a social class. However, the contradictory relationships cannot be analyzed only through the Marxist/materialist perspective. Moreover, the exercise of power should be analyzed in relation to people (caste/ethnicity), place (insider/outsider) and occupation in Khumbu.

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