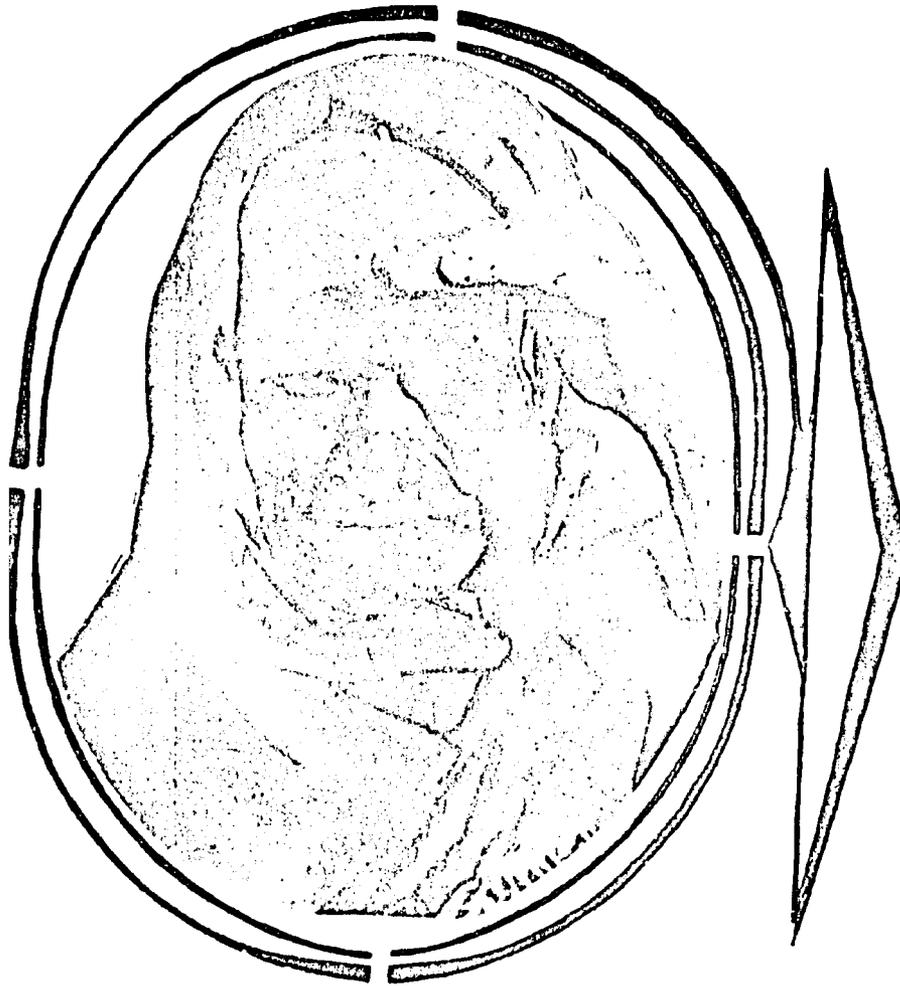


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Dr. Bedh P. Upreti

**Journal of a Terai Village:
Padipur
and Its
Environs.**

Dr. Bedh Prakash Upreti

July 1978

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Over a decade ago we spent a few months in Padipur.* Then when we told the villagers that we were there to do a general study of their village, they hardly believed us in the beginning. After all, it is the books that should be studied, not villages! And what was in Padipur that was worth studying? It was neither a pilgrim place nor a big city. That was the villagers' attitude. During the first two month's of our stay in Padipur our motives were always suspect. And there came a time when we had to take the villagers side against some intrudingly arrogant government official. That broke the ice. Our relationship began to get warmer and warmer. By the time we left Padipur, we had become part of it. We had unknowingly developed a soft corner for Padipur in our hearts.

Well, after 12 years the opportunity of doing a study in Padipur came again. We took it as fast as it came. This time, however, the focus of our study was more specific. In a nutshell

* The findings of the first Padipur study were published by Mr. Dor Bahadur Bista. See "Padipur: A Central Terai Village" contributions to Nepalese Study Vol. 1, No. 1, January 1976.

In order to protect informants pseudonyms are given both to the village and some individuals.

the sole purpose of our Padipur visit was to look at the family planning, and aspects associated with it, from the villagers point of view. Since the report itself will speak clearly, we feel that there is no need to further elaborate on this.

The link established 12 years ago still seemed fresh. Though every once in a while we had to invoke a phrase saying "Remember, we were here 12 years ago. We asked you many questions and took pictures", we did not encounter any problems of cooperation from the villagers.

Anthropological research methodology of 'participant observation' was employed, and found to be very reliable, in this study. Though forms and questionnaires were used, the information thus gathered was later verified through the villagers themselves.

The title of this report "Journal of a Terai Village" might give an impression that it might be a story of a travelling salesman. It is not. We had nothing to sell to the villagers. Prospective salesman! We might be, One can say that this is a market study; a study of behaviour market.

One could assert that Padipur cannot be generalized (But

what can be?). True, that Padipur as it relates to specific individuals and their specific activities, cannot be generalized. But on the other hand, Padipur as a village, it's villager as a group with hopes and fear, biases and aspirations, is an experience that can be found in hundreds of other Nepali villagers.

We are very grateful for the Padipur villagers for their cooperation. Sincere appreciation is extended to Dr. Raymond Carlaw, Chief, Nepal/Berkeley FP/MCH Project, Dr. Andrew Fisher and Mr. Basu D. Sharma for their most valuable support and help for the successful conduction of this study.

CHAPTER I

GETTING INTO IT

We arrived in Padipur just before dusk. Children were bringing cattle home after grazing. A group of women were washing their hands and legs near the road side well. For an outsider the smell of dung and dust was everywhere.

We stopped near the roadside tea-shop. A group of children with inquisitive looks surrounded us. A middle aged man from the tea-shop came running, bowed a little and did 'namaste' to us. I recognized the old man. "Panditji"^{1/}, that is what villagers call him - is one of the few hill Brahmin in the middle of an overwhelming Terai population of Padipur. During our 1966 survey he was our guide, interpreter, and our data book. He knew everyone in the village. And they respected him. Whenever he went around Padipur, everyone, including the children, always greeted him by saying 'Pau Lagi Panditji'^{2/}

^{1/} Pandit is a Sanskrit term meaning a scholar. It is also an honorific term generally used to address Brahmins.

^{2/} In the ritual hierarchy of the human-body, feet have the lowest place. Touching the lowest part of someone else's body, i.e. touching someone's feet, is the highest degree of respect one could show to that person. The person receiving the respect, generally returns this favour by putting his/her right hand over the head of the person that touches his/her feet.

(meaning, I touch your feet). The villagers, whose mother-tongue is Bhojpuri, found in Panditji what they did not have. He received the government officials on their behalf. He did all the official business with various HMG offices (which is in Nepali language) for the villagers. In a sense, he was the village 'Host'.

"Panditji, do not you recognize me? I was here twelve years ago". I said, Well, twelve years ago there might have been many people who might have visited Padipur. He looked bewildered. "We stayed here for three months. You helped us with our survey. We had all of your pictures taken. I brought them back, remember?" Suddenly Panditji's eyes twinkled. He had the biggest smile I had ever seen in his face. He embraced me and kept on saying "Namaste Hajur, Namaste Hajur." We all sat on the tea-shop benches. By then a huge crowd had gathered around us. The news had spread all over the village that the fellow who went around asking all sorts of questions and took pictures of everyone - and best of all sent a copy of them - was back.

Now it was the question period. Where was I for twelve years while they were right there in Padipur? What was I doing? "I heard that you were in America". "Is it true that

it costs Rs. 100 to have a hair-cut in America?" "You have gotten fat since you were here" someone poked at my cheek and said. There were many other questions on America and reasons for my being there. "We will have lot of time to talk about America and other things. First of all we need a place to stay. We plan to spend three weeks in Padipur" I said.

We moved from the tea-shop to the village and made arrangements to stay in the same house that we had rented twelve years ago. But this time we could only get a room instead of the entire house.

More people were coming in to see us. We passed cigarettes around. "American cigarettes tastes so different!" someone in the crowd was commenting. "Sorry! it is a Yak, made in Janakpur." I said. "They do eat cows, do they not?" "I was told that they do not have Yaks in America". "Do they use manure?" "Do they plaster their houses with dung like we do?" Many, many questions again. I was more sorry that I had mentioned the term "Yak" at all.

The Cat and Rat Game

Finally we were left alone. We made an inventory of our supplies and stretched ourselves anticipating a very restful

night. It was then things started to happen. We heard foot-steps all over the room. Even the ceiling was making noise. "They say that sometime some spirit visits this house. I have never believed in the story, however. I have spent months in this house all alone. Nothing happened to me." I remember Panditji telling me about this house twelve years ago. His casual remarks had scared me to the point where I had to move my cot to the room which our driver had occupied. At that time the only 'hunting' incidence that had taken place was when a hungry dog had entered into our kitchen and messed-up most of our supplies. The noise in the kitchen had haunted us somewhat badly, but we had felt safe at our discovery that it was a hungry dog rather than a hungry ghost hunting us and our supplies. Anyway this time too, the alarm proved to be false. The noise we heard turned out to be the act of three huge - as big as cats - rats. We practically spent all night chasing the rats out of our room and decided that we were going to look for a less ratty place the next day.

The all-night rat-race revealed something interesting about rats and cats during our survey. In the sixties D.D.T. was intensively used in the village as a remedy to malaria. Following the D.D.T. use many villagers reported death of their cats. This was, however, not enough to wipe out the cat

population. With the few cats remaining the rat population seem to have grown faster. Infested by the rats, in the early 70's the villagers started using rat poison. In the beginning the result looked promising. The poison controlled the rats. But soon it became obvious that the rat poison also killed the remaining cats. Cats that ate the dead rats died instantly. So did humans. The Dhobis, whose traditional occupation is that of washermen, also had the dubious distinction of being rat-hunters. Ritually, they were and still are, the only caste allowed to eat rats in Padipur. A few years ago a Dhobi adult and a child died after they had eaten a dead rat. Scared from this incident the Dhobis stopped eating rats. The scenario looked like this: the cats were all dead. The Dhobis stopped eating the rats. Unhindered by the previous checks, i.e. the Dhobis and the cats, the rats simply multiplied to the extent where they have declared an open war on the human population. We witnessed rats eating grain right out of court-yards where it is being spread for drying. It was something we had never seen happen during broad-day light. In our survey every household reported some grain loss to rats. The total amount of grain loss reported by the villagers is over 1,000 maunds (approx. 80,000 lbs.). This is grain loss from the storage, not from the field. Most of Padipur's field are rigged with

rat holes. One does not know how much grain is lost to the rats that way. Even if we were to accept half of the 1,000 maunds that the villagers reported as a loss due to rats, it represents too high an economic loss for a single village. It seems much simpler to starve the rats than to starve the people. Some programs of rat starvation - and their prevention - is urgently called for. Better storage facilities would help tremendously towards minimizing the loss.

The Village and Its People

Padipur lies 8 kilometer east of Birgunj on the Birgunj-Kalaiya main road. It is only 3 kilometer west of Kalaiya - headquarters of Bara district. The Indian boarder is only three miles away from Padipur.

The Padipur Village Panchayat is composed of three other adjoining villages including Padipur. Padipur itself comprises four of the nine wards of the Panchayat. It is the most prosperous village in the group, and traditionally the Pradhan Pancha (Village Panchayat Chairman) have been elected from among its inhabitants. The present Pradhan Pancha of the Village Panchayat is a resident of Padipur as well.

A north-to-south cart trek, which is also the main village

read, divides Padipur into two sections. Various sub-sections of the village can be reached through small lanes originating from this main road. Housing pattern in Padipur, though not strictly so, is generally based on caste hierarchy. The families considered to be low caste^{3/} are clustered together at the periphery of the village.

A total of 163 households, compared to 155 in 1966, live in Padipur. Excluding the two absentee households that were included in the 1966 census, it is a net gain of 10 households since the last survey. No new families have settled in Padipur since 1966. However, one family has left the village since then and has settled near the airport in Simra. Though the emigrant family still retains land in Padipur, he seems to have left the village for good. Located near the entrance to the village from the main road, his house, run-down and vacant, is supposed to be haunted. Panditji, the migrant's elder brother, is presently looking after his property.

Padipur is predominantly a Hindu village. The 13 Muslim families represent only 7% of the total population. The following caste groups live in the village.^{4/}

^{3/} The caste hierarchy mentioned in this report is based on the Padipur villager's reckoning, not the authors.

^{4/} For comparison all tables contain 1966 data as well.

PADIPUR AND ITS HOUSING PATTERNS

(BOTH APPROX)

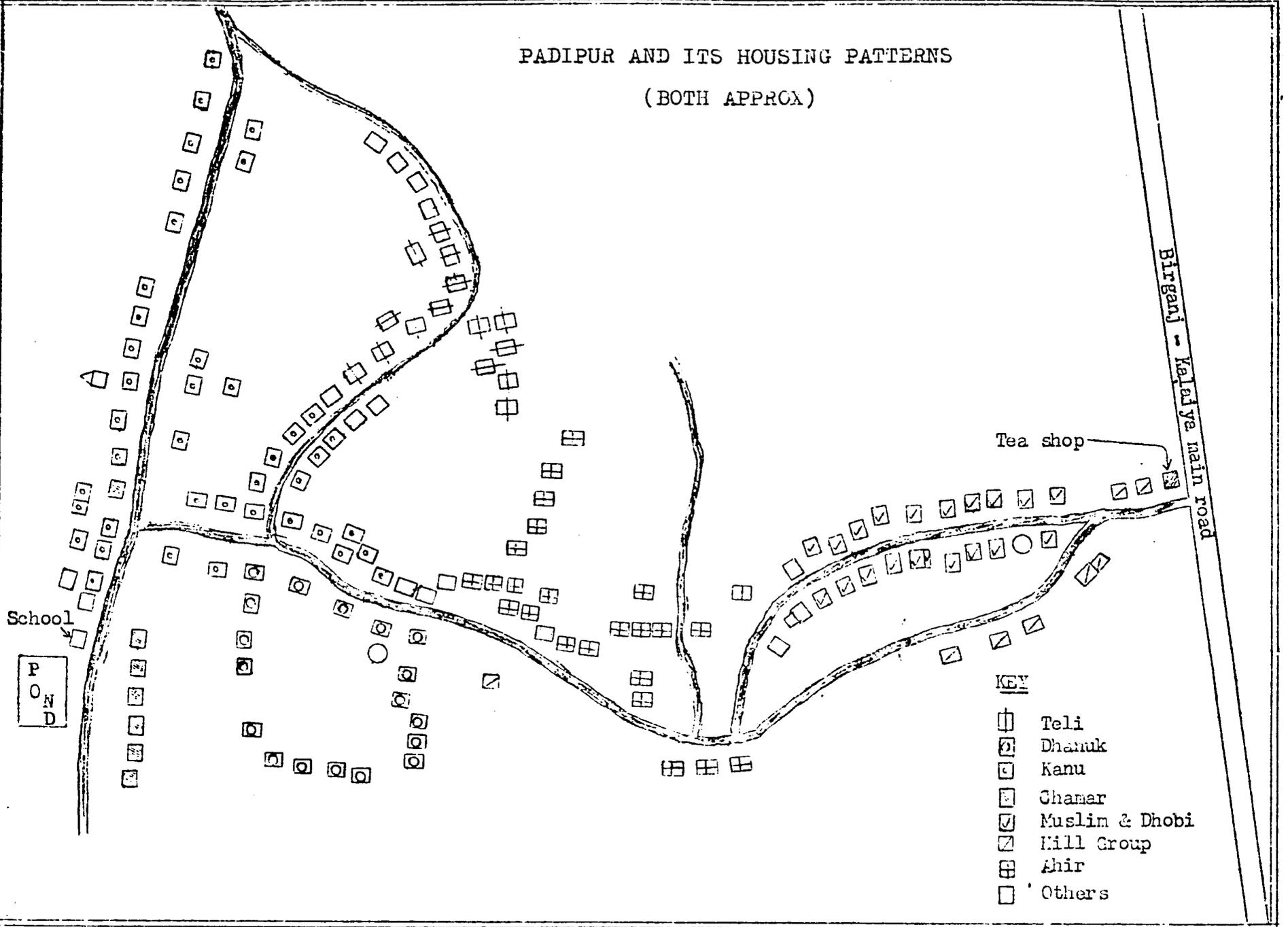


Table 1

No. Caste Groups	Number of Households				Number of Individuals			
	1966	%	1978	%	1966	%	1978	% ^{5/}
1. Brahmin	4	2.6	5	3.0	35	4.3	51	5.0
2. Chhetri	3	1.9	2	1.2	11	1.3	17	2.0
3. Kanu	78	50.3	81	50.0	399	49.6	460	57.0
4. Ahir	11	7.3	13	8.0	70	8.8	101	10.0
5. Dhamuk	15	9.7	16	9.2	71	8.9	76	7.0
6. Hazam	1	0.6	1	.7	2	.2	3	.2
7. Lohar	1	0.6	2	1.2	5	.6	12	1.1
8. Teli	13	8.4	13	8.0	69	8.6	95	9.0
9. Muslim	13	8.4	13	8.0	70	8.6	94	9.0
10. Dhobis	10	6.5	11	6.7	45	5.7	64	6.0
11. Chamar	6	3.9	6	4.0	28	3.4	37	3.7
Total	155		163		805		1010	

In the period between 1966 and 1978 Padipur's population has grown from 805 to 1010, a net gain of 205, or 2.55%. Excluded from this figure are the 84 deaths that occurred during the same period. Of the 84 deaths, 40 were infants while the rest were adults.

^{5/} Percentage is vis-a-vis the total number of either the households or the individuals in 1966 and 1978 respectively.

The division of Padipur population by sex and age is presented in the following tables:

Table 2

Population Division by Sex

	1966	%	1978	%
Male	406	50.4	515	21.0
Female	399	49.6	495	49.0
Total	805	100%	1010	100%

Table 3

Population Division by Age

Age	Population in 1966	%	Population in 1978	%
0- 5 years	121	15	198	19.7
6-16 years	184	22.9	245	24.2
17-40 years	320	39.8	381	37.8
41-60 years	155	19.2	164	16.2
Above 61	25	3.1	22	2.1
Total	805	100%	1010	100%

Though every family in Padipur have registered some growth since the 1966 census, it is interesting to note that the biggest share of this growth has gone to richer section of the village. For example, while the caste groups like Hazam, Teli, Muslim, Dhobi and Chamar, the poorest group in the village, have achieved less than 1% growth, the economically well-to-do groups like Brahmin, Chhetri, Kanu, and Ahir together have registered over 10% growth compared with their 1966 population. In 1966 these four groups comprised 64% of Padipur population. In 1978 the same groups dominate the village population by 74%. Of the four groups, the Kanu, who comprise over 50% of the village population, seem to have gained the most; almost 8% growth since 1966. Among the 11 different ethnic groups in Padipur, the Dhanuk population, though their numbers have grown from 71 individuals in 1966 to 76 individuals in 1978, has declined by over one percent in comparison to the over-all village population.

The male-female ratio, as table 2 shows, has not changed much. On the other hand, the composition of the various age group population (table 3) has changed. The gains made by the 0-5 years (from 15% of the total population in 1966 to 19.7 in 1978) and 6-16 years (from 22.9% of the total population in 1966 to 24.2% in 1978) have been at the expense of the older

groups in the village. Plainly speaking there are more children in Padipur today than there were in 1966. The percentage of the active population (i.e. between age 17-60) has dropped from 59% in 1966 to 54% in 1978. Roughly viewed, at the present state of the Padipur population, this cannot be called positive in the context of development requiring physical activities.

Family Composition

Majority of Padipur villagers live under a joint family system.^{6/} We found that there is a very clear pattern between the economic status of a family and its composition. In Padipur all the rich families operate under this system, while the poor live in smaller nuclear families.

^{6/} In this report a joint family is defined as a family comprising in addition to ego's immediate family, his parent(s), married/unmarried brother(s) and or sister(s). The family eats from the same hearth and lives in the same compound and shares the family resources equally.

Table 4

Family Composition

<u>Number of individuals within the families</u>	<u>Number of families in 1966</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Number of families in 1978</u>	<u>%</u>
1 - 2 members	21	13.6	18	11.0
3 - 5 members	73	47.0	67	41.1
6 -10 members	52	33.6	60	36.9
Over 11 members	9	5.8	18	11.0

There is a volume of material dealing with the disappearance of joint-family system in South Asia. With the advent of western type of economic system, it is argued that joint family in South Asia is in the process of fragmentation.^{7/} Contrary to the belief dearly defended by many sociologists and anthropologists, Padipur, seems to be moving into the opposite direction. Instead of nuclearization more Padipur families are turning into joint families. As table 4 shows there has been 8% decline in the number of nuclear families between the period 1966 to 1978. 17 joint families with sizes

^{7/} For detail see; Goode, William, World Revolution in Family Patterns New York: The Free Press, 1963. Kolenda, P.M., "Region, Caste, and Family Structure: A Comparative Study of Indian Joint Family" In Structure and Change in Indian Society, M. Singer and B.S. Cohn editors, Chicago: Aldine Publishing Co. 1968.

ranging from 6 to over 11 have emerged over the last decade in Padipur. Interestingly, it is these and the other 61 joint families that account for over 65% of the present Padipur population of 1010 people.

The One Room School

Padipur has a primary school where grade 1-4 occupy the same room. The one-room primary school is located near the village pond. It is the same thatched-roof building that we had seen in 1966, and has not changed at all. Of the 245 school age children of Padipur between the age of 6-16, only 59 (28%) attend either the village primary school or the neighbouring high school in Kalaiya. The division by sex of the 59 students is as follows:

Table 5

Division by Sex of School Age and School Attending

(Children Between the Age 6-16)

	Male		Female		Total
Total School Age Children in the Village	130	53%	115	47%	245
Presently School Attending Children	50	20.4%	19	7.6%	59

It is interesting to note that of the 130 school age boys in the village, over 38% are sent to school while the ratio of girls attending schools is only 16%.

Though the idea of sending children to schools is changing among Padipur parents, the immediate economic requirements and the prevailing social norms still seem to figure prominently in their desire and decision to educate their children. The five family profiles make this point quite clear.

CHAPTER II

THE FIVE FAMILIES OF PADIPUR

Following the survey of all the 163 Padipur families, we thought that a detailed study of five representative families regarding their health and family planning behaviour would yield much information needed for our purpose. The following five families were selected on the basis of ethnic group, economic status, and family size. The detailed profile of each of the five families is given below.

Madhusudan Upadhaya

Madhusudan is a 58 years old hill Brahmin who came to Padipur as a handy man of Mr. Shah, the Birta owner who lived in Kathmandu most of the time. When Mr. Shah died Madhusudan was made a manager of the former's property in Padipur and surrounding villages. Except his salary, Madhusudan claims that he was not given any land by the Shah family. When we visited Padipur in 1966, besides a small vegetable garden around his house, Madhusudan did not own any land. These days, however, he owns about 4 Bighas of land next to the Birgunj - Kalgiya main road. His land is worth at least Rs. 40,000 at the current rate of land price in Padipur area. How did he do it? Pointing towards his sons Madhusudan answers the question with a broad grin in his face.

They did it. I did not. I am simply a manager. I have been a manager all my life. I tried to provide them with whatever education I could. They got jobs afterwards and are collectively supporting the family. They pulled their earnings together and bought the land piece by piece. They got some loans also. But the land will repay the loan,

Madhusudan is a widower. His wife died in 1976. He does not want to get married again. But his sons insist that he should get married so that someone could look after him in his old age.

Of the 15 children Madhusudan and his wife had, four died. Three, two daughters and one son, died when they were infants. The fourth, a 20 year old boy, died in a jeep accident in 1977. He was a clerk at the Rastra Bank branch office in Birgunj. He was married but had no issue. The wounds are still fresh in Madhusudan's mind. Tears roll down his cheek when he starts to talk about it. Madhav - the dead boy - was his best, he says.

Madhusudan's eldest son, Keshav, is a 9th grade school dropout. He works as a senior clerk at the Guthi Sansthan (temple Trust Corporation) Office in Birgunj. He commutes to work everyday, and brings back a Rs. 200 monthly pay. His first wife could not bear any children following a miscarriage of a daughter many years ago. So, last year Keshav got married

again. We were told that it was Keshav's first wife who arranged to have Keshav married with her cousin - a 16 year old girl from Rajbiraj. Keshav and his first wife are hopeful that the new bride will provide them with many sons.

In Padipur, like in many South Asian societies, a woman who cannot bear children or whose children die in quick succession is often suspected of being a witch. Unable to bear children after her first miscarriage, we were told that Keshav's wife tried to look pregnant with a pillow hidden in her stomach. Though unable to get any children of her own, Keshav's first wife does not seem to have been regarded negatively by the villagers. She seem to have a reputation of a kind and very religious women. It could be that she became extra-religious to avoid the social stigma attached to women without children.

Madhusudan's second son Hira has married a girl from Nepalgunj. They have two sons and one daughter. Hira works as a clerk at the Guthi Sansthan Office (Temple Trust Corporation) in Birgunj. Hira, a high school graduate, is a part-time businessman as well. He owns 12 rickshaws and has rented them in Birgunj. His average net income from the rickshaw rental is Rs. 50 per day.

Basudev is the third surviving son Madhusudan has. He is married to a girl from Kalaiya. They have three daughters. Until Basudev gets sons, at least two of them he says he will not accept sterilization. He is a seventh grade drop-out. He looks after the only tea-shop in Padipur. While he plays cards with his friends inside a well hidden room next to the tea-shop, Suniti, his 11 year old daughter, actually runs the shop. The tea-shop nets an average of Rs. 15 per day.

Madhusudan's fourth son, Mukunda has eighth grade education and works as a clerk at the Banijya Bank (Commercial Bank) in Kalaiya. He is unmarried.

Furu - the fifth son - is 18 years old and works as a clerk at the local Sajha (Cooperative) store. He passed 7th grade and decided that it was enough education to make a living. "Well, my father had none, but he still made it." He answers to queries aimed at him.

Narotam is Madhusudan's sixth son. A 16 year old boy, he ran away from home when he was a seventh grade student in Kalaiya. A month later he was found plastering movie posters for a movie hall in Raxaul. He is an employee of the movie hall now. When we went to Raxaul to see him, he insisted that

we meet his boss - the owner of the hall. All of us were introduced as his relatives. His prestige, I presume, was elated. Not many movie hall employers' relatives have vehicles. We had. Our bonus? Five free movie hall tickets. We took advantage of that.

On the way back to Padipur had some questions to Madhusudan. "Are not you worried about your son Narotam? Should not he be going to school rather than running around with movie posters? You can afford to send him to school. Make him a doctor, or an engineer, may be a lawyer". "A doctor like you," he smiled at me teasingly, "is a no good doctor. You cannot treat sick people." Then he was serious;

I was not educated - Angregi (English) educated. Everyone says times have changed. The time is the same. But we are different. We have changed. It would be good if he could be a doctor, or a lawyer. But he is learning more about life. He is making a living. I am told that all the big-people - the famous people worked hard like Narotam in the beginning. May be he will be a big-man this way.

Madhusudan's answer had stopped all our remaining questions. We kept silent until we reached Padipur. Uttam, Madhusudan's youngest son - a 13 year old lad, came running to meet us. Uttam goes to school in Kalaiya. He does not have one but many mothers (i.e. his elder brothers' wives) to look

after him. He seems to thrive on their love. He is spoiled.

Madhusudan's two living daughters are both married and live with their husbands in Birgunj. Both were married at the age of 14 and the eldest has four sons and two daughters. We did not meet her but Hira told us that her husband, despite six children, does not want to adopt permanent family planning methods.

"What about the marriage of your three sons?" "They would get married soon - as soon as Uttam reaches 16 years old". Madhusudan answers. He plans to have all three marriages done at the same time. The expenses are minimized that way.

The greatest problem facing Padipur and the country? It is water - irrigation water. Madhusudan answer,

With good irrigation water, we can do miracles in Padipur. More food could be produced. More sugarcane - more money. Everything more.

Is not a small family a better, and a happy family?

Madhusudan laughs - a respectable regret for not agreeing with us. He knows us too well since 1966. He disagrees with us on matters that he would not with Government officials.

You have seen my family. We are not unhappy. We are not rich but have enough. I cannot imagine where I would have been if my family would have been small.

"If your family would have been" I stop without completing the sentence. I realize that I would have been talking of "would have" - a situation very hypothetical. The reality is that Madhusudan is a better-off man today - much better off than he was in 1966. He has a big family but is happy. He can afford to send Narotam to to a good school, but is not. And he is not bothered about it.

But we are bothered. The poster of a couple holding hands together with their two kids nags us. "Sano pariwar - Sukhi Pariwar (a small family, a happy family)." It is really so? If so, why is Madhusudan so dumb as not to get the message. We wonder.

Ram Dev Shah Kanu

When I was first introduced to Ram in 1966, I felt that he was ready to cry - or at least that is how he looked. It was a very sorry feeling that I had felt then for his insensitiveness towards my very open and mildly humble presentation of self. But I was wrong. Ram Dev happened to be smiling. With open heart and a bindi (a mini-mini cigar, I would say) in his hand he was welcoming me in his house. We become good friends and have remained so.

"You have to have tea in my house". He was the second

Padipur man to invite us for tea (the first was Madhusudan). He caused some problems for himself. His daughter had to run to the store for sugar, and there was no milk saved for tea. Well, we ended up having home made yogurt - better than the tea we would have had.

Ram Dev's family might like to drink tea, but they cannot afford to do that. They live a marginal existence - enough to sustain, nothing to spare.

"How have things changed since 1966? Your house is tiled-roofed (still thatched walls, however). You have two milking buffaloes?" Ram gets ready to reply with a big smile. At 46 he has lost may be more than half of his teeth. The remaining teeth - and odd congregation of tipsy-turvey heavily stained dots, shake violently when he talks. We start to talk about dental care. "Dant Ko Daktar?" (doctor of teeth?). He had never heard of it. Some years ago he had lots of problem with his teeth. The severe ache kept him away from his work. He had tried all local remedies, chewing of tobacco, putting nutmeg dust in the affected area, etc., but all in vain. Then he had his tooth pulled (literally pulled with a strong string) one by one. He had felt good following this tusseling act of being pulled back and forth along with his teeth.

Ram feels that though he is slightly better off than he was 12 years ago, on the average, however, it might not actually be so.

We were four then and eight now. With my eldest daughter gone, it is seven. More, but three more mouths to feed. I sell milk but I need to buy more clothes than before. I till, may be half a biga of land (approx. 1/3 acre) more than I used to, but I need more for my daughters' dowry (bride-price).

The government has made accepting and receiving of dowry illegal. But many societies in Nepal still consider it a prerequisite to any marriage. For Ram the hard fact is that he had to work tooth and nail to pay a Rs. 1,000 dowry for his eldest daughters' marriage in 1977. Ram's second daughter, a 12 year old girl, has to be married before she reaches puberty.

"It is risky to have a young daughter in the house. The older she gets the more questions there would be. Why was not she married for so long? There would be rumors. In the villages you have to follow the customs."

Sending his daughter to school does not make much sense to Ram Dev either. It is like an investment with no returns.

"Once married she goes to another house. And what would she do with her books? She has to work inside the house and in the field. A boy can use his education. For a girl it is useless. Moti Sahu's (one of the rich persons in the village) daughter-in-law knows how to read and write. But what good has that done to her. She still

has to work. May be in the cities it (sending of daughters to school) might work, but not here.

It is difficult to convince Ram Dev, and at times it is quite upsetting. But "Ke Garne?" (what can be done).

Ram Dev has already sent information through the marriage-brokers about his daughters marriage availability. One party has approached him with a demand of Rs. 6,000 dowry. He cannot obviously afford it. But there will be hard bargaining. The demand, hopefully, will come down. He expects it to be between Rs. 3,000 - 4,000. He only paid Rs. 1,000 dowry to his eldest daughter's husband. But times have changed. If the boy is educated and comes from a good family Rs. 3,000 - 4,000 is reasonable. He plans to sell 2 katta (approx. $\frac{1}{2}$ of an acre) of land to get the money. From this he will get enough to pay the dowry and other expenses during his daughter's wedding.

Dowry is not a good custom especially if one happens to have many daughters Ram Dev is fortunate, because he has only two daughters. Moreover, Ram Dev has four sons. That will get him more than he had to pay for his two daughter's dowries. It is a gleefully profitable prospect for him. When one explores this eventuality with him, Ram Dev is nothing but a happy person with smiles and more smiles.

Of his four sons, two attend the local school part-time, Whenever they do not have household chores to attend. Ram Dev's daughter, though only 12 years old, works as hard as an adult - a matter of much pride. His older sons, 10 and 8 years old respectively, look after their younger brothers and gather fodder for the cattle. School or no school they regularly have to take the goats to the pasture and bring them home in the evening. The eldest one has even learned to ride on a buffalo. Ram Dev is about to begin to teach him to drive a bullock-cart. As his immediate successor he has to learn all of these trade tricks fast. When Ram Dev is old he will be responsible for the family. It seems like a very hard pill to swallow. But what is the alternative for Ram Dev's eldest son?

Ram Dev thinks that a small family with lots of money is a happy family. He consider his a small family. "Look at Moti Sahu, he has 21, and I have only seven people". That is his definition of small.

It seems to us that the operative forces with respect to the growth or decline of fertility rate seem to be more economic and educational than directly religious in Ram's case. Ram Dev can go on producing children (provided that his wife agreed

to it), indefinitely and indefatigably, if he were to be absolutely certain that they were sons - no daughters but sons. The prospect of having daughters, due to the dowry, does present parents like Ram Dev with a dilemma. A closer look at this unsavory practice makes it easier to believe why female infanticide is practiced in societies with a strong dowry system.

From Ram Dev's perspective a family with many sons makes a lot of sense.

"Look at the construction work going on in Birgunj and Kalaiya. Some workers earn over Rs. 12 per day. Also with more sons we could rent more land. Grow more sugarcane (sugarcane production is extremely profitable)."

There is a population problem from Ram Dev's reckoning as well. But it is of a different kind. He only wishes that he would have many adult sons to help him. They would have found a niche for themselves as Ram Dev did in Padipur. His father did not leave him with much. At least he has something to start with for his sons. A house with two Bighas (approx. 1½ acre) of land, two buffaloes, a pair of bullocks with a cart, and a tangible prospect of some good dowry.

Maharaj Raut

If you meet Maharaj Raut you would think what every

stranger during his first encounter with him would think he is not, a rich man. But he is the richest man in the village. From Padipur's standard he seems to be obsessively rich. Unless villagers tell you, however, there is no aura of richness around and about him. It is only the number of rice storage bins that tell the story of his richness. His house, a tiled roofed, thatched wall, collection of cow sheds and huts, look like any other house in the village. There is nothing about his richness in the way he lives or moves around. He looks just like any other poor man in Padipur.

Maharaj Raut always made excuses when we wanted to talk to him. He would give us a time and place to meet and never turned up there himself. He was interested in our work. And he made inquiries about it from a distance. Though we interviewed him briefly, most of the information about him in the report comes from the Padipur villagers.

Maharaj Raut owns 25 Bighas (approx. 20 acres) of land; the maximum amount of land one is allowed to own by law. He has 12 rice storage bins outside his house, each with the capacity of holding 400 maunds of rice (approx. 32,000 lbs.). We were told that he stores another 1,000 maunds (80,000 lbs.) of grain inside his house. Furthermore, Mr. Raut nets over Rs. 10,000

from the sale of sugarcane annually. What does he do with all that earnings?

He hides. He puts money in plastic bags and hides it in the rice storage bins. That is what the villagers say. We were told that last year a woman - a regular customer of Maharaj Raut - from a nearby village came to borrow rice from him. Since Mr. Raut was away, his wife asked the woman to get the grain from the bin for measurement. The woman did that and once the rice was measured, she, as usual, promised to repay the loan with 35% interest at the coming harvesting season and took the rice home. When Mrs. Raut told her husband about the day's transaction he looked worried and went directly to the rice bin. The remaining rice was taken out of the bin and an all-night search was conducted for the money that was hidden inside the bin. It was gone. The woman might have taken it, but Mr. Raut had no proof of that. Villagers talk about this incident in an amusing mood. No one seem to know the exact amount involved. The guesses range from Rs. 5 - 10 thousand.

Mr. Raut does not like to sell rice. He prefers to lend it. He begins lending rice in May and gets it back the coming harvesting season (October-November) with an interest of 35%. He annually lends approximately 4,000 maunds (3,20,000 lbs.)

of rice. With the interest added, he gets 5,400 maunds (4,32,000 lbs.) of rice back. The average market price of 5,400 maunds is Rs. 2,70,000. It might be somewhat difficult to believe that a pretensionly average looking Mr. Raut is such a shrewd businessman. But he is. And his storage bins tell the story that he really is rich.

Behind his back Mr. Raut is despised by villagers. But they still go to him for help. The villagers very well could go to the cooperative office or the agriculture bank and get loans rather than go to a loan-shark like Mr. Raut. For an outsider it looks so simple. We talked to couple of Mr. Raut's regular customers about it. And here is what we recorded.

When we need the grain it is readily available from Maharaj Raut. We know his interest rates are high. But we do not know how to behave or deal with a sarkari apish (government office). We know Maharaj Raut. We do not know how to read and write. Maharaj Raut trusts us and we trust him.

The plain fact seems to be that Mr. Raut is in Tadipur all the time but the government is not. The needs, though anticipated by the villagers, might arise unpredictably. Subsequently, villagers go to places where help is forthcoming even at unpredictable hours. The feeling of absolute assurance of help even at a much higher cost, seems to negate many privilliges presumed to be provided by the government.

Maharaj Raut's expenses are minimal. He owns a pair of shoes but does not wear them. It is only on a very special occasion that he can be seen with his shoes. The villagers say that he often carries his shoes until just before he reaches the destination. For the rest of the family members, if they are extravagant, it does not show. In terms of life style they seemed to be an exact replica of Maharaj Raut. One exception however, Mr. Raut's youngest son Hulas, is an obsessive pan (betel-leaves) chewer - a habit esteemed by almost every adult male in the Terai region. Maharaj Raut himself does not seem to share this obsession with his son.

Of the four children Maharaj Raut and his wife have, two daughters were married a long time ago (before our first visit in 1966), and of the two sons, only the youngest is in Padipur. Sita Ram (36) his eldest son, joined the Nepali Congress Party (banned in 1961) and lives as an exile in India. He is considered an "anti-national element" by HMG and will be reprimanded if he were to be found in Nepal. Though he lives across the border in India, his wife and children still live in Padipur with his father. Villagers told us that he often visits his family surreptitiously and spends a few days with them. He must do that otherwise how could he have three children? His two sons, age five and three respectively, are too young to

attend school. The eldest, a ten year old school age girl, stays home and looks after her two brothers. "Should not she be going to school"? When this question was directed to Hulas his answer was "Well her father is not here". Odd answer to a perfectly good question. But if they do not want to spend a penny to educate her what else can they say?

Hulas is 32, and like his father barely literate. His father is seventy years old and Hulas is slowly taking over the family business. Hulas is married but has no children. Murti, his wife is said to be 30 years old, but looks almost 50. She must be anxious to have babies, or her husband will marry another woman. We suggested to Hulas that he could see a doctor about it and may be something good would happen to him. But he took no notice of our suggestion. He did not want to pursue any discussion about it. So we got into discussion about the current problems facing the country.

"Water", he said, "is the answer. We need irrigation water. Rainfall is not predictable".

What about the drinking water? Is not there need of good drinking water? Hulas had a ready made answer for us.

You have seen it in our village. All of us have wells, or tube-wells. There is enough drinking water. How much more water can one drink?

Yes. We have seen the wells, especially his well. The water from his well stinks. It's a dingy old well next to his buffalo shed. It does not even have a platform around it, and everything from dust to dung gets inside the well. During an hour or so of our discussion we kept trying to persuade him that drinking boiled water is good for health. He kept telling us about the impossibility of keeping-up with that habit. "What do you do if you get thirsty in the market place? Run to the house?" We know Hulas can, if he wants to, afford to drink boiled water. Many Padipur villagers cannot. He was simply interested in the negative aspect of the problem. Realizing the futility of our persuasion we could only get a benign feeling of 'if he wants to kill himself, it is his life'. What else can one feel in that situation?

Sukhamara Chamar

Sukhamara is a leather worker by tradition - a person considered ritually polluting to touch. He quit his traditional occupation and became a farmer. He was a victim of modernization, particularly that of Bata Shoe Company.

Sukhamara and his relatives, six Chamar families in all, live in a section of Padipur away from the ritually twice-born

caste. The Chamars, along with the Dhobis (Washermen) and Muslaman (Muslims) constitute the poorest class of people in Padipur.

Sukhamara does not own any land but rents 2 bighas (approx. $1\frac{1}{2}$ acre) from Maharaj Sahu. Though he has been cultivating this land for many years, Sukhamara, despite the Land Reform Regulation, does not have any tenancy right over the rented land. According to the Land Reform Regulation he is not obliged to pay more than 15 maunds (approx. 1,200 lbs.) per bigha as rent, but he ends up sharing 50% of every crop with Maharaj Sahu. He can claim tenancy right. But if he does that he would also have to leave Padipur for good. Almost every tenant in Padipur are in a similar situation. The government's Land Reform Office located in Kalaiya, just a couple of miles away, seems too far away to protect the interest of many Sukhamaras in Padipur.

Sukhamara was hesitant to talk to us about family planning in the beginning. While we sat on a log outside Sukhamara's house, Panditji (Madhusudan) took him aside for akanta (secret talk). We do not know exactly what was being said, but he became a very forthcoming informant following Panditji's persuasion.

Through Panditji we learned later about Sukhamara's fear. He had heard of forcefully conducted sterilization operations (in India). He was afraid that we might be up-to similar activities. No, we were not. Panditji had assured him. We were not even HMG officials. We were writers. We wanted to compile a book on people's thinking about family planning and related areas. "Remember! these people - these same people were in Padipur 12 years ago. Went to every house asking questions. Did anything bad happen to you following their departure?" Panditji had said. "If they want to write a book", Sukhamara had insisted, "would they put my picture in it?" The deal was made. We promised to put Sukhamara's picture in our book, and immediately proceeded to take pictures of his family. Sukhamara's daughter was away tending goats, and could not be in the picture. It was destined to happen this way. Click! Click! Click. Too bad she was away.

"Family Planning is just for rich people", Sukhamara started to talk.

If you really want my honest opinion, it is no good for poor people. We have to work hard. The rich do not. They can afford to feel weak. We cannot. A rich man from a neighbouring village had the operation. He has 32 children. He can afford to have the operation. The government must have thought that it was good for the government to have family planning. But for us, it is not good.

While Sukhamara talked, almost everyone in the Chamar section listened to him carefully. Every once in a while someone from the crowd kept saying "thik ba" (that is correct). One could clearly see that Sukhamara was their leader. He was echoing their sentiment. Sukhamara had decided that family planning was not good for them, and they had accepted his verdict.

Sukhamara has 10 persons to feed, including himself. The thatched roof, thatched wall, two room house is occupied by himself, his wife Surati (54), his son Hridam (38) and his wife and their five children, and his 10 year old daughter.

Sukhamara was married twice. His first wife died leaving behind three daughters and a son. All three daughters from his first wife also died, and he sent his son to live with his (i.e. son's) maternal grand parents. Now an adult, the son from his first wife, is married and lives in another village.

Sukhamara's second wife gave him two sons and two daughters. His eldest daughter is married and lives with her husband in another village. He promised to give a calf as a dowry to his in-law. But has not yet been able to fulfill his promise. He reckons that his youngest daughter (10) is ready to be married as well. One party has already approached him. He thinks that she will be married by next year.

Of the two sons from his second wife, the eldest died when he was an infant. Hridam is his only remaining son from his wife Surati. Like his father Hridam also is against family planning. I thought of suggesting the use of family planning contraceptives. I had almost taken a packet of condoms from my pocket. Then it occurred to me that if Hridam and his wife share the same room with the rest of the family, which they do, where, when, and how would he use it? An embarrassing thought kept on nagging my mind. How did Hridam manage to have five children? Even the best speculation I had were of no use. Only Hridam knows the answer.

Bira Raut Khir

Bira is 85 years old - the oldest person in Padipur. Though he has occasional back and knee problems, especially so after a bad fall last year, for an 85 year old man he seems to be doing extremely well. His eye sight is fine and hearing is good.

Bira's wife died last year. She was 80 years old. Of the six children he had, four sons and two daughters, three sons and a daughter died when they were young. His eldest, and the only surviving daughter, is over 60 and lives with

her family across the border in India. Jagadish (44), his youngest and only surviving son lives with him.

Jagadish and his wife Mauaki Devi (43) have four surviving children. A daughter died when she was an infant. Their eldest son Avadesh (Ehagat) is 26 years old. He is married and has three daughters. Ehagat had a year left before his high school graduation. But he had to give-up his schooling. He had wanted to be an officer in the government service. Though this dream was never materialized, he tried a stint with Guthi Samsthan (Temple Trust Corporation) as a clerk for six months. He was not an officer, and so found conditions not entirely amicable to his dream. "Next time" (in the next life) he is going to equip himself with the most important paraphernalia an aspirant officer should have - a B.A. degree. "I am just a simple home-minister now". Ehagat quips.

Ehagat knows about family planning. He even tried to use a condom. "It was like taking a bath with all your clothes on" he laughs. He does not want to have sterilization, either for him or for his wife, until he has two sons. "What would you do if you get two daughters in a row?" We posed a question. "My family would be against it (sterilization) unless I have a son". Ehagat and his wife have 20 years to produce a son. If

they keep up with the present pace (their three daughters are 4, 3, and 1 years old respectively), they will have a minimum of 10 more children. That is an awful burden especially on Ehagat's wife. Well, his wife could use IUD or pills for spacing. Ehagat hesitated to respond to our information for a while, and said,

You see, my family, especially my mother, does not think very highly of it. She thinks that it is vulgar. Even if I were to give my wife some pills she will know. The whole village would know. My mother would think that her daughter-in-law does not obey her. The family will start quarelling. It will be bad. We are happy now.

Ram Narayan (17) is Ehagat's youngest brother. He is married. His wife is 16 years old. The old man, Bira, wants to see a great-grand-son before he dies. He is hoping that Ram Narayan will fulfill his wishes. Ram Narayan did go to school until the fifth grade. But despite his family's insistence that he continue his schooling, he dropped out. Well and dandy for his father, he is proving himself to be a very handy person to have around.

Ehagat's two sisters are 13 and 10 respectively. Gangatri, the eldest, will be married this year. Her marriage was finalized while we were in Padipur. Both parties have agreed not to give or take any dowry. But we were also informed that

Ehagat's family will present a bicycle, a wristwatch and a transistor radio as a gift to the groom.

Ehagat's both sisters help the family in farming and other jobs. The youngest looks after the four goats, and two buffaloes that they own. When Ehagat's youngest sister gets married, and leaves her parent's house it will be Ehagat's daughter who will have to do the job that his sister presently does.

Jagadish, Ehagat's father, is an innocent and simple soul. Every questions aimed at him are always referred to Ehagat for an answer. Ehagat is the spokesman for the family.

Ehagat's perspective is much broader than that of most of the Padipur villagers. He thinks that non-availability of irrigation water is a big problem. But the much bigger problem is the question of village unity. "Most of the rich people in Padipur cannot get along. They always quarrel for prestige. If one supports one good idea, another opposes it. If only all of us could get together everything can be done" that's his prognosis of problems facing Padipur. Ehagat adds,

I do not know how it is in the hills, but similar situations (local feuds) exist in every village in this area. This is the biggest problem for our country. People not getting together - always quarrelling for nothing. We should stop that and we will be prosperous.

He considers his family to be a small one. A family of two children is "too small" from Bhagat's reckoning. Maybe, instead of a small family, we should aim for a "too small" family. But would the thousands of other Bhagat's in Nepal listen and adhere to it?

CHAPTER III

THE ONES WHO DID IT

On the morning of the second day of our arrival in Padipur we went out to sketch a village map. By the time we were in the middle of the village, a group of children, who were following us, were joined by a group of adults. Some heated conversation that was going on between them in Ehojpuri was not fully within our grasp. Nonetheless, we understood that some people in the crowd were not in favour of our doing 'something'. We could not quite get what it was. Panditji, our guide and informant, arrived just in time to rescue us. Some women led by Hakim Miya's wife - mostly Muslims - were against registering their houses for family planning. Well, we had to go into a long statement of declaring the purpose of our visit. "Remember we were here many years ago. We took pictures. Made a map of Padipur. We are back again doing the same thing. Who else keeps record of Padipur? We are the only people. We are not here to force you to do anything. We are Padipur's unpaid clerks". While Panditji translated the clerk bit the crowd got a jolting laugh. "We are simply drawing a map of Padipur. May be you can help us". Most of the people in the crowd dispersed. Some, who remained behind, wanted to help us. "Let me see my house". "My house is bigger than that". "My house is not there, it should be near the tube-well". We completed

the village map only the next day. We must admit that on this particular score we would have been better off without the good villagers' help.

We found a lot of apprehension regarding family planning in Padipur. People hesitate to talk about it openly. The Village Level Health Aide (see page 57) told us that there were 5 males and 4 females using contraceptives regularly. But we were never able to learn who they were. The health worker had their names. But except one, none of the people could be found in Padipur. And the one turned out to be the name of a small girl. It may be that people did not want to give their real names when accepting contraceptives. Or it could be that the health aide simply faked the record to satisfy the target requirement. Regardless of individual views on family planning, we found some persons who had undergone either vasectomy or laparoscopy operation. Profiles of each person and how and why they did it is answered by themselves in the following pages.

Paspat Mahato (33)

Paspat is illiterate. He works as a house servant. Except a house and the land surrounding it, he does not have much.

He had heard about 'operation' (vasectomy). He was

afraid of it. He had not quite understood why people would go to the extent of having an operation just to avoid having babies. It was a dreadful thing from Paspat's point of view. Then, in March 1977, his turn came. His malik (master) i.e. his employer, insisted that he too should have it. He already had 3 sons and a daughter. Why did he need more children? Paspat was against the operation to begin with, but his immediate source of livelihood was threatened if we were to be against his malik's wishes as well. Paspat was in a dilemma.

Paspat did not want his mother and wife to know about it. He informed his malik about his decision and the next day they went to Birgunj hospital. Once in the hospital, however, Paspat changed his mind. He did not want to have vasectomy there. Instead, he wanted to have it at Duncon Hospital - across the border in Raxaul. And finally, Paspat was at the operation theater at Duncon.

At that time, I thought that they were going to kill me. I never thought that I was going to come alive out of that place. I thought of my family and kept praying. I made a promise of offering to the Bhagawati Temple (in Birgunj).

The operation was a just a prick. It was a success because Paspat came out of the operation theater alive. It was Paspat's very deep faith on the goddess, he thinks, that made all the difference.

Following the operation, however, he felt weak. He spent 15 days "doing nothing but eating good food". When his wife and mother learnt about it, they were distressed, but happy that he was alive.

An offering was made to goddess Bhagawati as promised. Paspal does not feel weak any more. Presently Paspal is leading a relatively happy post-vasectomy life.

Shiva Sharma (33)

Shiva could be dubbed as the play boy of Padipur. He is a high school graduate. But these days spends most of his time roaming from one town to another. He gambles, and drinks a lot. He is heavily in debt. If it were not for his first wife, he probably would have sold much of his property some time ago. Luckey for his family, his first wife's brother happens to be in the Land Reform Office in a nearby district. We were told that the land Shiva owned has now been registered in his mother's name. Without her consent he cannot sell it. And his mother is not a person who is likely to bless herself to poverty.

During our stay in Padipur, we got to know Shiva quite well. We even played cards with him. He was quite frank with us regarding almost every thing but his third wife.

His first wife lives in Padipur with him. He has two sons and three daughters from her. His second wife is in Birgunj. She has a son and a daughter from him. We were told that she also used to live in Padipur in the same house with his first wife. But due to daily beating from him and abusive treatment from his first wife, she was forced to move to Birgunj where she works at the hospital.

Shiva, until a year ago, worked as a senior clerk with the Land Reform Office in a neighbouring district. But he seemed to have liked his fellow office worker's daughter more than his job. And that proved to be the end of his experiment with government service. He ran away with the girl but could not afford to bring her to his house in Padipur. There simply was no room for his third wife. He took her to Birgunj. And as the rumors go, she eloped from him a month later.

Shiva came to Kathmandu in 1975. As he tells it, he was spending an evening (drinking) with friends. Some one suggested that all of them should have vasectomy. Everyone oked the idea. They decided to go to the Family Planning Association (FPA) clinic the next day and have the operation. As planned next day all four friends went to the FPA clinic. Once in the clinic, however, Shiva, had second thoughts about it. He felt

scared, and tried to get out of it. As he narrated to us, he told the doctor that he had fever. The doctor examined him and found that it was not so. He tried to fake the doctor by saying that he was a heart patient. All in vain. He had the operation after all. It was not the doctor, but his friends that were after him. They had their operation as planned, and they were not about to let Shiva go without it.

Shiva's fear proved to be false. The operation did not hurt him. Shiva was and still is, full of praise for the FPA doctor that conducted the operation. He does not feel any negative side effects following the operation. He seems to be, as a matter of fact, pursuing his vocation more vigorously than ever.

Eharat Upadhaya (33)

Eharat is one of the most jovial fellows in Padipur. Once he felt comfortable with us, the first thing he did was talk about his Kathmandu visit. He had never been in an elevator, let alone seen one. He rode on one at the Nepal Bank office. It was a fantastic experience. "What happens if it drops?" The villagers around him murmur. They must have heard this story many times over. But whenever Eharat repeats it again they listen to it as intently as ever. We heard this story

twice, and twice it was different. Well, that is Eharat's style. You cannot do much about it. But just listen. And that's what the villagers do.

Eharat was married when he was 14 years old. Prakash, his eldest son was born when Eharat was 16. Two years later Promod, his second son, and a daughter were born. Following his daughter's birth, his wife remained ill for many years. He took her to Patna, Raxaul, Birgunj and finally to Bhagalpur in India. The doctor in Bhagalpur suggested that any more pregnancies could be fatal to his wife. It was then, Eharat decided to have a vasectomy. He had the operation, but the wound got infected. He kept it a secret for eight days and finally decided to get help from Dr. Khan at Birgunj hospital.

Eharat does not have problem with his vasectomy operation any more. His wife has regained her health as well. But their only daughter died last year. Eharat is, however, reluctant to recommend vasectomy "unless you have many children". "How many is many?" "Over four sons and four daughters". That's is his answer.

Mrs. Daya Devi Kanu (40)

It was in 1975 that Daya, Prem's wife started bleeding

severely. She was pregnant and the delivery was near. Prem rented a jeep and took her to Birgunj hospital. The baby, their youngest son, was delivered, and Prem was told that any further pregnancy could be fatal to his wife. Prem already had three sons and two daughters. He went along with the doctor and his wife's laparoscopy operation was conducted. Following the operation his wife felt weak and had to be in bed for six months. She still feels weak and Prem does not allow her to do any heavy work. He is quite certain that it is the operation that has made her weak.

Prem and his wife do not have regrets about the operation, however.

You see the next child very well could have been a daughter. A daughter means dowry. And that's expensive. It was good that she had the operation.

"Would you suggest your daughter that she also have this operation?" "Yes, yes, once she has enough children?" Enough children! That is not difficult for Prem to define. He has four sons and two daughters. And that's enough.

The Other Two

Kapil Raut (35) and Riddhi Malla, the villagers told us, had a vasectomy. However, we never did get to talk to these people about it.

Kapil has 4 sons and a daughter. We were told that he had vasectomy done a few months ago at Duncon hospital in Raxaul. His youngest son is only two months old. In the absence of verification from Kapil himself we are not sure about the information (vasectomy) however.

Riddhi (41) has three sons and two daughters. His youngest child, a daughter, is eight years old. Though we did not see Riddhi while we were there (he was away most of the time), the information, i.e. regarding his vasectomy, looks quite credible.

Besides Riddhi and Kapil, there is one other Padipur villager who personally claims that he had vasectomy. Moti Sha (64) says that he had the operation done at Duncun Hospital in Raxaul in 1972. His wife was over 50 years old in 1972. He did not need it. Why did he do it then? His only answer is that with 3 sons and 9 grandsons he did not feel like having any more. We suspect that if he really had the operation the financial incentives that the Indian Family Planning Project provided had more to do with it than anything else.

CANCER & PIT LATRINES

Panditji had spread the word that I had come back to Padipur as a doctor. He had simply inferred this from the way Kiran, our

driver, addressed me as 'Docktar Sahib'. In the morning of the second day of our arrival in Padipur, we found an old woman waiting for us. "Did you not recognize me?" She said. I did not. But then, she turned out to be Paspat's mother. She helped us with our kitchen work in 1966 for three months. She knew every woman, and gossips about them, in Padipur, She probably still does. But this time she was coming to us with some serious matters. She had cancer, at least that is what the doctors seemed to have diagnosed it was. Her face was swollen beyond recognition. There was infection inside her mouth.

"I am so glad you are back. They say you are a docktar. Please help me". Before she had even completed the sentence she started crying. I tried to make her understand that I was not a medical doctor, but just a Ph.D. Every time I spoke using my broken Bhojpuri she listened intently, but at the end kept saying "you are a docktar. You can help me." Then I realized the futility of my efforts. We called Panditji. He also was rather surprised to know that I was not a real docktar. Now it was Panditji's turn to explain my situation to Paspat's mother. "He is a docktar of thought (bichar) but not wrist (Nadi)". Doctor of thought! It was flattering.

Paspat's mother's trouble started with a tiny sore inside her left cheek. It did not heal at all. It got bigger. The sore gave her persistent pain. She went to the Hospital in Birgunj, and then to Duncon Hospital in Raxaul. Doctors at both hospitals diagnosed it as cancer. Her relatives gave her some money, and her son Paspat (see page 45) took her to Bhagalpur. There too her illness was diagnosed as cancer.

Gauri Kamu, another villager in Padipur had a sore in his chin. He told us that the doctors in Birgunj suspected it to be cancer. Gauri did not want to waste any time remaining around, in his words "paying money to small doctors". So, he went to Patna. The "big doctors" in Patna gave him lots of medicine. Gauri spent Rs. 2,000 and still the sore did not heal. Finally Gauri bought a Rs. 2 worth ointment from a local medicine man in Birgunj. It worked. Gauri still has a small scar in his chin. He proudly displays it to discredit many doctors.

They are after your money. You do not get good medicine if you do not have money. They ask you to come again and again so that they can charge you more and more.

There are, of course, both positive and negative experiences villagers have with doctors and hospitals. Prem (see page 50) feels very obliged because his wife's life was saved by a doctor.

We often argued that if the villagers were to remain in a more hygienic condition may be they would not have to go to a doctor to begin with. Drinking boiled water, or keeping their house clean, getting vaccination, having pit latrines etc. figured quite prominently in one discussion. But every time the villagers resorted to the conditions of rural life as a handicap. "It is not practical. We live in dehayat (rural area)", was their answer.

In rural areas, it is true that practices like drinking boiled water often are difficult to keep-up with. But there are other practices which the villagers can follow quite easily. One such practice that Padipur villagers can adopt is pit latrines. Padipur does not even have a single pit or other types of latrine. Every one, including women and children, go to the open field to discharge. "What would the women do, if they have diarrhea?" We posed a question to the Pradhan Pancha. "They simply do it inside the house" "inside the house!". "Yes, inside, in a pan. They clean it later" was the answer.

Last year a group of students from the Institute of Medicine came to Padipur and tried to introduce some of the public health measures. They helped the villagers in building four pit latrines. But as soon as they were gone the pit latrines were

dismantled. We had long discussions about the introduction of pit latrines with Panditji and the Pradhan Pancha. We were trying to convince them that precisely because of Padipur's ruralness they need pit latrines. Then, the Pradhan Pancha gave us the real reason for not having pit latrines.

Docktar Sahib, if there is a thief in a group of 100 people the 99 in the group can point a finger at him and tell him so. He can be ridiculed and punished. But if the 99 were to be thieves, the remaining one cannot ridicule the rest. If I were to have a pit latrine, the rest of the villager would ridicule me and my family. Without it we are OK. Why be ridiculed with it?

It turned out that we were exempt from this ridicule for our using a pit latrine that we had built for temporary use. We were from the city and Padipur's standard did not apply to us. Pit latrine seemed to be part of a fashion. It is not fashionable to have them yet. Panditji elaborated this point.

It is like wearing pants. I have never worn them. If I were to do so at this age every one will think that I am getting crazy. But if many people of my age in Padipur were to start wearing angrezi luga (western dress), I will do it.

Well, then who will be the catalist in Padipur? Some one who can ride through the initial ridicule is needed as an ice-breaker. The villagers need pit latrines.

The Village Health Aide, Tablets and Injections

Hari Prasad Yadav is a Village Health Aide (VHA), supposed to look after the basic health needs of four villages including that of Padipur. He is stationed in a nearby village which is also the location of a health post for the area. In Padipur alone Hari Prasad has posted notices in nine different places. The notices request the villagers to inform him (i.e. Mr. Yadav) of their health problems, e.g. diarrhoea, smallpox, immunization, or family planning contraceptives. In every notice Hari Prasad Yadav's name is written in bold letters. But strangely even the literate villagers did not know who he was.

A doctor Sahib inquiring with villagers about health and family planning? Who else could that be but an official from the Health Ministry. A very apologetic Mr. Yadav came to see us. He was sorry that he did not know we were going to be there. He was also sorry that he could not make any arrangements before hand. He spent half an hour apologizing for the conditions in Padipur, and another half an hour telling us about the difficulties he was facing as a VHA. He had not received his pay since the last couple of months. He "had to work with these ignorant villagers". It was very difficult to convince them about better health practices. His work was hard, he said. He

emphasized that he deserves an increment in his monthly salary.

Hari Prasad Yadav must have felt sorry when we informed him that we were neither directly attached to the Health Ministry, nor occupied any position of influence to be able to help him get his salary or increment in his salary. Nonetheless, he agreed to help us with our research. We ended up providing Mr. Yadav information regarding the number of Padipur villagers that had vasectomy or laparascopy. He had not done the village census yet. He did not know the number of infants in the village. He carried a record book that was mostly blank. Upon our urging he filled some of it.

We were informed that a mobile immunization/vaccination camp came to Padipur on the first Thursday of every month. We were there on the first Thursday of Magh (2034), but no one came. Mr. Yadav had told us that many Padipur children were immunized against polio and other disease regularly. We could find only 3 children that had received "injection". The parents of the children did not know what the "injections" were for.

Padipur villagers have accepted modern medicine. As a matter of fact there is a growing craving for what could be called a "tablet culture"; a culture where tablets and injection represent the modern medicine. The doctors are

expected to prescribe tablets and injections. When Gauri took his sick son to a doctor in Birgunj, the doctor, to Gauri's dismay, prescribed milk and eggs and lot of rest to his son. Gauri's evaluation of the prescription were negative, because,

All of us know milk and eggs are good, but I took my son to him (to the doctor) so that he would give some medicine.

What's modern medicine then? The perception of a medicine seems to be something that's sealed in a plastic, or is in a bottle, or in the form of a tablet or an injection. This perception, however, does not contradict the villagers belief in traditional or local medicine. Traditional medicine or traditional curing practices are within the villagers' system. A villager can affect the medicineman within the system. On the other hand neither modern medicine nor the doctors are part of the villager's networks. Villagers have faith on both systems of medicine. The difference seems to be that they can depend on the traditional medicine (because it is within their reach), whereas, the modern medicine is not within their immediate reach, and thus not dependable.

Modern medicine and its practitioners hinge on personalities that are alien to the villagers. The doctors are not like one's

friendly, next-door shaman. Further, due to the management problems involved in the transitional period of the change process; i.e. that of providing better health care to villagers, a gap between the expectations of the villagers and the modern health care machinery has evolved. The burden of narrowing the gap, in our opinion, squarely falls on the latter.

AT THE END

We have no ready-made answer to Padipur's woes. Nor do we pretend that the Padipur within the confines of this briefing is totality. The reality, however, is that Padipur exists with real people, with real beliefs. The beliefs we focused on were mainly related to the area of family planning and health behavior. Other realities, i.e. political, economic, social, and religious could be the subject of other studies in the future.

The majority of the Padipur villagers are illiterate. But, on the other hand, all of them are a very rational human beings. Naturally they do not perceive the world as we might do, and vice-versa. They do not need to. The basis of their perception, i.e. the the context in which day-to-day experiences are generated, makes it imperative that they follow what is real within their immediate realities. The behaviour of the Padipur villagers seems quite logical and consistent with their approach to life; may be more so than we - the literate minority.

In 1966 the sugar mill in Birgunj was actively encouraging Padipur villagers to grow sugar-cane. The government at the same time had introduced the use of chemical fertilizer. Both ventures, then, were not successful. The villagers did not want to switch from one system to another. Their attitude towards change was, what seemed to us to be then, "fixed". But the

villagers proved that we were wrong. These days Padipur itself produces over 8,000 quintals of sugar-cane. The villagers are more than happy to pass a few rupees to the sugar-mill J.T.A. (Junior Technical Assistant) so that their sugar-cane cart could be unloaded before others. They spend hours on the line to buy a few bags of chemical fertilizer. When there is a shortage of chemical fertilizer they even smuggle it from India. As a matter of fact, it happened in Padipur while we were there. Why do they do it? Obviously it is to their advantage to do it.

Now, the questions arise, "Why are not the villagers rushing to get services from us?" "Do they know that we are there ?" Yes, they do. Then why are not they coming to us ? May be it is time that we go to them for an answer.