CHAPTER FOUR

Chakaluwa Village: Village with Bullockcart-Capitalism

Chakaluwa located at Haldwani- Ramnagar road in the district of Nainital is an important village on the map of terai region of Uttarakhal. The village happens to be the seat of the most successful and advanced commercialized farming in the form of Chadha farm. Infact, like elsewhere, this family farm has become the paramount identity of this village. Predominantly a pahari village, with more than 90 percent inhabitants from the hills, the Chadha farm represents the 'zone of prosperity' on the village topography. The high visibility of the farm owes largely to the round-the-year intense agribusiness activities that take place on the Chadha farm.

It is interesting to note how with the growth and phenomenal expansion chadha's residential landscape has been clearly bifurcated into two blocks. One, his personal space where his family stays including the kitchen area and second, from where chadhas operate their agribusiness activities which include papaya cultivation, vegetables and floriculture etc. Adjacent to their personal residential block a much corporatised office establishment has come up recently which is fully equipped with computer, telefax and internet facility through which chadhas interact with their domestic and global partners especially in Holland. As one stands outside chadha's corporate space of the residential area, sight of bullock cart driven ploughing in the neighboring field, barely at a stone throw away distance instantly reminds one of the phrase 'bullock cart-capitalism' used by a social anthropologist in a different context.
Sr. Chaddha chips in with his vast experience. Here he is dealing with the local labor force.

This poverty-prosperity Coexistence intrigues one no end. More interestingly and surprisingly, people, the ordinary pahari farmers of the village, talks of chaddha farm in a secretive tone – not in any appreciation but with contempt.

My first visit to Chadhas was in the month of December 2000. The Chadhas as it appeared were the most famous family of the area and hence finding them was not a problem.

In fact the bus conductor who ferry people between Ramnagar and Haldwani knew Chadhas very well as 'phool bale'. I was a bit unsure about whether the
conductor would drop me at the right place, so I insisted again to him to drop me at chakaluwa. He laughed saying

‘Chadha farm bolo sir ya chakaluwa bolo ek hi bat hai’

(Whether you say chakaluwa or just chadha farm it means the same thing).

This was certainly a compliment to a refugee family which had moved in this area just a few decades back. On my first visit I met Sri Harikishan Lal Chadha, 70, the Sr. Chadha, as the locals call him, who had first come to this land in the 50s after Partition from Rawalpindi in Pakistan. Harkishan Lal Chadha’s father, as he recalls, initially set-up an export-import business and operated from Delhi by the name I.D. Chadha and Company. When Pt. Govind Ballabh Pant, the first chief minister of Uttar Pradesh, offered this area to these refugee migrants from across the border, Chadha family latched on to this opportunity. The senior Chadha recounts:

Aaj jaise achhe din tab nahi the. Ye din dekhne ke liye jahrile saanpon aur khunkhar jangli janwaron se ladna pada. Is bulandi pe aane ke liye khub pasine aur khoon bahaye.

(The prosperity and good time was preceded by harrowing tales of fights with the deadly pythons and man eater tigers as this area were initially a dense forest infested with malarial parasites. Sheer hard work smeared literally with sweat and blood went in to making of this journey from rags to riches)
Chadha's only son Sudhir Chadha had gone to attend agri-business fair in Delhi when I visited the farm. During this visit I was made to wait for Sr. Chadha who I was informed by his attendant, a pahari boy from the hills (incidentally local paharis consider themselves advanced and progressive compared to the people and families who still live in hills) was taking a bath in his pool. This surprised me as I never ever expected a swimming pool in a village. As I waited and enjoyed fresh papaya and some tea served by the attendant acres of papaya interspersed with floriculture poly houses caught my attention all around me as I realized later that I was sitting in the guest room, especially constructed for visitors outside his residential quarters. After a while Sr. Chadha emerged with folded hands. As we settled in our respective seats he apologized for making me wait as he was doing some yoga and some pooja after the bath, he volunteered. I queried him about his journey from 1950 to this date; he appeared dispassionately nostalgic to this and recounted his past struggle with stubborn pride and with a sense of conquering the unsurmountable. In course of his reflection he introduced himself as ‘100% pure vegetarian Hindu but Panjabi’. Mr. Chadha also talked in length about his glorious association with the RSS and how much he supports the Hindutva ideology.
His other favorite subject happened to be the sacredness of cow and its place in Indian agriculture. But as it appeared his love and respect for cows, atleast in theoretical terms had much to do with the age old Hindu notion of cow as 'Mata' or mother goddess. Chadha has a huge 'gaushala' located in the close vicinity of his house. Chadhas despite being open to and adopting the latest innovations of science and technology seems to articulate the glory of traditional agriculture in a manner which appears more ritualistic and an attempt of justification for his 'profane application' of a 'sacred text'. This is important to note that in the traditional world view agriculture was an extension to the world of divine and sacred and hence it seems the ambiguity and contradiction in those who practiced it for profit. There is constant grappling with some sort of persistent guilt for violating what is sacrosanct. Just look at some of the references to various elements of agriculture from Sr. Chadha’s point of view:

Land is not merely a factor of production but a living entity (jamin bhi saans leti hai)

Jamin (land) needs proper care like a child which can be provided in plenty by gau mata (cow) through cow dung based manure and gau mutra (cow urine).

Agriculture should be performed like a dharma (duty) and not as business.

Gai (cow) aur dharti.(land) ek dusre ke purak hain

(meaning cow and land complement each other)

There is a clear contradiction in Chadha’s theory and practice, given that he has been successful on the basis of an inorganic type of agricultural world
view. This can be seen as reversal of the traditional cosmos of rural life where asceticism and moksha along with dharma and kam formed the top of the hierarchy with artha remaining at the bottom. Agriculture in Chadha’s view runs in one’s blood and quite understandably therefore he proudly attributes his success to ‘panjab di matti’ (the soil of Punjab).

As I was about to leave in the late afternoon I desired for a few stems of gladula and other flowers from Sr. Chadha. Sr. Chadha obliged me with a bunch of fresh flowers and as I was about to thank him he very politely quoted me a price. A paltry sum of about Rs.10-20 only, but I must confess it caught me unaware. I certainly had not expected this kind of parting gesture. In any case as I paid him the money Chadha’s face remained firm and emotionless.

This was, however, not a minor issue for me as a researcher as this is where I learnt the difference between the ‘peasant’ and the ‘farmer’ in action. Harjinder Singh of Bari (who though not so rich had offered me fresh gladula without me even asking for it as I was to leave his field during my first visit) for instance is still a peasant in spirit irrespective of the fact that he was growing cash crop. Money still remains for him a ‘means’ to an ‘end’ and not ‘end’ in itself. Harkisan Singh Chadha in contrast is a farmer as he knows the value of every single penny. His asking me to pay for a few stems of gladula corroborates to the fact that he understands how to keep ‘personal’ segregated from the ‘professional’ of which gladula cultivation was a part.

In course of our conversation Sr. Chadha narrated me an interesting account of how he came to acquire 50 acres of land from one religious guru/mahant named Bhagat des raj, who was sr. chadha’s father’s friend from Rawalpindi.
When the first group of refugees had come to this area post-partition mahant ji had acquired some 250 acres of land here. Mahant ji who used to survive only on milk had borrowed some 3000 rs. from chadha’s father when in Pakistan. To clear this debt bhagat ji had given this 50 acre land to chadha. When Chadha talks of Bhagat ji he talks of him with supreme regard and reverence but the dispassionate way in which this exchange of land for money borrowed in crisis is described to me ,comes to me as another reminder of chadha’s ancestral business acumen.

This family seemed to have inherited the art of delinking sacred from pure commerce without much ambiguity from the very beginning. Chadhas understand the value of money and believes in ‘bund bund se ghat bhare’ (i.e., theory of economic prosperity which believes in accumulation drop by drop, where each unit counts). Sr. Chadha therefore embodies his struggle, his ordeal by fire post partition and hence there is this constant and insatiable urge for ‘security’ and more security leading to perpetual quest for better avenues and new experiments. It appears that the scar of being uprooted once and having faced the adversity thereof has been instrumental in their entrepreneurial proclivity including agribusiness activity like floriculture etc. Says Chaddha:

Haan ye sahi hai ki hamne bade bure din dekhe hain aur paise ki keemat janta hun. Log yahan hame neecha dikhane ke liye kabhi kabhi refugee bolte hain. Par ye bhi sahi hai ki ham aaj jahan hain wo bhi usi ki wajah se. Refugee hoke gharbar chhodkar naye jagah me jane aur basne me jo chunauti mili usi se
irade pakke hue aur risk lene ki himmat bhi wahi se mili. Ham naya karne me darte nahi hain local logon ki tarah.

(Yes it is right we have seen the worst in our early days and so we understand the value of money. sometimes local paharis here try to denigrate us by calling us refugees but the fact is we are what we are today also has to do with our experience of uprootedness as a refugee. The experience made us brave and of strong resolve. This also enabled us not to fear in taking risks)

This is a significant comment as it establishes a link between the culture of the refugees and the experience of uprootedness to the agripreneurship. It also provides socio-cultural reasoning as to why most of the successful agriculturist families and innovators in the area are all post partition settlers from the Panjab region.

It is however important to see how the new generation, that is, Mr. Sudhir, son of H. L. Chadha approaches his life and its economic conditions. The villagers in chakaluwa rates Sudhir Chadha as more social and more instrumental in bringing chadha farm to this level. Sr.Chadha comes across as a very frugal man who would not like to part with even a single grain to someone where he sees no possibility of any reciprocity.

Sudhir chadha in contrast can be called a modern farmer who instead believes in broad basing his profit generating avenues, in collaboration, in experimenting and in networking. In other words his idea of successful
business lies in opening more and more resource generating opportunities rather than on emphasizing under consumption and small savings, symptomatic of subsistence agriculture. Sudhir 47, a graduate from a local college underlines the importance of ‘right kind of education’ and the role of technology like computer, fax machines, internet in modern agribusiness. He explains:

Mere pitaji ne jo bhi kamaya ya banaya wo pasine baha kar, mihnat ke bal pe kamaya. Unhone chawal gehu ki kheti ki aur apne hisab se uski marketing bhi ki. Par ab samay badal gaya hai, cheezen badal gayi hain. Ab sirf paseene bahane se kuchh nahi hota hai.

(whatever my father earned, earned through sheer hard work, he grew conventional crops like wheat, sugarcane and rice as per his best marketing acumen but things have changed, times have changed, sweating in the field alone does not guarantee any thing now)

Understandably real change in fortune came with Sudhir joining his father’s profession. Sudhir’s profile speaks volume about his sharp agriprenurial mindset and his understanding of agriculture as profession. He not only made it a point initially to attend all the state and national level agricultural fairs and workshops but also attended an advanced floriculture training course in Holland in the year 1991 which was sponsored by the government Sudhir elaborates:
In krishi melon aur seminaron me jane se mujhe bahut fayada hua. Wahan alag alag rajyon se safal kisano se milne aur unke anubhav share karne ka mauka mila. Sath hi khas beej aur faslon ke bare me aur unki taknik ke bare me bhi Jana. Jo sabse badi baat thi wo ye ki in safal logon se milkar ye lagta tha ki safal hua ja sakta hai.

(I learnt a lot by attending these fairs and seminars on agri-business where I met people from different states with different experiences. Also I learnt about variety of new seeds and crops and about techniques. Most importantly by attending these seminars and meeting these successful people I realized it was possible to be successful)

He adds:

In jaghon pe maine nai kheti ke gur sikhe aur sabse badi baat inki marketing ke network ke bare me jana. Phoolon ke alawe jo jankari mere liye bardan sabit hui wo thi papaya ki beej ki kheti. Aaj hamara farm selection 1 brand desh ke lagbhag sabhi kisan bhandar me uplabdh hai jo ki 8000 rupe prati kilogram milta hai. Isi paise se hamne aaj yahan tak ka safar kiya.

(Through these meetings I got to know the rule of the
game and the market networking techniques. Apart from floriculture what actually was like hitting the goldmine for us was papaya cultivation, especially papaya seed cultivation. Business of our papaya seed brand ‘Farm selection 1’ today costs as much as Rs.8000 per kg and it can be found with all the major seed distributors of the country. About papaya also I learned from one of the agribusiness fairs which later turned out to be a source of our initial capital strength.

Sudhir executes the marketing of his seeds through coloured brochures and pamphlets highlighting the special qualities of the seeds (see appendix-II a & b). After a successful stint in papaya seed cultivation Sudhir is now planning to enter litchi export business which he says his wife will look after. Neeru Chadha, his wife, is an alumnus of the Vanasthali Vidyapeeth in Rajasthan. Apart from his village based farm activities, Chadhas have floriculture farms in Padampuri (where Lilium, botanical name for Lily, is grown to be exported to the gulf and European countries) and Bhavali near Nainital.

As the idea of these ventures seems to be trying too many things Sudhir clarifies:

Ab bachche bade ho gaye hain aur school ja rahe hain to ab Neeru ko kafi time milega aur wo hamare kaam me haath badhan sakti hain

(Now that kids are grown up and they go to schools, Neeru will have enough time to supervise the venture and help us)
This is approved by Neeru Chadha herself as she confides that she always wanted to share his burden (referring to Sudhir), and now comes the opportunity to use her education and show Sudhir that she can also prove her worth in his domain. And before you think Sudhir to be too calculative, he corrects you immediately. As he puts it:

Nahi nahi ye calculative hone ki baat nahi hai. Ise home based man-power management bolna chahiye. Management ka formulae ghar aur bahar dono jagah kam karta hai to achha hai.

(This is not being calculative, this is man-power management at home; best utilization of your team whether they are your family members or outsider).

Clearly Sudhir Chadha applies his knowledge of latest management techniques in his own house first which then transcends to the public domain. In response to a question as to why she did not marry a doctor or an engineer despite coming from a rich background with boarding school education Neeru chadha said:

Ye maine kabhi socha hi nahi. Ham bhi kheti bale parivar se aate hain aur kheti hamare parivar ki shaan mani jati hai. Isliye kisi farm bale se saadi karne me kahin se kam ijjat bali baat nahi lagi. Balki main to proud feel karti hun Sudhir ke bare me jab akhbaron me aata hai.

(This never ever occurred to me; in any case
agriculture has always been the mainstay of our family and a proud profession. So getting married to an agriculturist was in no way considered inferior to a doctor or an engineer. In fact I am proud of Sudhir and his farms, especially when the news about his crop or flower comes in the newspaper I feel very honored).

This in a sense corroborates the saying that 'once an agriculturist always an agriculturist' and this is true irrespective of caste, religion and community affiliations. Hence agriculturist who has been doing the land for at least more than two generations tend to create a culture congenial to agriculture related activities with some sense of pride.

Based on the foregoing discussions one can easily notice that the father-son duo though both are profit driven, yet they essentially represent two world views and which can be summarized in the following manner (see table). The most critical part of chakaluwa field work happens to be chadha's relationship to his neighbors, mostly paharis. This is reflected amply in the way chadha's immediate neighbors and general villagers react to your question: 'why do not you people also grow papaya which will fetch you good returns even in the domestic market?'

A typical answer from a local pahari would be such as this: 'Chadhas, who sell seeds tovideshis, meaning outsiders, give us fake seeds and not the original one so that we remain in poverty'. Such negativity against Chadha is so strong that it almost hangs in the air of Chakaluwa. Furthermore these comments more often than not are pointed towards Senior Chadha and not to...
Sudhir Chadha. Not that Sudhir is completely let off but he is still acknowledged by villagers as mixing and helping. Latent meaning behind this negativity is very typical of an Indian village; prosperity anywhere in the village is considered a joint venture. People tend to expect and be acknowledged for their contribution by virtue of being merely a unit of the village. So common villager in chakaluwa want to be acknowledged for chadha’s farm fortunes. It seems Senior chadha’s fixation with his ‘panjab di matti’ identity and local pahari’s refusal to treat them as one ran like two parallel lines all these years.

Senior Chadha’s frugality and indifference to local village issues also seems to have made the boundaries of Chadha farm rather rigid. As a result and quite expectedly Senior Chadha explains local paharis disinterestedness to agribusiness activities thus:

Ye log aalsi hote hain. Kam karne me inka man lagta hai nahi. Par chahenge ki fal mile. Khud kuchh karenge nahi par dusron ke safal hone par jalenge aur chahenge ki hissedari mile.

(These people donot want to work. Paharis are by nature idle people. Yet they would feel envious of others success and would want share in it)

Paharis consider themselves the real owners of this area and they still refer to Chadhas as refugees. Uttarakhand movement which led to the formation of a new state of Uttarakhand seems to have further sharpened this inter-ethnic divide. Majority of the pahari youths and families seem to be more interested in petty government jobs even if that means selling off a few acres of land in the bargain. In fact Chadha’s immediate pahari neighbor has given his land to
the Chadhas on a subcontracting arrangement for a fixed sum of money annually. While taking land on subcontracting is a pure economic decision for chadhas, the pahari owner of the land looks at it differently. He takes pride in the fact that Chadha’s family ‘work on their land’. Here ‘working on the land’ has a connotation of a traditional type of jajmani system where tiller used to be considered inferior to the land holder. Thus even though Chadhas live in opulence in local social context they have an ambivalent status, economically high but socially low.

As one pahari young man casually remarked:

‘Kya faida aise paise ka, agar bahu betiyon sahit chaubees ghante kam pe lage raho’

(There is no point in having that kind of money which engages your entire family on work round the clock)

That shows how traditional agronomic discourse has that inbuilt notion of ‘enough’ and any proclivity shown for excess was considered a sign of avarice. This is perhaps why the term ‘baniyoti’ or baniya -like was frequently
applied for Chadhas, meaning behaviour akin to banias who are traditionally believed to be highly appropriative in their business-behaviour. Also it suggests that social honour in village is not necessarily coterminous with one's class position. Reason why chadhas occupy not so high status in the village hierarchy is because of the fact that social esteem is contextual. This is further explained by how patriarchal culture of traditional agriculture understood and related to the 'movement of women' outside the personalized, familial and household domain as sign of lower middle peasantry. Those with 'enough' and 'more than enough' would consciously choose to restrict their women's movement as sign of their upward mobility. Interestingly the culture of agribusiness as represented by chadhas family can not afford such pretensions.

Social unrest & disharmony

Increased hostility against Chaddha & farm

Dependence on external forces including Migrant labour

Indisciplined local labour force

Complaint of Chaddha being anti village

Modern Agribusiness & its Vicious circle of social interaction
It is not that Sudhir Chadha is not aware of the hostility and envy of his village men around his farm. In fact during one of my visits I found Chadha family in the eye of a storm. The whole controversy had started after one of the migrant labourers from western Uttar Pradesh who was working on Chadha farm for some time eloped with the wife of Chadha’s immediate neighbor, interestingly the lone Sikh family with a few acre of land and leading a life in penury and misery, owing to inter-brother rivalry, alcoholism and tendency to sell land for greener pastures in nearby city. The Sikh family put the blame squarely on Chadhas for the elopement. Sikh family claimed Chadhas want them to sell their remaining lands to them and leave the village and this was another way of putting pressure on them by instigating his labourers against them. Expectedly the overall mood in the village was against Chadhas. Villagers in general stoked the fire by saying that when it comes to choose between ‘gaon ki ijjat’ (honor of the village) and his migrant labourers Chadha still back his workers. Another layer of malafide campaign, it seems, to score over the Chadhas was on. The issue kept smouldering for quite some time and only got settled when the woman in question was traced with the help of somebody known to the Sikh family who saw her in a nearby city with that labourer and quickly informed the family in chakaluwa.

I, in fact, met the family and also the woman and was surprised to find that she was not repentant at all for her behavior. As it appeared villagers anyway do not quite appreciate and encourage the outsiders and especially migrant workers who are seen as intruders to village social and cultural life. Since Chadhas agribusiness took off they started depending on these workers for their loyalty as traditional workforce, according to Chadha are susceptible to
the vilification campaign triggered by village politics every now and then. Settled presence of these migrant labourers from distant underdeveloped places suit chadhas as elements of trust and loyalty is more with them. Also more distant a place the labor belongs to and come from, less prone they are to absenteeism which is rampant among the locals. Under one pretext or the other the local labourer would abscond for days without any information and appear one day with lame excuses expecting favor citing familiarity and local relationships. And if not accommodated they join the opponents of chadhas. Another reason why chadhas prefer migrants is that since they invest and work hard on their training and it really hurts when they (locals) do not value these in puts.

It is not that migrant labourers are new phenomenon to this area. Even earlier when agriculture was ‘rice-wheat-sugarcane’ type migrant labourer used to come for work for a certain period, earn their wages and used to go back to their home states (mostly from Bihar and UP). But now with the introduction of floriculture and other market oriented cash crops like papaya, litchi etc. they are almost settled here with family members taking turn in visiting their home towns. This trend has not been quite liked by the majority in the village (mostly traditionalist farmer). They consider them (labourers) nuisance for the village. No wonder these migrant labors are soft targets for the disgruntled elements that are always on look for some issue to embarrass chadhas and settle score with them. Chadhas are naturally very patronizing towards his workers when it comes to taking sides which is again considered and projected by his adversaries as sign of disloyalty to the village.

Sudhir chadha regrets this aspect of his farm life but cannot help it either. To
prove a point Sudhir introduces to me his accountant, a pahari boy but educated and computer literate who Sudhir argues is there with him not because of his ethnic identity but because of his qualification and ability. Agribusiness requires skilled manpower which is difficult to get from the traditional quarters of the village. Recently he had to advertise for a post of lab-assistant in a local newspaper with essential qualification of post graduation in organic chemistry for his tissue culture lab. For this Rs. 5000/- a month salary job he has shortlisted a candidate from Kanpur. This is inevitable, argues Sudhir, as modern agribusiness can not sustain itself in a traditional ‘familistic-reciprocal’ environment. Unlike his father who considers paharis ‘aalsi’ or idle Sudhir feels that paharis are certainly less enterprising when it comes to agriculture which he reasons may be because minimalist-subsistence kind of low scale agriculture that they have been used to in hills for ages.

Sudhir’s understanding finds apt description in what an old pahari woman (70 years) commented about agriculture in the hills:

‘Waha kya kheti hogi. Din bhar khet me kam karo, aur sam me peechnay dekho to wahi ke wahi’.

(What is there in the hills to think of interms of agriculture? You work there the whole day on your land and in the evening when you look back you realize you have hardly moved).

This statement contextualizes the notion of time and space in hills. In hilly
areas where arable lands are scarce and whatever ladder-like plots are there prepared on slopes are mostly very small units which are extremely difficult to cultivate. Thus the notion of 'minimalist-substantial' type of hill agronomy is as much part of hill people's cognitive map as to their existential-temporal world.

The attitude of small-scale cultivation for mere subsistence has affected and shaped the hill people's understanding about agriculture in a particular way which is minimalist, limited in scope and non-entrepreneurial. Even the thought of any business out of agriculture is considered weird and creation of a feeble mind in the villages in the interior of hills.

Another important facet in Senior Chaddha's interaction with the neighbors and villagers in general comes to the fore when one looks into his relationship with the most immediate, in fact, only Sikh family living in the vicinity. Senior Chadha seems to suffer from 'identity confusion'. When he interacts with this family, he becomes a Hindu and while interacting with Hindus but paharis he becomes captive of his Panjabi moorings. This could be an important factor leading to his alienation from his village. Further class distinction makes it more accentuated and virtually non-negotiable.

Sudhir chadha, however, on his part tries hard to dispel some of these
misgivings. Though not so successful he explains his endeavours:

Itne kaam badh gaye hain ki kise bataun. Farm ke kam aur unke marketing aadi me itne samay lag jate hai ki apne liye samay hi nahi bachta. Upar se alag alag jaghon pe agriculture fair aur seminar aadi me bhi jata rahta hun apne business ko update karne ke liye. Jo thoda bahut samay milta hai sochta hun pariwar aur bachhon ke ssaath bitaun. Ab padosi aur gaon bale ise meri akad ya paise ka ghamand kahe to dukh hota hai par kya karun.

(As I become very very busy and occupied with my various farm activities in the village and elsewhere and whatever little time that I am left with after attending workshops and agro-seminars etc. I want to devote atleast some time with my family and especially kids. Now I agree this has certainly affected my interaction level and frequency with my village folks but I feel sad when this is perceived and constructed as snobbery)

Sudhir is right as most of the villagers complained about his non-participation in village activities and attributed it to their growing class-status. As the paharis say:
jyada paisa ho gaya hai ab unko gaon se aur gaon bale se kya matlab hai

(why should he bother as he has become rich now and he does not need us or the village anymore)

ARMY JOB: ULTIMATE PRIDE FOR A PAHARI
Photos in the background in these houses reflect the sentiment in plenty

A door-to-door random survey and interaction with the chadha’s neighboring pahari families indicated a pre-dominant preference for army jobs followed by petty government jobs like peons in banks and other state government establishments. The most cherished dream of any pahari youth is to join Indian military. That almost all the pahari family in chakaluwa has atleast one man in the Indian army, reflect their fascination for army jobs. The famous Kumaon and Garhwal regiment frame the culture of a typical pahari home. Both the kumaoni and Garhwali folk songs are full of melancholic references to the mother’s urge to meet his son who is away on the border fighting the enemy or a young girl’s heartrending remembrance for her beloved in the army. Agriculture, in other words, has never been accorded any significant place in hill society traditionally. Sudhir chadha apart from the element of non-entreprenurial culture of the paharis attributes to the following factors for lack of agribusiness initiative in the village: 1-Local hostile environment 2- local
politics, especially panchayat election which seems to have further divided the village on caste and community lines. 3-sharpened pahari-nonpahari identity articulations accentuated by local politician who have been rendered issue less after the formation of the new state of uttaranchal.

That chadha farm's success story could not travel beyond its boundary suggest that there has been almost negligible centrifugal tendency in the agribusiness currents in chakaluwa. Chadha farm can be visualized as an island of prosperity amidst vast ocean of subsistence agriculture marked by apathy, gross indifference, hostility and almost fatalistic attitude of 'kaun jhamela leta hai' (why take this headache). Traditional farmers mostly verbalized their complacency by saying 'theke par jamin de do aur mast raho' (give the land on subcontracting and relax). That is, land never appears to them as an asset. In fact there is an increasing tendency among the pahari families to sell off their lands in Chakaluwa and buy cheap land near the emerging towns as after the formation of uttarakhand these terai based small local towns have become hot property and land prices have shot up and it is being seen as lucrative investment for the future.

Apart from Chadha's own initiative and acumen for agribusiness what seems to have helped their ventures immensely is the way the Chadhas used various support schemes like easy bank loans provided by the government in the last decade of economic liberalization. They also seem to have used their image of progressive farmer of the area to elicit favor from the politicians, bureaucrats and banking sector high ups to create the required infrastructure on their farms as it appeared from Sudhir's proud possession of photographs
with the politicians and bureaucrats at various occasions, some of which donned the walls of his house at prominent positions. In fact he himself admitted that the government is encouraging people to start such projects but very few show interest. He has been keenly following the developments and seeking governmental support by personally meeting officials and others who are promoting new commercial projects in agriculture in Uttarakhand. Again this is being seen by the common villagers as misappropriation of government funds which essentially are meant for the development of the entire village. This of course again is a misplaced perception as to an average pahari villagers government projects mean freebies and hence the view.

In my last visit to the village chakaluwa in the summer of 2005 I witnessed steady but phenomenal growth in the fortunes of Chadha farm. This was not merely in terms of mere expansion of chaddha's floriculture based business beyond chakaluwa in the distant hill areas of Nainital but also the phenomenon of extreme corporatisation that his office near his residence in chakaluwa had undergone. While Sudhir chaddha was chatting with his clients and business partners on the internet, the newly appointed lab technician Mr. Ram Moorthy, a young south Indian who had graduated from the Pantnagar agricultural university seemed busy in a highly sophisticated laboratory. What made all this technical paraphernalia, now ordinary stuff in any city, extraordinary was its coexistence with an extremely opposite setting marked by traditional technical knowledge form and ways of life as reflected in the life style and cultural settings of the paharis.

There were, however, visible signs of discontentment amongst chaddhas vis-à-vis his chakaluwa co-villagers as evident in the gradual strategic shifting of
farm base from chakaluwa to nearby areas. As Sudhir chaddha explained:

Ham ab chakaluwa me naya kuchh start nahi karma chahte hain. Par Papaya ka kaam yahan se chalega aur apna residence yahin rakhenge Waise bhi jis tarah ke phool ham lagana chah rahe hain uske liye pahdon ki jamin aur awohawa achhi hai. Saath me waha kam karma bhi asan hai ek ajnabi ke roop me.

(We do not want to add new enterprises in this village. Other than the limited level of papaya seed cultivation and our residential and office establishment we are shifting our base to nearby areas in the hills. The kind of flowers that we want to grow, these areas near hills provide better weather conditions and congenial social and political environment. It is easy to work there as a neutral unacquainted person)

Sudhir explained it further which also captures the sentiments of growing inter-ethnic divide in the area:

Pahadon me rahne bale abhi bhi bade saade seedhe log hote hain. Ye jaise hi plain me jate hai politics karne lagte hain aur pahari- pardeshi ki baat karne lagte hain.

(People of hills are generally simple and helping but those who have settled in the plain terai region have become politicized and think on ethnic lines)
This one was not an isolated or a stray remark. Rather most of the migrant non-hill population of this area makes this distinction between the ‘pure hill people’ and ‘terai hill people’, where the later always meant in a pejorative sense. Terai settled hill population is always perceived as ‘chalu’ (cunning) and untrustworthy by the non-hill migrant population. Similarly the pahari population looks at their counterparts as ‘greedy’, ‘business minded’ and ‘self-centred’. This is interesting, for instance, the way the word ‘business’ is prefixed here with a very strong negative moral connotation; meaning thereby lowly people. Economic prosperity of these enterprising migrants from Panjab and Haryana and also from the western U.P is attributed to their indulgence in materialistic pursuits by the paharis in general. As one pahari gentleman from Almora whom I met at a chai shop in chakaluwa put it:

Desi se bach ke, ye paise ke liye apno ko bhi bech de. Paisa hi inka iman dharma hai

(beware of these people from plains. Money is their religion. They will even sell their own people for money).

Apart from the immediate contextual rationale behind these image formations there is also this dominant cultural constructs prevailing among the people from the hills in general which downgrades any pursuit of profit making. This is further reflected in their everyday life references. As you talk to the old people from hills they will tell you how these baniyas and sahukars will be doomed for the status of lower creatures in their next births. Local money lenders are given respect only till they are face to face. The moment they would leave people would curse them with all kinds of wishful of punishments
with grotesque descriptions like how their soul would be put into boiling oil etc. it is an interesting phenomenon as the word ‘business’ is used quite frequently to contrast the ‘pure’, ‘sacred’ and ‘emotional’ world of the hills in the past. Repeated use of the word ‘business’ in describing situations to employ the degeneration in overall social relationships and culture especially by the old people underlines the inbuilt antithesis to anything profit making. As they would say:

Sab kuchch aaj kal business ho gaya hai. Pahle log paisa kamate the behtar jindagi, behtar sambandh ke liye. Par ab to ‘paisa’ hi sab kuchch hai.

(Everything now has become ‘businesses’. Earlier people would earn money for better life and healthy relationships but now money has become primary goal).

Not quite surprising therefore that when it comes to using ‘land’ or agriculture in general towards profit maximization the mood is clearly discouraging. The traditional thinking treats modern agribusiness like floriculture as thing of the ‘profane’ world. This negativity surrounding agribusiness among the paharis especially, may not be the only important factor but it certainly has considerable influence on the people who have been too pampered and cushioned by the status-quoist cosiness of subsistence agriculture.

No wonder chaddha farm in chakaluwa appears like an island insulated from all sides. It has over the years created its own culture of agriculture which is modern, dynamic, entrepreneurial and profit-driven. The third generation of
chaddha family Sushant chaddha, son of Sudhir, is barely 19yrs old but shares his father's dream of becoming country's top name in floriculture business. Sudhir is grooming him into this by associating him in the activities of his new padampuri (near Nainital) uttaranchal orchids farm. He smilingly says:

‘Do saal ki free consultancy doonga. Aakhir Beta hai. Par bad me isse bhi fee charge karoonga. Free milne par log regard nahin karte hain.

(I will help him and provide him free consultancy for initial two years. after all he is my son. But after that I will charge him with my consultancy fee)

But before you try and take it in a lighter vein, Sudhir surprises you by saying:

Mai bahut seriously ye baat kah raha hun. Kyunki mujhe lagta hai agar kuchh bhi free mile to log uski kimat nahi samajhte. To suru me ise madad karunga taki ye apne pairon pe khada ho sake aur phir chhod dunga. Apni galtiyon se hi sikhega.

(I am very serious. Please do not mistake me as I firmly believe that anything which comes free of cost is not taken seriously and less valued. So I will help him initially to stand on his feet in this sector and then leave him to take his own decisions, make mistakes and learn from it)
Menu chaddha, his wife, nods in agreement as sudhir elaborates it further:

Mere father ko kuchch bhi plate me nahi mila. Unhone jo mujhe diya uspar mihnat karke maine use dugna kiya. Ab ye nae generation ko badhana hai. Unhe to balki hamse achha karma chahiye kyunki unhe to ek background bhi hai ab.

(My father did not get anything on platter. He worked hard but I worked doubly hard on whatever he passed on to me. Now it is the turn of the new generation to carry it forward and actually better it given the fact that they have had substantial background)

This actually goes to show to the extent the Chadhas have mastered the art of disassociating their ‘emotional world’ from their ‘professional’ agripreneurial domain which is characterized by pure reasoning and instrumental rationality.

Most importantly, there is absolutely no confusion or dilemma in all this. This family is working on their future with a vision. It would not be a big deal for them to send their children to any high profile business schools or in any engineering colleges imitating the dominant trend among most of the affluent paharis who would take pride in the fact that their children were studying medicine or engineering, even if in some sub-standard institutions. Reasons Sudhir:

Bachche padh ke bhi akhir kheti hi karenge. Jab yahi karna hai to engineering karba ne se kya fayada.

Kheti me bhi awsar hai balki jyada awasar hai. Abhi
se unhe practical exposure de raha hun.

(After all children will ultimately join my business which I have created with so much effort. What is the point in doing engineering etc. as they will be of no use. There is more opportunities in agriculture. So we are preparing them for future with practical exposure)

Sudhir Chaddha's story is a story of a man who chased his dream of becoming a successful agriculturist by dint of sheer hard work and with a rare skill of negotiating and networking with both the man and nature made odds. His shifting his farm base from chakaluwa to other places shows his adaptability and flexibility in approach to his work. These new places provide him with congenial neutral settings away from the hostility of chakaluwa. Hostility in chakaluwa is such that when recently one of the family members of chaddha's immediate neighbor, the sikh family (remember the one whose wife had eloped with the labourer of chaddha) committed suicide and when police visited the village some people tried to give it a different colour by saying that it was because of chaddhas constant pressure and harassment that he resorted to this extreme step. Matter though now settled, Sudhir however believes in moving on. Unfazed by all these he is busy pursuing his business. Recently he visited Belgium, Taiwan and Holland to explore new opportunities and trends in global flower market.

Chaddha's neighbors on the other hand, all paharis except one, in contrast lead a slow-paced life with a laid-back attitude, away from the din and bustle of chaddha farm. Take the case of Gopal Singh. He has a large acre of land, about 15 acre, and a substantial portion of which he has converted into
mango orchard. On rest of the land he grows conventional crops with the sole aim of ensuring household needs related to food. It was one summer afternoon, around 2 pm, when I reached their residence there was no trace of life around, all were sleeping after lunch. Even the stray dog near his house behaved indifferently to my arrival. It looked to me without any movement in its body, waged its tail and again slept. After repeated knock at the door finally Gopal Singh appeared, visibly upset with this interruption. In fact I was coming to Gopal’s house straight from Chaddha farm, barely at a distance of half a kilometer. In contrast the farm related activities on Chaddha farm were on full swing, we had lunch together but there was no sign of post lunch nap there. Later as Gopal Singh revealed:

Haan ham log khane ke baad thoda so let te hai.
Waise bhi kya karna hai. Bahar itni garmi hai, andar fan chalta hai. Ek do TV programme dekh kar so jate hain.

(Yes we take a nap post-lunch. In any case there is nothing to do and it’s so hot outside. Inside atleast we have a fan and after watching a few serials on the television we all sleep till late in the evening)

With two of his three sons in army and even the one left is all geared up to join the army Gopal, understandably, has no reason not to enjoy this luxury of extended nap in the afternoon. On queried as to why has he converted such a large portion of his highly fertile land into a mango orchard which is not a smart move given the fact that it occupied the land permanently with meager biannual returns and what about engaging at least one son in agriculture on Socio-Cultural Dimensions of Agribusiness Practices in Selected Villages of the Terai Region of Uttarakhand
the pattern of Chaddha, Gopal Singh responded:

‘kheti me izzat nahi hai. Army job hamare liye bahut samman ki bat hai. Hamare samaj me agar aapka beta kheti karta ho to shadi ka rista bhi achche ghar se nahi aata. Rahi baat phool ke kheti ko to ye sab chaddha logon ke bas ki hai. Hamne to kabhi is taraf socha hi nahi. Waise bhi kaun itna ‘headache’ le. Do bachche fauz me hain teesra bhi chala jayega, phir kya karna hai itna paise ka. Apne gujare ke liye to hamari purani kheti hi kafi hai.’

(There is no honor in agriculture. Army jobs give us social prestige. In fact in our society it is difficult to find girls from respectable families for your son if they are engaged in agriculture. And as for floriculture we did not even think about it. Anyways it is not for us, only Chaddhas can do it. It is such a headache. With sons settled in army jobs we are contented with our conventional agriculture which takes care of our requirements).

These comments once again underline the lowly status assigned to agriculture in the hierarchy of pahari social and cultural life. Gopal Singh’s remarks that it would be difficult to find girls from respected families for marriage if son would be engaged in agriculture highlights this point. Further his apathy to Chaddha’s floriculture is baffling given that he is barely at a distance of less than half a kilometer. Not surprising therefore Gopal Singh,
despite being such a close neighbor of Chaddhas at least in terms of their residential locations had last met Sudhir chaddha some six months back!

Gopal admits:

Ab milna julna kam hi hota hai. wo apne kam me busy hain ham apne me. Waise to ab gaon me ye milne-julne ka riwaj kam hi ho gaya hai. Sab apne apne me simat gaye hain. Chaddha to waise bhi kabhi milne julne walon me nahi the.

(We rarely meet each other. He is busy in his world, I have my own engagements. Generally the culture of meeting on a regular basis in village is disappearing. In any case Chaddhas have never been very mixing kind of people)

Informal interactions with the pahari male members in the six famililies around chaddha farm in the village to explore their daily routines and to know about the trends in leisure activities of an average pahari male member above 18 years of age threw up some interesting facts. Men did tend to spend quite a lot of time watching television. They appeared to prefer news channels and sports. Daily routine would invariably involve visiting local market of Chakaluwa at least once for petty household shopping, followed by a cup of tea at local chai-pan shop and then back home. Interestingly there seemed to be not much of social interaction amidst all this. Older people would nostalgically remember the time when by evening people would gather at a common place, mostly in the local primary school campus and it used to be
the hub of all sorts of discussions ranging from issues of local concern to provincial and national importance. Television had not arrived those days and newspaper was not so much common, radio along with these get-togethers used to work as real social adhesives. It appears that the boom in communication networks like TV cable networks, mobiles and newspapers have adversely affected the organic unity of the village. The urge for meeting is no more; insulated in their houses the villagers tend to become self-centred leading to minimal social interactions. The villagers would much rather prefer watching various reality shows than assemble at village public spaces like school premise or panchayat bhawan for earthy and raw gossips and some laughter which they get better packaged at TV shows. This insularity is broken only in cases of death of somebody or marriage of someone’s daughter or similar such social occasions. One can say that the nature of relationship is increasingly becoming ‘secondary’, utilitarian and end-oriented. Village seems to be a conglomerate of independent households separated by arable lands with huge social distances in between. As one villager put it:

"Aaj kal agar bina kam ke kisi ke yaha jayenge to log sochte hai koi kam hoga. Bhai chare ke naam pe milne ka riwaz to ab khatam hi ho gaya hai. Dusre ke yaha bina kaam ke jane ko log achcha nahi mante (Nowaday if you go to meet someone at his house he will think you have some work or some favor to take. The tradition of casual meetings with each other is simply out of favor in a changed environment. In fact such meetings are socially disapproved)"
This social distancing becomes all the more acute when it comes to relating with the chaddhas. Though there are still a few like Dan Singh, retired army personnel, who appreciate and acknowledge chaddhas hard work behind the prosperity. He rubbishes the dominant view prevalent among his pahari community that chaddhas are selfish and unsocial. Not one to mince words Dan Singh had this to say:

'logon ko unki tarakki pasand nahi aati hai. Jalne ke bajai achcha ho ham me se kuchch log unse sikhe ki kheti kaise ki jati hai. Gaon ke log sarkari naukari ke intezar me baithe baiithe negative ho gaye hain. Din bhar patte, sarab aur TV ke saath samay katne se aane bala samay aur kharab hoga

(People, especially from my own community cannot digest Chaddhas success. instead of envying some of us should learn from chaddhas how to do agriculture in a better way. Young people are wasting their time in search of already scarce government jobs. They are wasting their time in drinking liquor, playing cards and watching TV instead)

Sadly, Dan Singh's is a lonely voice. Majority opinion still remains on somewhat discordant with this island of prosperity in Chakaluwa. This is perhaps why Chaddhas have given up now on 'familiarity factor' in their recruitment policies for on-farm labour force, be it technical or manual. They prefer 'neutrality' factor. They believe that working and operating in a neutral environment is far more conducive. This perhaps explains why Sudhir settled
for a south Indian lab assistant at his tissue culture laboratory who has M.Sc. in horticulture from Pant Nagar University. Sudhir reasoned:

Hamne ise merit ki wajah se liya hai. Aur phir ye dur se hai to aur bhi hame suit karta hai. Is karan ye bina wajah chhutti aur unprofessional kaam nahi karta. Sabse badi baat ye hai ki ye bahut imandar aur mihnati aadmi hai. Ham ise apne ghar ke member ki tarah hi mante hain

(I have taken him purely on the basis of merit. Secondly his being from such far off place suited my requirements. He is less susceptible to erratic leaves and unprofessional attitude unlike the locals. Besides he is very hard working and honest. We treat him as one of our family members)

Understandably so, agribusiness activities at this level require professional ethic more than emotional doses of tradition-bound camaraderie at the local level. Given the nature of agribusiness which is characterized by hectic schedule and dynamism where one has to constantly work on newer strategies, newer variety of seeds, newer market strategies and newer crops the farmers engaged in this sort of activities have to be always on alert and agile to respond to invisible anonymous players. For instance chaddha who had started with gladioli and other variety of cut flowers gradually moved to seed and bulb production which meant better returns and less of running around related to sell of flowers in local and Delhi mandi. Also gladioli cultivators from the areas adjoining Delhi started to crowd the market leading
to slump in business. As a result the Chaddhas diversified into papaya seed and pulp business. They also exported litchi and now they are trying their luck in sarifa (sugar apple or Annona squamosa) cultivation as they see huge potential for export in this. Also in floriculture segment they are into highly sophisticated varieties of gerbera and orchids especially for the export market. All this requires constant research and networking. Thanks to communication boom such as internet which has made life easy for farmers like Chaddha. No wonder Sudhir recently bought a laptop which he carries along with him wherever he goes.

While Chaddhas are busy chasing newer dreams the rest of Chakaluwa enjoys afternoon nap cushioned by safe, secure and simple life of conventional agriculture and its uninterrupted, non-risky world. Chakaluwa and its village dynamics around Chaddha farm reveals some of the socio-cultural conditions which make it difficult for conducting or taking up farm related activities.
TWO GENERATIONS, TWO WORLD VIEWS:

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<th>HAR KISHAN LAL CHADHA</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Agriculture as 'Dharma'</td>
<td>• Agriculture as means to 'Artha'</td>
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<td>• Prosperity through minimalist consumption pattern</td>
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<td>• Agriculture based on sweat and Blood.</td>
<td>• Agriculture based on innovation and Science and technology.</td>
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<td>• Traditional trapping behind Eco pursuits</td>
<td>• Need no such traditional approval</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Fixated with the past and Its moorings</td>
<td>• Believes in moving with the time and agriculture with reasoning which can be replicated any where.</td>
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<td>• Almost Contemptuous towards his neighbors, mostly paharis</td>
<td>• Tries hard to mix up, in fact tries his level best to participate in social Functions and marriages etc., does not harbour any ethnic ill feeling Regrets being misunderstood by his villagemen.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Enjoy being printed and mentioned in the local media, about his journey from a refugee to being the richest</td>
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