Chapter 3: Coming to Terms with Self-Regulatory Focus and Counterfactual Thinking: An Anthropological Perspective

Had we made the key choices in our life differently, then how different our life would have been? What if you had gone to a different university, opted for a different career, married some other person, or born in a different caste/country/family/? Most of us ponder about such “possibilities” at least once in a while. This kind of brooding is nothing but counterfactual thinking.

As discussed in the previous chapter, there are studies which establish how counterfactual thoughts of additive and subtractive type are guided by distinct self regulatory strategies of promotion focus and prevention focus respectively (Pennington & Roese, 2003; Roese et al., 1999; Zou et al., 2009). Moreover, there are cross-cultural studies which have investigated content of counterfactual thinking (Bloom, 1981; Au, 1983, 1984, 2004; Chen et al., 2006; Gilovich et al., 2003), regulatory focus (Elliot et al., 2001; Lalwani et al., 2009; Lee et al., 2000; Uskul et al., 2009; Van – Dijk & Kluger, 2004), or the association between the two (Zou et al., 2009). But, none of these studies used any methodology to examine or explore these phenomena from close quarters in groups from where the participants were drawn. Therefore, it was decided to go for a shift in paradigm and start with the use of the more grounded approach of ethnography for studying the phenomenon in the Gurkhas of Dehradun. This phase of ethnography also helped in hypothesis building.

I believe that regulatory focus is important and potentially influential in guiding the content of counterfactuals because it has the ability to tap the strategic preferences of people
living in different cultures inhabiting different areas of the world, subsisting on different means of livelihood and having different world views. All the above mentioned studies are more or less silent on this issue because they have operationalized culture quasi-experimentally through country status and the range of participants considered in such studies is limited to university students only. The grounded approach of the present study was expected to further enhance the prospect of capturing the “real” situation as it exists out there.

The notion of two distinct regulatory focus orientations could be delineated in a nutshell as follows: people who are promotion focused keenly pursue gains or successes and are characterized by “openness to change” (Liberman, Idson, Camacho & Higgins, 1999) and “openness to experience” (Ackerman & Heggestad, 1997). Focusing on accomplishments, achievements, and the pursuit of ideals, they are oriented toward fulfilling their hopes and aspirations, and they examine their social world for information that bears on the quest of success (Lockwood et al., 2002). In contrast, people with a prevention focus endeavor to avoid negative outcomes and branded as those with “conservation” (Liberman et al., 1999) and “traditionalism” (Ackerman et al., 1997). Driven by the need to feel secure and to meet their obligations, these individuals are primarily concerned with preventing failures or losses, and their information processing and interpersonal strategies are geared toward avoiding undesirable outcomes (Higgins et al., 1994). Thus, promotion focus is about growth while prevention focus is about security (Gable & Strachman, 2008).

Therefore, in the present study for investigating the relationship between self regulatory strategies (prevention/promotion) and nature of counterfactual thinking (additive/subtractive), a grounded approach was adopted. An ethnographic study was carried out by me (NS is the acronym used in the text further) in the Gurkha Karbari hamlet of Karbari Grant village among
the Gurkhas which lasted for about two months. The village is situated in the Sahaspur block of Vikasnagar sub-district of Dehradun district in the state of Uttarakhand in India. The ethnography was an attempt to understand the Gurkha culture with a holistic perspective. In this phase, techniques used for data collection were non-participant observation, social mapping (for drawing village map and understanding the population distribution of Gurkhas and other communities in the village), unstructured interviews, and audio-visual aids. This approach helped me in identifying the potential variable of regulatory focus orientations in relation to counterfactual thinking in the day-to-day life of Gurkhas. Based on this I started hypothesizing about the potential difference in regulatory focus orientation among the young and old Gurkhas which could lead to predilection for additive or subtractive counterfactuals.

Anthropological techniques were adopted instead of just using rating analysis technique for investigating regulatory focus orientations (for example Elliot et al., 2001; Lalwani et al., 2009; Lee et al., 2000) or scenario based measures of counterfactual thinking (for example Roese & Olson, 1993; Roese et al., 1999) which have been the methods used so far. This is so because anthropological techniques provide a more grounded approach in understanding the phenomenon and also help in coming up with explanations which are more close to the cultural reality of the group. This method of starting with anthropological techniques was used because culture plays a central role in shaping the individual’s cognitive, affective, and motivational processes. Through socialization, persons are endowed with an interpretive framework that institutes their view of the world, the self, and the self’s place in the world (Markus, Kitayama, & Heiman, 1996).

In view of the above let us firstly have a brief look at the “way of life” of Gurkhas of Karbari Grant village as revealed from the ethnographic study of the community. However, I do not claim my ethnography to be exhaustive and a means-to-an-end in itself. The fact that I was in
the village to study their (Gurkha’s) culture was well known to the entire community. I was at any point in time not engaged in doing “participant observation” and there was no attempt from my side to conceal my motives during the course of study. Hence it could be said that the ethnographic approach adopted by me followed that of Hammersley and Atkinson (2005).

3.1 The Gurkhas

It is vaguely known in India that Gurkhas come from Nepal, but that is how history describes them. The relationship between Gurkhas and Nepal is indispensible for anybody who wants to understand and study the community. Nepal has a very ancient history and civilization which is beyond the purview of this study. Nepal seems to have been in the past ages a kind of dumping ground for numerous emigrants, both from north and south (Morris & Northey, 1974). One often comes across the Khassia ethnic group. The descendants of this race now form the Rajput or Kshettriya clans of Gurkha which has been the major governing class among them (Morris & Northey, 1974). They claim for themselves rights in the second rank in the Hindu hierarchy, that of true Kshettriyas, and also wear the sacred thread.

The present study was undertaken in the Gurkha community residing in the Gurkha Karbari hamlet of the Karbari Grant village in Sahaspur block of Vikasnagar sub-district of Dehradun district in the state of Uttarakhand. For collecting data on some aspects like origin, history and social structure of Gurkhas the apex body of Gurkhas in Dehradun known as Gurkhali Sudhar Sabha was also contacted.
3.1.1 Brief account of field area

Karbari Grant village is situated between 30°35’N latitude and 77°94’ E longitude at a distance of about 21 km from Dehradun city, towards South of the National Highway 72 which connects Dehradun to Ponta Sahib, famous pilgrimage for the Sikhs. Direction wise the village is located towards the north-west of Dehradun. The climate is generally temperate, but varies greatly from tropical to severe cold. The area receives an average annual rainfall of about 2,000 mm with July and August being the rainiest (as per the data of local metrological department).

The village Karbari Grant is multi ethnic having communities like Gurkha, Gadhwal, Panjabi, but no representation of any minority community like Muslim, Christian, etc. There were about 322 households in the village with population of 1590, out of which 758 were males and 832 females having a very healthy sex-ratio of 1098 females for 1000 males. The literacy rate in the village was 79.33% which is much high than the national average (Census of India, 2001).

The Gurkha Karbari hamlet of the village is mostly populated by Gurkhas along with a few Garhwali families and a Punjabi family residing in it. The hamlet had about 104 Gurkha households with a population of about 529 out of which 262 were males and 267 females. The sex-ratio is evenly poised between the males and females at 1019 females for 100 males. Morphological features like epicanthic fold and short stature puts this group in the mongoloid stock and it is believed that they migrated from Nepal a few centuries ago. Literacy rate is good at about 93% (about 95.71% for males and 90.87% for females). Seeking job in armed forces of India is still a passion among some. A large section of the Gurkha society practice agriculture. The crops grown are mostly different varieties of Basmati rice, which are grown by some
farmers using exclusively organic manures and even exported outside India. The agricultural ties of the village are strong with another village nearby known as Buddhi Gaon where Muslim community dominates. A single Gurkha family in the village is engaged in sericulture, while members of a few households work in flower farms situated in the vicinity of the village. Moreover, some work as skilled and unskilled labourers in adjoining areas.

![Satellite image of Gurkha Karbari hamlet in Karbari Grant village of Dehradun](source: www.maps.google.com)

Figure 3.1: Satellite image of Gurkha Karbari hamlet in Karbari Grant village of Dehradun

Source: www.maps.google.com

The village has a very peculiar story behind the term “Grant” in the village’s name. It was told by some elderly in the village that before India became independent in 1947 this piece of land was owned by some King (name unknown). About that time, the news about annexing all the kingdoms into India after independence was spreading like fire. So the King, afraid of this
consequence, sold the land to some other King (again name unknown), who later ‘granted’ or allowed the Gurkha population already existing here to continue practicing agriculture on his land. He even asked the jobless Gurkhas, of that time, to come and farm his land. This is how the village got its name. Even today a large portion of the village land, mostly agricultural, is owned by the descendants of this King.

3.1.2 Origin and History of Gurkhas

There are two versions about the origin and history of Gurkhas – one prevalent among the Gurkhas of Karbari Grant village and the Gurkhali Sudhar Sabha while another has been described by Moris and Northeiy (1974; for more details refer to Saxena, 2012). According to my Gurkha participants, cow has been considered pious and sacred in Hindu religion and tradition. But, during the non-secular invasion by Muslim’s in India during 13th or 14th century, slaughtering of cows took place at mass level. In order to fight against this the Rajputs, Sikhs and hill men from Nepal formed a coalition group for “Gau-raksha” meaning “protection of Cow” and fighting against Muslim invasion which later came to be known as “Gurkha”. This title was given by Dravya Sah, a king of Sah dynasty. Later on the 10th King of Saha dynasty - Prithwi Narayan Sah unified the whole Gurkha kingdom of which Dehradun was also a part. Hence, according to the natives of the village, Gurkhas inhabit Uttarakhand and this village since then.

3.1.3 Social Structure of the Gurkhas

The smallest social unit in Gurkhas is family which is not a surprise. Gurkhas live in nuclear and joint families and the prominence of joint family system could easily be observed in the village. Social Structure of the Gurkhas is one aspect of the Gurkha community which is
most intriguing and often confusing and therefore I have classified the social structure of Gurkhas into traditional and present day social structure.

After family, the unit of social structure is clan which is an exogamous group and popularly known among Hindus as “gotra”. The concept of gotra is prevalent in Gurkhas too and it is believed that individuals of same gotra cannot marry each other. Several exogamous clans form a caste which is an endogamous group. Traditionally in the Gurkha society people marry within their own caste. To the notion of clan and caste are associated various social norms which act as a binding force in the Gurkha society. The tables given below illustrate the traditional social structure of Gurkhas, present social structure of Gurkhas, and details of castes as well as clans present in the Karbari Grant village of Dehradun (for more details on all three aspects refer to Saxena, 2012).

Table 3.1: Traditional caste hierarchy in Gurkha community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traditional Caste Hierarchy in the Gurkha community</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brahmins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thakurs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chetris or Khas</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gurungs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Magars</td>
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<tr>
<td>Limbus</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rais</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sunwars</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Table 3.2: Present caste hierarchy in Gurkha community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Caste hierarchy prevalent in the Gurkha community at present</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brahmins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chetris</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thakurs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gurungs</td>
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<td>Magars</td>
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<td>Limbus</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rais</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sunwars</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.3: Gurkha castes and clans present in Karbari Grant village

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Castes present in the Karbari Grant village</th>
<th>Existing clans within caste present in the Karbari Grant village</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brahmin</td>
<td>Upaddhe, Jaisi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chetri</td>
<td>Khatri, Khadka-Chetri, Chetri-Tiwari, Thapa, Chetri-Thakur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thakur</td>
<td>Thakuri, Mall, Sahi-Thakur, Mall-Thakur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gurung</td>
<td>Lama Gurung</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magar</td>
<td>Rana, Thapa, Thapa-Magar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rai</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
From the above tables viz. 3.1 and 3.2 the important change evident in the social structure and social organization of Gurkhas is the upward movement of Chetri in caste and social hierarchy from ancient to modern times.

### 3.1.4 Dispute Solving Mechanism in Gurkhas

Solving disputes in the community is indispensible for the sustenance of any community and Gurkhas are no different. Here again the dispute solving mechanism of Gurkhas has been divided into two sections: first one is the ancient or traditional mechanism, while the second one is the modern mechanism being followed these days among the Gurkhas as evident from the field work. The traditional dispute solving mechanism of Gurkhas involved institutions like Gurkhal Kings of Nepal at the national level, Jamwal or the Big Head-men who looked after more than one Gurkha villages and under whose aegis the Mukhiya or Village Head-men worked. Institutions of Jamwal and Mukhia are almost obsolete now. The present day indigenous dispute solving mechanism of Gurkhas involves institutions like “Adhayaksha” or head-man, “Upadhayaksha” or vice-headman, “Sachiv” or secretary, “Upsachiv” or assistant secretary, and “Koshadhayaksha” or treasurer (for more details refer to Saxena, 2012).

### 3.1.5 Religion

Like most of the communities Gurkhas too have a strong belief in religious institutions and follow the Hindu tradition in this domain. Interestingly when the Gurkhas formalized as a group for the first time, they were without any Brahmin class per se (Morris and Northey, 1974) which later emerged when Hindu Brahmins migrated from mainland India into Gurkha
territories. Presently Brahmins occupy the apex position in the caste hierarchy among the Gurkhas. The Gurkhas of Karbari Grant are mainly associated with three sacred centres in the village – the *Manak Siddha Baba* temple, the *Barah Bhagwan* temple, and the sacred grooves outside the village where annually *Sansari Mata Puja* is performed (for more details refer to Saxena, 2012).

### 3.1.6 Identity Preservation

Gurkhas, especially the ones residing in the village, are hurt about the fact that still often people in India label them frequently as “*Nepali*” meaning ‘citizen of Nepal’ and doubt their loyalty and integrity for India. To counter this they place many arguments like: As per the historic Treaty of Sigowli Gurkhas have been in this part of India (present day Uttarakhand and Dehradun) with their land which is often described by them by using the phrase “*tab se baître hain zammen ke saath*” meaning “have been here since then (i.e. 1816) with our own land” and not immigrated from Nepal. Secondly, about 200 Gurkha men and woman laid their life during the freedom struggle in India against the British. The notable one among them was martyr Durga Mall, whose bronze statue is in the Parliament of India. He expressed fearless pride about going to the gallows in the letter written on 22\(^{nd}\) August 1944 while he was to be hanged on 25\(^{th}\) August 1944.

One important thing that impacts Gurkha’s social structure and interaction of Gurkhas with other castes and communities in this region is the fact that Gurkhas of Uttarakhand, as well as of Karbari Grant, have been demanding for Scheduled Tribe status for a long time. On the contrary, they have been provided with Other Backward Caste status on 8\(^{th}\) November, 2003 vide
a formal notification in the state of Uttarakhand. This implies that now they can avail of 14 per cent reservation in state government jobs. Gurkha community (excluding Brahmins and Kshettriya) in Uttarakhand have also been included in the Central Government’s list for Other Backward Caste and therefore entitled to 27 per cent seat reservation in central government jobs and educational institutions among other benefits (“Storm over OBC”, 2012).

However, the community at large is not satisfied with OBC status as their demand is for Scheduled Tribe status. This is so because, they believe their way of life is comparable to other Scheduled Tribes in state. Another reason for the demand for Scheduled Tribe status is that no economic criteria have to be met to avail the benefits under Scheduled Tribe category unlike under an Other Backward Caste quota where only people who earn below a threshold level can avail the benefits. Gurkhas feel that as a community they have contributed heavily for India’s freedom, sovereignty and prosperity, but are looked upon by the general public still as a military class. In order to break out of this image they (especially young Gurkhas) want to make a mark in other fields, try new livelihood options and diversify. The young Gurkhas believe that if given the Scheduled Tribe status they can accomplish this more easily.

### 3.2 Ethnographic observations about self-regulatory orientations

During the course of ethnography in the Gurkha village I made certain observations which steered my attention to the probable difference in self-regulatory orientations of old and young Gurkhas. The observations are as follows:

The first thing which struck me is that rural Gurkhas of Karbari Grant village live in a separate hamlet – Gurkha Karbari which secludes them from the other neighbouring societies
like Gadhwalis of the village. Upon extension of the families by means of marriage or birth, Gurkhas seek to remain within their hamlet only as the mandate of the older generation is that for preservation of their culture and identity spatial separation is important. An example of this mindset is an instance which took place on 2nd April, 2011 in my presence in one of the Thapa family where recently one of their sons got married. The son was insisting for settling on a piece of larger land (about 20,000 sq. ft.) which is out of the Gurkha hamlet. Also, this piece of land had Gadhwali neighbourhoods. But, the elders of the family were adamant about making the son settle within the Gurkha hamlet though on a much smaller piece of land (about 1,500 sq. ft.). At last the son had to bow down to the wish of his grand-parents and father. The difference in opinion between the young and old could be gauged from this illustration.

Another instance is about Gurkhas and their land. Gurkhas here have been given the constitutional status of OBCs and there is no restriction on them from selling their lands to members of other community, but such an act rarely happens. The Gurkhas here never sell their land to an “outsider” from another community. On 26th March, 2011 one of my informants told me that few years ago a Gurkha from the village under huge financial pressure had to sell some of his land to person of another community from the village only. When the Gurkha community of the village came to know about it, then immediately all the elderly Gurkhas took a consensus decision to help the informant and made sure that land was recovered back as it meant ‘intrusion’ in to their territory.

The institution of marriage also sheds light on the dissimilarity in self-regulatory focus of the old and young Gurkhas. There are two aspects of marriage are worth attending to. One is that elders are strictly opposed to intermarriages with other ethnic groups of the area. An instance of intermarriage of a Gurkha girl with a boy of another caste from the village was reiterated several
times by my respondents during the course of field work. The Gurkha family in this case was virtually excluded by the Gurkha community of the village and only when the parents of the girl agreed to disown her they were allowed to mingle in the community.

On the contrary, off late a few instances of inter caste marriages have been reported in Gurkhas. In one of such case where both the bride (Gurkha) and groom were from the village and their marriage was not getting sanction from the village folks, especially the Gurkhas, they decided to migrate from the village and have settled near the main city of Dehradun showing that young Gurkhas are ready to break the barriers. This piece of information was provided by one of my young key informant and I validated it from other sources also.

The second aspect related to institution of marriage is that in Gurkha marriages of the village only the people from the community are allowed to lend a hand in preparations of the marriage, while the other community members from the village merely join on the occasion as “guests”. This indicates the kind of social distance and structure being maintained by the Gurkha elders. However, in discussion with one of my young key informants on 13th April, 2011, I came to know about a new trend being set up young Gurkhas of the village. These days before two or three days of marriage the groom along with his friends, who are from other communities too, go out in groups and perform a separate feast. This is the way in which young ones have begun to socialize and mix with other communities.

The most interesting and direct instance of prevention focused nature of old Gurkhas was evident during the Sansari Mata Puja on 2nd April, 2011. I observed that the elders of the community maintain the norm that only Gurkha members celebrate the occasion and be a part of it. The testimony for the strict observance of this pattern is the list prepared by Mukhiya
(traditional Head man) of the village, with the consent of other elder community members, for allocation of the duties regarding the auspicious occasion. All the duties are performed by people who are of Gurkha community only (Picture 3.1).

**Picture 3.1**
The above photograph illustrates how community members are allocated responsibilities in community festivals by village council.

In the same community meeting for *Sansari Mata Puja* I also observed that when the list was being discussed and prepared then some young Gurkhas of the community joined the
discussion and raised voice about inclusion and invitation to other communities also for the procession. The young ones think that such restrictions should be lifted now as it will give them the opportunity to go and join other communities on their auspicious occasion also and thus a more congenial and harmonious atmosphere for the development of youth could be created. However, the older Gurkhas owing to their dominance in the community did not accede to this request by their younger counterparts. Thus we see that views of the old and old are contrary to each other on the issue of socializing with other communities.

Few more domains where I found antagonistic views and mindset of old and young Gurkhas pertain to leisure activities and collection of fuel wood. During the entire course of my field work I observed that all the elder Gurkha men used to gather daily in the afternoon under a tree nearby the snacks shop which is centrally located in the village and play cards for long hours. This is one of the popular means of spending the leisure time. Once on 9th April, 2011 I asked them

“You people play alone here daily. Your fellow villagers of other communities don’t ever join you!!” Immediately I got the reply – “We are sufficient to carry on with this tradition....you can play if you want.”

I tried once but could not manage against their wit.

Likewise, I once accompanied the elder Gurkha women group (five of them; on 20th March, 2011) to the forest for collection of fuel wood and some herbs which are used by them for treatment purposes. I asked one of them –

“Do you talk and interact with women of other caste like Gadhwalis of the village?” She replied – “Yes we do.” I probed further – “Then why don’t they accompany you on this tough and dangerous journey to the forest?” Another woman was prompt to answer and replied – “We don’t like their company....they are different from us...we
don’t want to share our household remedies with them...it is for us only.” I asked further – “But if they come with you then they can also benefit from these medicines?” Another lady replied immediately – “It is for us only.....no need to share...there are many places from where they can get treatment.”

In the same vein, the sentiments of exclusiveness and seclusion among the old Gurkhas were again evident on 2nd April, 2011 when India won the International Cricket Council’s World Cup. The Gurkhas were eagerly waiting for the match and it was watched collectively by Gurkhas of the hamlet alone (mostly elderly and old Gurkha men and women). Upon India’s victory the entire hamlet gathered to celebrate it the whole night. Within no time drums and other musical instruments were arranged and a procession followed in the entire village. However, it was staggering to observe that this procession of Gurkhas was not joined in by the fellow villagers of other communities. Later on I came to know that a few of the young Gurkha were having a bon-fire in the outskirts of the village where they were also joined by some young ones from other communities for the celebrations.

Contrary to the ‘tradition’ of old Gurkha men and women of not allowing or not inviting folks from other sections of the village society for spending the leisure time or going to forest for collection of fuel, herbs, etc. the young Gurkha boys and girls are coming up with new ‘tradition’. I observed on several occasions that boys of different communities including Gurkha play together games like football, hockey and cricket. While the young Gurkha girls do not mind the company of girls from other communities while playing, singing and dancing. In fact, there is a duo in the village comprising of a Gurkha girl and a Punjabi girl (both in their teens) who are well known for their dancing skills and even won some awards in local competitions. When I asked one of the young Gurkha girl VB -
“How come young guys like you are able to cooperate so well with youngsters from other communities while your elders are not so comfortable?” She immediately replied with a twinkle in her eyes— “We have been studying together, playing together and eating together in the school….we are spending a lot of time together”

Two more instances are there which point to the promotion focused nature of the young Gurkha.

First instance – NS’s notes, 23rd March, 2011

I was among a group of three young boys – P, Q and R roughly in the age group 18 – 22 years and the discussion was about the carrier choices.

\[ P – (to Q) \] What you want to become .....?  
\[ Q – (thinking and then answers) \] A teacher.  
\[ R – (asks jokingly) \] Why....you don’t want to be a soldier?  
\[ Q – (replies promptly) \] No. I want to do something different from my fore-fathers.

Second instance - NS’s notes, 6th April, 2011

I was talking with two young ones – M & N (roughly in the age group 17 – 19 years) while they were returning from the ground near the village after playing the daily session of football in the evening.

\[ NS – How come so many Gurkha men are there in the Indian army? \]  
\[ N – (replied immediately) \] My father and his father didn’t wanted to think beyond the army job....it was easy to get in.  
\[ M – But we have to move ahead and expand in other fields.....look quite a few Gurkha boys stop education after high school for getting into the army but when they fail they open a Momos shop here. \]
Inference from observations

All the observations discussed above point towards the more closed, conservationist, traditional, unwillingness to change type of mindset of the older ones and also reflect that a lot of attention among the old ones is on things which should not be done or avoided like not getting married in other communities, not playing cards with others, not taking fellow of other community to the jungle for collection of wood and herbs, not inviting others on sacred performances, etc. This is so because the concept of ‘insider vs. outsider’ is dominant among the older ones. The older Gurkhas make it a point to maintain social distance with other communities and this age-old tradition seems to be deeply rooted in them. We also get the glimpse that how quickly and wit-fully the leisure activity of playing cards is tagged as “tradition” so as to keep other communities at bay.

Contrary to the old ones of Gurkha community these observations and illustrations point at the more growth oriented, thinking ‘out of the box’, willingness to change attitude of the young ones of Gurkha community and also draws attention to the fact that more emphasis among them is on doing things like the duo of dancing girls, Gurkha groom having a separate feast, informants Q and M wants to work in some other field apart from being in army. This is indicative of promotion focus and additive counterfactual thinking. One possible reason for this pattern, which comes out from the last instance cited of dialogue with a Gurkha girl, is the presence of modern schooling system where students from all classes and castes sit together, do things collectively, get education and get to know each other better.

These observations and illustrations led me to start thinking that young ones of the community are more promotion focused in life (showing more attributes like openness to change,
openness to experience, growth, etc.), while the elders or old ones of the community are more prevention focused (showing more traits like conservation, traditionalism, security, etc.).

3.3 Initial Hypothesis

The above discussed set of ethnographic observations and illustrations helped me with hypothesis building. The pattern or trend observable is that the young rural Gurkhas are more inclined to promotion than prevention focus, while the old rural Gurkhas are more leaned towards prevention than promotion focus. Also, the young seem to be believe in changing things by ‘doing’ something and old seem to be going about changing things by ‘restricting’ or ‘refraining’ from doing something. Previous studies (Pennington & Roese, 2003; Roese et al., 1999) have found that promotion focus is most typically associated with additive counterfactual thoughts and prevention focus is more likely to be associated with subtractive counterfactual thoughts. In line with this, it could be hypothesized that young rural Gurkhas owing to their more promotion focus orientation should produce more additive counterfactuals, while the old rural Gurkhas owing to their more prevention focus orientation should produce more subtractive counterfactuals.

3.4 Discussion

The results or inferences drawn from ethnography indicates that in the Gurkha community of Karbari Grant village, the younger participants seem to be more promotion focused and on the other hand older members of the community appear to be more prevention focused.
There are clear indications from ethnographic observations that the younger participants from the Gurkha community are more geared to growth, more willing to change for the better, diversify in occupations, aspiring to fulfill their hopes, and they want to rectify these by monitoring the “errors of omission” that is by additive counterfactual thinking. At the same time, the old participants are more traditionalist and conservationist in approach, not open to change, conscious about securing relationships, ensuring community participation in events, and not mixing with ‘others’. The old prefer fixing situations by monitoring the “errors of commission” that is by engaging in subtractive counterfactuals. Thus, we see that the two sub-groups (young and old) within the larger Gurkha community in the same village have different strategic preferences in their life molded by their cultural milieus and reflecting in the way they go about dealing with the issues of day-to-day life.

This is certainly not the first study which has provided an empirical basis to the assumption that regulatory focus strategies are closely knit with counterfactual thinking. Previous studies like the ones by Pennington and Roese (2003) and Roese et al. (1999) have shown this association before and even Zou et al. (2009, Study 3) showed it at cross-cultural level where they briefly talk about the distinction between culturally consensual regulatory focus and personal regulatory focus. However, the need for doing this study by employing such an approach and methodology was there because previous studies which have taken culture into account for explaining the pattern of counterfactual thinking have not paid any heed to the strategic preferences of their participants who represented their respective cultures. Also, no attempt was made what-so-ever in all these studies to tap the “way of living” in the group, society’s structure and hierarchy and presence or absence of sub-cultures or sub-groups in the
culture about which claims were being made. These factors have been cared for in the current research approach.

The present study thus presents a novel way of studying regulatory focus orientations in relation to counterfactual thinking and also asserts that the ‘thick description’ (Geertz, 1973) provided through anthropological and ethnographic techniques about the participants’ perceptions, experiences and behavior are crucial in understanding phenomena like self regulatory strategies, counterfactual thinking, and relation between the two. Moreover, the need is to explore the relationship between regulatory focus strategy and nature of counterfactual thoughts (of which we had only some glimpse in this study) more thoroughly and empirically as that will lead to the bigger question about how the content of counterfactual thoughts varies across contexts.