

A young couple begins with a small herd of *zomo* and rights to the family *kharke*. Ownership of the *kharke* may be either shared among brothers, or they may individually own them but share use. Parents assist the young couple by visiting and consulting on a regular basis. However, such assistance is not required. By the time they are married, children raised in a *gode* have extensive experience performing the work of a *gode* household. Between the ages of 5 and 12 years, children help with domestic tasks, such as carrying water, tending chickens and baby animals, caring for younger siblings, and assisting their mothers with chores. They also can go out with the herds. By 12 years of age, children are able to participate in adult physical labor, albeit with lighter loads. They may even provide labor within the village as a part of reciprocal labor arrangements, carrying manure to fields or carrying loads of firewood. Fodder gathering, which involves climbing high in trees to lop off branches and then carrying the huge bundles on their backs using tumplines, is generally the work of 15- to 18-year-old boys, as well as men. Adolescent boys also help to manage the animals around the homestead and travel back and forth between the *gode* and the village on supply runs. They know the surrounding topography well—the location of everyone's pastures, where to find water, and the location of other *gode* families. They whoop and shout as they move swiftly through the forest, announcing their presence to friends and predators alike. Girls begin helping their mothers with dairying chores by the time they are 12 or 13; once in their midteens, they are capable

of managing the *gode* for periods without their parents present. They milk, feed, and care for the animals; they assist their mothers with churning butter and drying cheese; they fetch water and are able to cook and make tea in the absence of their mothers. Life in the *gode* is intimate and provides ample opportunity for family members to learn every role.

In a *zomo gode*, there is a division of labor among men and women, although it is possible to interchange most duties if necessary. Milking is one task that is difficult to alternate. In nearly all Melemchi *gode*, women do the milking, and some animals do not permit anyone else to milk them. Women often miss village events because they are needed at the *gode* for milking. In one case we witnessed, a woman gave birth while her *gode* was in the village en route to a high pasture and within the hour was helped outside by her husband to milk several of their *zomo*. She collapsed and was taken inside, only to be brought out again and set up to milk a few minutes later. A tourist onlooker was horrified at what she perceived to be brutal and sexist treatment of this woman. In fact, both the husband and wife knew that she, and she alone, was the only one who could milk those particular animals. At least five men told of selling their *gode* when their wives had either died or been injured in such a way that they could no longer milk. No doubt it was the combined effect of the particular relationship between animal and caretaker and the loss of an adult worker that prompted the sale, since maintaining a young family and herd without a wife would be virtually impossible. Women who sold *gode* when their husbands died said they couldn't manage it alone.

In a *gode*, men's duties include carrying the heavy equipment and bamboo mats between pastures (in addition to general load carrying), cutting firewood, supervising livestock breeding, making advance trips to new pastures, buying and selling livestock, making supply runs to the village, and traveling to sell butter and cheese. Women maintain the household (cooking, cleaning, child care), milk the animals twice daily, make butter and cheese every other day, carry water, spin wool and weave cloth, care for small household livestock (chickens, calves, a few goats or sheep), and maintain the *gode* while men are away. Men and women agree: it is a hard life in the *gode*, especially for women.

*Milking and looking after the zomo is women's work. We make cheese, make butter—it's all women's work. Men don't have much work to do—they look after the house, climb trees to cut fodder, and cut wood.*

**Kando**, 33-year-old mother of two children (five more children were born in the following 9 years)

*We started the gode eight years ago. The man works taking the zomo to the forest, and the women milk and clean up the zomo shit and make butter. It is hard work in a zomo gode. If the husband stays all the time in the zomo gode, then it isn't such hard work. If the husband doesn't stay all the time in the gode, then it is very, very hard work. I have to do all his work and all of mine. I have three sons. We don't want to give the zomo gode to our children.*

**Maya**, 25-year-old mother of four, who came to the *gode* one week after she married her husband, Kami

It isn't until children are 5 or 6 years old that they are able to help with even the smallest tasks. As a woman milks each of her *zomo* twice daily (a task that can take

more than an hour and involves complete concentration to maintain her own safety as well as the animals'), she cannot be distracted by watching out for her toddlers. Maya locks her small children in the *gode* itself when she goes out to milk. Older children, however, are of crucial assistance to their parents. The predominance of large family size in Melemchi, especially prior to widespread availability of contraception, has no doubt contributed to the possibility for economic diversification found in Melemchi agropastoralism, as elsewhere (Fricke, 1986). It is interesting to note that, even today, the largest families are those living in *gode*, where children are ultimately an asset and where access to contraception and medical assistance is lowest (see Chapter 6).