

CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

2013

THE ANNUAL KATHMANDU CONFERENCE ON

NEPAL & THE HIMALAYA



This page has been left blank intentionally.

CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

2013

THE ANNUAL KATHMANDU CONFERENCE ON

NEPAL & THE HIMALAYA

This page has been left blank intentionally.

CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

2013

THE ANNUAL KATHMANDU CONFERENCE ON
NEPAL & THE HIMALAYA



Britain-Nepal
Academic Council



The papers contained in this volume were presented at the **Annual Kathmandu Conference on Nepal and the Himalaya**, 24-26 July, 2013, organised by **Social Science Baha**, the **Association for Nepal and Himalayan Studies** and the **Britain-Nepal Academic Council**.

Not all the papers presented at the conference were submitted for publication; some were published in other platforms while others remain unpublished. The conference schedule is provided in the appendix of this volume. The full list of presentations made at the conference along with the abstracts submitted can be viewed at <http://annualconference.soscbaha.org/akc2013>.

This volume was edited by a team at Social Science Baha consisting of **Khem Shreesh, Shaileshwori Sharma** and **Wayne Redpath**.

Preferred citation

Social Science Baha. 2018. *Conference Proceedings 2013: The Annual Kathmandu Conference on Nepal and the Himalaya*. Kathmandu: Social Science Baha.

© Individual authors

Published for Social Science Baha by Himal Books

ISBN: 978 9937 597 47 0

Social Science Baha

345 Ramchandra Marg, Battisputali, Kathmandu – 9, Nepal

Tel: +977-1-4472807, 4480091 • Fax: +977-1-4475215

info@soscbaha.org • www.soscbaha.org

Himal Books

Himal Kitab Pvt. Ltd.

521 Narayan Gopal Sadak, Lazimpat

Kathmandu – 2, Nepal

Tel: +977-1-4422794

info@himalbooks.com • www.himalbooks.com

Printed in Nepal

Price: Rs 700/-

Contents

1

Cultural Politics in the Markets

Case from Inter-Caste Negotiations at Meat Business in Kathmandu

Kanako Nakagawa

14

From Controlling Access to Crafting Minds

Experiments in Education in Rana Era Nepal

Lokranjan Parajuli

47

Decentralising the Farmer-to-Farmer

Extension Approach to the Local Level

Challenges and Learnings

Soma Kumari Rana and Shiva Kumar Shrestha

63

Modernity Prior to the Era of Development

Water Supply, Forest Management and 'Progress' during the Rana Period

Sudhindra Sharma and Bandana Gyawali

86

Paul Collier and Nepal's Prospects for Coming out of the Conflict Trap

Khem Raj Shreesh and Sudhindra Sharma

121

Mobilising for What?

A Discursive History of Nepal's Youth Policy

Amanda Snellinger

146

Politics of Nature Conservation and Space

National Park, River, and Sonaha Ethnic Minorities

Sudeep Jana Thing

172

Caste in Contemporary Nepal

Hierarchy and Equality

Gérard Toffin

198

The Contributors

201

Appendix

This page has been left blank intentionally.

Cultural Politics in the Markets

Case from Inter-Caste Negotiations at Meat Business in Kathmandu

KANAKO NAKAGAWA

Introduction

This paper attempts to analyse the process of the re-interpretation of caste brought about by the commercial practices at meat markets of Kathmandu, where people from various castes are interacting. Focusing on the members of Khadgī¹ caste, who have been engaged in slaughtering, processing, and trading of livestock as a caste-based role in the Newar society, I will describe the individual negotiations between Khadgī and other castes from Newar society and Muslims in their daily commercial practices, and the collective activities of Khadgī through their caste association.

By analysing the process, I try to propose alternative views to assess the cultural politics, which are often based on given categories such as ethnicity or caste and has emerged as ethnic identity politics. In the meat market, Khadgī negotiate individually beyond their caste and ethnicity, creating their local rules. However, on the other hand, Khadgī work collectively as well through their caste association Nepal Khadgi Sewa Samiti which was formed in 1973, as the first caste association in Newar Society.

Recently, especially after 2000s, this caste association has enlarged its role as an agent for re-interpreting caste-image to ensure the category of caste which helps to maintain their advantageous positions in the market. I want to show the process of their re-interpretation of caste as the cultural politics in the market, and present its features by contrasting it with the identity politics in the political fields.

1 Khadgī is one caste of Newar society, whose family name is Khadgī, Nāy, Śāhī, etc. In this paper, I call them Khadgī as a generic name since they use this name most frequently.

Caste identity and formation of caste association

Previous research have pointed out that people located in the low castes find specific meaning in the category of caste with political intention. In India, especially after the national census of 1931, many castes formed their own caste associations searching for their places in this politics. In many cases, the caste associations had been a platform to demand for their rights and the categories such as 'Scheduled Caste (SC)' or 'Other Backward Classes (OBC)' which are the subject of governmental affirmative reservations. For example, Shinoda (1997) and Searle-Chatterjee (1979) pointed out that the urban sweepers formed their caste association to demand their employment status as civil servants.

Regarding the Newar Society, after the democratisation movement of 1990, each caste started to form its caste association (Toffin 2007). However, in stark contrast to India, Nepal did not introduce any system of reservation for SC or OBC, to provide a social context to match the democratic political system in the 1990s.² Toffin pointed out that the main purpose of the formation of caste associations was to protect their individuality and to improve their image within the Newar community (Toffin 2007:363).

Shifts among the inter-caste relationships mediated by the market economy

Then, what kinds of effects the market economy has had on the caste society? Through the ethnographic accounts on the Newar village, Ishii observed that the market economy enabled people to release themselves from the restriction of caste, and the shifts among inter-caste relationships had been brought about. For example, Maharjan caste, who have come to have economic power following the improvement of agricultural productivity, have refused their caste-based role in rituals organised by upper caste, Śreṣṭha, and even resisted against Śreṣṭha. The market economy enables people to earn their livelihood beyond the previous social system, and that brought the shift among the inter-caste relationships (Ishii 1980).

Furthermore, through the comparative study between 1970 and 1996 of same Newar village, Ishii concludes that the market economy enabled people to release themselves from the restriction of caste, but nonetheless, the occupational relationships involved are not freed from the relational basis of caste. The 'resumption' of the occupation of lower castes has been taking place by the cash economy. For example, many Khaḍgī have 'resumed' their caste-based role as a meat shopkeeper. Ishii pointed out that

2 Since 2003, the government of Nepal has started to introduce the reservation system.

caste system has shifted from the traditional inter-caste dependence to a division of labour based on caste mediated by cash economy (Ishii 2007:126).

In this paper, I will investigate the inter-caste negotiations in the service industry where people situated in the lower caste have been involved in caste-based role. Based on my fieldwork from 2005³ in Khaḍgī community, I will investigate how the meat market has been formed, and how each Khaḍgī negotiates with Muslims, and other castes from Newar, and what kind of the re-interpretation of caste has been brought about through their caste association.

Khaḍgī caste of Kathmandu Valley

Kathmandu, the capital of Nepal, is situated in the Kathmandu valley, which is about 25 km wide. There are over 3 million people in this valley, and the number is still increasing. The Newar, who are indigenous people of Kathmandu Valley, consist of about 30 castes. Gellner has stressed that as a kind of ‘traditional’ baseline from which to judge the present-day situation of caste system, it is important to examine two sources in detail, the General Code (Muluki Ain) of 1854 and the chronicle known as the Bhāṣā Vaṃśāvalī (Gellner 1999:266).

The Bhāṣā Vaṃśāvalī dates from sometime between Prithvi Narayan Shah’s conquest in 1769 and the 1854 Law Code but it purports to describe the caste system as it was regulated and established by Jayasthiti Malla long before at the end of the fourteenth Century.⁴ According to Bhāṣā Vaṃśāvalī, Khaḍgī was allocated the role of killing buffalo for people’s ritual celebrations or for selling meat. Besides that role, playing drums to accompany death procession had been also their caste-based role. Khaḍgīs were under the restriction in their clothes, houses, and ornaments (Gellner 1999: 268-269, 270-277). The Muluki Ain of 1854 has been regarded as the first place which introduced Nepali national caste order. In the Muluki Ain, Khaḍgī had been located as low caste, who cannot offer water to upper caste (Hofer 1979).

According to Khaḍgī’s own description,⁵ the population of Khaḍgī in Kathmandu valley is about 125,000. They have their community in the

3 The description is based on my participant observation in Khaḍgī communities for about 50 months, during 2005-2006, 2007-2010, 2011, and 2012.

4 Gellner further mentioned that the period the Bhāṣā Vaṃśāvalī refers to is rather the end of the Malla period, i.e., the eighteenth century, and not the time of Sthiti Malla, in so far as the chronicle’s rules are based on actual practices (Gellner 1999: 266).

5 Newā Deyā Dabu had published the book titled newā samāj in 2008. The chairman of Nepal Khaḍgī Sewa Samiti (NKSS) writes the topic of Khaḍgī of the book. He wrote that the population of Khaḍgīs is 125,000 within Kathmandu valley and 50,000 outside the valley.

periphery along the city wall.⁶ Ishii showed based on his fieldwork in the Newar village that Khadgī's caste-based role are (1) to supply meat, (2) to sacrifice buffaloes in main festivals, (3) to usher festival and funeral procession with music, (4) to carry bride in wedding procession, (5) to cut umbilical cord (mainly for Śreṣṭha and Maharjan), (6) to put polluted things away at childbirth and death, (7) act as messengers of the village (Ishii 1999:116). Along with Ishii's list of roles within the village area, in the Kathmandu city area, Khadgī engage in '*bali puja* (animal sacrifice)' for goddess Taleju. In Kathmandu, 12 Khadgī called '*jhiṃnimha nāyaḥ*' practice *bali puja* in the Taleju temple located in the royal palace in Basantapur.

According to the oral tradition of Khadgī, they are descendants of king Harisimhadeva who brought the Taleju into Kathmandu valley while fleeing to Nepal in 1326 after Muslim invasions. On their way to Kathmandu, they were hungry, so the king prayed for the goddess Taleju. She told him that they will find a wild buffalo and he should choose a man for sacrificing it. Then, the king's son sacrificed the buffalo and the son is the ancestor of Khadgī. Based on this oral tradition, Khadgī maintain that in spite of their low status they are the descendants of the king's son.

The main livelihoods of Khadgī are selling meat, and besides that, they engage as shop keeper, taxi driver among others. Along with the increasing population of Kathmandu valley, the meat market is expanding rapidly. Thus, although Khadgī had suffered from the stigmatising low caste due to the caste ideology, the category of caste has brought them a business opportunity to earn cash in the market economy. In 1973, Khadgī formed their caste association, Nepal Khadgī Sewa Samiti (NKSS). At that time, the dispute between Khadgī and Muslims who are brokers of buffalo, had occurred many times. In order to negotiate with Muslims collectively rather than individually, they formed NKSS. NKSS spread its branches all over the country. In 2010, there were 58 branch offices of NKSS in 28 districts over the country. They have their own regulation, and hold national meeting once a year.

The meat market in the Kathmandu Valley

In this part, I will describe the process of the formation of the meat markets and inter-caste negotiations within the market. According to the official report of Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives of the Government of

6 There are 9 Khadgī communities in Kathmandu city area, 11 in Lalitpur city area, 11 in Bhaktapur city area. Beside those community in the city are, there are Khadgī communities in the villages within Kathmandu valley. Recently, many Khadgī's have moved to new towns including Baudha, Baneshwar.

Nepal, about 270 buffaloes, 650 goats, 6300 chickens are brought into the Kathmandu valley via Thankot checkpoint per day. However, according to the trade unions estimations, actual number is much more. based on the estimates of the trade union, about 800-900 buffaloes are brought into Kathmandu valley per day. According to the official statistics, national production of meat in 2008 is 1.7 times high than that of 1990. By the estimation of the Ministry in 2010, there are about 3300 meat shops in Kathmandu valley.

The formation of buffalo market and introduction of the broker system

In the beginning of the 20th century, one family from Khaḍgī caste had got a phone line connection and started to import buffalos from Uttar Pradesh of India, by placing orders to Muslim brokers living along the India/Nepal borders through the telephone. At that time, buffaloes were brought into Kathmandu valley in caravans. An old man from Khaḍgī caste said that about 30-40 buffaloes were brought into the Kathmandu per day in the 1960s. Since the 1980s, trucks have become the main means of transportation and the transactions of the buffaloes have increased massively. Since 1995, the buffalo market has been formed in Satungal village, in the western part of the Kathmandu valley. Nowadays, almost all of the buffalo meats consumed in Kathmandu are imported from India via the buffalo market. After the transaction, the buffaloes are sent to the abattoir within Khaḍgī communities and slaughtered early the next morning. Since they do not have refrigeration facility in their shops, the meat must be sold within the day. The wholesale and retail of the buffalo meats are predominantly occupied by Khaḍgī. There are about 1000 buffalo meat shops within the Kathmandu valley.

The involvement of high caste into goat and chicken market

Until the 1980s, the farmer directly brought goats to Kathmandu, and consumers bought them directly from farmers. After trucks became the main transportation tools in the 1980s, the goat market was formed. There are 3 main goat markets in Kathmandu. Almost all the goats consumed in Kathmandu are imported from India. Similar to buffalos, the brokers from the Muslim community buy goats in Uttar Pradesh in India, and bring the goats into Kathmandu. There are about 1200-1500 goat meat shops in Kathmandu valley. Other than Khaḍgī, Hindu high castes have become involved in wholesaling and retailing of goat meats. .

The shopkeepers of chicken meats have also become diversified in their

castes. In the 1980s, one company started to grow the broiler variety of chicken. In 2010, three companies have occupied the market of broiler chickens in Kathmandu. Prior to those companies' participation in the market, the farmers sold 'local chicken', and the number of the shops was only about 10-12. But in 2010, there are about 1000 chicken meat shops in the Kathmandu Valley. There is no abattoir of goat and chicken, and they are slaughtered in each shop.

Commercialisation of pork

In the Newar society, 'sungur', the original species of pig with black colour, had been avoided since it was regarded as 'impure'. In Nepal, the people from Rai, Limbu communities had been the main consumer of the sungur. But in the 1970s, white pigs were brought from New Zealand, and Nepal government crossbred it with 'bandel', the local wild boar, and named it as 'bangur'. They promoted bangur by insisting that it is not sungur but different new species. The providers of pigs are the farmers living near the Kathmandu. They are from Tamang, Sherpa, Hindu Dalit, Newar communities. There is no pig market like buffalo and goat. The shopkeepers of pork have also become diversified in term of their caste. Pigs are also slaughtered in the shop.

Involvement by various castes in the meat market

As it is evident from above, each market has a different distribution system. In the goat and chicken market, which was formed in the 1980s, though Khadgi is the majority group, Muslims, Tibetan, and Hindu high castes started to get involved. The market for pork, though it had not been consumed widely since it was considered 'impure', has expanded. However, regarding buffaloes, which had formed a distribution system earlier in the beginning of the 20 century, the wholesale and retail are occupied by Khadgi. According to the door-to-door interview conducted by Kathmandu Municipality, in the Kathmandu city area, there are 758 meat shops and within that, Khadgi own 526 shops, the largest caste group in the meat market. Meanwhile, 76 shops by Muslims, 49 shops from other castes from Newar, 36 shops by Chhettri, and 14 shops by Hindu Brahman are being managed. The Hindu high castes, who are basically vegetarians, had found an economic opportunity and joined the meat business.

The everyday commercial practices by Khadgi

In this section, I will describe how Khadgi are negotiating individually with other castes and ethnic groups in the buffalo market. In particular, I will

Table 1: The attribution of the meat shop owners in Kathmandu City area

Attribution		Number of people
Newar	Khadgī	526
	Other castes	49
Muslims		76
Chhetri		36
Brahman		14
Madhesi		9
Lama		9
Tamang		9
Gurung		8
Rai		6
Magar		4
Dalit		3
Limbu		1
Unidentified		8
Total		758

Source: author edited based on the research conducted by the Kathmandu Municipality.

describe the commercial practices of one Khadgī family living in the suburban area in the Kathmandu valley, involved in wholesale and retail of the buffalo meat. The family members are Anil,⁷ his wife, his daughter, his son Raju, Raju's wife and son. They purchase the buffalos in the market of Satungal, and slaughter them in the abattoir located at the first floor of their house. They sell the buffalo meat in the shop located in Anil's house, and in Raju's shop located in his mother's parental house in the central area, Sundhara.

The negotiation with Muslims in the buffalo market

Anil visits the Satungal buffalo market twice a week. The Muslims brokers, who regularly bring buffaloes into the market, are about 30-35 in number. Anil buys buffalos from Karn every time. Immediately after arriving in the market, Anil usually calls Karn, and Karn shows him buffalos that he has brought. Anil chooses some buffalos and then asks Karn to bring them to his house, and the business is completed. They communicate with each other in Hindi language.

One buffalo is sold for about 15,000-30,000 rupees including transportation fee of about 3000-4000 rupees with 200 rupees as commission fee. The market is open permanently, but most Khadgī visit the market only twice a week since the brokers bring buffalo from India twice a week.

7 In this paper, I use fictitious name to protect the informant's privacy.

Practising 'halal' in the abattoir

The abattoir of Anil is located on the ground floor of his house. They start slaughtering from 2:45 every morning. In their abattoir, 7 people are working, Anil, his wife, Raju, 3 Khaḍgīs, Chhetri, Muslim. First, one man holds a buffalo, and then other man hits on the forehead of the buffalo with a hammer. The unconscious buffalo falls to the ground, then a Muslim cuts the throat in keeping with 'halal' practice. Finally, 2 men skin the buffalo and separate the meats and internal organs onto the skin so as to prevent dusts from getting on the meat. The slaughtering and separation process are completed within 30 minutes per buffalo.

At 4:50 a.m., one woman from Chhetri caste and her son join the team. The woman engages in pushing out the marrow from the backbone and cleaning the intestines. Her son is engaged in separating the head into eyes, noses,

Table 2: Sales and its detail of Raju's shop in one day

Purpose of purchasing	Consumer's address	Consumer's attribution	item	amount (kg)
Retail	Budhanilkantha	Khaḍgī	Meat	40
Retail	Jorpati	Khaḍgī	Meat	20
Retail	Sundhara	Khaḍgī	Meat	10
Restaurant	Thamel	Chinese	Mincemeat	26
Retail	Lalitpur	Muslim	Meat	50
Processing for Restaurant	Sundhara	Khaḍgī	Meat, nose, fat, intestine	10
Retail	Hyumata	Khaḍgī	Mincemeat	10
Retail	Chikamungal	Khaḍgī	Meat	32
Retail	Sundhara	Khaḍgī	Meat	20
Processing for Restaurant	Maha Bauddha	Newar (Śākya)	Meat	22
Processing for Restaurant	New Baneshwar	Tamang	Meat	26
Domestic consumption	Kathmandu city area	Newar (Śreṣṭha)	Meat	10
Domestic Consumption	Kathmandu city area	Newar (Śreṣṭha)	Meat	7
Domestic Consumption	Lalitpur	Foreigner (INGO officer)	Meat	5
Processing for Restaurant	Thamel	Tibetan	Meat	10

Source: interview and participant observation by author

brain, and tongue. By 6 in the morning, they finish all the slaughtering and separating works. On average, they slaughter 5 buffaloes per day; 2 of them are for Raju's shop in the central city area, 3 are for Anil's shop, remaining for meat shops and restaurants in their village.

The relationships with customers in the meat-shop

Immediately after the arrival of meat around 7 a.m., Raju's shop opens. He sells the meat by the weight. Most of Raju's customers are not families, but wholesalers, shops, and restaurants. Raju usually gives a discount of 10-20 % off when customers purchase more than 10 kg of meat. The table below is the detail of sales at Raju's shop. His customers mentioned below regularly buy meat from Raju.

In the shop, there is a photo of mosque, with the sticker 'here halal meat is available'. The Muslim customer also buys meats from Raju every time to sell in his own shop. The Tibetan and Chinese, who are owners of the restaurants in Thamel, are also the regular customers. The restaurant which offers the traditional Newar dishes purchases the noses and intestines. At 8:45 a.m., all the meat has sold out, and Raju closes his shop.

Then, he goes back to his home and helps Anil's business. Anil's customers are mainly from Newar community in the village, and they buy meat for their domestic consumption. Anil opens the shop from 8 a.m. to 10 a.m. in the morning, and 3 p.m. to 6 p.m., and it is a typical business hour of other meat shops in Kathmandu valley.

Re-interpretation of the caste-based self-image through the caste association

In this section, I will investigate the process of Khaḍgī's collective movement mediated by their caste association NKSS, focusing on the Kankeshwari area where the biggest community of Khaḍgī is located.

Khaḍgī's caste solidarity in processing bones and skins

Here I will describe the employment of abattoir workers and the way of utilising sub-production such as bones, skins, and stomach and intestinal contents of buffaloes. In Kankeshwari, 150 buffaloes are slaughtered per-day. The practice of '*halal*' is provided for Muslim customers. At 6 a.m., many trucks arrive in the abattoir to receive meats. The abattoir workers are mainly from Khaḍgī caste, but recently, the people other than Khaḍgī are also engaged in this work. They get a salary of 300-400 rupees per-day.

The bones are transferred to a bone meal factory in Hetauda, which was established in 1960 by a Khaḍgī. Now, they collect about 10-12 tons of bones

of 1000 buffaloes per day from the Kathmandu valley and other areas over the country.

The skins are collected to be taken to the factories in the Khaḍgī community, where they process the skins by rubbing salt on their surfaces so that the skins will dry for further processing. The buffalo skin processing industry started from the 1980s when 'panjabi rāgo' the big species of buffalo from Panjab area of India were started to be distributed to the Kathmandu valley. Before then, in the Newar traditional slaughtering style, they first cut the carotids and singed the buffaloes with skins, so as to eat them.

Since 2011, one Khaḍgī businessman has collected about 300 buffalo skins, 130-140 from Kankeshwari, 80 from Lalitpur, 80 from Bauddha per day. He purchases the skins at the rate of 1300 rupees per one buffalo directly from abattoir, and sells the dried skins at 1500 rupees to the factories operated by Muslims and Indians located along Nepal-India border. The factories produce such items like jacket, sofa, belt among others, and these items are exported to foreign countries mainly to India and China. Out of the profit per one buffalo of 200 rupee, he donates 10 rupees to NKSS. NKSS established the skin fund, which is utilised for the community well-being, such as making the women organisation, cooperative association, and football team.

In 2011, NKSS established a bio-gas plant in Kankeshwari, financially supported by the Kathmandu Municipality, and foreign aid. By putting all the contents of the stomachs and intestines of 150 buffaloes slaughtered in Kankeshwari area into the plant, they can self-support the gas for their domestic use. Thus, Khaḍgī utilise the sub-production of bones, skins, and contents of the stomach and intestines from buffalo by managing them collectively within their caste membership.

The re-interpretation of caste by NKSS

The local government has been designing the modernisation program of the meat business, calling for the need for hygienic meat. NKSS works as a mediator between the local government and the Khaḍgī community. NKSS called on the Khaḍgī community to construct walls and roofs to the abattoirs, which are often operated in the open air. Also, NKSS demanded meat shops to switch from wood chopping board to steel or plastic boards for hygiene purposes. NKSS organised awareness campaigns and distributed aprons with a logo of NKSS to the Khaḍgī community and promoted them to wear it in meat shops.

Along with these awareness activities on the meat business, NKSS is also involved in social and cultural activities. NKSS has built the drinking water tanks stencilled with 'donated from Khaḍgī family' in the temples

and public spaces, as a part of struggles to overcome the discriminations of being 'water unacceptable'. NKSS also urges the people who call themselves Kasāi, to change their registered name in the nāgarikatā (citizenship) into Khaḍgī or Śāhī, insisting that Kasāi is not an original term of Newari, but the derogatory term means 'butcher'.

Furthermore, NKSS called for the Khaḍgī' community to refuse some of their caste-based roles such as cutting the umbilical cord and to put away polluted things at childbirth and death, which they consider to be linked with caste discrimination. On the other hand, NKSS introduced 'jhiṃnimha nāyah', who has special role in the Taleju puja, on every program held by NKSS, and claim that Khaḍgī have a very important role in the ritual.

NKSS functions as a contact point in negotiations with the local government and other castes, and so this association has many opportunities to represent their traditions and their caste-based roles to the public. NKSS urges the Khaḍgī community to refuse the caste-based roles which they deem to be linked with caste discrimination, but on the other hand, they emphasise the caste-based role which they are proud of and promote their social prestige. Thus, NKSS, whose main role at the beginning was as a trade union of meat business to negotiate with Muslims in the meat market, enlarged its role and promotes Khaḍgī by re-interpreting their caste-based self-image in both economic and cultural domains.

The formation of the meat market enabled Khaḍgī come in contact with Muslims, and foreigners (Chinese, Indians) with whom they previously had no contact under the traditional caste society. This phenomenon can be seen as the result of individual market force overwhelming the traditional caste-based role. However, regarding Khaḍgī's case whose caste-based role to sell buffalo meat has directly presented them with business opportunity, it led to tighten their caste solidarity as well. Thus, Khaḍgī has not only maintained their caste-based role but also re-interpreted the caste-based self-images mediated by NKSS, and reflect them into the inter-caste relationships in the Newar society. Through this process of re-interpretation, the shifts among the inter-caste relationships have been brought about. For example, some members of Khaḍgī refused their traditional caste-based-roles, which they considered to be linked with caste hierarchy.

Conclusion

In this paper, I investigated the process of the formation of meat markets in the Kathmandu valley and how Khaḍgī are negotiating their self-images beyond their castes in the meat market. Though Khaḍgī have been suffered from stigma as low caste, their caste-based roles brought new business

opportunity in the market economy. After the expansion of the meat market since the 1980s, Khaḍgī have made new relationships as business counterparts with other castes who are also involved in the meat business. For example, Khaḍgī employ the Muslims in their abattoirs, and introduce the cutting ways of *halal*, so that they are successful in selling 'halal meat' to Muslims. Khaḍgī are also accepting the norms of other groups. The skin processing started with the introduction of 'panjabi rāgo' by Muslims. The skin processing was established in Khaḍgī community, and recently, the processed skin product has started to be exported to India and China. Thus, the meat market is shaped by the various norms and values through the commercial negotiations beyond their cultural and religious backgrounds.

However, on the other hand, Khaḍgī's livelihoods is still based on their network within their caste membership. Under this situation, NKSS has enlarged its role, and not only negotiate with local government representing Khaḍgī caste, but also engaged its role and involved in cultural politics. For example, they urge Khaḍgī to change the name from Kasāi which they regard as a derogatory term. But they select and emphasise their caste-based role as *jhiṃnimha nāyaḥ*, which they regard as very important and socially prestigious role. Through this re-interpretation of caste, some Khaḍgī have refused their caste-based role, which they regard as linked with the caste hierarchy. Thus, the shifts among relationships had been brought about.

These developments can be seen as a result of the individualisation mediated by the market economy. However, in case of Khaḍgī, since their livelihoods is directly connected with the caste-based role, they do not simply seek the way for individualisation, but they re-interpret the category of caste collectively to facilitate their livelihoods by articulating themselves with the norms of caste-based role and market trade.

In the meat market, the pork, which had been regarded as impure, are accepted by some Newar community. The Hindu high castes who have been vegetarian, have joined the meat business seeking jobs and opportunity. This kind of transformation from the traditional caste-based identities is still limited to the daily practices of the people, but it shows how the market economy is gradually eroding the social order, and may eventually lead to the social transformation in future.

In contrast to earlier studies that are based on people's strategic re-interpretation in the ethnic identity politics on the political domains, this paper posits that the everyday commercial practices also represent domains where the cultural politics have engaged. Furthermore, the re-interpretation of caste based on the commercial practices might have

brought about changes in people's sense of values and ethics reflecting individual negotiations in the market economy.

References

- Gellner, David N. 2009. 'Introduction: How Civil are 'Communal' and Ethno-nationalist Movements?,' in *Ethnic Activism and Civil Society in South Asia*, edited by David N. Gellner, 1-26. New Delhi: SAGE Publications.
- Gellner, David N. 1999. 'Low Castes in Lalitpur', in *Contested Hierarchies: A Collaborative Ethnography of Caste Among the Newars of the Kathmandu Valley*, edited by David N. Gellner and Declan Quigley, 264-297. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Höfer, András. 1979. *The Caste Hierarchy and the State in Nepal: A Study of the Muluki Ain of 1854*. Innsbruck: Universitätsverlag Wagner.
- Ishii, Hiroshi. 2007. 'The Transformation of Caste Relationships in Nepal: Rethinking 'Substantialization',' in *Political and Social Transformation in North India and Nepal*, edited by Hiroshi Ishii, David N. Gellner, and Katsuo Nawa, 91-130. New Delhi: Manohar Publishers & Distributors.
- Ishii, Hiroshi. 1999. 'Caste and Kinship in a Newar Village,' in *Contested Hierarchies: A Collaborative Ethnography of Caste among the Newars of the Kathmandu Valley*, edited by David N. Gellner and Declan Quigley, 109-157. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Ishii, Hiroshi. 1980. *Social Structure and its Change in a Newar village: Social change in a Caste Society* (in Japanese). Tokyo: Toyo Shuppan Co., Ltd,
- Kanako Nakagawa. 2011. 'Formation of the Meat Market and Shift in the Inter-Caste Relationships: a Study focusing on the commercial practices by "Khadgi" in Kathmandu Valley"' (in Japanese). *Journal of the Japanese Association for South Asian Studies* 23: 74-99.
- Searle-Chatterjee, Mary. 1979. 'The Polluted Identity of Work: a study of Benares Sweepers', in *Social Anthropology of Work*, edited by Sandra Wallman, 269-286. London: Academic Press INC,
- Shinoda, Takashi. 1997. *Studies on Sweeper Caste in India* (in Japanese). Tokyo: Shunjusha publishing Company.
- Toffin, Gérard. 2007. *Newar Society: City, Village and Periphery*. Lalitpur: Himal Books.

From Controlling Access to Crafting Minds

Experiments in Education in Rana Era Nepal

LOKRANJAN PARAJULI

Introduction

In the education history of Nepal, the Rana era (1846-1951) is almost always portrayed as an era in which citizens were denied access to (formal) education. The less than 2 per cent literacy rate at the end of the Rana regime and the concomitant figures (related to schools/teachers/students) give credence to this line of argument.¹ There is no denying that the Ranas in general barred their 'subjects' from having access to education, but this uni-linear narrative masks a number of experiments that the Ranas conducted over the years in this sector. More specifically, the introduction of the Basic Education System in the final years of Rana rule was, I argue, a radical policy turnaround. With it, the Rana era education policy moved from keeping the masses 'ignorant' (by barring their access to education) to crafting the minds of the masses (by teaching them their 'duties').

During the Rana era, the formation of independent social or political associations was prohibited and dissent was ruthlessly suppressed. If anything, the Ranas with a few exceptions actively worked against public welfare. Whoever expressed liberal views, or talked of public welfare, risked death, the dungeon, or banishment. Somewhat 'liberal' Rana prime ministers were forced to step down or flee because of their less rigid stance towards their 'subjects'. One such 'liberal' Rana was Dev Shamsher (r. 118 days in 1901) who assumed power in the early 20th century. During his brief tenure an attempt was made to provide education in the present-day Nepali

1 In 1951 when Rana rule ended, there were 21 high schools, 311 primary schools, a college and altogether 10,000 students in the entire country (HMG 2018 v.s.).

language. This effort was as short-lived as was the rule of Dev Shamsher himself, who was forced to abdicate. The conservative next ruler Chandra Shamsher (r. 1901-1929) who kept a total grip on the education system is credited with setting up of a book-record-keeping school called *Shresta Pathshala* with the aim of producing low-level clerks to man the expanding bureaucracy. The next two rulers also posed themselves as ‘progressive’ but effectively worked to stymie the education sector.

Padma Shamsher (r. 1945-1948), another ‘liberal’ Rana ruler, who came to power towards the end of Rana era, turned his predecessors’ policy around. He saw that the old policy of controlling access was not working and sought to redress the problem by providing ‘appropriate’ education. For this Padma chose the Basic Education System over other existing systems—‘modern,’ Sanskrit and *Bhasha*. Propounded by Gandhi, this system was adopted (partly) in India since 1937 and opposed Western education and sought to make education self-sufficient. The selection of Basic Education, I argue, was a strategic decision aimed ‘to kill many birds at once.’ The Ranas appropriated the Gandhian education system to prolong their rule because they thought, among other things, it would strengthen their relationship with the new rulers of post-independence India, showing that they were not wary of, or against, change. For the Ranas, this education system was also alluring because it was touted as ‘self-sustaining’ (see Kumar 1993; 1995).

Though this paper looks historically at the growth process of education in Rana Nepal, its major focus is on the Basic Education System that was introduced in 1947. It begins with an overview of the experiments, e.g., *Bhasha*, *Shresta* schools, conducted in the education sector prior to 1947. The three sections that follow focus on the politics of Basic Education. The first of these sections tells the story of the introduction of the Basic Education in Nepal and also analyses the rationale behind the decision. The next section looks at the Nepali Basic Education discourse or how the idea was sold to the public. The subsequent section charts the downfall of Basic Education vis-a-vis ‘modern’ education. The Basic Education System, this paper further argues, was bound to fail for as: one, the philosophy of Basic Education and the idea of ‘control’ was a contradiction; two, there was a ‘trust deficit’ such that citizens were wary of all government initiatives and the public favoured ‘modern’ education; and three, it lost its champion in Padma Shamsher who was forced to abdicate. When the Nepali state during Padma Shamsher’s rule showed leniency towards public education, local actors became involved in establishing and running schools in significant numbers in Nepal—though not necessarily Basic Schools. These schools were also a means to expand political party bases, and especially ‘modern’

schools were sought and opened to challenge the exclusivity of the ruling elites' access into the corpus of knowledge that they thought existed in the English language.

Rana Era experiments in education

The modern Nepali state, which is said to begin with the 1740s² rise of Prithvi Narayan Shah, king of Gorkha, one of the various principalities in central hills, did not seem to have established a universal education system (see Pandey et al. 1956, Aryal 1970, Sharma 2062 v.s.). When Janga Bahadur Kunwar (later Rana; r. 1846-1856) came to power via the *kot* massacre in 1846, and a family oligarchy was established, education was further eclipsed.³ In 1850, Janga Bahadur embarked on a year-long tour of Europe, especially the UK. Upon returning, he recruited Bengali and English tutors to teach English and other subjects to his sons and brothers in his own palace. This, one could say, was the formal entry of 'Western education system' in Nepal. But for the rest of the population, 'there was no provision for education of any sort'. 'The subject of schools and colleges in Nepal may be treated as briefly as that of snakes in Ireland. There are none,' wrote Daniel Wright, the British resident surgeon in Kathmandu in 1877 (Quoted in Ragsdale 1989, 12).⁴

The English school set up in 1854 by Janga Bahadur solely for his family slowly became accessible to the children of the courtiers, but remained inaccessible to the rest of the population. In the half a century thereafter there was no progress whatsoever in the education sector. On top of that, even traditional Buddhist and Sanskrit education declined (Wood 1965, 9). There was thus a vacuum as traditional patterns of learning were vanishing, and new institutions were not evolving. The elites who could afford to send their children to Indian cities did so.⁵ People from the plains could send their children to schools across the border fairly easily. Other persons interested

2 For an account of the rise of Gorkha empire, see Stiller 1973, 1974, also Acharya 2024 v.s.

3 For the account of the rise of Janga Bahadur, see Adhikari 1984, Whelpton 1991, and Rana 2061 v.s.

4 Sylvain Levy, a French academic who visited Nepal in 1898, presents a pitiable picture of educational conditions at that time. 'There were a few learned scholars here and there, but on the whole the torch of the ancient knowledge was dying out' (quoted in Upraity 1962, 38). To quote Perceval Landon, '[E]ducation was looked upon with something of mistrust with which the medieval Church heard of the activities of scientists within her fold' (quoted in Aryal 1970, 32). And to quote Wood, 'In an era when western countries were developing and extending their systems of learning, the Ranas were attempting to remove nearly all vestiges of education in Nepal' (1965, 9).

5 One however had to take permission for that too.

in education either taught their children themselves or employed family priests or pandits. The chances for most of the population getting access to education was thus fairly limited, or non-existent to be precise, as there was no public provision for it (Pandey et al. 1956, Kumar 1967).

When Dev Shamsher—allegedly the most liberal minded of the Ranas—came to power in 1901, some steps were taken for the benefit of the public.⁶ The schools opened during Dev's tenure were called *Bhasha Pathshalas* (lit. language schools) meaning schools where Gorkhali/Khas or present-day Nepali was the medium of instruction (Acharya 2008 v.s.).⁷ Even though Nepali had for a long time been the lingua-franca, especially among the hill people (and also was used in the court, in official correspondences, and records), it was not considered worthy of being taught in schools or of being the medium of instruction (Sharma 2062 v.s.). Called *Bhasha*, a generic term for languages—but also used derogatorily at times—present-day Nepali did not even have a 'proper name' and was referred as Khas, Parbate, Gorkhali, Gorkhe among others (Clark 1969). English was the language that the elites embraced whereas Sanskrit was the language of the learned—the pandits. Unlike Sanskrit and English (and also other languages popular among the ruling elites like Urdu, Bengali, Persian), Nepali literature 'worth mentioning' did not exist at that time. Any available literature was viewed as 'low-brow,' and in fact the language itself was considered 'inappropriate' for literary creation (Parajuli 2009; also Sharma 2062 v.s.).⁸

There were not, thus, many takers of the idea (of imparting education in the Nepali language) in the elite-world, but since the project had the prime minister's backing, it moved further. With the introduction of *Bhasha* schools, theoretically a large section of the society could now have access to education, formerly in the reach of only the upper echelon of a select few caste-groups, namely Brahmins, Chhetris, Newars. Nepali, however, was not a universally spoken language, and there were many social groups for whom

6 Aryal (1970, 24) writes, 'The year 1901 saw for the first time, after nearly a couple of centuries of educational neglect and opposition, some significant and genuine steps for the cause of education and public welfare.' Dev Shamsher is also credited with establishing a weekly newspaper, *Gorkhapatra*, the first of its kind in Nepal.

7 Jaya Prithvi Bahadur (J.P.B.) Singh, King of one of the principalities, Bajhang, and a close relative of Dev Shamsher—son-in-law of Chandra Shamsher, the next prime minister—was instrumental in this initiative. Singh is also credited with giving the present-day Nepali language its proper name within Nepal even though it was a Christian missionary A. Turnbull who was first to call it by that name in 1887 (Acharya 2008 v.s., 152; also Clark 1969, 253).

8 According to Neupane, Nepali then was disparaged as a 'vernacular' which meant 'language of the slaves' (2011 v.s., 4; English words used in the original).

Nepali was as alien as Sanskrit or English. However, *Bhasha* was free from the ‘sacredness’ attached to Sanskrit and ‘stigma’/‘enigma’ attached to English (Parajuli 2009). In a relatively short period, around fifty *Bhasha* schools were opened across the country—though the majority were in and around the Kathmandu valley itself (Wood 1965).⁹ Since there was governmental financing available, the traditional informal Sanskrit-learning centres also took advantage. Some teachers, who otherwise would have had to rely on local finance or *guthis* (trusts), also tapped this opportunity by converting their rudimentary schools into *Bhasha Pathshalas* (Parajuli 2009).

Dev Shamsher’s autocratic brothers, however, were opposed to such a ‘progressive’ idea as imparting education to subjects so they hatched a conspiracy and exiled him to India within four months of his accession to the throne. J.P.B. Singh, the chief architect of the education program, too was forced to flee to India (Aryal 1970, 24). The chapter of liberalism and educational plan virtually came to an end with the accession to premiership of the ‘master conspirator’ Chandra Shamsher who ruled Nepal for the next three decades (Shaha 1996, 33). ‘[M]ost of the 150 schools’ opened during Dev Shamsher’s 118-day tenure faced the same fate as his own during his successor’s reign’ (Vir 1988, 33).

When the supply of textbooks stopped, as did salary from the government treasury, the teachers also discontinued their jobs leading to the demise of the newer schools. As some of the *Bhasha* schools were just converted rudimentary Sanskrit schools, they reverted to their old form when funds dried up. The new primer was replaced again by the old textbooks, Sanskrit texts. Sanskrit again rose to prominence when state patronage to *Bhasha* ended (Sharma 2062 v.s.).

Despite attempts to check progress, forces beyond the Rana state’s control were at work which led to some changes in the education sector.¹⁰ One factor was that the regime needed clerks for its gradually expanding bureaucracy to collect revenue, to work in the court and in other offices,

9 The number of schools established varies—some claim up to 150 schools (see, e.g., Wood 1965, Aryal 1970, Vir 1988, Sharma 2062 v.s.). The government had made a provision whereby if a community came up with fifty prospective students it provided one teacher, and for a hundred students two teachers. Besides, the beginner’s book (and other textbooks which were in preparation), other materials were also to be distributed free of charge (Aryal 1970, Sharma 2062 v.s.).

10 In 1902, a group of eight students were sent to Japan for further studies. Chandra Shamsher, however, halted that practice but claimed that the suggestion to send students to study overseas was rejected by his counsellors. ‘From then until after the abolition of the Rana family’s rule, Nepali students were not permitted to go overseas for higher education. A handful of them who defied the ban had to suffer exile and loss of caste’ (Shaha 1996: 58).

writing contracts, reports, and doing simple arithmetic. What can be argued to be a miniature version of the Macaulay-ian education, introduced in India by the British to produce *babus* required for the Indian bureaucracy, was also introduced in October 1905 with the *Shresta Pathshala* (book/record-keeping school).¹¹ Geared towards producing low-level clerks in the state bureaucracy (Gautam 2008 v.s., 191; also Maskey 1996), such a provision nevertheless provided an opportunity for some to have some sort of education.

Even though there was only one school in Kathmandu that went by the name, there was a provision that allowed anyone to take exams in a private capacity. And if one passed the exams, then he was awarded a certificate that would then make him eligible to enter the government bureaucracy. There were three such exams called informally as 4-pass (*pratham*), 7-pass (*madhyam*) and 11-pass (*uttam/uccha*). The lowest qualification meant basic reading-writing skill and a knowledge of basic arithmetic and the skill to write petitions (see Sharma 2062 v.s., Agrawal 1976). However, the examination control office (*Janch Pass Adda*) appears never to have conducted exams for the higher level, i.e., 11-pass. In a letter to editor in *Gorkhapatra*, Birdhwoj Nepali wrote, 'It has already been nine years since the beginning of the *madhyamik* level exam, but the higher level exam has not yet begun' (2003 v.s., 2). A notice of the Nepal Bhasha Prakashini Samiti suggests that the government at one time, however, was contemplating introducing higher levels. The notice sought authors who could write books required for the higher-level *nijamati* that was to be opened in the future (Gorkhapatra 2003 v.s.b, 3).

Those who had passed other school exams (e.g., *Bhasha*/general, English or Sanskrit) could sit for an additional one or two subjects and receive their *nijamati* degrees. At its peak, the number of applicants wishing to appear in the *nijamati* exams reached around 1200-1300, as the serial numbers of the results published in *Gorkhapatra* evince.¹² The 1951 budget prepared by the new government after the political change of 1951 allocated a sum of money under the heading 'Shresta Pathshala,' but it, at the same time, also mentioned that the 'Shresta Pathshala will be abolished, and its functions

11 Thomas Macaulay, President of the Committee of Public Instruction, presented a Minute on Education to the Supreme Council in Calcutta on 2 February 1835 which made it clear that indigenous learning in India would be completely supplanted by British Scholarship imparted through the English language (Quoted in Macfie 2000, 1). Krishna Kumar, however, argues that '[t]he customary statement that colonial education was 'aimed' at producing clerks is both theoretically feeble and historically untenable' (1991, 25).

12 A letter to editor in *Gorkhapatra* speculates that around half of these were the ones already employed in various government offices (Gorkhapatra: 2003 v.s.a, 2).

will be performed by different departments' (RRS 1981: 181). The *Pathshala* was, however, not shelved as planned and continued taking exams for the next couple of years as notices of the exam control office published in *Gorkhapatra* attest.

Another factor that influenced the education sector in general was the British-Gorkha connection. Chandra Shamsher was happy to send as many recruits as possible for the British-Indian army not only because the British were Rana Nepal's closest allies, but also because it pushed potential trouble makers away, while also earning him royalty. The state, therefore, tolerated, to an extent, the opening of primary schools by ex-Gorkha soldiers but kept a close eye on them. As a result some schools came into existence, especially in the hills (see also Wood 1976).

During Juddha Shamsher's tenure (r. 1932-1945), a decree (*istihar*) was issued (in 1996 v.s.) to 'propagate the progress of education' (*viddyako unnati prachar garna*) which not only made it necessary for the public to acquire permission from the government to establish a school but it also outlined different rules and regulations such as fees, structure, functioning, and management of schools (Sharma 2062 v.s., 131).¹³ The preamble claims that the act was promulgated to 'promote schools' (*schoolko unnati garna nimitta*), but it turned out that the opposite was intended, that is, to make it difficult to open schools and to take complete control of the institution. The school managing committee was now required to be chaired either by the Deputy Education Director or District Governor or his assistant, and another government servant had to serve as its member. The teachers and students were forbidden to be members of any organisation, the committee had to 'secretly report' the activities of teachers and students as well as make sure that no activities against the government took place.¹⁴ Thus, in principle, a community could open a school and might even receive financial support from the government. But in practice it was not only difficult to do so, there were also various strings attached.¹⁵

13 When Bhim Shamsher, the immediate predecessor of Juddha Shamsher, became prime minister, he initially invited suggestions from the public for the *unnati* (progress) of the country. But when some youths of Kathmandu suggested and even made preparations to establish a library, they were arrested, fined, and jailed (see Parajuli 2007).

14 Also prohibited was the use of books other than those approved by the department of education (see Parajuli 2009). According to Prasad, Juddha 'took a keen interest in the curriculum which he examined himself with a meticulous care' (1996, 188).

15 If there had been only benign motives, people would not have been condemned to prisons just for opening schools. One such incident is mentioned in poet Siddhicharan Shrestha's memoir where he talks in detail about the plight of a Mahavir Institute (school) opened in the 1940s by Chinia Lal and others in Kathmandu. Himself a teacher in the same school,

Policy turnaround: Introducing the Basic Education System

The state during the Rana era—except during the time of Dev Shamsher's reign—thus controlled public access to education. But the end of the Second World War and the independence movements that took momentum thereafter in the subcontinent greatly impacted the Rana administration in general, and education in particular. The second half of the 1940s was also the period when political activism amongst Nepalis (both residing in Nepal and India) began to take off. As Indian independence became imminent, the movement to overthrow the Rana regime also built up momentum, which was a double blow to the Ranas. Since the Rana's most trusted of allies (or sole ally) Great Britain was retreating, the regime sought to expand its tentacles to the outside world, and also tried to make peace with the new Indian leadership. When political activists launched their movement and demanded reforms, Prime Minister Padma Shamsher was forced to make somewhat conciliatory gestures by offering gradual reforms. Addressing 'countrymen' via the assembly of 'noblemen,' in 1947 he said:

You all know that in most of the countries of the world today, the subjects are being associated with the Government as far as possible.... [I]t would be greatly helpful to the welfare of the country and the people if similar arrangements were made in this country too.... The cooperation of all countrymen is required for successfully running such a system of government. For this purpose it is essential that measures should be taken for propagating education among the people so that they may acquire knowledge about political matters as well as their duties. Only when this is done, will the people be able to cooperate with the government and take part in the development work of the country by properly exercising the rights available to them. (Pandey 2039 v.s., 233-34, italics added)

The speech is important for it acknowledges for the first time the necessity of 'associating the subjects with the government.' But since the countrymen were 'ignorant,' they must first be educated on 'political matters and their duties,' and only then could they 'properly exercise' the rights. Referring to the agitators demanding political reforms, Padma Shamsher in the same speech said, '[A] handful of foolish persons recently attempted to behave in imitation and at the instigation of others, and interfered in matters which

Shrestha, along with Lal and 26 other teachers, was arrested and jailed by the Ranas for no other reason than educating children of the general public. The chief initiator Lal eventually died in prison (Sarubhakta 2052 v.s.).

they did not know, nor understand even the meaning of the slogans they had raised...' (Pandey 2039 v.s., 234). In order for the 'subjects' to understand their duties, what is wrong and right, they needed education. Padma said:

I have time and again drawn your attention to the importance of education. I am happy to note that all people, taking interest in education, are opening schools, one by one, as is evident from the opening, with governmental permission, of 7 schools in the Kathmandu valley since the new session. The government alone cannot do everything. It has opened schools and colleges to the best of its capacity and has extended and will extend assistance to the people who have opened them.... Girl's schools too shall be opened, but they must be run in such a way that the *modesty* and *good character* of Nepali women are *not* affected. (Pandey 2039 v.s., 236, italics added)

This is a radical shift in Rana education policy. Prior to Padma, as explained earlier, access to education was restricted. But the latest movement (instigated by newly established political parties) which sought to change the polity, and its significant following even in Kathmandu demonstrated to the Ranas how easily 'foolish subjects' could be 'duped.' When instigated they could 'imitate romantic slogans that they did not understand,' and even turn against their own masters. This was a revelation. To tame these 'subject-savages,' they should be given 'proper education' so that they know their duties and behave accordingly. The Ranas also thought that by granting permission to open schools, they could contain the discontent simmering among the youth of the country. Mrigendra Shamsher, the Director General of the Public Instruction Department, in the inauguration ceremony of a school in Kathmandu spoke thus:

In the last six months 20 schools opened in the Kathmandu valley alone. While granting permissions, the government neither posed stricter conditions nor made much background inquiry. The government okayed all the requests with the expectation that the studying-teaching activities will mellow the new intense fervour (*nayaumleko josh*) in youths. (Gorkhapatra 2004 v.s., 2)

With the realisation of the importance of education in controlling the public mind as well as discontent due mainly to growing pressure from the newly formed political parties, Padma Shamsher tried to make some changes in the polity by preparing a new constitution to accommodate the political

demands.¹⁶ In the 1948 constitution, called the legitimate (legal) act of the Nepal government (*Nepal sarkarko vaidhanik kanoon*), some cosmetic changes were made in the polity and for the first time freedom of expression, press among others find mention. And more importantly, education (elementary education) finds a place among fundamental rights. Article 4 reads:

Subject to the principles of public order and morality this Constitution guarantees to the citizens of Nepal freedom of person, freedom of speech, liberty of the press, freedom of assembly and discussion, freedom of worship, complete equality in the eye of the law, cheap and speedy justice, *universal free compulsory elementary education*, universal and equal suffrage for all adults, security of private property as defined by the laws of the State as at present existing and laws and rules to be made hereunder. (RRS 1970, 78, italics added)

Education gets further elaboration in the miscellaneous section (Part VI, Article 60) of the constitution:

As soon after the commencement of this Act as expedient, the Government shall provide for universal, free, compulsory, elementary education, and technical and higher education will be provided by the State to the extent necessary to prepare candidates for wide opportunities of service of the people of Nepal. In addition, the State will provide as far as possible for the liquidation of adult illiteracy. The aim of educational institutions shall be *good moral training*, personal and vocational efficiency and the *development of the spirit of nationality*, and international friendliness. (RRS 1970, 92, italics added)

The constitution, thus, also reflected the change in the education policy that was already afoot. Prior to this, Padma had sent Mrigendra Shamsher, the Director General of the Public Instruction department, to India in January of 1946 to study the education system there. He visited Lucknow, Agra, Delhi, and Lahore and came back very much impressed by the prospect for the introduction of Gandhi's 'Basic Education System' in Nepal (Shaha 1996,

¹⁶ Padma also sought the Indian government's help in devising the constitution. Upon his request, India sent Sri Prakash Gupta, Ram Ugra Singh and other assistants in June 1947 to assist the Nepal government in the process. There was conflict among the Rana *bhardars* on the degree of liberalising the polity, which also led to the resignation of Bahadur Shamsher as chairperson of the main Reforms Committee (see Shaha 1996; 181).

168).¹⁷ After much thinking, the Ranas, who, to quote Mrigendra Shamsher, 'have been minutely (*sukshma tarikale*) observing this education for last few years,' decided that the moment was opportune to introduce the Basic Education System (NS 2005 v.s.e, 17).

The Basic Education System, also called *Nai Talim* or *Buniyadi Talim*, is the education system propounded by Gandhi. While Gandhi had long been airing his views on education, his critique of the existing education system and counter proposal spelt out in the July 1937 issue of *Harijan* formed the basis of this system.¹⁸ Gandhi wrote, 'By education, I mean an all-round drawing out of the best in child and man—body, mind and spirit.... Literacy itself is not education, I would, therefore, begin the child's education by teaching it a useful handicraft and enabling it to produce from the moment it begins its training. Thus every school can be made self-supporting, the condition being that the state takes over the manufacture of these schools' (Sykes 1988). In October 22-23 of that year a National Education Conference was organised in Wardha, Maharashtra (India), which drew participants from across the country, including Gandhi and ministers of the provincial governments. Gandhi presented a proposal in the conference which was an extended version of his *Harijan* article. The conference passed four resolutions¹⁹ and also appointed a committee under Dr Zakir Hussain to prepare a detailed syllabus. In March 1938 the committee submitted a report which is also

17 According to the editorial in the first issue of *Nepal Shiksha*, 'The credit of initiating this [i.e., Basic] education system goes to the *suযোগ্য* (competent) Director General of the Education Department...Mrigendra Shamsher.' The editorial adds, 'His Excellency himself went to various cities of India to investigate the usefulness of this system and finding this system very appropriate for Nepal the foundation of this system was laid out' (NS 2005 v.s.a, 5). *Nepal Shiksha* is the mouthpiece of the Education Department of the government, with a primary focus on Basic Education. Established in 2005 v.s., along with the introduction of Basic Education System, *Nepal Shiksha* was initially a monthly publication. Published for nearly five years, *Nepal Shiksha* also became bimonthly at one time but was not very regular. Many of the notices and speeches that appear in *Nepal Shiksha* were also published in *Gorkhapatra* of that period. The Education Department had also published another paper called *Jagriti*.

18 In 1937, a majority of the popularly elected provinces of British India were controlled by the Indian National Congress (INC). The INC was earlier pleading for free, compulsory and universal education. Now that the INC itself was heading the governments in various provinces, Gandhi came up with the proposal (Sykes 1988).

19 The resolutions were: 1) Free and compulsory education be provided for seven years on a nation-wide scale; 2) Medium of instruction be the mother-tongue; 3) The process of education throughout this period should centred around some productive form of manual work, and that all other abilities to be developed or training given, as far as possible, be integrally related to the central handicraft chosen with due regard to the environment of the child; and 4) The system of education will be gradually able to cover the remuneration of the teachers (Sykes 1988).

known as the Wardha Scheme of Education, which was approved by Gandhi and subsequently by the INC. The provincial governments under INC began implementing the Basic Education system, but there were also people who severely criticised it.²⁰

Perhaps also because of its spatial proximity, the Bihar experiment in Basic Education seems to have influenced the Nepal experiment. In 1947, the Nepal government invited a number of people involved in Basic Education in Bihar with whom the Ranas and the government officials held a series of meetings.²¹ The invited Indian experts along with Nepal's educationists and concerned officials worked together to prepare a planning document for the implementation of the Basic Education System in Nepal. Soon six graduates from Nepal were sent to the Basic Training School in Patna so as to employ them to teach other 'pupil-teachers' upon their return in Nepal (NS 2011 v.s., 18-20; NS 2005 v.s.a, 5). Thus, the experiment in 'Basic Education' was finally launched in Nepal in 1947 with the returnees forming the core team of trainers at the newly opened Basic Education Training Centre in Kathmandu (Shaha 1996, 169).²² In the first half of 1947 the government began the training program for prospective teachers who would then open/run Basic Education program in various schools across the country. Of the 141 applicants, the department selected 54 'pupil-teachers' and trained them for nearly a year. By the end, 39 of them had successfully completed the program. The department then sent them to various schools across the country—some of them became involved in already established schools whereas a few others opened new schools and began teaching (NS 2005 v.s.f, 134-36).²³ For at least the next six years the government trained around 50 would be teachers each year.²⁴

20 According to Kumar (1993), the Muslim League saw it as a Hindu ploy. Kumar (1993) writes, for others, the idea of using students' produce to financially sustain the schools amounted to child labour in schools. The INC's desire to industrialise and modernise the nation didn't match with Gandhian focus on handicrafts or village industries.

21 Prominent among the invitees were former secretary Ram Sharan Upadhyay, Shiv Kumar Lal and Tarakeshwar, who were all involved in the Basic Education system in Bihar (NS 2011 v.s., 19).

22 Bhavanath Upadhyay, BSc. Ag., who headed the Training Centre, was one of the trainers who went to India.

23 For example, Muktinath Timisina opened a school at Batulechaur, Pokhara (Timisina 2040 v.s.) whereas Madhav Prasad Ghimire who later became a nationally recognised writer went to Lamjung and taught in the newly opened Basic School there (Prasad 2007 v.s.).

24 According to a report published in the *Nepal Shiksha*, there were 250 Basic Education teachers in 1953 (NS 2011 v.s., 19). After teaching for three years in the Basic Schools these teachers would again be called to Kathmandu and trained for one more year so as to equip them with the knowledge to teach in the higher classes.

But the 'liberal-minded' Padma Shamsher did not last long in power. He was forced to leave the country by his conservative cousins before the constitution that he commissioned came into force.²⁵ But even after the accession of the more conservative Mohan Shamsher at the end of April (30), 1948, the Basic Education program was not discontinued. Yet Mohan did not seem to be very enthused by it.²⁶ In the congratulatory message of the first issue of *Nepal Shiksha*, the Director General of the Education Department praises his master as one who loved education (*vidya premi*) and claims that at the order of Mohan Shamsher the department is beginning Montessori school, Basic Schools, and also a university (Rana 2005 v.s., 3).²⁷ The editorial of the first issue further highlights the wishes of the prime minister by including adult education and female education (NS 2005 v.s.a, 4-6). The Director General sends out the following 'order' (*aadesh patra*) to headmasters and secretaries of schools across the country:

You all are aware of the government's aim and effort to publicize education across the country through Basic Education, and also about the provision of the 2004 v.s. legal act [i.e., constitution] of making education compulsory as far as possible (*sakesamma*). I am writing this order (*aadesh patra*) to you all (*timiharu*) because this great task will attain success fast and with ease if you all cooperate.... It is not appropriate to simultaneously run two education systems, but it is also no good to abruptly end the existing education system.... All existing schools shall gradually be converted into Basic Schools. If we start now, all existing schools will be converted to the Basic ones by 2012 v.s.²⁸ (NS 2005 v.s.e, 17-18)

25 The first constitution of Nepal was proclaimed on 26 January 1948 and was to come into force on 14 April 1948. But before it came into force, Padma Shamsher was made to leave the country in February.

26 The government was also fascinated by the Montessori system of learning for young kids, and for that the government also had brought some 'professors' from India to teach children (NS 2005 v.s.a, 4).

27 The government under Mohan Shamsher was, it seems, seriously thinking of establishing a university in Nepal. There was some money set aside, and a powerful committee set up to translate the idea into reality. The committee and subcommittees held a series of meetings on various aspects—courses, language of instruction, land, etc. (see NS 2005 v.s.b; 2005 v.s.c; 2005 v.s.d; 2006 v.s.d; 2006 v.s.f; 2006 v.s.h). The Nepali authorities feared the vernacularisation of Indian universities and the phase out of English within five years. They took it as a threat to the national existence as it would pose a threat to the national language as they would have to rely on Hindi or other regional languages of India, which they thought would eventually lead to the extinction of Nepal's national language (NS 2005 v.s.d, 10).

28 Interestingly, the 'order letter' also seeks their views (*raya*): 'What is your (*timiharuko*)

In the same 'order' the Director General also asked the school teachers and secretaries to send a teacher each year from their schools to the Basic Education Training Centre so as to equip the teachers with the Basic Education methods.

Even though the education department iterates its intention of providing 'compulsory' education—albeit with a qualifier '*sakesamma*'—the government does not consider opening school to be its duty. The Director General of the department thus explains how schools come into being not only in Nepal but also all over the world:

Schools are opened in two ways: some only seek permission to open a school whereas others also seek support from the government as per the rule. And the government has been granting permission as per the petition (*jasto mageko testai bakseko*). This is how schools are opened across the globe. (NS 2006 v.s.a; 169)

The responsibility of setting up schools lies on the shoulders of the people themselves. But they cannot do so on their own. They have to first acquire permission by following the procedures/rules set up by the government. In the first issue (and also in latter issues) of the *Nepal Shiksha*, a notice is published spelling out the rules or procedures to open new schools (NS 2005 v.s.e, 18-19; NS 2006 v.s.e, 301-03). As per the procedure, whenever a petition to open a school is filed, the government would through the district magistrate, assess (*sarjamine garne*) the public (*raiti/duniya*) interest on the school/education. If found satisfactory, the government would even provide financial support in running the school as well as in training the teachers (for Basic School) but the subjects must agree to do a list of things, and also answer a number of questions.²⁹ One of the major conditions was the number of students. As per rules, the first grade must have at least 30 students and from the next class onwards (to be opened gradually every year) there must be no less than 25 students in each grade. Should the number of students be less than 25, the government will stop funding the school and the public has to run it on its own via donations (*chanda*).³⁰ The initiators must also agree

view on this? And if you see anything else that further develops education, send your views within a month of getting this letter' (NS 2005 v.s.e, 18).

29 The initial notice on rules published in *Nepal Shiksha* (NS 2005 v.s.e, 18-19) does not include the questions; however, the later notices do. The 12 additional questions are related to basic information such as population of the area, school-going children, primary language as well as business/occupation of the area, and so on (NS 2006 v.s.e, 301-03).

30 The government seems to be monitoring the figures, for it liquidated one Bageshwori Basic School of Nepalgunj for not having adequate students (NS 2006 v.s.g, 331), and

to all the points as well as get the signature of 4-5 nobles of the area on the petition (see NS 2006 v.s.e, 301-03 for details).

By the end of Rana rule in 1951, there were 'more than 38 Basic Schools' in Nepal; a number of schools had reached fifth grade of which 9-10 were within the valley and 'a lot of English, middle and high schools' were converted into Basic Schools (Joshi 2007 v.s., 173).

One wonders why the Ranas wanted to implement the education system propounded by Gandhi, who was not only waging a war against the regime's closest ally the British-Indian government, but was also engulfing the whole subcontinent with his idea of passive resistance, *satyagraha*. Swept by the Gandhian wave, Nepali migrants and exiles were also participating in the Indian independence movement so much so that Gandhi was a source of inspiration for Nepali rebels fighting against the Rana regime. Gandhi, in essence, was as much an enemy of the Ranas as of the British. Nevertheless, when it became evident that the Indians would achieve their independence, the Ranas appropriated Gandhi, strategically, to prolong their rule. The Gandhian brand, thus, was, as the Nepali saying goes, 'an arrow to kill many birds at once'. The Ranas needed to improve their relationship with the new rulers of post-independence India, which otherwise was not good. So, by embracing the most respected of the leaders, Gandhi, and his education system, the Ranas were sending a message that they also adored the *Mahatma*, were ready to cooperate, and wanted to smooth and strengthen the relationship between themselves and India.³¹ Besides, they also wanted to give an impression to the outside world and to Nepali activists that they were not wary of, or against, change.

Gandhi was also useful to the Ranas because he stood for *swadeshi* or nationalistic movement, and the Ranas wanted to appropriate that version of 'nationalism' as they were branding Nepali agitators as being instigated by 'foreigners' (i.e., Indians) who were launching a movement from 'foreign soil,' that is, India. The other reason for following the Gandhian model was his opposition towards western education, and also the use of English as medium of instruction.³² But the Ranas were opposed to providing English

reprimanded (*nasihati dinu*) teachers of two schools for lying about the figures by including minors in the adult literacy classes so as to increase the class size (NS 2006 v.s.d, 293).

31 The Ranas, as has been mentioned above, offered their troops to help the Indian government in their problems in Hyderabad and Kashmir. The Nepal government also signed a Treaty of Friendship with the new government in July 1950.

32 Gandhi, already by his mid-30s, was so disenchanted with English education that he could write about 'the rottenness of this education' and that 'to give millions a knowledge of English is to enslave them...that, by receiving English education, we have enslaved the nation.' www.infed.org/thinkers/et-grand.htm; accessed 2 November 2012.

education to their 'subjects' for entirely different reasons. Ranas emulated the West, the English especially—from apparel to furniture to palaces—which made them distinct from their subjects (see Liechty 1997). Imparting English or western education to the public was considered an act of elevating their social position and making them equal to the rulers. This the Ranas could not digest, so Basic Schools came in handy. Moreover, in the Basic Education system, schools were to be productive and self-sufficient (Kumar 1993; 1995), which meant there was not even the need for the Rana state to spend money in providing 'appropriate' education to its subject.

The Nepali basic education discourse

The Ranas began the new education system during the final years of their rule when their legitimacy was at its nadir. This clearly affected the acceptability of the idea which eventually was scrapped a few years after the downfall of the regime. Before looking at the demise of the Basic Education System, let us look at how the government under the Ranas marketed the concept, or how the discourse was created.

In the first issue (1948) of *Nepal Shiksha* the Director General Mrigendra Shamsher writes thus about the root of the Basic Education System:

Gandhi ji initiated the Basic Education [System] in India and after 10 years of experience all the states of India are now implementing this (*apanaye*). Since our country's geographic and other conditions are no different from that of India, and as this education matches with our culture and tradition (*riti-thiti-anukul*), we are also going to implement (*apanaune*) it here. (NS 2005 v.s.e, 17)

The editorial of the first issue also gives credit to Gandhi for the new education system: 'Mahatma Gandhi thought that the students will become self-reliant (*swabalambi*) if they also did physical work along with their study'. It adds, 'In this system, it is not only the brain that becomes active but the other parts of the body also become active, and because of this the closely interlinked brain and body flourish and advance'. The editorial hopes that 'the education system will turn out to be very appropriate for our country' (NS 2005 v.s.a, 5). But, as the editorial itself acknowledges, it was not what everybody believed. Despite being touted as suitable to native '*riti-thiti*,' it was suspect in the eyes of the public.³³ The editorial adds, 'Some people might also think that it will

33 The articles published to propagate Basic Education also give us an idea of the issues of public concern regarding Basic Education, for the articles labour to persuade the anonymous sceptics/critics.

hurt the fundamental roots of the education. But if one thinks seriously about it, the suspicion will naturally wither away because such a farsighted person as Gandhi would never have propagated the system without thinking about it properly' (NS 2005 v.s.a, 5). Even Padma Shamsheer himself came out publicly to defend the Basic Education System thus: 'I've made arrangements for [the implementation of] Basic Education System to promote various kinds of *ilam* (jobs) in the country. Do not take it as an effort to suppress higher education' (Gorkhapatra 2003 v.s.c, 1).

The imperative for the authorities to convince the sceptics seems to have not only continued but grown. The Director General sees 'no surprise if some are confused' about the principles of the new education system but hopes that 'in 2-4 years, everyone will understand it' (NS 2006 v.s.a, 170). And the editorial comment (that precedes Rana's article) concedes: 'Many [people] questioned and criticised (*tika-tippani*) the Basic Education idea. Gradually, the educated lot has understood the importance [of this education system] but amongst the semi-educated and uneducated, confusion still persists' (Rana 2006 v.s.a, 332). To clear 'misconceptions about this system' *Nepal Shiksha* labours through its editorials and articles. The Director General, one of the architects of the Nepali version of the system, himself joins the fray to explain the rationale behind choosing Basic Education over other existing education systems through various speeches (some reproduced verbatim in *Nepal Shiksha*). He also starts writing a series of articles for the newly established mouthpiece *Nepal Shiksha* explaining the rationale for introducing Basic Education.

To begin with, the Director General looks at the history of education and terms the education prior to 1800 A.D. as *Puranic*; the purpose of which being gaining mental power, spiritual knowledge and making men virtuous (*sadguni banaune*). According to him, the 'liberal education' that was practiced in the next two centuries focused on science and mathematics as well as in geography and history and made great progress (Rana 2006 v.s.a, 332-34). But people began to find faults in this education as well. The major defects of this system in the eyes of the Director and the solutions that he describes merit mention in some detail:³⁴

Educated young people forgot the simple life and thought of luxurious life as the only aim.... When the supply of graduates began to outstrip the

34 The faults are given in the form of quotes with initials Aa. Shi. And are followed by numbers, which suggests they were drawn from existing documents. Aa. Shi. most likely stands for Aadhar Shiksha or Basic Education, and the numbers refer to page numbers, but it is not clear if book, booklet or pamphlet is being referred to.

demands, the value of graduates started to diminish.... And, when the lazy minds became the devil's place, various incidents (*upadrav*) occurred; conflict (*ashanti*) and discontent began to spread; the distressed youths started joining the deadly movements; and havoc spilled all over.... This small land of ours too had the bad effects in a short time period. India could withstand it for centuries but we cannot.... The education had to be linked to the industry and business to combat the ills of that education system. Experiments were carried out in various countries to fix the problem but none could resolve all the faults.... Gandhiji, the founder of the non-violence movement, also ventured on it. The brain [of Gandhi] that was ripened with the mental fast or *tapasya* created/developed an *alaukik* education system for the complete development of humanity. (Rana 2006 v.s.a, 333-34)

One recurrent argument against the existing (modern/English) education system that appears in the various issues of *Nepal Shiksha* over the years is that the system was introduced in India by the British to produce low-level office workers to sustain their regime.³⁵ As this faulty education system was copied *in toto* in Nepal, it was only natural that the Nepalis, too, got the vices: it promoted selfishness and it drove the educated lot away from physical labour. All that the English-educated persons knew was to talk; they didn't walk the talk, they just talked the talk (Rana 2006 v.s.a, 333; Joshi 2007 v.s., 174; NS 2005 v.s.f, 134). They wore foreign hats, boots and suits, and there was no love for their own culture, and for the country in them (Y.P. Sharma 2009 v.s., 295). They lacked the *rastriyata ko bhavana* (patriotic/nationalistic feeling). Trailokya Nath Upraity sums up the sins of the existing education system:

It is astonishing to see the students of Europe and America taking part in the development of their countries (*desh nirman*)—it is because their education system relates to the country. But it hurts badly to find that lacking in our modern education. The lack of Nepaliness (*Nepaliyata*) in the activities (living, eating and talking) of students strikes our hearts. Our students are running after the mirage of illusion of Western civilisation. What could we expect from the products [i.e., students] coming out of the schools, colleges and *pathshalas* that provide such education in nation-building? ... We have to awake/arouse their

35 Almost every single article published in the magazine that dealt with the Basic Education System made this argument. Similar arguments continued even after the downfall of the Rana regime.

love for the country/patriotism (*desh prem*) and *jatiyata* [by providing appropriate education].³⁶ (Upraity 2006 v.s., 311-12)

The Gandhian education system was the solution to the problem, but it was also not foolproof; it needed some tweaking to make it suitable for Nepal. After some changes, the Wardha Scheme was converted into a Basic Education System in Nepal, claimed the Director General (Rana 2006 v.s.a, 334). An editorial in the *Nepal Shiksha*, though it acknowledges Gandhi's contribution, does not give full credit to him for the originality of the idea. It says, 'If we were to search the roots, we reach more or less to Europe and America'. It gives the main credit to the U.S. 'project method' propounded by American educationists, particularly Dewey. In Russia, the editorial claims, this system was called 'complex method' which India implemented after tweaking it to suit their needs and called it '*buniyadi talim*' or basic training (NS 2005 v.s.f, 134; see also Navin 2009 v.s., 332).

One reason for the linking up of the Basic Education system with that of the U.S.A., Russia, and other European countries was to increase the saleability of the idea, for there were not many takers. While the Rana motive was already suspect, the de-emphasising or elimination of English from the curricula made its acceptability even less among the public. The Director General's second article in the series titled 'What is Basic Education?' focuses particularly on the language issue. 'When one of my Indian friends described Basic Education curtly as education without English but with art/skill (*kala sita prachalit*),' writes Mrigendra Shamsher, 'he was severely criticised. I, therefore, want to provide a slightly longer answer'. He refutes the allegation that English is not taught in the Basic Education as absolute rubbish, but clarifies that 'English would not get the same importance as it gets in the existing education system'. And it would not be imposed on all but 'those who want and have the capacity to learn' will get a chance, he says. 'This education will disprove the idea that people won't be educated without studying English,' he adds (Rana 2006 v.s.b, 360-62).³⁷

He further argues that it is both important and timely to diminish the role/influence of English for a number of reasons: a) it puts tremendous

36 In the same article Upraity writes, 'The so-called educated lot from both the non-governmental and governmental sectors are blinded by the glitter of Western civilisation that they want to copy blindly without taking the country's situation into consideration. They want to reform the education in similar fashion. These people and the existing English education system are responsible for making our present children/youth unproductive, wealth-less, and powerless' (2006 v.s., 310-11).

37 For the rise of Nepali language to dominant status in the Rana era, see Onta (1997).

pressure in a young child's mind and causes harm, b) priority must be given to the mother tongue/national language—which is what non-English-speaking developed countries do or are doing,³⁸ and c) English is no longer the language that would help us deal with our neighbouring countries (which was not the case when India was under the British). He urges readers to be farsighted and invest as much in Hindi as in English as the former is going to be the national language of India. 'But,' he laments, 'since our thought is coloured by the existing education system, we think that to have less knowledge of English is to have less capacity.' He adds, 'Especially those who studied English think this way but this is hollow pomp. Even though I myself fall in that category [of English-educated] but the reality is always true' (Rana 2006 v.s.b, 360-62).

The Basic Education System practiced in India put more emphasis on practical aspects and less on the textbooks—more so in the lower levels. It is not very clear how much more emphasis was given to textbooks in the Nepali Basic Schools, but some articles and reports suggest that the focus was more on textbooks than on practical aspects.³⁹ The government had prepared curricula for both primary and middle-level Basic Schools as the notices published in the *Nepal Shiksha* suggest. One early notice claims that the text books are in the process of being printed (NS 2005 v.s.g) whereas a bookseller's advertisement published a couple of years later lists 30 titles for class one to five (NS 2007 v.s.a; 2007 v.s.b).⁴⁰ The draft (*motamoti*) curricula for the middle level schools also appear in the pages of *Nepal Shiksha* in which English appears as an optional subject (NS 2006 v.s.b, 171-72), but it does not appear that the textbooks for the middle and above level were

38 To play down the importance of English, an editorial of the journal mentions Madras as a state with the highest English-speaking population—where even the coolies chatter freely (*bhadbhadaune*) in English—turning full-fledged to Basic Education (NS 2005 v.s.f, 135).

39 However, for the grades above five, local text books were not available. The Nepali representative's report in the All India Buniyadi Education Convention (1953) mentions three problems that the Basic Education program in Nepal at that time was facing: people's preference for English education over Basic; problems in the craft as cotton was not easily available in Nepal; and unavailability of text books for grades above five (NS 2011 v.s., 19-20). A couple of reports complained that the teachers in Basic Schools were not following the basic principle of teaching—i.e., teaching by what they called *samabaya* method or teaching holistically by paying more attention to the practice part.

40 The following subjects were to be taught in the primary (1-5 grade) Basic Schools: practical lessons on the making of yarn from cotton using a spinning wheel (*katai*), practical agriculture, theoretical class on yarn making and agriculture, geography, history, mathematics, mother tongue or language, general science, and citizen/social studies (*nagarik shastra*). English, which had been taught in the existing schools, however, is missing from the curricula (NS 2005 v.s.f).

ever produced (NS 2011 v.s., 20). The notice that lays out the middle Basic School curricula first refutes the claim that English is not taught in the Basic Schools and then details the curricula.⁴¹

Basic education fades into oblivion

Padma Shamsher, it seems, was enlightened enough to have a grasp of what loomed ahead in the regime's future. But the conservative camp led by Mohan Shamsher, son of Chandra Shamsher, was neither convinced nor satisfied with Padma. Hence Padma was forced to abdicate. When Mohan Shamsher came to power in 1948 April,⁴² he followed his father's footsteps by suspending the limited concessions made by his predecessor. More than paying attention to simmering internal problems and implementing the rather conservative constitution, Mohan Shamsher tried to expand diplomatic relationships with the outside world. He also offered his troops to the Indian government when India faced problems in areas like Hyderabad and Kashmir so as to win their favour. During the first two years of his administration Mohan Shamsher 'put into effect repressive laws drastically curtailing freedom of expression and association' and suspended the civil liberties (Shaha 1996, 203).⁴³ But, writes Aryal, '[i]n spite of his efforts to suppress the people, they began to fight for their political and other rights' (Aryal 1970, 29).

On the education front, however, the Basic Education policy of the government continued. But, despite the Director General's effort to push the system, there was not much zeal on the part of the ruler himself in

41 The following subjects were to be taught in the middle Basic Schools: 1) basic art skill (*shilpa kala*)—a) agriculture and horticulture b) weaving and knitting c) metal and wood work [one of the three to be selected]; 2) minor industry—a) agriculture and horticulture b) weaving and knitting c) working with paper board [one of the three to be selected]; 3) Nepali; 4) Other language—English, Hindi and Sanskrit [one of the three]; 5) Mathematics; 6) Social science—a) history b) geography and c) citizenship/social studies; 7) General science; 8) Art; 9) Health science and sanitation; and 10) Religious studies (NS 2006 v.s.b, 171-72). Another report published in 1953 confirms that the text books for middle and higher level were not published till the end of 1953 (NS 2011 v.s., 20).

42 With growing pressure from the conservative camps led by Mohan Shamsher, Padma Shamsher fled Kathmandu on 21 February 1948 and crossed the frontier into India a week later (Shaha 1996, 188). Mohan Shamsher officially took over the reign only on 30 April 1948, as the latter did not send his resignation letter as promised.

43 In 1950 when Mohan Shamsher came under real pressure, he tried to save face by concocting elections in some villages and also forming a so-called parliament by hand-picking his henchmen in September of that year. Mohan Shamsher had earlier (in 1948) banned the Nepali Congress party and also introduced a new press and publication law in 2005 v.s. to further curtail civil liberties (see Parajuli 2012).

promoting it.⁴⁴ And the program was suspect in the public eye.⁴⁵ Rishikesh Shaha writes, '[The Basic Education system] became suspect in the eyes of the Nepali educated elites who viewed it as Mrigendra's device to exploit Gandhi's name and programme to discourage and finally displace the western-style education system which the Ranas did not find conducive to their political interests' (1996, 168).⁴⁶ Trailokya Nath Upraity, himself a teacher at the Basic Education Training Centre, later claimed that the Rana government in 1947 was more interested in the import of the label than the contents of Basic Education from India (Upraity 1962, 37).

While the government was pushing the Basic Education, the public was more interested in 'modern' or English education.⁴⁷ And they began to 'open schools against the will of the Ranas, and without getting sanction from them' (Aryal 1970, 29). However, there were exceptions and at least in the case of Pokhara it was the central government that okayed the proposal to establish a public (or modern) school, despite the district Governor's (*Badahakim*; another Rana) reservations.⁴⁸ Despite the government's policy to promote Basic Schools and bear its financial burden, actors there chose to establish an English school, which they themselves had to fund and manage. Why were they running after this alien, so called 'modern' education, also derogatorily referred to as 'cow-eating' education?⁴⁹

44 Madhav Prasad (2007 v.s.) laments the unavailability of the basic materials such as pens, pencils, slates, and notebooks in the hill areas whereas another report complains about the unavailability of text books as well as raw materials required to teach 'craft' (NS 2011 v.s.).

45 After Padma came to power and showed his 'reformist' side to public, many people via the 'letter to editor' in the official newspaper *Gorkhapatra* demanded schools in their areas. Only a handful of them, however, were demanding Basic Schools.

46 At the time of the launch of this programme, Shaha was teaching at Tri-Chandra College and had written an article on Basic Education parroting the government's talking points and applauding the effort of the Rana authorities (Shaha 2003 v.s., 3-4). He also contributed a poem in *Nepal Shiksha* praising the Rana system and Mohan Shamsher on the occasion of latter's accession to power (see Shaha 2006 v.s., 167-68).

47 There were other parents who were dissatisfied with the Basic Education—because it did not teach their children the know-how of performing rituals based on the Sanskrit texts (see, e.g., Prasad 2007 v.s., Gautam 2007 v.s., cf. Neupane 2010 v.s.: 20).

48 The *Badahakim*, who was also to be the chairperson of the school managing committee, was uncooperative. He reportedly said that he would not let the school run. 'But it was the thing of the 20th century. Ultimately the school side won' (Parajuli 2007 v.s., 14).

49 In this logic English are beef-eaters and hence their education equaled cow-eaters' education. The argument was also that when people get such an education, they would imitate the foreigners and start eating beef, a sin for cow worshipping Hindus. It was interesting however that even religious teachers such as ascetic Prem Chaitanya in Pokhara was spearheading the modern school drive, as chief of the school management committee (see Parajuli 2009).

One simple argument for such a craze for modern schools could be that English epitomised prosperity and technological and other advancements made by the West; the lure of 'modern education' was so powerful that they even dared deviate from government policies, if not defy them outright.⁵⁰ Modern education was the answer to all that they lacked compared to the outside world, it was a panacea for all the modern amenities that were not available in this part of the globe. English education was required not only for the material progress or technological advancement, it was also the emancipatory path to a 'civilised society' or path to enlightenment.⁵¹ Embracing 'cow-eating' education was thus not against the religion, rather it was just the opposite—it was a 'sin' not to have embraced 'timely' education.⁵² A school—and not *Pathshala* or Basic School for that matter—was a marker of *aadhunikata* (modernisation/modernity) and they did not want to be lagging behind [*pichadiyeko* or backward] (Parajuli 2057 v.s., 7).

It would, however, be erroneous to view the setting up of schools as a mere lure for *aadhunikata* or following of the modernisation bandwagon. We have to move a step further to analyse how the term *vidya* (knowledge/education) was appropriated by both the state and by the social actors. More than anything else, the act of coming together to establish the so-called 'modern school' was a 'politically motivated subversive act,' as Tej Nath Ghimire also puts it.⁵³ Another activist Shri Kant Adhikari claims that the English school was also a special institution to fight against the Ranas (Adhikari 2056 v.s., 17).⁵⁴ And increasingly, hardcore political actors were using schools as covert means to expand their base across the

50 The justification for such education furnished by an activist in trying to convince one of the elites to sign the petition, also illustrates this. For details of the interaction between the activist and the elite, see Parajuli (2009).

51 The modern school was opened, according to Mukti Nath Timisina, as 'the demand of the time was to become a civilised society (*yugle savya samaj sanga sambandha rakhna khojeko thiyo*)' (Timisina 2040 v.s., 19).

52 The only way to transform 'savages' into 'civilised' was to give them a dose of English, modern education. So pressing were the demands, and overwhelming was the justification that even the diehard opponents finally yielded. The Sanskrit or Bhasha school did not quite fulfill the demands of the time, writes the joint secretary Sundar Prasad Marsani of the school, 'It was a matter of shame for the people of the city like Pokhara to not have any provision of public education that suited the era (*yug suhauddo*)' (Marsani 2022 v.s., 2).

53 Interview with Tej Nath Ghimire, teacher-writer-social activist of Pokhara, who came of age during the 1950s. For an account of how these activists were involved in new style of doing politics, see Parajuli (2008).

54 Adhikari was a teacher at a Basic School in Pokhara during Rana era. He went on to become a Member of Parliament in the first people elected parliament of 1959.

country.⁵⁵ One of the activities outlined by the Nepali Congress party as part of the *satyagraha* (civil disobedience) movement launched in 1947 was to establish schools (Joshi 2048 v.s., 17).

The selection of the English school model, thus, was deliberate. Though it was not envisaged as an arena to directly confront the rulers, it, nevertheless, was a subtle means to expand access and influence of the 'subjects' in the affairs of the state. On the one hand it provided an excuse to form a group and reach out to larger sections of the society. On the other hand, it challenged the exclusivity of the Ranas' access to the corpus of knowledge, which was available only in English. The Ranas were against imparting English education to the general populace because it would elevate the social positioning of the subjects, thereby eliminating the differences between rulers and the ruled. For the same reason, that is, to bridge the gap, the activists wanted to promote English education, they wanted to be equals.

In the meanwhile, the banned Nepali Congress party launched an armed struggle against the consolidation of power by the new prime minister in 1950. This armed struggle against the Rana autocracy ended in a compromise, popularly known as the Delhi Compromise, which ultimately saw the end of the regime. With the downfall of the family oligarchy of the Ranas began the age of *janajagaran* (public awakening), as many write and say, and the country took a new direction. An interim act was introduced with clearly defined political, social, and economic rights for the people.

'The zeal of the government as well as the public created a genuine atmosphere for the proper development of education in the country,' writes Aryal (1970, 34). People all across the country became excited, creating new *avatars* of themselves as individuals and as associations: political parties, schools, libraries, literary organisations, theatre groups, clubs, newspapers (Parajuli 2009). Kamal P. Malla calls the 1950s a 'decade of extroversion. For it was a decade of explosion of all manner of ideas, activities, and organised efforts' (1979, 192). Yet though there was new zeal, the new government did not seem to have a clear vision of where and how to move ahead. The old machinery had collapsed, but the new set-up was yet to be structured or established (Shahi 2052 v.s.). With the formation of an interim coalition government, a new education ministry (Ministry of Education and Culture) was created and some changes were made.⁵⁶ However, no concrete national

55 One writer (editorial) however claims that the schools were opened due to economic reasons. Since educated people could not find jobs, they opened schools so as to earn their livelihood (see NS 2010 v.s.a).

56 On 22 April 1951 a meeting, *shikshasabha*, was called to discuss various issues related to the future of Nepali education. The meeting recommended compulsory universal education,

education policy was formed despite repeated calls for such a policy. The pages of *Nepal Shiksha* are filled with articles that demanded a 'national' policy that is not a copycat of other countries but is suitable to the needs and requirements of the country (see, e.g., Pandey 2009 v.s., Swar 2010 v.s., Chhipa 2010 v.s., Singh 2010 v.s., Prasad 2010 v.s., Neupane 2011 v.s.). One of the reasons for failing to devise a policy was political instability. Within four years of political change there were five ministers who headed the education ministry.⁵⁷

But the absence of a concrete policy did not matter much to education enthusiasts all across the country. They went ahead with what they wanted which was definitely not Basic School. The Basic Education approach had already lost its shine or lustre, if it ever existed in the first place.⁵⁸ The new Education Minister Nripa Jang Rana was astounded by this public demand for English education. He noted that 'there is only demand for English education in Nepal today,' and asked, 'Why is it so?' (NS 2008 v.s.a, 200; see also NS 2011 v.s, 19). A writer lamented the gradual decline of Basic Education: 'I'm telling you with great *lachari* that the parents have stopped sending their children to Basic Schools for they think that their kids will be spoiled if they go to a school where they only teach how to make yarn (*katai garne*)' (Bahadur 2008 v.s., 218). Yet another tried to defend the Basic Education system thus:

Many people think that Basic Education hinders higher education. They say this was introduced only to stop pupils from getting higher education. Other people think that this education only produces fishermen and

setting up a women's college, and a board comprised of *bidwans* to formulate a national education policy (NS 2008 v.s.b, 250-54). The education ministry called another meeting on 26 July 1951 in which 200 people including high-ranking ministers B.P. Koirala and Ganesh Man Singh participated (NS 2008 v.s.c). The education minister stated that the responsibility of managing the primary schools went to district *panchayats* (NS 2008 v.s.d). A National Board of Education was also established in 1952 (Wood 1965, Sharma 2062 v.s.).

57 Even after the political change, which ended in a compromise and a coalition ministry, a Rana by the name Nripa Jang Rana headed the education ministry. Another Rana Sharada Shamsher became the next education minister. There was also a change in the education department a few months before the political change. Mrigendra Shamsher, the Director General, left for India in November 1950 and his son Bharat Shamsher replaced him (NS 2007 v.s.c).

58 The editorials and contributors in the *Nepal Shiksha* continued to deride the existing English education (and a few also derided Sanskrit) and defended the criticism targeted at Basic Education. 'What's the use of the hand in the machine age?', ask people. 'But, this is like asking why the child that is just born is not able to speak or earn,' wrote one (Badrinath 2011 v.s., 15-16). He added, 'The existing English education has not injected the love of the country in the pupil. It just had made them passive and parasitic' (Badrinath 2011 v.s, 17).

farmers. This is not true. Basic Education is that education which is based on industry. In other words it is called Basic Education because its base is industry.... But, unfortunately, the Ranas initiated it and people were suspicious...they began to say *dal me kuch kala hai* [something is fishy]. (Joshi 2007 v.s., 175)

A teacher at a Basic School looked nostalgically at the growth (and decline) of Basic Schools: 'In the last six years of its existence, it has spread all across the country.... People were talking about it all the time.... There was no English school where Basic Education was not initiated' (Swar 2009 v.s., 339-40). 'But,' he lamented, 'the growth of the Basic Education is now limited. The importance of this education in the last three years compared to the previous three years has diminished. It is slackening.' And he concluded with an elegy: 'The motion of the spinning wheels has stopped. The handlooms have lost their consciousness. The boat of Basic Education is overturned by the storm and is drowning' (Swar 2009 v.s., 341).

Indeed, the elegy was prophetic. The state patronage once enjoyed by Basic Education was gradually declining even though there had been some efforts to make it attractive.⁵⁹ On 25 May 1952, the Ministry of Education called another grand meeting to 'completely change the primary education system' in which the learned/erudite and the educators participated. The meeting decided unanimously to morph all primary education systems (English, *Bhasha*, Basic, Sanskrit) into one education system (P.N. Sharma 2009 v.s., 223-27).⁶⁰ With this, the foundation of the Basic Education system totally collapsed. However, Basic Education as such still continued. In the year 2009 v.s., the sixth batch of teachers was trained and from that year 10 women were also trained as teachers to meet the demand for female teachers (NS 2010 v.s.b). In 1953, there were 23 primary schools, 13 middle schools, and 14 high schools offering Basic

59 A notice of the Basic Education Centre says that if a fifth grade Basic School graduate sits for additional law and book-keeping exams, then he will get a *madhyama* certificate, which is the same privilege that graduates of English schools enjoy (NS 2007 v.s.d). Another report says, 'The government has made a provision of providing 'Less-English' matriculation certificate to those students who have passed the eighth standard from the Basic high schools. By taking two additional English papers, they will get the matriculation certificate' (NS 2011 v.s., 19).

60 It was also decided in the meeting that primary education will be free and compulsory. English and Sanskrit would not be taught at the primary level. Primary education should be provided in the local language, but the national language was also to be promoted alongside. Nepali language, general knowledge, math, science, and health/physical training were to be part of the curricula (P.N. Sharma 2009 v.s., 226).

Education in which a total of 250 teachers and around 12,000 students were engaged (NS 2011 v.s., 19).

Finally, in 1954, the government constituted the National Educational Planning Commission for the 'orderly development of education in Nepal' (Pandey et al. 1956, Wood 1965). It collected data on education for the first time and also sought suggestions from the public. 'After the hard work of a year,' the commission submitted a voluminous report on March 1, 1955, 'making recommendations on all aspects of education.'⁶¹ While it took time to get the report's recommendations implemented, it, nevertheless, formally heralded the end of the experiment that began nearly a decade earlier.⁶²

Conclusion

The family oligarchy of the Ranas that lasted more than a century, thus in general, did not make any genuine effort to promote education. If anything, the Ranas with a few exceptions actively worked against public welfare. For most of this period, access to education was severely restricted and whatever growth there was merely incidental. However, in public, the rulers more often than not posed as 'promoters of education'.

There was a policy turnaround, especially after the assumption of power by Padma Shamsher. From the existing policy of controlling public access to education, the new policy sought to control the minds of the masses by providing them 'appropriate' knowledge. And, in the Basic Education system, Gandhi's brainchild, the Ranas saw salvation, which, however, was a contradiction. For the philosophy of Basic Education was emancipation and not control (see Kumar 1993; Sykes 1988). The Rana government formally introduced the Basic Education System in Nepal in 1947 and aimed to gradually replace the other existing education systems.

The Basic Education policy and concomitant project of 'controlling the mind,' however, did not make much headway for a number of reasons. First, the champion of the idea, Padma Shamsher, could not focus on the project as he was embroiled in other matters of politics—he was facing opposition from his conservative fraternity as well as from the newly formed political

61 Hugh B. Wood, chief adviser to the commission, writes, 'This commission of 56 members, widely representative of Nepalese leadership, worked intensively for a year (1954-55) and drafted a long-range comprehensive plan of education for Nepal. Among its goals were: universal primary education by 1985, availability of adult education to all who desired by 1965, a national university by 1965, availability of multi-purpose secondary education on the basis of one school for every 10 thousand population by 1975' (1965, 11).

62 It is worth mentioning here that the Indian Basic Education experiment also did not make much headway and finally went into oblivion after 1960 (see Kumar 1993).

parties aimed at overthrowing the regime itself—and was eventually forced to abdicate. Second, the next ruler Mohan Shamsher—who exiled Padma—believed in the old way of ruling one’s subjects (i.e., with an iron fist) and was thus sceptical of the idea of controlling their minds. The political situation did not permit Mohan to openly disavow the education system; therefore, it was continued but without much zeal. Third, the project was suspect in the public eye—there was a ‘trust deficit’. Neither the ‘traditional’ nor the ‘modern elites’ believed that one had to study to be a farmer or a fisherman. This they had been doing for generations without going to school. The ‘traditional elites’ were unhappy also because it was not imparting to their children any skills to perform rites and rituals. Conversely, the ‘modern elites’ did not want to embrace it as it was passé in the ‘machine age’ to be teaching handicrafts and farming but not English—the ticket to civilisation and modernisation. They also saw it as a Rana ploy to keep them in the ‘barbaric’ or ‘dark age’. As the elite group that became omnipresent after the political change of 1951 was awed by the discourses of modernity, the rustic Gandhian Basic Education system found few backers and was eventually replaced by ‘modern education’. Thus the Truman Doctrine took over as U.S. professor Hugh B. Wood became Nepal’s chief adviser on education and played a leading role in crafting Nepal’s new education policy that sought a break from Rana-ruled Nepal.

Acknowledgments

Part of this paper is drawn from my dissertation (Parajuli 2009). However, much of the writing and research was undertaken during my academic visit (September 2012–May 2013) at the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) under a fellowship provided by the Open Society Foundations (OSF). I would like to thank the OSF and my host Mark Liechty at the Anthropology Department of UIC for enabling me to undertake this work. I am grateful to Pratyoush Onta, Mark Liechty, Seira Tamang, Tatsuro Fujikura and Pramod Bhatta for their constructive comments/suggestions on earlier versions of this paper. I would also like to thank discussant Sambriddhi Kharel and the participants of the Second Annual Kathmandu Conference. I am, however, solely responsible for any remaining errors.

References

- Acharya, Baburam. 2008 v.s. Hamro Rastrabhasha. *Nepal Shiksha* 4(1): 157-63.
- Acharya, Baburam. 2024 v.s. *Shri Panch Badamaharajadhiraj Prithvi Narayan Shahko Sankshipta Jeevani*. 4 Vols. Kathmandu: Royal Nepal Academy.
- Adhikari, Krishna Kant. 1984. *Nepal Under Jang Bahadur: 1846-1877*. Vol 1. Kathmandu: Buku.
- Adhikari, Shri Kant. 2056 v.s. Rishi Keshav Parajulijyuko Amarata. In *Prajanatranka Ananya Sadhak Pt. Rishi Keshav Parajuli Smarika*. pp. 17-19. Pokhara: Peoples' Media Centre.
- Agrawal, Hem Narayan. 1976. *The Administrative System of Nepal: From Tradition to Modernity*. Delhi: Vikas Publication House.
- Aryal, Krishna Raj. 1970. *Education for the Development of Nepal*. Kathmandu: Shanti Prakashan.
- Badrinath. 2011 v.s. Aadhar Shiksha Kina? *Nepal Shiksha* 5(2): 15-18.
- Bahadur, Prahlad. 2008 v.s. Aadhar-Shiksha. *Nepal Shiksha* 3(8): 216-18.
- Chhipa, Amrit Bahadur. 2010 v.s. Bartaman Shikshako Charcha. *Nepal Shiksha* 5(1): 26-27.
- Clark, T.W. 1969. Nepali and Pahari. In *Current Trends in Linguistics 5: Linguistics in South Asia*. Thomas A. Sebeok, ed., pp. 249-76. The Hague: Mouton.
- Gautam, Shyamkrishna. 2008 v.s. Nepalma Shiksha. *Nepal Shiksha* 3(8): 191-93.
- Gautam, Tankeshwor. 2007 v.s. Shikshako Bund. *Nepal Shiksha* 3(2): 57-58.
- Gorkhapatra. 2003 v.s.a. Nijamati Pariksha Sithil Bhayo. *Gorkhapatra*, 4 Asoj, p. 2.
- Gorkhapatra. 2003 v.s.b. Lekhak Chahiye. *Gorkhapatra*, 25 Asoj, p. 3.
- Gorkhapatra. 2003 v.s.c. Shri Tin Maharajko Mahatwapurna Bhashan. *Gorkhapatra*, 3 Fagun, p. 1&4.
- Gorkhapatra. 2004 v.s. Shiksha Bibhagka Da. Ja. ko Bhashan. *Gorkhapatra*, 29 Asoj, p. 2.
- His Majesty's Government (HMG). 2018 v.s. *Sarvagin Rastriya Shikshya Samitiko Report*. Kathmandu: HMG, Ministry of Education.
- Joshi, Ram Hari. 2048 v.s. *Nepalko November Kranti*. Kathmandu: Antarastriya Manch.
- Joshi, Shyamraj Dhowj. 2007 v.s. Aadhar-Shikshako Ek Jhalak. *Nepal Shiksha* 3(7): 173-176.
- Kumar, Krishna. 1991. *Political Agenda of Education: A Study of Colonialist and Nationalist Ideas*. New Delhi: Sage.
- Kumar, Krishna. 1993. Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi. *Prospects* 23(3-4): 507-17.
- Kumar, Krishna. 1995. Listening to Gandhi. *Seminar* 436: XX.
- Kumar, Satish. 1967. *Rana Polity in Nepal*. Bombay: Asia Publishing House.
- Liechty, Mark. 1997. Selective Exclusion: Foreigners, Foreign Goods and Foreignness in Modern Nepali History. *Studies in Nepali History and Society* 2(1): 5-68.

- Macfie, A.L., ed. 2000. *Orientalism: A Reader*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Malla, Kamal Prakash. 1979. *The Road to Nowhere*. Kathmandu: Sajha Prakashan.
- Marsani, Sundar Prasad. 2022 v.s. Rastriya Bahuddeshyiyi Vidyalayako Sankshipt Itihas. In *Nirjharini* 1(1): 2-9. Pokhara: Rastriya Bahuddeshyiyi Uchcha Vidyalaya.
- Maskey, Govinda. 1996. *Social Life in Nepal: From Tradition to Modernity (1901-1925)*. New Delhi: Anmol Publications.
- Navin, Puskar Prasad Sharma. 2009 v.s. Buniyadi Shikshako Bare Mero Bichar. *Nepal Shiksha* 4(11-12): 332-34.
- Nepal Shiksha (NS). 2005 v.s.a. Sampadakiya. *Nepal Shiksha* 1(1): 4-6.
- Nepal Shiksha (NS). 2005 v.s.b. Vishwavidyalaya-Yojana-Sabhaka Nimitta Sarkarbata Niyukta Bhayeka Sabhapati, Upasabhapati tatha Sadasyaharuoko Namavaali. *Nepal Shiksha* 1(1): 7.
- Nepal Shiksha (NS). 2005 v.s.c. Shiksha Bibhagka Director General Shri Su.Ma. Ne.Ta, Su.Pra.Go.Da.Ba, Me. Ja. Mrigendra Shamsheer Ja. Ba.Rana M. A. bata vishwavidyalaya-Yojana-Sabhako Sabhapatiko Haisiyatle So Sabhaka Pratyek Sadasyalai 2005 Sal Bhadra 11 Gate Pathaibakseko Karyakramsahitko Suchana. *Nepal Shiksha* 1(1): 8-9.
- Nepal Shiksha (NS). 2005 v.s.d. Vishwavidyalaya-Yojana-Sabha. *Nepal Shiksha* 1(1): 9-14.
- Nepal Shiksha (NS). 2005 v.s.e. Shri Supradipta Manyavar Nepal-tara Suprasiddha Prabal Gorakha Dakshinbahu Major General Mrigendra Shamsheer Janga Bahadur Rana M.A. Director General of Public Instructions Nepalata School Schoolka Secretary, Headmasterharulai Bakseko Aadhar-Shiksha ra Praudhshalaharu bareko Aadesh Patra. *Nepal Shiksha* 1(1): 17-18.
- Nepal Shiksha (NS). 2005 v.s.f. Sampadakiya: Aadhar Shiksha nai Kina?. *Nepal Shiksha* 1(7): 134-36.
- Nepal Shiksha (NS). 2005 v.s.g. Chhapiyo, Dhamadham Bikri Hudaicha, Aadhar Shikshako Pathyakram. *Nepal Shiksha* 1(7): 157.
- Nepal Shiksha (NS). 2006 v.s.a. Shri Padma-Kanya-Vidyapithko Janmajayantima Shri Shiksha Bibhagka Director General Sahebko Vaktrita. *Nepal Shiksha* 1(8): 169-171.
- Nepal Shiksha (NS). 2006 v.s.b. Madhyam Aadhar-Schoolko Motamoti Pathyakram. *Nepal Shiksha* 1(8): 171-72.
- Nepal Shiksha (NS). 2006 v.s.c. Aadhar Shikshan Kendrako Suchana. *Nepal Shiksha* 1(9): 293.
- Nepal Shiksha (NS). 2006 v.s.d. Shri Da. Ja. Pa. E. Aafisko Suchana. *Nepal Shiksha* 1(9): 294.
- Nepal Shiksha (NS). 2006 v.s.e. Shri Da. Ja. Pa. E. Aafisko Suchana. *Nepal Shiksha* 1(9): 305.

- Nepal Shiksha (NS). 2006 v.s.f. Sampadakiya: Hamro Vishwavidyalaya. *Nepal Shiksha* 1(10): 306-09.
- Nepal Shiksha (NS). 2006 v.s.g. Sampadakiya. *Nepal Shiksha* 1(11): 330-31.
- Nepal Shiksha (NS). 2006 v.s.h. Vishwavidyalaya-Yojana-Sabha. *Nepal Shiksha* 1(12): 365-71.
- Nepal Shiksha (NS). 2007 v.s.a. Bigyapan. *Nepal Shiksha* 3(1): 30.
- Nepal Shiksha (NS). 2007 v.s.b. Bigyapan. *Nepal Shiksha* 3(2): 48.
- Nepal Shiksha (NS). 2007 v.s.c. Savari. *Nepal Shiksha* 3(2): 58.
- Nepal Shiksha (NS). 2007 v.s.d. Aa. Shi. Kendrako Suchana. *Nepal Shiksha* 3(5): 133.
- Nepal Shiksha (NS). 2008 v.s.a. Shri Mananiya Shikshamantri Nripa Jang Ranako Baktabya. *Nepal Shiksha* 3(8): 200-02.
- Nepal Shiksha (NS). 2008 v.s.b. Nepal Shiksha Bibhagko Kamko Pragati. *Nepal Shiksha* 3(10-11): 250-54.
- Nepal Shiksha (NS). 2008 v.s.c. Shiksha Sammelan. *Nepal Shiksha* 3(10-11): 262.
- Nepal Shiksha (NS). 2008 v.s.d. 2008 Saal Shravan 11 Gate Roj 5 ma Bhayeko Shiksha Sammelanma Shri Mananiya Shikshamantrijyu bata Bitarit 'Anurodh.' *Nepal Shiksha* 3(12): 272-74.
- Nepal Shiksha (NS). 2010 v.s.a. Editorial: Nepalka Schoolharu: Ek Samkshiapta Adhyayan. *Nepal Shiksha* 4(11-12): 308-15.
- Nepal Shiksha (NS). 2010 v.s.b. Aadhar Shikshako Chhaithaun Adhiveshan Chaldaichha. *Nepal Shiksha* 4(11-12): 316-17.
- Nepal Shiksha (NS). 2011 v.s. 11.11.53 ko Akhil Bharatiya Buniyadi Shiksha Sammelanko Naya Adhiveshan Titabar (Asam) ma Udghatan. *Nepal Shiksha* 5(3): 18-20.
- Nepali, Birdhwoj. 2003 v.s. Uttam Pariksha Khulne Kahile?. *Gorkhapatra*, 4 Asoj, p. 2.
- Neupane, Kedarnath. 2010 v.s. Samrakshak Shikshak ra Vidyarthiko Parasparik Sambandha. *Nepal Shiksha* 5(1): 17-23.
- Neupane, Kedarnath. 2011 v.s. Nepalma Shiksha ra Shiksha Pranali. *Nepal Shiksha* 5(3): 1-10.
- Pandey, Bhim Bahadur. 2039 v.s. *Tyas Bakhatko Nepal*, Vol. 2. Kathmandu: Centre for Nepal and Asian Studies, TU.
- Pandey, Poshan Prasad. 2009 v.s. Shikshama Sudhar. *Nepal Shiksha* 4(5-7): 196-200.
- Pandey, Rudra Raj, Keshar Bahadur KC and Hugh B Wood, eds. 1956. *Nepalma Shikshya: Nepal Rastriya Shikshya Ayogko Vivaran*. Kathmandu: College of Education.
- Parajuli, Lokranjan. 2008. From Subjects to Citizens: The Formative Stage of Political Formations in Pokhara. *Studies in Nepali History and Society* 13(2): 351-388.

- Parajuli, Lokranjan. 2009. The Historical Evolution of Civil Society: Pokhara (1949-72). PhD dissertation, University of Bielefeld, Germany.
- Parajuli, Lokranjan. 2012. 'Objectionable Contents': The Policing of Nepali Print Media during the 1950s. *European Bulletin of Himalayan Research* 41: 58-83.
- Parajuli, Ramesh. 2007. Sarvajani Pustakalaya ko Rajniti: Eitihasik Simhavalokan. *Rupantara* 3: 1-18.
- Parajuli, Rishi Keshav. 2057 v.s. *Janajagaranko Satya Tathya: Pokharako Euta Itihas*. Pokhara: Grishma Keshav, Varsha Keshav Parajuli.
- Prasad, Ishwari. 1996. *The Life and Times of Maharaja Juddha Shumsher Jung Bahadur Rana of Nepal*. New Delhi: Ashis Publishing House.
- Prasad, M. 2010 v.s. Rastriya Shikshako Aavasyakata. *Nepal Shiksha* 5(2): 6-9.
- Prasad, Madhav. 2007 v.s. Pahadka Schoolko Padhai. *Nepal Shiksha* 3(1): 21-22.
- Ragsdale, Tod A. 1989. *Once a Hermit Kingdom: Ethnicity, Education and National Integration in Nepal*. New Delhi: Manohar.
- Rana, Mrigendra Shamsher J.B. 2005 v.s. Suvechha. *Nepal Shiksha* 1(1): 3.
- Rana, Mrigendra Shamsher J.B. 2006 v.s.a. Aadhar-Shiksha Kina?. *Nepal Shiksha* 1(11): 332-334.
- Rana, Mrigendra Shamsher J.B. 2006 v.s.b. Aadhar-Shiksha Kina?. *Nepal Shiksha* 1(12): 360-362.
- Rana, Pramod Shamsher. 2061 v.s. *Shri Tinharuko Tathya Vrittant*, Vol 1. Kathmandu: Vidyarthi Pustak Bhandar.
- Regmi Research Series (RRS). 1970. Government of Nepal Act 1948. *Regmi Research Series* 2(4): 77-95.
- Regmi Research Series (RRS). 1981. Revenue and Expenditure of the Government of Nepal, 1951. *Regmi Research Series* 13(12): 177-82.
- Sarubhakta, ed. 2052 v.s. *Siddhicharanka Jail Sansmaran*. Kathmandu: Nepal Rajakiya Pragya Pratisthan.
- Shaha, Rishikesh. 1996. *Modern Nepal: A Political History (1769-1955)*, Vol 2. New Delhi: Manohar.
- Shaha, Rishikesh. 2003 v.s. Aadhar Shiksha. *Gorkhapatra*, 20 Kattik, p. 3-4.
- Shaha, Rishikesh. 2006 v.s. Udayotsavma Shraddhanjali. *Nepal Shiksha* 1(8): 167-168.
- Shahi, D.K. 2052 v.s. *Saat Saal Pachhi Saat Saal*. 2nd edn. Kathmandu: Sajha Prakashan.
- Sharma, Gopi Nath. 2062 v.s. *Nepalma Shikshako Itihas*. Part 1.3rd edn. Kathmandu: Makalu Books and Stationers.
- Sharma, Puskar Nath. 2009 v.s. Nepalko Prathamik Shikshama Navinata. *Nepal Shiksha* 4(5-7): 223-27.
- Sharma, Yam Prasad. 2009 v.s. Kun Ho Ta. *Nepal Shiksha* 4(10): 295-297.
- Singh, Khadgaman. 2010 v.s. *Jaya Ma Nepal: Bartaman Shiksha Pranalima Parivartanko Aavasyakata*. *Nepal Shiksha* 5(2): 1-5.

- Stiller, Ludwig S.J. 1973. *The Rise of the House of Gorkha: A Study in the Unification of Nepal, 1768-1816*. Ranchi: Catholic Press.
- Stiller, Ludwig S.J. 1974. The Role of Fear in the Unification of Nepal. *Contribution to Nepali Studies* 1(2): 42-89.
- Swar, Nripa Bahadur. 2009 v.s. Aadhar ra Nepalma Tyasko Bikas. *Nepal Shiksha* 4(11-12): 339-41.
- Swar, Taraman Singh. 2010 v.s. Nepalma Sarvajanic Anivarya Nishulka Aadhar-Shikshako Aavasyakata. *Nepal Shiksha* 5(1): 1-6.
- Sykes, Marjorie. 1988. The Story of Nai Talim. Available at http://home.iitk.ac.in/~amman/soc748/sykes_story_of_nai_talim.html; accessed 12 December 2012.
- Timisina, Mukti Nath. 2040 v.s. *Mukti Nath Timisina*. Kathmandu: Sangraha Prakashan.
- Upraity, Trailokya Nath. 2006 v.s. Vidyarthi Jeevan. *Nepal Shiksha* 1(10): 310-11.
- Upraity, Trailokya Nath. 1962. *Financing Elementary Education in Nepal*. Eugene: The American-Nepal Education Foundation.
- Vir, Dharam. 1988. *Education and Polity in Nepal: An Asian Experiment*. New Delhi: Northern Book Centre.
- Whelpton, John. 1991. *Kings, Soldiers and Priests: Nepalese Politics and the Rise of Jang Bahadur Rana (1830-1857)*. New Delhi: Manohar Publications.
- Wood, Hugh B. 1965. *The Development of Education in Nepal*. Washington: US Department of Health, Education and Welfare, Office of Education.
- Wood, Hugh B. 1976. Agents of Education and Development in Nepal. In *The Anthropological Study of Education*. Craig J Calhoun and Francis A.J. Ianni, eds., pp. 147-158. The Hague: Morton.

Decentralising the Farmer-to-Farmer Extension Approach to the Local Level

Challenges and Learnings

SOMA KUMARI RANA AND SHIVA KUMAR SHRESTHA

Introduction

Decentralisation promotes democratisation, equity, people's participation and effective service delivery at local level through transfer of responsibilities and competencies, capacities and resource allocation power to a lower level of government (MoLD, 2004). Decentralising extension services is important in Nepal because agriculture contributes about 36% of the national GDP and employs over 65% of the economically active population. The majority of the rural population, over 83%, resides in rural areas, relying on agriculture and agriculture-related enterprises for their economic development and food security (MoAD, 2012). The agriculture sector in Nepal is neglected in terms of financial inputs, human resources, and programme planning and management. Due to that, government extension services are ineffective in reaching remote areas of Nepal, leaving many rural communities without any permanent means of assistance. Systematic and effective agricultural extension can play a fundamental role in technology transfer, and one means of achieving this is through an inclusive Farmer-to-Farmer (FtF) extension approach.

The current extension system in Nepal

The current agricultural extension system of the Government of Nepal (GoN) remains centralised and top-down. Under the circumstances, full participation of farmers in programme decision-making, planning, implementation and management, and monitoring and evaluation has not taken place. Farmers are suffering from lack of resources, ineffective institutional management mechanisms and unreliable systems of accountability. These existing centralised extension systems are not owned by farmers, rural communities or even district-level stakeholders. The

extension services from the district headquarters are weak with limited coverage, low cost efficiency and effectiveness, and respond poorly to the problems, concerns and priorities of poor and disadvantaged farmers.

Most government structures supporting the agriculture sector are located at central and regional level, and at the district headquarters. Outside the district headquarters, there are altogether 1377 Agriculture Service Centres (ASC) and Livestock Service Centres distributed across the 75 districts but they are understaffed, lack resources and motivation, and are declining in number. In the field, one ASC has to cover about 8,000 farming households (Dahal, 2010), and the forefront extension worker to farm-family ratio is 1:1500. Such a high ratio indicates poor access of farming families to service delivery, which is anyway difficult in the hilly and mountainous terrain of Nepal, especially in the more remote areas with poor or no access. This existing situation is not improved by scarcity of resources, poor policy implementation for supporting agricultural extension, centralised authority and inadequate local-level technicians.

Moreover, access of women to extension services and skills is very limited because of the lack of a gender-sensitive extension system. For example, most agricultural extension workers are men and they largely connect with men farmers who receive the information and service-delivery. It is almost inevitable that gender and social issues become marginalised in organisations and institutional systems in which a single caste group and gender dominate in the policy development process and programme implementation (Khadka, 2011).

Access to assets, resources and knowledge in agriculture

Agriculture in Nepal is a feminised sector; 70% of the agriculture labour force are women. The decade-long armed conflict (1996 – 2006), and higher migration of men from rural areas of Nepal, has not only severely increased the burden on women but has also increased feminisation. However, the government has yet to adopt measures to address the challenges arising from this feminisation in the agriculture sector (Ghale, 2008). In the production chain, access to resources determines the power relation at all levels. The amount of land owned and the quality of the land is the prime factor in determining the social status and productive potential of women. Ownership of assets—particularly land—is generally low amongst Dalits and disadvantaged Janajati groups. Partly for this reason, it is often also difficult for them to obtain credit. Disadvantaged groups are also very poorly represented in community politics, as well as salaried positions in both the private and public sectors (HELVETAS, 2012). The social norms

and traditional values of Nepalese society are still major hindering factors to recognising, accepting and promoting leadership of the disadvantaged. Women in Nepal in general have less economic assets, lower labour wages, poorer education, higher rates of illiteracy, little knowledge of their legal rights, less confidence in public, and are bound to their responsibilities at home (FAO, 2011). It is this continued social subordination of women in society that leads to poor access to economic opportunities. However, there are differences in the empowerment and inclusion levels of women depending on class, caste and ethnicity, religion and age. In this context, the extension service provision must be based on gender-sensitive and inclusive principles so that all sectors of society can benefit; an FtF system of extension must be inclusive to be accessible to the disadvantaged groups which are often excluded from mainstream services in remote areas.

Inclusion in the agricultural extension policies

Over the past 14 years, the GoN has promulgated the Local Self-Governance Act (LSGA 1999), the LSGA Regulations (2000), and the VDC Block Grant Operating Guidelines (2067 BS, 2011), all of which give high priority and momentum to agriculture service provision. The LSGA and its regulations foresee the devolution of public agricultural extension from the central government to local government, including the Village Development Committees (VDC), simultaneously, transferring authority for programme planning, implementation and management, and co-financing responsibilities from central to local government—the end goal being to accelerate the delivery of agricultural information and extension services to local communities.

Over the past decades new policies have also emphasised the need to promote the role of women and other socially discriminated groups (DFID and World Bank, 2006). After the political change in Nepal, some positive initiatives have been started such as those embodied in the National Agriculture Policy (2004), the National Extension Strategy, and the Agriculture Entrepreneurs Policy, all of which have acknowledged the role of women in agriculture development and poverty reduction. Other policy provisions are also becoming sensitive to include women in the production and market processes, but women's access to the necessary means of production remain either very limited or isolated even when efforts are made. In addition, none of the policy documents recognise the situation relating to gender and inclusiveness existing in the farmers' institutions in Nepal, and all policies seem to ignore the inter-linkages of wider socio-political and technical agendas related to resource rights, women specific policies and plans, and the provision of sufficient incentive and affirmative action to promote

participation, representation and leadership of discriminated people. The low participation and representation of the disadvantaged in policy processes has led to low confidence levels and disquiet, and consequently, disadvantaged farmers have not properly benefitted from such policies.

There is, therefore, a strong need for substantial reorientation in the understanding of inclusive agricultural development where women's and the disadvantaged's leadership is recognised and ensured. In most of the cases, the technical human resources, especially at the government structures are male and therefore their priorities, interests and approaches are different, which has consequently limited women's access to services from these government service centres (Ghale, 2008).

SSMP's contribution to inclusive agriculture extension

In the context of the current weak central, regional and district government structures which support the agriculture sector, the Sustainable Soil Management Programme (SSMP) has promoted a system of decentralised, participatory and inclusive agricultural extension—the FtF approach. This approach aims to (Shrestha, 2012):

- combat the poor delivery of extension services to the rural communities, especially those located some distance from the district headquarters;
- stimulate a socially equitable service that is more responsive to local needs;
- promote bottom-up planning with local participation;
- ensure ownership of programmes and projects by farming communities and cost-sharing.

In order to increase the access to agricultural services by rural communities, SSMP has begun to facilitate the establishment of VDC-level Agriculture Forest and Environment Committees (AFECs) to manage the FtF extension approach. This is undertaken through mobilising locallevel technicians—the Experienced Leader Farmers, ELFs—who provide agricultural coaching and services to farmer groups in remote areas. This SSMP strategy for provision of agriculture services to previously unreached farmers has been successful and cost-effective and has resulted in increased empowerment and productivity, as well as improved livelihoods.

On the social side, SSMP attempts to integrate the Gender, Equity, Social Inclusion and Poverty (GESIP) practices into the overall programme—from the processes, the institutional culture, through to the policies, strategies

and communication systems related to agriculture development in order to enable implementing actors and farmer groups to identify and address gender and equity issues at their work place. The programme facilitates the management and use of local human and natural resources and develops local capacities by policy interventions in the different institutions—e.g. in farmer groups, the AFECs and the local service providers. The importance of this approach has been realised by district- and local-level stakeholders as well as in the national policy arena.

Key operational modality of the FtF extension approach developed by SSMP

In order to create an effective FtF system operational at the VDC level, the following steps need to be followed. Development and mobilisation of Experienced Leader Farmers (ELFs) at VDC level for agriculture service delivery is currently undertaken by a District FtF Committee and supported by the District Agriculture Development Office (DADOs) and SSMP's local service providers (local NGOs). The FtF Committees are established with the assistance of the District Development Committee and are currently funded by SSMP. SSMP has developed ELFs in all the districts that it has worked in; a roster of ELFs is available to all, and copies are maintained at the DADO, District Livestock Services Office (DLSO) and AFEC offices. The AFECs have been established for promoting decentralised and participatory agriculture extension at the local level, and are responsible for:

- preparing the necessary by-laws and fund operating guidelines for effective and efficient use of the agriculture development funds received, and establishment of an agriculture development fund at the VDC level;
- defining the agricultural priorities of the VDC, and developing annual plans;
- undertaking evaluations of project proposals received from farmer groups, including technical and social assessments, and taking into account the availability of funds, providing formal approval of selected projects and disbursement of funds against a formal letter of agreement;
- developing and mobilising the ELFs in response to demands from the local farmer groups and communities within that VDC;
- undertaking monitoring and evaluation of the fund utilisation;
- providing the required technical and financial and progress reports to the VDC;

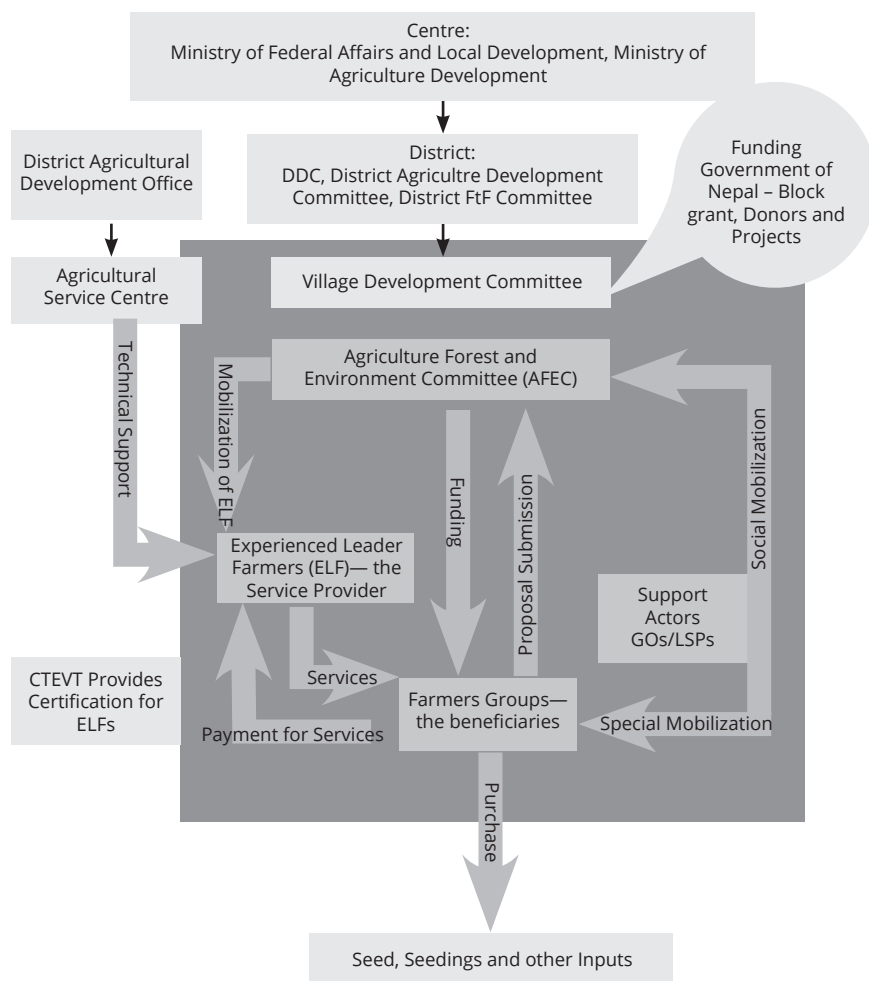
- transparent fund management, in relation to recording and accounting, disbursement, and auditing;
- tapping of funds for local agricultural development from government grants, donors, and projects active in the area (Ghale, Allen and Shrestha, 2012) – see Figure 1.

ELF development and mobilisation

Experienced Leader Farmers (ELFs) are the key actors in the FtF diffusion process. The most experienced and committed leaders in a farmer group

Figure 1: Operation of Farmer to Farmer extension approach

Institutionalizing FtF Extension Approach at VDC Level



are identified for their good farming and sound communication skills and selected to function as an ELF (Dhital, 2009). Those leader farmers, who are continuously involved in farming, are able to try, test, and regularly experiment with new technologies through the establishment of demonstration and test plots, as well as being able to analyse the causes of success or failure, are selected. They should also have experience of increasing profits and improving their own livelihoods through agriculture.

ELFs also need good leadership abilities, be committed to social service and change, and interested in serving disadvantaged farmers groups. After being selected as an ELF, coaching covers technical and social competencies, communication skills and the FtF process.

SSMP has learnt that groups of one caste often learnt best from an ELF belonging to the same caste, and women are inspired by learning from female ELFs. SSMP thus focuses on proportional representation by gender, caste and ethnicity during ELF development and mobilisation, ensuring that ELFs from mixed backgrounds are developed (see Table 1). SSMP has to date developed 441 female ELFs and this has been observed to lead to a significant increase in self-confidence and self-esteem of the female ELFs. Experiences from past years reveal that in many ways that women ELFs have been the change agents in demonstrating sustainable soil management (SSM) technologies in their own farms and for informing and motivating other women to adopt SSM technologies and increase their access to on-farm income (SSMP, 2012). The role of the ELF in the FtF extension approach is crucial so special attention needs to be given to identifying and developing the ELFs.

- In relation to lessons learnt in the development and mobilisation of ELFs, SSMP experiences conclude that:
- the VDC is the appropriate government institution for mobilising ELFs and promoting sustainable soil management technologies;
- focusing on the development of women ELFs and ELFs from the disadvantaged groups has a significant empowering effect;
- ELFs have an important impact on productivity and livelihood in remote areas;
- linking VDC agricultural fund allocation with the abilities of women and disadvantaged ELFs promotes access to agricultural technologies and knowledge acquirement by other farmers from disadvantaged groups;
- SSMP has also recognised that building gender analytical and socially sensitive facilitation skills of project partners as well as trained ELFs

can have a significant impact on the inclusion of socio-economically disadvantaged people in such a farmer-led agricultural extension system.

A decentralised extension approach in favour of disadvantaged groups

SSMP is committed to working towards an equal and just Nepali society and seeks to make farmers from disadvantaged groups the primary stakeholders in the programme (Khadka, 2012). The project document states that at least 60% of those reached are from disadvantaged groups. As a consequence, the programme which promotes sustainable soil management technologies and practices through the FtF approach prioritises the inclusion of disadvantaged groups. The farmer groups constitute the most important institution through which the programme promotes improved soil, farm and land management, with the goal of increasing incomes, enhancing food security and improving livelihoods (SSMP, 2012).

SSMP continues to lobby line agencies and political leaders to make the VDC the site for out-scaling improved agriculture and has encouraged the raising of policy voices on the importance of local institutions, such as farmer groups, VDC-level committees, including women and the disadvantage especially in the key positions—chairperson, secretary and treasurer. SSMP also inspires raising of voices at the VDC to ensure that available funds are used for the agriculture development of socially disadvantage groups.

SSMP contributing to the policy debate at national level

As described above, the AFEC is responsible for carrying out agricultural development programmes at the VDC level, which is directly accountable to local farmers. Through committed, widespread and regular coaching, SSMP works toward influencing the VDCs, government agencies, local NGOs, and local elites to ensure that policy and the institutional environment at the local level is GESIP-focused and decision-making is participatory—for example, all VDCs where AFECs have been formed to date have agreed that inclusion of women, Dalits and Janajatis in the membership of the AFECs is mandatory. One result of this coaching is that all 298 AFECs formed to date by SSMP in its current phase have developed by-laws and guidelines for: a) the establishment and operation of the funds received at local level, b) the development of the agriculture sector in the VDC, c) the institutionalisation of the FtF extension approach; and d) inclusivity in terms of all operational and management activities.

The by-laws have undoubtedly had some positive impact on the inclusive

Table 1: Caste and Gender of the AFEC members in the SSMP Phase 4 working districts

District	Total no. of AFECs	No. of AFEC Committee Members	Caste and Gender of Committee Members (nos.)									
			Dalit		Janajati		BCNT*			Others		
			F	M	F	M	F	M		F	M	
Achham	37	521	35	85	2	10	116	272		0		1
Dailekh	36	383	22	34	16	35	52	219		0		5
Jajarkot	20	213	9	33	3	15	37	116		-		-
Kalikot	26	284	19	27	1	4	60	171		0		2
Khotang	58	426	18	27	72	142	22	139		1		5
Okhaldhunga	56	952	48	61	165	180	151	347		0		0
Ramechhap	55	436	20	20	73	121	50	141		2		9
Total	298	3215	171	287	332	507	488	1,405		3		22

Source: SSMP Field Survey, 2013

* BCNT= Brahmin, Chhetri and Thakuri including ethnic advantaged Newar

nature of the AFECs formed to date, as shown in Table 1 below. Of the 3215 committee members in the 298 VDCs, 31% are women, 14% Dalit and 26% Janajati.

Impetus to the formation of an inclusive local extension service was provided in 2012 by a directive from the Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development (MoFALD) that a minimum of 15% of the block grants should be expended on agriculture development and that 35% of the capital grant received by each VDC should be used for disadvantaged groups. This was followed by a directive from the Department of Agriculture (DoA) to all DADOs that they should be actively involved in both further AFEC establishment and the proper utilisation of the 15% funds for agriculture; in addition, the DADOs were instructed to incorporate the FtF extension approach and SSM technologies as mandatory activities in their regular annual plans and programmes. Table 2 below shows the progress made in establishing the local level extension service and fund disbursement for agriculture development programmes.

Both the MoFALD and Ministry of Agricultural Development (MoAD) have decided to upscale this approach to other districts. Currently the Soil Management Directorate is planning to implement a cattle-shed improvement programme for 7500 households in FY 2070/71 in 39 mid-hill districts of Nepal; the National Planning Commission and the Ministry of Finance has agreed to provide the budget. The programme will be implemented through the AFECs, with technical backstopping from DADO. The establishment of these AFECs will be supported by operational guidelines currently being drafted by SSMP's Technical Committee to ensure smooth operation and management of agriculture development programmes at the VDC level—these guidelines will be endorsed by both the MoFALD and the MoAD.

Institutionalisation through curricula development at agriculture institutions

SSMP has also made efforts in ensuring inclusion of principles and practices of local-level FtF extension, including lessons learnt from the field into the curricula of three agricultural educational institutions at technical and tertiary level. These include the two main agricultural universities in Nepal, the Institute of Agriculture and Animal Science (IAAS), Tribhuvan University; and the Himalayan College of Agricultural Sciences and Technology (HICAST), Purvanchal University—which have incorporated the approach at both BSc and MSc level. The new Agriculture and Forestry University (AFU) is currently in dialogue with SSMP to ensure the incorporation of

Table 2: Current progress on AFEC formed, ELF developed and fund financed by VDC in the SSMP 4 phase working districts

Name of the districts	at end of fiscal year 2011/12:						Funds disbursed for agricultural development:	
	No. of VDCs in the district	Total No. of VDCs covered by SSMP	No. of AFECs formed with SSMP Support	Total No of ELFs Developed	No. of Groups served	Total No. of HHs served	Funds co-financed by VDC in 2011/12 (NRs)	Funds co-financed by VDC in 2012/13 (NRs)
Achham	75	47	37	237	52	858	10,845,342	7,191,001
Dallekh	56	35	36	107	6	82	7,319,123	3,210,830
Jajarkot	30	20	20	151	15	179	172,000	2,495,382
Kalikot	30	20	26	93	71	1,207	3,260,901	5,499,576
Khotang	78	48	58	175	54	879	270,000	4,000,000
Okhaldhunga	56	35	56	140	305	5,876	671,000	8,877,994
Ramechhap	55	35	55	200	401	7,385	5623238	5,616,265
Totals	378	240	298	1,103	904	16,466	28,161,604	36,891,048

Source: SSMP Field Survey, 2013

SSMP's learning and experiences into their course curricula. The Council for Technical Education and Vocational Training (CTEVT) has also incorporated the SSM technologies and the FtF extension approach into its technical courses for Junior Technicians who are trained to become agricultural extension officers. SSMP continues to discuss a more complete focus on the gender and social inclusion dimensions of agricultural development into the curricula of the above institutions.

SSMP has also supported student research projects at IAAS (MSc level) and HICAST (BSc level) in order to provide further emphasis in the curricula of SSMP technical practices and institutional processes (e.g., the FtF approach) and their impacts.

Challenges in reaching the unreached

SSMP has succeeded in reaching women and other disadvantage groups with a package of appropriate agricultural technologies and practices in its 7 working districts, but faces challenges in a number of areas:

- proportional representation by gender, castes/ethnicity and class;
- empowering and building the capacities of the AFEC members—due to the existing unequal traditional roles, education levels and leadership capacities of the disadvantaged groups; this will be a long-term challenge (SSMP, 2012);
- although women participate in community meetings, men still indirectly control major decisions regarding seed selection, allocation of land for cultivation, and price-setting. There is a great need to facilitate intra-household gender relations while promoting technologies and village-based extension services;
- acceptance of female leadership in the AFECs—another long-term challenge;
- the mobility of local extension workers, especially the women and those from poor socio- economic backgrounds, which is linked to the commonly institutionalised gender roles in agricultural and household work;
- monitoring and assessing the performance of the ELF;
- lack of social competency and accountability in government offices to facilitate gender issues in agriculture—a big challenge throughout Nepal, as currently, there are no strategic measures from the GoN to ensure that agriculture services and incentives reach women and the disadvantaged in a sustainable manner;
- in training, in the coaching materials, and in progress analysis,

technical issues predominate, and power relations issues take a back seat in discussions and assessment;

- developing inclusive mechanisms for VDC-supported agriculture development remains a challenge because there is a lack of a clear pro-poor focus in policies relating to agricultural extension and decentralisation policies;
- delays in the receipt of funds at the VDC from the District Development Fund due to late release of funds from the centre—this leads to a poor response by the VDC to farmer demands and does not build the confidence of the community in the ability of the AFEC to deliver services.

Learnings and results

The key learnings of the initiatives taken by SSMP to establish a decentralised and participatory extension service are summarised below:

- the FtF approach embedded at the VDC-level can provide access to services for poor and disadvantage groups;
- the provision of a mechanism for local agricultural service delivery has resulted in an increase in the participation of local people in the planning, budgeting, implementation and evaluation of local agricultural development programmes;
- the process has also empowered women and the disadvantaged through providing opportunities to become an ELF or an AFEC member resulting in increased voice, self-confidence and self-esteem, and social standing within the community;
- the lack of implementation of the GoN GESI policy and low education levels of women in the AFECs is a hindrance on further active participation of women and discriminated groups in local level decision-making and this will only be overcome in the medium to long term;
- technology dissemination from the ELFs is more effective—both technically and cost-wise than coaching from an outside technician; the FtF approach is therefore considered as a cost-effective and accessible service-delivery mechanism;
- there is much local support for the establishment of agricultural committees at the VDC level as it is directly accessible and accountable to local farmers in relation to implementation of agricultural development programmes;
- integrating the gender and social inclusion perspectives and

approaches in agricultural programmes in Nepal requires time, resources, both financial and human, and a dedicated effort from decision-makers and policymakers to stimulate integrated and inclusive local level development; it is thus crucial at many different levels to sensitise projectimplementing actors on the social processes and dynamics of agricultural development projects;

- the AFECs are the appropriate institutions through which to establish a one-window approach for all agricultural activities in the VDC—all funding for agricultural development programmes should go through the AFEC, in order to reduce the duplication of resources and to ensure local participation in all initiatives.

Some of the key results of SSMP's efforts in Phase 4 are presented below:

- the FtF extension approach has been introduced and is up and running in 240 VDCs in SSMP's 7 working districts;
- out of the total 378 VDCs in its seven operational districts, 298 AFECs have been established, the committees trained, and by-laws and guidelines developed for the operation of local agriculture development programmes. 58 of these 298 VDCs which lie outside the SSMP working VDCs, have established AFECs through support from DDC, VDC and DADO—this can be seen as an encouraging out-scaling effect;
- 1103 ELF's have been developed, and by January 2013, 188 ELF's have begun to provide extension services to 611 farming households through 71 AFECs. 42% of the ELF's developed in the last two years are women, leading to a significant increase in self-esteem of the female ELF's, as documented in numerous case studies;
- policy dialogue with MoFALD and MoAD has resulted in: a) the SSMP Project Steering Committee (PSC) taking a decision to support an additional programme for establishment and capacity-building of AFECs in all 378 VDCs of SSMP's working districts; b) the MoAD directive to all DADOs to assist in the establishment of the AFECs and to include SSM practices and the FtF approach in their annual plans; c) the MoFALD directive that a minimum 15% of the block grant budget should be invested in agriculture at the VDC level, which continues to be a major motivation for the establishment of the further AFECs;
- the recent support provided by both MoFALD and MoAD to upscale this approach to other districts—the first phase covering 39 mid-hill districts. This will be supported by the MoFALD, in coordination

with the MoAD, currently drafting a nationally approved operational guideline for the smooth operation and management of the agriculture development programmes at the VDC level.

Conclusions and recommendations

The modality for the establishment of a local-level participatory extension service promoted by SSMP increases the accountability of local government to the farmers, enhances transparency, and significantly improves the participation of the local communities in the planning and implementation of agricultural development. This decentralised approach offers particular hope for improving the relevance, responsiveness, effectiveness and sustainability of extension services provided to local communities, and at the same time serving and empowering women and the disadvantaged in rural Nepal. Despite much success in the past years, this requires long-term dedicated focus, appropriate strategies, resources and a determined effort from all stakeholders. An integrated inclusive GESI policy approach for the overall local level programme is essential. For this MoFALD and MoAD, together with other concerned ministries, should take an instrumental and central role to design specific policies.

Acknowledgements

The author is grateful to the SSMP team and to HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation Nepal and SDC for support toward the preparation of this paper and participation in the conference. I am grateful to Social Science Baha for selecting this paper and for giving an opportunity to participate. Special thanks to Richard Allen, International Programme Officer, SSMP, and Rudriksha Rai Parajuli, Team Leader of SSMP, and the entire team for their cooperation and assistance.

References

- Adhikari L. 2009. *Comparative study of male and female work division in different castes of Kaipalmandu VDC, Dadeldhura*. Lalitpur: Sustainable Soil Management Programme SSMP/HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation Nepal.
- Dahal H. 2010. *A Country Report Presentation in the Workshop on Rural Development for High-level Officers of AFACI Members Countries*, held on August 7-14, (Suwon, Republic of Korea, 2010).
- DFID and World Bank. 2006. *Unequal Citizens: Gender, Caste and Ethnic Exclusion in Nepal Summary*. Kathmandu: Nepal Office, World Bank and DFID.

- Dhital and et.al. 2009. *Agriculture development through VDC –Guidelines: for Service Delivery by Experienced Leader Farmers for Sustainable Agriculture Promotion*. Lalitpur: Sustainable Soil Management Programme, SSMP/HELVETAS.
- FAO. 2011. *The state of the food and agriculture: women in agriculture, closing the gender gap for development*. Available online at www.fao.org
- Ghale Y, Allen R and Shrestha SK. 2012. *The Farmer to Farmer a Decentralized Extension Approach: Reaching the Unreached* the Poster Prepared for Agriculture Development Sector National Workshop, (Kathmandu, Nepal, 2012).
- Ghale, Y. 2008. *Scoping Study on Women's Leadership in the Agriculture Sector in Nepal: Prepared for WOCAN*. Available online at www.wocan.org
- HELVETAS. 2012. *Gender Equality, Social Inclusion and Poverty Orientation: HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation Nepal Draft Working Guidelines Programme Office Guidelines Series 2012/1*. Lalitpur: (HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation Nepal.
- Khadka M. 2011. *Why and How to Integrate Gender, Equity and Social Inclusion (GESI) Perspectives in Sustainable Soil Management Programme: A Training Manual for Agriculture Practitioner* (in Nepali), Document No. 171. Lalitpur: SSMP/HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation
- Khadka M. 2012. *Making Agricultural Intervention Responsive to Gender and Social Equity in Nepal*. Lalitpur: Sustainable Soil Management Programme SSMP/HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation.
- MoAC. 2004. *National Agriculture Policy, 2061 BS*. Kathmandu: The Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives, the Government of Nepal.
- MoLD. 2010. *Social Mobilisation Guidelines, 2066 BS* (in Nepali), Kathmandu: Local Governance and Community Development Programme, The Ministry of Local Development
- Shrestha SK. 2012. *Decentralizing the Farmer-to-Farmer Extension Approach to the Local Level*. Paper Submitted to Centre for Alleviation of Poverty through Sustainable Agriculture (CAPSA) for the 'Technology Transfer for Smallholder Farmers' Policy Dialogue (Indonesia, 2012).
- SSMP. 2009. *Farmer Profile from the Mid-Hills of Nepal: A collection of individual stories*. Lalitpur: SSMP/HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation
- SSMP. 2010. *Sustainable Management of Agricultural Soils in the Mid-Hills of Nepal: Project Document, SSMP, Phase 4, 2011-2014* Lalitpur: SSMP/HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation
- SSMP. 2012. *Sustainable Soil Management Programme: Annual Report*. Lalitpur: SSMP/HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation

Modernity Prior to the Era of Development

Water Supply, Forest Management and ‘Progress’ during the Rana Period

SUDHINDRA SHARMA AND BANDANA GYAWALI¹

Introduction

With external financing entering Nepal after 1951, aid policies and planning models have increasingly built upon the monolithic and quintessential western construct of development to try to overcome the ‘traditional’ obstacles that were blocking ‘development’. This representation implies a lack of development prior to the entry of foreign aid into Nepal. In fact, aid documents usually begin by labelling the country as a blank state, with no prior experience or involvement in development. This paper argues that engagement with ideas and practices of development, though not consciously articulated as development, was prevalent in Nepal prior to 1951.

In the popular imagination, Rana rule is characterised as a feudal era where neither democracy nor development prevailed. The text-bookish account of Rana rule is a period marked by backwardness, palace intrigues, and isolationism, cut-off from the rest of the world. The works of Marxist, or Marx-inspired, political economists undertaken during the past two decades, however, have demonstrated that the Rana rule was far from being isolationist. These works have illustrated how capitalism had begun to penetrate the Nepali economy and society from earlier in the twentieth century, and how the Ranas had been responding to the penetration of the market economy and

1 This is the revised version of the paper that was originally presented during the Second Annual Kathmandu Conference on Nepal and the Himalaya. The authors are grateful to Social Science Baha for accepting the paper for the conference, Dr. Sambriddhi Kharel for her comments on the paper that was presented on July 24, 2014, and to other commentators when the paper was presented in the conference.

had begun to integrate into the regional capitalist processes in distinct ways (c.f. Blakie et al. 1980; Mishra, C. 1987; and Seddon, D. 1990).

There have been other studies conducted during the past decade, which have begun to document the initiatives the Ranas had taken, such as installing hydropower stations or building canals for irrigation development, laying pipes for water supplies, and managing forests to yield better revenues. These studies have shed light on the development-like initiatives that were undertaken during the first half of the twentieth century. However, these initiatives are extremely puzzling as the pre-1950 state had not internalised the idea of development, and development had not yet become a core function of the state. The Ranas did not articulate the language of development, or *bikas*, and did not engage in the discourse of development. In these circumstances what was the rationale for the Ranas for initiating development-like programmes, whether in hydropower, irrigation, water supplies, forest management, or other areas? Why did the Ranas instigate these initiatives when they had not internalised the concept of development, and when they did not actively participate in the discourse of development? How did they rationalise their incursion into an area over which they had little grasp, especially when they were not deliberately espousing development; more so when globally the idea of development itself was still in gestation?²

To answer these questions, the paper first revisits two sectors, water supplies and forestry prior to 1951, and then examines archival documents, mainly from the National Archives of India in New Delhi. In the area of water supply, the paper examines what the Ranas had done to provide modern water supply facilities, and more importantly, the rationale for such activities. In forestry, it examines what the Ranas actually instituted to manage forests better, and more significantly, the reasons that guided such management practices. Lastly, it examines how the Ranas pursued an interest in industrialisation and hydropower development. The correspondence between the Rana rulers of Nepal and British rulers of India sheds light on the mindset of the Ranas when they attempted to promote these development-like initiatives in Nepal, prior to the era of development.

This paper is influenced by the German historian, Reinhart Koselleck (2004), and specifically his ideas regarding the relationship between words

2 The coming of age of the idea of development was when President Harry Truman, in his inaugural speech in 1949, singled out development as an important goal of the US in the countries of Asia, Africa, and South America that were coming out of colonial rule. This is commonly known as the Point Four Program. The year 1949 is singled out as the year when the idea of development came of age.

and concepts. In his seminal essay *Begriffsgeschichte and Social History*, Koselleck differentiates between words and concepts, whereas while concepts are associated with words, not every word can be called a social or political concept, as ‘...a word becomes a concept only when the entirety of meaning and experience within a socio-political context within which and for which a word is used can be condensed into one word’ (Koselleck 2004: 85). He goes on to add that conceptual history must investigate parallel expressions around the concept in question, the ideological currents that formed around it as well as other related terms. Therefore *Begriffsgeschichte*, or history of concepts, is not just a linguistic history but deals with socio-political events and terminologies.

This paper draws on Koselleck’s insights on conceptual history mainly by exploring two concepts; development and its parallel notion of progress. In pre-democratic Nepal, the concept of development (or *bikas*, its Nepali equivalent) was seldom used. Rather, words such as *pragati* and *unnati*, indicating progress and even modernisation, were more common. As we shall see in the sections below, the correspondence between the Rana rulers and their British counterparts were sprinkled with ideas of progress, and sometimes even the concept of development, what it entailed and how it could be achieved in Nepal.

The pre-1951 regime and domestic water³

Probably the oldest modern water supply system in Kathmandu Valley was the Bir Dhara network, instigated by the Rana Prime Minister Bir Shamshere. The Bir Dhara work was completed in 1891. When this modern piped system was developed, it was the Rana elites, and a few privileged non-Ranas, who had access to it. For public use, taps were installed at selected points. To meet the demands of a growing, albeit still small population in the valley, the Tri Bhim Dhara, a new water supply system was completed in 1928 (Dixit 2002).

Domestic water supply was accompanied by the provision of limited sanitation facilities (Landon, 2007). *Pani goswaras*, the office responsible for the water supply, were also operating in Kathmandu during the Rana period. A position known as *pani line man* was created on a hereditary basis, for the daily inspection, operation, and maintenance of piped water networks (Sharma 2001). Besides domestic water, sewerage/drainage systems and a *Sahar Safai* office were also established in Kathmandu to look after the sanitation of the valley (Landon 2007).

3 This section is based on Sudhindra Sharma’s *Procuring Water: Foreign Aid and Rural Water Supply in Nepal* (2001). It also draws upon Ajaya Dixit’s *Basic Water Science* (2002).

Besides Kathmandu, there were provisions to supply water to wayfarers at a site midway between Bichkhori and Simara (Landon 2007). Prime Minister Chandra Shamshere constructed a drinking water scheme in Jajarkot, a mid-western hill district, during the 1910s for the convenience of his in-laws. He also constructed the Patan waterworks, including a seven-inch pipeline from *dudh pokhari*, the suspension bridge of Bagmati river (which was also used to cross the pipe across the Bagmati river), and the distribution of Patan water works (Stiller 1993). Later, when his first wife died, Chandra Shamshere constructed the first rural domestic water scheme in memory of his wife in Amlekhgunj in the central Tarai, to which the general public also had access.⁴

It was only the Rana Prime Minister's family, the nobility made up of other Rana and Shah families, and the *bhardar* (the clientele made up of the upper echelons of the military and administration) that had access to this system in their individual homes, and as such, it was a prestigious status symbol. To have access to a water supply was a privilege and not a right, therefore, having a piped water supply in individual homes was a powerful status symbol that further marked the 'important' individuals from the rest of the society.

In an era seeped in Hindu traditional norms, the rationale for the construction of modern water supply systems drew from both traditional norms and from new modern sensibilities. Water was conceived as a purifier and making available water to others was thought to wash away sins. Additionally, a piped water supply was a modern amenity (as were motor cars) and access to piped water underscored both status and links with the civilised West.

The introduction of a modern amenity such as piped network system and the supply of water through this network to individual homes in an era marked by autocratic rule cannot be disassociated with power relationships. It was not the commoners who had access to the piped network, as at a time when access to such amenities was a privilege and not a right; it is not surprisingly that only a miniscule percentage of the population had access to this network. It, therefore, does not come as a surprise that having water flowing from taps in one's house was a status symbol to be flouted; not a services that aimed at improving health and hygiene as a water supply would be rationalised in the 1970s when the government sought to make this available to everyone. It was unquestionably a show of status that the

4 A drinking water scheme was constructed in Kavrepalanchowk that lies near the Kathmandu Valley. However, the scheme was constructed because an official in charge of the drawing room of the Ranas; a *baithake*, was from this place (Sharma, 2001).

first modern piped system was built, – as it was meant to operate a fountain in the palace that Bir Shamshere had built⁵.

Thus, when the Ranas introduced modern amenities, such as water supply systems, one could say that they ‘misappropriated’ the technology in the sense that it was not used for facilitating production, but for generating comfort for the ruling classes. Gyawali (2001) asserts that the Ranas were apprehensive of potential changes that modernity could introduce. Despite all the wrong reasons however, modernity as epitomised by a modern water supply system, took specific shape in Nepal during the Rana period prior to the era of development. The enterprise of establishing modern water supply systems was not done for ‘development’, neither did it represent ‘development’. If a water supply represented appropriation of one set of ideas and, practices associated with modernity, attempts at initiating scientific management of forests, represented another set of modernity-inspired ideas.

Forest management⁶

The monetary benefits accruing from the Tarai forests prompted the Ranas to begin scientific forest management in Nepal. The Rana rulers hired foreign technical expertise, paid for from the state’s or their own coffers, to conduct the scientific management of forests. Various steps were taken by the Ranas to exploit, as well as to manage the forests, and this is apparent in the formulations and implementations of various rules and the different tiers of forest administration established to conduct forest-related activities.

The forests, especially in the Tarai, were important for revenue collection in many different ways. Firstly, more forestland could be cultivated thus increasing the tax base, and secondly, timber could be logged and sold for profit by individual prime ministers who own land in the Tarai, with levies paid to the state. The export of wild animals captured in the forests of the Tarai and the inner Tarai was another important source of revenue. In addition, these forests yielded revenue through their pasturage facilities from herders coming from the Indian side (Regmi 1988, 158). A further significant use of the forests was the extensive use of charcoal for making weapons. Therefore, from the time of the emergence of modern Nepal towards the end of the eighteenth century, forests, especially in the Tarai, were exploited by the state as a prime resource. Regmi (1988) notes that in the latter half of the nineteenth century the Tarai forests made a significant

5 In local parlance his palace was referred to as the *phohora durbar* (Fountain Palace).

6 This section is largely based on Sujan Ghimire’s PhD dissertation *Impacts of Forestry Aid in Nepal: Nepali State, Finnish Support and Social Change* (Ongoing).

contribution to state exchequer⁷. Forest-related administration during this period concentrated on taxes, revenue collection, and procurement of forest-related products for the higher echelons of the society. Many of these activities were conducted under *jhara* and *rakam* labour obligations⁸.

The contribution of forests to the regime prompted some institutional changes, and an important change was the one triggered by the timber trade with India. During the third quarter of the nineteenth century, large-scale production of ties/sleepers for the expansion of the Indian railroad led to the depletion of *sal* forests in India. Nepal's heavily forested Tarai, with the hard wood *sal* timber, became a prime source for the sleepers. This demand in India increased the price of timber in Nepal leading to a spectacular boom in timber exports. Subsequently, there were institutional changes in forest bureaucracy; for instance, in 1858 the *ijara* system was abolished and replaced by the *amanat* system to operate *kathmahals* (official establishment for management of exporting trade; ref. Regmi, 1988:160) in the Tarai⁹.

In 1885, soon after becoming Prime Minister, Bir Shamshere (1885-1901) decreed that in the forests south of the Churia range, only those trees that had been officially marked should be cut for commercial purposes. In the Tarai and inner Tarai regions, land reclamation and settlement in protected areas were banned. The Rana rulers also took steps to control indiscriminate hunting and destruction of wildlife. People were forbidden from grazing their cattle, collecting forest products, and other related activities in and around the Kathmandu valley. Nevertheless, this did not stop the Ranas from carrying out large wildlife expeditions in the Tarai and inner Tarai. These expeditions, where the British nobility and officials participated, helped in strengthening the diplomatic ties between the two countries¹⁰.

7 Regmi (1988) shows that the revenue actually increased from NPR. 50,900 in year 1851-52 to NPR. 679,000 in 1861-1862.

8 *Jhara* refers to labour obligations on a regular basis whereas *rakam* labour was demanded on an *ad hoc* basis (Regmi, 1984). In a cash-starved and resource-poor state, these services in the form of *jhara* and *rakam* were central for the ruling nobility and the Nepali state.

9 Under the *ijara* system, the right to collect revenue from a specific source or from a specific territory was granted for a specific period to an individual (Regmi, 1984, 34). However, *amanat* referred to a system under which the state collected revenue, or operated any revenue-yielding function, through salaried employees appointed for the function. Regmi (1988) further mentions that '...the timber export trade was thereafter placed under the management of salaried employees appointed by the government which not only received the actual sale proceeds but also assumed the obligation to meet administrative expenses as well as losses and the expenses incurred on the cutting, transportation, storage of timber' (Regmi 1988, 163 page number required as direct quote). According to Regmi, under this system (*amanat*) the revenue of the state increased nearly 20 times in a period of 10 years

10 The most notable example was Chandra Shamshere's hosting of a royal hunt for England's

Besides the conservation steps, there were attempts, in the latter part of their rule, to better exploit the forests. Bir Shamshere initiated a new arrangement for the production and export of ties/sleepers. These arrangements consisted of the installations of saw mills at different points on the Nepal-India border under the management of British engineers and with machinery procured from India. Two such saw mills were installed at Nepalgunj and at Nawalpur during 1900/01. This was of historic importance as this was the first time in the economic history of the kingdom that the government invested in capital for the installation of mechanical equipment for processing primary commodities for commercial export (Regmi 1988:175).

Chandra Shamshere, in 1910, assigned Basu Dev Sharma, to demarcate the area of the western Tarai. Gyawali and Koponen (2004) note that his work was mainly limited to the western forests and it did not in any way stop the continuing exploitation of forests in the country. From 1925 to 1930, the Ranas employed a British forestry expert, J. V. Collier, from the Indian Forest Service to supervise and improve timber felling for export to India. Collier prepared a report on Nepal's forests in 1928 which provides insights into the knowledge of forestry relating to that period. He broadly categorised the forests into three main zones: tropical, temperate, and alpine.

In the early 1940s, another forestry advisor, Smythies, was hired to establish a National Forest Department in Nepal to control and manage forest administration. Smythies was the former chief of the Forestry Division of India. Accordingly, in 1942 the Forest Department was established in Nepal and it was based on the Indian model of forest service (Graner 1997). The trend of hiring forestry experts continued during the Rana period, and in 1947, after India gained independence, Indian forestry experts (viz. Ratauri, Chaturvedi) were working in Nepal as forestry advisors. Their main advice was on the restructuring of the organisation rather than forest management. Gautam (1993) writes that the motive behind the restructuring of the organisation was to exploit the forests to the greatest possible degree.

As in the case of modern water supply systems, what the Ranas did in initiating modern management practices was not done under the rubric of 'development'. From the literature on the history of forest management in the era prior to 1951, it is not possible to identify 'development' as a motive for justifying better management of the forestry sector. The Ranas, however, knew of the importance of the forests in generating revenue

King George V in Chitwan over the Christmas of 1911, during which the English monarch alone shot 21 tigers, ten rhinoceroses, and two bears (Landon, 2007).

and paid for the services of the British and Indian forestry experts with their own money to better manage the sector. To explore how the Ranas thought of the development-like initiatives, and how they rationalised these, in an era before development and where development had not yet become a state ideology, one will have to examine the archives and revisit the correspondence between the Rana rulers (and their emissaries) and the British rulers of India.

Contextualising Rana rule

During the late eighteenth centuries, the country that is known today as Nepal was forged by King Prithvi Narayan Shah of the principality of Gorkha, through military conquests as well as through marriage and other kinds of pacts. Though Prithvi Narayan was successful in forging a unified country in the central Himalayas, his death enveloped the nascent kingdom into numerous court rivalries and power struggles. Three-fourths of a century later, one man, a consummate Janga Bahadur Kunwar, through his 'will-to-power' and taking advantage of his numerous brothers, who as *bhardars* were entitled to carry arms, liquidated his rivals, other *bhardars* (or the military elite of the Gorkhali Empire), to become the de-facto ruler of Nepal. After annihilating his rivals and neutralising the remaining power centres, such as the King's and the Queen's entourage, he legitimised his rule through the institution of hereditary Prime Ministership, and by declaring himself as the Maharaja. In addition, he elevated the social status of his family through marriage alliances with the family of the Shah kings. In keeping with their new found aristocracy, from then onwards the Kunwars were called the Ranas.

The primary function of the Rana regime (1846 – 1951) was the collection of revenue and the maintenance of law and order; the latter, primarily in order to facilitate the former. As mentioned at the outset, the dominant portrayal of the Ranas was that they were feudal, who allowed neither development nor democracy. The era prior to 1951 is seen as one where there was no development. Past 'isolation' is seen to be associated with stagnation and 'lack of change', and contrasted with the more dynamic 'developing' path (Chene and Onta 1997). However, a re-reading of this period challenges this simplistic and naïve view.

Recent research on the topic shows how the Ranas pursued 'selective seclusion' to protect the state from foreign intervention and to safeguard their regime (Liechty 1997). This 'selective seclusion' began in 1850 when Prime Minister Janga Bahadur Kunwar Rana embarked on a voyage to England. This was the first occasion that a Hindu Raja had crossed the

oceans to see Europe and definitely a 'modern' practice representing a 'new epoch'. This contact with Britain exposed the Ranas to 'western ideas' and institutions, and propelled some administrative and social reforms, such as the promulgation of the *Muluki Ain* 1854 (first comprehensive administrative and personal law document), the abolition of mutilation, the partial abolition of *sati*¹¹, and the limitation of capital punishment to specific categories (Shah 2001). In particular, the promulgation of *Muluki Ain* influenced how the Ranas governed the state and sought to enhance their own position within and outside the region¹².

Despite their monopolistic grip over the reign of governance, the Rana prime ministers faced a number of constraints and potential threats. First, they had to protect themselves from court intrigues and possible coups; the very processes that had led to their accession to power. While the Ranas' own rise to power was achieved by mercilessly annihilating their rival military families in the Kot massacre, this was also the mechanism for sorting out the rivalry between the Janga and the Shamshere Ranas, wherein the latter liquidated the former. For the functionaries of the military-civil bureaucracy, they instituted the system of '*chakari*' and '*pajani*' – having to pay homage to the rulers by being present in the court every day (not being present could be misconstrued as conspiring against the rulers), i.e., '*chakari*' and through the annual transfer/termination of the service, i.e., '*pajani*'.

A second constraint was the pressure to guard Nepal's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Janga Bahadur, and his brothers and their sons (i.e., the Shamshere Ranas), were descendants of Bal Narsingh Kunwar, a military commander of Prithvi Narayan, and as such were loyal to the house of Gorkha. In as much as Nepal's sovereignty and territorial integrity were being challenged by the East India Company and subsequently the British Government, as were many of the pre-colonial states in South Asia, the Ranas were both suspicious of the East India Company/British Government but also had to maintain amicable relations with them¹³. By not posing as

11 Sati is the suicide of a wife through self-immolation on the husband's funeral pyre.

12 The Rana prime ministers not only tried to strengthen their own position within the country and in the region, but also took steps to re-assert Nepal's sovereignty as an independent state, and in 1920 the British Resident was transformed to an envoy.

13 Although the British never exercised indirect rule in Nepal, like they did in many princely states in India, they had considerable leverage in political and administrative matters. (For further discussion on British indirect rule in Indian princely states, see Ramusack, 2004). Initial contact between Nepal and Britain began with the signing of the Treaty of Commerce in 1792. Nepal's aversion to foreign relationships, which was overcome by her expectation of being provided military assistance, through the treaty, to counter the war with China, was not met. Instead the Company sent Captain William Kirkpatrick on a

a threat to British interests in India, and by willingly supporting British interests in India and the world, the Ranas thought that the British could be kept at bay. This involved a balancing act of being friendly towards the British, but ensuring that they do not make inroads into the country. Moreover, they had to portray themselves as 'enlightened' rulers to the British; rulers who demonstrated that they were civilised in the way they governed their subjects in the country.

Another constraint the Ranas had to deal with is that they had to demonstrate as rulers of the land that they upheld the Hindu religious order and Hindu norms. The cosmology that informed contemporary sensibilities was one that saw the world as degenerating from Satya to the Dwapar, Treta, and the Kali Yugas, i.e., from an era marked by truth and goodness to an era marked by deceit. According to contemporary sensibilities, an able Hindu ruler is one who held the Kali at bay and stopped its forward march as much as possible its forward march. To demonstrate to the population at large that they upheld the Hindu religious order and norms, the Rana rulers promulgated the *Muluki Ain*, the civil code that links all of Nepal's caste, ethnic communities, and regional codes into one single code. The *Muluki Ain* bolstered the Rana rulers' claims to be good Hindu rulers on the one hand, while on the other, created a national hierarchy, which effectively legitimised the position of the ruling group (Hofer 1979).

If one examines how these two constraints could work upon, or provide a limitation to, what the Ranas could do, one has a better sense of appreciation of the tension the Ranas had to contend with. When instituting a modern practice, such as developing a modern hydroelectric plant, on the one hand the Ranas wanted to present themselves as 'enlightened' rulers who served the interests of the governed for their British Indian counterparts, while doing so could precisely jeopardise their position as good Hindu rulers who,

fact-finding mission to Nepal. It is through this mission that Nepal became better known to the Company. Subsequently, a treaty signed between Nepal and the East India Company in 1801 opened the doors to the Company's first Resident W. O. Knox in Kathmandu. These events were met with trepidation and oppositions from the ruling class in Nepal and the Company had to exercise patience and diplomatic tactics in gaining permission to establish links with the country. The Company also had to emphasise that it was only interested in trade and commerce and would not interfere in the internal affairs of the country. The Sugauli Treaty, signed between Nepal and the British Indian government in 1816 after the defeat of the former in a war between the two from 1814 to 1816, demarcated the boundaries between the two and made no attempt to absorb Nepal as a subsidiary state of the British Indian government. Rather, the treaty was signed as between two sovereign nations. Nepal was not a subsidiary ally of the British Indian government, and was allowed to retain her sovereignty.

in instituting modern practices, were inviting the Kali Yuga.

If one basis for Rana rule came from *Muluki Ain*, another came from the 'roll kram'. The 'roll kram' was the official document concerning the roll of succession to the office of the prime minister originally issued by Janga Bahadur in 1856, in which all male members of the Rana family were listed according to their date of birth. It was an elaborate document enlisting how the roll of succession would pass from brother to brother instead of father to son. In practice, however, once a prime minister had consolidated his hold over the state apparatus, he would attempt to tamper with the roll of succession by disregarding the principles (Shah 2001)¹⁴. Though the Rana rule was one that was not characterised by democracy, it would not be correct to characterise it as a rule wherein there was no legitimate frame of reference for ruling, or one where brute force alone dictated who the ruler was and who the ruled were. The *roll kram*, which enunciated a basis for the succession of rulers, and the *Muluki Ain* provided just such legitimising frameworks.

Along with the above-mentioned constraints, the Ranas faced a new dilemma in the form of modernisation. The Ranas were keen to experiment with the concept of modernisation without undermining the status quo or the basis of their rule. However, this was problematic since modern amenities and technological innovations generally flourish in egalitarian and democratic systems. Since the Ranas did not subscribe to egalitarianism, but to a hierarchical order based on ascription, they had to ensure that the thrust towards modernisation did not upset the prevailing order.

Narratives of stagnation versus actual change: Nepal from 1901 to 1951

Despite the Rana rulers being fiercely defensive with regards to the sovereignty of the nation and despite their attempts to insulate the country and its people from outsiders, a slow trickle of Western ideas began seeping into the Nepali soil, the carriers being the Ranas themselves.

A look at Chandra Shamshere's speech during the inauguration of Chandralok Hospital in Bhaktapur in 1905 may be able to provide some insights:

I am unable to describe the satisfaction I feel today on this occasion.
I am ever ready to contribute my bit to ensure the good health of

14 Additional divisions such as A, B and C class among the Ranas existed where A signified, those born of lawful and in equal caste with their parents', B signified ,those born of lawful but unequal marriage' and C signified ,those born illegitimate' (Shah 2001).

my *raiti* and wholeheartedly support the efforts to lessen the pain of my countrymen... ..It should be brought to the notice of all that there are a few deeds as better as establishing hospitals that provide relief to the suffering. The west has excelled in sciences, particularly those concerning medicine and surgery. The advancements made in alleviating the pain and suffering caused by diseases was not known to us twenty years ago but if the relief that such measures can provide does not reach the needy and destitute today then the progress made in this area (may be futile?). We may not be able to reap the benefits of such *hikmat* entirely but should be able to benefit by them in whatever measures we can.¹⁵

This is just one example and to use it to generalise the actions of the Rana prime ministers may not be justifiable. However, one notices in the speech above, an awareness of events and achievements occurring outside Nepal's immediate neighbourhood. Also, noticeable is Chandra Shamsher's explanation of the need for such efforts, the satisfaction he talks about may have to do with a sense of progressiveness felt in comparison to his predecessors and those below his rank and file. Finally, his acceptance of the restriction that confronts his endeavours reflects his acceptance of conditions in his kingdom that is not on a par with those that pioneer such achievements. Without, however, belittling himself or his country, he looks up to and emulates the achievements of the West.

This tendency to emulate the West was also pursued by succeeding prime ministers. Dev Shamsher (1901 March 5 – June 27) initiated a number of pioneering ideas but they lacked the force necessary to bear fruit. Nevertheless, he has a number of 'firsts' to his credit, noteworthy among which was his attempt to initiate a modern-day parliamentlike assembly, where men from all walks of life were invited to suggest improvements to the administration, judiciary, trade, and industry. Chandra Shamsher (1901 – 1929), Dev's brother and successor, is credited with sending six students to Japan for technical training in 1902. That Japan was chosen instead of England shows that the rulers were not myopically oriented towards British India alone. A hydroelectric station at Pharping was completed in 1911, Trichandra College was set up in 1918, a cable way for transporting goods from Dhursingh to Matatirtha in 1924 and railway from Raxaul to Amlekhgunj in 1927. He also allowed the publication of the first Nepali to English dictionary and introduced changes to the legal code.

15 *Gorkhapatra*. 28 Ashad 1961 BS.

The three years that Bhim Shamsheer ruled (1929 – 1932) were marked by negotiations to avert the war with Tibet and his engagement with British India. In the winter of 1931, he paid an official visit to Calcutta, where perhaps he saw more than just an airplane exhibition, as India in 1931 was clamouring for democracy. The 66-year-old prime minister could not have been blind to the change and hostility faced by an empire that boasted of immortality. However, Bhim Shamsheer was no more innovative than his lineage permitted him and feared the arousal of political consciousness among the Nepali people. When Mahatma Gandhi was popularising his *swadeshi* movements through the spinning wheel, Bhim Shamsheer felt threatened by this device and even put one of its Nepali advocates in jail. Juddha Shamsheer (1932 – 1945), responsible for reversing the ban on capital punishment by his decision to persecute four of the anti-Rana Praja Parishad members, was keen to industrialise Nepal. The following is his inaugural speech during the electrification of Bhaktapur in 1911, which is here referred to as the ‘factory of light’:

By the grace of god, we are able to inaugurate the factory of light. This is the first factory of its kind in Nepal... ...I hope that this factory will help the industry of this country to usher themselves into a new era. As bigger projects of this kind should be managed well in their initial phase, we have used the electricity to brighten the city of our capital although the factory has more capacity than that. (*Gorkhapatra* 1968 BS 3-4 from Raj Yogesh, 2010)

Though much less educated than Chandra, Juddha was aware of the boons of technology. The ‘new era’ he mentions in the above passage signals his wish for change and progress. For what else could a new era signify other than one that is better than the present, and what better way to open a new era than with industrialisation of the country? The result of his keenness to industrialise Nepal were initiatives, such as the jute mill, two match factories in Birgunj and Biratnagar, a cotton mill in Birgunj, a plywood and bobbin company, and the Morang Hydroelectric Supply company, in addition to a few rice mills. Two biennial industrial exhibitions were also held in 1937 and 1939.

During Padma Shamsheer’s reign (1945 – 1948), a Friendship and Commerce Agreement with the United States was formalised in 1947. During his short-lived rule, he spent most of his time trying to cope with the rapidly changing political circumstances within India and Nepal. Mohan Shamsheer’s (1948 – 1950) reign was marked by political turmoil which ultimately overthrew

the hereditary Rana prime ministers. Therefore, Mohan's contributions to modernisation is conspicuously absent in writings about him. The one outstanding event of his time is the Treaty of Peace and Friendship, and the Treaty of Trade and Commerce with India in 1950, which was supposedly due to India's keenness to have such a treaty with Nepal on the face of growing Chinese intervention in Tibet. Therefore, we see that the Ranas oscillated between the need for change and the preservation of the status quo. They faced a tussle between the traditional world view typical of their lineage, and also an urge to move with the times. The following section will take a deeper look at how the Ranas engaged with modernity by exploring the proposed 'industrialisation' and 'hydroelectric development' schemes of the 1930s.

Engagements with modernity prior to the era of development

It appears that the Rana prime ministers were aware of 'economic development' as early as 1937, much before American President Harry Truman's Point Four exposition, as they had actually used this terminology. Prime Minister Juddha Shamsheer's attempt to persuade the British to assist in Nepal's economic endeavour by convening a trade convention between the two countries is contained in the following letter:

For some years past, the Government of Nepal has been anxiously considering the decadent economic situation of the country. The combined effect of various causes, coupled with the dearth of occupation at home and keener competition outside, resulted in worsening of the condition of not only the lower ranks but through natural repercussion also those of middle and even the upper classes of society. This has made it imperative to seek and find ways and means to ameliorate, to some extent at least, the acuteness of the stress. It is hoped that discriminating industrial development on a moderate or small cottage scale, utilising the local raw materials and cheap power units available in the country will bring some relief and that as capital, intelligence, and labour in the country can be combined in such development and such methods gradually introduced may prove helpful to that end at this juncture.¹⁶

Juddha Shamsheer wanted this since 'industrialisation' in Nepal was at its infancy, goods manufactured in Nepal and exported to India, or abroad

¹⁶ National Archives of India, External Affairs, 616 – X, 1937.

through India, were exempted from duties¹⁷. In the same letter mentioned above, Prime Minister Juddha also suggested that Indian markets would be sought for the surplus generated from the industrial ventures in Nepal. This caused the British in India to panic for they feared that if Nepal's wish be catered to, Indian industries and revenue would suffer because of the absence of income tax laws, lower municipal taxes, lower labour costs, and the absence of labour regulations in Nepal. Additionally, the proposed industries were to be set up in the plains of Nepal, close to the Indian border. Hence, there was a very real possibility of Indian industries migrating to Nepal and taking advantage of the profits to be made due to differences in taxes and labour rules.

Thus, British India was wary of Nepal's proposed 'industrial development' and insisted on setting up a customs union with Nepal to protect the interest of Indian industries. The importance of appeasing Nepal in order to suppress anti-British activities along the Indo-Nepal border was admitted, but more important was the policy of keeping Nepal within the orbit of Indian influence as is clear from a letter to the India Office, London, by the Government of India:

Although the Government of India have fully admitted the independence of Nepal to be as complete as that of Afghanistan, it is an essential part of their policy to maintain and secure their influence in the kingdom on the Indian glaxis – a policy which can best be pursued by the grant of financial or other aid at recurring intervals. The continuance of Nepal within the Indian political, military, and commercial orbit through the maintenance and, if possible, strengthening of, existing ties must therefore be a cardinal feature in India's foreign policy. For this reason alone they now on full consideration strongly recommend that the status quo should be preserved¹⁸.

An example of how the Ranas were constrained by their more powerful southern neighbour when toying with the ideas that enshrined modernisation is well illustrated by the above description of Juddha Shamsheer's attempts at industrialisation. Juddha believed that industrial development would lead the kingdom to prosperity, but without the British on board, he could do very little because although the British never exercised indirect rule in Nepal like they did in India, they had considerable

¹⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁸ National Archives of India, Foreign Department, 131 – X, 1935.

leverage in political and administrative matters of this sovereign land. Efforts at modernisation could only accelerate with British consent, as was clear from their opinion regarding involvement with Nepal's 'hydroelectric development' schemes.

After protracted discussions with Nepal on the custom union proposal failed, British India, keen on keeping Nepal within her sphere of influence, saw a role for herself in what they called Nepal's 'hydroelectric development' schemes. British India was able to convince Nepal that 'hydroelectric development' was the foundation of the industrialisation of Nepal and also added that Nepal's water resources could be used for the benefit of both countries. Here, British India moved away from her previous stance that Nepal's attempts at industrial development were aimed mainly to capture Indian markets. In a surprising move, British India admitted that Nepal's industrialisation was intended to supply her internal needs and not to damage Indian industries, and that such fears could be subdued by suitable agreements between the two countries. She also admitted that it was rather farfetched to worry about Nepali industries competing with, and undercutting, Indian manufacturers.¹⁹ Earlier there had been vociferous criticism against Nepal's industrial development, but the prospect of obtaining cheap hydropower for Indian provinces altered the arguments in favour of Nepal's propositions.

Engaging with modernity while upholding tradition: Incompatible roles?

In making modern amenities available to themselves, and to a limited number of subjects, the Ranas made sure that the hierarchical order, based on ascription, was not undermined. Modernity was for the consumption of those belonging to high status groups and close to the rulers. The linkage between them and the perpetuation of hierarchical order was important in determining access to modern amenities. Also important for the Ranas as Hindu rulers was an act of patronage, the giving of gifts in the form of land and money to Brahmins and Shiva/Vishnu followers, which would provide them legitimacy. It was an amalgam of the need for a Hindu ruler to fulfil the dharma of a benevolent ruler concerned with the welfare of his subjects and the selective patronage that made introducing modernisation possible without upsetting the hierarchical order.

For their external audiences, the British, it was important for the Ranas to project themselves as 'enlightened rulers' concerned for the welfare of

¹⁹ *ibid.*

their subjects. Since the polity was not informed by 'democracy', there was no question of making modern amenities available to all citizens; in fact, people were not thought of as citizens but as subjects or *raiti*. However, it was possible to make modern amenities – whether these were electricity or domestic water – available to a limited section of the society and to appear 'civilised'. Therefore, even if initiatives at modernisation by the Ranas were mainly driven by their attempts at consolidating social status, and by their need to appear 'civilised', it did give rise to certain unintended consequences.

However, the Rana rulers were not the sole claimants to modernity during the 1930s and 1940s; they were its first advocates. As the first claimants to modernity, the Rana protagonists, awoke to the need to appear modern, and launched a number of schemes in its name, albeit going about it in a gradual manner. At that very time, however, a small but growing voice within the country said that the Ranas were responsible for retrogression, by keeping the country in darkness and isolation. The Ranas were considered to be a part of the problem in the same manner in which the British in India were considered to be a part of the problem by Indian nationalists who believed that achievements made during the British Raj were wrested by nationalistic agitation instead of being genuine British efforts (Zachariah 2012).

The second claimant to modernity was the educated class of Nepali people, those that were on the forefront of agitation against the Ranas. They were mostly men who had attained university education in the north Indian cities of Banaras, Patna, and Calcutta and were familiar with the socialist and Gandhian ideas popular during pre-Independent India. In the 1930s and 1940s, these men were, in the narrow space they had carved out, challenging the Rana government. There were also disgruntled Gurkha soldiers within this group, who operated mainly from Darjeeling and whose later focus would be more on demands for a new province for Nepali people in British India, which could later be brought under the sway of the Nepalese government.²⁰ However, in the 1930s, this Darjeeling-Banaras-Patna nexus was instrumental in debating ideas on modernisation, as well as fostering journals, newspapers, and other publications in the Nepali language.²¹

Both the Ranas and their opponents envisaged a demarcation between the civilised world and Nepal. Whereas the civilised world was represented by the West with its education, industries, and prosperity and was the

²⁰ *ibid.*

²¹ Literature in Nepali, such as 'A soldier who survived the war', 'A visit of HH the Maharaj', 'Doshi Chasma' by B. P Koirala; and articles, such as 'Are we free?' and 'If it is not whimsical then what?' by S. B Gyawali; and 'Naivedya' a collection of poems by Dharani Dhar Sharma were critical of the Ranas and for which they had received wide publicity in 1944. *ibid*

prototype for advancement and progress, Nepal was the opposite; it was uncivilised and needed improvement. However, for their opponents, it was because of the Ranas that Nepal had languished in abysmal darkness for a hundred years and the march towards progress was dependent on the educated and politically conscious people of Nepal. In the writings of the anti-Rana activists pre-1951, there was also a reference to the glorious past of Nepal; for example: 'Great was the past of Nepal, magnificent its marvels. But they are gone. The decay after the 16th century is due to political disruption and anarchy.'²² Nepal under the Ranas was compared with the worst Indian princely states, where an aristocracy bent on fulfilling the interests of a family over the larger interests of the people was at the helm of power.²³

What was distinctive about the political change of 1951 was that the reigns of the state's changed hands from the Ranas, who exited the administrative, though not necessarily the military, state apparatus, into the hands of this rival claimant group. Though the head of the government in the 1950s and 1960s changed many times, what did not change was the control of this group over the state, or more precisely, the non-military state apparatus. It would, thus, be the non-Rana claimants who had received a modern education in Indian towns and cities during the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s that would embrace in modernity as the ones who controlled the state bureaucracy from 1951 onwards. Unlike the Ranas, who were cautious about accepting foreign assistance due to the inroads such gestures would eventually make into the country; this new claimant had no such qualms and was quite willing to take in external support. The aspiration of this new class for 'modernising' and 'developing' Nepal coincided with the international era of aid flows, wherein the Western/capitalistic countries and socialist countries were willing to make funds, materials, and technical knowhow available to the new leaders of the third world.

Discussion and conclusion

This paper focused on the concept of modernisation that was present in the Rana era by exploring new initiatives in forestry and domestic water provision prior to 1951, and by examining the correspondence between the Rana rulers and the British rulers of India. In exploring the linkages between modernity and development, the paper attempted to show how

22 Extract from the article 'Art and architecture' by D. R. Regmi in the file 626 – CA/44, National Archives of India, 1944. 'Newars of Kathmandu' and 'A Historical Note' by the same author also contain similar themes on the lost glory of Nepal.

23 'An appeal to Congressmen' from the file 626 – CA/44, National Archives of India, 1944.

these concepts were appropriated and reproduced by the then rulers. The discussion points to how scientific forestry management principles and piped drinking water systems and facilities made their debut into Nepal earlier than the era of development, albeit limited to Rana families and their clientele.

In spite the dominant narratives that highlight the lack of development during the Rana period, institutional forms of forestry management and practices explicitly show that ideas of modernity, including scientific management, had already made their mark on Nepal. The process through which forestry was managed to generate revenue, and the organisational structures and institutional processes, through which forests were managed, is evidence of the 'development' of the forestry sector by the Ranas. As for the water supply systems, this was an amenity predominantly for the Rana aristocracy and their selected clienteles. Why could it not be a service which larger sections of society could avail of, is a larger question that brings in the question of democracy and warrants a further discussion of the subject. In fact, the reason as to why the service was not provided to a larger population is rather simple, because the people of the period were still considered as subjects, or *raiti*, and not 'citizens' and could not make demands from the ruling elite. Needless to say, the regime was not based on the principles of democracy, and so there was no mechanism through which subjects could articulate their demands or for the state to address any demands.

In contrast, modern states are based on the principle of democracy, freedom, and equality, although in actual practice these principles may not be adhered to completely. Many countries whose constitutions enunciate the principles of democracy, freedom, and equality are the ones whose societies are characterised by cleavages in income and in the social polarisation between the rich and the poor. Therefore, many such societies, though constitutionally democratic, free, and equal, or equal at least before the eyes of the state remain in actual practice, unequal, and in some cases not even democratic. In the case of Nepal in the first half of the twentieth century, the country was not constitutionally democratic and in practice undemocratic, as it had not even adhered to the idea of democracy. There was not even a constitution and the law of the land, the Muluki Ain, did not articulate the ideas of democracy, freedom, and equality.

For a state that espoused hierarchy and did not subscribe to the principles of democracy and equality, there was no rationale for providing services for the masses. Democracy counts on the individual; numbers matter since it assigns one vote to one individual, and since the adult population can vote, they are entitled to demand certain things, including amenities, from

the state. If one does not subscribe to democracy, the question of people demanding from the state does not arise, and such a state is not obliged to provide amenities to its people. On the contrary, if they do, this would undermine the exclusivity of status groups and with it the hierarchical order, and that was precisely what the Ranas did not want to prevent.

Therefore, we see that the word 'progress' was appropriated by the Ranas of Nepal to mean a limited set of practices which did not jeopardise the status quo. Also, in retrospect, progress was a 'linguistic visualisation' as mentioned by the historian Koselleck, for it was the idea of progress that had led to a flurry of activities within Nepal that focused on attaining what progress signified. Progress and modernisation became the goal, a vision, and to dwell on the ways and means of achieving it came prior to the experience of progress. The same can be said of development. While the experience of '*bikas*', or development, gets further and further postponed, the future cannot but be *bikas*-driven

Postscript

In answering the question of what history can teach us today, John Tosh (1984) sums up three areas of relevance: firstly that it alerts us to the array of possible 'human mentalities and achievements'. Secondly, history can help in predicting, although Tosh admits that no two historical events are the same and thus the ability of history to predict can only mean that it can identify a general trend. Thirdly, history has the responsibility of negating or correcting false myths.²⁴ To these, one may add that history, today, has the important function of bringing alternative reinterpretations to the forefront.

To illustrate what history can teach today, an example from the case of the idea of development in Nepal may help. Development has been conceived as a foreign idea transplanted onto Nepali soil by well-meaning friends from the West with the cooperation of benign rulers at home. However, if it were not for history, the fact that Nepal engaged with the idea of development even prior to the dawn of the development era in the early 1950, would have remained in the dark. Thus, to the first point made by John Tosh about the array of human mentalities and achievements that history makes us aware of, we add that it also alerts us to the array of real and sometimes possible and unexplored events. Secondly, the history of the idea of development in Nepal can help generalise future prospects of what development means

24 Tosh, *The Pursuit of History*, 12 – 18 (Tosh, J. 1984. *The pursuit of history. Aims, methods and new directions in the study of modern history*. New York: Longman).

for Nepal. Studying the historical context in which the idea of development was shaped and defined, the historical agencies that were involved in this process of defining the idea, its propagation and to the exclusion of what other ideas, and by whom, are some of the many questions that will help in generalising and better understanding development in Nepal. Thirdly, the importance of negating myths, such as Nepal being unaware of the concept of development, or of being an isolated kingdom untouched by colonial expansion, can be achieved if we step back to the pages of history. Finally, the importance of introducing alternative interpretations by exploring alternative sources, many of which have been silently gathering dust in the archives, is important in understanding how there can be more than one agency and more than one interpretation for how the idea of development came to Nepal. For historicism as an acknowledgement of the uniqueness of each age and each period can only be illustrated, as in the case of Nepal and her encounters with the idea of development, if viewed as responses by agencies over a changing time span, and a response to the needs specific to the time in which they lived, rather than an ahistorical understanding based on the present.

Additionally, this paper benefits from the methodological consideration of Reinhart Koselleck's *Begriffschichte*, or conceptual study according to which it is important to investigate onomasiology along with semasiology²⁵. According to Koselleck, the history of a concept is not only confined to understanding the meaning of the word and how it evolved over time but also to studying how parallel or opposite expressions interact with and enrich the concept in question. This methodological step ensures that the array of social and political experiences condensed into words is not overlooked by the exclusivity of semasiology. This paper could be seen as an attempt to understand the onomasiological dimensions of development in pre development Nepal.

25 By onomasiology Koselleck means how one concept can be assigned various words. For example, development could be *bikas* but also *pragati* and *unnati* – here *pragati* and *unnati* are the onomasiology to *bikas*. Semasiology means studying the meaning of a word. For example, studying what *bikas* has meant from 1910 to the present. Koselleck is of the opinion that, “The semasiological approach must alternate with the onomasiological; Begriffsgeschichte must register the variety of names for (identical?) materialities in order to be able to show how concepts are formed.” (Koselleck 2004:87).

References

- Blakie, P. M., J. Cameron and D. Seddon. 1980. *Nepal In crises: Growth and stagnation at the periphery*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Dixit, A. 2002. *Basic water science*. Kathmandu: Nepal Water Conservation Foundation.
- Gautam, K. H. 1993. Evolving forest legislation strengthening or weakening indigenous forest management? In Tamang, et al (eds). *Indigenous management of natural resources in Nepal*. Kathmandu: Winrock.
- Ghimire, S. (ongoing dissertation) *Impacts of forestry aid in Nepal: Nepali state, Finnish support and social change*, Central Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Faculty of Social Sciences, Tribhuvan University
- Graner, E. 1997. *The political ecology of community and forestry in Nepal*. Saarbrücken: Verlag für Entwicklungspolitik.
- Gyawali, B. (ongoing dissertation) *Historicizing the concept of development in Nepal 1910 – 2007*, Development Studies Program, Department of Political and Economic Studies, University of Helsinki.
- Gyawali, D. and J. Koponen. 2004. Missionary zeal on retreat or the strange ephemerality of Bara Forest Management Plan. in Sharma, S., J. Koponen, D. Gyawali, A. Dixit (Eds.). *Aid under stress: Water forest and Finnish support in Nepal*. Kathmandu: Himal Books.
- Gyawali, D. 2001. *Rivers, technology and society. learning the lessons of water management*. London, New York: Zed Books
- Gorkhapatra. 28 Ashad 1961 B.S.
- Hofer, A. 1979. *The caste hierarchy and the state in Nepal: A study of the Muluki Ain 1854*. Universitätsverlag Wagner, Innsbruck.
- Koselleck, R. 2004. *Futures past. On the semantics of historical time*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Landon, P. 2007. *Nepal: Volume I and II*. New Delhi: Rupa and Co.
- Liechty, M. 1997. Foreigners, foreign goods and foreignness in modern Nepali history, *Studies in Nepali History and Society*. Volume 2, No. 1
- Mishra, C. 1987. Development and underdevelopment: A preliminary sociological perspective in Fisher, J. (Ed.) *Occasional Papers in Sociology and Anthropology, Volume 1*, 105-135. Kathmandu: Tribhuvan University
- National Archives of India. External Affairs, 1937. File no. 616 – X.
- National Archives of India. Foreign Affairs, 1935. File no. 131 – X.
- National Archives of India. CA Branch. 1944 File no. 626 – CA/44.
- Ramusack, B. N. (2004) *The Indian princes and their states*, The New Cambridge History of India, III – 6. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge.
- Raj, Y. 2010. *History of mindscape. A memoir of the peasant's movement of Nepal*. Kathmandu: Martin Chautari.

- Regmi, D. R. 2007. *Modern Nepal: Volume I and II*. New Delhi: Rupa and Co.
- Regmi, M. C. 1984. *The state and economic surplus: Production, trade and resource mobilisation in the early nineteenth century*. Varanasi: Nath Publishing House.
- Regmi, M. C. 1988. *An economic history of Nepal 1846-1901*. Varanasi: Surajkund.
- Seddon, D. 1987. *Nepal: A state of poverty*. New Delhi: Bikas Publishing House
- Shah, R. 2001. *Modern Nepal: A political history 1769-1955. Volume I 1769-1885, Volume 2 1885-1955*. New Delhi: Manohar Publishers.
- Sharma, S. 2001. *Procuring water: Foreign aid and rural water supply in Nepal*. Kathmandu: Nepal Water Conservation Foundation.
- Stiller, L. F. 1993. *Nepal: Growth of a nation*. Kathmandu: Human Resource Development Research Centre.
- Tosh, J. 1984. *The pursuit of history: Aims, methods and new directions in the study of modern history*. New York: Longman.
- Zachariah, B. 2005. *Developing India. An intellectual and social history, c. 1930-50*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Paul Collier and Nepal's Prospects for Coming out of the Conflict Trap

KHEM RAJ SHREESH AND SUDHINDRA SHARMA¹

Background and objectives: Why Collier in the first place?

Broadly speaking, there are three genres of literature that attempt to explain the emergence and continuance of the 'new wars' or the civil conflicts that have proliferated since the end of the Cold War. These three genres of literature have pithily been called 'Malthus with guns', 'new barbarism' and 'greed, not grievance' (Richards 2005).

The first genre reflects the writings of scholars like T. F. Homer-Dixon, who see conflicts as having arisen due to environmental scarcity for resources. This perspective has parallels with eighteenth century English demographer and political economist Thomas Malthus, who had argued that while population growth occurs exponentially, resource base on which the population is dependent upon grows at a limited pace. According to Malthus, competition over scarce resources leads to conflict. Richards (2005) calls the first type of conflicts 'Malthus with guns'. While this paradigm agrees with Malthus, the conflict is exacerbated with groups having access to weapons – thus the pithy phrase 'Malthus with guns'.

Another thesis is called 'new barbarism'. According to this perspective, the wars in the Balkans and in Africa such as Congo and Rwanda were seen to have deep roots into the pre-communist period in the case of the Balkans and the pre-colonial period in the case of Africa. These hatreds/hostilities were seen to be based on ethnicity, religion, culture among others which were more primitive and enduring forms of identity that tended to have boundaries and hence clash when in contact with another set of identity. This 'new barbarism' thesis tends to follow the belief that war is simply human

¹ The authors are grateful towards the Toni Hagen Foundation Fellowship that made possible this research. Dr Sudhindra Sharma was the mentor for this research.

nature (Richards 2005, 8); with the 'lid' coming off – end of communism in the Balkans and colonialism in Africa – primeval barbarism has been let out of the genie's bottle.

Instead of ethnic divisions or the fight to control scarce resources, the thesis 'greed, not grievance', the third genre, holds that though many rebel movements justify taking up arms for the redressing their grievances, as a matter of fact, what really drives the rebel movement or the state, is 'greed'. This perspective is associated with the writings of the political economist Paul Collier. Though Collier has subsequently revised his position on the 'greed' versus 'grievance' thesis, by saying that wherever it is feasible, a conflict will occur, what the following section does is to discuss 'Greed and Grievance in Civil War' (2004) and his other writings in as far as they either substantiate or revise and refine the arguments of his classic 2004 publication.

The value of Collier's framework lies in its visualising the new conflicts as having come about due to a combination of factors, many of these are 'structure-focused' than 'agency-focused', and its overall optimist orientation regarding the prospects for countries currently mired in conflict to come out of such a conflict. Moreover, as a framework that does not espouse any kind of essentialism in that he does not link a country's internal conflict to its ethnic or religious composition (though these may have a bearing on its likely occurrence), he discusses the many things that players within the country and the international community could do to bring the concerned country out of the conflict. Another major strength is his methodology – the empirical-based argumentation. It is his empirically-based argumentation that is the core strength of his approach.

Collier has written on a host of topics which, nevertheless, overlap with one another and include cross-cutting themes. The topics that he has written about are Africa, aid, conflict, and political economy.

How is Nepal placed vis-à-vis the variables that Collier identifies as the predictors of conflict? How has Nepal's political economy fared during the post-conflict phase, i.e., after the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2006, and up to June 2013? Examining each of these variables for Nepal, do these individually and collectively point towards the probability of eruption of conflict or to its end? Are there other 'structural' features in Nepal's political economy, that have not been adequately captured in Collier's framework, but which nevertheless has a bearing on the probability of conflict? These are some of the questions this paper grapples with.

'Greed and grievance' and 'beyond greed and grievance': Method, evidence, arguments

This section examines Collier's methods, data, and the core arguments. It does so by focusing on the journal articles: the first one called 'Greed and Grievance in Civil War' (2004) written with Anke Hoeffler and the second one called 'Beyond Greed and Grievance: Feasibility and Civil War' (2009) written with Anke Hoeffler and Dominic Rohner.

In 'Greed and Grievance in Civil War', Collier and Hoeffler develop a model which predicts the outbreak of civil conflict. Among the different types of multivariate regression analysis, the duo adopts the 'logit' – since his dependant variable, i.e., the outbreak of civil war, is nominal data. A distinctive feature of the paper is its empirical base – it works with the data on 78 civil conflicts in 161 countries and encompasses duration between 1960 and 1999.

The paper juxtaposes accounts that explain the emergence of civil war in terms of 'motive' (a term that authors allege that political scientists prefer) with 'opportunities' (a term that authors think economists do). If the former is associated with 'grievance', i.e., in the sense that rebel movements begin either because the rebels could not articulate their demands in a legitimate manner or because the state did not listen to these demands, the latter is associated with 'greed'.

Collier and Hoeffler (2004) then identify the proxies for 'grievances' and for 'greed'. Grievance-related proxies include: ethnic or religious hatred, political repression, political exclusion, economic inequality. The variables that they ultimately take into account in this model are: ethnic fractionalisation, religious fractionalisation, polarisation, ethnic dominance, democracy, income inequality, and land inequality. Greed-related proxies that Collier and Hoeffler examine are: primary commodity exports as percentage of GDP, post-cold war, male secondary schooling, GDP per capita, GDP growth, previous war, Diaspora among others. The other variables are: peace duration, mountainous terrain, geographic dispersion, population (taking natural logs), social fractionalisation.

After running logit regression analysis tests, Collier and Hoeffler (2004) argue that the grievance model does not possess a great deal of explanatory power and conclude that the opportunity model is superior but also concede that some elements of the grievance model could be added to enhance the explanatory power of the model.

The variables for which Collier and Hoeffler (2004) single out as having a bearing on the probability of the outbreak of the conflict is shown in the table below. The different texts from which this information has been extracted is shown in the legend below the table.

Collier's positions on the different variables

SN	Variables	Greed and Grievance in Civil War (2004)	The Bottom Billion (2007)	Beyond Greed and Grievance (2008)	Wars, Guns and Votes (2009)
1.	GDP per capita	✓	✓	✓	✓
2.	GDP growth rate	✓	✓	✓	✓
3.	Primary commodity exports	✓	✓	✓	✓
4.	Diaspora	✓			
5.	Previous war	✓	✓	✓	✓
6.	Peace duration	✓	✓	✓	✓
7.	Social fractionalisation		✓	✓	✓
8.	Ethnic fractionalisation				✓
9.	Religious fractionalisation				✓
10.	Polarisation	✓			
11.	Proportion of young men	✓	✓	✓	✓
12.	Male secondary schooling	✓	✓		
13.	Ln population	✓	✓	✓	✓
14.	Terrain – mountainous			✓	✓
15.	Geographic concentration of the population	✓			
16.	Geographic dispersion	✓			
17.	Population area	✓			
18.	Population density	✓			
19.	Democracy	✓	✓	✓	✓
20.	Ethnic dominance	✓	✓		
21.	Income inequality	✓			
22.	Land inequality	✓			
23.	Former French African colony			✓	✓

In 'Beyond Greed and Grievance: Feasibility and Civil War' (2009) Collier, with his two colleagues Anke Hoeffler and Dominic Rohner, works with an even larger data base – one that includes 208 countries and 84 civil war outbreaks, and one where the data extends up to the year 2000-04. The variables that the authors re-consider in 2009 and which they add to the list are: mountainous terrain, social fractionalisation including ethnic and religious fractionalisation. A new variable they add in 2009 is 'Former French African Colony'. The variables that Collier and Hoeffler identify as having a significant bearing in 2004 but which they later drop in their 2008 analysis are: Diaspora, ethnic dominance, polarisation, male secondary schooling, proportion of young men, population density.

In overall terms, Collier's arguments give credence to 'structure-focused' explanations over 'agency-focused' explanations. Irrespective of what 'agents' (which in the Nepali context would be influential political parties) are doing or not doing, what ultimately determines the probability of the eruption of new conflict or a relapse into conflict are the macro-economic indicators (along with several other non-economic indicators). This is very much a 'structural' approach to conflict, and it is this which makes Collier distinctive vis-à-vis other scholars writing about conflict, who generally tend to focus on agents.

The bottom billion and the problems of landlocked countries

In terms of content, the book *The Bottom Billion: Why the Poorest Countries Are Failing and What Can Be Done About It* (2007) is very similar to the academic article 'Beyond Greed and Grievance: Feasibility and Civil War' (2009). However, in contrast to the academic article, the book is written in a non-academic style, to the extent that it reads like a fiction. It is probably this non-academic writing and the examples he gives to illustrate his point that has made the book immensely popular among the lay-intelligent readers.

The major indicators/variables that have a bearing to a country's proclivity to conflict are discussed in two chapters: a) The Conflict Trap and b) The Natural Resource Trap. Both of these chapters read like stories rather than as 'findings' based on empirical evidences. And the story is a very compelling one indeed.

In terms of substance, the book discusses more or less the same issues that have been discussed in 'Beyond Greed and Grievance: Feasibility and Civil War' (2009) but is narrated much more in a readable form. For instance, one of the variables that points towards the conflict is the proportion of raw materials in total exports. Why should this portend something ominous? While in his other writings, these are discussed in a

pithy manner, in *The Bottom Billion* takes a detour into 'Dutch disease' to explain these things.

As to why the proportion of raw materials in exports relative to the country's GDP should be problematic, Collier tells captivating stories of how the ruling governments use the oil money to finance the civil conflict, while guerrillas, who control the hinterland, use the money garnered from other sources (e.g., diamond) to finance the civil conflict. Such examples make it relatively easier to understand his argument about the proportion of raw materials to export and why this could trigger conflicts.

Collier, through lucid prose, is able to link phenomena that may not be evident for a lay reader. For instance, continuing with the point mentioned earlier, the proportion of raw materials to exports, how a government that would tend to derive its revenue from the sale of primary products tends not to tax its citizens or to keep the level of taxation very low. But, as a matter of fact, it is taxation that leads to a democratic and accountable government. Collier shows how low or non-taxation has been conducive to non-democratic forms of government.

Another very relevant chapter for the case of Nepal, though variables per se are not systematically identified or discussed, is the chapter titled *Landlocked with Bad Neighbours*. The comparison he makes between Uganda and Switzerland has resonances with the predicament that Nepal finds itself in. Uganda and Switzerland are both landlocked, but their neighbourhood has an important bearing on their prospects. The cost of production in landlocked countries is dependent on the transport infrastructure of adjoining countries – in the case of Uganda, it is dependent on Kenya. In the case of Switzerland, it is dependent on Germany and Italy. Likewise the market for Switzerland is Germany and Italy. With this backdrop, we cannot but speculate on the quality of transport infrastructure in the States of West Bengal, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, from which goods enter into Nepal. Likewise, to what extent has India been a market? Collier notes that it has been unfortunate that the economy of resource-poor, landlocked countries have been oriented either inwards or to the world market, but not to the neighbouring market. Collier rightly notes how coastal areas could afford to produce for the world market but not landlocked countries, due to high transportation costs that would ensue.

In *The Bottom Billion*, Collier also discusses the possibility of benefitting from the growth in the neighbourhood. If the country's neighbours grew by around 1 per cent, the country grew at an additional 0.4 per cent. For a land-locked country, the spill-over is as high as 0.7 per cent, according to Collier. Towards the end of the chapter, Collier even provides nine

recommendations for what a landlocked country could do to exit out of conflict and poverty.

Wars, Guns and Votes: Democracy in Dangerous Places (2009)

Wars, Guns and Votes: Democracy in Dangerous Place (2009) is a book that has a much larger scope than simply discussing the variables that could lead a country to conflict. However, since these very indicators are the focus of this paper, the discussion of this book here would necessarily have to be limited to the chapter titled The Political Economy of Destruction.

As in the case of *The Bottom Billion* (2007), *Wars, Guns and Votes* (2009) is a less academic and one could say more 'polemical' albeit more readable. The 'novelty', if it could be called that, first lies in the way Collier discusses the different indicators under several rubrics, i.e., economy, history, geography, society and polity. Another novelty lies in further elaboration upon the feasibility hypothesis, and drawing inferences from therein.

The Political Economy of Destruction chapter is written in a very readable style, which, however, does not give too many facts and figures, while simultaneously avoiding academic-style argumentation. It is immensely readable for a lay audience but (had it not been for his academic papers) appears unsubstantiated.

Under 'economy', Collier discusses the three indicators he had discussed in earlier publications: GDP per capita, GDP growth rate, and primary commodity exports as a percentage of the GDP.

Under 'history', Collier discusses the two indicators he had discussed earlier: previous history of civil war, and length of time since the last civil war.

Under 'structure of society', Collier discusses the ethnic and religious divisions. Here the line of argument is very similar to 'Beyond Grieve and Grievance' (2009) and admits that he got it wrong the first time in 2004 in his work 'Greed and Grievance in Civil War'. He emphatically states that diversity increases the risk of violence. He, however, does not elaborate on this; therefore, it becomes difficult to discern what he means by 'ethnic and religious divisions'.

Under 'structure of society', the indicators he examines are the proportion of young men in the population and the size of the population. For both of these indicators the relationship he identified earlier holds. (Though Collier discusses these two points under the rubric of 'structure of society' these could have been mentioned under 'demography').

Under 'geography', Collier as in the case of his 2009 paper continues to hold that the mountainous terrain is important.

Finally under 'politics', Collier examines the Polity IV index. Collier continues to stick to the belief that in low income countries democracy is dangerous, just as in high income countries, lack of democracy is risky.

In interpreting the data, Collier tries to 'take a leap' from statistics and in doing so discusses what he calls the 'feasibility' hypothesis. For Collier, a more fruitful line of inquiry is not asking *why* a rebellion happens but *how* it happens. In the past through the grievance-related proxies or through greed-related proxies, scholars had sought to ascertain the *why* question. But a more fruitful line of investigation, according to Collier, is the *how* question. How do civil conflicts become possible in the first place?

Collier thinks this would be a more worthwhile question to ask in the first place since in normal circumstances, a civil war is not feasible. He has what he calls the tough version of the hypothesis, i.e., where a rebellion is feasible, it will occur. For a civil conflict to be feasible, the rebels need an organisation, an army, and big amounts of funds. The policy implication that draws from the feasibility thesis is preventing it by making it more difficult. It could be done by squeezing rebel organisations and making it more difficult for them to get money and weapons.

The indicators/variables that Collier ultimately limits himself to, and the threshold he identifies for countries for coming out of the 'conflict trap', are illustrated in the table below.

Paul Collier's Variables and the Threshold for Exiting from the Conflict Trap

SN	Variable	Threshold for exiting conflict trap
1.	GDP per capita	At least USD 750
2.	GDP growth rate	Greater than 5 per cent per year
3.	Primary commodity exports	Less than 20 per cent
4.	Previous war	Yes
5.	Peace duration	High probability within first 10 years
6.	Social fractionalisation	Ethnic plurality – problematic Religious plurality – problematic Common lingua franca – positive
7.	Proportion of young men	Proportion of young men indicates high risk
8.	Terrain – mountainous	Mountainous terrain possesses high risk
9.	Democracy (Polity IV Index)	Democracy with poor economy possesses high risk

In assessing the likelihood of relapse to conflict or the eruption of new conflict, the remaining section discusses the status of indicators/variables

for Nepal that Paul Collier singles out. However, before delving into that, an attempt is made to sketch the various governments that have been formed after 2006 and outline what their priorities, as far as the economy is concerned, have been.

Overview of governments between 2006 and 2013 or unstable politics and its toll

The post-conflict phase, i.e., the period from November 2006 to June 2013, has seen a series of unstable governments. The focus of the political parties has been in forming the government of their choice, with one major political party opting to stay out of the coalition. This party has subsequently opposed the coalition and has subsequently sought to form another government. This proclivity has meant that no one specific coalition has been stable. Frequent change of government has led to political instability, which has, in turn, affected the economy.

Political instability itself, though not an important variable in Collier's scheme of things, has for the analysis of Nepal's post-conflict transition become a key variable in that it has had a repercussion on the economy, by leading to its slowdown. Thus, for Collier though political instability is not an important indicator for or predictor of conflict, in as much as the political instability in post-conflict context has held back economic growth, it becomes an important variable to consider in the Nepali context.

One of the obvious reasons the political instability has led to slow growth is because the government of the day has not been able to pass a budget on time. Many budgets that have been presented to the parliament have been one-thirds of the budgets through ordinances presented by caretaker governments (with political parties agreeing to pass the remainder later on). Lack of full-fledged budgets and inability of the political parties to approve the budget on time has dampening and de-accelerating effect on the economy.

The following section outlines the different governments that have been formed between 2006 and 2013, the coalitions that have constituted the government (including specifying the party that abstained from joining), the duration of the government and the reasons for its demise. The section after that discusses the main economic thrust of the governments and whether or not the government in question was able to pass a full-fledged budget. In providing an overview of politics and budgets, it is hoped that the section would also describe the larger political-economic context of Nepal as the country transits through the post-conflict phase.

Politics of the never-ending 'transition'

The first government after the Second Peoples' Movement of April 2006 that ended direct rule of the King and the military stand-off between the Nepali state and the Maoists was headed by Girija Prasad Koirala, president of the Nepali Congress (who during the 1990s and 2000s had become the Prime Minister of Nepal many times). His swearing-in as the Prime Minister of post-people's movement was also accompanied by the reinstatement of the dissolved House of Representatives (the House that had been dissolved by another Nepali Congress Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba in 2002) and the expansion of this House to include the former rebels, the Maoists. It was this Koirala government that had signed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) with the Maoist rebels in November 2006.

The post-conflict Koirala government included all the eight political parties that made up the People's Movement of April 2006. In early 2007, protests erupted against it spearheaded by the Tarai-Madhesi. And thus one of the major challenges facing this first post-conflict coalition government was addressing the Madhesi uprising and acceding to their demands including the delineation of boundaries of constituencies and the idea that Nepal should be a federal state.

The Koirala government was expanded to include the Maoists. This government was able to pass two full-fledged budgets, and it was this government that oversaw the election to the constituent assembly that took place in April 2008. Relenting to the pressure exerted by the Maoists in that they threatened to walk out of the coalition otherwise, the country was declared a federal, democratic, secular republic on the eve of the Constituent Assembly (CA) elections, a fait accompli.

The constituent assembly election of April 2008 did not result in a clear-cut victory for any particular political party. In a House of 601, the CPN (Maoist) stood first with a total of 220 seats. Nepali Congress came second with 110 seats, and CPN (UML) third, with a total of 103 seats. Standing in the fourth and fifth position were the Madhes-based political parties, the MJF with 52 seats and the TMDP with 20 seats.

Some three months after the election, through a majority vote, the chairman of CPN (Maoist) Pushpa Kamal Dahal became the Prime Minister. A coalition cabinet was then formed which comprised major political parties, including UML, MJF and TMDP. Nepali Congress, however, decided not to join the government. The Prachanda-led coalition government lasted for nine months up until early May 2009. The Finance Minister of this government was Baburam Bhattarai, the CPN (Maoists) vice-chairman, and he was able to present a budget to the House, which was passed in September 2008.

The tenure of the first coalition government formed after the 2008 CA election came to an abrupt end when the Prime Minister Dahal resigned. A crisis had been developing between the Chief of Army Staff (COAS) of Nepali Army and the Maoist leadership related to the forced early retirement of the incumbent COAS and his replacement by the second-in-command, who happened to be a Maoist favourite. This move by the Prime Minister was objected to by the Nepali Army. As the crisis deepened, 17 political parties in the Constituent Assembly perceived the move by the Maoists as a blatant interference into the Army's internal affairs and petitioned the President who raised questions regarding the Prime Minister's motives and pointed to improper procedures that had been followed. Once the major coalition partners in the Maoist-led coalition withdrew their support to the Maoists, sensing an impending vote of no-confidence against his government, Dahal resigned in May 2009.

The next coalition government was headed by Madhav Kumar (MK) Nepal from UML. Ironically, he had lost from two constituencies in the CA elections but became a member after being nominated to it. After MK Nepal was elected as the new Prime Minister on 23 May 2009, his cabinet soon expanded to a size of 33 cabinet members. While Nepali Congress was a partner in the coalition, and so were the Madhes-based political parties, the Maoists deliberately abstained from joining the government.

On November 20, 2010, the government of Madhav Kumar Nepal announced the budget ordinance. Preparation for a full budget had led to confrontation with Maoist lawmakers as the government was already running on advance budget presented on July 12, 2010. A section of the UML opposed him and was interested, rather in forming a government with the support from Maoists. Due to incessant protest from within the CA and from within his own party, MK Nepal government resigned. However, the next round of elections in the parliament did not result in the election of a new Prime Minister and MK Nepal government continued as caretaker government for another seven long months.

After 16 rounds of elections for the Prime Minister – the main contention was between Ramchandra Poudel of Nepali Congress, Pushpa Kamal Dahal of Maoists, and Jhala Nath Khanal of UML – Jhala Nath Khanal won with the support of the Maoists. In the government headed by Khanal, the Maoists became the coalition partner, and so did the Madhes-based parties, but, not surprisingly, the Nepali Congress decided not to join the government. The Khanal government lasted till August 2011 after which it fell after the failure to reach a compromise on the constitution and the fate of the Maoist combatants.

Through an election in the parliament, Baburam Bhattarai, vice-chairman of CPN (Maoists) and who had earlier served as Finance Minister in the Dahal-led government, won with the help of the different Madhes-based political parties. The UML and the Nepali Congress abstained from joining the government. This government was able to agree on the framework for the integration of the Maoist combatants based on the framework that the Special Committee (which had subsequently replaced UNMIN) had prepared, and oversaw the integration of the Maoist combatants into the Nepali Army and the voluntary retirement of remaining combatants. The CA was, however, unable to complete the drafting of the constitution, as a consequence of which the CA was dissolved in May 2012.

Accusing that the government had 'sold-out' on many fronts, including the poor terms in integrating with the Nepali Army, a large section of Maoists decided to leave the parent party and to form their own party, CPN-Maoists.

The Bhattarai-led government continued for several more months after May 2012, but there was mounting criticism against it for not being able to hold the second CA election as announced and not being able to include other political parties in its coalition. Finally in February 2013, the four main political parties (Unified Maoists, Nepali Congress, UML and Madhesi Front) requested the President to form a non-political-party-headed cabinet to oversee the second CA election.

The government that was formed subsequent to February 2013 was headed by the Chief Justice Khil Raj Regmi and its ministers constituted former secretaries of the government, and as such was a cabinet made up of bureaucrats. It announced the second CA election for November 2013². While some political parties insisted that the Regmi-led cabinet should work independently and not become a 'puppet' in the hands of the four main parties, others such as CPN-Maoists opposed it and insisted on political parties themselves forming the government.

Full and partial budgets and their toll

The defining characteristic of this transition and constant government change has been the inability of the governments to bring the budget on time. For the last seven fiscal years, only three budgets have been presented on time and the government had to make do through ordinances at other times. The budget ordinances limit the spending to one-third of the previous years' spending level and only for three months. This absence of

2 The elections were held on 19 November 2013 and a new government took over in February 2014.

timely full budget was complicated by the failure among the parties to agree on a common economic agenda, and as a consequence, there was no clear message on government's priorities and policies.

The first budget (2006/07) presented by a coalition government after the CPA in 2006 had emphasised that while 'debate has focused on future political system...and sustainable peace...democracy cannot survive in a weak economy' and had recognised the people's aspirations for 'new opportunities for employment and income generation' and 'fair share in services and facilities provided by the state'. It had sought to provide 'inclusive development' taking advantage of the 'consensus present' (among the parties) with a 'new contract between the state and citizens... (for) greater equity'. It had targeted a growth rate of more than 6 per cent with the objective of institutionalising democracy by developing economic infrastructures and improving investment climate. It also had a large component of relief, rehabilitation, and reconstruction of damaged infrastructures and for the conflict-affected people. Additionally, it sought to increase capital investment and contain consumption expenditures (MOF 2006). The actual rate of growth of the economy was 2.8 per cent for the year 2006-07 and was 5.8 per cent for 2007-08.

The first government after the CA election was led by the Maoists, and the budget presented to legislature-parliament, two months late, was couched in Marxian terminology, which, while recognising the 'widespread unemployment and semi-unemployment...inequality and discrimination... inadequacy of physical infrastructure...corruption and weak service delivery...trade deficit', tried to promote the cooperative sector along with the private sector 'to eliminate all forms of feudalism and establish socialism-oriented industrial capitalism'. It aspired to a rapid double-digit economic growth and 'self-reliant and independent economy'. The actual growth in GDP for 2008/09 was 3.9 per cent. The other important objective was to assist in the drafting of the constitution (MOF 2008), which would not be completed during the tenure of the CA.

By 2009, the government had noted the decline in GDP growth, which had been buoyed by the ongoing peace process and successful CA elections. The causes were the 'energy crisis, decline in capital expenditure, disturbed industrial sector' among others. The government also had to contend with an inflation of more than 12 per cent per annum in 2008/09 due to 'devaluation of Nepali currency, cartelling and malpractices in the domestic market, weak public delivery system, closure, strike, transport halt and obstruction created in the supply system by different agitating groups' (MOF 2009). This was the recognition of the challenges that lay ahead. The rising inflation

was also partly due to the hike in wage and salaries of government teachers and civil servants. The government's tendency to spend the budget during the last few months of fiscal year was compounded by its failure to spend the allocated budget itself, specially the capital expenditure. In 2009/10, the government was only able to spend 71 per cent of the allocated capital expenditure (NRB n.d.).

The budget speech of 2010/11 (MOF 2010) observed that the (political parties) had 'failed to fulfil (their) development responsibility towards people by engaging in political wrangling at a time when general consensus was required on the formulation and implementation of the full-fledged budget to address people's high aspiration for development...politics will be meaningful that day when economic development agenda tops the priority'. There was the trend of low expenditure of allocated budget and also trade deficit widened and there was balance of payment crisis which necessitated availing of Rapid Credit Facility of \$42 million from the IMF. This happened at a time when the growth in remittance and income from tourism had declined considerably, which pointed to a deeper malaise in the economy.

By the time the last budget ordinance was announced by the care-taker government, comprising of former CA members after the dissolution of the CA, on 20 November 2012, the political bickering had taken such a toll that the ordinance statement was beyond the three-month income-expenditure statement and was full of rhetoric and bitterness that reflected the lack of consensus and trust among the political parties. The budget for 2012/13 was presented by an election government on April 9, 2013, nine months too late, and frankly admitted that 'in 60 years of budget history in Nepal, this is the first time that we have been unable to bring a full-fledged budget with the estimate of revenue and expenditure even in the lapse of first eight months of the Fiscal Year' (MOF 2013).

The frequent government changes along with failure to come up with an agreed vision of economic growth and delayed budget(s) has had a pernicious effect in the Nepali economy. The GDP growth rate for the year 2012/13 was expected to be 3.6 per cent, the lowest since the end of the conflict in 2006/07 (MOF 2013a).

In the absence of prioritisation and ownership of the development agenda among the political parties, the government of the day has generally given continuity to programmes of the previous governments. The programmes that have received continuous funding from every government are sectors such as health and education, where Nepal's commitments to Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were tied. Very few new social and infrastructure projects were begun during this transition. However, there

have been infrastructure projects begun as early as 2005, which continued to receive support from succeeding governments. Sikta Irrigation Project begun in 2005 and Karnali Employment Programme started in 2005/06 have been provided adequate funds in the subsequent years. Similarly, Mid-Hill Highway Project (in the hills) and Hulaki Road Project (in the Tarai) have been receiving budget in the years since 2007/08 when they were started.

Nepal's post-conflict transition and Collier

In assessing the likelihood of relapse to conflict or the eruption of new conflict, the following section discusses the indicators/variables for Nepal that Paul Collier singles out. In the chapter 'The Political Economy of Destruction' of *Wars, Guns and Votes: Democracy in Dangerous Places* (2009), Collier discusses these indicators/variables by arranging these under several rubrics: economy, history, geography, social structure, and polity. This paper follows a similar heading and chronological order in examining each of the Nepal specific indicator/variable.

Economy: GDP growth rate, GDP per capita and the proportion of exports

Collier examines three indicators/variables under 'economy' which have a bearing on the probability of conflict, which are GDP growth rate, GDP per capita income, and the share of the export of primary commodities in GDP.

Nepal's post-conflict GDP growth rate has hovered around 4 per cent annually – 1 per cent less than 5 per cent, which Collier identifies as the minimum growth rate a post-conflict country should have to offset the likelihood of a rebellion.

Nepal's GDP growth rate had averaged a little above 4 per cent between 2006 and 2013. While Nepal's growth rate was even lower at around 3.87 per cent on average from 2002 to 2006 when the conflict was at its peak, the growth rate has risen to 4.56 per cent on average from 2007 to 2011/12, with 4.63 per cent growth in 2011/12 (producers prices) (NRB data). However, this growth rate is expected to slow down to 3.6 per cent in 2012/13 (MOF 2013). In all of the post-conflict years, with the exception of the year 2007/08 when the GDP growth rate had been 5.8 per cent, it has been below the (Collier's) threshold of 5 per cent growth rate.

According to Collier, the annual growth of GDP is an important predictor/indicator of conflict because the faster rate of growth would lower the risk of rebellion in that the labour market will become more tight, which, in turn will mean that it will be difficult to recruit new rebels

Another important variable for Collier is the economic status enjoyed by the population, specifically the level of income. The level of income as measured by per capita GDP has a significant bearing on the risk of conflict. Nepal has an estimated per capita GDP of USD 717 in 2012/13 (MOF 2013a)³. Though the per capita GDP has been growing, it is still below the threshold of per capita GDP of USD 750 beyond which, according to Collier, the risk of conflict begins to decline. Although the per capita GDP for the year 2012 stands at USD 717, it has grown by more than 2 times during the past 10 years, from a meagre USD 293 in 2003.

Collier singles out this variable as being an important indicator/predictor of conflict because it would entail a lower opportunity cost of a rebellion in that it would be cheaper to recruit a rebel (in that 'would-be' rebels would not have much better economic opportunities).

Nepal's share of exports to the GDP is relatively low. Of the total GDP, the share of exports (both raw materials and processed goods) makes up 11.3 per cent of the GDP (MOF 2012). If one were to single out the raw materials in this share, the share of raw materials to the total export and the proportion of this to the GDP would be lower still – not more than 5 per cent⁴.

Why is this important for Collier? Natural resources can increase the risk of rebellion because it could constitute easy sources of rebel finance. In addition, dependence on natural resources could lead the concerned government to avoid taxing its citizens (in that a government has a different source of income). For Collier the effect of primary commodity exports is both highly significant and considerable on the risk of conflict. At what he calls 'peak danger' (primary commodity exports being 33 per cent of GDP), the risk of conflict is about 22 per cent, while a country with no such exports has a risk of only 1 per cent.

Among others what we see from the examination of this indicator in Nepal is that since Nepal does not have natural resources that rebels could rely on for financing themselves, nor has it been something that the government has relied on during or after the conflict. In the absence of natural resources, the government's revenue could increase only through increased taxation. And this is precisely what has happened in Nepal – the

3 Nepal's GDP per capita was estimated to have reached USD 735 in 2012. However, because of the massive devaluation of the Indian Rupee (and given that the Nepali Rupee is pegged to the Indian Rupee) during the first few months of 2013, the GDP per capita has had to be re-adjusted for 2012. The re-adjusted per capita for 2012 comes to be USD 706.

4 As of present, Nepal's natural resources would be sand/stone and herbs; others raw or processed are leather and ayurvedic products and agricultural products like jutes, cardamom.

government's revenue has increased steadily by around 15 per cent during the past 7 years.

Of the three variables, two (GDP growth rate and GDP per capita) indicate the likelihood of conflict. Even these two variables are not way below the threshold – these are only a few notches below the threshold. As far as the third variable is concerned, the share of primary commodities in export to GDP is low and Nepal does not face a risk on this count.

What the trend reveals is that as of 2012, in that the figures for each of the economy-related indicators for Nepal are below the threshold and point to the possibility of a conflict. However, examining for each of these indicators longitudinally shows that Nepal in 2012 is much better placed than it was in 2003. We know for a fact that Nepal was in an internal conflict between 1996 and 2006 and it would be truism to state that the data for 2003 points towards the high probability of conflict during that period in time.

History: Previous conflict and the number of peace years

The two inter-related indicators that are discussed under 'history' are previous incidence of conflict and the number of years that have elapsed since the last conflict.

Nepal is a country that previously was in a conflict; as a country that had gone through a civil war between 1996 and 2006, Nepal qualifies as a country where there was a conflict in the recent past. As a country that had conflict in the past, there would be a probable likelihood of another civil war.

For Collier, once a country 'stumbles' into a civil war, there is a danger that it would enter a dysfunctional cycle in which the past legacy generated a heightened risk of new conflict. 'Greed and Grievance in Civil War' (2004) likens a country that once faced civil war to the behaviour of a criminal in that a person who has once indulged in crime has a higher propensity for crime in the future. Collier states that the principal legacy of a civil war is a grossly heightened risk of further civil war, and not surprisingly likens new civil strife as 'conflict traps'.

With the number of years of holding of peace, the probable likelihood of the occurrence of a civil war taking place does down. In other words as more years go by, the probable occurrence of a new conflict goes down. In 'Greed and Grievance in Civil War' (2004), Collier holds that immediately after the civil war there is a high probability of a re-start, the risk being about 32 per cent and that there is a decline of about one percentage points per year. In 'Beyond Greed and Grievance' (2009), Collier states that a country with only ten years post-conflict has a risk of 14.2 per cent and one that is 20 years

Collier's Economy-related Indicators and Nepal's Status

SN	Economy-related Indicator	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012*
1.	Annual GDP growth rate	4.4	3.2	3.7	2.8	5.8	3.9	4.3	3.8	4.6	3.6
2.	GDP per capita income (USD)#	293.0	328.0	350.0	410.0	491.0	497.0	610.0	718.0	706.0	717.0
3.	Share of exports/GDP (%)	16.7	14.6	13.4	12.9	12.8	12.4	9.8	8.7	9.8	11.3

revisions and effect of currency devaluation vis-a-vis USD noticeable

* first 8 months of FY 2012/13

Source: MOF, Economic Surveys of 2009/10, 2010/11, 2011/12 and 2012/13

post-conflict has a risk of 8.6 per cent. Nepal with six years of post-conflict peace still has a risk of 20 to 25 per cent.

Social structure: Social fractionalisation and the demographic transition

Collier has interpreted the bearing that social fractionalisation has on the probable likelihood of a conflict differently in his different writings. Moreover the facets that he singles out when he discusses social fractionalisation have tended to change.

In 'Greed and Grievance in Civil War' (2004), the dimension of social fractionalisation that manifests as ethnic dominance has repercussions on the likelihood of conflict. He says, 'If a country is characterised by ethnic dominance its risk of conflict is nearly doubled'. Using an ethno-linguistic data source from a database source that existed in the erstwhile USSR, ethnic dominance is said to come about if a single ethno-linguistic group makes up 45 to 90 per cent of the total population. The 2004 paper had demonstrated that if one ethnic community dominated, there were risks of conflict. They had found that other than this, social and religious fractionalisation tended to reduce the risk of conflict.

In 'Beyond Greed and Grievance' (2009), however, Collier says that social fractionalisation significantly increases risks of conflict. In this work, Collier measures ethnic fractionalisation by combining two measures of ethnic and religious pluralism. The ethno-linguistic fractionalisation index would measure the probability of two randomly picked individuals not speaking the same language. This is clear enough. But what is not clear is when he says the same about religious fractionalisation. In 'Beyond Greed and Grievance' (2009), Collier states that doubling social fractionalisation from 18 per cent to 36 per cent raises the risk of conflict from 4.6 per cent to 6.67 per cent.

Taking a clue from 'Beyond Greed and Grievance' (2009), and examining the Nepali context, would it be possible to state that since many caste/ethnic groups and religions inhabit Nepal, that Nepal is marked by social fractionalisation and which therefore poses high risks to conflict? Though the first part of the statement is true, the second part does not follow automatically. Though over 100 caste and ethnic groups inhabit Nepal and though there are more than 30 languages spoken in the country, the probability of two Nepalese who come from different ethnic communities or regional backgrounds speaking the same language is quite high. As high as 85 per cent of the Nepalese people, irrespective of which caste/ethnic or religious background they come from, and what their mother tongue may be, can nevertheless communicate with one another verbally in the

Nepali language. Around 70 per cent of the population can communicate with one another by writing in the Nepali language. Thus as far as the ethno-linguistic fractionalisation index is concerned, having many ethnic and linguistic groups need not necessarily mean inability across ethnic and linguistic markers to communicate in one language.

As far as religion is concerned, though the adherents of almost all of the world's religions live in Nepal, some 81 per cent of the population is Hindu. When such a high proportion of the country's population adhere to a single religion, it would probably not be correct to characterise Nepal as a country marked by religious fractionalisation.

If social fractionalisation in the case of Nepal does not indicate a greater likelihood of conflict, what about demography? Under demography, what Collier singles out is the proportion of young men aged 15 to 29 in the population. Collier (2009) points out that a doubling in the proportion of the population in this category increases the risk of conflict from 4.6 per cent to 19.7 per cent.

The proportion of young men aged between 15 and 29 in Nepal is 26.50 per cent for 2011 (CBS 2012). Compared to 20 years earlier, i.e., 1991, when this proportion was 24.40 per cent, the proportion of young males in the population seems to be growing. However, because of the migration of young men of this age, in relative terms, the proportion of women of this group is higher. There are 29.06 per cent women in the age group 15 to 29 for the year 2011 or in other words 3 percentage points higher.

What the data for the young men aged between 15 and 29 in Nepal shows is that the proportion of this age-group is quite high in Nepal. Does the high proportion of young men vis-a-vis other population groups indicate a proclivity to conflict though?

For Collier, this variable is important since it is from this age-group that rebel movements recruit their combatants. A relatively big pool in this age-group would indicate a greater availability of potential recruits and would make it easier and cheaper to start a rebellion (Collier 2008, 10). For Collier, a doubling in the proportion of the population in this category increases the risk of conflict from 4.6 to 19.7 per cent (Collier 2008, 16). Making an analogy with criminality, Collier is of the opinion that young men have both an absolute advantage and a taste for violence.

In the Nepali case, however, certain ambiguities remain as a consequence of which it would not be possible to interpret a high proportion of men of age 15 to 29 as indicating an emphatic proclivity to conflict. This is because though the proportion of young men is rising vis-à-vis population as whole, but vis-à-vis women of the same age, it is declining. In other words, there

[illegible]

are more women of the age 15 to 29 in Nepal these days than are men. The number of young women of age 15 to 29 is increasing because of the high rates of migration among the young men. What this further means that rebel movements in the future will have to go for aggressively recruiting young females if they are keen to begin a rebellion; however, young women may not have a proclivity to violence as do young men.

Geography: Mountainous terrain

Under the rubric of geography, both forest cover and the extent of mountainous terrain had been examined in Collier's various writings. 'Greed and Grievance in Civil War' (2004) had examined both of these variables and had found a weak relationship that pertained between these and the probable occurrence of conflict. 'Beyond Greed and Grievance' (2009) in which he had formulated the feasibility hypothesis, or the idea that wherever it is feasible, a conflict will occur, had explored the mountainous terrain further and showed that it has indeed a relationship with the incidence of conflict. To measure to what extent a country is or is not mountainous, Collier et al. worked with the index developed by the geographer, John Gerrard. Although this indicator had not been identified as very significant in 2004, various specification and robustness checks were applied in 2009, whose effect was then found to be very large.

With reference to this variable on the mountain terrain, Collier has a statement that refers to Nepal explicitly (Collier et al 2008, 16):

Taking the point estimate at face value, were Nepal flat its risk of civil war would have been 3.5 per cent based on its other characteristics. Given that 67.4 per cent of its terrain is mountainous its risk was 7 per cent⁵.

This indicator is a something given by nature and cannot be changed. Nepal cannot but continue to remain a mountainous country. And this continues to point to the risks it possesses with regards to the outbreak of conflict.

Democracy – Polity IV index

Democracy is an important variable/indicator for Collier. Collier measures democracy with the democracy indicator from the Polity IV data set. The

5 The point that Collier makes with reference to the risks to conflict that stem from Nepal's mountainous terrain is fairly evident and needs no further explanation. However, his assertion that 'were Nepal flat its risk of civil war would have been 3.5% based on its other characteristics' is problematic. Based on other characteristics or the 8 remaining variables excluding the mountainous terrain, the risks to conflict for Nepal are very high indeed.

Polity IV envisions a spectrum of governing authority that spans from fully institutionalised autocracies through mixed, or incoherent, authority regimes (termed ‘anocracies’) to fully institutionalised democracies. The ‘Polity Score’ captures this regime authority spectrum on a 21-point scale ranging from -10 (hereditary monarchy) to +10 (consolidated democracy). The Polity scores can also be converted to regime categories: ‘autocracies’ (-10 to -6), ‘anocracies’ (-5 to +5), and ‘democracies’ (+6 to +10).

The rating of Nepal between 2003 and 2012 according to the Polity IV index is illustrated in the table below.

Nepal and its rating as per polity IV between 2003 and 2012

SN	Polity IV Rating for	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
1.	Nepal	-6	-6	-6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6

Source: www.systemicpeace.org/polity

According to Polity IV index, Nepal became a ‘democracy’ from ‘autocracy’ between 2005 and 2006.

Although democracy is an important indicator for Collier, the presence of democracy need not necessarily be a positive marker as far as conflicts are concerned. In fact, if a country is ‘democratic’ (in that it has periodic elections, but as is the case with many developing countries, where the rule of law is weak), but poorly developed – in that it has low per capita income and low GDP growth rate, among others – the cocktail is a sure sign of conflict. Thus being a ‘democracy’ need not be a positive marker as far as the probability of conflict is concerned in Collier’s scheme of things.

In fact, not being a democracy, or being an autocracy, means that impending conflicts are discerned well on time and ‘addressed’ before these spiral out of control. As Collier notes in *War, Guns and Votes* (2009) the intelligence apparatus of the state are not as strong and effective in democratic states, as they are in autocratic ones, as a consequence of which a democratic state is not able to ‘nip the bud’ of simmering discontents as a consequence of which these easily escalate into full-fledged conflicts.

The Nepali case substantiates this line of argumentation in that the non-party Panchayat System (1960-1989) had a stronger internal surveillance system, not to mention a sound intelligence apparatus, as a consequence of which though the other markers of conflict were present (such as low GDP growth and low per capita income), conflicts did not emerge. It was with the coming of the multiparty democracy from 1990 onwards, with other markers of poor development intact but the intelligence apparatus of the

state severely weakened (for instance the ruling parties simply recruited their party cadres and filled in the ranks of the intelligence organisations) that the state could not 'nip the bud' or do anything as minor grievances escalated into major conflict.

That Nepal is a 'democracy' (and not an 'autocracy'), and where they may be multi-party elections but where the rule of law may be weak, needs to be interpreted as a negative marker in that being a 'democracy' poses a risk as far as the outbreaks of new conflict is concerned.

It, however, also needs to be borne in mind that according to Collier's model, continuing to have a lid on democracy when the markers of development are positive i.e., having at least USD 750 per capita income and a GDP growth rate of at least 5 per cent, poses risks of conflict. In other words for countries that are developing, they need to move from negative to positive and positive-cum-high scores in the Polity IV index, if such countries are to avoid conflict in the future.

Further discussion of Nepal's political economy: The 'why' and the 'what for'

This section further discusses the different facets of Nepali economy, especially in reference to employment generation through and by different sectors of the economy, including the government by spending on development activities. The purpose is to go beyond the 'what' of the economy (since that is something what the previous chapter has done) but to examine the questions of 'why' and 'what for'. The purpose is to go beyond Collier in that if there are other structural features that are discerned in the Nepali political economy, and to bring these into discussion and to 'tease out' what they mean.

The Nepali economy, under the International Standard Industrial Classification (ISIC) system, is divided into primary, secondary and tertiary sectors, which is equivalent to agricultural, industrial, and service sectors.

The share of agriculture in the economy seems to be slowly decreasing but it still accounts for one-third of the economy (NRB n.d.) and provides employment to more than two-thirds (73.9%) of the population (CBS 2009). Yet most of the agricultural sector is dependent on monsoon rains as only 40 per cent of agricultural land has irrigation facilities (NRB 2013). This sector is also constrained by labour shortage due to migration of working-age population. This has had the effect of raising the wage rates but might also represent loss of productivity as labour is hard to come by and when required.

The other sector that has been declining is the industrial sector whose

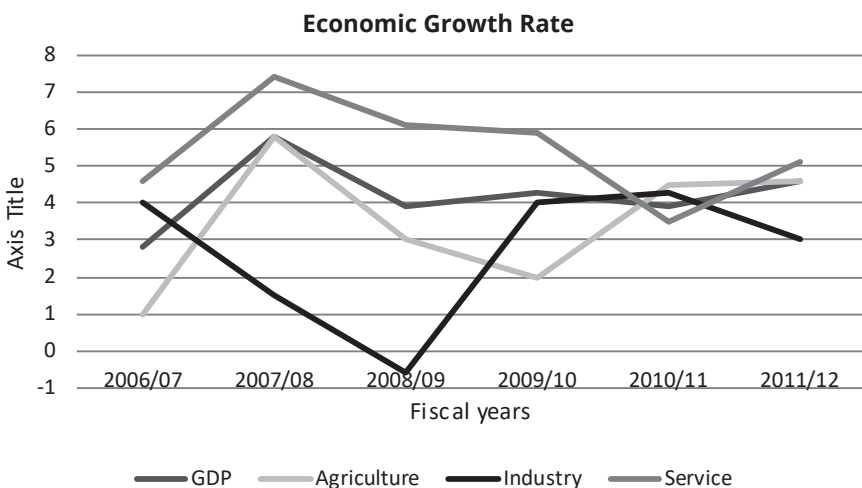
Collier's Indicators and Nepal's Status

SN	Variable	Threshold for exiting conflict trap	Nepal's status
1.	GDP per capita	At least USD 750	USD 717 (2013)
2.	GDP growth rate	Greater than 5 per cent per year	Around 4 per cent (2006-13)
3.	Primary commodity exports	Less than 20 per cent	Around 5 per cent
4.	Previous war	Yes	Ended in November 2006
5.	Peace duration	High probability within first 10 years	6 years have elapsed
6.	Social fractionalisation	Ethnic plurality – problematic Religious plurality – problematic Common lingua franca – positive	Over 100 caste/ethnic groups Over 5 religions 80 per cent can communicate in Nepali
7.	Proportion of young men	Proportion of young men – high risk	26.5 per cent males between 15 and 29
8.	Terrain – mountainous	Mountainous terrain possesses high risk	67 per cent of Nepal is mountainous
9.	Democracy (Polity IV Index)	Democracy with poor economy – high risk	Scale of 6 (0 to 10) for 2012

contribution to the national economy has come down from a high of 16.7 per cent in 2002/03 to 14.2 per cent in 2011/12. Under industrial sector come manufacturing, utilities, and construction sector. Manufacturing has been declining gradually over the decade not only in terms of output but also employment generation potential. A survey of manufacturing industries in major industrial zones found that in the first six months of this fiscal year 2012/13, average capacity utilisation of major industries was only 44.72 per cent with highest capacity utilisation seen in the beer industry at 77.45 per cent. In the absence of any new large infrastructure projects being undertaken, utilities and construction sectors are also in decline with cement and iron rod industries operating at 49.76 per cent and 43.83 per cent of their capacities respectively (NRB 2013).

The importance and contribution of the service sector to the economy is gradually growing in the last decade and now comprises almost half of the economy (47.5%). This growth of service sector mainly stems from the rise in consumption-related sectors such as transport, financial intermediation, and education among others. This reflects the reach of the market economy and shift in and access of the population, which is ultimately tied to the growth of the service sector.

The government has stated the targeted goal of double-digit growth in the economic sector, but that has largely remained a pipe dream in the absence of political stability which would have provided a consistent policy guidelines and suitable investment climate.



Source: Economic Survey 2012

The slow and uneven rate of economic growth can be explained in part due to the large contribution of agriculture, which suffers from lack of investment in terms of technology and timely supply of fertilisers and mostly has to rely on monsoon rains for irrigation. And in recent years, it has also suffered from higher wage rates as youths leave the sector for blue-collar jobs or migrate abroad in search of more gainful employment. Due to the relatively high weight of agriculture in GDP, the GDP growth has been higher in years when the agricultural sector has performed well.

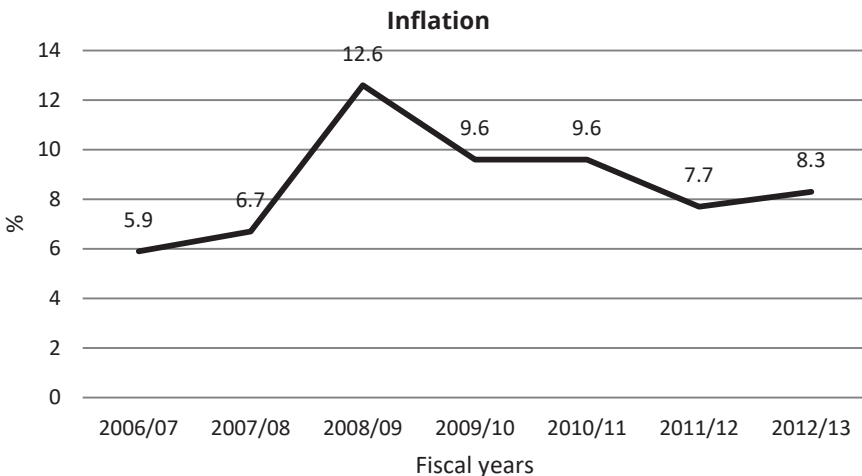
The contribution of industrial sector has been going down, especially in view of the lack of investment in projects generating hydropower. Adverse environment in the manufacturing sector combined with several structural bottlenecks are also to blame. Nepal not only suffers from excessively politicised labour force, which are not only affiliated to different parties but also keep calling strike-outs at every opportunity, but also substantially high minimum wage compared to other countries in South Asia (ILO Global Wage Database). However, the other main constraint has been (lack of) reliable energy in the form of regular electricity supply. The loss suffered by industries and business is estimated at 27 per cent of annual sales (World Bank 2013). Another obstacle has been the road network with many roads in dilapidated conditions that are prone to landslides and cause breakages and unnecessary loss on maintenance of the vehicles.

Structural bottlenecks are also affecting the service sector though it is gradually becoming more important to the economy as its contribution rises. This growth has been partially due to the rising consumerism among the populace which has access to cash and credit. Along with the rising income of the blue-collar workers and households receiving remittances, the easy availability of credit has also promoted consumption of services and goods. This is evident in the import of luxury goods such as motor vehicles, electronic goods, and rise in the real estates.

However, the extension of credit for this kind of consumption was mainly a function of unavailability of other investment opportunities for people as well as the banking and financial sectors. There was so much lending to this sector that the Nepal Rastra Bank, the apex financial regulating body, set an exposure limit of the financial institutions to this sector in December 2009. By then, there was over-exposure of these financial institutions and glut in the land and housing sectors. Eventually when the land prices fell, leading to lower land transactions and non-payment of the loans, all these institutions were in trouble. By October 2011, there was about 40 per cent reduction in real estate transactions with up to 30 per cent reduction in the value of the assets (NRB 2011).

Amidst all the dismal picture of the economy, Nepal's per capita GDP has reached USD 706 in 2012, an increase of about 50 per cent in the last five years. This has been attributed more to remittance-driven growth factors like increased consumption of goods and services. This rise in income is also due to severe labour shortages, which has raised the labour wage that has been rising at about 20 per cent per annum in the last three years. The rise is seen more in unskilled category and is significantly higher in the agriculture sector at about 30 per cent in the last two years.

With the rise in income has come the scourge of inflation (averaging 8.6 per cent in the last seven years), which the government has always targeted to maintain below 7 per cent per annum. The government has noted the cause of rising inflation in its policy documents as 'cartelling and malpractices in the domestic market, weak public delivery system, closures, strikes' among others. Uncontrolled inflation has become entrenched for now.

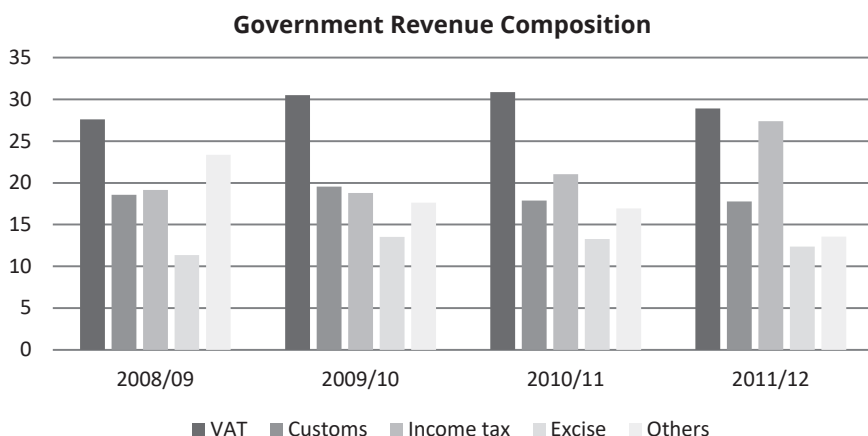


Source: Economic Survey 2012 and NRB Macroeconomic Indicators

The rise in inflation has consistently been higher in food items than in non-food items, though with the rise in petroleum prices, the cost of all the items including non-food items has gone up correspondingly. In the first 10 months of 2012/13, the inflation averaged about 8.4 per cent.

Despite the poor performance of the economy, the government revenue has been rising consistently. There are four main tax sources of government revenue, which are driven in part by consumption as well as good governance at reforming and implementing tax policies. Almost 30 per cent of the revenue is through VAT collection, and about 18 per cent through customs collections. Income tax forms more than 21 per cent of government

revenue and it is growing at more than 25 per cent for the past two years. This reflects the government ability to bring many sectors within the tax net. Excise tax levied on tobacco and alcohol contributes about 14 per cent to government revenue. Non-tax revenue contributes about 15 per cent to government revenue.

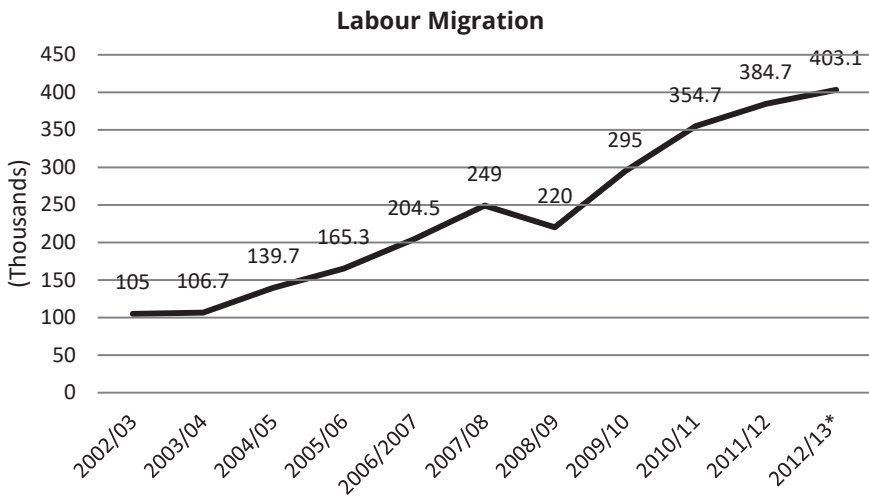


Source: NRB Macroeconomic Indicators

Foreign grants constitute a large portion of government resources, representing about 26 per cent of national budget (MOF 2013b). However, in terms of development expenditure, foreign aid has consistently accounted for more than 60 per cent of the total. Nepal also receives foreign aid for its recurrent expenditure as well. In 2011/12, Nepal received USD 1.04 billion out of USD 1.21 billion commitment, with most of it going to social sectors such as education and health along with peace-building programmes despite Nepal's focus on infrastructure development (MOF 2013b). The discrepancy between aid commitment and disbursement reflects Nepal's poor aid absorption capacity. This happens mainly because the budgets have not come out on time and expenditure on development activities has slowed down with many projects not taking off on time.

With the political instability, development activities and expenditure have been slowing down. In 2009/10, only 70.9 per cent of allocated budget estimate was spent. That figure was 67.8 per cent in 2010/11. This figure had declined to 56.2 per cent by 2011/12, which was in real terms a decline of 41.7 per cent over the previous year's development expenditure. In the first 10 months of 2012/13, capital expenditure was only 34 per cent of the allocated budget estimate for the year and it is likely that capital expenditure might see a decline as compared to last year.

The failure to spend the allocated development budget not only affects the development activities but also negatively impacts the economy as development activities create and spur demand for goods and services as money is pumped into the economy. Development activities also create employment which has been growing at 2.7 per cent per annum in the last 10 years⁶. Every year 400,000 youths enter the labour market but job creation has been minimal and about 75 per cent of these opt to go abroad to seek employment. Malaysia, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries have emerged as the main destination of these job seekers.



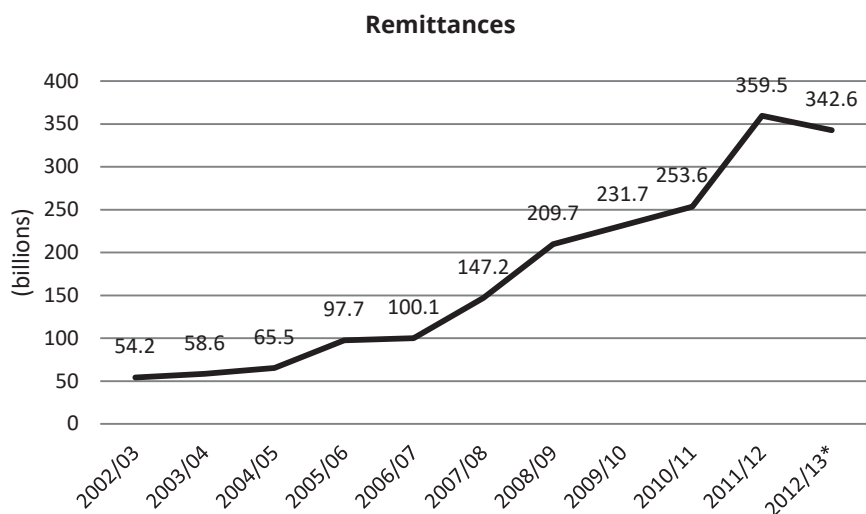
Source: Department of Foreign Employment

Foreign labour migration has proven to be fairly resilient to the global economic crisis and has recovered and remittances did not decrease despite the fall in the number of labour migrants leaving the country.

The remittance earnings from these labour migrants has been increasing, which has benefited not only their families but also the national accounts in terms of foreign currency accumulation. It is equivalent to 23 per cent of national GDP, doubling in 10 years⁷. About 56 per cent of the households in Nepal receive remittances and it forms about 31 per cent of total household income. The remittances is mainly used for daily consumption (79%), loan payment (7%), household/property (5%) and education (4%) (CBS 2011). While remittances at the household level form the main source for finance

6 Calculated from World Bank Labour Force Growth Rate data

7 In as much as remittance constitutes 23 per cent of the GDP of Nepal, this has become the 'Dutch disease' of Nepal.



Source: MoF 2013

for daily consumption and have been instrumental in reducing poverty and have helped in balance of payments at the national level, it also seems to have given a false picture of the foreign accounts which normally would be largely financed through exports.

Exports as a ratio of GDP is less than 5 per cent, a significant decline from 10 per cent a decade ago. The growth of exports has been very uneven and declined 10 per cent in 2009/10. However, imports has maintained growing trend. India is Nepal's largest trading partner, accounting for more than 65 per cent of total trade and 87 per cent of imports. Nepal's exports to India are textiles, jute goods, polyester yarn, cardamom, juice, metal pipe and wires. This list shows that some of the value exports to India contain raw materials that are imported themselves. Nepal's largest import from India is the petroleum products, which accounts for almost one-third of the imports. Other imports are vehicles and machinery along with iron and steel to be processed into products in Nepal. Nepal's top three exports to other countries are woollen carpets, readymade garments, pashmina, which contain significant amount of imported raw materials. Gold has been the largest import from third countries, whose import has seen a steep rise, fuelling the speculation that is being smuggled to India. Other imports are telecommunications equipment, machinery, and electronic goods.

The other economic sector that can contribute significantly to Nepali economy in terms of employment generation is tourism, which takes advantage of Nepal's natural terrain. Income from tourism accounts for

about 2 per cent of GDP and about 8 per cent of foreign currency earnings. However, it is also plagued by the instability of the transition and other structural bottlenecks afflicting the Nepali economy.

Foreign direct investment (FDI) and employment

In the absence of political stability with clear policies and attractive incentives, FDI has not been forthcoming. Until three years ago, most of the FDI used to be in tourism sectors, but now it has shifted to other service sectors and even agriculture. The FDI every year is estimated to generate less than 10,000 new jobs, a pittance compared to the 400,000 who enter the job market every year.

Though agriculture sector still absorbs and masks under- and unemployment, it has not grown to the extent that it would have provided gainful employment to all. Along with that, the aspirations of the younger generation to move away from agricultural work to white- or blue-collar jobs makes this group ambitious and restless at the same time.

The Nepal Living Standard Survey II 2003/04 (CBS 2004, 43) calculates unemployment rate of age 15 and above at 3.8 per cent, and Nepal Labour Force Survey (NLFS) 2008 (CBS 2009, 89) reports that for ages 20 to 29, unemployment rate is 8.1 per cent. The urban unemployment rate is 13 per cent (CBS 2009, 102). However, these figures suffer from the definitional problems of unemployment used by the survey methodology, which defines unemployment if the person has not gotten and/or sought (any) employment within the preceding week of the survey. If employment is to be counted as work hours of at least 40 hours per week, which would be more meaningful, then the real unemployment rate would be as high as 31.8 per cent.

The NLFS 2008 reports that 73.9 per cent of the employed are engaged in agriculture and 64 per cent are engaged in subsistence agriculture (CBS 2009, 74-75). It also gives the underemployment figure as 6.7 per cent, and for ages 20 to 29, the figure is 8.1 per cent (CBS 2009:89). It also notes that unemployment has risen from 1.8 per cent in 1998/99 to 2.1 per cent in 2008. However, it also reports that market-oriented employment is on the rise, e.g., forestry/fisheries, craft and related trades (CBS 2009, 74-75).

Due to the subsistence nature of agriculture and changing structure of society, labour migration has become a necessary option for the unemployed. Labour migration is not a new phenomenon as the hills of Nepal have never provided enough to sustain the population. However, the burgeoning youth population and lack of gainful local employment opportunities has given rise to a mobile population.

The population pressure in the hills has forced people to move to the cities, further straining the already limited urban facilities, and giving rise to shanty towns and slums in all the major cities of Nepal. More than three-fourths of migration occurs from rural areas to the urban centres and of these more than one-third are from the age group 15-29 (CBS 2009, 156). Migration is affected by both 'push-and-pull' factors. About 11.6 per cent of these migrants come to the cities for studies and training, and another 6.9 per cent come looking for work, while 8.6 per cent simply come to the cities for easier lifestyle (CBS 2009, 159).

Two readings of Nepal's political economy

Besides being a mountainous and a post-conflict country, which predispose Nepal to conflict, political economy also assumes significance while trying to discern the patterns and prospects for Nepal.

First, level and growth of economy and income are important determining factors with influence on likelihood of conflict. This is plausible because a growing economy would absorb most of the raw materials and labour force, thus spreading wealth in the economy. Only caveat would be that this growth would need to be broad-based and inclusive. Nepal's economy is growing at a very slow pace, for a variety of compounding factors, below the threshold of 5 per cent, and per capita GDP is still below USD 750, above which the probability of conflict begins to diminish.

This leads to our second argument. Nepal faces the double whammy of low economic growth, and consequent low income, and almost one-third of the population between 15 and 29 years of age. This group of the population is likely to become restive in the absence of any gainful employment. Here, it would be pertinent to bring into discussion the work of economist Albert Hirschman (1980), who developed a theory of 'exit' and 'voice', where members of a group will 'exit' if the costs are not high or if 'voice' is restrained. However, raising 'voice' to demand that conditions improve is proper thing to do, according to Hirschman.

A very tangential implication of Hirschman's idea would be very pertinent to understand the nature of Nepal's predicament. In the absence of any real economic growth, the youth can be expected to 'exit' or 'voice' their response. If they choose to 'exit' as is the case now in the form of labour migration and/or studies abroad because they do not trust the government to deliver the goods for them and/or do not see any future here, there will be some semblance of stability in society for a while though there will be many social cost of marginalisation, alienation in society. Also, most of the migrants are likely to return and they cannot indefinitely stay abroad

hoping for things to change at home. At this point, they can be expected to try to take matters into their own hands. If they choose to exercise their 'voice' and raise their arms, both literally and figuratively, and demand reform from within and start protesting, there will potentially be another period of violent instability.

References

- CBS (Central Bureau of Statistics), GoN. 2004. 'Nepal Living Standard Survey 2003/04 Statistical Report Volume Two.' Kathmandu: Central Bureau of Statistics, National Planning Commission Secretariat, His Majesty's Government of Nepal.
- CBS (Central Bureau of Statistics), GoN. 2009. 'Nepal Labour Force Survey 2008: Statistical Report.' Kathmandu: Central Bureau of Statistics, National Planning Commission Secretariat, Government of Nepal.
- CBS (Central Bureau of Statistics), GoN. 2011. 'Nepal Living Standard Survey 2010/11 Statistical Report Volume Two.' Accessed on May 8, 2013. http://cbs.gov.np/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/Statistical_Report_Vol2.pdf
- CBS (Central Bureau of Statistics), GoN. 2012. 'National Population and Housing Census 2011 (National Report)'. Accessed on June 21, 2013. <http://cbs.gov.np/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/National%20Report.pdf>
- Collier, Paul and Anke Hoeffler. 2004. 'Greed and grievance in civil war.' *Oxford Economic Papers* 56 (4): 563-95.
- Collier, Paul. 2007. *The bottom billion : why the poorest countries are failing and what can be done about it*. Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press.
- Collier, Paul. 2009. *Wars, Guns and Votes: Democracy in Dangerous Places*. London: Vintage Books.
- Collier, Paul, Anke Hoeffler, and Dominic Rohner. 2009. 'Beyond greed and grievance: feasibility and civil war.' *Oxford Economic Papers* 61 (1): 1-27.
- Department of Foreign Employment, GoN. 'Monthly Report.' Accessed on June 29, 2013. http://dofe.gov.np/uploads/document/final%20report_20130623110931.pdf
- ILO. 'ILO Global Wage Database'. Accessed on June 3, 2013. <http://www.ilo.org/travail/info/db/lang--en/index.htm>
- MOF (Ministry of Finance), GoN. 2006. 'Budget Speech of Fiscal Year 2006-07.' Accessed February 10, 2013. <http://www.mof.gov.np/files/Files/1334034105.pdf>
- MOF (Ministry of Finance), GoN. 2008. 'Budget Speech of Fiscal Year 2008-09.' Accessed February 10, 2013. <http://www.mof.gov.np/files/Files/1333886039.pdf>

- MOF (Ministry of Finance), GoN. 2009. 'Budget Speech of Fiscal Year 2009-10.' Accessed February 10, 2013. <http://www.mof.gov.np/files/Files/1333885854.pdf>
- MOF (Ministry of Finance), GoN. 2010. 'Budget Speech (Statement) of Fiscal Year 2010-11.' Accessed February 10, 2013. <http://www.mof.gov.np/files/Files/1333882649.pdf>
- MOF (Ministry of Finance), GoN. 2012. 'Economic Survey Fiscal Year 2011/12.' Accessed on February 10, 2013. http://www.mof.gov.np/ajw/uploads/uploaded_image/Chapter%20All-Final-Edited.pdf
- MOF (Ministry of Finance), GoN. 2013. 'Budget Speech (Public Statement) of Fiscal Year 2009-10.' Accessed February 10, 2013. [http://www.mof.gov.np/ajw/uploads/uploaded_image/Final%20Translation%20Bud%202069-70\(4\).pdf](http://www.mof.gov.np/ajw/uploads/uploaded_image/Final%20Translation%20Bud%202069-70(4).pdf)
- MOF (Ministry of Finance), GoN. 2013a. 'Economic Survey of Fiscal Year 2012-13' (in Nepali). Accessed July 16, 2013. http://www.mof.gov.np/ajw/uploads/uploaded_image/EcoSur_complete.pdf
- MOF (Ministry of Finance), GoN. 2013b. 'Development Cooperation Report Fiscal Year 2011-12'. Accessed on May 27, 2013. http://www.mof.gov.np/ajw/uploads/uploaded_image/Development_Cooperation_Report.pdf
- NRB (Nepal Rastra Bank). 2011. 'Report on Real Estate Survey (in Nepali).' Accessed on March 24, 2013. http://www.nrb.org.np/red/publications/study_reports/Study_Reports--Real_Estate_Survey,_2068.pdf
- NRB (Nepal Rastra Bank). 2013. 'Economic Activities Study Report, 2069-70 Text (Half Yearly)'. Accessed on March 24, 2013. [http://www.nrb.org.np/red/publications/economic_activity_study_report/Economic_Activities_Study_Reports--Economic_Activities_Study_Report,_2069-70_Text_\(Half_Yearly\)-new.pdf](http://www.nrb.org.np/red/publications/economic_activity_study_report/Economic_Activities_Study_Reports--Economic_Activities_Study_Report,_2069-70_Text_(Half_Yearly)-new.pdf)
- NRB (Nepal Rastra Bank). n.d. 'Current Macroeconomic Situation (Based on the annual Data of 2009/10)'. Accessed March 24, 2013. [http://www.nrb.org.np/ofg/current_macroecomic/Current_Macroeconomic_Situation_\(English\)--2010-08_Text_\(Based%20on%20Annual%20data%20of%202009-10\).pdf](http://www.nrb.org.np/ofg/current_macroecomic/Current_Macroeconomic_Situation_(English)--2010-08_Text_(Based%20on%20Annual%20data%20of%202009-10).pdf)
- Richards, Paul, ed. 2005. *No peace, no war: an anthropology of contemporary armed conflicts*. Athens Oxford: Ohio University Press; J. Currey.
- World Bank. 'World Development Indicators.' Accessed on June 11, 2013. <http://data.worldbank.org/country/nepal>
- World Bank. 2013. 'Nepal Development Update.' Kathmandu: The World Bank Group, Nepal Office.

Mobilising for What?

A Discursive History of Nepal's Youth Policy¹

AMANDA SNELLINGER

Introduction

The period of 'Naya Nepal' was supposed to change many things, yet much is still incomplete. One thing that has materialised since the 2006 peace talks is a National Youth Policy (NYP), along with a Ministry of Youth and Sports (MYS) to oversee its institution. It became clear during the decade-long civil war between the government and Maoists (1996-2006) and the ongoing democratic street protests since 2004 that youth were disgruntled and frustrated with their lack of prospects in Nepal. They were simultaneously one of the political forces' strongest assets and most dangerous liabilities. Each side had mobilised these disgruntled youth to be their foot soldiers in their political battles. When the Maoists and political parties achieved success through the 2006 People's Movement—the publicly supported joint effort to overthrow the king's government and institute a secular, multiparty democratic republic—they all recognised the urgency in attending to the concerns of the youth demographic, lest they become the next focus of Nepalese youth's frustrations. For this reason, the NYP had multi-partisan support.

This paper provides a discursive history of the NYP development since multiparty democracy opened up Nepal in the 1990s. I analyse the values, priorities, and agendas of all the participating stakeholders and the degree to which they influenced policy outcomes based on their position and influence. Like Stephen Carney and Min Bahadur Bista, I consider the

1 I would like to thank Devendra Neupane for his assistance taking interviews and translating; Robin Sitaula for providing me the list of NYP drafting committee participants, a copy of the 2002 NYP draft; and the eight youth wings' reports compiled by Lead International; and Dr. Kedar Bhakta Mathema for letting me make a copy of the 1996 high-commission report on youth's situation. My analysis could not have come together if it were not for these individuals and the other twenty people who shared their views and experiences about the NYP. This research is supported by the Economic and Social Research Council (Grant# ES/J011444/1).

‘contemporary process of policy convergence’ (2009:193) to understand how the opportunities and challenges Nepalese youth face as they navigate their life trajectories are shaped by both global and local factors. Thus I focus on the relationship between the international donor regime and the state during the policy development and its institution in order to provide insight into what mediates cultural flows and social opportunity across sovereign borders.

I analyse this policy as a dynamic interplay between social, economic, and political structures, which affects young people’s lives (Beck 1992; Furlong and Cartmel 2007). I analyse policy, supporting documents, and focused interviews with various stakeholders who have participated in or closely observed the NYP development process since 1995. I interviewed ten drafting committee members who cover the diverse range of stakeholder interests in the 2010 NYP; three high-level bureaucrats at the Ministry of Youth and Sports and three from the Youth Small Enterprise and Self-Employment Fund central department (YSESEF); the head of HMG’s 1996 high-level commission report that assessed youth’s situation; a LEAD International project coordinator who was contracted by the Norwegian government to organise programmes and produce reports; a representative from UNIFEM; a UNFPA coordinator who oversees Nepal’s Youth Advisory Panel (YAP); a Save The Children program officer who is working closely with the Ministry of Youth and Sports to institute the NYP; and the country director of the ILO. These participating stakeholders are the active agents who infuse the policy and its institution with substance. As this research demonstrates, all of these stakeholders act and interact within the structural and discursive constraints of the state and transnational regimes. Some do it with ambivalence, others with disenchantment and alienation, and others strategically engage opportunities when they come (Carney & Bista 2009:193).

In order to understand how the youth policy was made and will be instituted, I consider what ideas, concepts, values, assumptions, and power dynamics played a part in the policy process and which ones were excluded, marginalised, or dismissed. My discursive analysis takes cue from the approach Carney and Bista used to study the development of the community schooling in Nepal’s educational history, what they frame as the genealogy of policy² (2009:194). Genealogy traces the present moment

2 ‘Policy genealogy, then, is not convinced by analyses of policy production explained by ‘bounded rationality’ . . . or ‘incrementalism’ achieved through ‘partisan mutual adjustment.’ . . . Certainly, it asks (1) how policies change over time, but it also seeks to determine (2) how the rationality and consensus of policy production might be

backwards to the time of its inception in order to understand how we have gotten to where we are. Taking a post-structural view, I recognise that the contemporary understanding and consensus very well could have been otherwise (Foucault 1972 [1969]). Policy, in other words, cannot be taken as a historical product of linear progressive rationality. The National Youth Policy especially demonstrates that policy is created and instituted through an ongoing process of contestation and negotiation that takes diverging courses when the guiding political, social, and economic factors change.

In the next three sections, I provide the historical background that influenced the creation of Nepal's NYP, a detailed analysis of the drafting process, and analysis of the most contentious aspects of the policy content. I will close by summarising the MYS's plans to institute the NYP and the obstacles they face. The challenges the ministry faces highlight the tensions between the different participating stakeholders. I suggest that the lack of joint ownership at any phase of the policy process may undermine its ability to be an effective policy in the long run.

Background

Youth-focused policies and instituting government bodies are not new in Nepal or the international community. Over the last five decades, the policy position on young people has shifted; they've become a demographic in need of legal protection and promotion (cf. Baker & Hinton 2001). Since 1965, there has been a converging international consensus around the need to invest in the youth demographic. In 1965, the United Nations General Assembly adopted resolution 2037 entitled, 'Declaration on the Promotion among Youth of the Ideals of Peace, Mutual Respect and Understanding between Peoples'. Between 1965-1975, the General Assembly's Economic and Social Council emphasised three priority focuses for national and international policy related to youth: participation, development, and peace. In 1979, by resolution 34/151, the General Assembly declared that 1985 will be designated as 'International Youth Year: Participation and Development'. This awareness campaign brought international attention to the needs of youth (15-24 years old) and promoted their active participation in economic and social development. August 12th has become International Youth Day, creating a UN tradition of calling together government ministers, who oversee youth's wellbeing, to discuss policy and implementation strategy (UN 2010:11).

In 1995, on the 10th Anniversary of International Youth Year, the 'World

problematised and (3) how temporary alliances are formed and reformed around conflicting interests in the policy production process.' (Gale 2001: 390 inn Carney & Bista 2009:194).

Programme of Action for Youth' was adopted by the UN General Assembly as a policy framework that provided guidelines for national action and international support to improve young people's lives. It identified ten fields of action, and then in 2007, five additional ones were adopted, among them are: education, employment, hunger and poverty, environment, substance abuse, juvenile justice, armed conflict, HIV/AIDS, intergenerational conflict, and gender discrimination (UN 2010: i-ii). The Programme of Action was divided into three phases: the first was focused on analysis and drafting the program, which was adopted by the General Assembly in 1995; the second phase spanned from 1995-2000, focusing on implementation; and the third phases between 2000-2010 focused on further implementation, progress made, and suggestions for improving outcomes and long-term implementation (UN 2010:12).³

In Nepal there has been a history of youth focused policy that dates back to the Panchayat era. For example as part of their policies focused on strengthening nationalism, the Panchayat government established the *rāstriya bidyārthi mandal* (national student council) to cultivate college students into the Panchayat administration. The *rāstriya bidyārthi mandal* served a similar role as the other student organisations that were affiliated with the underground political parties; it competed for political influence on campus and indoctrinated its member and other students through its Free Student Union activities (cf. Snellinger 2010 & 2005). Additionally in the 1970s and 1980s, Queen Aishwarya often inaugurated youth-focused programs, including the *rāstriya yubalaya bhaban'* (the national youth house). These overtures were meant to demonstrate the government's youth-friendly position to avoid dissent from the young generation.

Another youth focused program was the National Development Service (1972-1979). This programme was implemented as part of the new education policy of 1971; its purpose was to integrate the students' education and service together to make them key contributors to the nations' development (Vaidya 1992:129). It required Tribhuvan University master's students to perform a year of service involving a two-month training program in practical implementation of first aid, agriculture, teaching, and local development, and a ten-month village stay working with local Panchayat officials. The culminating requirement was a report on the village and its development, which was submitted to the central government. Over ninety per cent of the districts were involved. This programme was the Panchayat government's answer to sustainable national development by connecting

3 For details of this analysis, see the 2010 World Program of Action Report.

the newly educated youth with the nation's rural villages and towns, but it was also an attempt to cultivate national pride and connection to rural Nepal within these newly educated professionals (cf. Messerschmidt et al.2007).

The first initiative that focused on youth-specific policy after the 1990 institution of multiparty democracy was the creation of the Ministry of Youth, Culture, and Sports in 1995 (Ashwin 6, 2052) by Sher Bahadur Deuba's government. It was housed in the Ministry of Education office complex in Kaiser Mahal. This ministry's directive regarding youth was unclear, and thus in 1996, Minister Purna Bahadur Khadka (NC-affiliated political appointee) commissioned Dr Kedar Bhakta Mathema to oversee a high-level commission to assess the situation of youth and provide directives to the ministry. The high-level commission report recommended that His Majesty's Government draft and approve a youth policy that articulates the government's minimum responsibility and the responsibility of the non-governmental sector. It also suggested that a national youth council be devised to coordinate the policy as well as a youth volunteer service. It heavily emphasised youth employment, urging a comprehensive policy with a five-year plan be developed along with the establishment of national youth development centres that would work locally throughout the country to promote training and guidance on employment opportunities, particularly emphasising self-employment. It also called for the promotion of education in rural and urban areas and mechanisms to promote youth development at the Village Development Committee level (HMG 2053[1996]).

The Ministry of Youth, Culture and Sports survived until 1999 but little of its annual budget of 2,010 million NR (1.06% of the budget)⁴ went to youth issues nor did it accomplish instituting any of the high level commission report's main suggestions. Despite this, the Deuba government did break the mould in the Ninth Government Plan and separated youth from adolescents by dedicating subsection 14.2.1 to 'Youth mobilisation'. It identified education, culture, employment, health, sports, crime involvement, and substance abuse as major priority areas (NCP 1998). The policy suggestions in this chapter mirror the suggestions of the 1996 high-level commission report; however, none of these suggestions had been instituted by the time of the creation of the Tenth Plan. Youth issues took even less priority in the Tenth Plan devised by the last HMG of Nepal. There was no direct mention of how to accommodate youth as a discrete demographic. However, during Sher Bahadur Deuba's tenure as the king's appointed prime minister in 2002, a NYP draft was written but never made it to parliament for approval.

4 See Ninth Plan 1998-2002, Table 5: 143

Bureaucrats in the Ministry of Youth, Culture and Sports drafted the policy, consulting the 1996 high-level report and other country national youth policies to devise it.

Like most reports and plans, little of the youth-related policies came to fruition in the form of official legal action before 2007. The main reason for this is the short-term government tenure due to rapid political turnover. Since the institution of multi-party democracy in 1990, Nepal has had twenty different prime ministers, and that does not include King Gyanendra's direct rule stints in 2002 and 2005. Thus, there is a political tradition of one administration's grand plans, policies, and reports to fade on the back shelves of the ministries as the bureaucrats busy themselves working with new political appointees on alternative plans, policies, and reports.

It was not until after the peace talks between the Maoists and political parties that the making of a NYP became a serious endeavour. In the 2007 Interim Three-Year Plan, the entirety of chapter 24 focused on youth, it emphasised that the Interim Constitution adopted a special policy by the Nepali state to mobilise youth in the development of the nation. The policies and objectives were focused mainly on employment but also included devising a NYP, national youth commission, and adopting affirmative action policies for youth from the women, Dalit, Adivasi Janajati, and the Madhesi communities. The other proposed policies and working programmes echoed the suggestions of the 1996 high-level commission report and demanded coordination between the government, donor agencies, and NGOs. In 2008, Maoist Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal gave all the proposed youth-related plans the political will needed by issuing a directive to create the NYP (which was finally published in 2010), The Ministry of Youth and Sports (MYS), and broad-scale education and employment schemes.

The momentum of these directives was refreshing due in part to it being one of the rare priorities shared by all sides in Nepal—the far left parties, democratic parties, royalists, general public, and donor agencies. On the political level, the majority of democratic activists and Maoists combatants were of the youth demographic. In order to keep them loyal, all the parties recognised that they must address their young cadres' concerns. There has also been more youth advocacy since young leaders have transitioned into parties' central committees and government positions. When asking NYP drafting committee participants what the NYP's motivating factors were, they all pointed to young people's central role in creating the political situation that led to the Constituent Assembly restructuring the

constitution and state.⁵ One youth leader pointed out that 'youth are the pillars of development' in all societies, and Nepal needed to demonstrate this to itself and to the world by joining other nations that have created national youth policies.⁶

It is indeed true that the drafting of the NYP signals that the constituency assembly elected government was serious about addressing the conflict issues. Donor agencies have directly correlated investing in youth opportunity with maintaining peace and stability. During the peace talks and the writing of the Interim Constitution in 2007, the UN Country's Peace and Reconciliation Plan emphasised the World Programme of Action for Youth. A ten-member UN Youth Advisory Panel (UNYAP) for Nepal was formed in October 2008 as part of the UN Country Team's agenda. The UN Country Team heavily prioritised youth issues that were considered integral to attaining the Millennium Development Goals outlined by the UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) 2008-2010. The Government of Nepal and UNDP signed an agreement to empower young people in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The National Planning Commission has also tried to address young people's employment challenges by crafting a National Plan of Action for Youth Employment (2008-2015) with technical cooperation from the International Labor Organization. It emphasised: employability, equal opportunity, entrepreneurship, and employment creation. The estimated total budget was 14 billion NPR, little of which has been allocated or spent on developing programs.

Nepal's NYP has emerged in coordination with global development schemes. This process, however, has not been as stark as the centrality of the donor-driven agenda in Nepal's education policy since the 1990s (Carney and Bista 2009). Rather, there seems to be a convergence of priorities at certain times, and divergence at others. Throughout the rest of this paper, I will analyse the dialectical interaction between national and foreign partners through various stakeholders' accounts. This analysis is meant to determine the way these various power structures shape the opportunities and constraints young people face as citizens while being cultivated as tomorrow's national future through policies and programs.

5 Within the National Youth Policy itself, the following reason is given for the need for a youth policy: 'The youths have rendered an outstanding contribution to every political change, founding of democracy and other social movements in Nepal. The peaceful popular movement, decade-long armed conflict, *Madhes* movement, *Tharubhat* movement as well as movements for identity and recognition, which took place in the past, have raised a demand to specially address the existing situation of the youths. The need of a policy for youth has, therefore, increased' (2010: 1-2).

6 Interview taken with Tarun Dal member on the NYP drafting committee on March 31, 2013.

The drafting of the 2010 National Youth Policy

How the drafting committee was chosen

CPN-UML member Udaya Raj Pandey was chosen to coordinate the drafting committee because of his long history in youth-related activism, particularly on the international level. In 1978, he began participating in ANNFSU, the CPN-ML's student wing, and during the 2036 BS (1979) student movement protesting the assassination of Bhutto. In 1979 (2036 BS), he served as the ANNFSU Parsa district committee president. He was elected as president of the Free Student Union Campus of Thakur Ram Campus in 1984. Then in 1985 (2042 BS), he became the central committee general secretary of ANNFSU. He was a founding member of the CPN-ML National Democratic Youth Federation, which was established in 1991 (2047 BS). In 1995 (2051 BS), he became the Yubha Sangh general secretary and became chairman in 1998 (2054 BS). From 2003 through 2007, he served as the vice-president of the World Federation of Democratic Youth and lived in Budapest, Hungary. When he returned he mediated between the CPN-UML central committee and the youth and student leaders of ANNFSU, while also being an advisor to the CPN-UML-appointed foreign secretary.⁷

The drafting committee comprised twenty members plus a delegate from the National Planning Commission, Ministry of Youth and Sports, and one expert. A delegate from each of the politically affiliated youth organisations participated (ten in total), three CA members, one student union president, three representatives from youth-related non-governmental organisations, and an expert of national origin from UNIFEM. CPN-UML-affiliated individuals were in the majority because of Udaya Pandey's position as committee coordinator. Five women participated, a bit more of a fifth of the team. Two out of the five women were CPN-UML affiliated, the others included UNIFEM representative and two Constituent Assembly members from left-leaning parties. As a whole, the political-leaning left organisations had more representation than the centre and there was no conservative party representation.

The drafting committee was meant to be representative of the youth demographic in Nepal.⁸ Everyone I interviewed articulated this; however, people had different standards for judging inclusivity. When I asked people why they were selected, they noted their position in the political or social sector focusing on youth. They tended to identify other people being

7 Based on interview taken on October 13, 2006 in Kathmandu

8 See Appendix One: List of National Youth Policy Drafting Committee Members

chosen for inclusion reasons and not themselves. For the most part, those I interviewed thought that the task force was not inclusive because they felt that people like themselves were in the minority and judged the level of inclusion based on the degree to which their view had proportional weight. Those from the social sector felt the committee was dominated by people in the political sector, and those from the political sector felt it was dominated by other political ideologies than their own. Of those members who were from a left-leaning persuasion, they tended to judge inclusion based on gender and ethnic group diversity (caste diversity was only addressed by one participant from the social sector). The only people who thought the committee was inclusive were the left-leaning politically affiliated high-caste men from the hills.

The committee was successful in having female and ethnic representation but not at a proportionate level. There, however, were no members from the Dalit community, from the lower economic classes, nor from the far west. But the most striking lack of inclusion was age. Only three of the committee members were younger than thirty, none were under twenty-five years of age, and the majority of the members were older than thirty-five. This may seem like an odd oversight but it reflects the socio-political reality of party politics in Nepal in which many are considered youth through their sixties (Snellinger 2009). Youth officially extends up into the mid-forties in the constitutions of many youth wings. This greatly impacted the debate around the age designation for youth in the NYP itself (this is detailed in the next section).

Drafting process

Once committee membership was established, the first meeting set the code of conduct so that these members from various affiliations could work together and overcome contentious issues without the committee dissolving. Then the drafting committee was broken up into groups to do focused research on different issues that affect youth, including education, employment, health, marginalisation, and social participation. Each of these groups was supposed to draft a report to inform the committee on the present situation and provide suggestions on how the policy should address young people's needs in this sector. One of the critiques articulated by NGO and INGO sector participants was that many of the politically affiliated committee members did not take this first step seriously and did not complete the background research or did so poorly. Thus, the external government experts heavily augmented many of these issue-based reports, recycling outdated reports and findings that were on hand. In the next

step, the committee re-joined to discuss the reports' findings and decide on the priorities and focus of the policy. Udaya Raj Pandey wrote the first draft based on this meeting. Consultations were then done with twenty different organisations in Kathmandu. And then there were consultations with stakeholders in the five development regions. The results of these consultations were used to tweak Pandey's draft. The penultimate step was left to the bureaucrats and technical experts who translated the document into the appropriate policy language and made it coherent with other state policies.

Many different policies and documents were consulted while drafting the NYP. I was told that the committee mainly focused on national documents including the 2002 youth policy draft, manifestos of different political organisations, the Interim Constitution, and National Planning Commission policies and its Interim Three-Year Plan. The drafting committee also consulted the Millennium Development Goals, World Program of Action for Youth strategy, and National Youth Policies of Malaysia, India, and Japan. Even though other national youth policies were consulted, many of the participants favoured making it relevant to Nepal's socio-cultural context rather than prioritising internationally prescribed norms. The UNIFEM participant explained that youth wings especially leveraged this assertion in order to strengthen their agenda to define youth in Nepal as 16-45, which it was perceived as a political agenda that they argued in nationalistic grounds.⁹ In comparing the two documents, it is apparent that the 2002 draft youth policy is the basic skeleton of the 2010 NYP, which was expanded in more depth to reflect the post-conflict reality and demands of the Second People's movement, particularly focusing on inclusion, employment, peace-building and community development. Furthermore, the 2010 NYP includes all fifteen strategic areas of the UN World Program of Action for Youth and specifies a commitment to the Millennium Development Goals.

When I asked participants about the committee dynamic, the NGO and INGO sector participants critiqued the youth wing participants for their domineering approach. They also critiqued the disorganisation of the politically affiliated participants (ranging from high rates of absenteeism, tardiness, as well as refusal to stick to any meeting agenda), arguing that it kept the committee meetings from being as robust and productive as they had hoped. They were disappointed that neither Udaya Raj Pandey nor the participants from the ministry took a more assertive role in chairing the meetings and overseeing that everyone had equal opportunity to express

9 Interview with UNIFEM drafting committee participant, May 17, 2013 in Kathmandu.

their views. They felt this kept many participants from asserting their misgivings on the most contentious issues and speaking out against the youth wings' dominant caucus. The youth wing participants' response was starkly different. They all felt that no member or committee faction dominated the meetings. A few expressed a surprisingly similar observation, saying that everyone had equal space to bring their thoughts to the committee. If anyone did not, it was because of personal deficiency rather a deficiency of the committee dynamic.¹⁰

The way this dynamic played out on the NYP drafting committee was indicative of who ended up endorsing the policy and who did not. Those from the NGO and INGO sector did not endorse the policy, nor did two of the politically affiliated women. These individuals did not endorse it because of the outcome of the debate over the age range of youth, which I'll discuss further in the next section. These participants explained to me that not endorsing the document was ultimately the most effective way to make their voice heard.¹¹

Policy's partial promulgation

Nonetheless, the 2010 policy draft was put forward to the ministerial council for approval. It, unfortunately, has not been presented to parliament for a vote and thus is not a legally enacted. The reason for this is because of the erratic nature of the Constituent Assembly-elected government. The drafting process occurred under the leadership of Pushpa Kamal Dahal's Maoist majority government. By the time the NYP was finalised, Madhav Kumar Nepal was prime minister and his government had other agendas it held in higher priority. The interviewees aligned with the UML and from NGO and INGO sector explained that the change in prime ministers was too contentious, and therefore, it was too difficult to bring the policy before parliament for a vote. To do so would have wasted valuable political capital that was needed for other agendas. Those from the non-UML politically aligned factions hinted that the policy did not go to parliament because of spite on the part of Madhav Kumar Nepal's government. They explained that the new UML-headed government did not want to follow through on anything Dahal's government made a priority because they wanted to hinder the view that the Maoist government had successful outcomes.

10 Based on interview with drafting committee members on March 20, 2013, March 31, 2013, April 28, 2013, May 7, 2013 in Kathmandu.

11 This is not the case for the MYS representative on the drafting committee who did not endorse the policy due to the age range debate. He has to institute the policy despite his own opinion.

I cannot say how accurate this claim is since I have not interviewed anyone from Madhav Kumar Nepal's government of that time. What is verifiable is that the democratically elected CA government has not established the legal precedence of the NYP. Therefore, the MYS is not legally obligated to uphold NYP like it would have if the NYP had been enacted by the parliament. This has created murkiness, which allows the MYS to dictate its policy priorities without being restricted to the NYP's mandate or constrained by its directives. The way this situation unfolded has unwittingly created a lack of ownership in the policy by youth from all sides: the NGO sector is disappointed because they did not feel they had equal voice in drafting it; the political sectors because it was not legally sanctioned by their parties' elected parliament; and the MYS is not beholden to any democratically elected oversight; and non-political youth because they have not been incorporated into any of the process, or as one MYP bureaucrat referred to them, 'the voiceless youth, they are the ones who are really marginalised'.¹²

State- or donor-driven endeavour?

Every person I spoke to regarding the NYP said that this was a state-driven agenda with little foreign pressure or economic support contributing to its fruition. Many respondents invoked Nepal's sovereignty; they asserted that only the state of Nepal can decide policies for its people. One drafting committee member explained that the decision to draft the policy had already been made in the Interim Constitution and was reflected in the NPC's Interim Three-Year Plan. He elaborated that there was no pressure, rather it was a 'joint commitment between the foreign friends and the political parties to create long lasting peace'.¹³ Individuals from the MYS confirmed that there was no direct economic support for the task force team to draft the NYP.¹⁴ Rather, the various foreign agencies provided technical support, organised workshops, and provided feedback. The UNFPA YAP program coordinator stated that UNFPA spent about \$30,000 USD for logistical workshop support.¹⁵

The most notable foreign influence in the drafting process was the Norwegian embassy. The Norwegian embassy was dedicated to shepherding the NYP through with input and support from all youth sectors. The way

12 Interview with former MYS bureaucrat who redrafted the endorsed NYP to align with other policy documents, June 15, 2013 in Kathmandu.

13 Interview with left-leaning drafting committee member on May 7, 2013 in Kathmandu.

14 Interview taken with MYS representative on the NYP drafting committee May 2, 2013 in Kathmandu.

15 Interview with UNFPA YAP program coordinator, May 22, 2013, Patan.

they did this, however, was working through the eight political youth organisations: Tarai Madhes Front; Nepal Tarun Dal; Progressive Youth Federation, Nepal; Madhes Youth Forum, Nepal; Madhesi Youth Forum, Nepal (Democratic), Sadbhawana Youth Front; Youth Federation, Nepal; and Young Communist League, Nepal. The process was three-fold. The first was a set of nationwide workshops in which the youth political wings gathered input from young people on what the NYP should include, which were published in the 2008 report '*Raastriya Yubaa Niti Sujhaab Prativedan*' (The NYP Recommendation Report). The second phase was capacity enhancement trainings for young political leaders so they could jointly institute a National Youth Employment Campaign. The third phase was the launching of a nationwide advocacy campaign for youth employment and the 2012 culminating publication, 'Recommendations for the National Youth Employment Policy'.

The degree to which the Norwegian embassy's role was received depended on the participant's position and interests. The drafting members from the political youth wings were very positive about the Norwegian embassy's support, including the Young Communist League president during a time when the Maoist party was still wary of foreign influences in Nepal. All of the youth wing leaders with whom I spoke attributed their participation in the drafting committee to the Norwegian embassy's efforts. They also applauded the Norwegian embassy's support for bringing the interaction programs to a more grassroots level than the MYS had the will or capacity to do. The MYS extended interaction programmes for feedback on the policy to the five development regional zones. The Norwegian embassy organised interactions within all seventy-five districts. These programs, however, were coordinated through the youth political wings' networks, and therefore political youth participation was prioritised over non-political youth participation. This created a positive feedback loop that reinforced the youth wing's legitimacy, agenda, and lobbying efforts on the drafting committee.

Representatives from non-political organisations, on the other hand, were quite critical of the Norwegian embassy's support of the NYP. One of the Lead International coordinators explained to me that the Norwegian embassy spent more financial resources on the eight youth wings' coordinating efforts than the drafting and instituting of the NYP itself.¹⁶ This approach reinforced that the drafting of the NYP policy was a political process in the eyes of many NGO and INGO observers. One youth NGO participant explained to me that many young people were excluded and felt no ownership over

16 Interview with Lead International coordinator on May 6, 2013, Kathmandu.

the NYP because it was dominated by youth political wings' agendas and priorities. This perpetuates the growing gap between political and non-political youth since the institution of multiparty democracy; many young people are disconnected from politics and the nation because they have no ownership within the process beyond casting a vote (Snellinger 2005).

Politically affiliated members from outside the youth wings were also dismissive of the Norwegian embassy's efforts. A student leader who participated on the drafting committee recalls being approached by the Norwegian embassy to help enforce the policy and lobby for it to gain legal status. She said that she and few other influential student leaders, who were key players in the 2006 People's movement, were called for three meetings by the Norwegian embassy to discuss how they could help institute the policy; they were offered both financial and technical support. She said the student leaders were approached first because the 'youth fronts [wings] represented relatively older people and the student organisations represented the real youth'.¹⁷ Ultimately, they declined the Norwegian Embassy's offer because they reasoned they were a student movement and not a project, and thus taking money from an embassy for their work would undermine their cause. She also dismissed the youth wings' work with the Norwegian embassy as having little impact.

Once the policy was drafted, donors provided support for its institutionalisation, not to the government but to various NGO's. Demo Finland, the EU, and UN agencies gave money to NGOs like Alliance for Peace and Yuba Sanjal (Youth Network) to run workshops that informed young people on the parameters of the policy and to gather feedback for the MYS on how to institute the policy. Politically affiliated participants saw this approach as short-sighted and problematic because it undermined coordination between the government and the NGO sector. Furthermore, the donor organisations' support to external agencies was seen as an indirect tactic pressuring the government to pass the NYP draft through a parliamentary vote. This struck a sensitive nerve, because in 2010, the government was in such bad shape that it could get little accomplished. The perception that donor organisations were pressuring the government through NGOs caused a loss of face for the political parties. The politically affiliated participants were critical of this process, asserting that a single-door policy should be instituted so that the government can oversee NGO activities in coordination with government efforts in order to maximise the NYP effectiveness.¹⁸

17 Interview with drafting committee member on April 28, 2013 in Kathmandu, Nepal.

18 It was interesting to hear the single-door policy being supported by a number of the interviewees; it seems to represent an attitudinal shift regarding aid distribution that is

People from the NGO and INGO sector, on the other hand, saw donor efforts as a way to make a societal impact despite the political dominance on the drafting committee. They saw the donor support of NGOs as ameliorating the political agenda of the policy itself, combating the lack of initiative in parliament to pass the policy into law, and compensate for the MYS's failure to institute major aspects of the policy. For instance, the Association of Youth Organisations in Nepal devised the National Youth Federation as per the NYP mandate in response to the fact that the MYS has not yet devised the National Youth Council. Nonetheless, the NGO and INGO drafting committee participants were critical because they felt the donors were not assertive enough in these support efforts. The donor spokespersons with whom I spoke explained to me that they were balancing their support by providing as much technical support as the MYS was willing to receive; however, they are putting their economic resources into organisations and projects that reflect their priorities more effectively and have a track record of providing outcomes.

Disputed policy content

Despite the uneven reception of foreign influence in support of the policy itself, Nepal's NYP was embraced by UN agencies that have been campaigning for national youth policies around the world since mid-1990s. Nepal's NYP has been featured in the 'Investing in Youth Policy' Report published by the UNICEF'S Asia-Pacific Interagency Group on Youth, which promotes NYP adoption and features different Asian countries that have incorporated more youth participation in governance (2011). Although they applaud Nepal's creation of the NYP, they criticise it for being vague and designating youth as ages 16-40. These two critiques reflect the key disputes that took place amongst the drafting committee members. They demonstrated what was at stake for the various participants on the drafting committee. By contextualising these contentious issues, I will highlight the socio-political values that are driving the contemporary agenda vis-à-vis youth, which has implications for how the policy is instituted and its long-term impact on young people's lives.

coming from the government level. An UNFPA officer told me that their office had been informed that in the coming fiscal year all economic support toward their programmes should be paid to the central treasury, and the finance ministry will oversee its distribution. This is a worrisome prospect for donors who have projects set up in specific areas, they feel that their money may not go toward what they have built their programmes around and depending on how the government disperses the funds, it could have very little impact.

Vagueness of language

When reading Nepal's NYP the thing that is the most striking is the lack of specificity of the objectives, language, strategies, and action plans; there is also no detail of budget allotments in order to fulfil the policy's objectives. The Asia-Pacific Interagency Group on Youth cites this as an obstacle for implementing the policy (ibid.). A number of respondents explained that the vagueness of the language was due in part because political actors drafted it and they were more interested in the rhetorical articulation of their political ideology than stipulating practical policy implementation. The stakes of the language were not in the specificity of an action plan but in the political implications. There were debates on what terminology to use because a number of different political ideologies were represented on the task force team. Squabbles between committee members would last for weeks over whether to use communist political language or democratic language. One participant said the language is vague because it was felt that everyone had 'to feel ownership' over the document language, thus it is a hodgepodge of political rhetoric.¹⁹

Another reason cited for the vagueness of the language was that the scope of the policy was uncertain to the drafting participants. One member explained it in this way:

I am also confused whether the policy is meant for today or for tomorrow. After all since this is a policy, it is for the present and the future. This is how we took it. A certain part of it can be implemented in the present and the rest in the future since we thought that it has also envisioned the future society. Sometimes, even we used to get confused whether to make the policy for the present or the future.²⁰

This statement strengthens the assertion made by the participants from the NGO and INGO sector and admittedly from the politically affiliated participants: this policy was first and foremost a political document. If it were meant to be otherwise, then the three external policy experts and the UNIFEM representative would have had more of a platform to guide the language so it read like a policy document that could be instituted by the MYS, which would clarify if it was meant for the present, future, or should encompass both. Such an intervention was not tolerated at the time of drafting. It was a threat to the youth political wings' participants who felt

19 Interview with drafting committee member on April 28, 2013 in Kathmandu, Nepal.

20 Translation from interview with drafting committee member on April 28, 2013 in Kathmandu, Nepal.

this process was the result of their hard work as activists over the previous decade.

An MYS bureaucrat who participated in redrafting the endorsed policy into a state policy document admitted that they were under a lot of pressure to keep the political agenda. He said that this was problematic because a national policy should not represent any party agenda but be coherent with other state policies; the main reason is that a politically motivated policy will become null once the government changes. He explained the vague wording was the best solution to remove overt party agendas from the document.²¹ In the long run, the vague hodgepodge of political rhetoric will pull the policy further and further out of the domain of the political actors. The ministerial bureaucrats will take this politically charged rhetoric and turn it into an action plan they can institute. Whether it will reflect the spirit of this political document is still an unanswered question.

Central debate of the policy: What is youth?

The most contentious issue of the policy content was the age range defining youth. Ultimately, the policy defined youth as ages 16-40, which reflects the dominance of the affiliated political youth wing participants. The non-political sector advocated for the upper limit to be 29 years of age. They reasoned, like the 2002 policy draft, it needed to surpass the UN sanctioned 24 years age limit due to the scarcity of economic and educational opportunities in Nepal. Udaya Raj Pandey's original draft set the upper limit at 35. However, the youth wing participants who are affiliated with the five main parties argued for forty-five based on their own constitutions.²² Many different national and international sources were consulted to advocate for the precedents of different age caps. The National Planning Commission defines youth as 15-29 for budgeting purposes. The limit for recruitment in the Nepal army, police, and armed forces varies from 22 to 25 years of age. The upper limit to appear for the Public Service Commission and Education Service exams is 35 years old. Some drafting members cited the national youth policies of India, China, and Sri-Lanka in which the upper age limit is 35 in order to advocate for an international precedent. But the youth wing affiliates rebutted by citing Japan's NYP, which extends to 45 years old.

Many hours of debate ensued over the age designator. Outside lobbying

21 Interview with former MYS bureaucrat who redrafted the endorsed NYP to align with other policy documents, June 15, 2013 in Kathmandu.

22 These were the youth wings affiliated to the Nepali Congress, UML, Maoists, and Peasants and Workers Party of Nepal, and UML-United Front.

took place, too. A student union leader participant explained to me that she was able to convince the Madhesi youth wings to support a lower age limit. Based on the support breakdown, the committee agreed to compromise and cap the age at 35. However, the final draft that was presented for endorsement set the age cap at 40. Advocates for the 40-years-old age cap argued that it was consistent with youth wing policies from the Panchayat rule and it was important to make the policy inclusive.²³ I was informed that this issue had support from external political factors because it did not hold a majority in the drafting committee itself, and all of the participating experts warned against this age designation. Nonetheless, Udaya Raj Pandey refused to change the 16-40 age designation and it was approved by the ministerial council. The policy does state, however, that it can be altered according to future population changes.

Those who supported the 29-year age cap were thoroughly disappointed and seven of them did not endorse the final policy. One critical individual explained the motivation of the youth wings as such:

But the youth, who represented the political parties, they didn't fall in the 16-29 age category; they belonged to 35- 50/60 age demographic. It seems to me that they were drafting the policy for themselves. They tended to think...for their own sake rather than for the youth throughout the nation. For this reason, they took a very strong stance. The preliminary draft had the provision of 16-35...²⁴ We opined that it is just like feeding the food meant for an infant to a 22-year old person. We disagreed with it. That was the debate. I wrote a note of dissent on it. They even said that I must be punished for this.²⁵

Four of the dissenting participants stopped going to the remainder of the drafting meetings once they realised they could not change things. The other three continued to go but said they stopped participating.

There were three main concerns regarding the 16-40 age designation. The first was that the 16-40 range incorporates two generations wherein both parent and child are within the same demographic category. The Asia-Pacific Interagency Report argues that the age range could possibly incorporate up to three generations (2011). This undermines the very point

23 Interview taken with MYS representative on the NYP drafting committee May 2, 2013 in Kathmandu.

24 Translation from interview with drafting committee member on April 28, 2013 in Kathmandu, Nepal.

25 Interview with drafting committee member on April 28, 2013 in Kathmandu, Nepal.

of youth as a modern social category in which there is a discrete phase in life between childhood and adulthood that society should accommodate in specific ways (Bucholtz 2002). Furthermore, the resources allotted for youth programming will be spread thinner amongst a larger number of people and will inevitably dilute the impact of policies geared toward young people. And for official budgetary and policy purposes, it throws Nepal's statistics off from transnational donor norms. According to the introduction of the NYP, Nepal's youth (16-40) comprises 38.8 per cent of the population (2010:1). However, the percentage of Nepal's youth population according to the UN standard (15-24) is 19.97 per cent, and it is 27.82 per cent of the population according to the Nepal Planning Commission and ILO's youth target group (15-29) (Central Bureau of Statistics 2012: 65). Thus the NYP throws off the uniformity of prescribed universal norms and emphasises the socially constructed and relative underpinnings of the youth category (cf. Cole & Durham 2007). This reality strengthens the arguments of social scientists like myself (cf. 2009); however, it does not necessarily benefit the people it is intended to serve, young Nepalese citizens.

Conclusion: The Ministry of Youth and Sports tentative trajectory

The Ministry of Youth and Sports has been slowly instituting the NYP over the last three years. Its main role is to coordinate youth-focused programs across the ministries and different government sectors to ensure that they are abiding by the NYP directives and to curb redundancies. The MYS representative on the drafting committee informed me that even the National Planning Commission's Three-Year Plan was devised within the guidelines of the NYP.²⁶ In this regard, the MYS is similar to the Ministry of Women and Children, it is more of a lobbying and coordinating mechanism than a ministry with a discrete, centralised jurisdiction. The other main things the MYS is focusing on is devising a Youth Responsive Budget in cooperation with UNFPA and seventeen different ministries; establishing six model Youth Information Centres in Kathmandu and in the five development regions with Save the Children, the Youth NGO Federation (Nepal), and Yatra; and drafting an NYP Action Plan of Implementation with UNFPA and UNICEF.

There are competing agendas from the political, civil, and donor sectors putting pressure on the MYS to institute this political document as effective

26 Interview taken with MYS representative on the NYP drafting committee May 2, 2013 in Kathmandu.

policy. Thus the MYS has a number of challenges in instituting the NYP effectively. The first challenge is its own image. People described the ministry as in its infancy, or more derogatorily, as a backwater ministry.²⁷ The lack of enthusiasm is both internal and external. It is not considered a prestigious posting in Nepalese civil service. Furthermore, the MYS budget is less than 1% of the budget. The NYP states that 5% of the budget should be spent on youth programmes, however, it was not defined where that money should be allotted.

Donors have their reservations as well. All the donor representatives with whom I spoke are not fully convinced of the MYS's capacity, blaming it for the flaws of the NYP itself. They find it more effective to work through NGOs, INGOs, and other ministries to carry out their own youth-related agendas. For instance, The ILO has chosen to work the finance ministry to address youth employment policy because of the MYS's failure to mobilise the allotted budget for the National Plan of Action for Youth Employment in 2009.²⁸ The UNFPA and Save the Children provide technical support to the MYS, but they are simultaneously work with other ministries, INGOs, and NGOs to achieve their goal of youth representation, mobilisation, and protection—for the age group they consider youth.

The drafting committee participants from the political youth wings who endorsed the NYP have been disappointed as well. They felt ownership over the policy they endorsed, because it emphasised issues that mattered to them. Nonetheless, they feel the reigns have been taken away from them for two reasons; the first is the policy was not enacted into law by parliament, and the second is that the MYS has yet to establish a National Youth Council (NYC). The MYS claims that it needs an implementing process and monitoring mechanisms in place before it can form the NYC. I was informed that there is a process that needs to be followed according to ministerial protocol, which is occurring but takes time.²⁹ Nonetheless, those who endorsed the NYP perceive the lack of the NYC as lack of will to have active youth participants (particularly from the political sector) in the MYS implementing process. They mentioned the MYS moving forward on devising an action plan before forming the NYC as proof.³⁰

27 Interview taken on May 16, 2013 in Kathmandu.

28 Interview with ILO country director on May 26, 2013, Kathmandu

29 Interview taken with MYS representative on the NYP drafting committee May 2, 2013 in Kathmandu.

30 A former MYS bureaucrat foreboded that if the National Youth Council is not formed, then the NYP will be of no use along with time (*khera janchha*). Interview on June 15, 2013 in Kathmandu

The members from the NGO and INGO sector, on the other hand, did not feel any ownership in the drafting process because they felt political motivations took priority. Now some of them are coordinating with the MYS and donors to establish the institutionalising mechanisms. It is at this point in which they hope to free the NYP from its limitations as a political document.³¹ Since the bureaucratic wing of the MYS, the NGO and INGO sector, and the donor organisations were not thrilled with the political domination, they are currently not very keen on including the youth political sector into the institutionalising of the policy. What has happened thus far is that none of the sectors have unified and shared joint ownership in any one step of the NYP development, another example of the widening gulf between the social and political sectors.

The lack of ownership felt by all stakeholders could have a negative impact in the long run. As the institutionalisation of policies in the past has demonstrated, the degree to which the NYP will be robust depends a lot on political will since the government in power mainly appoints ministers. Thus, the point a CA member made is very apt, 'the NYP agenda is linked with political stability'.³² How it moves forward in its institutionalisation, and future mandate and survival of the ministry depends on the agenda of future government cabinets, which, if government turnover stays on its current pace, may change rapidly. The National Youth Policy may end up on the back shelf along with the 2002 National Youth Plan draft. It could become a non-event in the bureaucratic archive, becoming a testament to the tension between 'plausible plans and implausible worlds' (Stoler 2009:108).

31 Interview with NGO sector participant of the NYP drafting committee April 29, 2013, Kathmandu.

32 Interview with left-leaning CA member who participated on the NYP drafting committee, March 20, 2013 in Kathmandu.

Appendix One: NYP Drafting Committee Participant List

SN	Organisation Name	Position	Name/Surname	Committee Position
1	CPN-UMML	Coordinator	Udaya Raj Pandey	Coordinator
2	YCL	President	Ganesh Man Pun	Member
3	Nepal Tarun Dal	President	Mahendra Yadav	Member
4	Youth Federation Nepal	President	Ajamber Kangwang	Member
5	Madhesi Youth Forum	President	Mohamad Yousuf Safi	Member
6	Tarai Madhes Youth Front	President	Krishna Singh	Member
7	Youth Forum (Mahato Panel)	President	Deependra Kumar Chaudhary	Member
8	Progressive Youth Federation Nepal	President	Aalendra Sundar Nembang	Member
9	Nepal National Youth Federation	President	Purna Man Shrestha	Member
10	Akhil Nepal Janawadi Yuwa Sangh	President	Raju Khadka	Member
11	Nepal Revolutionary Youth Federation	President	Jagya Badhur Sahi	Member
12	Constituent Assembly Maoist	CA Member	Uma Bhujel	Member
13	Constituent Assembly (Nepal Janta Dal)	CA member	Gayatri Shah	Member
14	Constituent Assembly Maoist	CA member	Gopi Bahadur Achami	Member
15	ANNFSU	President	Ram Kumari Jhakri	Member
16	UNIFEM	Program Officer	Sharu Joshi Shrestha	Member
17	National Youth Organisation Nepal	President	Mani Pokharel	Member
18	AYON	President	Kabindra Burlakoti	Member

SN	Organisation Name	Position	Name/Surname	Committee Position
19	CPN-UML	Central committee member	Jayanti Rai	Member
20	Youth Federation Nepal	President	Garima Shah	Member
21	National Planning Commission	Delegates		Member
22	Ministry of Youth and Sport	Delegates	Om Kumar Shrestha	Member
23		Expert	Lekhnath Poudel	Invited Member

References

- Asia-Pacific Interagency Group on Youth. 2011. *Investing in Youth Policy*. New York: UNICEF.
- Baker, R, and R. Hinton. 2001. 'Approaches to Children's Work and Rights in Nepal'. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 575: 176-193.
- Beck, U. 1992. *Risk Society*. London: Sage.
- Bucholtz, M. 2002. 'Youth and Cultural Practice'. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 31: 525-552.
- Carney, S., & Bista, M. B. 2009. 'Community Schooling in Nepal: A Genealogy of Education Reform since 1990'. *Comparative Education Review* 53(2): 63-88.
- Cole, J. and D. Durham, (eds.). 2007. *Generations and Globalization: Youth, Age, and Family in the New World Economy*. Bloomington Indiana: Indiana University Press.
- Foucault, M. 1972 [1969]. *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse of Language*. trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Furlong, A. & F. Cartmel (eds.). 2007. *Young People and Social Change: New Perspectives*, 2nd ed. Maidenhead: Open University Press.
- HMG, High Level Commission Report. Bhadra 2053 (1996). *Yuba Kriyaakalaaph Sambandhi*. Internal Report commissioned by the Ministry of Youth, Culture & Sports: Kathmandu
- Gale, Trevor. 2001. 'Critical Policy Sociology: Historiography, Archaeology, and Genealogy as Methods of Policy Analysis'. *Journal of Education Policy* 16 (5): 379-93.
- Government of Nepal, Central Bureau of Statistics. 2012. *National Population and Housing Census*. Kathmandu: National Planning Commission Secretariat.
- Government of Nepal, Ministry of Youth and Sports. 2010. *National Youth Policy*. Kathmandu: Ministry of Youth and Sports.
- Messerschmidt, D, G. Yadama and B. Silwal. 2007. 'History and Significance of National Development Service (NDS): Creating a 'Civil Space' and Commitment to Service in Nepal during the 1970s'. *Occasional Papers in Sociology and Anthropology* 10: 174-207.
- National Planning Commission. 2007. *Three-Year Interim Plan*. Kathmandu: Government of Nepal.
- 1998. *Ninth Plan 1998-2002*. Kathmandu: His Majesty's Government of Nepal.
- Snellinger, A. n.d. The production of possibility through an impossible ideal: Consensus as a political value on Nepal's Constituent Assembly
- 2010. 'Transfiguration of the Political: Nepali Student Politics and the Politics of Acculturation' PhD Dissertation. New York: Cornell University.

- 2009. "Yuba, Hamro Pustal': Youth and Generational Politics in Nepali Political Culture'. *Studies in Nepali History and Society* 14(1): 39-66.
- 2005. 'A Crisis in Nepali Student Politics?: Analyzing the Gap between Politically Active and Non-Active Students.' *Peace and Democracy in South Asia Journal* 2 (Fall): 14-30.
- Stoler, A. 2009. *Along the Archival Grain*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Tarai Madhes Front; Nepal Tarun Dal; Progressive Youth Federation, Nepal; Madhes Youth Forum, Nepal; Madhesi Youth Forum, Nepal (Democratic), Sadbhawana Youth Front; Youth Federation, Nepal; and Young Communist League, Nepal. 2069 (2012). *Recommendations for the NYP*. Lead International: Kathmandu, Nepal.
- 2066 (2008). *Raastriya Yubaa Niti Sujhaab Prativedan (Trans. The NYP Recommendation Report)*. Lead International: Kathmandu, Nepal.
- United Nations. 2010. *World Programme of Action for Youth Report*. New York: United Nations
- Vaidya, T.R. 1992. 'A case study on 'National Development Service' Nepal'. *Nepal: A Study of Socio-Economic and Political Changes*, pp: 128-148. New Delhi: Anmol Publishers.

Politics of Nature Conservation and Space National Park, River, and Sonaha Ethnic Minorities¹

SUDEEP JANA THING

Introduction

In the global conservation domain, Nepal is portrayed as a country with progressive conservation policies and practices. Since the mid-1990s, the country's conservation thinking and policy paradigms have shifted away from its earlier protectionist and fortress conservation focus towards community-based and people-oriented conservation ecosystems and landscapes. However, the lives of Sonaha ethnic minorities, with their long-standing occupancy and relationships with the river and riparian areas in the lower Karnali River delta, and traditionally engaged in artisanal fishing and panning of gold dust, are confronted with a progressively exclusionary regime of the national park and participatory conservation.

In this paper, I argue the case of violence against the Sonaha in the context of the imposition and exclusionary management of Bardia National Park (BNP), the largest lowland protected area of Nepal. Violence against the Sonaha continues despite participatory conservation reforms and interventions in the Buffer Zone – peripheral villages of the Park. Therefore, I argue the crisis of participatory reform and challenge the rhetoric of participatory conservation and development that legitimises top-down, techno-bureaucratic, military-centric, nature-focussed, globally-oriented conservation regime, which all constitute conservation violence, and which further marginalises the disadvantaged Sonaha, their world view and practices. I also demonstrate exercises of subtle and

1 A revised version of this article has been published as Thing, S.J., R. Jones & C. Birdsall-Jones, 'The Politics of Conservation: Sonaha, Riverscape in the Bardia National Park and Buffer Zone, Nepal', *Conservation & Society*, 15:3, 292-303, 2017.

indirect forms of power through hegemonic discourses and practices of conservation.

Based on the Sonaha's contestations with the Park regime and authorities, I also maintain that the conflicts and debates around protected areas and indigenous peoples can also be approached and engaged with the framework of the social theory of *space*, hence, as politics of space, thereby addresses the complexities of shared human-environment relations and of democratising conservation practices. I problematise and examine the case of the Sonaha-the Park conflict through the social theory of *space* and its politics under a framework of political ecology. At a time when the country is moving through the agenda of inclusive transformation, the Sonaha's experiences with the conservation regime offers important insights into the politics of inclusion and participatory governance of natural resources.

This paper draws empirical information generated during my ethnographic fieldwork in Nepal (2011-2013) as a part of my PhD research, mainly in the Sonaha villages located in the river delta across the Park (See Figures 1 and 2). Primary information was collected through multiple methods and techniques, such as structured and unstructured in-depth interviews, conversations with the Sonaha in the delta, as well as non-Sonaha locals, and local actors in the Park buffer zone. I also interviewed government officials at the Park administration; present and former members of the national park and forest bureaucracy, relevant individuals from conservation organisations, civil society organisations, and NGO activists. Oral history, memory mapping of elders and adults, as well as participatory techniques were used to trace mobility and the ancestral territory of the Sonaha. Participant observation was adopted to experience the Sonaha's everyday lives and resistance to the Park regime. This paper is also informed by my own engagements and encounters in the field of people and protected areas at the grassroots, national, and international forums.

Political ecology of conservation space

Political ecology of nature conservation provides a framework for this paper. Early works in the field of political ecology constitutes the relationships between social, political, and environmental processes using a framework of structural relations of power and domination over the environmental resources (Scoones 1999). Some of the important topics of concern to political ecology are the nexus between environmental change, degradation, and people's marginalisation, poverty; environmental conservation-related conflicts, struggles, over use, access and control over

natural resources among social groups and actors; environmental identity and social movements (Robbins 2004). It broadly defines relations of power and differences in interactions among human groups and biophysical environments (Gezon and Paulson 2005).

Scholars have noted a discursive turn in the political ecology since the 1990s and increased attention to post-structural concerns on discourse, power, and knowledge (Escobar 1996; Bryant 2000; Peet and Watts 2003). The diverse terrain of political ecology of conservation in particular involves the examination of state control and exercise of power upon the communities, colonial and post-colonial contexts of protected areas, and the role of powerful conservation NGOs. In addition, the dominant influence of conservation science in the understanding of nature, the increasing debates on socio-cultural impacts of conservation on social groups, policy reforms, and neoliberal thinking in conservation are some of the issues covered by this field today (Adams and Hutton 2007; Brockington, Duffy, and Igoe 2008). This field considers both sound environmental management (conservation) and 'empowerment of disadvantaged social groups' (Zimmerer 2000, 357).

Globally, the experiences of protected areas as a geographical strategy of nature or biodiversity conservation have been mixed. There are evidences of the benefits and diverse values of protected areas (Secretariat of the CBD 2008). However, strict and exclusionary paradigms and practices of protected areas have also come under staunch criticisms due to their impacts, costs, and injustices on local inhabitants and indigenous communities (e.g. Ghimire and Pimbert 1997; Brechin et al. 2003; West, Igoe, and Brockington 2006). Relationships between indigenous peoples, the state, and big conservation groups have been strained at times (Dowie 2009; Chapin 2004). Scholarly attention has been drawn to local people's resistance to protected areas (Norgrove and Hulme 2006; Holmes 2007; Neumann 1992). However, in recent times, thinking in conservation and protected areas have undergone major shifts with increasing discussions around human rights, social justice, equity, culture, and democratic governance (e.g. Borrini-Feyerabend, Kothari, and Oviedo 2004; Campese et al. 2007; Brosius 2004).

Power, discourse, and space

This paper attempts to contribute to the theoretical linkages between power, discourse, and space by examining a case of the Sonaha and the BNP. Politics or the analysis of power or attention to relations of power and difference among social groups are central to political ecology (Wilshusen 2003; Gezon and Paulson 2005). Hence, power relationships are imperative

to the political ecology of conservation as dealt with by this paper. I pay particular attention to material and structural dimensions of conservation politics, conflicts and struggles, and their implicit symbolic and discursive aspects (Nygren 2004; Escobar 1996).

In Foucault's (1982, 790) view, power relationships have to be sought not on the domain of violence, struggle, or consent but on the mode of action of *government*, and the way 'conduct of individuals or of groups' are directed and governed. Scholars have examined 'governmentality' in conservation (Fletcher 2010; Robbins 2004; Campbell 2007). Equally important, in the operation of power is Foucault's (1982) idea of 'subjectivity', how human beings are made subjects, both self-subjection and subjected to someone else. I compliment this with Gramsci's (1971) notion of 'hegemony', that is also understood as ideological and symbolic domination (Bates 1975), hence power as subtle, indirect and invisible, a cultural process, as opposed to force and coercion. Both these concepts resonate with a third dimension and a radical conception of power (Lukes 2005), in addition to power relationships; hence the discourse-power nexus is also integral to Foucault's work. Discourse is constitutive of power and knowledge, and people and institutions are also implicated in discourse (Hajer 1995). I understand discourse as: 'a specific ensemble of ideas, concepts, and categorisations that are produced, reproduced, and transformed in a particular set of practices and through which meaning is given to physical and social realities' (Hajer 1995, 44). In this paper, particular attention is also given to the power and hegemony of discourse; thereby, the hegemonic discourse of nature conservation as they function and mediate the management of the national park and its buffer zone, and the conservation of the riverine landscape in this study.

Contestations and politics of space are crucial to my analysis. I draw from Lefebvre's (1991) social theory of *space* that provides a radical understanding of *space* as perceived conceived and lived, hence appreciating the interrelated dimensions of physical/material, conceptual, and symbolic spaces hitherto understood as separate domains (Lefebvre 1991). Space is conceptualised as *produced* through three inter-related moments and processes that are spatial practice (perceived), representations of space (conceived) and representational spaces (lived) (ibid. 1991). Space is produced and reproduced by actions, ideas, and imageries (West 2005). Likewise, Massey's (2005) proposition also provides an alternative perspective to *space* as created out of social relations, always in a process and being made, contested, a sphere of multiplicity and heterogeneity. Such re-conceptualisations of *space* also provide a basis in my inquiry to problematise the riverine landscape, and examine politics of space in the context of the Sonaha-the

Park contestation. This contested space is politicised, hegemonised, and reproduced by dominant discourses and practices of conservation.

Background

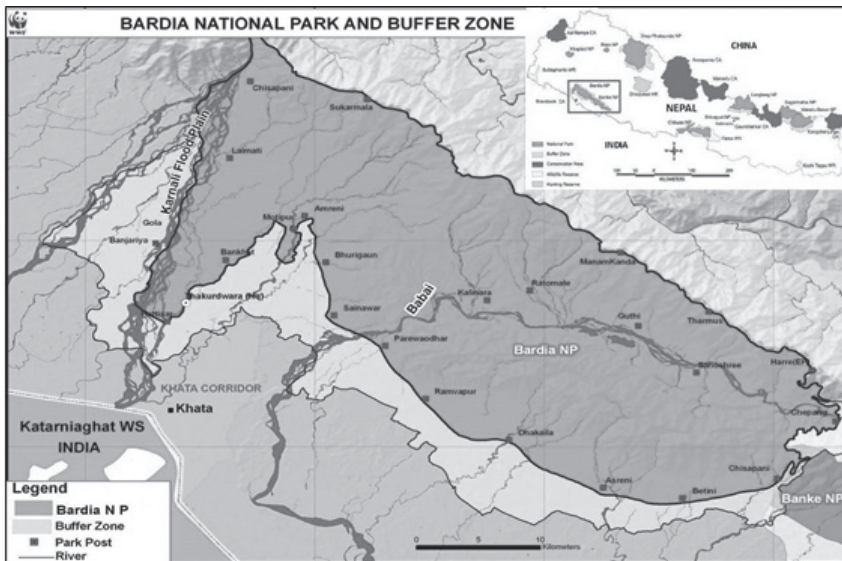
In this section I provide a background, starting with the historical context of the area and the national park examined in the study. The region of Bardia was under British India control from 1816–1861, and it was a popular hunting and grazing ground (Conway, Bhattarai, and Shrestha 2000). Low-lying frontiers that were under the control of Muslim landlords from the immediate region of Awadh (Oudh) in India were later handed over to the Nepali rulers. Jung Bahadur Rana, who was the de-facto ruler of Nepal during Shah Monarch's reign, declared the region as a part of new dominion (*Naya Muluk*). He distributed lands to his relatives and supporters that intensified colonisation and subordination of the Tharu natives that had begun from the Gorkhali conquest in the late 18th century (Lal 2013). The forest in Bardia was under a *Birta*, privileged tenure, of Jung. It was a hunting ground for the Rana ruling elites (Kollmair, Muller-Boker, and Soliva 2003). Given the stake of the rulers on the wildlife and forests, they also received some form of protection (Blower 1973).

The region also has a history of commercial exploitation and deforestation to supply timber for construction of railways sleepers for British India (Lal 2013). Although commercial forestry in the 1920s led to serious destruction of forests (Bolton 1976), the forests were claimed to have recovered over time (Upreti 1994). Although migrant settlers in the second half of the 19th century were encouraged to settle in the Tarai, until the malaria eradication programme in the 1950s, the region was still avoided for settlement by hill populations. Migration into Bardia accelerated after the 1960s which led to rapid conversion of forests into settlements and agricultural lands (Conway, Bhattarai, and Shrestha 2000). This ecological context and narrative facilitated state control and efforts on wildlife protection, and the eventual imposition of the Park on the local population.

The current area under state protection and the wilderness of the Park has a long history of original inhabitants, such as the Tharu and the Sonaha, and later other migrant settlers interacting and transforming the landscapes, and exploitation of the forest resources by the ruling elites. King Mahendra hunted in Bardia in the early sixties (Bhatt 2003), and later supported the foundation of the state conservation movement in the 1960s. While forests were nationalised in the country in the 1950s, in Bardia, the state-bureaucratic control in the 1960s was also executed in the form of setting aside forested areas under the wildlife management division of the

government between Babai and Thakurdwara (Upreti 1994) (See Figure 1). In 1969, the Park area was then enclosed as an exclusive hunting reserve of the monarchy, among several other elites in the country then armed forest guards were deployed which denied access to the locals. Later, after it was declared as an official wildlife reserve, grazing and forest access by locals were gradually controlled by military deployment from the mid-1970s (Bolton 1976). This institutionalised the strict state bureaucracy-managed protected area, backed by national legislation (see Appendix A). During its creation and later expansion of its boundaries, local inhabitants were displaced in the late 1960s, 1970s and the 1980s (also see Appendix B)².

Figure 1: Modified Map of Bardia National Park (NP) and Buffer Zone.³



Discursive creation of the park

The perceptions of foreign naturalists and experts based on their field experiences in the 1960s first evoked the idea of a modern protected area in the scenic and wildlife-rich landscape of the Karnali River and forested habitats in Bardia, around the western section of the Park and the Chisapani Gorge (Gee 1963) (see Figure 1). Naturalist Gee (1963) first envisaged and proposed a protected zone in that area. During this time, the discourse of national wildlife protection was triggered by narratives of ecological

² Courtesy: WWF Nepal, the map of Nepal was modified from Stevens (2013).

³ The river delta surrounded by two branches of the Karnali River, also marked as Karnali Flood Plains, is located to the west of the national park.

crises in the Tarai. For instance, it was the crisis of the endangered one-horned rhinoceros in the face of in-migration and forest destruction in the 1960s that instigated the formation of the first national park in the country, located in Chitwan. The preservation ethic and wildlife-related interests of the powerful monarchy and royal family, together with techno-scientific discourse on wildlife conservation, international discourse, aid, crucially shaped the state's imposition of government-managed protected areas in the 1970s. The discourse of tiger conservation in particular was instrumental in the inception of the modern protected area in Bardia (Bolton 1976; Blower 1973).

Policy evolution of protected areas in Nepal

After nearly two decades of exclusionary, protectionist, and top-down management of protected areas by the state since the 1970s, resulting in conflicts and tension with the local populations, and the global thrust towards participatory development, the need of participatory regimes were articulated in major state policy documents on environment, forestry and conservation in the 1980s and early 1990s. Provisions of the participatory managements of Buffer Zones (BZs) – peripheral areas or enclaves in the national park and wildlife reserves, and conservation areas – a less strict category of protected areas, was incorporated into the law (see Appendix A). These were landmark shifts in conservation policy designed to embrace participatory conservation in the context of protected area management in Nepal. Several BZs have been declared since the mid-1990s.

In the Park under study, the BZ was declared and demarcated in 1997 (recent extension to the north in 2010, see Figure 1). The discourses of participatory conservation and the national park also permeated in the peripheral villages of the Park through practices and local institutions of managing the BZ. Beside the Park administration, various integrated conservation and development projects since the late 1990s were instrumental in promoting the mainstream discourse and practices of conservation in the BZ, including the river delta in the study (see Appendix B).

The Sonaha's customary riverine territory and ways of life

The lower Karnali River delta is surrounded by the Karnali River and its tributary known as the Geruwa River that forms a western boundary of the Park today. A significant portion of the delta falls in the western buffer zone of the Park (see Figure 1). The Sonaha consider themselves as a distinct ethnic group indigenous to the delta. Recently, they have been asserting themselves as *Adivasi Janajati*, a term that denotes indigenous peoples of Nepal, in their

ongoing struggle for an official recognition as *Janajati* by the government. Oral accounts of the Sonaha elders suggest their origin in the delta traces as far as the pre-unification period of modern Nepal in the 18th century. The Sonaha elders often maintain a much older history and interaction of the Sonaha with the river and riparian areas in the delta than the arrival of the *Dangaura* Tharu, a sub-group of Tharu originally from the Dang valley, who constitute the majority of the population in the delta (Chetri 2005).

Historically, the Sonaha led a semi-nomadic life which involved artisanal fishing and mining of gold dust in rivers in and around the delta, and foraging and accessing forest resources rather than a settled agrarian way of life. Their mobility and customary (temporary) shelters, called *dera* or *basahi*, were concentrated on the river islands and river banks in and around the delta. The Sonaha consider this as their ancestral riverine territory (see Figure 2). The Sonaha's lives in the rivers also constitute their socio-cultural and spatial practices beside livelihoods.

The population of Sonaha is often uncounted by the national census. Although the latest census mentions 579 people with the Sonaha mother tongue (CBS 2011), their total population (1249), generated during the study, is still understated (see Appendix C). The Sonaha reside in different locations in the delta (inside and outside the Park buffer zone) as well as outside Bardia (see Figure 1, Appendix C).

Going to the river is our occupation! Fishing and gold panning! We Sonaha ethnic group, can't afford formal education [for our children]. We take all our girls and boys to wash gold. Gold washing is our ancestral occupation. By carrying our belongings, carrying our sons and daughters, we go to the river... ..Sonaha ethnic group, gold and fish are our farming.⁴

The English translation of the song above, by a Sonaha woman suggests meanings attached by the Sonaha to their customary livelihoods. The study also suggests that customary occupations contribute significantly to the livelihoods of the Sonaha in the delta as a significant majority of them are landless or have minimal landholdings. However, their customary occupations and ways of life have been changing as they are diversifying livelihood options by including peasantry and seasonal daily wage labour. There has been an increasing trend of labour migration to the cities within the country, to neighbouring India, and the Middle East. While artisanal

4 Interview, March 13, 2012

Figure 2: Sketch Map (unscaled) of the River Delta, Customary Riverine Territory of the Sonaha. Only hamlets of the Sonaha are marked.

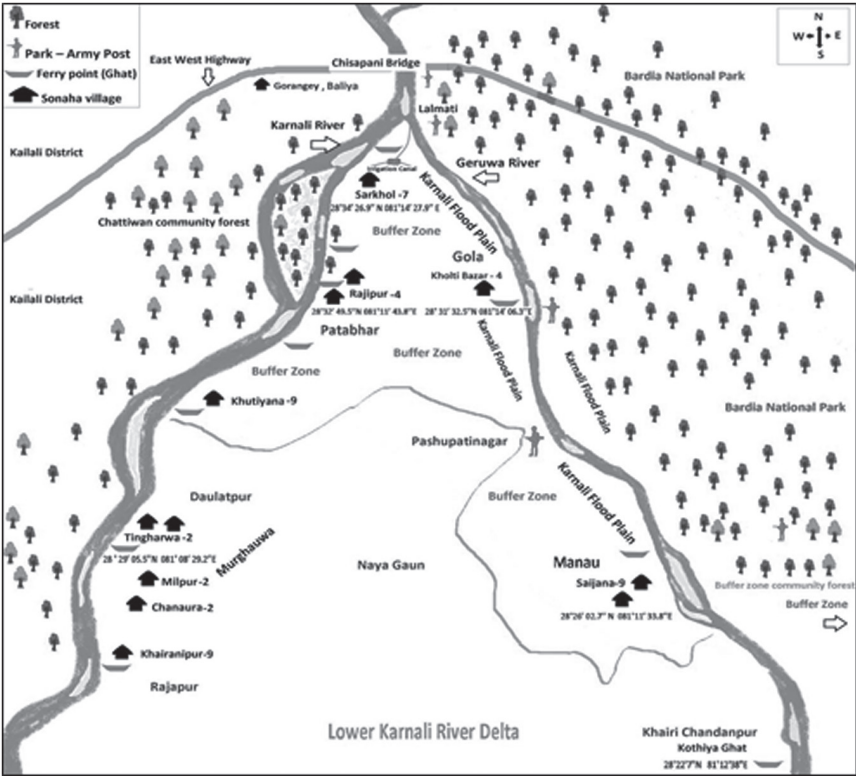


Figure credit: Author and the Sonaha from Rajpur.

gold panning technologies are still customary, the Sonaha fishing practices have also undergone changes from the use of cast nets to plastic strings gill nets, but they still rely on traditional wooden canoes (see Photo 1).

A unique practice of managing and governing the gold panning as common property, known as *Kafthans*, existed. Although the practice gradually weakened in the second half of the 20th century, the Sonahas still recall this being practiced until about two decades ago. The sacred gold panning plots in the river banks were equally allocated to each household willing to pan gold dust. This was regulated by the customary authority of a key person in each Sonaha lineage group, with the possession of a collective sacred shrine of the lineage, and who also performed rituals at *Kafthans*. The Sonaha elders still recall how the riparian areas along the two rivers were historically allocated among various key persons across several lineage groups. The customary practices associated with *Kafthans* were fostered based on spiritual, economic, and socio-cultural relations among the Sonaha.

Sonaha's Lived Experiences and Construct of the Riverine Space

The river and riparian areas in and around the delta (including those enclosed by the Park) have deeper meanings with historical, cultural, and emotional connections and relationships to the Sonaha (e.g., see Photo 1). These areas are considered by the Sonaha to constitute their ancestral riverine territory. They shape their collective identity and culture, and are rich in meanings and memories associated with ancestral occupations and semi-mobile ways of life. Although at present the Sonaha live sedentary lives, a significant population of the Sonaha in the delta still live a semi-mobile life, taking refuge on the *dera* (islands) in the rivers away from the village settlements, sometimes for up to one month. '*Tipariya ma basahi, dyara*' (sheltering on river islands) is a common expression among the Sonaha, which resonates with their customary way of life, although not as common as it was in the time of their ancestors (see Photo 1).

Jana (2009) argues that the forests are home for the *Raute* nomadic group. For the Sonaha, the rivers and riparian areas are places where they interact and take temporary refuge. Historically they have been places of intergenerational learning, acquiring skills, and gaining resilience to the riverine way of life, and where Sonaha kinship and social relations are fostered. 'For us, the river islands are also our homes and villages' was commonly expressed by the Sonaha during my fieldwork. Customary *Kafthans* are also remembered by referring them as *Gaun* (village), but with a radically different connotation of a *village* in popular Nepali vernacular. Although the practices have largely disappeared as they lost control over their territory including the Park policy, Sonaha elders still demonstrate emotional connections to those sites. The Sonaha adults, during my fieldwork, could still recollect childhood memories of these practices. Hence, this space is also what Gow (1995) refers to as a 'lived space' and not only a natural physical landscape.

The riverscape in the delta, where 'spatial practices' of the Sonaha thrive, also constitute their knowledge, conceptions and mental constructs, thus the Sonaha's 'representations of the space'. Its meaning is linked with a *lived* symbolic place in which their collective identities, culture, emotions, and aspirations are embedded. Therefore, the Sonaha's cultural constructions, worldviews, and embodied meanings, lived experiences and everyday practices are also embedded in this riverscape. I conceptualise the Sonaha riverscape as a dynamic space, that is at once perceived, conceived, and lived (Lefebvre 1991). This can also be reconceptualised as a multidimensional bio-cultural space. However, the Sonaha's meanings and close associations with the riverscape have been unappreciated and altered by the Park regime.



Photo 1: Young Sonaha Fishers Returning to the Temporary Shelter at the Tip of the Delta across the Park, after early Morning Fishing.



Photo 2: Sonaha Women from Rajipur Village Panning for Gold in the Delta of the Karnali.

The violence of nature conservation

Oral accounts and recollection of memories by the Sonaha elders suggest that the creation of the Park, which some of them still refer to as *Arackhya* (a wildlife reserve), is an imposition of *Kanun* (law) enforced by the armed military and guards. Especially since the 1970s, their free mobility in the rivers around the Park became increasingly constrained as one elder

lamented during the interview: '*Laddi ta Sonaha ko raj hunthiyo*' (Sonaha had freedom over the rivers).

The Sonaha often recall harassment and punishment from the military and the Park authorities, and extreme hardship was experienced as their customary occupations were restricted by the Park authorities as a breach of the Park regulations. Several Sonaha families were also pushed into the exploitative *Kamaiya* (bonded labour) system. For instance, in the village of Rajipur and Saijana, hardship from the Park restrictions and actions of the authorities triggered out-migration of the Sonaha to India. The Park regime and policy usurped their customary territory, curtailed their access and mobility in the rivers, and more importantly, dismantled and altered their ties with the land, waters, and socio-cultural practices including *Kafthans* without offering socially just alternatives. These impacts can be argued as a violence of conservation perpetrated against the marginalised Sonaha by the state (Peluso 1993; Neumann 2001).

During my fieldwork, the Sonaha frequently articulated their resentments against the Park management authorities. In recent years, the Park administration and its conservation partners have mobilised the local youth around the Park to curb wildlife poaching and illegal logging. The Sonaha's relationships with the cadres of anti-poaching youth groups in the Park buffer zone have been tense. The Sonaha resent the raids conducted by the youth cadres in addition to the Park patrol of their river shelters, or their attempts to discourage them from gold panning in the rivers around the Park. The youth cadres, however, saw themselves as bastions of conservation. This indicates that the coercive conservation measures of the state against the Sonaha have been increasingly exercised by local actors under the rubric of a community-based anti-poaching campaign.

Despite the efforts of participatory conservation and development in the Park buffer zone, tensions with the Park authorities have continued. Frequent encounters of the Sonaha with the Park guards have declined in recent years as a larger river channel of the Karnali flows outside the Park jurisdiction. However, they are likely to intensify again if the Geruwa River along the Park holds its course and the Karnali River runs low again (as had happened in the past) and the Sonaha resume their customary occupations on the Geruwa.

Interrogating conservation discourse and practices

In addition to the coercive imposition of the national park regime and its subsequent discourse on the Sonaha, their everyday lives have been increasingly influenced and impacted by the dominant



Photo credit: Author

Photo 3: Sonaha women observing a collective ritual at the edge of the river Karnali.

conservation discourse. The Sonaha in the delta began to encounter the discourse and practice of '*Madhyawarti*' (buffer zone) since the late 1990s. This is mainly due to the rise of Integrated Conservation and Development Projects (ICDPs) for the state and its conservation partners to engage with the buffer zone locals. Support to mobilise local populations for conservation and community developments, building their capacities and institutional support for local livelihoods, management of community forests, setting-up electric fences to address depredation and encroachment by wildlife, conservation awareness, and education have been some of the key interventions of the state and its conservation partners through ICDPs in the buffer zone.

The three-tiered institutions of buffer zone residents for the management of buffer zones (user group, user committee and an apex council) are important actors in promoting and intensifying a mainstream discourse of '*Samrakchyan*' (conservation) at the grassroots level. During my fieldwork, I noticed that these institutions and ICDPs were significant in reinforcing the mainstream discourse of '*Nikunja*' (national park). In the context of the Sonaha and the Park, this mainstream hegemonic discourse entails:

- Preservation of the Park (including the riverscape in and around the delta) wilderness without the existence and interaction of the Sonaha, hence their separation from the wilderness.
- Reduction of their relationship and engagement with the riverscape

as purely economic, and their practices being incompatible to nature conservation, de-legitimising their customary and cultural practices.

- Obscurement of their meanings and ties with the land, water and forests in the delta, marginalisation of Sonaha worldviews and counter discourses.

The Sonaha were invisible in the Park management plans and various ecological and conservation studies related to the Park until 2006. They were officially mentioned for the first time in the Park management plan, 2007-2011 (DNPWC/MoFSC 2007). The Sonaha gradually gained visibility through the activities of one such ICDP, known as the Western Tarai Landscape Project (WTLCF), 2005-2012, a government-executed project funded by international donors, which began engaging with the Sonaha in the Park buffer zone from 2007 onwards. To leverage the benefits from the project, such as nominal saving and credit funds, the Sonaha have also appropriated the mainstream conservation discourse like fellow buffer zone residents, by associating with the activities of the Project. For instance, in the two VDCs in the buffer zone, Patabhar and Manau, the resident Sonaha were organised into two exclusive Sonaha community-based organisations known as *Sonaha Samrakchyan Tatha Bikas Upasamati (SSBU)*, Sonaha Conservation and Development Sub-Committee, in 2007 with the support of the Park administration and the Project.

Therefore, the Sonaha are not only subjected to the strict national park regime, but they have also been subjected to the mainstream discourse and practices under the rubric of participatory conservation (e.g., buffer zone). The resident Sonaha in the buffer zone are eligible to receive benefits of ICDPs-supported livelihood activities, as well as the available Park revenues, a portion of which is invested back into local communities via local people's institutions in the buffer zone. First, as a resident, legitimate members and beneficiaries of buffer zone user groups and community forests, second, as members of SSBU within the formal structure of buffer zone management, the Sonaha have been transformed into conservation subjects and not necessarily only as victims of the national park. The governmentality of conservation (the Park) is enacted not only through coercive measures, but also through the conservation subjectivity of the Sonaha, who as conservation subjects are integrated into formal structures and institutions in the buffer zone under the direction and surveillance of the Park administration. Furthermore, this governmentality also operates through the intensification and adoption of the hegemonic national park discourse of the national park into their everyday lives.

While the Park restrictions on the Sonaha's customary ways of life are still intact, the WTLCP, for instance, provided supports for alternative livelihoods of the Sonaha, such as skills development training, seed funds to the SSBU, and some community development work in the Sonaha villages. During the fieldwork, the Sonaha, despite leveraging project support, expressed their grievances with the project for ignoring their customary occupations. The project support was perceived as inadequate to compensate the loss of customary livelihoods as a result of Park policy. These, including the Sonaha's discontent with the Park regime, in fact contradict the claims of the project and its donors, of transforming the lives of the Sonaha or improving the Sonaha's relationship with the Park authorities (UNDP Nepal 2008; WTLCP 2008). In my 2011 observation of the Sonaha encountering UNDP's project monitoring team, and inquiring into the benefits of the Park and the project for the Sonaha, the Sonaha at Rajipur village asserted their plight and continued struggles for survival.

The hegemonic discourse of conservation, as ingrained in the project, and current practices of the Park and its buffer zone management, reinforces Sonaha alienation from their customary livelihoods, rivers and ancestral territory. This discourse legitimises the conservation violence perpetrated against the Sonaha. As hegemonic conservation discourse of the Park is sustained and entrenched, the Sonaha's worldview, practices, and their relationships with the riverscape and embedded meanings are also marginalised. The modern concept of 'buffer zone' is incompatible with Sonaha worldviews and the riverine way of life. The river stretch (Karnali-Geruwa), that also marks the Park boundary and segregates the buffer zone (society) from the Park (nature) is problematic to the Sonaha way of life that is embedded in the riverscape as a nature-culture hybrid.

The Sonaha resistance to the park regime

...we go to the national park to fish...When Sonaha are distressed! YCL [anti-poaching youth cadres] are cheerful! We go to the national park to wash gold... ..Amidst fights against the park warden and threats of the Army! Still deprived of licenses [fishing & gold panning]⁵.

The above song by a Sonaha woman strongly articulates the Sonaha's everyday struggles. The Sonaha have been resisting the national park regime since the creation of the Park through silent, evasive, cautious acts (Scott 1985) by

5 Interview, April the 1st, 2011

transgressing the Park rules, continuing their customary occupations, and by maintaining mobility on the rivers. Despite the frequent Park patrol and vigilance, they fished and panned gold at night in the Park Rivers by dwelling on temporary shelters outside the Park boundary. Sonaha resentment against the Park officials and the armed guards was often expressed during closed conversations. On several occasions, I observed Sonaha men fishing at night from canoes, and the Sonaha women fishing with on foot nets during the day in the Park Rivers. However, except some odd encounters, experiences of directly confronting the Park authorities are rather rare.

Supported by rights-based NGOs and activists, the Sonaha resistance has been exhibited in the form of collective non-violent protests and action against the Park. Their people's organisation, known as *Nepal Sonaha Sangh* (NSS) emerged in the course of their collective movement (2006-2011) to demand collective rights and recognition of ethnic identity. The NSS has been allying with NGOs and other buffer zone residents that resent the protected area policies in Nepal (Rai 2011; Jana 2008). In 2008 (February 2), the Sonaha negotiated a nine-month fishing concessions from the Park administration to fish the Geruwa River at the Park boundary, but, Sonaha from other villages in the delta outside the Park buffer zone were excluded. The concession was; however, short-lived, as in a few months (May 10) the Park administration unilaterally halted issuance and further renewal of fishing licenses, when three Sonaha youth from Manau, one of the buffer-zone villages, were held by the Park authorities along with other locals for the alleged sale of a rhino horn.

Counter discourse to the park regime

Sonaha collective resistance to the national park regime articulate and are also sites of counter discourses. Sonaha leaders and activists refer to their ongoing struggle as *andolan* (movement) and perceive their suffering due to the Park regime as *adhikhar hanan* (violation of rights). The Sonaha in the course of NGOs-backed organised action, mainly since 2006, have also appropriated counter discourses of rights and *Janajati* (ethnic) identity to advance their cause. Their collective struggles that were initially triggered by the hardship due to the Park regime, have also become avenues to assert their identity as marginalised or endangered *Janajati*. In my view, the Sonaha silent resistance and NGO-supported *andolan* against the Park regime, although waning since 2012, symbolises the crisis of both a strict paradigm of nature conservation and participatory reform in the buffer zone. The Sonaha politics and struggles constitute material, discursive, as well as symbolic dimensions, and entail politics of *space*.

Reframing park-people contestations and conservation politics

The contestations between the Sonaha and the national park, in the context of the Karnali-Geruwa riverscape (river and riparian landscape) also inform the problematic of *space*, its conceptualisation and embedded politics. The riverscape constitutes the ancestral territory of the Sonaha, a portion of which was usurped by the Park and its buffer zone. The Sonaha have lost control and access to the riverscape, and although integral to their livelihood struggles, the dimension of resource-use conflict alone is not a sufficient frame of analysis. Approaching this riverscape from the social theory of reconceptualised *space*, as discussed earlier, helps us to grapple with protected areas and indigenous people's contestations; politics, its cultural complexities and nuances; and thus generates critical insights towards democratic and inclusive nature conservation.

This bio-diverse riverscape, for instance the Karnali-Geruwa river stretch and the riparian areas in and around the Park (western section, see Figure 1 and 2), is not the only the physical location of Sonaha-Park contestations. In the course of the creation of the Park (discussed earlier) by the state's actions, conservation discourse, and its subsequent management practices, the use and meanings of the riverscape have also been reconstructed. This riverscape has been reproduced by powerful state and non-state actors, dominant discourses, and representations that legitimise, on the one hand, state control over this space as a conservation territory, and on the other hand, the marginalisation of the Sonaha. The riverscape has been reconstructed as an ecologically significant natural ecosystem for conservation as the 'Karnali Flood Plain' or even a 'biodiversity hotspot' as well as an ecotourism destination. It has also been portrayed as an important habitat of endangered mega-fauna such as one-horned rhinoceroses, tigers, and other aquatic species including Gharial crocodiles and river dolphins (DNPWC/MoFSC 2001, 2007). These dominant perceptions and values of the riverscape in relation to the Park were also articulated by the Park officials, conservation practitioners, and experts during my interviews.

The conservationist representations and constructions of the riverscape by conservation actors have transformed the understanding and meaning of this space. They ignore Sonaha history and interaction; reinforce the non-presence of the Sonaha and their dispossession of their ancestral territory. These powerful constructs, representations, and knowledge as they reproduce and reconstruct the riverscape also entrench the hegemonic mainstream conservation discourse (see section 6), that of the Park and riverine wilderness without the Sonaha. The dominant 'representations of

the space' and discourse they constitute is the prevailing space of the park planners, the powerful state and non-state conservation actors.

The worldviews and meanings of the Sonaha, which is historically embedded and engaged with their lived experiences in this very riverscape, the Sonaha's embodied sense of place, emotions, memories, aspirations, hence 'representational space', are marginalised and dominated. Their 'spatial practices' and actions (customary way of life) are criminalised and the Sonaha as producers of the riverscape are de-legitimised. Their lives and practices are governed by coercive conservation measures of the state, often backed by hegemonic mainstream discourses. The Sonaha's resistance and counter discourse emanating from this, which is expressed overtly through their actions as well as embodied and concealed with their lived experiences, are disregarded by the mainstream discourse and practices of conservation.

Conclusion

The Sonaha's experiences with the conservation interventions demonstrate how violence of conservation (direct exercise of power) and the subtle exercise of power through hegemonic discourse and practices operate in the sphere of nature conservation regime. It includes both strict protection (the national park) and participatory conservation (the buffer zone). Hence, the governmentality of conservation is enacted and sustained through violence as well as hegemonic discourse that the Sonaha are directly subjected. The mainstream conservation discourse and practices; therefore, legitimise violence against the Sonaha and their unjust separation from their ancestral territory, marginalise their worldviews, and transform Sonaha meanings of the lived riverscape.

The Sonaha have been resisting the Park regime, both silently and through organised actions and collective protests. These articulate and are sites of counter discourses that powerfully symbolise the crises of both the strict and participatory regime of conservation. Authority of the conservationist state and related hegemonic discourse prevail despite Sonaha resistance, and their NGOs-backed social movement. Therefore, as others have argued, a strict protected area regime prevails despite local resistance (Brockington 2004; Holmes 2013).

The case presented in this paper also entails the politics of nature conservation and space. I demonstrated that the Sonaha-Park contestations over the contested riverscape are not only limited to material struggles or conflicts over the use and control of natural resources. They can also be reframed as the politics of *space* as perceived, conceived, and lived, mediated

by social power relationships and cultural complexities. Considering the worldviews and lived experiences of the Sonaha, the riverscape in their ancestral territory can be reconceptualised as a bio-cultural space. The perspective of a bio-cultural space informed by a bio-cultural diversity framework (Maffi and Woodley 2010; Davidson-Hunt et al. 2012) and a particular attention to reconceptualisation of *space* and its politics, provides a critical framework to examine conservation contestations as well as enhance democratic governance and practices in protected areas.

Acknowledgements

I acknowledge contributions of the Sonaha from Bardia, the research participants and my supervisors at Curtin University. I thank Ms Silvia Lozeva and Dr Hemant Ojha for their comments on the draft paper. I acknowledge the Humanities Office of Research and Graduate Studies for providing conference funding to present this paper. I also thank the Chair, the discussant, and the audience for their comments during the panel at the conference.

References

- Adams, W. M., and J. Hutton. 2007. People, parks and poverty: Political ecology and biodiversity conservation. *Conservation and Society* 5 (2): 147-183. <http://www.conservationandsociety.org/text.asp?2007/5/2/147/49228>.
- Bates, T. R. 1975. Gramsci and the theory of hegemony. *Journal of the History of Ideas* 36 (2): 351-366. doi: 10.2307/2708933.
- Bhatt, N. 2003. Kings as wardens and wardens as kings: Post-Rana ties between Nepali royalty and national park staff. *Conservation and Society* 1 (2): 247-268.
- Blower, J. 1973. Rhinos -and other problems in Nepal. *Oryx*: 270-280.
- Bolton, M. 1976. *Royal Karnali wildlife reserve management plan 1976-1981*. Rome: United Nation Development Program and Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations.
- Borrini-Feyerabend, G., A. Kothari, and G. Oviedo. 2004. *Indigenous and local communities and protected areas: Towards equity and enhanced conservation*. Gland, Switzerland and Cambridge, UK: IUCN.
- Brechin, S. R., P. R. Wilshusen, C. L. Fortwangler, and P. C. West, eds. 2003. *Contested nature: Promoting international biodiversity with social justice in the twenty-first century*. Albany: State Univ. N.Y. Press.
- Brockington, D. 2004. Community conservation, inequality and injustice: Myths of power in protected area management. *Conservation and Society* 2 (2), 411-32.

- Brockington, D., R. Duffy, and J. Igoe. 2008. *Nature unbound: Conservation capitalism and the future of protected areas*. London ; Sterling, VA: Earthscan.
- Brosius, P. J. 2004. Indigenous peoples and protected areas at the world parks congress. *Conservation Biology* 18 (3): 609-612. doi: 10.1111/j.1523-1739.2004.01834.x.
- Bryant, R. L. 2000. Politicised moral geographies: Debating biodiversity conservation and ancestral domain in the Philippines. *Political Geography* 19 (6): 673-705. doi: Doi: 10.1016/s0962-6298(00)00024-x.
- Campbell, B. 2007. Resisting the environmentalist state. in *Resistance and the state: Nepalese experiences*. D Gellner, ed. 83-112. Oxford: Berghahn Books.
- Campese, J., G. Borrini-Feyerabend, M. De Cordova, A. Guigner, G. Oviedo, M. Colchester, M. F. Ferrari, and B. Lassen. 2007. 'Just' conservation? What can human rights do for conservation... and vice versa? *Policy Matters: Conservation and Human Rights* 15, 6-8.
- CBS. 2011. *National population and housing census 2011*. Kathmandu, Nepal: Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS).
- Chapin, M. 2004. A challenge to conservationists. *World Watch Magazine*, November/December, 17-32.
- Chetri, R. 2005. The plight of the Tharu Kamaiyas in Nepal: A review of the social, economic and political facets. *Occasional Papers in Sociology and Anthropology* 9, 22-46.
- Conway, D., K. Bhattarai, and N. R. Shrestha. 2000. Population-environment relations at the forested frontier of Nepal: Tharu and Pahari survival strategies in Bardia. *Applied Geography* 20, 221-242.
- Davidson-Hunt, I. J., L. Katherine, L. Turner, A. T. P. Mead, J. Cabrera-Lopez, R. Bolton, C. J. Idrobo, I. Miretski, A. Morrison, and J. P. Robson. 2012. Biocultural design: A new conceptual framework for sustainable development in rural indigenous and local communities. *S.A.P.I.E.N.S* 5 (2): 33-45. <https://sapiens.revues.org/1382>
- DNPWC/MoFSC. 2001. Royal Bardia national park management plan (2001-2005). Kathmandu: Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC) / Ministry of Forest and Soil Conservation (MoFSC).
- DNPWC/MoFSC. 2007. Bardia national park management plan (2007-2011). Kathmandu: Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC) / Ministry of Forest and Soil Conservation (MoFSC).
- Dowie, M. 2009. *The hundred-year conflict between global conservation and native peoples*. Cambridge, Massachusetts, London: The MIT Press.
- Escobar, A. 1996. Construction nature: elements for a post-structuralist political ecology. *Futures* 28 (4): 325-343. doi: Doi: 10.1016/0016-3287(96)00011-0.
- Fletcher, R. 2010. Neoliberal environmentality: Towards a poststructuralist

- political ecology of conservation debate. *Conservation and Society* 8 (3): 171-181.
- Foucault, M. 1980. *Power/Knowledge: Selected interviews and other writings (1972-1977)*. Edited by C Gordon. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Foucault, M. 1982. The subject and power. *Critical Inquiry* 8 (4): 777-795.
- Gee, E. P. 1963. Report on a brief survey of the wildlife resources of Nepal, including the rhinoceros. *Oryx* 7 (2-3): 67-76. doi: doi:10.1017/S0030605300002416.
- Gezon, L. L., and S. Paulson. 2005. Place, power and difference: Multiscale research at the dawn of the twenty-first century. in *Political ecology across spaces, scales and social groups*. S. Paulson, and L. L. Gezon, eds. 1-16. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Ghimire, K. B., and M. P. Pimbert, eds. 1997. *Social change and conservation. Environmental politics and impacts of national parks and protected areas*. London: Earthscan.
- Gow, P. 1995. Land, people and paper in West Amazonia. in *The anthropology of landscape: Perspectives on place and space*, E. Hirsch, and M. O' Hanlon, eds. 43-62. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gramsci, A. 1971. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*. London, GBR: ElecBook.
- Hajer, M. 1995. *The politics of environmental discourse: Ecological modernisation and the policy process*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Holmes, G. 2007. Protection, politics and protest: Understanding resistance to conservation. *Conservation and Society* 5 (2): 184-201. <http://www.conservationandsociety.org/text.asp?2007/5/2/184/49229>.
- Holmes, G. 2013. Exploring the relationship between local support and the success of protected areas. *Conservation & Society* 11 (1): 72-82. doi: 10.4103/0972-4923.110940.
- IUCN. 1993. *Nature reserves of the Himalaya and mountains of central Asia*. Gland, Switzerland and Cambridge, UK: IUCN and World Conservation Monitoring Centre.
- Jana, F. 2009. *Kings of the forest: The cultural resilience of Himalayan hunter-gatherers*. USA: University of Hawai Press.
- Jana, S. 2008. *Protecting people in protected areas: Recapitulating rights campaign in lowland protected areas of Nepal*. Kathmandu: CDO.
- Kollmair, M., U. Muller-Boker, and R. Soliva. 2003. Social context of conservation. *European Bulletin of Himalayan Research* 24 (Spring): 25-62.
- Lal, C. K. 2013. The Tharu Heartland. *Republica*, March the 11th. 8 http://myrepublica.com/portal/index.php/twb/milto?action=news_details&news_id=51266&show_comments=true.

- Lefebvre, H. 1991. *The production of space*. Translated by Donald Nicholson-Smith. Oxford UK & Cambridge USA: Blackwell.
- Lukes, S. 2005. *Power: A radical view*. Second ed. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Maffi, L., and E. Woodley. 2010. *Biocultural diversity conservation: A global source book*. London and Washington, DC: Earthscan.
- Massey, D. 2005. *For space*. London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage.
- Neumann, R. P. 1992. Political ecology of wildlife conservation in the Mt. Meru area of Northeast Tanzania. *Land Degradation & Development* 3 (2): 85-98. doi: 10.1002/ldr.3400030203
- Neumann, R. P. 2001. Disciplining peasants in Tanzania: From state violence to self-surveillance in wildlife conservation. in *Violent Environment*. N. L. Peluso, and M. Watts, eds. 305-327. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press.
- Norgrove, L., and D. Hulme. 2006. Confronting conservation at Mount Elgon, Uganda. *Development and Change* 37 (5): 1093-1116. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-7660.2006.00514.x.
- Nygren, A. 2004. Contested lands and incompatible images: The political ecology of struggles over resources in Nicaragua's Indio-Maiz Reserve. *Society and Natural Resources* 17, 189-205.
- Paudel, N. S., S. Jana, and J. Rai. 2011. Contested law: Slow response to demands for reformulating protected area legal framework in Nepal. Discussion Paper Series 11.5. ForestAction, Nepal. Lalitpur, Kathmandu. <http://www.forestaction.org/publications/index/33>.
- Peet, R., and M Watts, eds. 2003. *Liberation ecolgoies: Environment, development and social movements*. 2nd ed. London and New York: Routledge.
- Peluso, N. L. 1993. Coercing conservation: The politics of state resource control. *Global Environmental Change* 3 (2): 199-217. doi: [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0959-3780\(93\)90006-7](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0959-3780(93)90006-7).
- Rai, J. 2011. *Struggle of national park victims: Campaign for human rights, democracy and inclusion*. Anamnagar, Kathmandu: Community Development Organization.
- Robbins, P. 2004. *Political ecology: A critical introduction*. Malden, Oxford and Victoria: Blackwell.
- Scoones, I. 1999. New ecology and the social sciences: What prospects for a fruitful engagement? *Annual Review of Anthropology* 28, 479-507.
- Scott, J. C. 1985. *Weapons of the weak: Everyday forms of peasant resistance*. New Heaven and London: Yale University Press.
- Secretariat of the CBD. 2008. *Protected areas in today's world: Their values and benefits for the welfare of the planet*. Montreal: Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

- Stevens, S. 2013. National parks and ICCAs in the high Himalayan region of Nepal: challenges and opportunities. *Conservation & Society* 11 (1): 29-45. doi: 10.4103/0972-4923.110946.
- UNDP Nepal 2008. *Annual Report 2008*. Kathmandu: UNDP Nepal. http://www.undp.org.np/publications/index.php?page_no=2.
- Upreti, B. N. 1994. *Royal Bardia National Park*. Kathmandu: National Conservation Strategy Implementation Project.
- West, P. 2005. Translation, value, and space: Theorizing an ethnographic and engaged environmental anthropology. *American Anthropologist* 107 (4): 632-642.
- West, P., J. Igoe, and D. Brockington. 2006. Parks and peoples: The social impact of protected areas. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 35, 251-277. doi: 10.1146/annurev.anthro.35.081705.123308.
- Wilshusen, P. R. 2003. Exploring the political contours of conservation: A conceptual view of power in practice. in *Contested nature: Promoting international biodiversity with social justice in the twenty-first century*. S. R. Brechin, P. R. Wilshusen, C. L. Fortwangler, and P. C. West, eds. 41-57. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- WTLCP. 2008. Annual Progress Report 2007. Project Report. Western Terai Landscape Complex Project (WTLCP), Ministry of Forest and Soil Conservation, Government of Nepal. Kathmandu. <http://www.wtlcp.org.np/publications/publications.php>.
- Zimmerer, Karl S. 2000. The reworking of conservation geographies: Nonequilibrium landscapes and nature-society hybrids. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 90 (2): 356-369. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1515239>.

Appendix A: Trajectory of Key Legal Provisions Related to Protected Areas in Nepal*

1970s: Era of modern conservation under strict and protectionist paradigm, designation and management of protected areas (PAs)	
1973: National Park & Wildlife Conservation (NPWC) Act	Supreme PA legislation, founded the establishment of PAs in Nepal
1974: First amendment to NPWC Act	Opened PAs for tourism, allowed self-defence in case of emergency
1976: Himalayan National Park Regulation	Local concessions for resource access and recognition of enclave settlements
1980s: Inception of community based conservation & participatory approach, creation of new PAs	
1982: Second amendment to NPWC Act	Allowed increased access to park resources for subsistence use
1989: Third amendment to NPWC Act	Legal recognition of co-managed conservation areas with human habitation
1990s: Intensification and consolidation of participatory conservation, new PAs	
1993: Fourth amendment to NPWC Act	Local participation and benefit sharing in buffer zones
1996: Buffer Zone Management Regulation	Legal provision for buffer zone management and people's institutions.
1996: Conservation Area Management Regulation	Management and governance of Conservation Areas.
Kanchenjunga Conservation Area (KCA) Management Regulation, 2005	Community management of PA
2000 onwards: PA connectivity and trans-boundary conservation, new PAs	

* Adapted and modified from Paudel, Jana, and Rai (2011).

Appendix B: Chronology of Key Events in Bardia National Park

Time/period	Events
1816-1861	Bardia under British India control
1876	Prince of Wales, Albert Edward and his hunting team, on a hunting trip organised by Rana rulers, killed at least 17 tigers in about a month in the jungles of western Tarai.
1923	Under prime minister Chandra Shamsher Rana, clearing of Bardia forests for timber extraction and export to India as railway sleepers.
Pre 1956	Bardia as a Birta forest of Jung Bahadur Rana and prime site for big game hunting.
1964/65	King Mahendra's hunt
1969	Part of the area was designated as Royal Hunting Reserve. Two villages were relocated before its creation.
1973	Proposed status of the wildlife reserve.
1974	Warden appointed for the wildlife reserve.
1976	Royal Karnali Wildlife Reserve gazetted over 386 square kilometres after relocation of the village of Chisapani in the east. Palace hunt of late King Birendra
1984	Reserve area extended to the east (including the Babai valley) taking in a total area of 968 square kilometres. 9500 people were resettled in the Taratal area.
1986	13 one horned rhinoceroses were translocated from Chitwan National Park to the western section of the Park, in the Karnali flood plains.
1988	The reserve was upgraded to National Park status.
1989	In February 1989, two game scouts were killed following an encounter with local people who had illegally entered the park (IUCN 1993).
1992	20 Gharial crocodiles released in Karnali River and 26 Black Buck released in Bagaura grassland, western section of the Park.
1995	Bardia Integrated Conservation Project (WWF Nepal) initiated. UNDP Park and People Project (PPP) launched.
1996	Bardia National Park Regulation and Buffer Zone Management Regulation enacted. Creation of a buffer zone area covering 327 square kilometres (17 VDCs).
2001	Park and People Project ended. Beginning of Tarai Arc Landscape (TAL) Project (collaboration of government, WWF Nepal, donor and other organisations).
2002	Participatory Conservation Program (UNDP) extension of PPP runs to 2004.
2005	Western Tarai Arc Landscape Complex Project (WTLCP) launched (government, UNDP and other agencies).
2007	31 rhinos counted in Karnali Flood Plain
2008	Sonahas granted fishing licence. Sonaha from Manau were held on a charge of poaching a rhino horn. 18 tigers counted in the Park.

Time/period	Events
2009	Water level in Geruwa river (along the park boundary) declines and Karnali River held its course (outside the Park jurisdiction).
2010	Buffer zone of 180 sq km extension to the north.
2012	Tiger populations doubles (37) in the Park, spotted in Karnali flood plain and grasslands in the Park and Babai valley.

Appendix C: Population of Sonaha, as of 2012, Generated by the Study*

Settlement/Village	HH No.	VDC/Municipality
Bardia District		
Rajipur-4, North Sonaha hamlet	14	Patabhar
Rajipur-4 , South Sonaha hamlet	24	"
Sarkhol – 7	15	"
Khutiyana, Sonaha village -9	11	"
Kholti Bazar	3	Gola
Gola	1	"
Saijana, Parseni Bazar – 9	41	Manau
Total in buffer zone (Bardia)	109	559.17 (44.76%)
Khairi Chandanpur (Kothiya Ghat)	3	Khairi Chandanpur
Tin Gharwa, Murghawa 2	7	Daulatpur (outside BZ)
Milpur, Murghauwa – 2	24	"
Chanaura	8	"
Khairanipur	7	"
Total outside the buffer zone in Bardia	49	251.37 (20.12%)
Total in the Karnali River delta, Bardia	158	810.54 (64.89%)
Kailali District		
Gorangey	6	Baliya
Chisapani	1	Baliya
Bijay Nagar (Freed bonded labour camp)	4	Tikapur
Flood victim settlement	1	Tikapur
Sukhhad	1	Sukhhad
Total in Kailali	13	70.72 (5.66%)
Kanchanpur District		
Airi (Mahakali)	29	Mahendra Nagar
Odali (Mahakali)	21	"
Pipraiya (Mahakali)	17	"
Total in Kanchanpur	67	367.83 (29.44%)
Total HHs in the country	238	
Grand Total Population	1249.09	

Caste in Contemporary Nepal

Hierarchy and Equality

GÉRARD TOFFIN

Today Nepal presents a unique and fascinating ground for studying social and political changes. It is the only country in South Asia to have undergone sudden radical transformations within a relatively short period of time, i.e., from 1951 to 2010. Over the last six decades, the shift has clearly been from an archaic, secluded, xenophobic, autocratic Hindu kingdom, almost cut off from the rest of the world, to an open (but not fully unlocked) country, with commercial links abroad, a democratic and, from 2008 onwards, a republican regime in the making. During the same period of time, the old Hindu Rānā/Shāh authoritarian religious, conservative, state ideology which asserted the idea of a cohesive indivisible country proud of its national language, Nepali, with people sharing a single matrix, has evolved into a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, multi-religious pluralistic state (*bahulavād*, *bahularāshtriya rājya*). Moreover, federalist provisions have been implemented. The Tarai plains in particular have been increasingly recognised by the authorities and have played a more inclusive role in the political sphere than in the past. In political programmes, *Nayā Nepāl*, ‘New Nepal’, has become a motto of paramount importance. Yet, it is not an easy task to sweep away centuries of rampant nepotism, clientelism, personalised dyadic ties, and of an asymmetrical political culture, and to purge the old hierarchical patterns deeply rooted in the social structure. It is easier to write or proclaim ‘Out with the old’ than to put it into practice.

The fall of the Rānās in February 1951 and the first experiments with democracy in subsequent years must be regarded as a starting point to reflect on these changes rather than the post-monarchical period (2008 up to today), which is too limited in scope. In fact, some equalitarian provisions were taken even during the partyless Panchayat rule (1960-90); for example, in 1963, a substantial revision of the civil code (*Muluki Ain*, lit. ‘the Country Code’) was undertaken with significant departures from the old 1854 legal document, including the formal abolition of untouchability. This

improvement, adopted under King Mahendra's rule, was part of an effort to modernise the legal system.

Since the early 2000s, I have been particularly interested in these changes, emphasising several interconnected aspects —economic, political, social, religious, and even cultural— of this overall spectacular metamorphosis. In order to study this topic, a social analyst has to allow a certain period of time to elapse to be able to observe the different stages in this change. It is precisely what I have done since my first arrival in Nepal in June 1970. As a matter of fact, since then I have been able to come back to this country very regularly, nearly every year in fact, and sometimes more than once a year. A number of persons I met and worked with during my early days have died or are now very advanced in years. Similarly, many Nepali friends with whom I socialise today are surprised when I tell them that I first came to Nepal before they were born. Moreover, I have been able to live and work in different geographical zones (though not everywhere, and obviously not long enough in the Tarai) over the years and to acquire a more general, comparative viewpoint, even though this has not been systematically achieved. This sociological and anthropological essay has been written on the basis of this experience.

However, the intimate knowledge you acquire over a long period of time about people's daily life and modes of thinking is not sufficient to understand how society works. What is also required, and perhaps to an even greater extent, is extensive reading in the field of social science and the humanities, more and more reading of a large number of books related to different subjects, from empirical facts to theoretical intellectual interpretations. A person can be a permanent resident in a country and yet not recognise what is actually happening or not be capable of decoding the main trends in transformations. I hope that this methodological requirement —the necessity to combine a 'field view' and a 'book view'— will become clear in this essay, an essay which stresses the structural aspects underlying the facts and attempts to elaborate an interpretative framework for current transformations.

I shall limit my subject to the caste system, which deeply affects Parbatiyā, Newar and Madhesi communities, i.e., the three caste-organised groups which form the majority of the country's population. After contextualising the notions of hierarchy and equality in the Nepali context, I will focus mainly on three interrelated phenomena: the persistence of caste in the modern context, with special emphasis on Dalit ex-untouchables, its substantialisation in relation to other status groups, and the issue of caste versus class. The overall argument stresses both the changing and continuing patterns of stratification.

Putting hierarchy, equality and inclusion into perspective

The study of caste dynamics in present-day Nepal is the study of the dialectics of hierarchy and equality. The interplay between these two opposite, conflicting values plays a crucial role in social, political and religious life not only in South Asia but throughout the world. Let us clarify the terms used. Hierarchy and equality are values in the sense that they encompass various interrelated moral, religious, political ideas. They denote either asymmetrical or symmetrical conceptions, relating to a code or standard. They imply an ideal scheme, a desirable state of society. However, as two different lines of thinking, hierarchy and equality are also related to individual action.¹ Caste, for instance, is linked not only to religion, philosophy, but also to politics, clientelism, hierarchical ordering, sacral space, spatial divisions, cooking, food commensality, and so on. It is a holistic system, both mentally and concretely, deeply entrenched in society and religious beliefs. Hierarchy and equality, therefore, have to be studied simultaneously from these two angles, theoretically and empirically, in a dialectical fashion. A sociological and an anthropological lens are particularly important in this respect.

Thanks to historical legal studies (for instance those of Höfer 1979), the dominant hierarchical structure of the Hindu kingdom of Nepal during the Rānā/Shāh period, especially in the nineteenth century, is well documented. Ethnic groups were integrated into ancient Dharmashāstric divisions, permeated with *varna* Brāhmanical concepts that were formulated nearly two millennia ago in Sanskrit texts. The 1854 *Muluki Ain* Code (written in Nepali) and the social system it mirrors can be considered an epitome of the traditional Hindu world, ascribing to Brāhmins the highest position in the social hierarchy. It reflects a mindset opposed to any religious reforms, overconfident in its superiority, and infatuated with being the last Hindu kingdom in South Asia, uncontaminated by Muslims and Western (i.e., *mlecha*, 'barbarous foreigners', 'outsiders') ideas. 'The formation of Nepal as a hegemonic state in the mid-eighteenth century aims at creating a Hindu heaven against Muslim menace from Mughal India' (H. Gurung 2007:13). Purity and impurity were key words in the hierarchical system, the higher castes being the purest, the lower castes the most impure. In this system, a certain degree of collective purity or

1 In Nepali, the word for 'equality' is *samāntā*. For 'hierarchy' a number of terms can be used, such as *maryādā kram* ('social code, custom' in Turner's dictionary) and *pad* (or *padasopān*). The first is related to royal, army and top government positions, the second to status in an organisation ranging from top to bottom. *Padānukram* and *anukram* also denotes hierarchy, a succession of ranked positions, organising people at different ranks in an administrative body, a sequential order. The term for 'inequality' in Nepali is *asamāntā*.

impurity was/is imposed on each caste group, determining its position in the hierarchy. Such a relative level of purity defines the ritual obligations a caste has to fulfil during domestic and collective rituals. The whole judiciary system, the sentences and the penalties, was derived from these Hindu-specific hierarchical conceptions. For the very same offence, the punishment was more severe if one belonged to a low-caste group. Every procedure and provision was seen from this angle.

Slavery, *dās-prathā* in Nepali, was an additional and secondary aspect of this old hierarchy. Such a system also existed in ancient India and was abolished in Nepal only in 1924 by Chandra Shamsher Rānā. Some ethnic groups (Bhote, Chepang, Kumal, Tharu) and Dalits were possibly enslaved as a penal measure or for unpaid debts, contrary to higher groups which could not be enslaved (*namāsinyā*, as opposed to *māsinyā*). Under this system of servitude, families can be sold from one landlord to another. Notwithstanding these provisions, the Nepali state at this period cannot be referred to as a 'slave state' as expressed in Marxist evolutionist theory; slavery was merely subjugated to caste hierarchy, which remained the system's main orientation. Even if some limited cases prove the existence of a specific legal status for slaves (Höfer 1979:128), slaves (*kamāro/kamāri* in the old Code) and bond-servants (*bāmdhā* in the old Code) generally retain their own or their parents' caste affiliation, even after being sold. They continue to be positioned within a patron/client caste hierarchy based on bond-servitude. In other terms, the pure/impure dichotomy and the division of ritual performance prevailed. Moreover, servitude in Nepal was clearly associated with a feudal economic system entrenched in subordinate agrarian relations.

Despite the law, bonds of servitude still existed up until recently in certain regions of western Nepal, under various forms of unpaid or underpaid bonded labour. All the members of the families were submitted to the same master and landowning family. The descendants of these oppressed people, called *kamaiya*, *bukrahi*, *kamlari*, *chegarvā*, *nokar*, *sukumbāsī*, *gharti*, today still face enormous economic difficulties and social servitude, in spite of the recent official abolishment of such forced labour systems (Kamaiya Labour Prohibition Act, 2002).² The recent surge (June 2013) in the former *kamlaris* (daughters of Tharu *kamaiyās*) movement, after the suspicious demise (burnt to death) of a servant in her master's house, testifies to the fact that these issues have not yet been resolved and are critically resented by the people

2 On 17 July 2000 CE, the erstwhile government already officially 'liberated' *kamaiyās* people (Kamaiya Mukti Ghoshanā, Kamaiya Emancipation Announcement).

concerned. Upper castes' ethnic chauvinism towards Thāru tribal people may also explain this persisting institution (see D. Thapa, *The Kathmandu Post*, 24 June, 2013). As a matter of fact, many Hindu upper-caste people still clearly think that they are superior to meat-eating and alcohol-drinking ethnic communities (*matvāli*).

The local Nepali vocabulary reveals the official ideology and the strength of Hindu concepts during this long Rānā-Shāh period. Ethnic minorities from the hills and the plains were officially designated by the Indic term *jāt*, *jāti*, which means 'caste'. This was (and still is) used in popular language, as noted by several anthropologists from the 1950s onwards, Christoph von Fürer-Haimendorf being one of the earliest (1966). In other words, notwithstanding their totally different social stratification system, the tribes (to use the given sociological term in Indian sociology) were regarded as castes. One, therefore, immediately understands the importance of the new expression, *Janajati*, or *Ādivāsī-Janajāti*, which has been penned in the official discourse since the 1990s by the country's ethno-linguistic minorities. The use of these words (ultimately derived from *jāti*!) was introduced from India or by Nepali migrants living in India. It has been a way of challenging the former terminology and of rejecting caste language, which has been imposed on these ethnic groups in the course of centuries of Hinduisation. Nevertheless, as noted above, the words *jāt/jāti* are still used today in an official context (and in colloquial language), to refer to primordial forms of belonging which have nothing to do with caste. Admittedly, there is a slight colloquial difference between the two: *jāt* is mostly used for caste, and *jāti* for ethnic group (H. Gurung 2005:5), but both words come from the same linguistic root³ and are used interchangeably in everyday parlance. Among Nepali people, the difference between caste and ethnicity is not clear. Moreover, the tenacity of these two all-important local terms in the common language, despite political change, is a phenomenon that requires the attention of social scientists.

What about equality? It is commonly asserted that this is a Western concept, totally alien to the South Asian Hindu world. It is said to have appeared at a later stage, during colonial times, either in its liberal, democratic form or in its Marxist utopian formulation. In actual fact, this is not the case. I argue that equalitarianism is not totally foreign to the traditional Nepalese and Indian context. There were at least two areas where genuine egalitarian values were favoured or applied in the pre-democratic era. The first is the Hindu reformist movement, which has been active since at least the seventeenth century in India and which can be linked to the

3 For instance, on the new national decennial Census query forms.

old *bhakti* devotional current. A number of religious organisations, mostly among Vaishnava *sampradāyas*, have ingrained equalitarian ideas in their fight against the privileges of Brāhmans and against caste rigidity. Prior to this, Buddhist philosophy, at least primeval Buddhism, was a first attempt at challenging the self-asserted superiority of Brāhmans and their hierarchical *varna/jāti*. Their followers sought to implement a more equalitarian society. Indeed, it took time for these ideas to emerge and to spread in orthodox Brāhmanical Nepal. Reformist movements were at first regarded as suspicious by the authorities and were even prosecuted. Yet from the end of the nineteenth century, Pranāmī, Josmanī and Kabīr-panthī movements, to name just a few, had already spread in a subterranean manner through the Himalayan kingdom, not only in the urban centres. Later on, Ārya Samāj, which had long been forbidden, also penetrated parts of the country. All these movements diffuse a devotional and universalistic message, accessible to all, including low castes. This message is opposed to untouchability and to the exclusion of women in many matters. Hindu reformist ideas that reject Brāhman prerogatives in religious matters facilitated in many ways the acceptance of Western equalitarian ideas from the eighteenth century onwards. Surprisingly enough, Dumont, the French Indologically inspired anthropologist, ignores this significant internal current in South Asia, restricting endogenous equalitarian ideas on the subcontinent to Islamic communities. In his timeless, stereotyped vision of Hindu society, he erroneously typifies India as the land of *Homo hierarchicus* as opposed to Euro-American countries.

The casteless ideology existing within the sphere of most Nepali tribal groups currently called *Ādivāsī/Janajāti* ethnic communities represents another paradigm of equalitarian ideology. In a country where these groups make up more than 35 per cent of the population, the strength of these ideas cannot be disregarded. For a long time now, Magars, Gurungs, Tamangs, Rais, Limbus and Tharus have had their own social rules and ethos which are opposed in many ways to the Hindu values embodied by the Nepali-speaking upper castes living around them. They were and still are much more egalitarian. Their sense of communality and belonging is stronger than in caste-born groups. They are not totally acephalous, but their hierarchy is mostly based on junior/senior rules, gender and relations concerning territory (in particular the first settlers of a village). Likewise, their own conceptions of purity/impurity are not anchored in ascribed social groups as in the caste system. Over the ages, such a dichotomy between ethnic and caste groups has been reformulated by the former and described as a conflict between oppressed, downgraded people, and imperialist, conquistador-like

conquerors and invaders, in reference to the process of 'unification' of Nepal and of the gradual Hinduisation of the country. However, among *Ādivāsī/Janajāti* groups, equality is conceived in a particularistic way, distinct from the theoretically universalistic Marxist and Western liberal theories. Ethnic activists are concerned with equal relationships more within their own group rather than on a scale of the whole country. Yet, hierarchical matters are of greater importance in Bahun-Chetri's ideology which put *Janajāti* in second position. By and large, the anti-upper Hindu castes rhetoric prevails among members of ethnic communities today and has become a major theme in political discussions.

Since 1990, the expression 'social inclusion' (*sāmajik samāveshikaran*) has become the new motto of most governments. As a matter of fact, this concept, which originated in Europe in the 1980s in response to fear of social disintegration due to social and economical crisis, better suits the fundamental pluralism of the Nepalese population and culture than the idea of equality, which, in such a country (as in many others), remains largely unrealistic, if not utopian.⁴ The change in formulation aims at fighting primarily and, in a more concrete manner, against the various forms of exclusion faced by many sectors of the population: women, Muslims, Dalits (untouchables) and *Janajāti* ethnic groups. The rise of ethnic and other categorised movements after 1990 (return of democracy) clearly expresses the need for a more inclusive policy that recognises the minority rights of stigmatised communities. Significantly enough, this inclusive discourse has been adopted not only by intellectual figures and social scientists (M. Lawoti's first book is subtitled *Inclusive Political Institutions for a Multicultural Society*, 2005), but also by foreign agencies operating in the Himalayan country. In other words, the emphasis is now more on otherness, on the recognition of another's place, than on strict equality. The inclusion of marginalised groups becomes more important than 'formal democracy'. In my opinion, such a shift represents significant developments. It anticipates and justifies inclusive affirmative action measures which may challenge the strict equalitarian rhetoric supporting, among many other things, work for competition on an equal basis. This move has clearly intensified since the Maoist insurgency (1996-2006), the success of which can, for the most part, be attributed to various forms of intolerable exclusion and discrimination.

4 According to L. Dumont (1969: 34), the ideal notion of equality is 'artificial' when faced with the need for a hierarchy in all social systems throughout the world. I contend, however, that the notions of equality and hierarchy are indeed values in the sense defined at the beginning of this paper. Hierarchy can sometimes be 'artificial', that is theoretical as opposed to real, even in the caste system.

The tenacity of caste

The result of this situation is that nobody in Nepal today speaks in favour of inequality and caste. Public defence of Hindu *jāt/jāti* has disappeared from the official discourse. In the Interim Constitution (2007), all Nepalis are supposed to be equal. Despite this, the role of caste in Nepali life, society and politics has so far been of utmost importance. To put it bluntly, despite the fall of the monarchy (*rājatantra*) and the proclamation of a federal republic (*sanghiya ganatantrātmak*), the caste system (*jātbhāt*, *jātibyavasthā*, *jātiyā prathā*) remains a pillar of society without which little can be understood, especially at local level. Caste no longer exists as a social institution, but it remains a fundamental social fact. It has never, significantly, been abolished *per se*, contrary to untouchability which has been outlawed. Admittedly, the system is changing but not uniformly and not equally in all realms of life. There is a huge difference in these matters between rural areas and cities, the old and the new generation, in-house rules and outside observances. In addition, the difference between the Kathmandu Valley (approximately one fifth of the total population of Nepal) and the rest of the country is striking.

Last but not least, there is a huge gap between what is said officially by the government and NGOs, and implemented by law (for instance, in matters of abolishing untouchability), and what actually happens at local level. These discrepancies between the different orders of society are noteworthy. For instance, Newar activists who stress the unity of Newars as a single ethnic group across caste divisions still consider in private that marrying a low-caste Newar person, such as a Dyahlā or Khadgī, is problematic. Similarly, it is widely asserted by Nepali people that *Māobādī* leaders reject caste in public but observe its rules at home. As far as the daughters of *kamaiyā* are concerned, Shanta Chaudhary, an ex-Constituent Assembly member, nominated by CPN-UML, herself a former *kamlari* from Dang District, recently accused local judges, politicians, administrators, high level officials in the government of keeping *kamlari* in their houses and therefore of not being willing to abolish the system (*My Republica*, 12 June 2013). To conclude on this subject, for society to change, it is obviously not enough for a person just to drop his full Brāhman name, as Madhav Kumar Nepāl, the former UML Prime Minister, did because, as a communist, he is against the caste system.

Let me first consider the rules of purity and pollution. For city-dwellers working in offices, factories and in any other new economic environment, the decline in caste restrictions is not only obvious but also inevitable. The modern lifestyle does not fit in with the observance of strict caste rules in matters of commensality, dining with others, sharing food in restaurants,

and relations with low-caste persons in particular are unavoidable and constantly go against the rules. Food transactions have become more flexible, at least in daily life. But what about the rest of the country, i.e., rural areas, where 80 per cent of the population live? The language of purity/impurity, which encompasses the caste system and regulates many other activities, still prevails in these areas and is still formulated explicitly on a number of occasions. In Bāhun and Chetri families, for example, bans on menstruating women are in most cases still applicable today, limiting the freedom of married housewives and daughters. Similarly, entry into one's house by members of other castes is still in keeping with a series of regulations which depend on each person's relative degree of caste status. Inside the house, the rules for preparing the daily rice and lentil soup in the kitchen are an excellent indicator of how strictly purity rules are still applied. They are subject to an unwritten code that only becomes apparent when violated. And what about the *svayampākī*, upper-caste or Vaishnava-sect-affiliated individuals, who cook their food (rice and lentil soup) themselves, fearing pollution from accepting a cooked meal from other persons, even their wives? According to my observations, their number has not dropped, but on the contrary has risen.

More fundamentally, the spirit of the caste system still exists; persons of lower status are needed to complete impure tasks for high-caste people to prevent the latter from being permanently exposed to impure substances. Otherwise, the upper-caste individual concerned would risk jeopardising their purity status and might even lose their ranking in the hierarchy. Interestingly enough, this attitude still prevails among former untouchables, *achūt* or *pāni nacalne jāt*,⁵ 'castes with whom one does not share water', who are the most discriminated people in the country. This category of persons is divided into numerous castes that are hierarchically ranked. For their purificatory rituals, a Damāi needs a Gāine, a Gāine a Bādi, a Dyahlā a Chyāme, at the bottom of the caste ladder. A Dalit belonging to a specific caste is not supposed to take rice cooked by a person belonging to a lower caste than themselves. As Dr Ambedkar clearly pointed out in his writings, Dalit society is itself pervaded by the caste system and replicates within its subcategories the different degrees of purity and impurity of global society. Without rejecting these ostracising attitudes in their own social universe, how does one expect to eliminate prohibitions imposed by pure castes? Unfortunately for Nepalese Dalits, so far a figure of Dr Ambedkar's calibre has not emerged in the country.

5 Or *chuna nahune jāt* for the lowest castes 'which cannot be touched'.

The same can be said of marriage. There is still a general tendency to marry within one's caste, although the number of inter-caste marriages is clearly increasing in large cities. In these urban settings, the opportunity to meet new people beyond caste boundaries is far greater than in village-bound social spaces, and this opens up marriage options.⁶ What is locally called 'inter-caste love marriage', *āntarjātīya prem bibāh*, is clearly on the rise. However, marrying outside one's caste still causes many family problems even in cities; this can lead to social exclusion, and even violence, particularly from their one's own family. Daily newspapers are replete with cases of aggressions and sometimes murder of a newly married bride or groom because they contracted an inter-caste marriage.⁷ In many families such unions are still considered to be a religious and social offence. Moreover, the rule according to which the children of a man who has contracted a morganatic marriage with a woman from a lower caste are called *Lawat* to indicate their mixed origin still applies in a number of Newar families. Among Parbatiyās and Newar Shresthas, children born of an inter-caste marriage with somebody belonging to a lower caste still take a caste status that is situated some way between that of the father and mother (G.S. Nepali 1987:318).

Furthermore, the fight for individual freedom of choice regarding a

- 6 The rule is to marry within one's caste but outside one's clan (*thar*). Among Bāhuns, marrying within one's clan causes a drop in caste status. The couple (and their offspring) become Jaisi.
- 7 Cf. for example the *Annapurna Post*, 10 Jeth 2013, reports how a man from Saptari district (eastern Nepal) who planned to marry his daughter to the boy of a certain family (he had already taken 50,000 rupees from the future groom's family) hired two killers to assassinate his own daughter who had eloped with her boyfriend belonging to a different caste. The murder took place near Koshi River and the corpse was burnt by the murderers. The father was arrested and jailed. Similarly, *Nayā Patrikā*, 23 Jeth 2013 (p. 1 and 2), mentions another *āntarjātīya prem*, inter-caste love, with a tragic ending. A Madhesi man from Biratnagar forcibly admitted his son into a rehabilitation centre for addicted persons, by pretending that he was an alcoholic. In fact, he merely wanted to have his son locked away because the latter intended to marry a girl from the Hills (*pahār*) belonging to a different caste. The father was reluctant about this marriage because, as he said, 'the people from the Hills do not give a dowry, *dāijo*, along with their daughter'. With the help of a human rights association, the boy was released from the centre. Likewise, the *Annapurna Post*, 21 June 2013, relates the unfortunate story of a Bāhun man married to a Dalit girl, both teachers at a secondary school. They were expelled from their respective family, caste, social gatherings and even from employment because of their inter-caste marriage. They were even insulted by local people and not allowed to approach the village's water-tap. The couple at present leads a miserable life of *bisthāpit*, displaced people, in Phidim (Panchthar District), and is rejected by everybody. A Human rights group has tried to help them. The case was discussed at the CDO office, but relatives and colleagues of the Bāhun man deny the accusations and pass the blame onto him.

matrimonial union is stronger among certain castes than others. According to my observations, among Newars, Jyāpus are more flexible in this respect than Shresthas and Shākyas. A person's standard of education plays a considerable role in these matters. People with a higher education more often discard caste rules concerning purity restrictions and inter-caste marriage. They say, 'We no longer bother about these old *kurās*. Society is much freer today'. In the case of inter-caste marriage, the names of the bride and groom are nowadays fully written in the invitation cards without offending anybody. The picture is very different in rural areas, although breaches of caste regulations may also take place there. Waves of Nepali migrants venturing abroad (one may risk using the term *exodus*) to the Gulf, Asian countries and the West, and the subsequent exposure to other systems of ideas, have certainly facilitated more individual freedom to choose a wife/husband. The 1996-2006 armed conflict also helped to break social constraints (at least among *Māobādī* fighters). Nonetheless, the rules of caste endogamy are far from being obsolete among Hindu caste families living in rural areas and integrated in the rural economy.

Interestingly enough, recent socio-political developments tend to strengthen the caste system in some respects. As a matter of fact, the Nepalese authorities are now implementing several affirmative action measures not only in favour of ethnic minorities, *Ādivāsī/Janajāti*, but also in favour of former untouchables, now called Dalits. Some dispositions concerning education, justice, government and political assemblies have already been adopted or are on the point of being adopted. As in India, the pernicious effect of the reservation policy is to maintain caste categories and to reinforce caste consciousness and identity. Despite all the benefits of the reservation system, this mode of inclusiveness recognises caste logic within the constitution and state structures. Similarly, the present Nepalese census policy which follows the model of the Census of India and records caste and ethnic groups (inquiries about *jāt/jāti* are made on the forms to be filled in) is a valuable means of emphasising the diversity of the country's population and of collecting data designed for upgrading discriminated groups. Yet it is also an indirect way of perpetuating the existence of caste categories (and of reinforcing its boundaries).⁸ What a difference with the French republican system where recording data regarding one's ascribed ethnic group is considered to be an offence to the idea of equality and to the

8 According to the 2011 Census, Dalits represent 12.82 per cent (nearly three million people) of the population of Nepal. However, this figure is contested by Dalits. They argue that during Census interviews, scheduled castes hide their names. They claim to account for more than 20 per cent of the population of the country.

fundamental individuality of each person, and consequently banned! In this respect, France, like most European countries, favours a 'solitarist' approach (Amartya Sen 2006) which singles out an individual's identity and gives it a unique and privileged status, contrary to most South Asian countries which have adopted a more communal, pluralist mode of recognising communal groups. Unfortunately, citizenship is not actually compatible with ascribed and fossilised caste hierarchies.

The untouchability issue

The question of untouchability (*chuāchūt* or *achūt*) is crucial. As stated above, a caste society supposes the exclusion of impure groups —or Scheduled Castes. Numerous associations defending Dalit rights have been formed over the years within (Kisan 2005) and outside the Dalit community. They are fighting for the right to enter the precincts of notable Hindu temples (entry was traditionally denied to them, even for *darshan*, 'sanctified view of the god', after the marriage ceremony) and for admission into public and private schools for their children. Scheduled caste associations are fighting against other types of discrimination, such as the ban on using other castes' water taps or wells or the avoidance of direct bodily contact with other castes. In most cases these prejudices still go unpunished. In other words, Dalit groups are struggling against what some Nepali intellectuals call 'casteism', i.e., an excessive concern with caste rules, or to put it another way, excessive pride in one's superior status (in the case of Bāhun-Chetri or high Hindu Newar and Madhesi castes). Traditionally, former untouchables were even expected to speak in a demure tone with higher-caste people (at present only a few respect this custom). Currently there is extreme tension between Dalit and pure castes all over the country, but particularly in the Tarai plains

The *Kantipur* newspaper, 9 June 2013, reports a violent attack (*ākraman*) on a Dalit settlement of Camār, cobblers, in Rautahat District (Pipariya-8). Yadav villagers from the surrounding area raided the village after a *janti* marriage procession of a couple of newly married Camār tried to enter a local Hindu goddess temple, instead of worshipping her, as usual, from outside.⁹ This event heightened tension between the two communities. Yadavs barred paths around the Dalit hamlet and forbid its inhabitants to use the edges of their fields as latrine, as they customarily do. After some skirmishes, a group of Yadavs decided to storm the Dalit settlement. The attack took place on 31 Baisākh 2013 CE, at night. Sixty-five Camār houses were attacked and

9 On Hindu Yadavs in the Nepalese Tarai, see Dahal (2012). Cf. also Michelutti (2004) on this caste across the Nepali border.

vandalised in retaliation for the transgression of such an old rule (against entering a temple). People's belongings were looted and the village's water tap was broken. Several Camārs were harassed and savagely beaten during the attack. The Dalits filed a case with the police and the CDO (Chief District Officer) himself visited the place to express his reprobation of such inexcusable violence. Human rights associations also violently condemned this act of retaliation. This incident has gradually taken on a nationwide dimension. Dalit associations protested in Kathmandu in connection with this event and the Home Minister promised justice for the Dalit victims of the raid (*My Republica*, 12 June 2013). In the end, the quarrel seems to have reached a peaceful conclusion. The *Kantipur* journal (26 June 2013) reports that Camārs were finally allowed to enter this temple in Rautahat and it publishes a photo of Dalit women queuing up to worship the goddess.

I interviewed the chairman of the National Dalit Commission on the 21 July 2013 about this case. He rejected the local agreement, arguing that the Yadavs conceded because they feared legal pursuits. He also complained that the local police took too long a time to act. According to him, the Yadavs were locally supported by the Congress Party that identified Dalits with communist activists. He mentioned another recent event in Nuwakot district where a Rai man married a Dalit girl. The couple was compelled to cross the river marking the boundary and was driven away from their village. Some time after, Rai members of that settlement ventured over and ceremonially welcomed back the ostracised couple with flower garlands because they were scared of a court decision against them. However, these cases show how conflicts between opposite values can be resolved in a pacific way under the pressure of the state and associations.

Moreover, in some parts of western Nepal (Dhangadi, Dadeldhura, Doti, Bajura, and Bajhang), Dalits work in landlords' rice fields as *haliyā*, bond-tillers, which is a labour system akin to slavery. These labourers have the obligation to plough their patron/lender's field and to do other kinds of work, sometimes without even getting paid. They are ruthlessly linked to their landlords, on the pretext that they have to repay the debts accumulated by their ancestors over many generations. The system was officially abolished in 2008 but the application of the law takes time and no rehabilitation programme has been implemented.¹⁰ Some freed *haliyās* have even opted to return to their old masters (*The Himalayan Times*, 6 June 2013), despite the efforts of NGOs which fight against this trend.

10 The number of *haliyās* in Western Nepal is under discussion. Estimations vary between 120,000 to 200,000 persons.

New governmental bodies, such as the National Dalit Commission (*Rāshtriya Dalit Āyog*), NDC¹¹, and the Dalit Development Committee, were set up in March 2002 under Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba to amend existing legal provisions related to caste-based discrimination and untouchability. In addition, these bodies aim to increase the active participation in mainstream society of the most socially, economically, politically, educationally backward Dalit community. The Dalit Commission, situated in Jawalakhel, Lalitpur, aims at ensuring economic empowerment, a democracy with proportional representation and more inclusive measures. It lists seven Hill Dalit scheduled castes (including two 'Newar Dalit' caste groups) and 26 Dalit groups in the Tarai. However, this Commission and its associated institutions are allegedly weak and ineffective. They mainly issue caste certificates (*jātiya pramān patra*) and help Dalits with various administrative procedures.

The label 'Dalit' was first introduced to Nepal by India's most famous former untouchable, Dr Ambedkar, the father of the Indian Constitution, when he visited Nepal in 1956. The term is still unfamiliar to Dalits themselves in many rural communities in Nepal (Giri 2012:74). Today it is a subject of discussion and contention among backward castes. Some of their members point out that the word still carries a derogatory connotation and leads to neglect, humiliating attitudes or mockery when employed in front of 'clean castes'. According to Dalits, this term symbolises the history of their group's seclusion and reinforces it (Cameron 2007: 18). They suggest a new name that would put a stop to the wrangling and release them from Brāhmanical exclusion stereotypes.

Obviously, a certain stigma is still attached to their surname. By and large, Dalit activists note no significant change in the public's attitude regardless of new legal dispositions since 1963. Even after the proclamation of the Caste-Based Discrimination and Untouchability Act (Crime Elimination and Punishment), passed on 24 May 2011, acknowledging the principle that everybody is equal in terms of rights and human dignity, Dalits have been victimised in rural and remote areas as well as in the capital city (Pariyar 2013:5). Dyahlā sweepers/fishermen and Khadgīs butchers are even banned from entering the orthodox Newar Buddhist *bāhāls* of Patan. What is more, most of ethnic groups in the hills and in the Tarai follow Hindu rules which discriminate against them. It, therefore, comes as no surprise that in 2012 the *Dalit Welfare Association* mentioned that 46 per cent of Dalits live below the poverty threshold and that 50 per cent of them have no legal citizenship

11 The National Dalit Commission comes under the Ministry of Local Development.

documents in their possession. Furthermore, 54 per cent are landless and the illiteracy rate among them amounts to 42.8 per cent. Ninety per cent of the members of a group like Musahar in Tarai are landless and 100 per cent of them face food shortage problems (Giri 2012:75). All these figures make former untouchable castes the most depressed, disfavoured group (*utpidit jāt*) in the country.¹²

The procedure (inspired by Indian policy in some states of the Union) to grant one *lākh* rupees to a newly married couple that has contracted an inter-caste marriage with a lower caste woman which was adopted in 2010 by a Maoist coalition (and renewed in February 2012) has not been a frank success. As far as I know, in most cases it has been diverted from its original objective and reduced to the opportunity of earning easy money, rapidly followed by divorce. Even women organisations are against it.

The substantialisation of caste

Caste is nevertheless changing in nature. In this respect, *substantialisation* can safely be identified as the main transformation over recent years. The process has already been in force in India for some decades and has been described by several anthropologists and sociologists, such as Louis Dumont (the initiator of the concept), Mysore N. Srinivas, Arvind M. Shah, André Béteille among others.¹³ It refers to the manner in which caste groups become more and more inward-looking and concerned with themselves, to the detriment of their hierarchical relations with other groups. Horizontal solidarity is gaining in importance at the expense of vertical solidarity of castes. In other words, the caste system is losing its holistic character.

Caste associations in particular have become an increasingly important issue. They have emerged as a significant new form of institution and have become active political actors. Their members have compiled a series of claims and are vehemently fighting to defend their own group's interests and their position in society. The recent creation in Nepal of various *samājs*, one for each caste, Bāhun Samāj, Chettri Samāj,¹⁴ Udās Samāj, Balāmi Samāj and so on, is a clear illustration of this phenomenon. These organisations

12 The Musahars, classified today as Tarai Dalits, seem to have originally been a tribal group (Giri 2012: 73). They claim to be of such origin and argue a former connection with the Kol tribe of Chota Nagpur. Today they represent the second group (after Camār) of Tarai Dalits. Musahars are also classified as Scheduled Castes (Dalits) in India.

13 The concept of substantialisation has recently been discussed by Hiroshi Ishii, 2007. In this article, Ishii also gives fresh data on changes in the caste system of the Newar village of Satungal.

14 Chetris have two organisations: Chettri Samāj Nepāl and Khas Chettri Ekatā Samāj (Gray 2012: 135).

have generally written constitutions, rules, boards, and internal elections. Their members promote and defend their caste group. They develop welfare activities for their members and they strive to be in a good position to compete within a reservation system (*āraksan*) in order to obtain a maximum number of benefits from it. The invention of a glorious ascendancy, claiming to be, for instance, the descendants of Buddha or of a specific king, is a well-known and perennial feature in the caste system. Yet this phenomenon is clearly on the rise today, to the point of contesting the superiority of other castes. As formulated by the Indian sociologist, Dipankar Gupta, 'Identity here trumps hierarchy' (2004). The move is from structure to substance.

Castes are mobilising their members in this manner to join the competition in democratic politics. The communal aspect of caste and caste patriotism are on the increase to the detriment of the harmony of various parts. Over the past years, the importance of caste-vote, for instance, cannot be dismissed at elections even though caste is only one of the many factors influencing voting behaviour. Nepal has not yet reached the stage of violent cases of 'war of castes' as observed in India. Nevertheless, the massive assertion of ethnicities throughout the country plays an important part in intensifying caste identities. *Jātbhāt* has become a competitive system made up of independent, substantialised, dismembered fragments within a more open social arena. Identity prevails in the whole social fabric. As Srinivas puts it in the case of India, 'While caste as a system is dead, individual castes are flourishing' (2003, p. 459). In Nepal, even Chetris nowadays claim to be an indigenous *Ādivāsī* group and do not allow ethnic communities to be the only ones to secure this label. They make the point that caste identity is being destroyed in the name of ethnic and regional identity. The logic of identity and ethnicity which was and still is supported by Nepali Maoists encompasses the whole political field. Castes are starting to act as ethnic groups. Their social boundaries are being reinforced.

In Nepal as in India, in most cases, this process goes hand in hand with a relinquishment of caste obligations that have to be fulfilled on religious occasions. Lower castes in particular are increasingly reluctant to perform purificatory rituals for their upper-caste patrons. They are more hesitant about conveying messages from one family to another at the time of festivals or during celebrations of their *jajmān*, and they are nowadays disinclined to play the role of a departed person's evil spirit during funerary rituals. In the Newar caste system for instance, a number of Kapālī (Kusle) and Dyahlā now refuse to take the offerings made by the bereaved family to the dead person. Today, these ancient duties are felt to be infamous, derogatory. They explicitly refer to the relative impurity of the group and its inherited bonds

towards pure upper castes. Similarly, in the Tarai, Dalits refuse at present to bury dead domestic animals for pure castes. As a matter of fact, in the traditional caste system, such obligations were the main occasions to bind castes together and to display the ubiquity of the pure/impure dichotomy (Toffin 1984). However, today it is still difficult to perform a full ceremonial marriage without a band of musicians coming from a low musician caste. The reason is that their music (*kasāi bājā* or *nāykhim bājā*) is considered to be very auspicious in stark contrast to the derogatory obligations linked to death and impurity.

As far as festivals and collective ceremonies are concerned, the situation is more contrasted. Nearly a century ago, the half-French, half-English anthropologist and archaeologist Arthur M. Hocart emphasised the royal dimension of the caste system in his two major books, *The Caste*, first published in French (1938), and *Kings and Councillors* (1957). He stressed the link between such a hierarchical society and kingship, and saw the sovereign as being at the core of the system. I myself have showed in my writings how Newar festivals are organised around that principle and how they can be described as a mega-division of ritual work under the supervision of the king (Malla or Shāh). Traditionally, these collective ceremonies can be analysed as forms of sacrifice or kingly celebrations to ensure the prosperity of the subjects of the realm (Toffin 1996). Interestingly enough, this type of celebration still takes place even though the monarchy was abolished in 2008. Despite Maoist hostility and a further collapse of the social links underlying rituals, Dasain and other former royal ceremonies have so far been performed in most of the country apparently in a more or less similar way as before.

However, important shifts have indeed occurred. Significantly enough, more and more ritual low-caste specialists are refusing to fulfil their traditional roles at these festivals. In other cases, they ask for exorbitant sums of money to perform it. Newar *desh jātrās*, 'local annual festivals', in small towns such as Panauti, do not, therefore, fully demonstrate the caste system in action. In this respect, an overall degeneration of the caste system cannot be denied. Admittedly, the celebration of such collective rituals can still be examined in a similar manner as in A.M. Hocart's books. But a major difference is that the king's position at the centre of the whole ceremony is now merely symbolic and no longer corresponds to a real form of power. This is another significant change. Today, the former royal rituals tend to exemplify the cultural heritage of a specific ethnic group (in the Kathmandu Valley, the Newars) rather than to celebrate the fallen monarchy or complementary caste-group interrelations. They are

increasingly involved in politics of culture, each ethnic group trying to recreate its own cultural legacy.

Caste, class, and ethnicity

Any analysis of Nepali society exclusively in terms of class is difficult, hazardous and risky, principally because social scientists disagree about the content and the definition of the very term class. The Marxist concept of class based on social relations of production highlights relevant features, especially the divisions anchored in relationships with land and labour. It gives priority to property relations, not to income or status. It applies particularly well to pre-democratic Nepal where inequality between large landowners and peasantry was extreme, especially in the Tarai. Yet this theoretical construction ignores the expansion and modern aspects of twentieth and twenty-first-century economies, particularly the new spatial mapping of inequalities, and does not take into consideration the complexity of social categories. It also wrongly reduces social groups to two antagonist classes: the workers (proletariat) and the 'bourgeois' capitalists, on the basis of a one-sided, biased interpretation of historical movements over the centuries. It is difficult to accept a breaking down of groups of people into class categories based only on their material relations. How can the 'bourgeois' class be characterised in Nepal? Do all labourers and farmers belong to the same social self-conscious group? These issues are clearly problematical. The history of the creation of peasant class associations in Nepal does not allow us to answer the second question in the affirmative. Even the vague word 'feudal', *sāmanti*, so common in Nepal to qualify regressive forces, is to be used with caution. It belongs to vulgar, dogmatic political rhetoric rather than to socio-economic realities. Obviously, the capitalism that Marx talked about does not resemble the liberal economy of today, even if the current system is no less equalitarian than nineteenth-century forms of capitalism.

However, classes (translated in Nepali by *varga*) defined as functional socio-economic categories do exist in Nepal (and do sometimes compete with each other) together with caste or ethnic groups. The emergence of an educated urban middle class (called *madhyam varga*) is, for instance, one of the major phenomena that I have been able to observe over the past decades. According to ADB (Asian Development Bank), the middle class in Nepal amounts to 23 per cent of the population, i.e., 6.1 million in 2010 (*The Kathmandu Post*, 24 August 2010). ADB defines the middle class as those spending NPR 150-1,500 per person per day in 2005 (*idem*). According to the same source, the annual expenditure of an unmarried middle-class

Nepali is about NPR 100,000. There is a large proportion of middle-class people in Nepal, even though it is the smallest middle-class segment in Asia. It comprises many internal categories including merchants, civil servants, landowners, employees, who live mainly in urban centres. These families are notoriously consumerist and are responsible for the recent surge in spending on the commodity (cars, two-wheel motorised vehicles, television, electronic appliances) market. Even if the rate of unemployment is high among this segment of the population, their purchasing power is on the rise. According to my observations, members of this middle class have many things in common, and not only from a strict economic point of view. They have more or less the same standard of education, the same knowledge of English and regular access to diverse media sources, they share the same public space, and they have the same access to modern medical facilities, similar consumer practices, cultural practices and even idiosyncrasies. They are gradually adopting a new modern lifestyle in the increasingly globalised Nepal.

At the two opposite extremes of the hierarchy, the poor and the affluent class also make up more or less clear socio-economic categories. The former consists of persons who live below the poverty threshold, i.e., according to the latest estimation, 25 per cent of the population (Neupane 2013). It consists of poor labourers, low-caste people, displaced people, the urban proletariat and labour classes. All these persons are too destitute to be concerned with anything other than their basic subsistence. As for the affluent class, i.e., the country's small ruling elite, it has a long history in Nepal dating back at least to the nineteenth century. Its members are mainly to be found among upper-Hindu castes (Bahun, Chetri, Thakuri), Newar, and incidentally Thakali families. According to ADB, it represents less than 1 per cent of the population in Nepal and can afford a daily expenditure of 4,000 rupees. The rest of the population comprises small farmers who live in precarious economic conditions, improving their humble livelihood with remittances sent back from overseas migrants. They are caught up, against their will, in the process of globalisation and in worldwide economic and demographic networks. Clearly, the development of the country and the penetration of global capitalism have resulted in an increasing wealth disparity between the urban elite and the rest of the population.

Whatever the case may be, there is no direct, automatic correlation between poverty and caste (or ethnicity). Of course, low-caste people have not traditionally been landowners and they live in very small houses (in Nepali, *chāpro*). But even within Dalit castes, there are differences in socio-economic levels from one caste to another, and sometime even within one

caste itself. Among Newars for instance, the much stigmatised Dyahlā fishers and sweepers cannot compete with the more affluent Khadgī butchers. Such discrepancies can also be found among high-Hindu Parbatiyā castes. In the course of my research, I have come across a number of Bāhun farming families who, in spite of their high religious status, live just below or just above the poverty level. On the whole, the link between caste and economic standards is not as simple as made out to be by politicians or politicised social scientists. My contention, therefore, is that class logic is difficult to identify in Nepal's present context. There is little overall class consciousness and people rarely cross ethnicity lines or geographical borders. That is why only a small number of social scientists, except Marxists and communists, rely on class-group categories in their analysis.

Some researchers, like Mark Liechty (2003, 2010), use the argument about the rise of the middle class to assert that class has now supplanted caste in Nepal.¹⁵ My analysis and experience contradict this position. Despite mutual features and a certain collective self-awareness, the attachment to caste rules, caste identity remains primordial within this intermediate class. Even adhesion to a political party and voting during elections differ according to a number of other factors. Here a distinction has to be made between the private familial sphere, which seems to be unknown to the above-mentioned author, and the attitudes outside this sphere, towards friends or acquaintances. There is a considerable difference between the two areas. This was striking even in Rānā times. Liechty himself notes that these ruling families lived like commoners in small gloomy rooms in their palace, in stark contrast to the wide open spaces in their opulent, showy European-style mansions (2010:114-115). The persons described by this author do not seem to have any relatives or religion.

The social stratification of Nepal is much more complex and intricate. Broadly speaking, it can be situated at the intersection between economic, geographical, ethnic and caste parameters. It is particularly difficult to assign a rule of precedence to one of these elements over the others. In his work published in 2005, Mahendra Lawoti showed the importance of both castes and ethnic groups as major sources of stratification. His category of 'Ba-Chhe' (Bāhun-Chetri) combines the two (caste Hill Parbatiyā and upper castes). To sum up, the patterns of inequality in this country result from a combination of these various factors. Depending on the specific case

15 Mark Liechty (2009, pp. 9-15) defines this urban middle class by their cultural practices. Such a view is highly debatable and neglects economic and social realities. Persons belonging to very different classes, including the urban poor, may have the same cultural practices and way of thinking.

analysed, one issue may indeed prevail. A Nepali citizen has a simultaneous multiplicity of identities and affiliations which have a strong bearing on his status. The Social Inclusion Atlas and Ethnographic Profiles of the most excluded communities, which is being compiled today by the Sociology and Anthropological Department of Tribhuvan University, Kirtipur, will hopefully throw some light on these debatable questions. This kind of study is needed to explain the complexities of modern Nepal.

The Dalit situation can once again be given here as an interesting example which calls for close attention. It is a widely known fact that, save Dyahlās (Deulā, Pujāri, Jalāri) and Chyāme (Kuchikār and Chyāmkhala), former Newar *achūts* (five per cent of the Newar population), refuse to register in the National Dalit Commission.¹⁶ They insist on remaining separate and in maintaining their distinctiveness. Newar Dey Dabū, the main representative Newar *Janajāti* organisation, plays a role in this respect. Their members would like Newar Dalits to remain Newar and for them to register as Newar for reservation and other purposes. Here, ethnicity supersedes the potential solidarity of groups belonging to different ethnic groups to join a common low-caste association. Such a division of Newar Dalits from the mainstream Dalit movement illustrates the force of ethnicity in matters of caste in the contemporary Nepal. Obviously, the influence of political parties among Dalit organisations also provokes internal divisions and factionalism.

It must be recalled that the three Nepal caste systems concerned here that of the Parbatiyās, of the Newars and of the Madhesis exist independently of each other, with little contact and interaction. The Newārs very rarely call upon Parbatiyā Bāhuns (Brāhmans) to celebrate their rituals. The reverse is also true. Newars have acquired some religious specialists who came from India (the Shaivite order of Jangams, for instance), without granting them a role in their familial ceremonies. This is a major feature of the Nepali caste system, which is anchored in traditional forms of belonging attached to ethnicity, culture and geographical zones. The people making up these three hierarchical settings do not even speak the same language. Yet some changes appear here and there. Some Newār castes, for instance, now call upon a Nepali Parbatiyā priest to perform some of their funerary and other

16 Dyahlā and Chyāme themselves are divided into a 'Pro-Dalit' (in favour of affiliation with Dalits) and an 'Anti-Dalit' faction (opposed to being called Dalit, they prefer to be considered a *Janajāti*, associated with Newars). One argument put forward by the Anti-Dalit faction is that Dyahlā are the caretakers of goddess temples, and consequently of too high a status to be called Dalit. This is still a major bone of contention today. See on this subject M. Maharjan (2012). What is even more surprising is that Dyahlā and Chyāme are traditionally reluctant to be considered as Newars. They do not feel that they are part of this ethnic group (Toffin 1984).

religious rituals, such as *satya nārāyan pūjā*, and they rely increasingly on Damāi (Parbatiyā) musical bands at the time of a marriage procession.¹⁷

Conclusion

To sum up, caste as an ideal and respected hierarchical system has clearly fallen from grace. The globalisation and the triumph of democratic ideas in the international arena have challenged its principles. Caste does not fit in with the modern world and the widely recognised values of equality and inclusivism which prevail today in most educated and Westernised spheres. Even new Hindu religious movements and sects defend a more equalitarian attitude than old Brāhmanical values. Similarly, NGOs and government bodies view the caste system as an obstacle towards an inclusive policy; they overtly criticise the stigmatisation of lower castes. More generally, the social whirl and increased opportunities for individual mobility that have been set in motion by the expansion of the globalising middle class question traditional collective identities based on caste or ethnicity. It is difficult to believe that these developments will leave the social order unchanged. They tend to create alternative hierarchies.

Despite this, caste is far from being a thing of the past. It has become weaker but it still constitutes a major form of social grouping in Nepal and its dogma is still in force in most of society. Hierarchy between caste groups is so far regarded by many people as a natural and an acceptable fact and value. In the 1990s, the British anthropologist Alan Macfarlane wrote: 'In the agricultural peasantry (and even in cities), people are still primarily bound through marriage, kinship, caste, friendship work assistance' (1994:123). The situation has not drastically changed two decades later. A Westernisation of lifestyle does not mean that the traditional occupations and ceremonial roles have been totally abandoned. Most importantly, caste has become substantialised and essentialised. Its role in sustaining identity and belonging has been reinforced. Caste still notably plays a major part in the political sphere as well as within clientele links which pervade the Nepali state top-down, West to East, and South to North (Ramirez 2000). Such durability is nothing exceptional. Despite having adopted a republican system in 1947, India, the other foremost Hindu country in South Asia, is still dominated at local level by caste, which has remained up to the present day a central element in society, provoking the exasperation of some intellectuals and politicians. There is still a long road to a society

17 In Patan, the most famous and popular musical group, the *Everest Band*, is made up of Damāis. More often than not, nowadays, Newar Khadgīs refuse to play music during marriages celebrated by Newars.

where citizenship entitlement will not depend on the individual's caste (or lineage) membership. The political project put forward by the radical UCPN-M (Maoist), which explicitly tried to destroy the existing class and caste hierarchies, has obviously failed. Old habits and caste-ridden bonds have shown greater resilience than was expected. The UCPN-M's original target of creating a class-free society has been abandoned (save the most radical Maoist wing led by Mohan Vaidya) and acclimated to Nepali realities, in particular to the ethnic diversity of the country. Yet *Māobādī* equalitarian ideas are deeply ingrained in society and have considerably accelerated the dissemination of inclusive ideas.

Social change takes much longer than political transformations or a revolution to operate. These phenomena have to be studied over the long term. It is worthwhile in this respect to mention the name of Alexis de Tocqueville (1805-59), the nineteenth-century French intellectual, sociologist and politician (he was Minister of Foreign Affairs for a short time in 1849). One of his main publications, *L'Ancien régime et la Révolution* (1856) [*The Ancient Regime and the Revolution*], is an outstanding reflection on the theme of continuity and change throughout a period of political revolutionary turmoil and destitution of monarchy. Alexis de Tocqueville highlighted the rise of individualism with the advent of democracy, contrasting this development with the Old Regime where individuals were strongly bound to collective units such as family, kin groups, locality and social order (or class). But he also stressed the continuities between the old monarchical French regime and the post-revolutionary state and society. According to him, the Revolution has not brought about a radically new form of society; from time to time one can see aristocratic colours showing through.

These sociological and historical remarks are highly significant if contemporary Nepal is to be fully understood. The move from monarchy to republicanism and democracy has not destroyed the old social order, the caste system and its inequities. The continuing influence of caste and religion, in total contradiction with the secular and inclusive official discourse, is a remarkable feature of present-day Nepal. These lasting sociological constraints explain the thorny process, loaded with impedimenta, of the construction of an equalitarian society in the course of the last six decades. Today the country can be described as a hybrid form of a formal republican political system superposed on a durable caste (and ethnicity) base. Resolving these contradictions will take time, and perhaps create more turmoil.

Acknowledgments

I wish to express my thanks to Shova Shakya and Prasant Shrestha for providing me with various documents (reports, press cuttings) in the course of my research. Bernadette Sellers kindly revised the English text.

Postscript

This paper has been published in 2013, in G. Toffin, 'From Monarchy to Republic', Vajra Books, Kathmandu, and has been only slightly revised here.

References

- Bennett, Lynn. 2006. *Unequal Citizens. Gender, Caste and Ethnic Exclusion in Nepal*. Kathmandu: The Word Bank.
- Béteille, André. 2012. *Democracy and Its Institutions*. Delhi: Oxford Books.
- Béteille, André. 2012. The Peculiar Tenacity of Caste. *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. XLVII, n°113, pp. 41-48.
- Bhattachan et al. 2004. *Dalit's Empowerment and Inclusion for Integration in the National Mainstream: Strategy for Influencing Policy and Institutions*. Kathmandu, Dalit Empowerment and Inclusion Project.
- Boudon, Raymond. 2005. *Tocqueville aujourd'hui*. Paris: Odile Jacob.
- Cameron, Mary. 2007. Considering Dalits and Political Identity in Imaging a New Nepal. *Himalaya*, XXVVI, 1-2, pp. 13-26.
- Cox, Thomas. 1994. The current socioeconomic status of Untouchables in Nepal. *Occasional Papers in Sociology and Anthropology*, Tribhuvan University, vol. 4, 1994, pp. 90-109.
- Dumont, Louis. 1972. *Homo Hierarchicus. The Caste System and its Implications*. London: Paladin Books.
- Forum of Federations. The Global Network on Federalism. 2009. *English-Nepali Glossary of Federalism Terms*. Stockholm: FinePrint inc.
- Fürer-Haimendorf, von, Christopher. 1966. Caste Concepts and Status Distinction in Buddhist Communities of Western Nepal. In *Caste and Kin in Nepal, India, and Ceylon*, ed. Christopher von Fürer-Haimendorf, pp. 140-160. Bombay: Asia Publishing House.
- Guha, Ramachandra & Parry, Jonathan (eds.). 1999. *Institutions and Inequalities. Essays in honour of André Béteille*. Delhi: Oxford.
- Gupta, Dipankar. 2004. Introduction: The Certitude of Caste; When Identity Trumps Hierarchy. *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, 38, 1-2, pp. V-XV.
- Gurung, Harka. 2005. The Dalit Context. *Occasional Paper in Sociology and Anthropology*, Tribhuvan University, vol. 9, 2005, pp. 1-21.

- Gurung, Harka, et al. 2007. *From Exclusion to Inclusion. Socio-Political Agenda for Nepal*. Lalitpur: Social Inclusion Research Fund,
- Hocart, A.M. 1938. *Les castes*, traduit de l'anglais par E. J. Levy et J. Auboyer, Paris: Paul Geuthner.
- Hocart, A.M. 1970. *Rois et courtisans*, introduction de R. Needham, Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1978. [édition anglaise: *Kings and Councillors*, Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- Höfer, András. 1979. *The Caste Hierarchy and the State in Nepal. A Study of the Muluki Ain of 1854*. Universitätsverlag Wagner: Innsbruck.
- Ishii, Hiroshi. 2007. The transformation of caste relationships in Nepal: Rethinking Substantialisation'. In *Political and Social Transformations in North India and Nepal*, edited by Hiroshi Ishii, David Gellner and Katsuo Nawa, pp. 91-129. Delhi: Manohar.
- Jaffrelot, Christophe. 2003. *India's Silent Revolution – The Rise of the Lower Castes in North India*. New York/Columbia University Press; Londres/Hurst: New Delhi/Permanent Black.
- Lawoti, Mahendra. 2005. *Towards a Democratic Nepal. Inclusive Political Institution for a Multicultural Society*. Delhi: Sage.
- Liechty, Mark. 2003. *Suitably Modern. Making Middle-Class Culture in Kathmandu*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Liechty, Mark. 2010. *Out here in Kathmandu. Modernity on the Global Periphery*. Kathmandu: Martin Chautari Press.
- Macfarlane, Alan. 1994. Fatalism and Development in Nepal. In *Nepal in the Nineties*, ed. M. Hutt, pp. 106-127. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Maharjan, Maheshraj. 2012. Identity Crisis: A case Study of Newar Dalits. *Contributions to Nepalese Studies*. vol. 39, pp. 113-143.
- Malagodi, Mara. 2013. *Constitutional Nationalism and Legal Exclusion. Equality, Identity, Politics and Democracy in Nepal*. Delhi: Oxford.
- Michelutti, Lucia. 2004. 'We (Yadavs) are a Caste of Politicians': Caste and Modern Politics in a North Indian Town. *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, 38, 1-2, pp. 43-71.
- National Dalit Commission. 2010. *Dalit Caste Annex: Update Report*. Lalitpur: Nepal Dalit Commission.
- Nepali, Gopal Singh. 1987. Changes in Rigidity and Flexibility of Caste in the Kathmandu Valley. In, *Heritage of the Kathmandu Valley*, eds. N. Gustchow & A. Michaels, pp. 317-332. Sankt Augustin: VGH-Wiss.-Verlag (Nepalica, 4).
- Newār Dey Dabū. 2007. *Newā Samāj*. Kathmandu: Newā Dey Dabū.
- Neupane, Dhiraj Sharma. 2013. Story of Poverty. *The Kathmandu Post*, 4 March 2013.
- Pariyar, Kamal. 2013. Enforcement of Anti-Untouchability Law still Weak. *Republica*, 7 June 2012, p. 5.

- Ramirez, Philippe. 2000. *De la disparition des chefs. Une anthropologie politique népalaise*. Paris: CNRS-Éditions.
- Sen, Amartya. 2006. *Identity and Violence*. New York: Norton.
- Shah, Arvind. 2007. Caste in the 21st Century: from Systems to Elements. *Economic and Political Weekly*, November 3, 2007, pp. 109-116.
- Srinivas, M.N. 1995. *Social Change in Modern India*. Delhi: Orient Longman.
- Srinivas, M.N. (ed.). 1996. *Caste and its avatars*. Delhi: Penguin Books India.
- Thapa, Deepak. 2013. Comrades no more. *The Kathmandu Post*, June 24, 2013.
- Tocqueville, Alexis de. *Oeuvres*. 3 vol. Paris: Gallimard (Encyclopédie de la Pléiade), 1991-2004.
- Toffin, Gérard. 1984. *Société et Religion chez les Néwar du Népal*. Paris: Ed. du CNRS.
- Toffin, Gérard. 1996. *Le Palais et le Temple. La fonction royale dans l'ancienne vallée du Népal*. Paris. CNRS-Éditions.
- United Nations Development Programme. 2008. *The Dalits of Nepal and a New Constitution. A Resource of the Situation of Dalits in Nepal, their Demands and the Implications for a new Constitution*. UNDP. Kathmandu.

THE CONTRIBUTORS

Bandana Gyawali is defending her PhD dissertation ‘Ambiguous *Bikas*: History of the Concept of Development in Nepal, 1900-2006’ at the University of Helsinki in August 2018. Based on Nepal-specific archival sources, her current research focuses on early market history. Development, development as idea, history of ideas and history of infrastructure are her other research interests. She is a researcher at Martin Chautari.

Kanako Nakagawa is a researcher involved in anthropology teaching as an associate professor at the Department of Sociology, Otemon Gakuin University, Japan. She completed her PhD in Sociology in 2014 from Kwansei Gakuin University. Her thesis examined the re-interpretation of caste mediated by the market economy through a case study of meat sellers in Kathmandu. Prior to this, she worked for several years at the Embassy of Japan in Nepal as a researcher. She published a book of *Neparu de kasuto wo ikinuku (Living the ‘Caste’ in Contemporary Nepal: Ethnography on the People Engage in Animal Sacrifice and Meat Selling)* in 2016. The following awards were given to this book; the 44th Shibusawa Award and the 6th Japanese Association for South Asian Studies Award in 2017.

Lokranjan Parajuli is a Senior Researcher at Martin Chautari, an academic NGO. He has edited/co-edited half a dozen books, and his articles have appeared in edited volumes, journals and mainstream newspapers. He is also one of the editors of the journals *Studies in Nepali History and Society* and *Samaj Adhyayan*.

Soma Kumari Rana holds a BSc degree in Agriculture Science and Master’s degree in Sociology from Tribhuvan University and MSc degree in International Organic Agriculture from University of Kassel, Germany. Her main areas of expertise are sustainable agriculture development, agriculture – based rural livelihoods and Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI). She has contributed to the above-mentioned fields for more than 15 years as a front-line extension worker and a programme coordinator in different international

organizations: GIZ, UN-FPA, UMN, CECI, CARE and HELVETAS. Currently, she is supporting to promote Nutrition Sensitive Agriculture and agriculture extension system at policy level in national and international level.

Sudhindra Sharma is Executive Director at *Inter Disciplinary Analysts (IDA)*, a research and consulting organization based in Kathmandu, Nepal. A Sociologist by training he completed his PhD from the University of Tampere, Finland in 2001 and Masters from Ateneo de Manila University, Philippines in 1992. He has been a visiting scholar at the German Development Institute (Bonn), Center for the Study of Developing Societies (Delhi) and the Institute of Asian Studies (Bangkok). He is the author of the book *Procuring Water: Foreign Aid and Rural Water Supply in Nepal* (2001) and a co-editor of the book *Aid Under Stress: Water, Forests and Finnish Support in Nepal* (2004). He has made several contributions to the policy papers brought out by the Institute of Development Studies, University of Helsinki. Besides foreign aid, he has focused on religions – namely Hinduism and Islam and has to his credit several research articles in journals and books in Nepal and in India. Sharma is also interested in quantitative social science research and has co-authored several political opinion poll reports in Nepal. Ever since its inception in 1998 Sudhindra Sharma has been associated with the Immersion Course on Contemporary Social Issues first in the capacity of coordinator then as a moderator. Since its inception in 2010, Sharma has been Adjunct Professor of Sociology at Nepa School of Social Sciences and Humanities. He was awarded Docent in Development Studies at the University of Helsinki in February 2009 and supervises PhD candidates in Development Studies at the University.

Khem Shreesh received his Bachelor's degree in physics and mathematics and his Master's degree in business studies from Tribhuvan University, Nepal. He was awarded the Toni Hagen Fellowship in the Social Sciences in 2009 and has worked as a research consultant and copy-editor.

Shiva Kumar Shrestha holds a BSc degree in Agriculture Science from Tribhuvan University, Nepal and Master's degree in Social Inclusion, Gender and Rural Livelihoods from Wageningen University, the Netherlands. His main areas of expertise are decentralized and pluralistic agriculture extension, sustainable agriculture development and agriculture-based rural livelihoods. He has contributed to the above-mentioned fields for more than 21 years as a front-line extension worker and a senior policy adviser in different international organizations: GIZ, DFID, UN-FAO, USAID and HELVETAS, Nepal. Currently, he is supporting the Government of Nepal in

establishing and strengthening decentralized agriculture extension system at local government.

Amanda Snellinger received her PhD in anthropology from Cornell University. She has researched, written, and taught on the subjects of politics, law, activism, democratic theory, secularism, pluralism, and youth in South Asia. She is the author of *Making New Nepal: From Student Activism to Mainstream Politics*. She currently works in the field of user experience research and writes about research ethics and data protection in the tech industry.

Sudeep Jana Thing is an early-career researcher involved in geography teaching as a sessional academic at the Department of Planning and Geography, Curtin University, Perth. He completed PhD (in Social Science) in 2014 which examines contestations between Sonaha people and national park management in Nepal from the approach of political ecology. Prior to this, he worked for several years with various socio-environmental NGOs in Nepal as a researcher in the field of conservation, conflicts and social justice; protected areas governance and equity; indigenous peoples and community conserved areas.

Gérard Toffin, social and cultural anthropologist, is Director Emeritus of Research at the Center for Himalayan Studies, CNRS, France. Since 1970, he has undertaken intensive fields works in various parts of Nepal. In May 2013, he received the Nai Derukh International Award (Nai Prakashan) for his contribution to the study of Nepali culture and society.

Appendix

Conference Schedule

This page has been left blank intentionally.

Second Annual Kathmandu Conference on Nepal and the Himalaya

24-26 July, 2013, Hotel Shanker, Kathmandu
organised by Social Science Baha, The Association for Nepal and Himalayan Studies & Britain-Nepal Academic Society

Day 1: 24 July (Wednesday)		
PANEL PRESENTATIONS		
Opening remarks: Nirmal Man Tuladhar, Chair, Social Science Baha		
Panel 1 9 – 11 am	Chair: David Holmberg , Professor, Department of Anthropology, Cornell University	
	Sudhindra Sharma Executive Director, Interdisciplinary Analysts Sujan Ghimire Research Officer, Interdisciplinary Analysts Bandana Gyawali Gautam PhD Candidate, Department of Political and Economic Studies, University of Helsinki	Modernity Prior to the Era of Development: Forestry Management, Domestic Water Supply, and 'Pragati' during the Rana Period
	Lok Ranjan Parajuli Martin Chautari	From Controlling Access to Crafting Minds: Experiments in Basic Education in Late Rana Nepal
	Thomas Robertson Associate Professor, Humanities Department, Worcester Polytechnic Institute	A Lowland Plague in a Himalayan Country: A Historical Political Ecology of Disease in Nepal Before 1950
	Discussant: Sambriddhi Kharel , Senior Research Scholar, Nepā School of Social Sciences and Humanities	
BREAK: 11 am – 11:30 am		
Panel 2 11:30 am – 1:30 pm	Chair: Gérard Toffin , Senior Researcher, National Centre for Scientific Research	
	Andrea Kölbel PhD Candidate, School of Geography and the Environment, University of Oxford	Nepal's Change Agents: Educated Youth and their Involvements in the Local Labour Market
	Shrochis Karki PhD Candidate, International Development, University of Oxford	Positive Deviance: 'Success' in Unexpected Places
	Amanda Snellinger Postdoctoral Research Associate, School of Geography and the Environment, University of Oxford	Mobilising for What?: A Discursive History of Nepal's Youth Policy
	Discussant: Bandita Sijapati , Research Director, Centre for the Study of Labour and Mobility	
LUNCH: 1:30 – 2:30 pm		

Panel 3 2:30 – 4:00 pm	Chair: Joanna Pfaff-Czarnecka , Professor of Social Anthropology, Bielefeld University	
	Christie Lai Ming Lam Assistant Professor, Graduate School of Human Sciences, Osaka University	Park, Hill Migration, and the Changes of Gender Relations of Rana Tharus in Far-western Nepal
	Sanjay Sharma Research Associate, Centre for the Study of Labour and Mobility	The Political Economy of Migration Process: A 'Distorted' Rational Choice of Nepali Labour Migrants
	Discussant: Thomas Robertson , Associate Professor, Humanities Department, Worcester Polytechnic Institute	
BREAK: 4 – 5 pm		
Keynote 5 – 6:30 pm	Moderator: Abhi Subedi , Professor, Department of English, Tribhuvan University	
	Michael Hutt Professor, Nepali and Himalayan Studies, SOAS	Five Nepali Novels

Day 2: 25 July (Thursday)

PANEL PRESENTATIONS

PANEL 4 9 – 11 am	Chair: Sudhindra Sharma , Executive Director, Interdisciplinary Analysts	
	Sudeep Jana Thing PhD Candidate, Faculty of Humanities at Curtin University	Politics of Conservation and Space: National Park and Sonaha Ethnic Minorities
	Soma Kumari Rana Programme Officer (GESI), SSMP/ HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation Shiva Kumar Shrestha Senior Programme Officer, SSMP/ HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation	Decentralising the Farmer-to-Farmer Extension Approach to the Local Level: Challenges and Opportunities
	Christopher Butler PhD candidate, Department of Sociology, University of California Santa Cruz	Water Unites, Water Divides: Resistance to the West Seti and Upper Karnali Dams in Nepal
	Discussant: Christie Lai Ming Lam , Assistant Professor, Graduate School of Human Sciences, Osaka University	
BREAK: 11 am – 11:30 am		
PANEL 5 11:30 am – 1:30 pm	Chair: David Gellner , Professor of Social Anthropology, University of Oxford	
	Gérard Toffin Senior Researcher, National Centre for Scientific Research	Caste in Contemporary Nepal: Hierarchy and Equality
	Kanako Nakagawa Research Assistant, Institute for Advanced Social Research, Kwansei Gakuin University	Cultural Politics in the Markets: A Case from Inter-Caste Negotiations at Meat Business in Kathmandu
	Ajaya N Mali Tutor, Nepā School of Social Sciences and Humanities	The Newar Town and the Festival
	Discussant: Sujeet K Karn , Department of Social Sciences, University of Hull	
LUNCH: 1:30 – 2:30 pm		

PANEL 6 2:30 – 4 pm	Chair: Mahendra Lawoti , Professor, Department of Political Science, Western Michigan University	
	Khem Raj Shreesh Sudhindra Sharma Executive Director, Interdisciplinary Analysts	Paul Collier and Nepal's Prospects for Coming Out of the Conflict Trap
	Sujeet K Karn Department of Social Sciences, University of Hull	'Grief Arising Out of Violent Death is Like Swallowing a Hot Chilli': A Nepali Case
	Discussant: Mara Malagodi , British Academy Postdoctoral Fellow, Department of Law, London School of Economics and Political Science	
BREAK: 4 – 5 pm		
KEYNOTE 5 – 6:30 pm	Moderator: Hira Vishwakarma , Executive President, Dalit Studies and Development Centre	
	Mahendra Lawoti Professor, Department of Political Science, Western Michigan University	Democracy in Trouble? Political Elite's Attitude and Behaviour and Regime Stability in Nepal

Day 3: 26 July (Friday) PANEL PRESENTATIONS		
PANEL 7 9 – 10:30 am	Chair: Steven Folmar , Assistant Professor, Cultural/Applied Anthropology, Wake Forest University	
	Pauline Limbu Junior Research Fellow, Nepā School of Social Sciences and Humanities	History and Political Movements: Kipat in Today's Limbuwan Movement
	Gregory Pierce PhD Candidate, Human Ecology, LUCID Research Centre, Lund University	The Embodiments of Ice and Bone: Dualistic Ideologies, 'Permanence Through Certainty', and The Phenomenology of Being of Dolpo
	Discussant: Ajaya N Mali , Tutor, Nepā School of Social Sciences and Humanities	
BREAK: 10:30 – 11 am		
PANEL 8 11 am – 1 pm	Chair: Kathryn March , Professor of Anthropology and Feminist, Gender and Sexuality Studies and Asian Studies, Cornell University	
	Joanna Morrison Senior Research Associate, UCL Institute for Global Health	Who Participates?: Examining Socio-demographic Differences in a Community Mobilisation Intervention to Improve Maternal and Newborn Survival in Dhanusha and Makwanpur Districts
	Vikas Paudel, Dharma S Manandhar, Bhim P Shrestha Mother and Infant Research Activities (MIRA) Naomi Saville, Joanna Morrison, Kristen Ormston UCL Institute for Global Health	Understanding Nutritional Behaviour of Pregnant and Postpartum Women in Dhanusha District, Nepal
	Dhruba Bahadur Khatri MPhil Fellow and Teaching Assistant, Department of Geography and Population Studies, PN Campus	Determinants of Intimate Partner Violence against Women in Pokhara, Nepal
	Discussant: Amanda Snellinger , Postdoctoral Research Associate, School of Geography and the Environment, University of Oxford	
Closing remarks: Michael Hutt , Chair, Britain-Nepal Academic Council		
LUNCH: 1 – 2 pm		

PANEL DISCUSSION 2:30 – 4:30 pm	Moderator: David Gellner , Professor of Social Anthropology, University of Oxford	
	Pitamber Sharma Former Vice-Chair of the National Planning Commission and former Professor of Geography, Tribhuvan University	Strategic Plan for the Proposed Social Science Research Council in Nepal
	Comments by: Kathryn S March , Professor of Anthropology and Feminist, Gender and Sexuality Studies and Asian Studies, Cornell University; and Pratyoush Onta , Chair, Martin Chautari and Member, Social Science Baha	

This page has been left blank intentionally.



Britain-Nepal
Academic Council

