

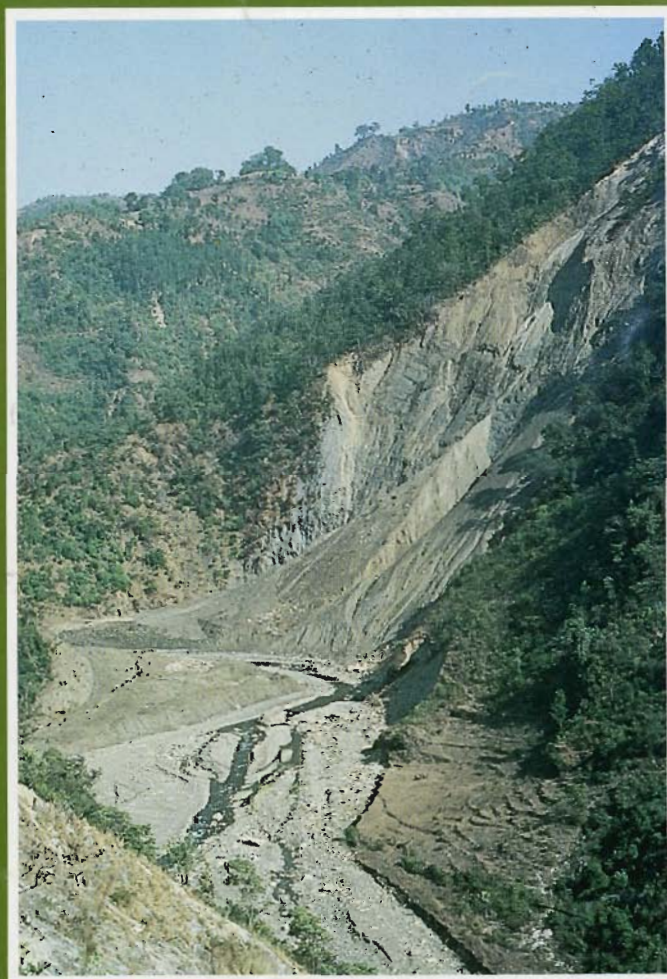


**ICIMOD**

International Centre for Integrated  
Mountain Development

# **EROSION AND SEDIMENTATION PROCESSES IN THE NEPALESE HIMALAYA**

**by Brian Carson**



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The front cover shows the Tinna River, north of Butwal Palpa District (see p. 20)

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The views expressed are those of the author, and do not necessarily represent the views of the above organisations.



## PROLOGUE

The ideas presented in this booklet are not original. Hindu mythology, nurtured in the Himalaya, came to similar conclusions about their landscape, thousands of years ago. Hindu gods have good and evil forms and every power has its opposites. Shiva, the noble creator of the world and Kali, his female consort, a blood-thirsty goddess of destruction. These opposites characterize the cycles of life, death and rebirth. Such images

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The philosophy of Hinduism, "Things we must fear" was developed. Landslides, earthquakes, floods and drought are considered the work of gods, beyond man's control. "Mayaburi", they must be borne. This is one of the major points of this paper. Man does not cause the major landslides or floods in the Himalaya and so he cannot easily control them.

However, traditional Hinduism has not evolved quickly enough to detect the significance of the changes to the landscape over the last one hundred years. Although cycles of creation and destruction are continuing, unchanged, the ambitious loss of topsoil by rainfall erosion is accelerating at an alarming rate and is now threatening the livelihood of the Himalayan hill farmer. He is committed to better land management must learn to differentiate between what is the work of man and what is the work of Kali. This is important to understand for developing appropriate conservation measures in the Himalaya.

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The ideas presented in this booklet are not original. Hindu mythology, nurtured in the Himalaya came to similar conclusions about their landscape, thousands of years ago. Hindu gods have good and evil forms and every power has its opposite: Shiva, the noble creator of the world and Kali his female consort, a blood-thirsty goddess of destruction. These opposites characterize the cycles of life, death and rebirth. Such images are paralleled in the Himalayan landscapes: the raging flood vs the fertile silt laid down by that flood; catastrophic landslides vs the gentle sloping landslide runouts upon which agriculture could begin again rejuvenated. During the early periods of Hinduism, the philosophy of "Majaburi" or "Things we must bear" was developed. Landslides, earthquakes, floods and drought are considered the work of gods, beyond man's control. "Majaburi", they must be borne. This is one of the major points of this paper. Man does not cause the major landslides or floods in the Himalaya and so he cannot easily control them.

However, traditional Hinduism has not evolved quickly enough to detect the significance of the changes to the landscape over the last one hundred years. Although cycles of creation and destruction are continuing, unchanged, the insidious loss of topsoil by rainfall erosion is accelerating at an alarming rate and is now threatening the livelihood of the Himalayan hill farmer. Those committed to better land management must learn to differentiate between what is the work of man and what is the work of Kali. This is important to understand for developing appropriate conservation measures in the Himalaya.

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