



Bihari K. Shrestha

# A HIMALAYAN ENCLAVE IN TRANSITION

*A Study of Change in the Western Mountains of Nepal*

Foreword

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*A Study of Change  
in the Western Mountains of Nepal*

**Bihari K. Shrestha**

*International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development*

*(ICIMOD)*

*Kathmandu, Nepal*

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# Foreword

The Kingdom of Nepal is a network of many ethnic and caste groups, each with their own history, traditions, racial backgrounds, and social and economic characteristics and each of which either dominates, or shares with others, its region of domicile to form what is generally referred to as a distinctive cultural "mosaic" in South Asia.

While its characterisation as a mosaic betrays the impression of enduring inter-ethnic harmony and peaceful co-existence, information, is still scanty, despite the burgeoning amount of literature on Nepal, in regard to the contents and dynamics of the relationships between different social groups in the country.

This lack of information is even worse for the mountain regions of the country with their formidable and inaccessible terrains, apparent lack of resources and economic development potential, widespread poverty, and relatively unimpressive population numbers which have imbued national leaders, decision-makers, donors, and researchers alike with an attitude of ambivalence and have generally kept them away. The mountain regions of Nepal, for all practical purposes, remain the "forgotten land".

This present study is an attempt to analyse the life and economy in a mountain village in western Nepal and the interactions among its different Hindu caste groups as they go through the ever-occurring process of change in this Himalayan enclave. For the sake of comparison, it also draws upon a study carried out by the same author of the same village some two decades ago as part of the multi-disciplinary Karnali Folk Culture Study coordinated by the eminent Nepalese scholar and intellectual, the then Member of the Royal Nepal Academy, Mr. Satya Mohan Joshi. It is to be hoped that this study will contribute substantially to our knowledge of the poorest among mountain peoples and consequently point the way to measures of alleviating their dire poverty.

Dr. E.F. Tacke  
Director General

# Acknowledgements

The author is immensely grateful to the Director General of ICIMOD, Dr. E.F. Tacke, for his kind interest and support for the study. He is also indebted to Dr. Mahesh Banskota, the ICIMOD Programme Director.

The author is also grateful for the able assistance received in fieldwork for the study from his daughter, Satyabhama Shrestha, nephew, Dibesh Bhakta Mathema, and son, Saibya Shrestha. Above all, the author wishes to render his grateful thanks to the people of Diyargaon (a pseudonym) who, for obvious reasons, have to remain anonymous.

Bihari K. Shrestha

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## LEGEND OF WEIGHTS AND MEASURES

	a quarter of a paise	=	man	Page
Frontispiece	approx. 25kg	=	doke	
	approx. 0.08 lbs	=	tal	
	45.44 litres	=	kal	
Chapter 1: THE ECONOMIC SCENE	a bunch of grass tied into a bundle	=	laxa	1
Introduction	held within two palms	=		1
Rationale and Objectives of the Current Study	approx. 0.25 kg (0.5 lbs)	=	mana	3
Objectives of the Study	0.0157 lb	=	mano-mun	4
Conceptual Framework and Methodology	a 50 paise coin	=	mohe	5
The Setting	approx. 75.8 kg (0.17 lbs)	=	mu	6
History	a hundredth of a rupee	=	paes	12
Settlement Pattern	approx. 3.8 kg	=	pahe	19
Population Changes	0.0209 lbs	=	topani	19
Division of Labour	five annas	=	supo	25
Castes and Inter-caste Relations	11 annas	=	tol	27
Family, Kinship, and Extended Social Relations	an embrace with both hands	=	ungalo	29
Religious Tradition	the amount that can be contained in the			
Conflict and Cooperation				

Chapter 2: THE ECONOMIC SCENE				31
Agriculture	(Other Nepal terms are explained in the text)			31
Land Distribution				32
Ownership Changes Between 1970 to 1990				41
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*Dedicated to*  
**Professor John T. Hitchcock and Mrs. Patricia Hitchcock**  
 who, more than three decades ago,  
 initiated me into feeling at home in the villages of Nepal

*and to*

**Mr. Satya Mohan Joshi**  
 who pioneered the first multi-disciplinary study  
 by national researchers in the Himalayan Region  
 in the pursuit of his vision to extend  
 the frontiers of Nepalese scholarship.

## LEGEND OF WEIGHTS AND MEASURES

<i>dam</i>	=	a quarter of a <i>paisa</i>
<i>doko</i>	=	approx. 25kg.
<i>hal</i>	=	approx. 0.08 ha
<i>khal</i>	=	45.44 litres
<i>lara</i>	=	a bunch of grass tied into a knot and held within two palms
<i>mana</i>	=	approx. 0.45 kg (0.568 litres)
<i>mato-muri</i>	=	0.0127 ha
<i>mohar</i>	=	a 50 <i>paisa</i> coin
<i>muri</i>	=	approx. 72.6 kg (0.013 ha)
<i>paisa</i>	=	a hundredth of a rupee
<i>pathi</i>	=	approx. 3.6 kg.
<i>ropani</i>	=	0.0509 ha
<i>supo</i>	=	five <i>pathi</i>
<i>tola</i>	=	11 grammes
<i>ungalo</i>	=	an embrace with both hands or the amount that can be contained within it

(Other Nepali terms are explained in the text)

## NEPALI CALENDAR

## ENGLISH CALENDAR

<i>Baisakh</i>	=	April/May
<i>Jestha</i>	=	May/June
<i>Ashar</i>	=	June/July
<i>Shrawan</i>	=	July/August
<i>Bhadra</i>	=	August/September
<i>Aswin</i>	=	September/October
<i>Kartik</i>	=	October/November
<i>Mangsir</i>	=	November/December
<i>Poush</i>	=	December/January
<i>Magh</i>	=	January/February
<i>Fagun</i>	=	February/March
<i>Chaitra</i>	=	March/April

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