

CHAPTER 7

Conclusions

Despite its inaccessibility, Diyargaon has undergone many changes in the two decades between 1970 and 1990. Most of these changes are linked to the transformation that the country has undergone throughout many decades.

In contrast to the relative seclusion of the earlier period, Jumla and Diyargaon have been exposed to a number of external interventions which have had both unsettling and assimilative effects on the local people. With the introduction of the grassroots' based *Panchayat* policy, culminating in national level organisations, local political leaders could participate in the affairs of the district and interaction with the rest of the country also intensified. As a small but significant indicator of development, a civil servant in the area is no longer called a *Gorkhali* (meaning a representative of the House of Gorkha which conquered and annexed the territory in the late eighteenth century). Government authority, which was once represented by the highly-feared administrative chief known differently at different times, e.g., the *bada hakim* (or literally the big chief) during the Rana regime and, later, the Zonal Commissioner, became more open to negotiation and

freer interaction under the system. The local *Panchayat* even passed resolutions against corrupt officials.

More significant, however, has been the introduction of a number of national development programmes in the district which were also implemented in Diyargaon. A fairly large number of services has been established with the stated objective of socioeconomic development of the area, although a few of them, such as the building of infrastructure, educational, and health interventions and the introduction of fruit crops, mainly apples and walnuts, have been more useful and effective than others. With the injection of more cash into the local economy, a tiny little bazaar-like settlement has sprung up in the village, encouraging a number of village households to set up trailside stores and escalating the real estate prices in the particular area in the process.

Population and Socioeconomic Changes: The Tightening of the Noose

The most important change has, however, been the acceleration of population growth during the twentieth century, portending the end of over a century of homeostasis in Jumla (Bishop 1990: 359). In 1970, Bishop had noted that serious population pressure was already being felt and had observed that the region lacked the capacity to support the then population of 175,000. Prospects for controlling the population growth were dim (Bishop 1970: 40).

The prophecy has more or less been borne out in Diyargaon, where the means of livelihood have always been scarce. The population increased by 32 per cent during the two decades between 1970 and 1990, and this created its own gradual, but significant, ripple effects on the life and economy of its people.

Diyargaon has been far from being an egalitarian, homogenous society. Despite its poor resource base, it is highly stratified along economic lines and orthodox Hindu caste division, one largely reinforcing the other.

While agriculture remains the main basis of subsistence, the land endowment has been very small, 8.5 *muri* (0.1 ha) per capita, which also includes a substantial proportion of least productive *lekali* lands.

The situation is much worse for the majority *kamsel* whose per capita land ownership is only 4.8 *muri* (0.06 ha) and includes an overwhelming proportion (63.5%) in *lekali* lands.

Although the upper caste households have made some gains in their land ownership status (from 8.4 *muri* per capita in 1970 to 12.7 *muri* in 1990, i.e., from 0.1 ha to 0.16 ha), it has not been very significant in absolute terms, and more so considering the fact that the majority of such landholdings (50.8%) again are comprised of *lekali* lands.

As a consequence, only 12 out of 42 households in the sample produce sufficient food to last them for 12 months or more in a year (a number of the former also export foodgrains out of the village).

But the limits to the expansion of agricultural holdings, as stated earlier, have been reached because of the creation of the expansive Wildlife Sanctuary in the vicinity of Diyargaon, restrictions imposed by the Forest Department, and the sheer unavailability of cultivable fallow in the highlands.

Other developments too have affected the fortunes of the rich and the poor, primarily the *kamsel*. Population increases in the southern region, where the rich of Diyargaon traditionally took their large herds of cattle for winter grazing, have forced them to withdraw because of the inroads made by the local people in terms of the expansion of cultivated land and appropriation of what remained of the pastures for their own livestock. This, coupled with the closure of the precious pastures by the Sanctuary, effectively resulted in the drastic reduction of their herds and, consequently, in the radical shifting of the emphasis in their household economies.

Similarly, the restriction imposed by the government authorities on what little exports they made in the past, in terms of local medicinal herbs and other natural products, made the winter migration more difficult for the poor. Among the *kamsels*, the *Damai* further face the mounting problem of less tailoring jobs in the village because of the increasing import of readymade clothes by their clients.

The *kamsel* generally suffer from an even more serious problem. While the traditional Hindu perception of the twice-born having to take care of all the material needs of the untouchable service castes has all but ceased to be observed, the socioeconomic disabilities

enjoined upon them by the orthodoxy of the religion remain intact. This has made them the weakest contenders in the increasingly fierce competition for limited resources, and it has subjected them to a systematic regime of exploitation at the hands of their better-equipped *chokha* neighbours.

On the health and population front, however, the introduction of two effective health measures, namely immunisation and control of Acute Respiratory Infection, has drastically reduced mortality among children and is certain to result in a more accelerated growth of population in the village. The people are, indeed, already aware that the local population is too numerous and can foresee the worsening of the already acute problems of shelter and sustenance for most of the village inhabitants.

All these changes have forced the people of Diyargaon to intensify their search for newer coping options and have affected both the poor and the rich alike.

Increasingly Desperate Search for Coping Options

While the pursuit of new options for the rich is not necessarily occasioned by the hardships of existence, to a considerable extent it is influenced by the twin problems of population growth in their own households and by their aspiration to ensure a more secure future for their offspring in a situation where the land resources are limited - unlike in the past. Therefore, their advantages, in terms of economic prowess, political might, higher caste status, ability for mutual collusion, and access to and art of exploiting the government system, enable them to expand their holdings by fair means or foul. They convert their *ghaderi* into *jjula*, diversify their crops by cultivating apples and walnuts, lend money at an exorbitant rate of interest, engage in more capital-intensive seasonal and longer-term trading, and even go in for occasional adoption of birth control devices.

The mercurial nature of village politics and factionalism too are basically guided by the same motivation for resource gains and augmentation. The fact that the basic philosophies of such programmes as the SFDP, VDTP, and FCHV are compromised for spurious loans or for getting one's family member appointed have also been developments in the same direction.

However, it is the poor majority of the village, with diminutive land holdings, whose search for options is becoming even more desperate. Faced with the compulsions of feeding and clothing their expanding families, the *kamsel*, in particular, resort to distress borrowing, use SFDP loans to pay off more exorbitant ones, part with a portion of their landholdings, pay for the land in terms of labour, forsake possible *kamsel* solidarity, distribute their votes safely among different protagonists in elections, and go hungry when necessary. In contrast, however, a few *Sarki* have also managed to extend their range of alternatives by learning to work as builders - an occupation traditionally assigned to the *Od Kami*.

In the current scheme of things for most *kamsel* and other poor in the village, seasonal migration, to find work as labourers or for petty trading, is by far the most important of the options for their survival. Those with some business acumen and the wherewithal to put together a little cash - their own or borrowed at exorbitant interest rates - go mostly to Gorakhpur and range through a wide area of adjoining villages peddling the wares bought in the city. While exaggerated and often misleading claims have always been associated with such trade everywhere, the traders from Jumla do a more successful job of it with their wares. At present, they buy third-rate goods in India and sell them in its rural hinterlands as Nepalese products of very high quality.

Similarly, many less fortunate people, mostly *kamsel*, go to north India for labour jobs, many of them on prolonged sojourns. Often, their families back home do not hear from them for years on end. Some do not show up at all. But, once living in the village becomes impossible, migrating permanently to north India or to the Nepal *terai* remains the only option, whatever the consequences. In recent years, a few *kamsel* households have already taken up this option.

It is now the poor, mostly the *kamsel*, who have been pushed to the wall with little options left. Any adverse change in bilateral relations with India, affecting their movement across the border, is sure to bring about untold suffering to these people. Recently, a few *Jumli* have been spotted in Kathmandu peddling their wares, obviously as a bid to diversify their options. During the 1988-1990 Indian embargo against Nepal, most still managed to get across the border, some even running past the check-post at the risk of their own lives, which further illustrates the extent of their desperation.

Although the options available for the rich and poor have been diametrically opposed, there are a number of activities that they carry out jointly. The conservation of local forests, maintenance of local institutions for irrigational management, crop protection and grassland conservation, joint collection of pine needles from the forest, labour or cash contributions for building trails and bridges, and the management of the drinking water system are issues that they tackle to maintain or even invigorate their lifestyle.

Every household in the village, *chokha* or *kamsel*, rich or poor, has a stake in the proper operation and maintenance of these activities or projects. They, as a matter of habitual obedience, abide by the unwritten rules governing them which have been handed down to them through the generations or have been more recently introduced, as in the case of the construction and management of the drinking water projects, the construction of trails and bridges, or the reinforcement of the traditional irrigation canal. In essence, there exists a symbiotic relationship between the upkeep of these services and their related institutions, on the one hand, and the continued survival, sustenance, or even enhancement of the quality of life of the local people on the other. It is because of this situation of symbiosis that, despite the intense competition, conflict, and animosity inherent in the relationship between the rich and the poor, they cooperate with each other and contribute resources as necessary to ensure that their survival interests are not compromised.

Some Theoretical Implications

Despite its location in the mountain fastness of western Nepal, Diyargaon has been a scene of sustained change, both in its internal socioeconomic structure and in its natural environment. As described earlier, the steady increase in population and the shrinkage of highland pastures, among others, have, in recent times, been accompanied by increased clearing of the *lekali* forests, portending far-reaching dislocations in the downstream areas of the country and beyond. Similarly, the restrictions imposed by the Government on some of the traditional local experts have taken their own toll by deepening the dependency of the poor on foreign sources of sustenance. And the people generally are aware of the possibility of even

accelerated growth in population, in the not too distant future, promised by two successful health interventions.

While Diyargaon has, thus, been the scene of stresses and pressures generated both externally and internally, the responses of different social groups have differed. While the more fortunate have further solidified their positions by extending their landholdings, engaging in other lucrative pursuits, and otherwise entrenching their hold on political power, the poor, meagrely endowed in terms of agricultural land and persecuted by the rich through the many means of exploitation, have found themselves dependent on the increasingly tenuous sources of sustenance - which do not preclude permanent out-migration.

Given such a variability in responses between different groups and the impact made on the environment with far-reaching consequences, the proposition that it is a "*homeostatic state of life in the insular upper Karnali basin*" (Bishop, 1990:350) does not represent the unprecedented dynamics taking place in the region. Similarly, the assumption that "*social systems possess a tendency to re-establish some form of balance when confronted by changes or pressures that are systematically disruptive*" needs to be further examined and elaborated in the light of the Diyargaon situation which is more accurately described by Bishop's characterisation of the Karnali Zone as an "*ever-increasing downward spiral of degradation*" (1990:364).

The process of change in a highly stratified, traditional, and resource-scarce context like that of Diyargaon is conditioned more by the underlying forces of stratification, a stratification that results in the differential use of political power for the preservation and promotion of the interests of a privileged segment of the population. This phenomenon manifests itself in the clearing of the forests in the highlands, conservation of forests in the immediate vicinity, formation of, albeit transitory, profitable alliances, retention and careful nurturing of the much-needed *kamsel*-related institutions of *haligado*, *lagi-lagitya*, labour supply, and, at the same time, the ruthless exploitation of their own village brethren, driving the latter into acts of desperation.

However, had the political power - which is generally a function of economic power in a traditional community characterised by widespread poverty, illiteracy, and caste/ethnic stratification - been

more evenly distributed, it can be reasonably assumed that the pattern of change would have been largely different and certainly more egalitarian and participatory.

Another issue of theoretical importance is the sustenance of local traditional institutions such as the *narala* system of forest and crop protection, the *kumthi* system of irrigation management, or the more recently innovated *chaukidar* system of drinking water management and maintenance. Each beneficiary of these activities contributes to the payment of remuneration to those functionaries, some based on the extent of benefits received (e.g., four *mana* of grain for each *muri* of land irrigated) or on equal sharing as for the payment of the *narala* or *chaukidar*).

The binding force between these activities and their beneficiaries is the state of symbiosis between them which, in turn, is articulated and realised by the traditional decision-making mechanism dominated by the elites. It is locally structured in nature, elastic in composition, transparent in functioning, and participated in by most of the *Thalu* in the village, including a *kamsel* or two of higher economic standing and well-regarded by their fellow caste members. As informal as this leadership structure is in the village, it is, nonetheless, the only forum that is widely regarded by its inhabitants, represents the genius of the community, and carries with it the power of sanction against its erring members. Thus, it is the basis of stability in the village, of community action, and even of general improvements in the area, as evidenced by the operation and management of the drinking water system and by the protection of the *thapala* forest or that of the 'lonely pine'. In other words, the existence of a state of symbiosis expresses itself through the participation of its beneficiaries who, in a traditional context, are often represented by their informal leaders.

Corollarily, when such symbiosis breaks down, the traditional institutions that have sustained it are allowed to wither away by the beneficiaries themselves. This has happened in the case of the traditional cooperative arrangement for transhumance which ended when a decrease in the herds of cattle made it no longer necessary for the feed and dairy products to be ferried between the village and the pasture.

Furthermore, such symbiosis does not always involve the entire community. For instance, while the *narala* system of barley crop

protection is widely participated in in the village, it includes only those households which have barley crops to protect. But the fact still remains that they must invariably include a sufficient number of the members of the traditional decision-making apparatus who lend substance to the state of symbiosis.

Some Implications for Sustainable Mountain Development in Nepal

The insularity of the Karnali Zone (and of most mountainous regions in the country) has, in the past, been characterised by high birth and death rates, occasionally punctuated by Malthusian interventions, and thus some form of balance between population and available resources reestablished itself eventually. However, with developments in transport and communication facilities, such as roads and airlinks; the spread of a national education system; and intensification of political, administrative, economic, and other sociocultural contacts with the outside, the insularity has gradually yielded its place to greater identification with the national mainstream of life and economy.

In the Karnali Zone itself, the Government has been conducting programmes for the economic and social uplift of the region since the early sixties (Bishop 1970:30). These efforts were further supplemented by the implementation, in 1967, of a separate, Remote Area Development Programme in the eighteen northern districts identified as "remote". While the former represented the extension of the general national development programme to the zone, the latter aimed at addressing its specific problems and potentialities. This is when the propagation of apples, walnuts, and apricots received a major boost in the area. Other important development activities that followed in the zone have been the establishment of the Jumla Agricultural Research Centre in 1970 and the implementation of the Canada-aided Karnali-Bheri Integrated Rural Development (K-BIRD) Project in 1979/80.

While many of these interventions, as described in the preceding chapters, have been irrelevant to the region and feeble in their implementation, all the above factors working together, including the introduction of patent drugs and miracle vaccines, however limited, had the net effect of steady growth in population. Although it has been slow at present by national standards, a mounting imbalance

between population and resources is already taking place in the village. And with the dramatic success achieved by the ARI Control Programme, it is bound to lead to an even steeper rise in population which, in the absence of other complementary interventions, is certain to further aggravate the imbalance.

The present picture, therefore, of Diyargaon and of the Karnali Zone, is one of distorted development interventions. While the insularity of the region has been breaking down rapidly under external influence, the so-called development programmes have failed to come up with adequate policy, technology, and resource support to help achieve a new balance through increments in production and in the productivity of the local economy. As a consequence, while the natural environment has come under extreme stress, the lives of the disadvantaged majority have become so much more difficult. Whatever potential exists for the economic development of the region has gone largely untapped. What follows, therefore, is the description of some essential steps that should be taken to enhance the quality of life and of the environment in the region.

Local-level Planning for Mountain Development

Sustainable development of a community or geographical area presupposes the implementation of an adequate package of mutually complementary interventions, both in policy and programme activities, which are directly addressed to the specificities of the target area and people. Such an approach is all the more necessary in the case of the Karnali Zone where terrain, altitude, latitude, climatic remoteness, history, and cultural traditions, among others, not only lend distinctiveness to the region but also distinguish one area from the other, or one group of people from others inside it. Therefore, all development interventions must be planned at the local level, so that each of the specific attributes of the local problem can be appropriately and adequately addressed based on the priorities that reflect the aspirations of the targetted people.

Participating Approach to Development Interventions

Secondly, the Nepalese bureaucracy presently suffers from many deficiencies, resulting in low motivation and corrupt practices which

are even more pronounced among most officials working in remote rural locations. And even if the Government were to take up the problem in earnest, it will be many years before an effective turn-around can be expected. Therefore, given the long-standing tradition of participatory management of local assets and services in the area, it becomes both essential and desirable to depart radically from the practice of bureaucratic control of development projects and activities and to entrust them to the demonstrated capability of local beneficiary-focussed institutions. Such an approach would also result in increased local resource mobilisation on an ongoing basis, contributing to sustained development of the area.

As an exception, some success stories have been reported in mountain agricultural development in the country, such as the two British-aided agricultural farms namely the Lumle Centre (Pound et al. 1992:711-736) in west Nepal and the Pakhribas Centre (Chand and Thapa 1992:737-760) in east Nepal. But among the principal reasons for the continuity and effectiveness of the programmes have been "*professional satisfaction, good housing facilities, a good remuneration package, good training opportunities, and a good working environment*" (Pound et al. 1992:719) for the staff. Although such foreign-aided projects with relatively high levels of investment can succeed as long as the aid lasts, according to past experiences, they have not been found to be replicable elsewhere or sustainable after the withdrawal of aid. During the foreseeable future, it is highly unlikely that the Government would have the necessary resources to provide so many "good" things for the development of agriculture in this mostly mountainous country.

Retargetting of the Poverty Alleviation Programme

Thirdly, substantive interventions should be made in favour of the poor in the region. The so-called Small Farmers' Development Programme should be immediately retargetted to allow for the exclusive access of the poorest of the community to its credit facilities. As a part of this study, an exercise was successfully undertaken to see if a meeting widely participated in by local people can arrive at an unprejudiced consensus as to the ordinal ranking of the poorest households from the bottom stratum. Such a methodology would be simpler, more cost-effective, and more efficient and valid than the ones heretofore applied in the identification of its clients.

Social Development of the Poor

Much of the disabilities of the poor are also due to their lack of basic capabilities, such as literacy, which affects the whole gamut of their behaviour and attitude towards life and society. Therefore, social development activities, primarily in the fields of literacy, health, and civic education should constitute a part of the small farmers' development endeavour in the area.

Capital Loans for Trading

Furthermore, since most of the poor in Jumla have a demonstrated acumen for trading, a line of credit for trading capital should also be provided as part of the Small Farmers' Development Project. This will go a long way towards relieving the poor from the clutches of the rich man's usury in the village.

Women's Development

In the villages of Jumla, probably more than elsewhere in the country, women play a major and indispensable role in the economy of the households, but with a status much lower in relation to their economic role.

However, improvement in the quality of life in the families and the community would, to a large extent, depend upon the ameliorative role that they can play. Therefore, it is absolutely essential that, as part of the mountain development strategy in the country, special programmes and policies for women's advancement be included.

The basic thrust of such interventions should be to depart from the acts of a largely charitable nature, such as free tuition for girl students, or enrolling a handful of them in sewing and knitting activities, etc. It has always been difficult to market their products, thus placing definite limits to what little they can contribute to women's development.

The approach should be one of **empowerment** and **enablement of women** in a manner so that the menfolks find it in their interests and in the interest of the household to encourage them to participate in

development activities both inside the house and outside. One such intervention could be to make small livestock loans from the SFDP **exclusively** accessible to female borrowers. Since almost all households in the village keep small livestock, most men would very likely find it in their interests to have their women participate in the SFDP group activities. However, in the process of such participation, they would be exposed to other activities of social and economic development in the household and the community and develop sufficient confidence to assert their own rights in the household and in the community.

Other interventions along this line could be the allocation of government development grants to the villages, based on the literacy status of women in them; villagers with a larger proportion of literate women getting more resources in grants for such activities as irrigation, drinking water schemes, schools, etc. Similarly, local jobs, such as extension agents in health, education, agriculture, and livestock development, could be exclusively set aside for female candidates only.

However, the most effective intervention would be to make legal provisions for entitling women to a part of parental inheritance. This should dramatically alter the status of women in the household and in society.

Furthermore, the national leaders, planners, and policy-makers alike must internalise the basic premise that the improvement in women's status is required, not as an act of altruism but as a deliberate strategy for the all-round development of the community. No single intervention for national development would be as potent as the empowerment and enablement of women in the communities.

Population Control

Since there is now an increasing realisation in the village of the need to limit the number of children, although in most cases after having exceeded the number recommended by the experts, contraceptive services should be made more widely available. With the increased effectiveness of health interventions and the reduction in infant and child mortality, there should be every likelihood that parents would go in for contraceptive devices. In the case of Diyargaon particularly,

where infant and child mortality has been effectively brought under control, it could also be seen as an experimental case to see if a direct relationship exists between the reduced mortality of children and greater adoption of population control measures.

Road Artery

Central to the question of the development of the Karnali Zone is the issue of a road link to the south. It has all along been of paramount importance to properly harness the potential of the zone and to capitalise on the comparative advantages of the region. The emergence of a road would not only result in the dramatic expansion of fruit and vegetable farming, with a salutary effect on the environmental situation in the highlands, it would also lead to the realisation of other development possibilities such as herb farming, highland and mountain tourism, high altitude forestry, and the installation of a number of hydroelectric projects. These developments would have a major impact in bringing about some fundamental transformations in the life and economy of this otherwise remote foresaken region.

The totality of these interventions presupposes the designing and implementation of a systematic and integrated development approach, so that each of the related components function in mutual complementarity and coordination to ensure maximum return from investments. Given the proposition that the package also include a high-cost road project, such complementarity should be even better assured.

However, the story of integrated rural development in Nepal has generally been a story of dismal failure, and many donor-funded projects criss-crossing the country have little to show for the hundreds of millions of dollars spent on them for the stated purpose of achieving increased living standards for the people and improved environmental conditions in the area (Shrestha 1992:11-13).

In specific terms, a major donor, namely Canada as mentioned earlier, has been involved for more than twelve years in so-called integrated rural development in the selected districts of the Karnali and Bheri zones. But the project has hardly anything substantial to show for it other than an occasional infrastructure here and there. For most poor

people, at least in Diyargaon, the project has either been inaccessible or largely irrelevant. Despite the association of scores of foreign and local experts, the project lacked even a respectable database for future comparisons, and it has no idea how it has affected the numbers of the poor people in the region.

In the case of a roadlink too, an all-weather road, connecting Jumla with the east-west highway and the rest of Nepal, was initially planned as far back as 1970 as part of the Fourth Five Year Plan of the country (National Planning Commission 1986:230). It has yet to become a reality, even after two decades of national development efforts and 12 years of the Canada-funded K-BIRD Project.

In the initial stage of the project's formulation in the late seventies, an empathising Canadian economist in charge of the exercise had included a proposal for what was then called a "motorable mule-track", for moving All-Terrain Vehicles (ATV) from Surkhet to Jumla, and which was to be constructed largely by the means of labour contributions from the adjoining villages. While such a mule-track would have heralded the beginning of motorised transport for the imports and exports of the region, it would also have generated increasing interest from different sources in its continued maintenance and upgrading.

Despite the proposal's excited reception in government circles, the expatriates who succeeded the economist shot the idea down, presumably at the behest of their Canadian employers, and thus effectively suppressed any consideration of the vital artery as they pursued the "integrated" development of the region. It was a historic opportunity lost to the people of the region.

While the need for *"greater focus on upland-lowland linkages, use of regional complementarities in development strategies, and recognition of comparative advantages of the mountains"* are emphasised for mountain agricultural development by Jodha et al. (1992:19), they are much easier said than achieved in practice. For instance, regional planning as the approach to capitalising on north-south complementarities in Nepal has long remained a common refrain of the successive periodic plans of the country. Nevertheless, little has been accomplished in that direction, primarily for want of both capability and commitment to move beyond the stage of the rhetoric. Experience has shown that, unless some fundamental and sustained shift takes

place in the vision and understanding and managerial abilities of our national leaders and planners, in favour of a more egalitarian, judicious, and participatory national development approach, regional planning and development, with their attendant demands and challenges, will continue to elude the people in the outlying areas.

The situation thus calls for an approach which is professionally and managerially less demanding and which, at the same time, is also consistent with the stated ideological thrust of the national polity. Therefore, it is further suggested that, whatever the merits of a comprehensive regional planning approach for the country, the planners should desist from repeatedly embarking on such ambitious rhetoric. They should instead make beginnings in that direction by instituting and strengthening local planning and implementation mechanisms in the districts and villages in the regions. As the decentralised plans begin to be smoothly formulated and implemented, the need for ensuring supportive conditions and activities at higher level would begin to crystallise. Such a bottom-up approach is more likely to gradually build the foundations for substantive regional plans in the country. In short, a decentralised planning and implementation system must constitute the basis for sustained mountain development in the country.

Non-farm Income and Employment Opportunities Outside the Region

However, some problems are already obvious and need effective resolution. It has been seen that, given the extremely meagre landholdings of most villagers, the incomes earned from winter migration already constitute an important component of their household economy in the village. And, with the assured prospect of a steady increase in population and definite limits to the possibility of expanding their landholdings, their non-farm sources of income will be increasingly indispensable in future years. Thus, the need for extra-regional employment and income opportunities will only intensify in future.

In this connection, there are some important lessons to be learned from the experience of Switzerland which went through environmental degradation of the Alps due to deforestation for agriculture "before a series of catastrophic events triggered measures for effective protection. And, even then, forest policy alone was unable to solve the problem.

Growth of industry and the service sector in the pre-Alpine belt and in the urban areas of the midlands contributed in two ways: they produced the financial means for an ambitious programme of environmental respiration and they provided employment for large sectors of the mountain population which encouraged outmigration. The population pressure on the mountain ecosystem was reduced" (Guller 1986:82).

In the case of Diyargaon too, it is highly unlikely that the goals of enhancing the living standards of the people and the quality of their environment can be met by efforts limited to the confines of that village which, as stated earlier, is highly circumscribed by meagre and unevenly distributed landholdings, mounting population pressure, and unavailability of any significant non-farm employment and income opportunities other than those substantially supplemented by the provision of employment opportunities for its poor people outside the area. This could gradually lead to their permanent out-migration, thus contributing to the easing of the population pressures in the Karnali environment.

Similarly, resettlement schemes for the poorest could also be contemplated. However, such schemes in the past have almost always involved the clearing of diminishing forest areas and large investments in infrastructure and relief for the settlers. The management of such schemes has been consistently difficult also, often resulting in inefficient use of resources and long-drawn out problems for the settlers. Therefore, it is further suggested that resettlement should take the form of providing employment and income opportunities in or around existing settlements, or even urban areas, which would provide them with access to ready-made infrastructural facilities, such as drinking water, and social services such as health and education facilities. A line of credit could additionally be provided to assist the settlers in terms of resources and management capabilities, in addition to saving increasingly scarce forest resources.

However, the fact would still remain that, in the midst of stiff competition from people from other parts of the country and often also from India, employment opportunities cannot be obtained easily for the unskilled from mountain regions. Therefore, with a view to addressing the larger goal of environmental management and of helping the poorest of the poor, a policy of job reservation, especially in government-run projects or enterprises, should be contemplated also.

The targetted poor themselves can be identified through the same method recommended above for the reorientation of the Small Farmers' Development Project.

Should such a policy of easing pressure on the mountain environment be successful, the reduction in the number of people in the region would also result in the decreased availability of labour for the landed households. This situation would force them to revert to less labour-intensive, more environmentally-friendly, and less perishable cropping systems such as the increased farming of walnuts and apricots, especially on the *lekali* lands.

Multinational Firms for Mountain Development

In a resource-scarce economy like that of Nepal, mobilising enough money to build a roadlink to Jumla or implementing an adequate programme of integrated development in a relatively less populated and remote region like the Karnali Zone will remain prohibitive propositions for many years to come. As is seen from the preceding discussions, even major donors shy away from providing more than what appears to be cosmetic interventions. As it is, after so many years of involvement in the region, the donor-funded programme has been unable to even "reach" most people, let alone make a positive impact on their problems. The situation in the region continues to deteriorate, as referred to above "*locked into an ever-increasing, downward spiral of degradation*" (Bishop 1990:364).

Given the direness of the present situation, possibilities should be explored for attracting and engaging one or more multinational firms to invest in the development of the Karnali Zone as a business venture under conditions that they might find sufficiently lucrative. While the Government and interested international donors alike should seriously investigate this potential, other friends of Nepal too, who have been mesmerised by the pristine beauty and serenity of her mountain setting, should take it upon themselves to assist the country in this search to alleviate the ubiquitous squalor and poverty that lay underneath the captivating allure of its mountain scenery.