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## **Culture and Tourism**

## **Defining Roles and Relationships**

Prayag Raj Sharma

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Dr. Prayag Raj Sharma is Professor of Culture at the  
Centre for Nepal and Asian Studies, Tribhuvan University, Kirtipur

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# PREFACE

This Discussion Paper is one of a Series of Papers related to aspects of Mountain Tourism resulting from a NORAD-funded Project entitled "Mountain Tourism for Local Community Development". The present paper is the revised version of a paper presented at the First Review Meeting of the Project held in Pokhara, Nepal, in August 1994. The paper was commissioned as an input to the proposed Case Studies on Mountain Tourism in the hill and mountains of Nepal, the U.P. hills and Himachal Pradesh of India, and the North West Frontier Province and Northern Areas of Pakistan. All the Case Studies are being published in the MEI Discussion Paper Series. In the present paper, Prof. Prayag Raj Sharma, a noted scholar on Nepalese Culture, describes the impacts and implications of tourism on culture through an analysis of the processes in the Kathmandu Valley and the Khumbu region of Nepal.

On behalf of ICIMOD, Dr. Pitamber Sharma is the Project Coordinator as well as the technical editor of these papers.



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# Culture and Tourism

## Defining Roles and Relationships

### Introduction

Tourism's true significance should probably lie in the role it plays in imparting learning and providing recreation for the traveller in today's world. Bacon said of travel a long time ago that "*it is a [person's] part of education.*" Travelling has become a global phenomenon, and people are increasingly taking to it. The tide of travel flows from the developed and industrially advanced countries of the West, taking their nationals far and wide, visiting exotic places, enjoying their unique natural and cultural heritage, and getting all the fun and adventure out of it. Modern tourism, however, has gone beyond this early innocence. It has become a much more organised, professional, and hard-headed business. In third world countries such as Nepal, tourism is regarded as a top money-spinner and an excessively economic preoccupation.

### Tourism's Socioeconomics

Tourism in Nepal, therefore, was classed under industry in the very early stages of its development. Today it is looked on as Nepal's single most prized "economic commodity" the selling of which earns the country its valuable foreign exchange and generates a good income in the form of revenue. Among the other spin-offs of tourism are its contribution to employment generation. The economic benefits of tourism for Nepal are obvious enough. Its sheer economic logic sets all other doubts about it aside. Today, everyone necessarily talks in the language of economists and development planners (Veit Berger, 1978; Himal, 2(3), 1989). Some like to call tourism a "smokeless industry" (personal communication: Karna Shakya).

All this has naturally led both the government as well as the private sector in Nepal to work over the years, although not necessarily in tandem, for the promotion and expansion of tourism. In the last thirty years or so, Nepal has witnessed a phenomenal expansion and growth in the tourism sector, reflected not only in the increased number of tourists visiting it (see Summary Table 1), but also in the number of hotels and lodges; the expansion of domestic and foreign air links; and the number of tour, travel, and trekking agencies for servicing tourists. The increase in the number of tourists between 1962 and 1992 has been more than 5,400 per cent. Much of the growth in tourism in Nepal is attributed to the enterprise of the private sector, but this would not

**Summary Table 1: Tourist Numbers and Foreign Exchange Earnings**

Year	Tourist Numbers	Gross Foreign Total Earnings US\$ (000)	Exchange Earnings Rs (000)
1962	6,179	N.A.	N.A.
1988	265,943	63,502	1,486,837
1992	334,353	61,090	2,838,100
1993	293,567	72,104	3,508,041

Source: Nepal Tourism Statistics, 1992/1993

have come off without the government lending support to the idea of tourism growth through a total commitment to it and through providing it with legislative and organisational support.

### **General Tourism Policy of the Government**

HMG/N strengthened and organised tourism administration by establishing a separate Tourism Ministry (now the Ministry of Tourism and Civil Aviation) in 1979. The Department of Tourism, which predated the Ministry, was formerly placed under the Ministry of Transport and Communications before being placed under the new Tourism Ministry. A Hotel Management and Tourism Training Centre (HMTTC) was created within the Department of Tourism in 1972, with a view to conducting 'on the job' training courses for employees in various tourism-related services, as well as for new entrants into the profession (HMG/N MOT 1987-88). Another major measure taken in support of tourism was the establishment of a high-powered National Tourism Council in 1992 under the Chairmanship of the Prime Minister, with the Minister for Tourism and Civil Aviation as its Vice-Chairman. In the same year, a Tourism Development Board was also established with the Minister for Tourism as its Chairman (DOT HMG/N 1992: 9). The main objective of the Tourism Council is to bring about the much needed inter-ministerial coordination in tourism promotion and planning, and the objective of the Tourism Board is to have a body endowed with high decision-making authority in tourism. The government brought out a Tourism Act in 1978, a National Park and Wildlife Conservation Act in 1973, and a series of rules relating to trekking, mountaineering, and National Parks and Wildlife in the 70s and 80s (Tenzing and Banskota 1992: 161, 163). A 10-year Tourism Master Plan was drawn up by HMG/N in 1972, and the concern of the government for boosting tourism is more than reflected in the country's Seventh Plan (1985-90). The Plan laid out four main objectives, two of which are to increase the government's foreign exchange and revenue

earnings and to enhance employment generation (in the private sector, mainly), already stated above. The two other objectives include i) prolonging the length of stay by tourists in Nepal and extension of tourism into other areas of the country and ii) expansion of domestic product industries to act as import substitution in tourism consumer goods (Banskota and Sharma 1993: 1). Nepal has made good progress in the first three objectives. The most prominent of its achievements is the steady increase in foreign exchange earnings from tourism. In 1992, the total earnings in foreign exchange from non-Indian tourists stood at US\$ 61,090,000 (DOT HMG/N 1992: 65). Although there was a sudden decline in the number of tourists in 1993, by 12.2 per cent (see Summary Table 1), the amount of earnings in US\$ actually rose by 18.1 per cent over 1992 (DOT HMG/N 1993). Nepal, however, has failed to achieve much with respect to the fourth objective (Banskota and Sharma 1993: 12).

Notwithstanding the increase in foreign exchange earnings, the government's tourism policy and its work in tourism development have more critics than admirers. The government is widely blamed for failing to come up with an integrated or long-term perspective on tourism (Himal 2(3) 1989; 5(6) 1992; Banskota and Sharma 1993). At best, the government's policy on tourism remains *ad hoc*, piecemeal, and it responds or reacts in the face of criticism directed at its action or lack of it. For some years now, international environmentalist groups have reported on the problem of an increasing pile of non-biodegradable litter and garbage in the Mt. Everest and Khumbu areas, introduced by trekkers and mountaineers. Edmund Hillary, the hero of Everest in 1953, nicknamed it "the world's biggest junkyard". Still, no serious effort seems to be afoot to control, regulate, and clean the area of garbage. The few moves made in this direction are anything but determined. Commencing in the spring of 1992, the government royalty for climbing Mt. Everest was raised to US\$ 50,000. A rule now requires (effective from the autumn of 1992) climbing expeditions to bring back all their non-biodegradable garbage to Kathmandu for re-export to the country of origin. Expeditions are required to deposit a sum of US\$ 2,000 with the Ministry of Tourism, which they can reclaim on certification by the accompanying expedition liaison officer that their garbage has actually been brought back. This is all the government has been able to achieve on the issue of environmental pollution in the mountains so far. There is little else the government does to make sure such rules are actually working. An expedition to Mt. Pumori is said to have taken 200 metres of nylon rope and returned to Kathmandu with 300 metres (Himal 5(6), 1992: 21).

The government's policy on tourism or tourism management suffers from a number of other flaws in addition to the lack of an articulated tourism policy.



There is, for instance, an attitude of smug satisfaction among politicians and bureaucrats who, having stated a policy or promulgated a rule, do little else. There is little concern to see how such policies are being actually translated or implemented on the ground. There are any number of distortions in the application of rules for which either individual bureaucrats themselves are responsible or private travel and trekking agencies who bend, overlook, or ignore such rules at their convenience. The government has evolved no effective mechanism for monitoring, apart from appointing liaison officers, a system which is not without drawbacks. This attitude of indifference, unless there are personal gains to be made by members of the government or of the bureaucracy, deals a crippling blow to tourism development. The government does little to review or update the rules in the light of the impacts they make.

One of the latest rules to be announced relating to tourism, in general, and to trekking and climbing, in particular, by the government, introduces a stiff hike in visa and trekking permit fees, the national parks' fee, the royalty paid for trekking peaks, and the royalty paid for climbing middle and high-altitude peaks, not counting the embarkation fee and the airport tax. The Trekking Agency Association of Nepal (TAAN) has made a strong representation to the government stating that the raises are "unfair and unjustified". In a memorandum to the government submitted in February 1992 they protested against such an excessive fee structure, which is not to be found in any other country in the Himalayan region. They fear that this will make trekking and climbing activities in Nepal quite uncompetitive, leading to a falling off in trekking and climbing tourism in future. This could bring about an economic disaster and throw thousands of people employed in the private tourism sector out of a job. In a recent announcement, the government lowered the rate of the tourist visa fee, effective from July 1, 1994 (Rising Nepal, June 1994), but has not still relented to the other demands for lowering trekking and climbing royalties.

The TAAN blames the government accusing it of being interested only in maximising profits and monetary gains for the government from its tourism policy to the exclusion of other considerations (Private Communication: TAAN Officials). Apart from the exorbitant royalty rate for climbing Everest, the royalty levied on other peaks over 8,000 metres is US\$ 10,000. Similarly, trekking fees are charged at differential and uneven rates for different areas. They range from US\$ 5 per week for normal areas to US\$ 90 per week to visit other specified areas. For more exclusive areas, such as Upper Mustang and Upper Dolpa, the fees are as much as US\$ 700 per week for the first ten days, with an additional charge of US\$ 70 for each extra day spent. If the trekking

area happens to be in a National Park Area, the tourist is required to pay an additional fee of Nepali Rupees 600 flat. The TAAN has also expressed its unhappiness with the rule of setting an arbitrary limit of 900 tourists a year for Upper Mustang on the plea that it cannot go all out on the publicity front to attract tourists, in case many may exceed the stipulated limit and have to be refused entry. The TAAN, however, does not object to Mustang and Dolpa being opened up only to agency-handled group tourism, for obvious reasons. This rule is criticised by others, however, for creating no trickle-down benefits from tourism to local hosts (Thapa 1992: 126-128).

The government has done little to explain the reasons behind the huge hike in fees. Is there an underlying philosophy or a sound concept behind such a move? People are left to their own assumptions; which might be that it is done to cut down the number of expeditions to Mt. Everest and to protect the Khumbu area from environmental pollution, on the one hand, and to protect the cultural sensitivity of regions such as Upper Mustang and Upper Dolpa on the other. But, in truth, the government seems ambivalent and does not have the courage to of its convictions in relation to tourism policy or in basing its actions on it. In all these years it has dragged its feet in evolving and adopting a tourism policy. A draft policy has been drawn up but has not yet been announced. Perhaps the government is afraid that spelling out a policy clearly and explaining the underlying philosophy of tourism might give the government a moral responsibility to act on it.

This points to yet another defect in the government's tourism policy. One has an impression that there is a lack of independent thinking which is based on a true appreciation of the country's ecological peculiarities. Ideas about tourism development and expansion are dependent upon external drives and circumstances created by international tourism and travel organisations, or by loaning agencies such as the Asian Development Bank or the World Bank. It proceeds on the assumption that what is good for them is also good for Nepal. The Himalayas are a great source of attraction for tourists and tourism expansion in Nepal is recommended through overexploiting this one sensitive resource. A study on the tourism development programme, funded by the Asian Development Bank for the Ministry of Tourism, Nepal, and carried out by Touche Ross, in association with a group of international consultants in 1989-90, recommended the enhancement of tourism marketing. It projects a growth in tourist numbers of around 950,000 persons by the year 2010 (Touche Ross 1990). The Himalayas and trekking are shown to be among Nepal's two main tourist attractions.

In the end, two things seem to emerge from the government's overall tourism policy so far. One seeks to raise the tourist numbers by recourse to any means. In 1988 the government called upon the tourism sector to increase the number of tourists visiting Nepal to one million by the year 2000. The private sector criticises the government for projecting an overambitious and unrealisable plan in contrast to the little it actually does to provide the necessary infrastructure to achieve it. The government, however, seems determined to do it. In the meanwhile, it has issued licenses to more 5-star hotels in Kathmandu to open casinos. The other aim of the government seems to be to increase its revenue base and foreign exchange earnings from tourism, even if this means continually raising the fees payable by tourists.

## **The Cultural Policy of the Government**

The administration and management of culture and cultural affairs are divided into a number of discrete and separate sets of functions within the government ministries, departments, and the autonomous/semi-autonomous bodies, which then carry them out. Five ministries in the government are involved in the management of culture and environment, not counting the Tourism Ministry. They are, the Ministry of Education, Culture, and Social Welfare (the management of archaeology, museums, archives, the Cultural Undertaking Centre, Universities, Academies for Arts and Sciences, the Fine Arts Centre and the Lumbini Development Trust), the Ministry of Industry and Commerce (hotels, handicrafts, and carpet production), the Ministry of Physical Planning and Development (urban planning, housing construction, and preservation of the urban cultural environment), the Ministry of Land Reform (the office of the *Guthi Sansthan*, the custodian of the country's religious and cultural trust lands), and, finally, the Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation (which looks after the work of environmental and natural heritage protection). All this makes the cultural responsibility of the government extremely diffuse and scattered. This segmentary approach, to some extent, becomes unavoidable. There should, however, be an attempt to bring them all in line and within the ambits of a national cultural policy. This is where the problem actually is. There is, unfortunately, nothing like an overall cultural policy beyond the "say-good" and "seem-good" intentions of the government. From the above, it becomes clear that the aspect of culture that becomes most linked to tourism falls within the purview of the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation. All that one finds treated under cultural heritage falls in the domain of archaeology, museums, arts, restoration of monuments, music, dance, and painting. In like manner, the natural heritage part relates to land and



forests mainly. The cultural policy relating to some of the segments above involves the display, preservation, and restoration work that the Department of Archaeology of HMG/N is supposed to conduct or coordinate. There is an Act-- the Ancient Monuments' Protection Act of 1956--which is supposed to bring all notable specimens or sites of cultural heritage under the government's protection. But only a few of the most prominent specimens are restored. This plight faced by the cultural heritage in Nepal does not lend much credence to what is being done in the context of tourism promotion. The few monuments that are more regularly looked after mostly have foreign donors who are looking after them (Amatya 1983a: 26-37).

## **The Tourist Profile**

An attempt will be made below to present a thumbnail sketch of the incoming tourist to Nepal which might give us some idea of what sort of person he/she is. This sketch is based mainly on the Nepal Tourism Statistics (1992), an annual publication of the Department of Tourism.

Although the tourism statistics give six or seven broad types of tourists that arrive in Nepal, this categorisation is vague and imprecise (see Summary Table 2). It is doubtful whether all categories of visitors to Nepal can be called tourists unless this definition is stretched to include anyone bringing in foreign currency and spending a few nights in a hotel. Again, it leaves out an important tourist category, which is that of the rafter, for which the numbers are increasing each year with the extension of rafting to new areas.

The majority of tourists arrive by air; over 50 per cent of them are Western and European in origin; are in the 25-45 age group, in which the number of males is greater than females; 80 per cent of them come to visit Kathmandu, Pokhara, and the jungle resorts of Chitwan. These are the tourists who buy a package trip, stay in star hotels, and are driven in luxury coaches and limousines on a day's sight-seeing trip from the hotel. This class of tourist demands every possible facility for lodging, food, and drink, and these should meet Western tastes and specifications wherever such tourists spend the night. This kind of tourist is the holiday/pleasure type mentioned in the Tourism Statistics Book. This is also the class which brings in the most in terms of tourist dollars. The average length of stay for this class of tourist is 10-14 nights. In Eric Cohen's terminology this is the "institutionalised" or "conventionalised" individual or organised "mass" tourist (Cohen 1988: 31-32).



Summary Table 2: Tourist Numbers by Types

Year	Number Type		Business	Pilgrimage	Official	Convention/ Conference	Others	Total
	Holiday Pleasure	Trekking Mountaineering						
1962	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	6,179 (100)
1988	200,755 (75.5)	36,937 (13.9)	12,008 (4.5)	-	9,781 (3.7)	-	6,442 (2.4)	265,943 (100)
1992	237,711 (71.1)	35,166 (10.5)	31,765 (9.5)	7,219 (2.2)	20,967 (6.3)	815 (0.2)	710 (0.2)	334,353 (100)
1993	170,279 (58.0)	69,619 (23.7)	19,495 (6.7)	10,429 (3.5)	15,812 (5.4)	5,367 (1.8)	2,566 (0.9)	293,567 (100)

Source: Nepal Tourism Statistics 1992/93

Indian tourists account for another 34 per cent, and they mainly come to visit Kathmandu, Pokhara, or some other border town in the *terai*.

An important class of tourists, which deserves separate treatment, is that of the Japanese tourist. Unfortunately, they are lumped into the "other" category. The Japanese tourists, along with other Asian tourists, come in good numbers. Many of them also come for the purpose of pilgrimage. In other respects, however, the Japanese tourist has an identity closer to the Western/European tourist, as far as his travel, stay, and spending behaviour are concerned.

The other three categories of tourist are actually sub-categories of the same type, and these can be termed "adventure" tourists; viz., trekkers, mountaineers, and rafters. A greater part of their stay in Nepal is used up in trekking and camping activities along popular trekking trails (see Summary Table 3), so that their length of stay in hotels and lodges is minimal. Their length of stay, however, is for a longer period at an average of 25.8 nights (Banskota and Sharma 1993: 4). They form the main clientele of the various trekking, mountaineering, and rafting agencies. There are two types of trekkers — the group-trekkers, who are handled by trekking agencies, and individual trekkers. This latter type describes the tourist who likes to travel alone or travel with one or two friends. This is the low-profile, low-budget, loner type tourist who, in Eric Cohen's terminology again, is the "non-institutionalised" or "non-conventionalised" "drifter" or "explorer" (Cohen 1988: 31-32). The money spent by such a tourist mostly goes to pay the local host. The trekking behaviour of this type of tourist remains the most unpredictable. In some publications, this tourist is hailed for his adventurous spirit, his passion for taking the difficult and less-trodden path that average tourists are inclined to avoid, and as someone who craves to "drink in" the uncontaminated and unsullied beauty of nature (O'Connor 1990: 6).

**Summary Table 3: Popular Trekking Areas by Tourist Numbers**

Year	Everest Trekking	Helambu-Langtang Valley Trekking	Annapurna-Manang, Jomsom Trekking	Dolpa Trekking	Kanchanjanga Trekking	Others	Total
1979	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	19,868
1980	5,836	4,113	14,332	-	-	3,179	27,460
1988	11,366	8,423	37,902	-	87	3,495	61,273
1992	12,325	9,457	42,553	698	436	5,970	71,439

Source: Nepal Tourism Statistics 1992



In the industrialised societies from which most tourists come, studies have been carried out that focus on the sociology of the tourist. A similar study, based on the host people and those who are directly involved in conducting tourism business, or in dealing with tourists, might reveal a lot about their attitudes. How are tourists viewed by them? For example, are they really meted out the treatment befitting a guest? as glossy tourist publications are wont to describe them. Is there much feeling of philanthropy, or is the behaviour only business-like and governed strictly by the desire to make a profit? What are the tourists taken to be? Are they looked upon as i) friends, ii) charitable providers, iii) milching cows, iv) suckers, v) seekers of truth and happiness, or vi) gullible fools? Are people in the tourism business showing their true or masked face to them? Does a long exposure to the tourism trade harden them? Do they end up being cultural uproots, neither being fully modernised, nor feeling too comfortable within their own culture? In any tourism-related study in Nepal, providing such insight would prove extremely valuable. This is, however, a type of study which is yet to be carried out.

## Culture and Tourism

The preceding paragraphs are meant as a background and serve to provide a perspective on tourism planning and related activities in Nepal before entering into the subject of tourism's relationship with culture. It is acknowledged by everyone that culture has a direct relevance and use for tourism. There is a phraseology in vogue underlining this relationship — "cultural tourism" — whatever such an expression may mean in reality.

Culture is a term that can have many connotations, and it is not easy to give it a precise and succinct definition. It is interpreted, either narrowly or broadly, depending upon the context or the background of the person using it. It seems that, in tourism, culture is understood in a very broad sense. As a leading hotelier in Kathmandu put it: "*culture and country are inextricably linked; they are coterminous*" (personal communication: Shyam Bahadur Pandey, Hotel Shangrila). In tourism, it is usual to speak of nature and culture equably and together, as if they mean similar, if not identical, things. In any reference to tourism in which its possible adverse impacts are the subject of discussion, cultural and environmental degradation are mentioned in the same breath. An anthropologist has made an observation that the Khumbu tourists' main concern is with the degradation of the environment (Fisher 1990: 109). Thus, where tourism is concerned, culture is understood in environmental terms. Cultural and natural heritage are terms to be used simultaneously. Of course,

one part of this heritage refers to nature, ecology, and the general environment. In Nepal, this heritage has been given a concrete, tangible expression through the recognition and implementation of the national park idea, first started in 1973 (Tenzing and Banskota 1992: 163). It is hoped that the idea of protection and conservation of the environment does not just apply to national park areas, but to the country as a whole where there are more places of unique heritage value. Cultural heritage itself should more appropriately be referring to a community's belief system, its social organisation, its productive and reproductive activity, and its aesthetic creations and handiworks. However, where preservation and conservation work of such a cultural heritage is concerned, much of this heritage becomes subordinated to and overwhelmed by an ever-present process of change.

## **Cultural Change**

It is useful next to give a general idea of the process affecting cultural change. Such a process has characterised the Nepalese culture, or cultures (in acknowledgement of the idea of a cultural plurality in Nepal), at all times. But the change process accelerated substantially from the time Nepal suddenly stepped into the modern era, breaking out of its centuries-old, self-imposed isolation in 1951. It is not possible to treat the subject at greater length here, nor do justice to it with reference to all regions or cultures. We will merely be content to look at two cultures--the cultures of the Kathmandu Valley and the Khumbu region. This attempt to understand the change process should shed some light on how far tourism can be held responsible for triggering the process of cultural change, one way or another. Kathmandu Valley and Khumbu are the two most tourist-prone regions, attracting a lot of tourists every year. We will broadly gather how well these two cultures have been able to absorb the impact of tourism.

The process of culture change affecting Kathmandu has been one of the most profound, if not cataclysmical. Kathmandu remained in relative isolation and was insulated from modernistic changes in its polity, economy, and with regard to its other broader cultural values until 1951. Nepal remained veiled in an air of mystery, because so little was known about the country to the outside world before that date. There were just a few writings by a handful of early European visitors, who were grudgingly let in to visit the Kathmandu Valley, reporting on the artistic and architectural treasures there (Levi 1925; Brown 1912). They wrote about the Valley's temples, stupas, monasteries, their tiled and gilded-metal roofs; marvelled at their wood carvings, and at their sculptures and icons.



of both the Hindu and Buddhist divinities. Much earlier, in 1793, Kirkpatrick summed up the wonders of the Kathmandu Valley to the eyes of an outsider by saying that "*in truth, there are nearly as many temples as houses and as many idols as inhabitants*" (Kirkpatrick 1811: 150). According to his estimate, the city of Kathmandu then had about five thousand houses (Ibid: 160). The European visitors to the Valley wrote about the three Newar towns; their flagged and cobbled lanes and by-lanes, houses of brick lining them, lit up with exuberantly carved windows and doorways; and the open yards and public squares where people ambled on in a leisurely way. They wrote about the people, their curious manners; their dresses, their food, fads, and customs; and their endemic festivals. They described the beautiful, vast stretches of fields that hemmed in the three towns on all sides, streams that criss-crossed the Valley, and their banks along which a lot of religious activity could be seen. Kathmandu was strewn with yesterday's historical monuments at virtually every corner; much of which still stood intact even until 1951. An air of wonder mixed with curiosity hung over this place, endowing it with a Shangrila-like image even as late as 1951. The country in the interior was known even less to most people. Thus Kathmandu in the 50s was a much more blissful place, unaffected by the later modernistic developments which were to scar it permanently with little hope of redemption. Many festivals and cultural activities kept the place pulsating and alive, and the people participated in them with total faith and immersion.

Such an idyllic picture of Kathmandu in the 50s has been rudely shattered by the feverish pitch of development and by modernisation and urbanisation programmes in the last three or four decades. One major index characterising such changes is the population increase in the Kathmandu municipal area between the 50s and the 90s. In the census of 1952/54, Kathmandu's population stood at 106,579 (Sharma 1989: 40-41), but by 1991 it had risen to 421,258 (CBS 1991). Kathmandu had also expanded considerably into sprawling suburban areas during this time. The business core which forms the city centre has been too heavily and haphazardly built up, despite the efforts of successive governments to plan and regulate its growth. This has robbed the town of the old charm and ambience of the 50s, depriving it of its cultural character. Nor has it made the new Kathmandu of the 90s into a more decent, modern, and beautiful place to live. Its natural and cultural heritage have been deeply affected in two ways. First, the green and open fields around the valley have been built up, the air is choked with all sorts of industrial pollution and noxious traffic emissions, and all its major and minor streams have been turned into open sewers and public drains. No wonder Kathmandu earned the dubious distinction of being the second most polluted city in the world after Mexico city

in 1993. Secondly, this hectic growth has completely robbed and undermined it of its cultural demography. Kathmandu Valley, which used to be a predominantly Newari area earlier, is now composed of a heterogeneous, migrant population coming in to settle from all over Nepal, as well as from Tibet and India, and the Newars are now outnumbered. The city has become a bustling hub of new business and commercial activities, domestically and internationally. It is connected by diverse air, land, and other communication links, domestically and internationally again, joining Kathmandu to its outlying districts, as well as to other world capitals. Kathmandu is exposed to an unprecedented invasion from the electronic mass media and television networks. The incumbent City Mayor of Kathmandu never tires of stating his intentions to elevate the status of Kathmandu from a metropolis, which it is now, to that of a megalopolis (Nep. *Mahanagar*).

In this pell-mell growth, Kathmandu has paid a heavy cultural price. The earlier life styles of Kathmanduites which were steeped in culture have receded in the face of the onslaughts of modern business and commerce. Specimens of art that could be found at every street corner have either been destroyed or have disappeared. To give but one example, the public, stone water-spouts called the *dhunge-dharas* have been buried under and built upon. Many festivals have already disappeared (e.g., *Maghe jatra*) since the 50s, others are beginning to bow out (e.g., *dya bwoyegu*, *gathyamuga*). There are some festivals which are still impressively celebrated, e.g., *Indrajatra*, *Machhendra jatra*, and others, but closer enquiry reveals that they too, along with many other festivals and public celebrations, are beginning to experience the strain of how to maintain them.

To what extent can or should tourism be held responsible for this cultural change now taking place in Kathmandu over the past several decades? Could this change not be attributed to Kathmandu's rapid urbanisation programme and the other processes of modernisation and development taking place at the same time? Perhaps it could. Such a broad spectrum modernisation process relating to the people of Kathmandu touches on many aspects of their lives at many levels. Kathmandu strains hard to develop as an industrial and commercial hub with ever-expanding diversification of its economy. In fact this seems, more than anything else, to have led to Kathmandu's rapid population increase, rendering its ethnic composition heterogeneous and, last but not least, causing people to abandon their earlier farm-based occupations to adopt all sorts of servicing, catering, commercial, and other new occupations that are now available. Building up Kathmandu as a business and commercial centre has triggered off a spate of heavy construction activity all around it. At another level, the changes concern change in value. Introduction of a new polity based



on popular rule, democracy, civic liberties, social justice, human rights and individual freedom, and on the propagation of western liberal education to back them up, on the one hand, and adoption of a growth-oriented economy encouraging a lifestyle of consumerism and a materialistic outlook on the other, seem to have played a greater role in eroding Kathmandu's culture and the intensity with which the people adhered to their religious faith. Many of these changes have been abrupt and sudden for Nepal and some of them, e.g., the political changes, were beyond anybody's control. The result of this abruptness has not been altogether happy and satisfactory either, which can be seen from the less than satisfactory way we have experimented with a democratic system. A culture-conducive change should never be sudden nor abrupt, especially when it can be planned and regulated, such as a change relating to tourism.

There is, however, another fact that cannot be overlooked in this context. The urban growth taking place in Kathmandu over the last thirty years or so has been concomitant with or synchronised with the tourism development taking place over the same period. Tourism has been treated as a favoured and fancied industry, more so than perhaps any other aspect of Nepal's economy. There are several indicators from which one can assess the impact of tourism on Kathmandu. For instance, the tourists in Kathmandu have a more conspicuous presence at any given time than, perhaps, in any other capital city of the region. They are a common sight everywhere and can be seen thronging the streets, sacred places, festival sites, and other areas of tourist attraction. Next, tourism has produced many new jobs and vocations specialising in the tourist-services' sector and in catering. Although figures are not available now, it would be interesting to know how many hundred square hectares of Kathmandu's urban area are used in catering to the tourist trade. Count the number of hotels, shops, boutiques, recreation areas, etc which have sprung up for tourists. One talks with greater concern when tourism declines or is affected by political protests or street violence and by the frequent calls given for all-Nepal strikes. Tourism-related issues dominate the nation's consciousness. Tourists have procured a fame for Nepal that is unique in South Asia, and which we too have partly acknowledged. The name of Kathmandu is mentioned in western literature of tourist appeal (Iyer 1988; 77-102), in addition to being popularised in pop-songs and films. This should give tourism a greater feeling of responsibility for Nepal's development and modernisation.

There seems, strangely, a paradox at work in all this process of change. On the one hand, it is culture and cultural heritage that attracts a greater number of tourists to Kathmandu every year, on the other, more tourists, or travellers,

mean a faster rate of urbanisation, which in the present condition of our bureaucratic unconcern and general public apathy, takes a heavy toll on culture. The former Acting Director-General of Archaeology HMG/N has observed that the cultural heritage of Kathmandu is being "*exposed to the twin dangers of poorly-controlled urbanisation and the tourist invasion*" (Amatya 1983b: 11). Of course, people engaged in tourism in Nepal may be totally disinclined to accept such an assessment of tourism development. If anything, they would want to put blame for any negative impacts from tourism on the many acts of omission and commission by the government. They would be extremely wary if the government were to try to place any restriction on tourism because of this or that reason. In the world we live in, no one in his right mind can make a case against tourism, least of all for the sake of culture. All that needs to be done is to bring about some order, some method, and do nothing that might injure the country's natural and cultural health irreparably.

A direct cause-effect relationship in Kathmandu's cultural deterioration may, however, be traced to pressure on land in Kathmandu, or in the Kathmandu Valley as a whole, due to the rapid urbanisation process. The *Newari* culture and cultural practices drew their sustenance earlier from the income derived from land that charitable private donors, and/or the state, had liberally endowed on them in the past. A group of people was entrusted with a specific religious, cultural, or social task which it was required to scrupulously carry out, on a specific date in the annual cultural calendar, as stipulated. The expenses incurred were to be met with the income made from the produce of the land donated. This was a unique system of cultural trust invented by the Newars of the Kathmandu Valley, and it was known as the *guthi* system. The trustees, the custodians of these specific duties, were known as *guthiyar*. A large amount of the land in the Kathmandu Valley was thus pledged to one or the other *guthi*. *Guthi* land was one of the recognised forms of traditional land tenure in Nepal (Regmi 1978). The land was held inviolate and protected from appropriation by the state, or by any other person, and was given in perpetuity. In the post-1951 Period, a separate *Guthi* Office was set up by an act of 1964, as a semi-government corporation (Amatya 1983a: 44-45), to protect and safeguard the sanctity of all *guthi* lands. But what the *Guthi* Office actually managed to do over the years, because of its incompetence, inefficiency, and rampant corruption, was to let all the *guthi* land slip into individual, private (*raikar*) ownership. This deprived the *Guthi* Office both of its permanent economic resource and income base, so that its efficiency in carrying out many of the state-protected festivals and cultural activities has been seriously jeopardised (Toffin 1992: 77).



Cultural heritage constantly confronts this type of situation arising from rapid modernisation, through which it is forced to devise newer strategies for survival. Art objects are either museumised, or find their way into private collections. Their worth is now weighed in monetary terms, rather than for their religious or cultural values. Living places of worship, such as the temples or monasteries, find themselves treated as monuments and are preserved as such. Art is reproduced in bulk commercially, in the form of miniatures, curios, etc and reduced to use as room decor. Carved windows and doorways that have come apart from their original constructions are lifted and refitted in modern buildings, out of context. In short, cultural heritage lives in petrification. Such a heritage in Nepal has been able to arouse global concern for its protection and preservation, and UNESCO, in response, listed seven cultural sites in the Kathmandu Valley in the World Heritage list in 1979 (Amatya 1983b: 9). These include the Durbar Squares in Kathmandu, Lalitpur, and Bhaktapur; and the stupas and temple complexes of Swayambhu, Bauddha, Changunarayan, and Pashupati. Different loaning and aid agencies, based in Germany, France, and elsewhere, have been coming forward with many conservation schemes and projects, which are being carried out at these and other cultural heritage sites with increased frequency.

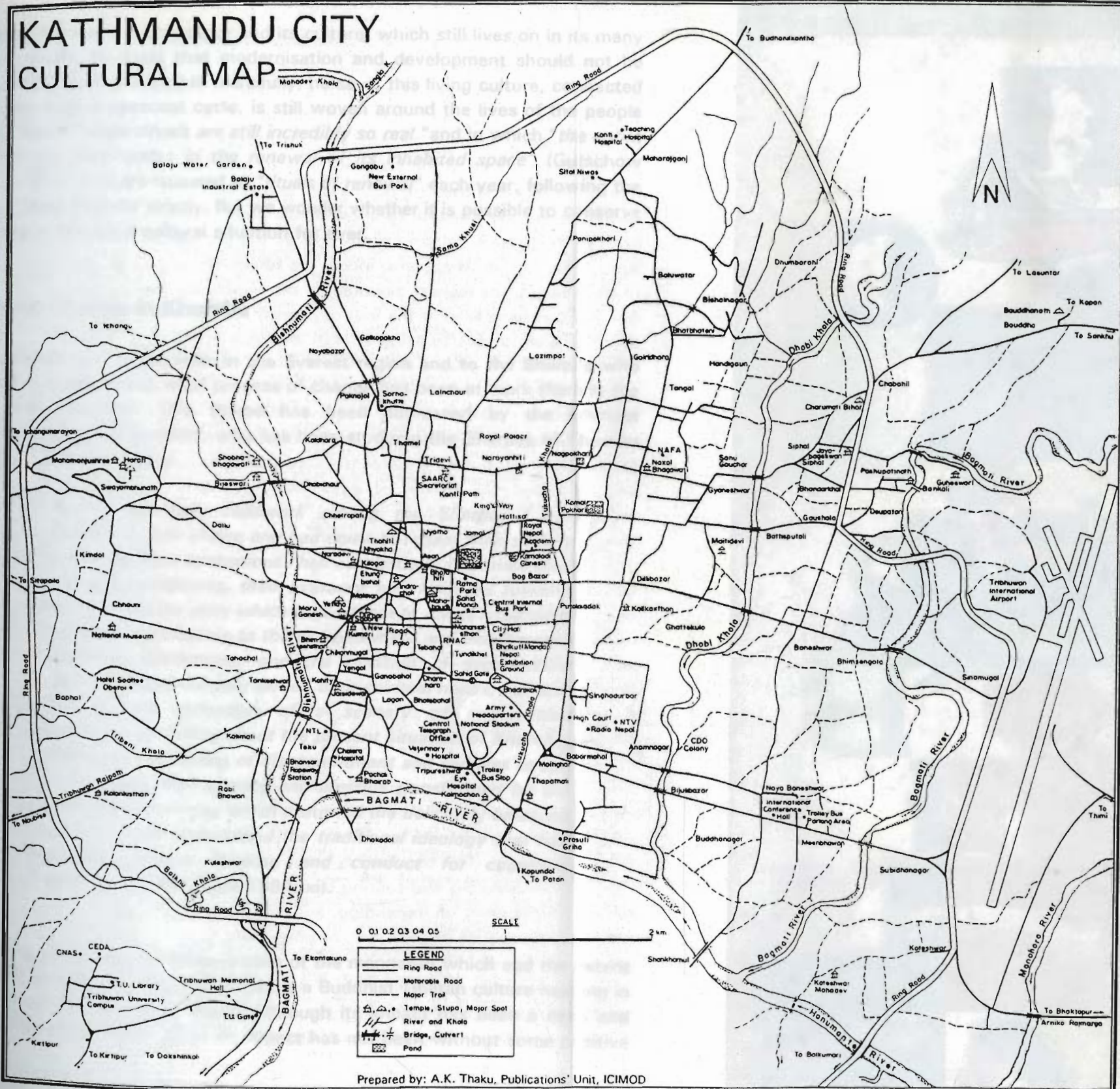
A direct and positive fallout from tourism expansion in Nepal has been the boost to handicraft production it has provided. More than 30 different skills in handicrafts are said to be associated with the Handicraft Association of Nepal (HAN), which is producing, selling, and exporting at an increasing rate. HAN claims that the earnings from the export of handicrafts in 1992-93 were approximately 560 million Nepali rupees. For the current year, i.e., 1993-94, this figure is expected to increase even further, because Nepal has already grossed 360 million rupees in the first seven months (information supplied by HAN Officials). Some of the prominent handicraft types include bronze and metal crafts; silver jewellery; *thanka* (Nep. *paubha*); woodwork; stonework; pottery; costumes; and clothing made from traditional fabric, handloom textiles, Nepalese paper made from *lokta*; and boxes, ashtrays, mementos, and animals encrusted with stones, made of metal or bone.

Sympathetic westerners with a fair knowledge of Nepal and as long-time observers deeply mourn the gradual loss of this culture to pressures from development and modernisation. For them, a thriving culture should never have been overtaken by museumisation. It should never be conserved or kept alive, as if in a zoo for example (Gutschow 1990). Gutschow is a German scholar and an expert in architectural restoration, working in Nepal since the time of the Bhaktapur Development Project, a conservation project started in 1975, and



# KATHMANDU CITY

## CULTURAL MAP





when he talks about Bhaktapur and its culture, which still lives on in its many urban rituals, he feels that modernisation and development should not be allowed to touch and spoil it. Mercifully, he says, this living culture, connected with the annual seasonal cycle, is still woven around the lives of the people there, where *"urban rituals are still incredibly so real"* and in which *"the entire community participates in the renewal of its inhabited space"* (Gutschow 1990). These acts are repeated as *"rituals of renewal"* each year, following the annual ritual calendar strictly. But we wonder whether it is possible to conserve Bhaktapur in such a cultural situation for ever.

## Cultural Change in Khumbu

Let us next turn to Khumbu in the Everest region and to the Sherpas who inhabit the area to see what process of change has been at work there in the past few decades. This theme has been addressed by the eminent anthropologist, Haimendorf, who has been studying the Sherpas of Khumbu since the 50s. He writes

*"...During my early fieldwork among the Sherpas I had succumbed to their charm and had come to regard their society as one of the most harmonious I had ever known. I admired their gaiety and friendliness, their tolerance and kindness towards each other, and the piety which urged them to divert large parts of their scarce resources to the establishment and maintenance of religious institutions, and the creation of architectural monuments which not only served their spiritual needs, but also added to the attraction of a scenery of unparalleled magnificence. In writing about the present situation of Khumbu, I cannot veil the feeling of disappointment and sadness to see this seemingly ideal society and lifestyle transformed by the impact of outside forces which disrupted the delicately balanced social fabric and undermined the traditional ideology that had dominated Sherpa thinking and conduct for countless generations"* (Haimendorf 1984: xi).

The Sherpas present an eminent case of the manner in which and the extent to which tourism can affect and change a **Buddhist** Tibetan culture nestling in the eastern Himalayas of **Nepal**. Although its impact has been a deep and pervasive one on them, such an impact has not been without some positive

elements as well. It has a traditional Buddhist highlander society, of pastoralist-cum-subsistence agriculturists and traders who traded in Tibetan salt, wool, and grain across the high passes of the Himalayas between Tibet and Nepal to supplement the meagre income from agriculture, to transform themselves into modern-looking, western-dressed, English-speaking, widely-travelled, intelligent, and highly endowed in the skills not only of mountain climbing but also in the running of tour and trekking businesses in a matter of just three decades. This switch from one lifestyle to another has been facilitated and made possible both by fortuitous circumstances and by the intrinsic merits of the Sherpas. Among the fortuitous circumstances, the foremost, of course, is the attraction of Mt. Everest, the highest mountain in the world, for climbers the world over. The Sherpas have lived at the foot of Everest for about four hundred years now and their adaptations to living at high altitudes in Namche, Khumjung, Kunde, Thame, and other villages of the Khumbu area, as well as their early association with climbing expeditions to Mt. Everest, have turned them into excellent high-altitude porters and, eventually, into mountaineers of great skill themselves. By virtue of this, and because of a number of other personal qualities they possess from the perspective of Western trekkers and climbers (some of these qualities are described by Fisher as egalitarian, peaceful, hardy, honest, polite, industrious, hospitable, cheerful, independent, brave, heroic, and compassionate) (Fisher 1986: 46), they have been in great demand as sirdars, high-altitude porters, cooks, and kitchen helpers for trekking and climbing not only in Khumbu, but also in other parts of Nepal, India, and Pakistan. Precisely because of this, their home in Khumbu has become one of the most popular trekking areas for American, European, and Japanese tourists. Because of their new-found businesses, they have become economically very prosperous too. In the words of Sir Edmund Hillary, it has also made Khumbu "*the most-surveyed, examined, blood-taken, anthropologically dissected area in the world*" (quoted in Fisher 1990: 24).

Tourism came to the rescue of the Sherpas not a day too soon. With the closure of the border trade with Tibet after the events of 1959, the Sherpas needed to find an alternative source of income, and this came to them in the form of tourism. The trickle of tourists in the sixties gradually turned into a torrent. The trekking and touring business in Khumbu and in other regions of the Himalayas went on expanding, and the Sherpas became the most sought-after people because of their real, or imaginary, qualities mentioned above. An increasing number of adult Sherpas in the working age group (20-45 years) were employed by the various trekking and touring agencies, some of which were now owned by the Sherpas themselves. One net result of this was that it kept the Sherpa population of the active age group away from home,



sometimes for as long as 10 months a year. This, according to Haimendorf, has radically affected the composition of Sherpa village society, throwing the village life off its traditional track (Haimendorf 1988: 93).

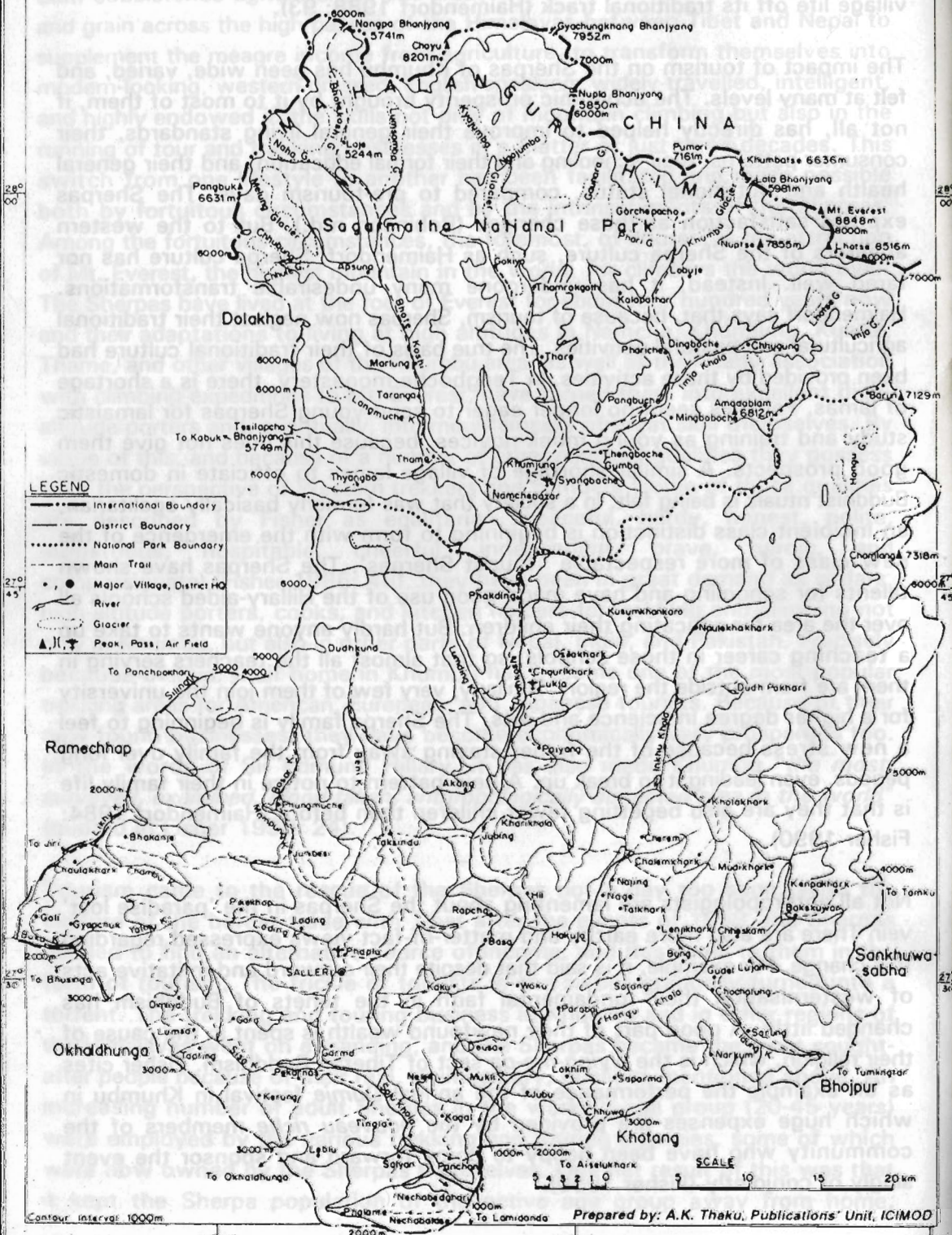
The impact of tourism on the Sherpas of Khumbu has been wide, varied, and felt at many levels. The economic prosperity brought by it to most of them, if not all, has directly helped to improve their general living standards, their consumer patterns, their schooling and their formal education, and their general health and nutritional status, compared to pre-tourism days. The Sherpas express satisfaction at these changes (Robinson n.d.). But to the western admirers of the Sherpa culture, such as Haimendorf, Sherpa culture has not fared well. Instead, it has undergone many undesirable transformations. Haimendorf says that, because of tourism, Sherpas now neglect their traditional agricultural and pastoral activities. The true basis of their traditional culture had been provided by these activities. In Tengboche monastery, there is a shortage of lamas. Families seem no longer eager to send young Sherpas for lamaistic study and training as young monk-novices, because this does not give them good prospects. A similar shortage of village lamas to officiate in domestic Buddhist rituals is being felt. In a society that was formerly basically egalitarian, an incipient class distinction is beginning to form with the emergence of the new class of more respectable 'tourist Sherpas'. The Sherpas have shown talents for schooling and have made good use of the Hillary-aided schools all over the area for educating their children. But hardly anyone wants to take up a teaching career in those schools, so that almost all the teachers serving in them are from outside the region. Similarly, very few of them join the university for a higher degree in science and arts. The Sherpa family is beginning to feel a new stress because of the father staying away from the family over long periods, even leading it to break up. A new pattern to notice in their family life is that they are also begetting fewer children than before (Haimendorf 1984: Fisher 1990).

Not all anthropologists are lamenting about the Sherpas in the 'paradise lost' vein. There are also more earthy and matter-of-fact views expressed regarding this change. For example, it is said that despite their outward and imitative acts of westernisation their fundamental faith in the tenets of Buddhism has changed little. A good part of their newfound wealth is spent in the cause of their religion, which is the *Nying-ma-pa* sect of Tibetan Buddhism. Fisher cites as an example the performance of the annual *Dumje* festival in Khumbu in which huge expenses are provided by the *nouveau riche* members of the community who have been happy to come forward and sponsor the event singly or conjointly (Fisher 1990).



# SOLUKHUMBU DISTRICT

## Major Trails and Trekking Routes



From the above, the conclusion to draw seems to be that the Sherpa culture *per se* has not suffered any major set back apart from the normal process of culture change which has been affecting it as with any other culture. What seems at greater risk however, is the environment of Khumbu and the Everest region. The most serious dimension of the environmental degradation there is presented by the rapid depletion of trees and alpine forests. Practically every house on the roadside in Khumbu, along the way to the Everest Base Camp, has been turned into a tourist lodge, and all these houses need to keep a good fire going to keep the tourists warm and well fed. In a study on the sustainable development of tourism, Pitamber Sharma has shown that the ratio of per capita consumption of local resources by tourists, in which fuelwood is one main item, is still favourable along other trekking trails, apart from Khumbu (Sharma 1992a: 115-116). The other major problem contributing to environmental pollution arises from the discarded waste and garbage left by the climbing expeditions and trekkers all over the area, all the way up the slopes of Everest. The recently reported completion of a mini-hydel project in Namche with the help of Austrian aid is not expected to offset the felling of trees, because the amount of electricity generated from it is not sufficient to heat the houses there.

## Culture à la Tourism

Tourism has its critics as well as its protagonists. To the latter, tourism does nothing but good. It is seen as a lucrative source of income for a resource-starved country, such as Nepal, which must be exploited to the full. One geographer, J. R. Allan, is quoted as saying: "*Trading of some cultural peculiarities for basic needs is a worthwhile exercise*" (Himal 2(3) 1989). There are also some people who like to adopt a middle stance in this controversy. "*Tourism cannot be wished away even by those who may dislike it*", says Kanak Dixit (Himal 2(3) 1989). For him the wisdom lies in managing it properly. A balanced approach to tourism is where our concentration should be.

Some insights can be drawn from sociological studies carried out in the industrialised countries of the West on the possible motives of tourists that lead them to take pleasure trips or a holiday abroad in the first place. In one such study, Cohen presents the views of Boorstin (Boorstin 1964), according to whom a tourist is a "*passive onlooker who seeks to enjoy the extravagantly strange from the security of the familiar*" (emphasis added) (Cohen 1988: 30). Such a security refers to the comforts of staying in expensive hotels, built to the specifications of the developed, industrialised world and catering for all the familiar comforts available back in their countries. What they come looking for,



once their comfort and security needs are taken care of (which in tourism development language is called 'building the infrastructure'), is to savour the spectacle of nature and of exotic cultures presented to them. To Boorstin, however, what is offered as a cultural menu in a host country is actually a "pseudo-event". In the name of culture, shows are "staged" to fit in the "tourist space" in tour packages and then offered to tourists. A tourist's behaviour during such trips is seen to break away from the standard, normative rules of behaviour back in his own social and work milieu (Cohen 1988). This explains why one comes across frequent instances of over-indulgence on the part of a tourist with regard to the food, drink, and other forms of entertainment that he seeks for himself during his holiday trip. This seems to make tourism an inauthentic experience, not only for the tourist, but also for the host country receiving him.

There is a school of opinion in the West that strongly disfavours tourism. Fisher quotes Smith as saying that tourism ultimately dehumanises societies. It alters the visited country as if it were "on sale", *"distorting its imagery and symbolism, turning its emotions loose...A culture is turned from a subject to an object, from independent to dependent, from an audience in its own right to a spectacle"* (Smith 1980, quoted in Fisher 1986: 37). Such a sentiment is also echoed in the remarks made by an anonymous visitor to the Sagarmatha National Park, which are quoted in Fisher. The remark reads:

*"I fear the trend of" "Industrial Tourism". Must we lead Nepal down the same [path of] ruination that so many of the western nations have gone? They have paved with asphalt the area around "Old Faithful" geyser Yellowstone National Park, Yosemite has smog and traffic jams... Is that progress? Will the government's plan to build a road into this area improve it? If we want to help the people of Nepal, let's help them in real ways--better means of food production, schools, hospitals. Please, let's spare them from the garbage that is burying us"* (Fisher 1990: 109).

Remarks by another tourist in the same visitor's book are as powerfully worded. He has written: *"A hot shower, steaks, and 500-foot viewing tower with central heating would definitely be in order"* (Ibid: 110). Such a pessimistic view of tourism is not only necessarily held by westerners, but also by some local residents. Fisher quotes the Tengboche Rimpoche as saying that tourists visiting the Khumbu area are like the floods in North India which come every year during the monsoon. If a dam is built on the river, it is a good way of



controlling, not only floods, but also a means of using the waters most profitably. If, however, the dam is dynamited, the waters released from it will wreak havoc and destruction. To the Rimpoche, construction of the airport at Lukla is like a dam dynamited, releasing the tourist flood (Fisher 1986: 58).

The views of economists, planners, and members of the government on tourism development run counter to such opinions. To them, connecting the remote parts of Nepal through aeroplane services is not only desirable, but also an accepted and standard strategy for popularising tourism. In a publication brought out by the Rastra Bank (the State Bank of Nepal) tourism has been described as *"a major growth sector and a stable source of foreign exchange with immense potential and virtually unlimited scope"* (Himal 2(3), 1989). Geographer and regional planner, Harka Gurung, too has put himself behind the idea of expansion of tourism to the maximum. He shows little patience with those who argue for restraints on tourism (Himal 2(3), 1989). He dismisses the idea of culture ever coming to harm as a result of tourism. He maintains that culture must develop its own immunity through maximum exposure to tourism (Himal Ibid). If it cannot do that it is not much *"use beating one's chest about cultural dislocation"* (Ibid).

In this debate, if the private sector in tourism, consisting of hoteliers, travel, and trekking agencies, is seen to solidly favour tourism and tourism expansion, it would be no surprise. In fact, many of them would want the government to go along and accept the idea of unlimited growth in tourism and would like to think that the country offers inexhaustible scope for its expansion. Government bureaucrats do not seem to dispute this basic premise of growth. Still the private sector continues to accuse them of not doing enough, or doing it poorly, with their eyes merely set on maximising profit.

Some hoteliers like to talk ebulliently about how tourism should be aggressively pursued through such notions as "endemic tourism", probably meaning to draw tourism out of its present seasonal cycle, or "ecotourism", suggesting an environmentally-friendly travel and tour-around, to view nature, the landscape, and wildlife and to look at people and cultures in their traditional settings. They talk of yet another new concept--"value-based" tourism, or tourism organised around special themes (personal communication: Karna Shakya). Some of these ideas have been contained in a report submitted to the Prime Minister during the second meeting of the Tourism Council held in the second week of June 1994, entitled "Visit Nepal 1996", prepared by a committee headed by Karna Shakya, President of the Nepal Heritage Society.

Opinions differ amongst hoteliers themselves on what kind of tourists are best to have, and who are the ones it is good to avoid as far as possible. Some show a strong dislike for "adventure" tourism (personal communication: Karna Shayka), others prefer "special interest" tourists and disfavour "mass" tourism (Shrestha 1983: 43-46). In all their zeal to steer tourism in Nepal on to a more vigorous course, the notion of "carrying capacity" is rarely mentioned. The sudden drop in the number of tourists visiting Nepal in 1993 has set off an alarm bell in their minds. This has focussed the attention of everyone concerned with tourism once again on the actions of the government which always seems to proceed with unconcern. The environmental pollution of Nepal, in general, and the Kathmandu Valley, in particular, which has reached dangerous proportions according to studies carried out in the past few months (as well as from general observations), is held partly responsible for the decreased number of tourists in Nepal in 1993. The piles of garbage dumped everywhere in the streets of Kathmandu, which are left unremoved for days, sometimes even weeks, are not only offensive to the sight, but also to the nose of the passer-by because of the foul stench wafting from them. The wearing of pollution masks by people in the streets has given the most damaging publicity ever to Nepal's idyllic image of a Himalayan paradise. The earlier cited "Visit Nepal 1996" has urged the government to address these problems squarely and pursue a determined policy to enhance the number of tourists visiting Nepal to a new level. Neither the government nor the private sector has made it clear whether tourism promotion and development are to be pursued with "no holds barred". The government's actions in tourism promotion sometimes give the impression of being rash and precipitate, rather than based on wisdom. The issuing of licenses to open casinos to three 5-star hotels has already been cited. In the tourism trade in some parts of the world, they seem eager, and make no bones about it, to cater to a class of tourists called "sex tourists". Will this also lead the government to consider legalising prostitution in Nepal one day in order to attract more tourists? and would the private sector be eager too to give its assent to such a move? One hopes not. All this only underlines the need for deeper thinking on strategies for tourism development. It is not sufficient to merely feel concerned about the problems of physical pollution and environmental degradation, we have to be alert also to the questions of moral and cultural degradation. After all, the cultural health of a society is not too far removed from the purity of its environment and both these should be made matters of predominant concern in tourism development.

There is no clearly-stated government tourism policy founded on an enduring concept or philosophy, as we have already pointed out above. The government's responses are either spasmodic, or weak gestures at "crisis

management", or made with the intention of increasing government profits under any pretext. Even from ecological considerations, it would not be wise to have a single, uniform policy on tourism for all the regions of Nepal. Such a policy can only be formed by paying due recognition to the many micro-ecological 'niche' in which the country abounds. Such a line of thinking must surely lead the government to acknowledge the idea of a different carrying capacity for different Himalayan valleys, as their ecologies, environmental conditions, and natural and cultural settings are bound to be different. Each Himalayan valley has a set of problems and conditions that make it unique and special from others. This is in terms of terrain; climate; biodiversity; land amount and quality; demography, and the religious, cultural, and social make-up of its people. After all, these in total are what constitutes a society's natural and cultural heritage. What must be borne in mind is that the story of Khumbu and the Sherpas cannot be repeated with the same degree of success everywhere in the Himalayas. The Sherpas are more of an exception than the rule. The Sherpas' exceptional circumstances have already been dealt with. Their early induction into the tourism trade has made them able tour and trekking managers and organisers, as they run sprawling businesses of their own. This prevents Khumbu, among other things, from being overrun by non-Sherpa outsiders in the management, not only of the tourism business, but also in the control of natural resources in the area. Although they may have neglected agriculture, the Sherpas have developed a greater awareness about keeping their land in Khumbu to themselves and under their own control. This is considered most essential in order to preserve the cultural integrity and cultural identity of a society.

All cultures and societies are not equally prepared mentally and temperamentally, nor endowed with the same natural ingenuity to cope with new problems, or to take the advantage of new economic opportunities arriving on their doorsteps. Usually, what happens is that a bigger benefit goes to outsiders from the opening of new areas to tourism in the interiors of the Himalayas. Among such areas opened recently are Upper Mustang, Upper Dolpa, and Larke Bhot in Gorkha. There are other areas, e.g., Kimathanka, Hadiyahola, Kerung, Dhuli, Yari, and Tinkar, which are next on the cards for opening. The case of Upper Mustang is already before us, as reports are being made that, under the existing rules in vogue in the area, which only allows group tourism handled by agencies, in specified numbers, of specified duration, and along specified routes, tourism leaves an infinitesimal amount of profit from the total tourist expenditure to the share of the local people, most of the money going to benefit outsiders. Sharma's calculation of expenditure patterns incurred by climbing expeditions draws similar conclusions. According to this

calculation, 85 per cent of such expenditure goes towards paying the various government fees, lodging expenses, buying of provisions, and paying for agency services. Only 15 per cent is spent locally (Sharma 1992b: 20). The local, impoverished populace either cannot or is not allowed to take up the new challenges and turn them to its advantage. In the name of infrastructural development in tourism, local land increasingly falls into the ownership of non-locals. People are not only culturally dislocated as a result of this (which economists prefer to advise us to worry least about), but it could also lead to their economic dislocation. A local of Mustang has been quoted as requesting that *"a law be passed curtailing the right of the people from outside the area to buy property and run business. If the government makes such rules, the people of the area can enforce them"* (Thapa 1992: 126).

Although economists in the developed countries and their in-country apologists might make it sound light and business-like, trading off one's culture and privacy to buy one's basic needs is deeply hurting to one's self-respect. When even this little profit is skimmed off by someone else — an outsider — it is like adding insult to injury. In Nepal it has become common to cite the instance of Austria and Switzerland which receive tourists in their midst numbering many times more than their entire population. But one should not perhaps forget the fact that the Austrians and Swiss do not have to take to tourism in order to buy their basic needs, and they offer services to tourists in their countries as people who are on an equal footing with them. This fact links tourism in Nepal to yet another equally crucial issue. More than any other country in South Asia, Nepal has over relied on tourism to bring it economic goodies. Dixit shows how it makes the whole thing sound more like *"tourism-led development than development-led tourism"* (Himal 2(3) 1989). If this is done by overexploiting the Himalayas, our prime source of tourist attraction, it might *"kill the goose that lays the golden eggs"*.

Jodha and Shrestha have developed a concept that looks at the mountains as fragile areas where the approach to sustainable farming should be different from that followed in other regions, meaning the plains mainly. Before implementing any farming development scheme, therefore, one must take the geomorphic structures, vulnerability of the resource base, people's low resource capacity, and high overhead costs for infrastructural development into account (Jodha and Shrestha 1993: 8). The implication of these constraints means that a full account must be taken of this fragility. These are not regions in which the government has already made large-scale investments to develop



other economic sectors, such as farming, before introducing tourism. A facile and complacent attitude of leaving everything to tourism in the private sector for triggering overall development can be callous. Hence, each mountain area must be studied thoroughly from all possible angles to assess the likely impacts it will have as a result of opening up to tourists. An equally good thing to do would be to involve the local community in any policy decision on tourism affecting such an area, as has been suggested (Thapa 1992: 126). Some of the rules enforced by the government regarding tourism in Upper Mustang appear to be bonafide and well-meaning in their intentions. For example, only group tourism is allowed at present, use of local fuelwood is forbidden and travelling groups must take their own kerosene supplies, waste must be disposed off properly, or taken back, tourists must not gift away cash or goods to local children, and they must be accompanied by Nepalese liaison officers appointed for the duration of their trip. However, unless and until a decentralised approach in tourism is adopted and local people are involved in all such policies, says Thapa, all hopes of implementing the rules on the ground will prove futile (Thapa 1992: 126).

Kathmandu, and a few other urban centres, have the capacity to absorb and handle a greater number of tourists at any given time. But this should not lead to it being cited as an example and to applying the same prescription to the smaller, remoter alpine valleys of Nepal. Kathmandu is a bigger, open, and flatter place and, as Nepal's prime metropolitan city, much capital investment has gone into developing its physical infrastructure and civic amenities to accommodate a much larger population. Lack of proper planning, lack of control, and inadequate development can be cited even in the case of Kathmandu which has been taken to the verge of an environmental disaster. Repeated mistakes of this nature in more fragile ecologies can only spell doom.

## **Negative and Positive Impacts of Tourism on Culture**

Examples serving as negative and positive impacts of tourism have been derived from two areas for the present study: one based in the Kathmandu Valley and the other in Khumbu. As yet, other cultures are little studied, or reported on, in the light of tourism. Even for the two regions above, the nature of impacts has been indicated in general terms. Some of these are taken from the earlier description of the cultural change process. Any projection of impacts for other regions, for the present, must rest on extrapolating the results from Kathmandu and Khumbu mainly.

# Impacts Relating to Kathmandu

## Negative Impacts

1. Change in the ethnic demography and culture of Kathmandu. Direct impact - the local Newar culture is being eclipsed by intrusions from other cultures, e.g., the Tibetan, the Newars have been pushed into second place. Tibetan cultural landmarks have become more prominent. The cultural characteristics of places such as Thamel and Swayambhu, which only a few years back used to be predominantly Newar, have been turned into a tourist market, run mainly by the Tibetan cultural population.
2. Commercialisation. Direct impact - people engaged in the tourism trade are excessively commercialised in all their attitudes and dealings, in which incidences of overcharging and duping tourists (selling them fake antiques) in the host country are commonplace. Taxi-cabs are clearly overcharging tourists. This is one small instance in the dehumanisation of tourism.
3. Staged cultural shows. Direct impact - living cultures woven within and around the lives of the community are reduced to cheap, sponsored shows for the pleasure of the tourist. Although hoteliers in Kathmandu take no small pride in claiming that they have been contributing individually to the costs of such "staged" shows, involving the traditional masked Mahakali and Bhairav dances of Bhaktapur, or the Lakhe dance of Kathmandu, such dances, lifted out of context, have become cheap acts of mimicry. It is like turning "*sacred ceremonies into ten cent peep shows*", in the language of Cecil Rajendra, the Malaysian poet.
4. Carpet industry. Direct impact - this industry is regarded widely as a spinoff and ancillary industry of tourism. Its unplanned and uncontrolled expansion has given rise to all sorts of problems relating to civic amenities and the general pollution in Kathmandu. It has created a shortage of drinking water in Kathmandu, polluted its river systems with chemicals, and slums have sprung up everywhere. It has ruined Nepal's image abroad where it is depicted as a country that inhumanly exploits child labour.
5. Voyeurism. Direct impact - the excessively inquisitive eyes of the tourist are prying in to every imaginable nook and corner, looking at every home and hearth, at every act that the people do, catching them unawares. Most people do not even know what all this means and smile

back instead of frowning at them. Cameras are busy clicking, zooming, and whirring about, invading people's privacy as never before. There is hardly a place where the inquisitive tourist is not to be found, including the burning ghats where dead bodies are cremated. Too many tourists go crowding popular temple sites to watch local people worshipping.

One such popular site is the temple at Daksinakali where the chief attraction for tourists is animal sacrifice. They watch the whole act, either with suppressed horror or condescending amusement, imparting a sense of embarrassment to the cultural participant. It spoils the cultural integrity of a ritual act. More than that, it makes everything in the country look as if it is on sale.

6. Value change. Indirect impact - traditional mores and morals that had helped to define and regulate a person's relationships with his family, kin groups, *guthi* organisations, neighbourhood, and community at large are all beginning to fall apart. It has led to a reduction in people's participation in cultural activities — both private and public. A more materialistic outlook now pervades them. As a result of this over-materialistic mindset of the people, many public festivals in Kathmandu are under pressure and fears have been expressed about their continued survival.

7. Youth problems. Direct impact - the hardest impact of tourism on the local youth was felt during the 60s and 70s in the heydays of the hippies. It was at this time that our youths were exposed to unhealthy influences from hard and soft drug abuse. The current Minister for Home Affairs believes that our youth mainly acquired the dangerous hard drug habit from tourists. It has become, today, the singlemost serious social problem and there are over 26,000 drug abusers among the youth of Nepal, of which 13,000 are to be found in Kathmandu alone. This "drug culture" is showing signs of spreading further and further. The youth are also acquiring other tastes, e.g., pop music. The pin-ups and wall-posters of pop icons like Michael Jackson decorate the rooms of these youths in the remotest corners of the country, and every passing tourist seems to reinforce their faith in their newly-acquired culture.

8. Increase in crime rate. Direct impact - tourism has a direct correlation to the increased incidences of prostitution in Kathmandu. No hotel will admit that prostitution actually takes place or is allowed to take place in it, however. There is an increase in other fraudulent activities to deceive tourists. Cases of tourists being robbed, or sometimes even murdered, are reported in the newspapers. Smuggling of hard drugs, gold, and art objects has been on the increase.



9. Art theft. Indirect impact - increasing incidences of art theft are reported. Bangdel has shown in his book that art theft in the 60s, 70s, and 80s shows a steady growth (Bangdel 1989).
10. Street begging. Direct impact - the sight of street urchins and beggars hanging outside five-star hotels, eating places, and other popular tourist haunts has become commonplace. Tourists have encouraged this by giving them money or buying them food or cigarettes. Trekkers in the countryside are offering children cash and gifts corrupting their young minds (Thapa 1992: 128).
11. Products for tourist consumption. Direct impact - manufacturing of drinks such as beer, coca-cola, and other hard and soft drinks in many varieties and great amounts is carried out locally, with the result that, in some quarters, Kathmandu is called the world's beer capital. Huge bill-boards, neon signs, and displays are mounted at soaring heights or suspended from tall rooftops to advertise them, scarring the city's skyline and the traditional look of the architecture of Kathmandu, even in its core cultural areas. These signs also block off the views of the surrounding hills.

#### *Positive Impacts*

1. Better appreciation of Nepalese art. Indirect impact - at home and abroad, the number of admirers of art work such as sculptures, paintings, and woodwork increases. The worth of art is valued in monetary terms. Museums receive more attention, art exhibitions are held, and private art galleries for Nepalese art are springing up abroad, making it part of a high and tasteful lifestyle.
2. International recognition of Kathmandu's cultural heritage. Direct/indirect impact - the value of Kathmandu's artistic heritage was recognised by UNESCO in 1979, when it included seven cultural/artistic sites in the Kathmandu Valley in its World Heritage List. Monument preservation schemes and projects are launched more frequently. The Durbar squares of Kathmandu, Lalitpur, and Bhaktapur remain in relatively better shape and are better maintained. In continuation of such work, more recently, local NGOs, in collaboration with local municipalities in Lalitpur and Bhaktapur, carried out restoration work of their respective monument sites in 1993-94. Gokarna, Panauti, and, outside the Valley, Gorkha Durbar have been receiving better attention in terms of preservation work. These are all tourist sites.



3. Handicrafts' production. Direct impact - There has been a remarkable growth in handicrafts' production in the private sector where the export performance and foreign exchange earnings look extremely encouraging. Tourism has provided a direct stimulus to the revival of some of Kathmandu's traditional art forms such as *thanka* paintings, bronze production, and wood and stone carvings. It has helped a new crop of artists, excelling in the production of the above art forms, to emerge and make names for themselves. The Handicraft Association of Nepal has published an inventory of 65 such eminent craftsmen (Shakya 1989).

Chainpur brass, which is the term given to metal crafts in the Sankhuwasabha district of the eastern hills, has also witnessed a revival, thanks to tourism. Although this craft hails from outside the Kathmandu Valley, it is a Newar craft from and its origins are in Kathmandu (Sharma et al. 1991).

4. An increased awareness of pollution problems. Direct impact - people in Kathmandu are more aware and feel more concerned about the increase in pollution in the city, perhaps more so on account of the tourists.

## Relating to Khumbu

### *Negative Impacts*

1. Degradation of National Parks. Direct impact - a recent newspaper report (Kathmandu Post: June 14, 1994) said that four hotels built in the vicinity of the Chitwan National Park are responsible for cutting firewood from the protected park area and for causing its degradation. Hotels are also said to have been a threat to the security of the rhino population in the park. Similarly, the Langtang National Park is also said to be facing degradation of the environment from the 800-man contingent of national park guards stationed in the area, because the guards themselves are said to eat up the scarce natural resources of the high alpine valleys. The implications of this for the Mt. Sagarmatha National Park area is but obvious. Felling trees in the Khumbu region is one of the main problems contributing to its environmental degradation.
2. Agricultural decline. Direct impact - Sherpas were good agriculturists until some decades ago. They produced surplus potatoes and buckwheat. Their increasing preoccupation with tourism has meant that agriculture is left to their women, or to the Sherpas from Solu, on

mutually agreeable terms. Haimendorf says that the real basis of Sherpa traditional culture rested on agriculture, which no longer seems to be true in the changed context.

3. Decline in the number of lamas in the monasteries. Direct impact - Buddhist monasteries have been the focus of Sherpa cultural and religious life for centuries. Today, however, the lure of the tourist dollar is so powerful that it is attracting all young Sherpas away from their monasteries. It has been a hallowed Tibetan Buddhist society practice to send the second son in the family as a young monk-novice to the *gomba* where he learns Tibetan and is trained in the ways of the monkhood. This has become a thing of the past. In the early seventies, Haimendorf found just four lamas serving in the Tengboche monastery. Similarly, there has been a decline in the number of lamas serving as village priests (Haimendorf 1975: 102). There is also a general decline in the Buddhist faith, according to him. In the past, Sherpas used to spend liberally in the maintenance of *chortens*, *mani* walls, and on having stones carved with the sacred Buddhist *mantra*, *om mani padme hum*, on boulders. These days, this is heard of less and less.
4. Decline of traditional crafts. Direct impact - Fisher has observed that Sherpa crafts, consisting of wood bowls, low Tibetan tables, and woollen products, such as rugs, are fast beginning to disappear. Their place is being taken by manufactured goods from Kathmandu because of the greater cash flow and the lack of patronage for traditional crafts. Many of the curio pieces sold in Khumbu to the tourists as Tibetan are either made in Kathmandu or in India.
5. Commercialisation of art. Direct impact - Haimendorf explains this commercialisation from the instance of the art of Khumbu's well-known and noted mural-turned-*thanka* painter, Kapa Kalden (now deceased). There was suddenly such a demand from tourists for Kapa Kalden's *thanka* paintings that he had a hard time to cope with the supply. As a result, commercialisation set in and his art and his paintings deteriorated in quality (Haimendorf 1975).
6. Sherpa demography. Direct impact - The demographic pattern of Khumbu has greatly changed since tourists started descending upon the area in the 60s. All young and able-bodied Sherpas of working age group have to live away from Khumbu for most of the year. This has affected the quality of Sherpa village life, says Haimendorf. With increased personal affluence, Sherpas have been abandoning the practice of fraternal polyandry and taking to monogamy. Polyandry was a traditional method of keeping the population in check and preventing the partition of family property. This had helped to maintain an



ecological balance and to prevent overexploitation of natural resources. Because of the absence of Sherpa youth, Sherpa village life is not as vibrant culturally as it used to be in the past according to Haimendorf.

7. Family break-up. Direct impact - Sherpa men live away from their families for prolonged periods, which forces their wives to live a lonely life. It has even resulted in family breakdown.
8. Gender Problem. Direct impact - Sherpa women are faced with the prospects of carrying out all of the household work themselves. Many Sherpa women are left unmarried, since their men are being wooed away by American and European women as husbands, or are rendered widows because of climbing accidents involving their men.

### *Positive Impacts*

1. National Park promotion idea. Direct impact - tourism activity in Népal has been responsible for the birth of the idea (1973) and establishment of national parks in different parts of Nepal, with a view to protecting its unique natural heritage in plant and animal life and the environment. The Sagarmatha National Park was first notified in 1976, and an act was passed in 1979 which gave it a legal basis.
2. Continued traditional habitat occupation. Direct impact - despite the Sherpas' much wider dispersal, and many of them building up their businesses as well as houses in Kathmandu, they have not abandoned their homes, lands, and property in Khumbu. Khumbu has provided them with a remarkable sense of belongingness and cultural focus. The tourist attraction to Khumbu has helped them to build a cultural identity around Khumbu. Sherpas may not care to cultivate their land themselves, but they are conscious enough not to let their lands slip into the hands of outsiders permanently.
3. Increased popularity of the Mani-Rimdu festival. Direct impact - the popularity of the festival has increased with the coming of the tourist and has received international publicity. It has brought largesse and tourist munificence for restoring, rebuilding, and extending the *gomba*, and also for paying the cost of some rituals performed in it.
4. Increased living standards of the Sherpas. Direct impact - owing to the new prosperity from the tourism trade, Sherpas eat better, dress better, and have better houses to live in. They are better educated and better travelled, both at home and abroad. Their nutritional status has much improved over the past.



## Mitigating Measures

It would be hard to imagine that remedial measures can be suggested point-by-point to mitigate the adverse impacts of tourism on culture in Nepal or anywhere else. In a normal process, culture change is slow and cumulative in effect. It is a result of many things that happen to a society as the winds of change blow in from many directions over a period of time. The nature of culture change can be diffuse as well as pervasive. Culture has no visible pressure points on which one could exert force to bring change about in the desired directions. In many cases, it may be already too late to do anything about the impacts. There should be a concern for preserving culture, even if it is through symbols and its external forms and when it may no longer be possible to preserve it as living rituals. In many countries, people have rediscovered and returned to their cultures belatedly, through revival. Festivals long forgotten, or enfeebled through lack of resources, can be revived for their colour, gaiety, and external splendour, if not for their true religious fervour. Art (sculptures and paintings) can be placed in galleries and museums, if they are languishing *in situ*; architectural works (temples, stupas, monasteries, and old palaces) can be treated as monuments and restored, if not used as objects of living faith. Art can be mass produced commercially for its aesthetic value. But whatever is done should be done properly. Art reproductions should be of a high quality. Museums and their displays must be properly kept. Monuments must be well-preserved. Core cultural areas must be protected from modern constructions, and their cultural environment must be preserved intact. Arts and crafts' centres in a new urban milieu should be supported. All parties involved in the tourism trade, such as the government, the private sector, and the NGOs, should have the good sense to keep themselves well-informed about the cultural sensitivity of the community, so as not to offend it or wilfully destroy things in the pursuit of one's trade. Those whose task it is to guide tourists must inform them about people's cultural traditions so that they behave in deference towards them. Tourism educational materials on the cultural sensitivity of the community in an area might be a good idea. Also, members of the host country, at various levels, must be taught to deal with tourists with deference, self-respect, and dignity, becoming of their cultural pride. Good results can be obtained just by putting some of the existing ground rules relating to environmental degradation, garbage-piling, and roadside-littering to more effective use. Effective measures could be taken to prevent art thefts. The youth of the country in various cultural communities must remain meaningfully preoccupied in productive work or have gainful employment. It is the idle and the unemployed among them who hang around tourists and become transmitters of negative cultures. It is necessary to strengthen

institutions, such as the drug rehabilitation centres, to help the youth who have been victims of drug abuse. It is not possible to be any more specific than this in suggesting mitigating measures here.

## **The Role of Tourism in the Preservation and Development of Cultural Diversity**

Given the nature of tourism and tourist behaviour patterns, some of which have been described in the preceding paragraphs, they do not seem to be especially helpful in the preservation of cultural diversity. Tourism tends to grow and expand on its own terms. Tourism infrastructure is provided to international specifications and standards. It calls for modernisation and for acquiring a high degree of efficiency in tourism servicing and management by the various tourist agencies and government bureaucracy. Thus, it seems to reduce everything to one uniform mode of behaviour. Tourists come to experience local cultures, be they in authentic or "staged" form, but beyond small souvenirs, or curios, or other handicrafts, they take back little of this culture with them. On the other hand, they leave behind a lot of modernistic influences and superficial western mores which are basically uniform. The prosperity tourism brings induces people to take to a life of conspicuous consumption, rather than retaining traditional values. Tourism development also means expansion of capitalism and penetration of market forces. How cultural groups would like to cope with such new pressures on them, and to what extent they would like to retain their cultural forms and identity, are questions the groups should answer for themselves. A degree of prosperity in the community is certainly expected to be beneficial for the preservation of its cultural symbols in a more static, though more appreciated or valued, form aesthetically.

### ***Role of Government***

1. There have been some general policy pronouncements, some rules and regulations, from time to time, by the government, providing the early bases of tourism development. But all this is short of being a comprehensive, integrated, long-term tourism policy. There is nothing like a tourism philosophy to underpin such a policy. HMG/N must act to repair this deficiency as soon as possible.
2. HMG/N must use its profits from tourism, making adequate provisions to safeguard Nepal's cultural and environmental heritage. There must be

a clear and unequivocal commitment that where fears exist about losing balance, measures can be immediately taken.

3. There has been no attempt to spell out and link tourism firmly with culture and cultural preservation. Much of the concern about tourism relates to environmental management, but environmental concern should not preclude concern for cultures and societies. The government should take the responsibility for defining such a link.
4. The country must be carefully mapped so that different areas can be assessed, not only for their tourism potential, but also for their cultural and environmental susceptibilities and for the ecological balance of the area.
5. The aims and objectives should be to run tourism on a sustainable principle, as with all other development programmes for the mountains. It must be acknowledged that each region is different in terms of its "carrying capacity".
6. The government should run tourism on a more competitive basis in terms of its fee-structuring. An exorbitant rise in various fees and climbing royalties cannot always be seen as fair and judicious. The government must not rationalise its actions by claiming that its intention is to discourage tourists from visiting certain areas that are overcrowded, or which may be already threatened with ecological damage. If this is truly so, it should immediately close down areas altogether. HMG/N must develop the habit of speaking out about its convictions openly and explicitly.
7. HMG/N should tone up its tourism administration and reactivate the various offices and cells charged with such an onerous responsibility to a new level of efficiency. The recently established high-level Tourism Board must work with greater purpose and coordination.
8. The government would do well to consider decentralising tourism administration by involving local communities in all decision-making processes concerning their localities. The enforcement of trekking rules on the ground might have a greater chance of success through such an approach.
9. A better method must be found of dividing the profits from tourism more equitably among the government, hotels, and tours and travel agencies based in urban centres and among the local hosts of tourists and porters. The present arrangement works to the disadvantage of the local community. Similarly, HMG/N should devise better methods of sharing and dividing responsibilities in the discharge of cultural and environmental preservation work.
10. Tourism development should go hand-in-hand with the work of general



development. Tourism should not be made the be-all and end-all of the development creed. Only a measure of economic prosperity enjoyed by the people can endow dignity and self-respect on tourism.

### *Role of NGOs*

Right now, Nepal is awash with non-government organisations (NGOs). Ninety-five per cent of these NGOs, however, are said to be concentrated in Kathmandu alone. These are private bodies or organisations set up to do community work and render service in different areas of sociocultural and socioeconomic development in Nepal's towns and villages. The NGOs are said to be especially helpful in taking ideas, resources, and programmes quickly, and without the bureaucratic hassle of the government line agencies, to the grassroots' level. There was a time when Nepal used to be called an over-advised country, because it was full of expatriate advisors and consultants. The spotlight now seems to have shifted to the NGOs which are giving the country the fame of being an overserved country.

Of the various types of NGOS at work, many are working in environmental preservation. Kathmandu alone is said to have 108 different NGOs working in the environmental field. Recently, a Kathmandu daily published a list of 93 NGOs engaged in the environment or in environment-related work (Kantipur: June 4, 1994). Barring one or two, which have perhaps made cultural heritage a part of their work agenda, the rest of them are specialising exclusively in environmental matters. Scanning through their names, it emerges that the environment has been interpreted in the broadest possible sense by them. Accordingly the definition includes gender problems, work in child welfare, the legal and journalistic implications of the environment, and matters of human rights. One obvious conclusion to draw from this would be that the country's environmental concerns far outweigh those relating to its cultural heritage.

There is no doubt that a lot of overlapping and undesirable competition now take place amongst the various NGOs. A general criticism voiced against them is that their motivations are selfseeking rather than evolving from a true spirit of social service and concern for village development work. One example of this was recently reported in a Kathmandu newspaper. An NGO called the Sagarmatha Pollution Control Committee (SPCC) has been established to address the problem of cleaning the Mt. Everest area of its garbage. However, two other smaller local NGOs, named the Himalayan Club of Lukla and the Sagarmatha Club, operating in the area were critical of the work carried out by the SPCC (Rising Nepal: June 6, 1994). The NGOs can also be criticised for

spreading the culture of "spoon feeding" and teaching villagers the habit of dependence on external resources and assistance, even for small things. One cannot possibly expect anything else from organisations that are themselves so heavily dependent on external foreign assistance.

In light of the above, it is difficult to say what true role the NGOs can really play in tourism-related activities. In an ideal set up, their work would seem to be most effective in teaching and spreading a new environmental awareness, educating the community about their natural and cultural heritage and about what should or could be done to preserve them, and, finally, in working as a strong environmental pressure group on behalf of the community for resisting any centrally-inspired rash decisions that might be detrimental to culture and to the environment. There are a few strong environmental pressure lobbies working in India, but Nepal has few like them. The NGOs could try to take this role on more effectively in future.

### *Role of the Private Sector*

The contribution made by the private tourism sector to cultural and environmental causes is too small and insignificant, in comparison to the concessions and tax rebates the government grants to hotels during the construction period and to travel and trekking agencies during the initial years of their establishment. For instance, hotels are granted soft loans with interest payable over long periods, facilities to import low-duty goods and equipment, and a tax holiday for the first years of establishment. Hotels and other tourism businesses in the private sector can draw on urban infrastructures, such as roads, drinking water, telecommunication links, etc, developed by the government without having to pay anything extra towards their cost. All that the private sector pays to the government is the hotel revenue, income tax, and tariff on public services. The private sector, in future, should carry a greater responsibility and devise better pollution control measures and measures for the preservation of natural and cultural heritage on a more institutionalised basis, by setting aside a larger share of its private profits.

The weakening of the traditional *guthi* institution has crippled and undermined the cultural activities of Kathmandu. It would be good if the private sector could come forward and assume the role of the former *guthi sansthan* in sustaining some of these cultural forms and practices. To do this now would be a timely move and would render an extremely valuable service to the cultural health of Kathmandu. Like the privately-endowed *guthi* land in former years, if the private sector could create a series of trusts in cash endowments and

deposit them in fixed accounts in the banks in substantial amounts, to be run and operated by the *guthiyar* of the specific cultural activity, it would be like a shot in the arm to the cultural life of Kathmandu.

### *Monitoring*

Monitoring the impacts of tourism in popular tourist spots, national parks, and alpine valleys should form part of an ongoing activity. Its success depends as much upon the refining of monitoring techniques, as upon the timely evaluation of monitoring results and a regular follow up on such evaluations. The indexes for monitoring have been listed, defining culture in the broadest possible sense.

### *Institutions for Monitoring*

Tourism monitoring, according to the key cultural indicators shown below, is suggested primarily for small, remote, relatively isolated mountain cultures, lying close to the high Himalayas. Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs) set up at the local community level and involving local members can serve as ideal agencies for such monitoring work and provide an institutional basis for the job. We have argued that to ensure better results in tourism promotion and to provide a just distribution of profits from tourism to benefit everyone engaged in this trade proportionately, local people must be involved in all tourism planning and decision-making processes for their areas. Within this framework, local monitoring groups can be easily established. Only where monitoring requires the use of a degree of specialised skill or knowledge should such a skill or expertise be brought from outside. In the long run, however, local people can develop such skills through training themselves.

For larger urban centres, such as Kathmandu city, monitoring might be a little hard to put into practice, if the whole city is treated as one single spatial unit. Of course, there will be many specialised institutions, at the government or the semi-government level, that are assigned the tasks of both monitoring and looking after cultural preservation, charged with the responsibility of monitoring. But such government institutions are never known to work properly, or cultural heritage would not be in such a pitiable plight today. Even in urban centres, therefore, monitoring must be entrusted to the NGOs. The city of Kathmandu can be divided into a number of specific localities and neighbourhoods, as it already is, where spontaneously formed local organisations can take on the work of cultural preservation and monitoring. It is up to the skill, ingenuity, and application of such local bodies to get the pre-existing government and semi-government institutions, such as the city



municipality, ward committees, or government departments, interested in their work and to cooperate with them. Only this will guarantee the most dependable institutional framework for such monitoring.

### *Monitoring Recommendations*

1. Monitor the state of the natural resource base (forests, shrublands, streams, lakes, high altitude passes, and pastoral and agricultural land) of the region, starting from a benchmark year, and note the changes in them.
2. Monitor changes in land use and landownership patterns. Check if local land is passing into the hands of outsiders through lease, rent, or purchase. Check if agricultural and pastureland is falling into non-agricultural, non-pastoral uses.
3. Monitor the use of temples, *chorten*, *gomba*, *mani*-walls, castles, and caves by the local community. Check their present state of preservation, and check whether these monuments or religious/sacred sites are cherished and valued by the local people, and whether they would like to see them preserved. Monitor any change in them, such as incidences of theft or destruction or, on the contrary, improvement in their condition.
4. Monitor local festivals and other public and community social and cultural events. Take note of any changes.
5. Monitor poaching activities involving rare and protected species in the region, or destruction to its unique biodiversity.
6. Monitor the state of traditional crafts. Check if the production of traditional crafts is dwindling or has increased. Check the types and varieties of local agricultural products and food preparation and see what changes are coming to them.
7. Monitor patterns of both emigration and immigration of people in each specific region. Check whether they are permanent, extended, or seasonal patterns of migratory activity.
8. Monitor seasonal work patterns and any changes in them.
9. Monitor time allocation patterns in the practice of traditional agriculture and household chores by gender and age and note any changes in agricultural-pastoral activities.
10. Monitor changes in the patterns and uses of leisure time and forms of recreational activity.
11. Monitor changes in the patterns of village organisation, social stratification, exercise of authority, and elite activities in the village.

12. Monitor changes in youth activities and their preoccupation in village life. Observe how far they are involved in drug culture.
13. Monitor changes in the use of materials and architectural styles in the construction of houses.
14. Monitor changes in traditional food and drink habits and changes in the manner of dress and wear in both genders.
15. Monitor the state and level of pollution, trail-littering, and garbage-piling and report on what is being done to tackle this problem locally.
16. Monitor the general level of crime, pilferage, and vandalism in the community.
17. Monitor the level of local awareness in the preservation of natural heritage in the village. Do they feel more concerned about the destruction of non-renewable natural resources?
18. Monitor tourism. Is it only a seasonal activity or is it a full-time activity for the members of the community? Does an increasing preoccupation with tourism result in the neglect of traditional pursuits?
19. Monitor ownership of the local tourist market.
20. Monitor the sale of local traditional and cultural products in the tourist market. Monitor what items are most in demand.
21. Monitor the wares manufactured outside which are slowly replacing local products.
22. Monitor the local fuelwood use pattern and the changes induced by the arrival of tourists.
23. Monitor the general development work being carried out in the area, such as road construction, improvement of trails, expansion of communication links, establishment of market facilities, schools, health-posts, agricultural services centres, and so on and what impacts they have on promoting tourism activities.

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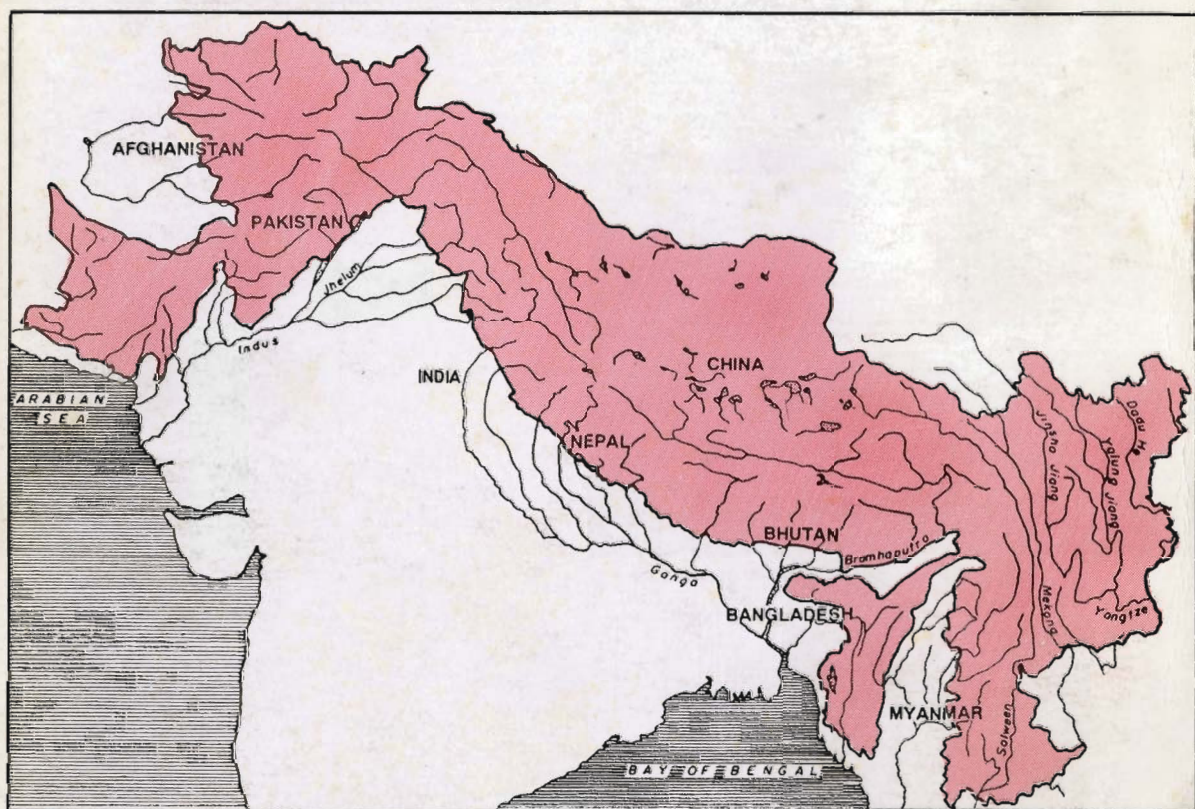
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☐ Afghanistan  
☐ Bhutan  
☐ India  
☐ Nepal

☐ Bangladesh  
☐ China  
☐ Myanmar  
☐ Pakistan



## INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR INTEGRATED MOUNTAIN DEVELOPMENT

4/80 Jawalakhel, G.P.O Box 3226, Kathmandu, Nepal

Telex : 2439 ICIMOD, NP  
Telephone : (977-1) 525313

Cable : ICIMOD, NEPAL  
Fax : (977-1) 524509