

## Book Reviews

Hiroshi, Ishii, David N. Gellner, and Katsuo Nawa, eds., 2007. *Social Dynamics in Northern South Asia* (Vol. 1): *Nepalis Inside and Outside Nepal* and (Vol. 2): *Political and Social Transformations in North India and Nepal*. New Delhi: Manohar Publications.

The books under review are collection of essays on socio-cultural and political aspects of northern India and Nepal. These two volumes were published in the initiation of Japanese Association for South Asian Studies as series of *Social Dynamics in Northern South Asia*. The first volume is titled *Nepalis Inside and Outside Nepal*, which contains fifteen essays grouped into four different parts. The first part is 'Urbanization, Ethnicity and Occupation' in which fall essays one to four. In the second part 'Marriage, Kinship and Transformation of Intimacy' are essays five to ten. Part four called 'Transnational Links Inside and Outside Nepal' has four essays, eleventh to fourteenth. The final part 'Nepal as Viewed from the Indian Himalayas' has one essay. The second volume, *Political and Social Transformations in North India and Nepal* has fourteen essays concerning different aspects of Nepalese and Indian society.

The first essay of the first volume is called 'Urbanization and Change in Pokhara, Nepal,' in which the writer Jagannath Adhikari accounts the changes which Pokhara witnessed along with the urbanization process. He shows how the construction of Siddhartha and Prithvi Highway linked Pokhara with other towns of hills and Tarai, and as a result altered the erstwhile socio-economic and demographic setup of Pokhara. Also with connections established with Kathmandu and Tarai cities, trade and commercial activities flourished in Pokhara. It again stimulated the influx of people, mainly Gurungs, from its surrounding areas to the city. As they settled in Pokhara, and got involved in commercial activities, it added to vitality to the rapidly urbanizing city. Pokhara saw new changes like the rise in inter-caste marriages, growth of religious pluralism or the overall diminishing of caste and ethnic boundaries. The urbanization also prompted the participation of individuals and different (interest) groups in decision-making processes. The Gurungs became economically strong through the remittance along with their demographic prominence (they are about the most populous group in Pokhara). These "economic and social assets" (p. 49) have helped Gurungs gain strong place in the

politics of the city. The writer also points out that the position of Pokhara has scaled high in the national scene, but unlike previously predicted, the hinterlands of the region have not benefited much from its rapid development.

The second article by Bishwo Kallyan Parajuli, 'Occupational Change among the Gaijnes of Pokhara City' also concerns the effects of rapid urbanization in Pokhara. Here, Parajuli discusses how Gaijnes, a Dalit musical caste group mainly living in western Nepal, have been responding to changes in outer social, cultural and economic setting. Poor, illiterate and downtrodden in society, the Gaijnes traditionally depended on singing and fishing as the means of survival. But the changes in Pokhara city have not left them unaffected: to adapt in society, they have adopted 'high-caste' family names, and have started working as shopkeepers, taxi drivers, professional singers, construction or factory workers, laborers abroad, etc., all of which are their non-traditional occupations. Their literacy level has rose; some also work in as teachers and officials in government offices. Given such continuous trend in occupational shifts, the author projects that in two or three decades, no Gaijne will pursue their traditional occupation any longer. The essay raises well the issue of occupational change among Gaijnes, but rather than being only based on focus-group discussion and narratives as tools of gathering information, the argument could have become more solid had it incorporated some empirical fieldwork to account the processes of occupational changes among this community.

In a more analytic and engaging vein, the anthropologist Ram Bahadur Chhetri shows how changes in similar set of environment can produce differential changes among different groups of people. In 'Changing Environments, Society and Culture,' he claims to avoid "the conventional approach of focusing on one group of people and of seeking out as isolated a field site as possible" (p. 88). He takes Jalaris (or Podes), Kumals and Dalits (mainly Kamis, Damais and Sarkis) to see how they have accommodated in the changing urbanizing environment of Pokhara. Chhetri states that the urbanization brought about many changes and "new opportunities" (p. 96) for many, but the Jalaris could not capitalize on the changes on their favor. They were rather unable to cope with *bikas* (p. 96) and only continued with their traditional occupation of fishing. On the other hand, the Kumals, who traditionally used to make clay-pots, are no more in this occupation. Some have followed other skilled and semi-skilled jobs, some have taken to fishing, while a considerable number of them have flown abroad for work. Their educational level has risen, and

they have largely adopted the cultural practices of non-Kumals. Likewise, the Dalits who performed their traditional occupations as blacksmiths, tailors and leather-repairers no longer do so and unlike in the past, do not offer their service to the high-castes in *bali* and *majuri* terms. They now transact with others in commercial grounds, and work as wage-earners inside the country and abroad. In this way, the ‘fruits’ of urbanization and suchlike processes of development, the writer argues, have not been uniform for everyone. In other words, tradition has not evenly greeted modernity. Quite convincingly, the writer proves this line of argument.

In ‘The *Sukumbāsi* Transformation from *Communitas* and Community,’ Yuji Yamamoto provides insights of squatter settlements or *sukumbāsis* in different scales. Firstly, he shows how, corresponding to the political changes, squatter settlements grew in Pokhara. And secondly, he describes the ‘life’ of *sukumbāsi* movements: how they begin, develop and flourish with *ad hoc* adjustments, and eventually find death. Beginning in 1970s, people have been coming to Pokhara to settle as *sukumbāsis* in different periods until 2000s. For such settlements to transform into community, generally it takes different processes of formation and deformation. In initial stage, people set certain goal, form associations and work together to achieve their goal; the goal is to get *lāl purjā*, or legal papers for settlement. But as soon as someone gets *lāl purjā*, the structure dissolves. Initially, the movement is led by an individual who seems to possess charismatic leadership power. But before the charisma actually grows to the fuller extent, it suddenly dies when the leader acquires the *purjā*. The writer calls it ‘proto-charismatic.’ In this way, the structure and the leadership both are temporary and *ad hoc*. While those who get *purjā* form a community, those who do not too, the writer argues. But the community, which the writer insists can better be called ‘pseudo-community.’ This essay is different from the former ones in that it has an anti-structure take (by accounting de-formations in the name of formations) within the broader structures taking shapes in the names of urbanization, modernization and development. However, it can also be seen otherwise: this transformation or de-formation is only a part in the process of forming broader structures again, because those who leave the associational structures become legal and rightful citizens (and hence no longer remain *sukumbāsis*). And by the time they de-form, they become part of already existing structure of the urban legitimate political community.

The essays in Part One are thematically named ‘Urbanization, Ethnicity and Occupation.’ All of them are related to Pokhara and its

surroundings and focus on occupational changes among different groups of people invited by more or less same factors – urbanization and modernization process. Adhikari seems to take the concept and process of development positive tone, Parajuli and Yamamoto hold a neutral position, while Chhetri takes a critical stance towards it.

The fifth essay ‘Abduction, Elopement, and Incest in Khas Society,’ by Hayami Yasuno is about different types of atypical marriage practices like abduction, elopement and the practice of incest among the Khas Brahmins of Jumla district, in western Nepal. Yasuno notes that both abduction and elopement as marriages will degrade the status of women, but does little so for men. Extramarital relations like intercourse or abduction are polluting, often incurring punishment or negative sanction against the involved parties. Similarly incest or an attempt of incest is sinful. Full of minute details, the essay also shows how people depend on local communities like *pañcas* to solve any disputes regarding marital and extramarital cases.

Seiko Sato in the next essay, ‘I Don’t Mind Being Born a Woman’ takes a microscopic look to account how gender is performed in everyday lives of Yolmo women. Sato observes the details like the seating arrangements in kitchen or the order of serving meal among Yolmos, and finds out that men occupy more respectful and superior position than women. She sees “women served in a less respectful way” (p. 204). Women are placed in such structures which altogether seem to be biased towards men. Even so, they try to assert their own role by resisting ‘unwanted’ marriages or such alliances, fighting against parental decision and running away from the wedding, etc. But the power of women agency seems quite miniscule when compared to the pressing patriarchal social structures, because of which the women tend to take these structures as natural, unavoidable and invincible. She posits that “what should be examined in order to understand women’s lives in specific cultural/social context, is neither structure or agency, both structure and agency at the same time, and the dynamic and complex relationships between the two” (p. 194). This account of her, however, seems to be occupied with the gendered everyday, where the role of agency is almost always lost. Structure is all-prevalent, and the agency is there only to accept the structure as natural, and nothing more.

The seventh essay called ‘Parental Wisdom vs. Youthful Romance’ is by Sarah LeVine, where she compares marriages among the Newars and Bahun-Chhetris, and examines the role of parents in such institutions. There are many similarities among marriages in these communities, and

both of them are seeing many changes in the marriage practice too. There has been a rise in the number of 'love' or preferred marriages, instead of arranged ones, which means that parents are not as decisive in their children's marriages as they used to be once. Boys, as compared to girls, have more power of rejection or choice over marrying partners. But again, the choice of suitable bride or groom is based on likely competitions, on the number of brothers and sisters-in-law. Similarly, after getting married, a daughter-in-law is expected to contribute economically to her family, but not express her opinions. The main challenge is to survive from her sisters-in-law rather than the mistreatment from her own husband and parents-in-law. Moreover, LeVine also shows that their bond with natal home greatly strengthens after marriage. Though she points out that the notion of romance prevails over today's marriage, this aspect is less highlighted as expressed in individual's choice and marriage process. Though Bahun-Chhetris and Newars are complex social groups and that a single explanation might not seem complete, but the findings of the chapter inform our understanding on social dynamics occurring in such groups in Nepal.

In the eighth essay, 'Laments for Unfortunate Marriages,' the writer Makiko Habazaki presents the accounts of domestic violence as narrated by women living in a shelter house run by a Nepali Non-Government Organization, Saathi. The essay is a good picture about domestic violence, which unlike previously considered, is now a public discourse. Women have become victims of "ritualised and physical violence" (p. 279), and cases like husband's negligence, husband's disappearance, wife battering, polygamy, etc. have been presented as cases of domestic violence. But as seen in the personal accounts of such incidents, the women sound less regretful over the nature of their husbands or the marital relations as such. In other words, women do not evidently call their marriages as unfortunate. Or they would do so, this is not seen in this chapter.

Khusiyali Subba's 'Drug Users in Dharan' is another essay of the book which analyzes how drug-use as a social problem in Dharan, a city in east Nepal, is related to the historical processes of marginalization in national and local levels. According to the writer, people from Dharan like Rais and Limbus were sent to British Gurkha Army since long and were marginalized from the national political mainstream. Because of this, they did not have important positions to really introduce any preventive initiatives or curative measures for such social ills like drug abuse. Similarly, other cultural factors have also contributed for this

delinquency. There occurs an 'alcoholic' socialization among people like Rais and Limbus, or that as alcohol becomes an inherent part of their culture, it often provides leeway to resort to drugs. Besides, the ties between the parents and children (mainly father and son) are quite loose because of few contacts between the working father and his children. This often culminates in a wrestling of authority between the father who is a Gurkha soldier and his son who in his time of retirement has just reached adulthood. The dissatisfaction from the parental pressure, and other factors discussed above propel the youths to seek alternative ways of realizing freedom, and drug use often becomes one such. In this way, Subba wants to claim that drug abuse "cannot be seen simply as a social or psychological problem" but the "as one of the gradual results of historical as well [*sic*] current political problems" (p. 305). For the first part, she has many stories to support, and for the second she has more speculations and educated guesses than empirically-butressed findings.

The tenth essay of the book is by social anthropologist, Judith Pettigrew. In 'Learning to Be Silent,' Pettigrew describes the socialization of people in 'terror' or the process by which people normalize terror and live in a condition of "normal abnormality" (p. 314). For this, she bases her study on fieldwork experiences in a Gurung village in western Nepal at the time when the country was under Maoist Insurgency and Maoists controlled the rural bases. She maintains that the Maoists were able to create fear and fascination alike among the rural villagers, which was also a means by which the villagers could break the "mundanity of daily life" (p. 330) because otherwise, their life would be too routinized and mundane. But as the villagers feed the Maoist soldiers or let them stay at home, they did so only because of fear, she claims. The children were the most affected, the writer argues, but they were also gradually internalizing fear and terror. They played games imitating Maoists fighting Royal Nepalese Army, and often behaved as adults: all these only helping them cope with the "time of danger, insecurity and fear" (p. 342) in their villages. In this way, Pettigrew's account can be taken as a testimony of psychosocial impacts of Maoist Insurgency. But though she is cautious not to overemphasize the idea of culture of terror in all spheres of daily lives, her presentation shows the culture of terror *does* prevail over all spheres of people's lives. More than what the author presents, it would also be interesting to see whether people understood Maoists' 'people's war' and their aims of 'liberation,' 'class struggle' and 'enemy' only as the means of terrorizing people, or something else too.

The essays in Part Two as discussed above are thematically entitled ‘Marriage, Kinship and Transformation of Intimacy.’ All essays stress on the insiders’ view on society, and, except the fifth, explain things on psychosocial or interactionist bases. Despite so, they present agency as being altogether enmeshed with the existing socio-cultural structures, and having no prominence altogether. It is also seen that the transformation of intimacy is either the cause or the consequence of all social phenomena.

The eleventh essay of the book is named ‘The Development of Local Entrepreneurship’ in which the writer Izumi Morimoto describes how Thamel developed as a tourist area, and in this process, how local entrepreneurship developed among the people there. In the expansion of Thamel as a tourist area, hotel-owners rent their hotel to people of their own caste/ethnic groups, and invite others of their own group for business. Their entrepreneurship depends on their ability to capitalize on western imaginations about Nepal and the Himalayas, and at the same time to adapt to the changes coming along with the waves of globalization. Their hotel names are Shangri-la and White Lotus (local, eastern), and also Hotel California, Hotel Horizon, Holiday Inn and Imperial Hotel (global, western). The writer notes that they also display their own cultures in the décor of their hotels, highlight the Sherpa image, and on the whole trade traditions as a valuable commodity. In this way, Morimoto describes the growth of tourism in that area, but unlike stated in the title, talks less about local entrepreneurship as such.

In the next article, Taeko Uesugi takes a macro-view to examine the processes of transnationalism as taking place among British Gurkhas. As a state-level initiative, Nepal and Britain have agreed to recruit Nepalis as British Gurkha soldiers to serve in the British military. This transnational military labor migration between these states has given rise to transnational culture, which Uesugi calls “transnational-national culture” (p. 398). The Gurkha culture and identity is based on the national Nepali culture. Hindu religion is the only practiced religion or their duty religion to which the British government gives special importance. Similarly Hindu festivals like Dasain are treated specially with which the Gurkhas can identify themselves as victor and set loyalty as their sole value. The Gurkhas establish transnational ties with their family members back home through letters, cards and messages. But it seems that gradually, this phenomenon is losing its mutuality and is becoming more one-way. And more, as Uesugi mentions, Gurkha identity and culture is in the process of gradually being anglicized.

Keiko Yamanaka, in the thirteenth essay, 'Bowling Together' makes similar arguments about transnational Nepali culture. Here, she shows how Nepalis build and maintain social networks and social capital as a way of adapting to the host Japanese society. In addition to establishing relations between Nepali and organizing cultural programs, such social networks help provide support to many Nepali illegal workers, who have problems in finding good jobs, or are exposed to hazardous work conditions or have no access to social benefits. But it is interesting to see that rather than Nepali clubs representing national identity, there are many Janajati clubs or organizations which do not seem to 'bowl together' and even hold antipathy towards one another. This, the writer argues, is a transnational response to the surge of ethnic politics back home. However, what such selective networks and Janajati groups have contributed in raising issues or common Nepali causes is unclear. Or it would be still relevant to ask why such Janajati networks develop where there is apparently little significance. Is that an instrumentalist or strategic use of ethnicity?

Though the above mentioned question remains unanswered, the fourteenth essay of the book shows that such ethnic identities can be of strategic use. Makito Minami in 'From *Tika* to *Kata*?' bases his study of Magars in different geographical and political settings to prove the case. In Sikkim of India, the Magars have formed All India Mangar Association while their struggle is aimed at getting Mangars (as they are known by the Indian Government) enlisted as Scheduled Tribes. They do not explicitly assert Buddhism as their religion. In Hong Kong, Magars are working to "promoting the presence of Nepalis in Hong Kong" (p. 460), and they are seldom concerned about whether they are Buddhist or not. There they do not assert other 'essential' Magar ethnic identity, for example their religion or language. Similarly, there are Magars among the Bhutanese refugees, who have formed Bhutan Magar Association to fight for their right to go back to Bhutan. Their conviction is that in the past, they have been cheated by the Hindu high-caste leaders; because they were portrayed as Hindus (which they were not), they were expelled by the Bhutanese government. Now they are practicing Buddhism as a way of making their repatriation easy. In these three different schemes of identity movement, they are preaching *Kata* as the symbol of their identity, while not necessarily giving up Hindu practices.

The essays put on Part Three are new directions of research in Nepali social sciences as they illuminate different aspects of transnationalism, ethnicity and identity. These discourses are of relatively recent origin in

Nepali academia, but have an unavoidable significance when we consider the outflow of Nepali population and the upsurge of ethnic and identity movement at home and abroad. All these essays have to some extent shown that ethnicity is strategically useful in the age of globalization, sometimes in running business (as Morimoto has shown), sometimes in adapting to outer society (as Minami and Yamanaka have shown) and sometimes in performing their duty (as Uesugi has shown).

The final essay is by the anthropologist Gerald Berreman, where he discusses various aspects of Indian and Nepalese Himalayas, socio-political movements and how these places have been received by the social science research academia. In this essay titled 'Issues, Activism, and Responses to Research in the Indian and Nepalese Himalayas,' he also explains why despite having seemingly alike socio-cultural realities, they have witnessed different political and social movements. According to him, in both India and Nepal there are certain groups of people who have been exclusively controlling and enjoying the state resources and privileges for long. Monarchy and political instability in Nepal is more unique in Nepal than in India. Similarly, the agitations and insurgency in India were aimed at gaining political autonomy, while in Nepal "the insurgency is aimed at nothing less than overturning the monarchy and assuming governance of the nation as a democratic socialist state" (p. 483). But unlike the writer claims, the Maoists Insurgency had more aims than just overthrowing monarchy: of establishing a community state with equitable distribution of property, power and property based on class, ethnicity, language and region. Berreman also explains why Nepal did not have Chipko-like movements as in India: in Nepal, environment has not yet been considered a serious problem, mainly because forests have been used by local people themselves for their own ends. Similarly, the building of some dams in India and Nepal has invited opposition in both places. He mentions that in Nepal and India alike, Dalits and Paharis are an unwelcome yet socio-politically unignorable social group, and in "every sense the pariahs of the society" (p. 491). Berreman further shows that academic skepticism, political blindfoldness and romanticized images of the Himalayas have produced criticisms or unnatural outcries to the research findings of the Himalayas. He recollects his experiences of how his studies were greeted with displeasure because they often contradicted the preoccupations in Indian minds. Compared to the earlier articles, this article by Berreman is more insightful and intellectually stimulating.

The second volume of *Social Dynamics in Northern South Asia* series is *Political and Social Transformations in North India and Nepal*. Unlike

the first volume, the essays here deal with political (rather than cultural alone) issues in India and Nepal. The essays are grouped into three parts. Part One is called 'Local Political and Social Change' which contains five essays, while the Part Two is 'Transformation of Religious Identities and Practices' with four essays. The final part is named 'Forms of 'Secular' Activism: Resistance, Negotiations, and Violence,' and it has five essays. Of these total essays, eight are related to Nepal. At the final part of the book is Afterword by Jonathan Parry who comments on the idea of substantialization of caste, raised by Hiroshi Ishii in one earlier essay. Here I consider only those essays concerning Nepal, while make general comments on others.

Krishna Hachhethu in 'Social Change and Leadership' examines how Bhaktapur, once a dirty city inhabited by the Newar low-caste Jyapus has witnessed some dramatic changes in socio-cultural and political spheres in recent decades. Recalling his own experiences of change and recent developments in the city, he wants to suggest that Bhaktapur is not as antique and stagnant city as it is normally depicted in public discourses. Bhaktapur is traditionally a land of farmer Jyapus, who were bigger in population size but inferior to the high-caste Newars in economic and political standards. Changes in the city were initially instigated by the Land Reform Act of 1964 which established tenancy rights for the Jyapu farmers, and also changed the farming methods (using *bikāse* seeds, fertilizers, cash-crop cultivation, etc). Later in 1974, a German-aided project called Bhaktapur Development Project (BDP) was initiated in the city for the conservation of cultural heritage and development of physical infrastructure and tourism promotion. The city was (re)developed as a cultural city often fitting western imagination of a stereotypical orientalist culture. The Jyapus were the most to benefit from it, and since the 1980s they moved into the political mainstream and eventually held the political grip of the city. Now Jyapus seem to lead themselves, prioritize their caste status, but again inter-caste relations and social hierarchy have become more relaxed than before. In this way, the article is able to discernibly present how socio-cultural significance of caste has decreased but the political significance has heightened.

Change in caste relationships in Nepali society is also a subject of concern for the next essay written by Hiroshi Ishii, 'The Transformation of Caste Leadership in Nepal.' Ishii seeks the relevance of substantialization, the idea previously used by Indianist social thinker Louis Dumont. For this, he examines the changes in caste-structure among Newars in Satungal, a village near Kathmandu. The previously

existing hostility among high-caste Newars like Shresthas and low-caste Newars like Maharjans, Putuwars and Khadgis has now altered with changes in caste-specific traditional occupations and roles. The Shresthas' centrality in festivals like Vishnudevi, Debhway is no more evident. It is so in *guthi* organization. The Maharjans and Khadgis no longer play music for the Shresthas, which was an obligation in the past. They have also stopped working as cremation-caretakers, midwives or messengers of Shresthas or of *guthis*. Therefore, their social roles now are not based on traditions, but on commercial or monetized terms. "What prevails here is not the traditional inter-caste dependence but a division of labor based on caste mediated by the cash economy" (p. 126). In this way, in one way, the erstwhile caste rigidity has changed or the caste relations have become more fluid, and in the other, the rigidity has become more substantialized or that they have become more coherent united groups more aware of their caste identities. The findings by Ishii can be compared to those by Hachhethu in the previous chapter.

In the seventh essay, 'The Spread of Vihar Buddhism among Rural Newars in the Kathmandu Valley,' the writer Keshav Lall Maharjan describes how religion (here Buddhism) changed along with the corresponding changes in the socio-economic and political spheres of society. In his article, he reports the origin, growth, activities, and organizational make-up of Nagadesh Bauddha Samuha, and argues that the growth of Vihar Buddhism which this Samuha promoted is a "sign of protest against the feudalistic and authoritarian regime" (p. 196). This characterized Panchayat-era Nepal. He reasons: less with "socio-economic transformations in 1980s and 1990s, many people became dissatisfied with the situation and found Vihar Buddhism" (p. 232). But he is not specific enough to recognize such changes and explain why people chose Vihar Buddhism as their best alternative. Moreover, the Samuha also supported movement to establish Newari language (Nepal Bhasa), and carried activities like felicitating government for declaring Shankhadhar Shakhwa, a philanthropic Newar merchant, as the national hero. But why it carried out these activities along with their religious movement is also unclear.

Katsuo Nawa's essay about Byansis of Far-western Nepal deals with the intended shift and unintended consequences in cultural paradigms. In the ninth essay, 'Some Unintended Consequences of Ritual Change,' Nawa shows that the Byansis who now regard themselves as Hindus once followed Buddhist practices. He examines the funeral ritual, which has changed from traditional Gwon to new Sarat. He reports that such

changes were brought about by a generation of young educated and “intellectual reformist group” (p. 277). They aimed at Hinduizing fellow-people and making their practices consistent with those of others in the then Hindu Kingdom of Nepal. But this Hinduization process was not without loopholes, and so it accumulated and retained some of their older practices. The transformation process still left many small places which were filled by their traditional Buddhist culture, and therefore made their culture and practices eclectic. More, as he observes, following completely new practices has not been smooth. For instance, there are confusions regarding the procedures or order of ritual and at times, such activities are carried out improvised. In short, there are unintended consequences in this ritual change. The findings of the essay can also be analyzed in the schema of structure and agency. The youths changed their age-old rituals in the way they wanted, but despite so, some forces of older structure still persisted. It shows that structure is not only overarching and dominating but also mundane and quotidian, often penetrating into smaller details of people’s daily lives.

The eleventh essay, ‘The Bonded Labourers’ Freedom Movement in Western Nepal’ is by Tatsuro Fujikura who describes how *kamaiyā* (the bonded laborers in western Nepal) liberation movement originated and grew till it realized its goal. He closely examines the role of an NGO called Backward Society Education (BASE) in this movement, which was initially established in 1991 for the “creation of exploitation-free society” (p. 332). With the support of international donor organizations, BASE had been playing important role in uplifting the economic standards of *kamaiyās* even before their liberation. Later after 2000, along with human-rights organizations, it led the liberation movement where the writer himself became the part of the movement, and along with others, was arrested and detained by the police. After days of agitation, the government finally declares the emancipation of *kamaiyās* 17th July, 2000. But even the period after emancipation have not been smooth. Now the *kamaiyās*’ ties with their landlords have bittered, while they do not have an alternative reliable means of earning a living, or settling in their new homes.

The twelfth essay by David Gellner and Mrigendra Karki is also related to movement and activism. In ‘The Sociology of Activism in Nepal,’ Karki and Gellner identify the grounds on which different activisms in Nepal are based. Religion is one such ground, and identifying oneself as non-Hindu (when Hindu was a state religion) has been a way of resisting against the state. Similarly, language, region, dress are some

other issues of activism. Though the activism saw an exponential growth after the advent of multi-party democracy in 1990, the sense was bred well before that. In the time of Panchayat, many people were educated in India, where unlike in Nepal, they faced no discrimination based on caste or ethnic statuses. Similarly, there had also been an influential inflow of progressive ideology coming mainly from China, North Korea and Russia. The activists' family backgrounds were also important in coloring their minds, and propelling them towards activism. The writers show that in their research sample, many (73.5 percent) of them had rural origins. Through the data they provide, they say, "have to be taken as suggestive rather than definitive" (p. 390), it can be true that they might have had a comparatively 'urbanlike' life even in the rural places. The writers base this article on the basis of a sample of activists, provide some numerical data to call it the 'sociology of activism.' But whether the numbers alone qualify something sociological might be debatable.

The next essay, 'Challenging Goliath' by Joanna Pfaff-Czarnecka brings into light the transnational nature of civil society movements, particularly the anti-dam protests. Here, the writer contests the notion of civil society as a well-managed coherent entity. She examines the case of anti-dam protest of Narmada Project in India, led by the affluent farmers who would be affected by the dam construction and who could provide sufficient funds for the movement. As soon as the protest movement began, there arose factions within the opposing group, but the project was abandoned later when the opposition became transnational in nature and more intense. Similarly, when the Kali Gandaki Project began in Western Nepal, it was welcomed by the local villagers so much so that they even barred protestors from 'outside' to interfere in their affairs. But later on, there grew confrontations of different interests among protestors themselves in matters like facts, methods, goals and values of the project. The project was over but not the differences. In this way, the writer shows that while 'challenging Goliath,' the protest groups have within themselves a bigger challenge to manage intra-group dynamics and their movements. Her work can be considered a stepping stone in the studies of such movements and inherent paradoxes. "We still know little in this very important field" (p. 430), she says. Certainly so.

The final essay of the book is written by Kioko Ogura. In her essay called 'Maoists, People and the State as Seen from Rolpa and Rukum,' she brings into light many new facts about Maoists and the Insurgency. She seeks historical causes or roots of Maoists. According to her, when during the Panchayat, the headquarters was shifted from Rukumkot to

Musikot, anti-state sentiments begin to grow as Rukumkot became “an easier place for anti-Panchayat campaign” (p. 451). Similarly, another important factor was the internal rivalry between the indigenous Magars and Thakuris, who were believed to have come from outside to control the Magar heartland. The Thakuris did not only occupy Rukum but also exploited local Magars, initially as Panchayat rulers and later as leaders of political parties like the Nepali Congress. The teachers, who later became Maoist leaders also worked to familiarize communist ideals among local school students and people. Ogura also reports that Rukum and Rolpa were already in the state of natural communism, with less strict hierarchy among people. The outsiders deteriorated such communist set-up of the local Magars, only to infuriate them. In this way, Magar culture which was already supportive to communist ideals, helped grow Maoist Insurgency in its ‘reactive politics’ against the state (*duśman*, enemy) in Rukum and Rolpa. This essay is helpful in informing our understanding about the origin of the Insurgency.

On the whole, the two volumes in *Social Dynamics in Northern South Asia* are collections of important essays related to various aspects of Nepali society. The series title is *Social Dynamics in Northern South Asia*, but the essays about Nepal focus on the Northern belt or the people of the hilly and mountainous region, which however might mistakenly suggest Nepal as a hilly state. More, published in 2007, the essays concern nil about the dramatic transformation of Nepali political structure in 2006. But having said so, the essays are not all-irrelevant or obsolete, because they deal with more or less foundational issues of Nepali society like caste, ethnicity, language or religion. In fact, the knowledge and understanding of such issues possesses no temporal trajectory. Arguably, the articles on some fields like transnationalism can be considered avant-garde works as they provide new directions in studying and understanding Nepali society. In that regard, Ishii, Gellner and Nawa do a commendable job by editing the books, which are an important collection, indispensable in understanding various diverse ever-relevant issues that pertain Nepali society.

**Ramakanta Tiwari**  
Martin Chautari