

Chapter 1

Introduction: Peasantry in Nepal

1.1 Introduction

Nepal is a landlocked country, with an area of 147,181km² and a population of 23.2 million, surrounded by the Tibetan autonomous region of China to the north and India to the east, west, and south. Agriculture is its mainstay, employing over 80% of the population and accounting for nearly 40% of GDP, which amounts to about 400 billion Nepali rupees (US \$ 1=NRs. 75) as of 2001 (CBS 2001). The mountainous nature of the country allows for only about 20% of total land area to be cultivated and also provides His Majesty's Government of Nepal (HMG) with many challenges in providing basic infrastructure and services to its people. Population pressures on the land have led to deforestation and erosion of soils, causing landslides. With 42% of its population living below the poverty line, Nepal is among the poorest and least developed countries of the world.

The principal reason for the inability to secure yearly food and basic human needs by the peasants (small farmers) lies in the conditions found within rural Nepal. Although the area of land under cultivation has increased and thus raised overall production to a certain level, this has not been accompanied with an increase in productivity. To add to this, there are very few other economic activities for rural people to engage in so as to maintain their livelihood. On the one hand, the population growth rate had remained above the 2% level and the increases in production are not meeting the demand for foodstuffs. On the other hand, environmental degradation may be taking its toll on agriculture and the general rural socio-economic situation. Due to such "push factors", those living in rural regions generally migrate to urban areas or other countries in order to earn income and maintain their livelihood. This migration destabilizes rural regions, which in turn worsens the already desperate situation and makes it increasingly difficult to escape from their impoverished condition.

The government has made various "development interventions", by building infrastructures, introducing technologies of production, processing and management in agricultural and nonagricultural sectors, expanding literacy (still lower than 50%), education, health and sanitation programs, institution building, and empowering the people by creating awareness, in order to induce development and improve the overall situation. For this, it not only uses its internal resources but also depends upon external resources from foreign governments, donor agencies, international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) and local non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Most of these interventions are carried out under a project basis, which runs for a limited number of years.

However, due to the mountainous nature of the land and multiethnic makeup of the country, many of them being unable to understand the official language of Nepali, the task of implementing development interventions is extremely difficult. The situation of the communities and their needs, especially in the montane regions, vary widely. Hence, it is very difficult to effectively practice the

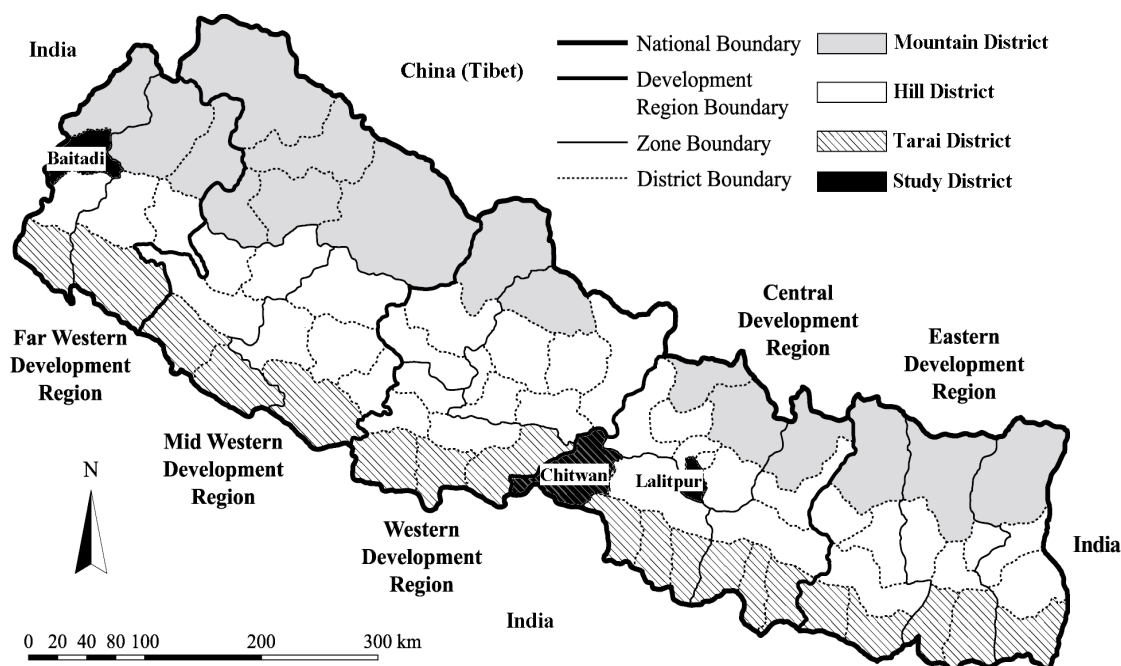
development interventions in rural regions due to the fact that they are planned and developed in the capital or elsewhere, including foreign countries, by the central government and or foreign agencies. This has created a hindrance in achieving development and made life difficult for the Nepalese people, more so in the montane region, limiting the achievements of development policies, implemented under a decentralized administrative structure of 75 districts, grouped into 5 development regions and three ecological belts. Thus, the tackling of agricultural and rural problems is of extreme importance to a country such as Nepal. One mid to long term solution to such a condition is to have the rural people find ways to ensure their food security and livelihood within the rural region, as far as possible, in a location specific way, by placing emphasis upon maximum utilization of local resources through systematic revitalization of local technologies and know-how and spontaneously organizing the people in groups through institution building, giving due consideration to the local systems, values and norms.

With this in mind, this research was undertaken to grasp the basic nature of the rural and agricultural situation in Nepal, by conducting a holistic household survey at the village level and make a situational analysis to understand the peasantry in Nepal. It will focus on how the people have been coping with their fragile situation, in securing food needs, through agricultural and nonagricultural means, using the local resources in a sustainable way, through community participation and eco-conservation, in accordance to, traditional practices, norms and values and or development interventions, within the rural region and beyond, including migration, as a whole sustaining their lives and the local environment. For this purpose, the villages of the montane districts, where the above mentioned complex problems exist, were categorically chosen. This montane region not only constitutes the large part of Nepal but also represents Nepal in many ways. This special publication attempts to account the subsistence farmers and their activities pertaining to food security by accounting village situation of three districts, each with different significance, in two development regions.

1.2 Background of Nepal

1.2.1 General Features

Nepal is a mountainous country containing eight of the fourteen peaks in the world that are over 8,000 meters in height, the most famous and tallest being Mount Everest (Sagarmatha) at 8,848 meters. The country can be divided from north to south into three ecological belts of mountains, hills and tarai plains. The mountains cover one-third of total area of which only two percent is cultivable. This is a very rugged region, ranging in altitude from 4,877m to 8,848m, and people earn a livelihood by raising sheep and yaks, which provide milk, hides and wool. Due to the high altitude and colder climate, it is sparsely populated and comprises a mere 7.3% of the total population. While the slopes are difficult to cultivate, some of the valleys can support agriculture. Tourism (trekking and mountaineering) is also a growing industry that helps to support people's livelihood in this region. The hills constitute 42% of the total land area of Nepal but only about 10% of this is suitable for farming. With an altitude variation of 610m to 4,877m, it is home to about 44% of the total population. A major feature of this region is the terraced slopes used for farming. The *tarai* is the plain area of Nepal constituting 23% of total area of which 40% is under cultivation. The subtropical climate and fertile



Adapted from: ICIMOD(1997)

Figure 1.1: Map of Nepal with Ecological District, Development Region and Study Districts

soil has made *tarai* the grainary of Nepal (**Figure 1.1**).

Nepal is a multi-ethnic society, with the majority of people practicing a mixture of Hinduism and Buddhism. Some Muslims live near the southern border and the Kathmandu valley, Christians, wherever there have been missionary activities. Nepali is the official language but many ethnic groups have their own languages and customs. Ethnic groups can be divided according to Indo-Aryan and Tibeto-Burman Language Groups. The former consists of Nepali and Northern Indian (Tarai) language speaking groups. Nepali is the mother tongue for highland Hindu caste society people consisting of high caste, i.e., Bahun, Chhetri, Khas, Thakuri, and occupational caste, i.e., Kami, Sarki, Damai. Most of them live in the hills but are scattered throughout Nepal. Northern Indian languages, such as, Maithali, Bhojpuri, Tharu, Awadi, Rajbanshi and so on are spoken by the ethnic groups mostly living in the *tarai* plains. Tibeto-Burman Language Group consists of Tibeto-Burman languages and Tibetan language speaking ethnic groups. Tibeto-Burman languages, i.e., Tamang, Newar, Rai, Limbu, Magar, Gurung, Thakali, Sunuwar, Chepang, etc. and Tibetan language, i.e., Sherpa, Bhote, etc. are spoken by respective ethnic groups of the same name. They are the inhabitants of hills and mountains, Rais and Limbus mostly in the east, Bhotes, Magars and Thakalis in the west. Gurungs are rather scattered whereas Sherpas live in certain pocket areas both in the east and west and Chepangs in the central region. Tamangs are mostly found in the central region. Newars are original dwellers of Kathmandu valley, but spread also throughout the country, though in small numbers.

Many of the people from all ethnic groups, without school or literacy education, cannot understand Nepali, the official language, whereas some of the Magars, Newars, Rais, Sunuwars, Gurungs, intermingling with the Nepali speaking people for generations, have forgotten their mother tongues. Most of them can speak but can't read or write. The mountainous nature of Nepal had, to some extent, hindered the extensive communication and interaction between the different ethnic communities, even up to recent times, that led these ethnic societies to remain more intact even today, forming ethnic

Table 1.1: General Population Figures for Nepal (1971-2001)

Population	Nepal	Mountain	Hill	Tarai
1971	11,555,983	1,138,610	6,071,407	4,345,966
1981	15,022,839	1,302,896	7,163,115	6,556,828
1991	18,491,097	1,443,130	8,419,889	8,628,078
2001	23,214,681	1,690,263	10,271,506	11,252,912
% (2001)	100.0	7.3	44.2	48.5
Growth Rate (%)				
1971-1981	2.7	1.4	1.7	4.2
1981-1991	2.1	1.0	1.6	2.8
1991-2001	2.3	1.6	2.0	2.7
Population Density				
1971	78.5	22.0	99.0	127.8
1981	102.1	25.1	116.8	192.7
1991	125.6	27.9	137.3	253.6
2001	157.7	32.6	167.4	330.8
Land Area (km ²)	147,181	51,817	61,345	34,019
%	100	35.21	41.68	23.11

Source: CBS 1971, 1981, 1991; http://npc.gov.np:8080/population/eco_dev.jsp

Note: Population figures for 2001 are preliminary.

societies and communities with different sets of norms and values, often unique and confined to ones own ethnic society.

With the start of a malaria eradication program in 1952, people were able to clear and settle land in the *tarai*, which helped to alleviate some of the population pressures in the montane regions. This migration is evident when looking at the population and population growth rate figures for Nepal (**Table 1.1**). Up until the 1981 census, the hills had the greatest number of people living in it but as of 1991, the *tarai* became the most populous region, consisting of 46.7% of the total Nepalese population. The population growth rate figures are also extremely high for the *tarai* at 4.2% and 2.8% during the 1970s and 1980s, respectively and this has been attributed to the migration of people from the mountains and the hills (Maharjan 1995). This trend has continued throughout the 1990s, with the population growth rates in the *tarai* being much higher than that of the rest of Nepal. Currently, 48.5% of the population live in the *tarai*.

From east to west, Nepal is divided into 5 development regions (Eastern, Central, Western, Mid Western, and Far Western Regions) and development policies are implemented according to these divisions and the ecological belts. The local level administration is divided into 75 districts, with 10 to 20 administrative districts in each development region. Within the district there are municipalities and village development committees (VDC: administrative village) forming the lower tiers of administration that is accessible to the grassroots directly. Currently there are 58 municipalities and nearly 4,000 VDCs in Nepal. After a long period of autocratic rule, Nepal's bicameral parliamentary system is encountering difficulties in meeting the development challenges of Nepal. A Maoist insurgent movement started in 1996 is posing a threat to the governance of a still young and developing democracy.

1.2.2 Economy

Nepal inherited a wretched national economy, with virtually nothing to start with, from the 104-year long feudalistic Rana oligarchy in 1951. In the early 1950s, Nepal's revenue base was so very narrow, due to the absence of major industries and related infrastructures, that meeting even the regular expenditures was impossible. In 1956, under the guidance of the "Colombo Planning" marshal plan for Asia, Nepal initiated five-year economic plans, which became the focus of the economic

system and development plans thereafter. Development efforts were and continue to be undertaken on the basis of planned projects. Certain sectors, such as infrastructure and agriculture, are given priority with the bulk of such expenditures being met by foreign aid, in the form of grants and loans, mainly from the Development Assistance Committee member countries.

During the autocratic Panchayat period (1960-1990), marked by the national slogan “politics for development”, the tax base was broadened and revenue was increased. However, national expenditures also increased constantly and thus the negative balance of the budget steadily widened every year and economic plan period. Foreign aid, which had virtually become a part of the budget, balanced this deficit and helped to meet development expenditures from the late 1970s. The income from foreign aid was often greater than the revenue collected. Despite efforts to undertake more market economy-oriented policies after democratization (1990), the absence of major industry inhibited a turn around of the fragile revenue base. This, together with a decrease in the grant component of foreign aid, has created a major challenge for the formulation of the national budget.

Agriculture is the main industry absorbing over 90% of the labour force between 1951 and 1981 and 80% thereafter. In spite of this, agriculture is predominantly subsistence in nature and is the sole source of food for many, with major food crops being paddy, maize, finger millet, wheat, barley, buckwheat, potato, spices and vegetables. To some extent it also provides raw materials; jute, tobacco, sugarcane, oilseeds and cotton, for domestic agro-based industries. However, due to geographical and other natural reasons coupled with a lack of agricultural infrastructures (agriculture roads, irrigation, etc.) and unfavourable conditions to build them, agriculture has remained almost stagnant since the 1950s and its share in the gross domestic products has been constantly decreasing ever since.

Nepal started industrialization during the 1950s with such agro-processing industries as jute, sugar, rice, oil mills, cotton spin mills, tobacco, matchstick and agricultural tools production. Manufacturing industries such as, cement, steel, leather, plywood, carpet, textile, alcohol, tea, etc. were added in the 1970s. They were all basically import substitution in nature (i.e., utilized foreign technologies) and promoted the use of local resources. In the 1980s these industries were reinforced in order to produce export-oriented goods. The carpet industry, later joined by the garments industry, took the lead role in exporting the goods. The labour for these industries, mostly based in the Kathmandu valley, is virtually supplied by the montane villages throughout Nepal. The manufacturing sector as a whole has increased its share of GDP from a few percentage points in early 1970s to 10% in late 1990s. The service industry, inextricably linked to tourism, consisting of trade (primarily merchandise), hotels and eateries, has also grown constantly, with a leap in early 1980s, expanding its share of GDP to more than 10%. Tourism, especially the ones related with trekking and mountaineering is earning much of Nepal's hard currency needs and contributing greatly to the internationalization of its economy.

Construction, transportation and communication, finance and social welfare industries, most often forming the fundamentals of an economy, are growing relative to economic development as a whole. However, industries related to vital lifelines (electricity, gas, drinking water) are increasing only at nominal rates and are confined to urbanized and tourist areas only.

Originally, international trade was conducted solely with India; heavily favouring the latter's trade balance. Whereas the exports from Nepal are crude agricultural (including forestry) products, imports from India consist of manufactured goods consumed in Nepal as consumer goods, intermedi-

ate inputs and machines for her infant industries and as service goods catering to the demands of tourists and the well-to-do section of the society. Trade diversification began in the late 1960s when Nepal started importing consumer goods from other countries, such as China and Japan, and moreover started exporting agricultural products to Singapore and some African countries. The volume of trade and the number of trading countries increased further after the 1970s with the import of various consumer goods, intermediate inputs, and machinery from different countries, often in line with the aid received from that country. This period also witnessed a growth in exports of Nepalese carpets, garments and other locally produced goods to Germany, other EC countries and US. Trade diversification decreased the share of trade volume with India, but the lion share of trade is still with India, the balance persistently heavy against Nepal. Nepalese economy is virtually dependent upon Indian policies and her economic conditions. The payment for trade deficit with India cannot be counterbalanced even with the earnings from tourists, foreign aid, and peacekeeping operations, remittance from British and Indian Gurkhas, and migrant labourers. Thus the balance of payment for the recent decades remains in the red.

1.3 Issues of Farming and Food Security

The farming situation in Nepal in general and the montane region in specific face many challenges. The most prominent difficulty faced by farmers of Nepal is that of the terrain and environment in which they live. Given the existence of a wide range in altitude between river valleys and mountain peaks, the climatic conditions can differ even within one village. In order to give an idea of the differences that can be found, **Table 1.2** shows the different cropping patterns utilized in the various climatic zones as defined by Manandhar and Shakya (1996). From this table, it can be seen that there are differences in the types of crops grown as altitude increases. The differences in climatic conditions will thus greatly impact upon the ways farmers cope.

Population pressures have forced farmers to clear more land, leading to deforestation that has adverse effects especially on the fragile mountain environment. Not only does deforestation increase the likelihood of landslides, but it also reduces the watershed area leading to drinking and irrigation water shortages, decreases the supply of fodder for livestock and firewood for cooking and heating purposes. Such problems further degrade the ability of the subsistence farming system practiced in Nepal to provide for the food needs of villagers.

With almost stagnant yield of major cereal crops for decades, the increase in the production of these crops is basically due to expansion of the farmland, taming forests, pastures, other marginal terrace lands and multiple cropping where feasible. This increase in production has not been able to meet the ever increasing food needs of the people due to increase in population and the domestic food supply of Nepal is getting bad. It used to have a yearly surplus of more than half a million tons of food; paddy and other main cereals, during the 1970s which were exported to third countries, beyond India. This surplus decreased to a few hundred thousand tons in the 1980s. But in the 1990s food produced became insufficient to meet the country's demand and despite having been an exporter of food in the past, Nepal must now import it yearly in hundreds of thousand tons to meet the food demand (**Figure 1.2**). Although a favourable preliminary upward trend of food production can be

Table 1.2: Cropping Patterns in Different Agro-ecological Zones

Sub-tropical (<1000 m alt)	Rainfed	Maize-Mustard-Fallow	Rice-Fallow
		Rice-Wheat-Fallow	Rice-Mustard-Chickpea
		Rice-Mustard-Lentil	Maize-Chickpea or Lentil
		Cotton+Pigeon Pea	Finger millet-Lathyrus
		Jute-Mustard-Fallow	Jute-Wheat-Fallow
Irrigated	Rice-Wheat-Fallow	Rice-Rice-Wheat	
	Rice-Rice/Lentil	Rice-Wheat-Mungbean	
	Rice-Wheat-Dhaincha	Rice-Potato-Dhaincha	
	Rice-Fieldpea	Rice-Rice-Maize	
	Rice+Pigeon pea (in rice bund)-Wheat		
Warm Temperate (1000m-2000m alt)	Rainfed	Maize/Finger millet-Wheat	Maize/Finger millet-Fallow
		Maize+Soybean-Mustard/Fallow	Maize-Barley
		Maize+Upland Rice-Fallow	Maize+Rice-Wheat
	Irrigated	Rice+Blackgram in bund-Wheat	Blackgram-Wheat-Fallow
		Rice-Wheat-Fallow	Rice-Wheat-Maize
Rice-Rice-Wheat	Rice-Barley		
Cool Temperate to Alpine (2000m-3000m+ alt) ¹	Rainfed	Maize-Fallow	Potato-Fallow
		Maize-Wheat	Naked barley-Fallow
		Wheat-Finger millet (2 years pattern)	
		Maize-Naked Barley-Finger millet (2 years pattern)	
		Maize-Wheat-Finger millet (2 years pattern)	
Irrigated	Rice-Naked Barley	Buckwheat-Naked Barley	
	Rice-Wheat	Potato-Naked Barley-Fallow (2 yrs Pattern)	

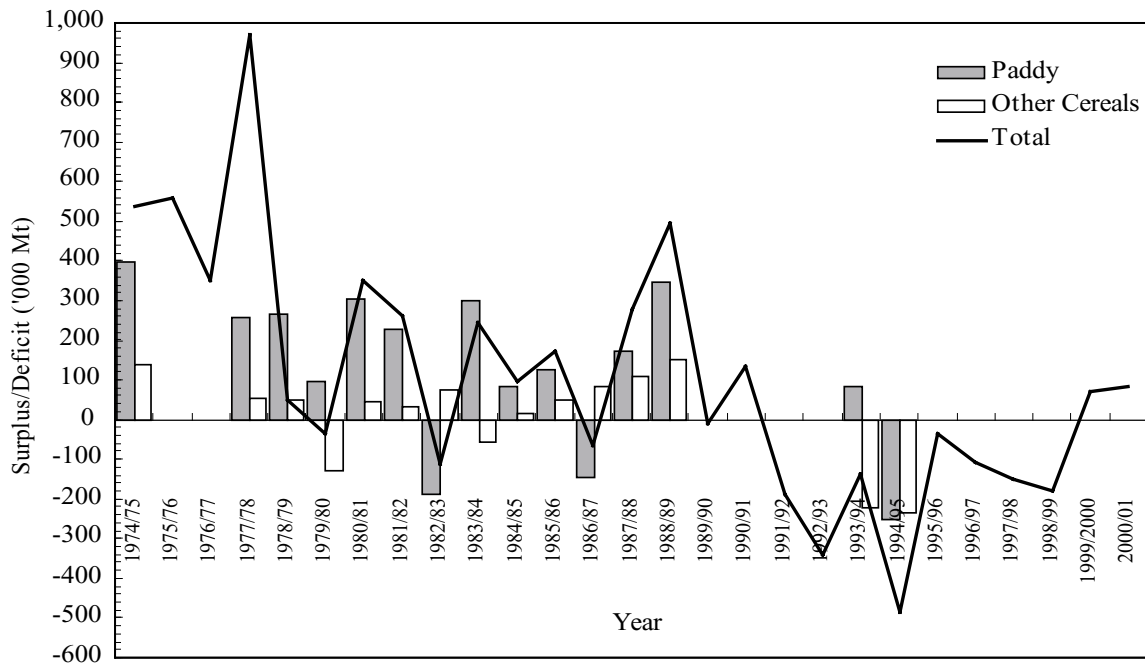
Source: Manandhar & Shakya (1996), p. 18.

Note: ¹One crop is usually grown at lower altitudes and as additional second crop is only possible in a few areas. In higher altitudes, three crops are generally grown in a two year time span. Above 3000m, only one crop of potato, naked barley or wheat is possible.

observed in the turn of the 21st century, Nepal no longer can secure its food needs at the country level. The situation is very severe in the montane region where only very few households are able to secure their yearly food needs.

Secondly, the mountainous nature of this region has left many areas relatively isolated due to difficulties in providing adequate transportation networks. This in turn has made it difficult for HMG to extend economic and social services to the farmers. Other development interventions made by agencies other than the government also have limitations in implementation and in achieving the goals. Given all of these problems, farmers are faced with a desperate situation and “food shortages in mountain areas has set in motion a chain reaction towards an integrated process of poverty – resource degradation – scarcity – poverty” (Partap, 1995).

Farming in the montane region of Nepal is presently undergoing a transition phase from subsistence to cash crop farming. The production of high-value cash crops is currently being touted, as a way to help farmers earn cash income so that they can purchase food and thus meet their food security needs. There are of course continuous efforts being made to produce more food in a more efficient way, with efforts at community levels, using re-evaluated local technology or locally induced technology, in an environment-specific adaptive way, often integrating the animal husbandry and forest usage. There are, however, many important components that are needed for this form of agriculture to be able to contribute towards the alleviation of poverty in rural regions. These include a series of devel-



Source: CBS (1982, 1986, 1989, 1999, 2000, 2001).

Notes: Food comprises of paddy, wheat, maize, millet, barley. Surplus and deficit of state of food supply is calculated by the national production and the demand. Value at the zero line on the left memory is where the production just meets the demand and the national self-sufficiency of the food is 100%, value above are surplus and below deficit. Data for 1999/2000 and 2000/01 are preliminary.

Figure 1.2: National Food Balance in Recent Decades

opment interventions, such as, access to re-evaluated local technology or induced technology that can be localized, production inputs, markets for the selling of products (cash crops), agricultural extension services and training, and financial support to provide the necessary seed money for such an enterprise.

Changes are occurring, not only in farming, but in the whole rural region as well, from complete isolation to integration, as a whole to the direction of modernity, with the influx of outsiders, cash economy, consumer and production goods produced elsewhere, information, system and values of the whole country and beyond. Some of the specific examples in this regard in rural Nepal would be the recent dissemination of local administration and school education at the grassroots level. This allows the people in the rural region to make living even without engaging in farming. People engaged in such non-farming jobs procure their food from local farmers or even import their foods, thus, accelerating the rural transition. Another form of transition seen in certain rural regions is the influx of tourists in the form of trekking and mountaineering tourism, rural tourism and eco (national park) tourism. Tourism can greatly influence the transition phase and to some extent make the rural region more stable by increasing its carry capacity to feed the people.

But in many of the villages, people adjust to this lack of capacity to feed the people by out migration, migrating to cities, *tarai* plains, India, Middle East, Malaysia, Japan and other western countries. At the migration destinations they get engaged in any available job ranging from British Gurkha army to petty menial jobs of portering, coolieing, petty trading, day labouring and servantry. They could be working seasonally, annually or beyond and would be remitting money and goods to their family in the village. Such remittances would be contributing in the securing of the food and other needs of the people staying back in the village. Migration also accelerates the transition of farming and rural region as a whole. In almost all the villages of Nepal, a combination of all these activities in various degrees can be observed.

All these non-farm activities in the rural region and beyond can contribute towards the alleviation of rural poverty. However, as in the case of farming, development interventions, such as, training and education to acquire the fundamental and systematic knowledge to engage in these nonfarm activities, seed money, group organization, etc. are necessary.

With these things in mind, this study will attempt to provide a basic picture of peasantry in the montane region of Nepal, by summarizing the basic characteristics of subsistence montane farming and the activities of the farmers pertaining to food security at the village level in three different settings; remote and under developed region, recently developing region and developed region. For this purpose the socio-economic conditions of the villagers will be considered from the holistic point of view with questionnaire survey to all the villagers. In order not limit the findings only to a village in the region another village within the region and having a typical characteristics of the region, rather well known, will be undertaken for comparative analysis. In doing so it will be tried to visualise the holistic regional dynamism through the aspects of area studies.

1.4 Objectives and Methodology

1.4.1 Objectives

The main objectives of this research is to examine the socio-economic conditions of montane rural households of Nepal and make a situational analysis, regarding education, occupation structure, income, finance, farming, inclusive of land and livestock holding, forest usage where ever applicable, farm production and food self-sufficiency. Identification of the problems in farming, other job engagements, income and food self-sufficiency will be lined out and examine how the villagers have been coping with these problems, including undertaking of various available development interventions and their application in farming of food and or cash crops, nonfarming, and migration in order to improve their food procurement and alleviate their socio-economic conditions. In doing so, the effect of or the relation of the schooling or literacy education and Nepali language understanding ability of the individuals, asset holding of the household, ethnicity of the people, location and ethno history (back ground) of the village will be also given due consideration.

A conceptual framework will be developed to understand and explain the peasantry and subsistence farming in Nepal and the whole phenomena of its dynamism holistically, and identify the problem of subsistence farmers and their activities pertaining to food security and local resource use.

1.4.2 Methodology

In order to meet the above objectives, an in-depth examination of secondary sources was conducted to provide an understanding of the farming system in Nepal and the problems that it is facing. After looking at the subsistence farming system prevalent in the montane region, the growth trends of cropping area, production and yield of major cereal crops for the montane region are examined by using census data where feasible and are incorporated in the chapters of each district.

Village level field data are used to examine the present situation faced by the farmers. For this purpose, six VDCs from three districts in two development regions were selected categorically after examining the general characters of all the montane districts (**Figure 1.1**). They are, Baitadi, one of

Table 1.3: Study Districts and Villages at a Glance

Dev. Region	District	District features	Field study village	Special features	Ethnic characteristics
Far Western	Baitadi (under developed)	Border montane district with close affinity to Northern India.	Melauli	Montane village with religious significance	Chhetri, Bahun, Occupational caste
			Patan	Ordinary subsistence montane village	Chhetri, Bahun, Occupational caste
Central	Chitwan (developing)	Inner tarai valley with mountains in the north and the south, and well known for National Park.	Kalyanpur	Newly settled migrant village in <i>madi</i> area	Bahun, Occupational caste
			Dahakhani	Ordinary subsistence montane village	Gurung, Magar, Chepang
	Lalitpur (developed)	Northern part highly urbanized and forms a part of Kathmandu valley but southern part very rugged and remote.	Bungamati	Suburban valley village with historical importance	Newar
			Dal Choki	Ordinary subsistence montane village	Tamang, Magar, Bahun

the least developed districts, in the remote far western development region, Chitwan, recently developing district but with remote montane region in the north and dense forestland with national forest in the south where people from all over Nepal have migrated in recent years to start new settlements clearing the forest, and Lalitpur, a developed district of Kathmandu valley but with rugged and remote montane region in southern part beyond the valley, both in central development region.

Two VDCs were selected purposively in each district for the in-depth study. One of the sample VDCs was just an ordinary subsistence montane village in the district, in a way representing the peasantry of the district in terms of size, population, ethnic composition, physical facilities, nature of farming and rural setting, together. The other sample VDC would contain the characteristics that could also be identified as the typical characters of the district for which the district is widely known to the country. Those characters could be natural, historical, social, ethnic and or economical, and the village could be more advanced or remote than the ordinary subsistence montane village. District features, special features and ethnic characteristics of each study village are summarised in **Table 1.3**. Each of the villages, except for the one in Kathmandu valley, are half a day to two days of walk from the nearest local motorable road head, which itself could take one to two days by land transport from Kathmandu. Within the village, to go to one end from the other could often take more than a day.

To collect the data at the village level, a set of structured questionnaire was constructed first, which was converted into Nepali in Kathmandu and a pre-test was carried out in the nearby villages. The information from the pre-test was used to revise the questionnaire and finalize it in a way that would best suit the rural context of Nepal.

The questionnaire contained the social aspects of the household: household head, family size, age, sex, marital status, education, Nepali ability, mother tongue ability, birth place and migration, of the household members; economic aspects of the household: main and side jobs of the household members, place and nature of working, its income, remittance, loans, savings, asset (house, land, live-stock, pasture and forest) holding, entreprenuring lodging and fooding facilities, petty industries and trading; farming and food security, social activities, membership of certain groups, and participation in development interventions. These data were collected from all the households in the sample vil-

lages after negotiating with village chairman and other officials for permission to conduct the study in the village. Further, some sample surveys were made in farming, group activities, farmers' perception of rural dynamism, and so on to support and explain the findings from the general survey made to all the households of the village. A survey team chaired by the author was formed at each village to collect the data. The members consist of students from Tribhuvan University, local NGO staff, village school-teachers, village youths, and public figures of the village where ever feasible. Students from Hiroshima University were also incorporated in the team where feasible. The author explained the objective of the study by conducting the public hearing and explained the questionnaires in detail to the investigators, made demonstrative surveys and carried out on-the-site trainings to conduct the surveys.

Findings of the study are highlighted with the comparative analysis of two villages in each district and related to the district where feasible to characterize the district. They are accounted here in different chapters in the sequence of Baitadi, Chitwan and Lalitpur. On the basis of these findings, a conceptual framework was discussed to understand and explain the peasantry and subsistence farming and its dynamism, and the problem of subsistence farmers and their activities pertaining to food security and local resource use in Nepal in the concluding chapter.

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