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Summer 1994

Review of Pradyumna P. Karan and Hiroshi Ishii,  
*Nepal: Development and Change in a Landlocked  
Himalayan Kingdom*

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Pradyumna P. Karan and Hiroshi Ishii.\* *Nepal: Development and Change in a Landlocked Himalayan Kingdom*. Tokyo: Institute for the Study of Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies (Monumenta Serindica No. 25), 1994, vii and 253 pp., biblio., and pocket map.

\*With the collaboration of Masao Kobayashi, Mohan Shrestha, Chakramehr Vajracharya, and David Zurick and cartographer Gyula Pauer.

The authors of this book have successfully provided “an outline of some of the crucial issues facing the country” (p. v), one of their declared aims. By examining Nepal’s landlocked setting, natural resources, forests, agriculture, industry, transportation systems, demographic characteristics, cultural patterns, settlement patterns, and tourism, the two authors and four collaborators have summarized many current conditions. The inclusion of numerous statistics reinforces the discussion, as well as giving readers a useful collection of data about contemporary Nepal (although the lack of an index diminishes their accessibility somewhat).

Many of the crucial issues the country faces are ones that a reader, even if unfamiliar with Nepal but very aware of problems confronting most Third World states, would anticipate: those associated with the numerous interrelated demographic, sociologic, economic, and political factors that create cycles of poverty. The usual deterrents to development are acerbated in the case of Nepal by its very limited accessibility to the global economy. With its mountainous terrain handicapping internal movements and limiting its already landlocked position to only one feasible external route, namely, that through India, Nepal has extremely few options to pursue. The authors make it very clear how the geographic situation makes Nepal highly dependent on India for virtually all avenues leading to economic growth. The development of the income generating activities that seem to have the most potential, such as specialized horticulture, hydroelectric generation, industrial production of labor-intensive consumer items, or tourism, depends on economic and political conditions in India. India is the most obvious direct market for Nepal’s exports, and it controls the transit routes connecting Nepal with other foreign markets. Even tourism, which “now contributes almost one-fifth of the country’s gross foreign exchange earnings” (p. 215), is dominated by Indian tourists; and the number of tourists to Nepal from other countries fluctuates with those attracted to India.

This is not a methodological treatise, as implied by the second aim of the book: "to explore how the social sciences can contribution to [the] understanding and management [of crucial issues]" (p. v). Rather than discussing the ways social sciences approach understanding, the authors demonstrate the perspectives of social scientists by interpreting the Nepalese setting. To the general conditions associated with landlocked Third World countries, they bring additional information that exposes the complexities of achieving economic development in this particular country. Such information is illustrated by a discussion about contrasting environmental attitudes held by various culture groups. For example, the average number of livestock per Maithili household in the terai region is only 1.5 while in Tharu households in the same region it is 14.6; likewise, the average for a Sherpa family in the Great Himalayan region is 14.9, which contrasts with 33.1 for a Tibetan family in the same ecological zone (p. 135).

The management or amelioration of problems by social scientists is demonstrated by suggesting policies that the authors believe would reduce the severity of several crucial issues. For instance, it is recommended that the Nepal government explore the formation of a South Asia Free Trade Area in an attempt to relieve some of the severe economic problems resulting from the country's landlocked position.

The effectiveness of the book is diminished somewhat by three minor irritants: (1) by difficult writing in some sections, (2) by unnecessary repetition of some facts, and (3) by minor map faults. The first is exemplified by the following sentence: "The dilemma facing Nepal is clear and unmistakable: development integrated poverty alleviation programs are needed most under conditions of widespread poverty, the prevalence of unorganized activities, illiteracy, and ignorance" (p. 239). The second, which may have resulted partly from having multiple authors, is typified by the reader being told repeatedly about the mass migration from the Middle Mountains to the terai during the last 50 years. An illustration of the third weakness is the reference to "four geoeological zones" on page 13 but having only three "ecological regions" shown by the map on page 14. This map fault, however, should be put in perspective; in general, there is a very good set of useful maps throughout the book. Furthermore, the main and subsidiary maps in the end pocket are excellent.

In conclusion, this book provides a good summary of many issues facing a landlocked Third World country having major economic and demographic problems. Furthermore, for scholars of Nepal, this

publication brings together a wealth of contemporary data along with an interpretative commentary. These combined benefits should result in making this a familiar title on many bookshelves.

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