Inventing Social Categories Through Place: Social Representations and Development in Nepal

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WHAT IS A VILLAGE?

Nepal is a predominantly rural nation: Most people live in villages and make their living as subsistence farmers. The Nepalese government, assisted by international donor agencies, administers projects directed at improving the conditions of life for these rural people. Images of villages and village life accompany the promotion of development ideals. Radio Nepal has actors playing the part of villagers in didactic skits aimed at convincing rural people that they should consult doctors for their health problems or should feed oral rehydration solution to children suffering from diarrhea. Schoolbooks contain illustrations of village scenes and talk about village life as they inform children about development programs. When development policy makers plan programs, they discuss what villagers do, how they react, and what they think. Together, these images coalesce into a typical, generic village, turning all the villages of rural Nepal into the village. Commonplace as these representations of the village and villagers are, they mold the way in which people in contemporary Nepal conceptualize national society and differences within it.

The village crystallizes into a distinct social category in the context of this national project of development. Further, the conceptual joining of village, development, and nation reworks an abstract, internationalized development ideal, rendering it Nepalese. This nepalization of development concepts accounts for why the village becomes a marked category in a society in which the vast majority of people are villagers.

Development alters the meaning of the village in Nepalese social imagina-

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tion, perhaps more than the actual villages in which its programs are carried out. In transforming both the terms in which social identities are cast and the symbols that mark social differences, development has effects that are cultural. Ironically, while so many carefully designed development programs fall short of accomplishing their goals for change, a diffuse, international development vision succeeds in producing a profound ideological shift. Unplanned, these effects go largely unrecognized and unexamined—both in public debate in Nepal and in anthropological discussions of development.

Though development projects are carried out in specific localities, the development vision is international and universalizing (Escobar 1988).[1] Development creates a conceptual space of cultural contact, carving into the social complexity of rural Nepal the paths along which nations from the "first" and "third world" can meet. As institutionalized in countries such as Nepal, development fuses the local and the global but concerns itself explicitly with the economic dimension of this relationship. The westernization that accompanies economic development tends to be regarded as an inevitable and self-evident process. A growing body of ethnography views colonial and post-colonial social relations as a sustained interaction in which political-economic systems and systems of signification are inextricably intertwined.[2] This work focuses on the local social forms and representational practices that emerge at the junctures of these systems. When applied to contemporary Nepal, this approach suggests that development establishes an ideological encounter in which universalist notions of progress and modernity meet locally grounded social visions.

Analyzing the ideological dimension of colonial encounters, a number of writers have argued that the colonized appropriate and internalize the colonial vision, even while resisting it.[3] If we extend this understanding of colonial relationships to contemporary international development, then Nepal's national project of development poses questions as to how, precisely, an ideology of modernization becomes assimilated into local culture. With this question in mind, I look first at how a diffuse but consistently reiterated opposition of the village to development provides an authoritative social map for Nepalese national society. I then adopt a different perspective to explore

[1] Development policies thus have a double orientation toward both the problems of the so-called underdeveloped society and the international ideals and standards of development. For example, Anagnost (1988:19) interprets China's one-child policy as "a form of 'sympathetic magic' meant to evoke the indicators of a post-industrial society in a context that does not yet possess the material basis for such." At the same time that the population-control policy regulates and controls the behavior of Chinese citizens, this policy also functions as a sign of modernity in an international culture.

[2] See, for example, Comaroff (1985), Comaroff and Comaroff (1988), Taussig (1980), and Ong (1987).

[3] Chatterjee (1986), Mani (1987), Memmi (1965), and Nandy (1983) all draw on different cases to demonstrate the paradoxes of this relationship.

the paradox that portrayals of the village as a backward place pose for rural people who see their lives as engaged with, not at a remove from, development.[4] How do people in Nepal conceptualize national society? How does this map of the nation become a guide for the social positioning of rural people? How, ultimately, does a kind of place come to stand for a kind of people? At issue are the politics of difference in the construction of national society.[5]

CITY AND COUNTRY IN A RURAL NATION

For the majority of Nepalis, villages are home, community, the very circumstances of daily life. A growing number of Nepalis are raised in hill villages, only to migrate out of them for a life of salaried employment in towns. For them, a village is still the homeplace, a social center to which they are intimately connected even when physically distant. In the lives of these people the line between village and not-village is blurred. Other Nepalis, the most elite, educated, and urbanized, are so socially distant from village life in Nepal that for them to go to a village is tantamount to visiting an alien land. There is no single meaning attached to villages: Villages can evoke familiarity, ambivalence, disdain, or nostalgia. The analysis that follows does not exhaust the meaning that the village has for all Nepalis.[6] But whether they themselves are rural or urban, the village figures in the social imagination of Nepalese people. What does the village represent in contemporary Nepalese society?

[4] Research in Nepal was conducted from December 1985 through January 1988. This essay draws both on ethnographic research conducted in a village near Bhojpur Bazaar, in eastern Nepal and on time spent in Kathmandu. While I did not undertake systematic research on development institutions in Kathmandu, nor on programs carried out in village areas, it was my inability to escape involvement in the discourse of development wherever I went in Nepal that inspired this essay.

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[5] The political dimensions of ethnic difference, especially in relation to "nepalese-ness" have been discussed by Burghart (1984), Gaborieau (1982), Gellner (1986), Holmberg (1989), Levine (1987), and Quigley (1987). This essay extends the spirit of these inquiries to other social differences as they emerge in a context of a pan-Nepalese ideology of modernization.

[6] Studies of the ways that socially mobile Nepalis relate to the villages they have left, studies of the urban elite's images of villages they have perhaps never seen, and studies of rural and pastoral imagery in literature, film, and the recently introduced medium of television all remain to be conducted and would show other dimensions of the images of the village that are my focus here.

Moreover, images of the village have changed over time, especially with the acceleration of governmental projects to further integrate the country politically, administratively, and culturally. The campaign called Back to the Village, launched by King Mahendra in 1967, left its legacy in the semantic association of *gāun* (village) with *panchāyat* (an administrative unit within the national governmental scheme). Thus, though I analyze here the way in which the village operates as a term of social classification, it is clear that the word gāun itself carries the inflections of various political ideologies that have been contested in Nepal for the past forty years.

Given the overwhelmingly rural character of Nepal, the first question is what is not a village in Nepal? Villages are neither bazaars, district centers nor towns. Bazaars are small local trading centers; District Centers are bazaars chosen as regional centers for government offices and agencies; and towns are concentrations of population magnitudes bigger than either of these. This classification of space allows the production of statistics, such as those that tell us that approximately 93 percent of the population is rural and that the urban population is growing at a rate of 10.7 percent per annum.[7] The 1981 census suggests that Nepal's demographic profile is changing as the proportion of urban and plains dwellers grows in relation to rural hill dwellers.[8] The rural–urban taxonomy is codified into the census figures, and it leads us to the rather obvious conclusion that the village, being rural, is simply that which is not urban.

Raymond Williams, however, suggests in his study of ideas about the country and the city in English literature that these terms are understood in relation to each other and that the meaning of each changes as the conditions of people's lives change. Williams, who notes (1973:290) that both transformations of images of the city and country and the recurrence of certain motifs for characterizing this difference, asks, "What kinds of experience do the ideas [of city and country] appear to interpret, and why do certain forms occur or recur at this period or that?" Williams grounds social imagery in historical circumstances, and his analysis offers both a caution and an inspiration when we turn to the question of the village in Nepal. The caution is against assuming that a rural–urban distinction is universal or self-evident. Williams relativizes our present-day conceptions of city and country through historical analysis. By implication, then, the English, or even Western (see Caro Baroja 1963), construction of these terms is but one historical trajectory in relation to others that might exist in other parts of the world. By undermining the obvious quality of the rural-urban distinction Williams urges us to look more closely—say, in the case of Nepal—at whether such a relationship exists and if it does, what social forms give it meaning.

[7] The formal definition of urban employed in successive censuses has been inconsistent. For administrative purposes, the government (at least until 1990) distinguished between rural [gāun] and urban [*nagar*] panchayats. Most bazaars in the hills are considered rural for official purposes, even though people consider bazaars and villages to be places of different kinds.

[8] The trend toward urbanization in Nepal is relatively recent, and its full demographic significance remains to be seen. Goldstein *et al.* (1983) give the following profile: In 1981, 46.8 percent of the population lived in the Terai, while 53.2 percent lived in hill and mountain areas. In the 1952–54 census, these figures were 35.3 percent and 64.7 percent, respectively. In 1981, 6.4 percent of the population lived in urban areas, while in 1952–54 2.8 percent did. (Though the recent census may under-represent "urban" populations.) The shift toward a plains-urban society that Goldstein *et al.* predict is primarily a population shift from the hills to the Terai and appears only secondarily to be one of urbanization. Nonetheless, these figures belie the image that many Nepalis and foreigners alike hold—that the hill village is characteristic of the Nepali way of life and the typical Nepal.

In Nepal, as I will show, images of the village take shape not in counterdistinction to the city but in relation to *bikās,* or development. I use the Nepali word bikās here to focus attention on development as it is understood in Nepal by Nepalis. This historically and socially contextualized meaning should not be confused with the theories and models of development discussed in academia or the head offices of agencies like the World Bank. Having made this distinction, it is nevertheless important to recognize that though notions of bikās are imbued with meanings particular to Nepalese society, these notions form in a context of what we might be inclined to see as western influence. The meaning of bikās in Nepalese society and the meaning of development in international institutions differ but are not separate.

The ideas of progress that fuel the imagery of development in Nepal are linked to concepts of the city. Specifically, as Williams (1973:297) observes

> The common image of the country is now an image of the past, and the common image of the city an image of the future. That leaves, if we isolate them, an undefined present. The pull of the idea of the country is toward old ways, human ways, natural ways. The pull of the idea of the city is towards progress, modernization, development. In what is then a tension, a present experienced as a tension, we use the contrast of country and city to ratify an unresolved division and conflict of impulses.

I will go on to argue that concepts of development have changed concepts of the village for people in Nepal. Is this change the result of the imposition of the western categories Williams describes on Nepalese society?

The answer is both yes and no. The philosophy and the terms of international development, so influential in Nepal, are themselves culturally particular—western, if you will—models of what development is.[9] On the other hand, these models become important in and through a society that is Nepalese. Images of progress have become embedded in Nepalese conceptions of social difference, through the creation of the village. This process cannot be reduced to imitation, assimilation, or even appropriation of "western" models. We need to account for how what have been termed "transnational cultural flows" sculpt the social sediments of Nepalese towns and villages.[10] Rather than teasing apart western and Nepalese perspectives and then making the finer distinction between westernized Nepalese and traditional Nepalese it is more fruitful to consider any ideological terms that are compelling in Nepal to be integral to the contested territory of what it is to be Nepali. In other words, there are Nepalis who lay claim to development's vision of society. Nepalis do not perceive the ideology of development as culturally foreign: They come to know it through specific social relationships. The terms of this ideology are identifiable either as their own or as those of other Nepalis. The questions therefore lie in how these ideologies frame social

[9] See Nandy (1989) for a critique of the dominance of western models of society in development discourse.

[10] For example, Appadurai and Breckenridge (1988).

differences and how certain ways of imagining social difference come to be associated with specific social positions or identities. A further question, one outside the scope of my argument here but implicated in it, concerns the political interests served, however indirectly, by the representations of social differences that I describe.

BIKAS IN SOCIETY

Development might be defined as a process of social transformation ("modernization;" "empowerment") that is brought about by specific programs, projects, and policies, such as maternal health, the building of hydroelectric plants, or "meeting basic needs." At least this is the institutional self-conception of development formulated from the perspective of international development agencies, policy-makers, and academics. In Nepal, development has a different, more profoundly social meaning, a meaning that weaves bikās into the fabric of local life and patterns Nepalese national society.

What is the basis for this national society? Nepal has existed as a nation and a political entity since the late eighteenth century, when the Shah kings took control of its present-day territory. As the administrative net subsequently tightened, a national system gradually came to cut across the regional and cultural diversity contained within the country's borders. To this day the relation between the political entity that forms a basis for a national, Nepalese identity and other social identities remains problematic.[11] The model of the nation-state—a sovereign, politically demarcated territory inhabited by a culturally unique people—supplanted a traditional model of royal dominion only gradually in Nepal (Burghart 1984). Beginning with the demarcation of a defined border in 1816, continuing through the incorporation of tribal groups as a result of a grand, legally mandated scheme of caste in the mid-nineteenth century (Höfer 1979) and the designation of Nepali as the official language, circa 1930, the transformation of Nepal into a modern nation-state culminated in the establishment of the partyless panchayat system of government. King

[11] Even the referent of the word Nepal is somewhat ambiguous. In colloquial speech some people continue to use that place name exclusively to refer to the Kathmandu Valley. Other people, especially youth and the educated, regard this usage as a quaint anachronism. In certain regions and among certain ethnic groups, identification with the nation of Nepal is weak: For example, Tibetan-speaking groups along the northern border are citizens of Nepal but use Nepali as an ethnic label for others, such as the people from the hills who are Hindu by culture, and regard these people as foreigners. Nonetheless, the more cosmopolitan people from any part of Nepal become, the more they identify at least in part with the nation—for reasons that my argument makes clear. The Nepalese national identification is not equally compelling to all Nepalese citizens, nor is the national frame of reference I describe here the only, or necessarily always the foremost, representation of social relationships. I would argue, however, that in emphasizing ethnic and regional diversity in Nepal, anthropologists have tended to overlook the processes by which a national culture is being created and the effect this process has on local society. Works that do deal with Nepal on a national scale include Burghart (1984), Gaborieau (1982), and Levine (1987).

Mahendra's speeches at the time (circa 1960) differentiated the kingship from the actual state and declared "the formation of a culturally unique polity" (Burghart 1984). By the early 1960s we find King Mahendra promoting the panchayat system as a characteristically Nepalese form of government. The concept of a uniquely Nepalese identity, which has only gradually emerged, now permeates and structures the self-image of the people who call themselves Nepali, even as it exists in a dynamic tension with regional and ethnic identities.

Nepal not only remained an independent state on the fringe of the British empire throughout the colonial era in South Asia but attempted to barricade itself from direct British influence. The country was ruled from 1846 to 1951 by a succession of prime ministers of the elite Rana family. Under their rule, the countryside was drawn into a national political-economy through the extraction of resources, tribute, and corvée labor (see Regmi 1978). The 1950–51 revolution overthrowing the Ranas owed much to India's successful campaign for independence, and the political forces bringing about the change of power in Nepal were energized not only by visions of democracy but also by a desire to modernize and develop a society that for so long had been systematically impoverished under the Rana oligarchy. The new government took a progressive stance. Where the Ranas had severely restricted foreign presence in Nepal, the new government invited international aid; where the Ranas had discouraged the construction of schools and hospitals, the new regime encouraged these projects. Reversing the isolationist policies of the Ranas, the new government enlisted the help of western, industrialized countries which, in the post-war era, had begun to erect an international apparatus of foreign aid. For Nepal, development—rather than the residues and scars of imperialism—is the overt link between it and the West.[12] Bikās is the term through which Nepalis understand their relationship to other parts of the world.

Nepal now identifies itself as an underdeveloped country in relation to the developed world.[13] These terms, so familiar to us that they risk being understood as transparently descriptive labels, are of recent origin. The post-colonial redefinition of global relationships produced the category of the third world and organized certain complexes of social relations in a condition labelled

[12] Mishra and Sharma (1983) describe foreign aid as "a trickle turning into a torrent." In the thirty-year period between 1951–52 and 1979–80, Rupees 7,734.4 million worth of foreign aid came into the country. They argue, controversially, that in Nepal the vast amounts of foreign aid monies have succeeded only in supporting the upper classes and reinforcing the traditional power structure. About ideology they comment: "A belief in the possibility and desirability of rather rapidly induced social change, an overwhelming faith in the western cultural-technological complex and a growing sense of national frailty may be identified as the major foreign-aid crystallized ideological dimensions."

[13] In Nepali, *abikasit* (literally, undeveloped).

underdevelopment (Escobar 1988; Pletsch 1981). Nepal forged its new political identity during this post-war, post-colonial period.

At the same time that development has connected Nepal and the rest of the world, bikās has gained importance in the definition of national society as a whole. For nearly forty years Nepal's modern political identity has been linked to global institutions of international development. During this time, the population has been exposed to a barrage of political rhetoric equating the legitimacy of the government with national unity on the one hand and national progress on the other.[14] Moreover, development programs support the burgeoning ranks of civil servants who leave their home villages behind to work in delivering development to other Nepalis.[15] In a process similar to that described by Anderson (1983) for the native functionaries of colonial administration,[16] these civil servants come to identify with a national society. They share a life and an outlook with their compatriots of whatever regional origin in the civil service, and they become a class distinct from farmers. This social transition occurs through and because of institutions of bikās.

The national project of bikās encourages the formation of an imagined national community. Anderson describes how the careers of native colonial administrators traced a looping trajectory that defined the boundaries of the new nations; in contemporary Nepal, likewise, development institutions stake out Nepal as a turf that development functionaries patrol.[17] Bikās transcends

[14] The recent campaign for democracy in Nepal has changed the terms of political rhetoric in Nepal; it remains to be seen how radically. This essay is based on research conducted from December 1985 to January 1988. My references, therefore, are to the partyless panchayat system in existence until 1990. The new regime inherits a tradition connecting legitimacy to development, but what it will make of these terms remains an open question. In a videotape produced to publicize the pro-democracy campaign internationally ("Voices of Nepal"), opposition leaders accuse the King of falsely claiming to develop the nation while impoverishing it instead. The new political climate may open the notion of development to new interpretations, and to criticism.

[15] See Caplan (1975) on the effects of administrative reorganization in Nepal.

[16] "For even in cases where a young brown or black Englishman came to receive some education or training in the metropole, in a way that few of his creole progenitors had been able to do, that was typically the last time he made this bureaucratic pilgrimage. From then on, the apex of his looping flight was *the highest administrative center to which he could be assigned:* Rangoon, Accra, Georgetown, or Colombo. Yet in each constricted journey he found bilingual travelling companions with whom he came to feel a growing communality. In his journey he understood rather quickly that his point of origin—conceived either ethnically, linguistically, or geographically—was of small significance. At most it started him on this pilgrimage rather than that: it did not fundamentally determine his destination or his companions. Out of this pattern came that subtle, half-conceived transformation, step by step, of the colonial-state into the nation-state, a transformation made possible not only by a solid continuity of personnel, but by the established skein of journeys through which each state was experienced by its functionaries" (Anderson 1983:105).

[17] Caplan (1975) notes that during the Rana period only the highest administrators, the Ranas themselves, circulated through different posts around the country. With the post-revolution expansion of the government, more kinds of jobs required posting away from home. Caplan observes that the necessity that made many salaried workers take up posts away from home has an impact on who can be recruited into office jobs and at what stage in their life. He also argues that the replacement of local administrators with people with no ties to the community fosters the growth of bribery as a form of corruption.

differences of language, region, caste, and ethnicity, creating a common terrain or social territory: the condition of underdevelopment at which development interventions are aimed.

In daily life, bikās becomes the idiom through which the relationship between local communities and other places is expressed. There are places of much bikās (*dherai bikās*), little bikās (*thorai bikās*), and no bikās (*bikās chhaina*). Bikās is quantifiable in this way because in common usage it connotes things: new breeds of goats and chickens, water pipes, electricity, videos, schools, commercial fertilizer, roads, airplanes, health posts, and medicines.[18] Bikās comes to local areas from elsewhere; it is not produced locally. Most material aspects of bikās—and these material benefits matter most to the majority of Nepalese citizens—are manufactured, often from unusual materials such as plastics. Other items, such as roads and hydroelectric plants, rest on technical knowledge obtained in places of greater bikās than villages. Moreover, much bikās is administered from Kathmandu and staffed at the higher levels by people posted to local projects from other places. From these associations grows the popular notion that bikās is concentrated, to varying degrees, in other places and that villages are places of relatively little bikās.

As we will see, this inverse relation between rural areas and degrees of bikās gives rise to two ways of representing national society and locating oneself in it. One uses the terms of bikās as coordinates to demarcate social territories and pinpoint social positions; the other turns bikās and village into the compass points according to which socially located people orient themselves. Both representations share a certain way of understanding Nepalese national society. I will discuss the first, the charting of social territories, through an analysis of the discourse of development. The second, the orienting of individuals in a social space, comes to the fore when I consider how the village/bikās contrast appears from the perspective of rural people. Charting and orienting are distinct but related symbolic means of placing villages in national society.[19]

CHARTING TIME AND PLACE

Embedded in the Nepali usage of bikās is what I call an ideology of modernization: the representation of society through an implicit scale of social prog-

[18] Rural people commonly denigrate certain of these items: They say, for example that the eggs from bikāsi chickens (i.e., "improved" breeds introduced through development schemes to raise egg production) "don't give strength" (*tāgat dindeina*) nor taste good. Embedded in the discourse about specific bikās items are images of development as empty, bankrupt, and deceptive in its promises of prosperity.

[19] The conceptual contrast I am drawing here is akin to the distinction made by de Certeau (1984) between maps and itineraries. Maps represent spatial relationships on a single plane, offering a totalizing but depersonalized definition of space. Itineraries narrate movements from location to location; the relationship between spaces is expressed in reference to the actor who passes through them. What I want to emphasize here is the interaction between two ways of envisioning social space.

ress. Schoolbooks offer us a window on how this ideology constructs the relationship between national society, bikās, and the village. The segment of the curriculum on social studies and civics explicitly communicates a clear message about the unity of Nepalese society ("we are all Nepalis"), the Nepalese character (peaceloving and brave), the common Nepalese heritage (from Mt. Everest to Lumbini, the birthplace of the Buddha), and the Nepalese political system (up until 1990, the party-less panchayat system).[20] The books stress national unity over ethnic, linguistic, and regional difference.

Their didactic aim—to educate people to a certain vision of society— is clear. The pedagogical strategy is two-pronged. They aim to instill in students certain values that bikās endorses (e.g., small families are good; children should be vaccinated) and to do so in a way appropriate to Nepal. To this end, school books weave discussions of village life with the messages of bikās. This overt message, however, is at odds with the message conveyed by the structure of these texts. At the same time that this pedagogical strategy aims to make development an integral part of the village, it creates a dichotomy between the village and bikās.

Villages are portrayed positively in schoolbooks. Even so, these texts reiterate a message about the direction of progress. Amidst patriotic exhortations on national character and national unity, school books string passages on life in the village together with sections on development, cities, and international aid agencies. Villages and villagers are always illustrated with line drawings of a typical Nepal with people in typical costume (see Plate 1). These same books have blurry photographs of the United Nations headquarters in New York, skyscrapers, important buildings in Kathmandu, and in one case a photograph of a hill area in Nepal retouched to show an artists's rendering of a superhighway. Throughout, villages are placed in relation to the kinds of places they are not.

Take a picture in the eighth grade civics text (see Plate 2). It juxtaposes two drawings of a boy and a girl. In the first, a boy carrying a load of rocks stands next to a girl who carries a cradle. Both children are dressed in ragged, patched clothing, and are barefoot. In the second picture a neatly attired boy sits at a desk writing and studying. The girl in this picture sports a frock and shoes and socks, her hair combed into pigtails. She is gaily jumping rope. The caption declares that the first picture is of "children today" and the second is of the children of an "exploitation-free. . . tomorrow" as "the panchayat system plans the future."[21] In fact, however, Nepalis are likely to read these

[20] With the dismantling of the partyless panchayat system as a result of the political changes in 1990–91, all references to the panchayat system have been eliminated from the schoolbooks.

[21] This picture appears in the book *Hāmro Panchāyat ra Nāgarik Jiban* (Shrestha 1981); currently reissued as *Nāgarik Jiban*. In granting me copyright permission to reproduce this drawing here, the Janak Education Materials Centre informed me that the caption accompanying

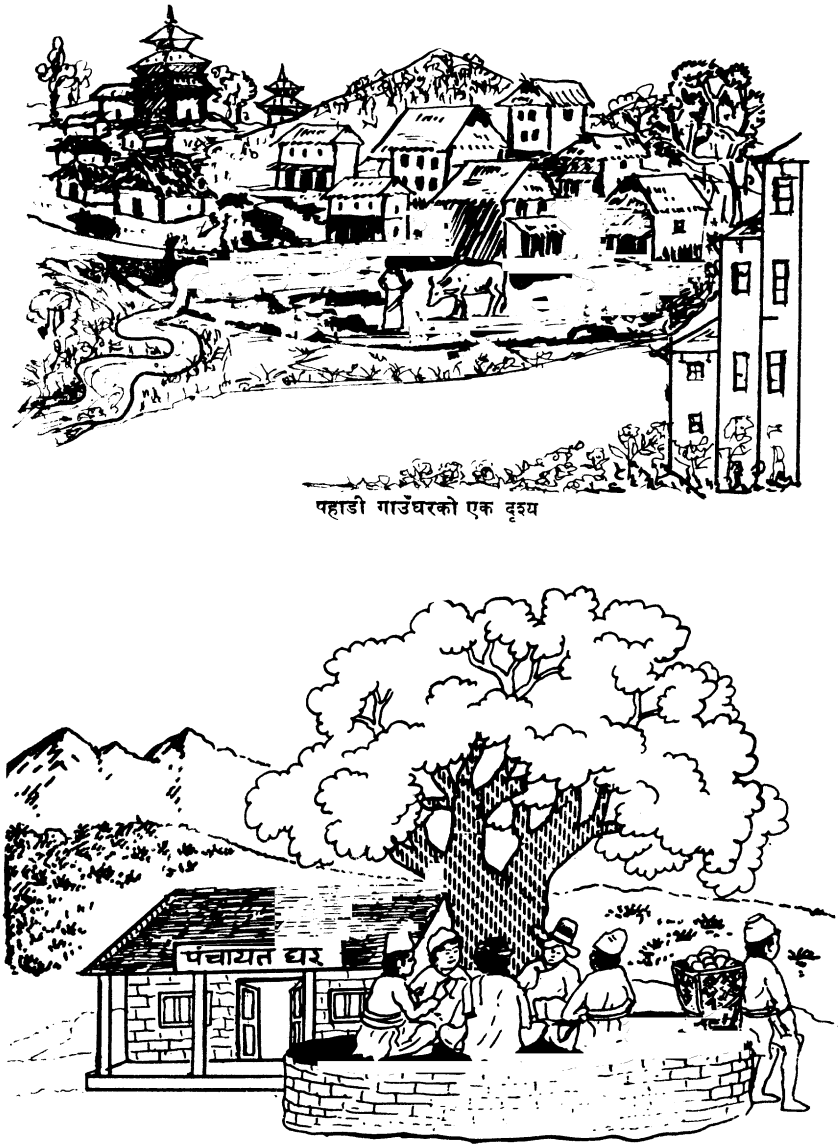

PLATE 1. Village scenes as depicted in an eighth grade school book. Above: One view of a hill village. Below: Village men talking under the pipal tree outside the local panchayat headquarters.

PLATE 2. The children of today (left) and of tomorrow (right).

PLATE 3. The ethnic diversity of Nepal as shown in an eighth grade school book. The caption reads: "Descendants all of the same land, among kin who can be distant or close? All have the same red blood, whether rich or poor."

PLATE 4. Punya Bahadur carries the doctor's bags to the bus stop.

PLATE 5. The bus stop where the doctor leaves for Kathmandu.

PLATE 6. Setting off on the journey to the hospital. The woman with the broken leg is being carried in the basket.

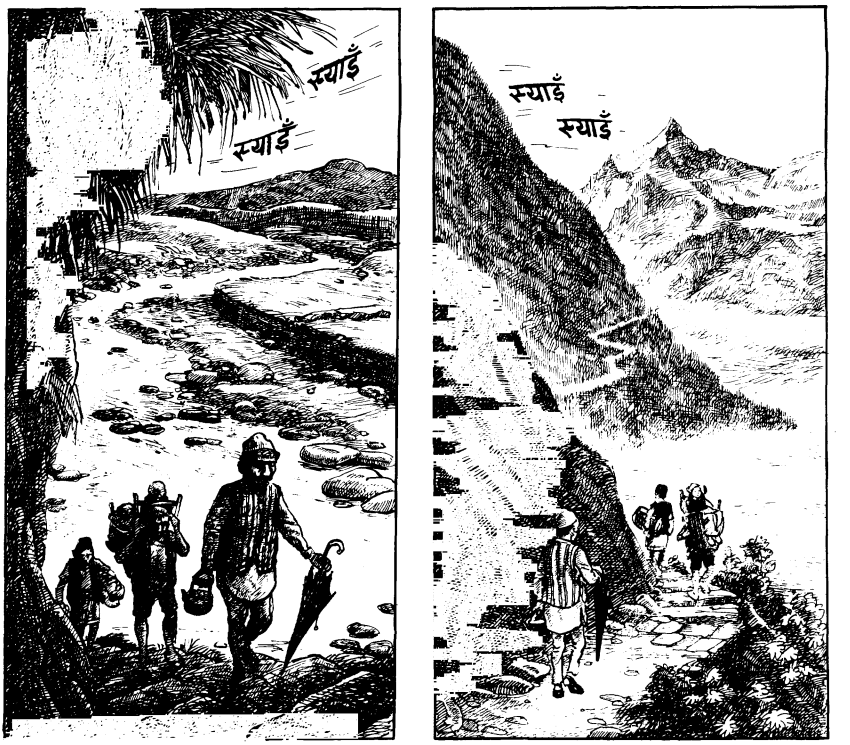

PLATE 7. The long and arduous journey from the village to the hospital.

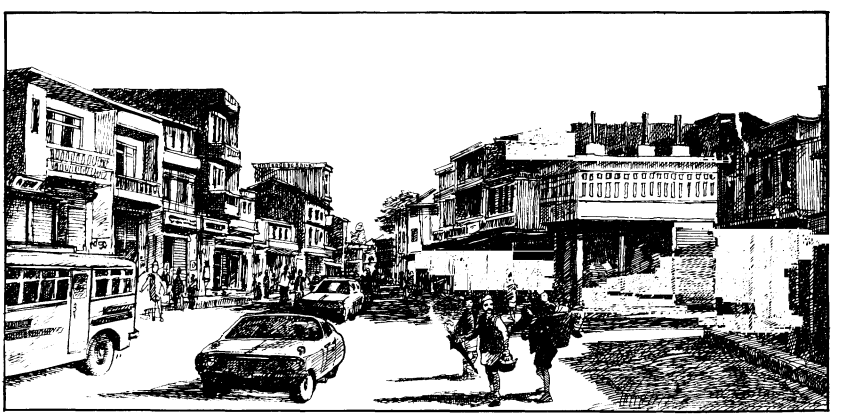

PLATE 8. Arriving in town on foot, the travellers are overwhelmed by the cars, the crowds, and the noise.

PLATE 9. The travellers make their way to the hospital. The sight of anonymous villagers carrying a sick person to the hospital is a common one in town.

PLATE 10. At last they arrive at the hospital. The exhausted porter watches in astonishment as the woman hobbles into the hospital: "We had to carry her," they said. "So now what is she doing walking?"

PLATE 11. Punya Bahadur escorts the woman through the unfamiliar world of the hospital.

PLATE 12. Punya Bahadur returns to the village. On the return trip the porter carries the much-needed stock of Jeevan Jal (for oral rehydration therapy) supplied by UNICEF.

pictures as renderings of present-day class difference. Childhood defined as work is the childhood of the village laborer; childhood defined as diligent study and carefree play is the childhood of the landowning or professional, largely urban, elite.

What this picture conveys is that everyone's tomorrow will (or should) look like some people's present. It is a hopeful sentiment and one that reveals not only images of social reform but also of social mobility.[22] The picture of clean, studious, and happy children conveys its message through signs people in Nepal associate with towns and affluence. Without the caption, these portraits would be taken to represent the village children and town children of today. In these images, ideals for a future society blur with actual portraits of social difference, conveying that some people in Nepal have already achieved what all strive for.

This temporal theme is elaborated more generally in the way social and societal differences are portrayed. The books promote an evolutionary understanding of society. The eighth grade civics text explains the five stages of social evolution as the hunting age, the pastoral age, the age of agriculture and human settlement, the industrial age, and the post-industrial era and the age of cybernetics. More insidiously, this same book, in a section on national society and the character of the Nepalis has an illustration composed of recognizable ethnic types (see Plate 3). In the background are Tibetan-like high mountain dwellers; in the middle are hill dwellers in ethnically distinctive costumes; and in the foreground are a Hindu man and woman of the Terai, and a woman and a man who might be high-caste Newars or Brahmin-Chhetris. The latter man wears glasses, considered a sign of high status in Nepal, and the standard office garb of a civil servant. This arrangement conforms to elite views of increasing levels of what they call, in English, civilization. It brings into a single evolutionary line a number of scales of social differentiation: habitat (mountain to plains); livelihood (nomadic herding through farming to office work); religion (Buddhist to more orthodox Hindu); race (Central Asian to Aryan).

As school books inform children about the social diversity of Nepal and about other countries, they also order these differences. On this scale of progress, elites are already in the future because they are more *bikāsi* (developed), while villagers remain in the past or at best an inadequate present. An evolutionary understanding of social stages, reinforced through the imagery of

this picture has been changed. The reference to the panchayat system has been eliminated; what is preserved is the idea of an "exploitation-free" future. The local administrative unit known as a panchayat has been renamed the Village Development Committee.

[22] The representation of social change as social mobility is perhaps the most deceptive feature of development ideology in Nepal. In its imagery the promotion of bikās promises to all a life modelled on that of the most affluent Nepalis, yet in its implementation the increased access to resources that would foster true economic mobility is seldom made possible.

progress and backwardness, becomes projected across space and across existing social differences. Nepal becomes charted into terrains of relative advancement and backwardness.

School books do not invent this theory of society, but they propagate it and legitimate it. All students in Nepal, whether they live in a village or a town, read the same schoolbooks. Though the picture of Nepalese society put forth in school books is not the only one that exists in Nepal, it is a highly influential one. The social representations we find in school books are authoritative not only to the extent that schools, in concert with other official sources, succeed in inculcating certain ideas, but also because the language of the schools is itself authoritative. To speak of Nepal in the way the school books do, to make reference to the ideas put forth in these books, is to mark oneself as bikāsi and to align oneself with the institutions and ideals of bikās. This is because schools are a primary institution of bikās. Education is both a symbol of bikāsi status and the route through which people can hope to move from farming in the village to an office job in a bikāsi place.

There are, in fact, two ways to learn to conceive what the village is from these texts. One way is to simply appropriate the message of the school books and to see Nepal as divided between the village and bikās. It is easy to see why an ideology of modernization would be persuasive to the most bikāsi of Nepalis, the professional educated elite whose social world is indeed removed from village life. The difference between themselves and their village cousins (and cousins, it should be noted, is frequently quite literally what villagers are to these people) is palpable to them, and they are concerned about marking this difference.

How this ideology becomes persuasive for villagers, especially for people who live in villages that have a relatively high degree of bikās, is more problematic. For these people, bikās resides both in the village and outside it, part of who they are and alien to them. When these people conceive of Nepal as a society polarized between village and bikās, this dichotomy makes sense to them in a different way. Instead of seeing the villager, who is at a remove, as an other, these people see differentiation within their local world. At the same time that school texts provide the language of bikās to rural people, they also subtly reinforce the legitimacy of the opposition between bikās and village through the very dissonance between the information they contain and local knowledge. In reconciling schoolbook knowledge with local knowledge, then, people simultaneously become convinced that bikās lies outside the village and gain the means to bring the bikāsi perspective into their village by making their minds territories of thinking endorsed by bikās. When bikāsi villagers assimilate the ideology of modernization, they do so by incorporating it into local social identity.

The discussion thus far suggests that bikās transforms what it means in Nepal to be a villager. It also suggests that the village and the villager look

different from different points of view, even when the village is framed by what appears to be the same bikās. I will explore this question of perspective first by elaborating on how the villager is represented within the discourse of bikās and then by considering how the distinction between village and bikās appears from village perspectives.

PLACES AND PEOPLE

The village that we can see emerging in counterdistinction to bikās in schoolbooks comes into even sharper relief in the ways people working in development talk about rural Nepal. What you hear in development offices are phrases like: "We are looking for an outreach worker who is from "the village"; "in the village people are mostly worried about . . . "; "we need to start a pilot project in the village." Outside the development offices as well, elite Nepalis, educated professionals, also speak of the village as a social world distinct and distant from their own. Whether the language used is English or Nepali, people refer to the village as everything "out there."[23] The overall impression is of islands of not-village surrounded by a sea of villageness. Assumptions about what is typical sustain these references to the village.

The generic village targeted by development agencies provides a comfortable framework within which programs can be planned.[24] The trend in international development has been away from large-scale, capital-intensive infrastructural projects, such as road and dam building, toward projects that, in

[23] The use of many English words and phrases characterizes the discourse of development in Nepal. These words are in one sense clearly foreign but in another assimilated into ordinary speech in Nepali. Rural people, many of whom are illiterate, use some English words in everyday speech to the degree that their village is touched by bikās, for bikās comes to them with its English language labels firmly attached. People of the educated professional class know English, and they intersperse their Nepali with English words and phrases when talking about bikās because these, and not their Nepali equivalents, are the terms of bikās. Interestingly, the word bikās generally does not get translated into development except where English predominates. In contrast, the concept of the generic village I examine here can be rendered in English or Nepali, as "the village" or gāun (or gāun-ghar). The emphasis on the definite article marks this usage in English, but in Nepali, a language in which there are no definite articles and the plural marker is often dropped, the form of the word gāun is more ambiguous. Whereas in English the collapsing of villages into a single village becomes evident in the linguistic form itself, in Nepali the generalized, generalizable village distinguishes itself from villages through the discursive relation it bears to other terms: namely, bikās and Nepalese national development.

[24] Comfortable, I would venture, in part because the village has been naturalized as a category in British colonial discourse on India (see Cohn 1968; Dewey 1972; Dumont 1966) as well as in the subsequent formulations of Indian nationalists. It is not accidental that what Cohn observes of British administration in India applies as well to contemporary development discourse:

> For the administrator the types and classifications of villages had the same kind of advantage that the official view of caste had: they reduced the need for specific knowledge. One could act in terms of categories. Latently, the categorical or conceptual thinking about villages directed attention away from internal politics in villages and from questions of the nature of actual social relations, of the distribution of wealth, of what was happening to agricultural production; in short, the Victorians were not concerned with what the actual conditions of life in the villages were but with general theoretical questions derived from social theory of the day (Cohn 1968:21).

the terms of development, "meet basic needs" and "put people first." Programs of this type are tied closely to local communities and have complex educational, social, and material goals. Such projects are intended to be appropriate to the conditions of specific communities, and their success depends on the incorporation of sociocultural information (as it is called) into the planning process. Paradoxically, even when such information is available, it is frequently ignored, as Justice (1986) has shown in her study of the assistant nurse midwife program in Nepal.[25] While Justice illuminates the byzantine workings of international development administration in Nepal, she does not address a more fundamental question: What constitutes sociocultural knowledge in the context of Nepal's social diversity?

Development agencies prioritize policy over research. The information they can assimilate most easily is in the form of facts and generalizations. An understanding of local communities, however, requires an appreciation of many variables and their complex interrelationships. The ecological, social, religious, and economic diversity of rural communities may exceed the capacity that development agencies have to incorporate information into the planning process. Agencies planning small-scale, community-based programs must balance the ideal of planning culturally appropriate programs against the need for generalizable models that can be applied throughout the country.

All the preliminary studies, pilot projects, and in-house experts notwithstanding, what comes to predominate in this institutional context is a kind of ersatz sociocultural knowledge encapsulated in the notion of the village. This is not to say that any given Nepali working in these institutions does not appreciate the difference between a Tibetan village in high altitude Mustang and a Maithili village in a jute-growing area on the border with India. Nor is it to accuse foreign development experts of not understanding Nepal's diversity, even when they lack a clear picture of what this is. However, the understanding of diversity that individuals have consistently dissolves in favor of a more convenient institutional lingua franca, the language of "the village." In this systematic reduction of the diverse into the generalizable, the village comes to seem ever more concrete because it is ever more knowable.

Whatever the validity of the composite imagery from which it is drawn, the picture of the village that emerges is a mythic one. Although villages do differ from, say, an urban center such as Kathmandu, it is also true that all villages differ from Kathmandu differently. Moreover, Kathmandu has more than a bit of the village within it, at the very least because so many of the most well-to-do and most destitute from villages have migrated there. Like all stereotypes, statements about the generic village disguise judgments as facts. It is important to keep in mind the role of those Nepalis who broker information about

[25] See Justice 1986 for an extended analysis of how the bureaucratic structures of foreign aid mitigate against the incorporation of sociocultural information into the planning process.

the village in development institutions. High-caste Hindus and to a lesser extent urban-based Newaris predominate in official and professional circles.[26] Their view of what is typical of a Nepali village extrapolates ethnically specific, predominantly Hindu norms to all of Nepal's inhabitants. To the extent that they are acknowledged, non-Hindu alternatives are seen as deviations from a norm that, while not marked explicitly, is nevertheless seen through a high-caste Hindu lens. The image of the generic village that forms is ethnically unmarked but is by no means ethnically neutral.

It follows that the generic village should be inhabited by generic villagers. The generic villager is an interesting social category because it is invoked instead of other possible social distinctions, such as *jāt* (caste or ethnicity), gender, regional identity, and so forth. As a social category, villager is an identity relevant only in the context of Nepalese national society defined, as I argued above, through its relation to bikās. Within any given village, distinctions of wealth, ethnicity, and gender loom large; it only makes sense to identify generic villagers when the social scale of reference is the national one.

Predictably enough, the generic villager has a generic consciousness. People in development planning know that villagers have certain habits, goals, motivations and beliefs these are formulations of the mindset of a composite, typical villager, a mindset needing explanation precisely because it is perceived as alien. While the expatriates working in development programs in Nepal, schooled in cultural relativism, tend to speak in somewhat neutral terms about what villagers "believe," educated Nepalese elites both in and out of development institutions waste no breath in speaking of the "superstition" of villagers. They see villagers as fettered by custom and blinded by tradition.[27] Whether the "ignorance" of villagers is spoken of with pity, compassion, or derision, what is perpetuated is the idea that villagers are, in Appadurai's (1988) words, "incarcerated" in a way of thinking by virtue of being "natives" of a kind of culture-territory. Place and person fuse in the distillation of cultural essence.[28]

[26] It is worth noting that foreign experts get most of their information about villages from their elite Nepali counterparts in the development bureaucracy.

[27] A cultural politics is at work in this notion of tradition as an imprisoning or limiting force. Elite Nepalis certainly have their own traditions, their own beliefs. These, however, are seen as moral, good, and right, a positive attribute of cultural identity rather than a misguided way of life relative to an enlightened ideal. Some cultural practices are seen as compatible with bikās, while others become construed as opposed to it. When traditional healing is represented as an obstacle to medical development, shamanic practices, not the healing rites performed by Brahmin priests or Buddhist lamas, are the object of criticism (see Pigg 1990).

[28] Appadurai (1988:37) suggests that "anthropologists have frozen the contribution of specific cultures to our understanding of the human condition" in the concept of the native who typifies a particular social form or set of beliefs. "Natives are not only persons who are from certain places, and belong to those places, but they are also those who are somehow *incarcerated,* or confined, in those places." The category of the villager functions in Nepal in a way similar to the category of the native in anthropology, as discussed by Fabian 1983.

The villager's vision necessarily has a narrower scope than that of the person who is no longer a villager. This is consonant with the way the village is placed backward in time. Being a villager is a state one can evolve out of, and once one is no longer a villager, one can recognize that others are. The "ignorance" of villagers is not an absence of knowledge. Quite the contrary. It is the presence of too much locally instilled belief. What villagers lack, according to this way of seeing the villager, is a consciousness of more cosmopolitan, developed ways.

Whether a development program's aim is to stem deforestation, boost agricultural productivity, or improve health conditions, development is posited as the solution. Distance, poverty, and the ignorance of villagers are the problems of Nepal. Therefore, while villages are the objects of development and villagers its recipients, they are also obstacles to national development. The Primary Health Care (PHC) program in Nepal offers one example of the ways policies, institutions of bikās, and program implementation conspire to construct villagers as a national problem. The program emphasizes education over the curative services that local people expect of government health programs. Stone's evaluation of the program highlights its internal contradictions (1986). Although the guiding principle behind the PHC program is community participation, Stone points out that implementing it to meet pre-defined "health needs" from the top down works at cross-purposes with the ideal in which communities define their own needs.

Rather than coming to terms with communities as they actually exist, development programs like PHC consistently make moves to marginalize the villagers' expressed points of view. Stone reports:

> Where local ideas on illness are considered in PHC, they are usually lumped together and negatively branded as 'superstition' or 'ignorance'. In Nepal's National Conference on PHC . . . "illiteracy, superstition, social evils and poverty" are all listed together as one of the eight health problems in the country, equivalent to items like malaria and malnutrition. Likewise, in PHC flow charts showing relationships between national health problems, it is common to see 'ignorance' (measured as a literacy rate of 19%) grouped with 'poverty' and linked by arrows to the ominous categories of disease, malnutrition and the underuse of health services. . . .
>
> This negative view of local culture also emerged during my interviews with rural health workers and health post staff in the Central hills and lowland Terai areas in 1983. When asked the question "in what ways is local culture important in primary health care?," these respondents invariably proceeded to list 'wrong' beliefs and practices of villagers. Many of them often referred vaguely to villagers' 'superstitions' or said, "The problem is that these people believe ghosts cause illness" (1986:297–8).

The social construction of the villager is built on this theme of ignorance. People who work in development, from low-level functionaries to policy makers, are acutely aware of the chasm between the attitudes and habits they promote and the ones that exist. As individuals they are positioned precisely at the points of blockage, the point beyond which what they know about real

villages and real villagers cannot be translated upward to the language of generalities spoken in the world of development. These people tell each other and foreign visitors that the villagers are the problem, identifying them as "people who don't understand" (*kurā bujhdeinan*).

As long as development aims to transform people's thinking, the villager must be someone who does not understand. Development focuses its efforts on villages because (ostensibly) most Nepalis live in them, but in doing so it reifies the village as the locus of Nepal's underdevelopment. Hence the village becomes a space of backwardness—a physical space that imprisons people in what is considered an inferior and outmoded way of life. This becomes the essence of villageness distilled from diverse villages.

There is an obvious perspective built into the category, villager, as it is formulated in the rhetoric of development: One cannot be one to see one. The social ideology of modernization espouses a binary logic, opposing the village to bikās and villagers to the people who can recognize that "they do not understand." The village does not look as opaque and fixed to people who live in villages as it does in the abstracted social map perpetuated by the institutions of bikās. Yet I claim that the social categories of development are not simply imposed from the outside on rural people but assimilated into the ways they see themselves and their relations to other Nepalis. Not only can one hear rural people talking about their neighbors, residents of the same village, mind you, as people who do not understand, but more profoundly, rural people adopt the conceptual polarity of bikās and village to orient themselves in national society.

QUESTIONS OF PERSPECTIVE

Stand next to a real villager in a field in a village, and you are looking outward toward places of relatively more bikās. Instead of looking down on the village from the high ground of bikās, we are now planted firmly in the immediacy of village life, gazing at bikās as a horizon, perhaps wondering how to get from here to there. This shift in perspective necessarily implies a different way of seeing social spaces.

Whereas the discourse of bikās characterizes the generic villager as a person who does not understand, people in rural areas speak of places of "much bikās" as places where "people don't have to carry loads" (*bhāri boknu pardeina*). By implication, the condition of village life is the condition of carrying loads. People living in villages see themselves with a *ḍoko,* the cone-shaped basket Nepalis carry on a tumpline suspended from their foreheads. In hill areas of Nepal, agriculture is not mechanized, and this means that people carry manure and seed to their fields and carry basket loads of millet, sheaves of rice, and stalks of corn back to their houses. They carry fodder to their livestock and carry grain to the mill; they carry virtually everything on their backs. This simple and stark fact has a significance that people in villages make constant reference to: They carry loads while other people do not.

Carrying loads condenses something more than the sweat of making a living by cultivating the land. Not everyone in a village carries loads all the time. Tenants carry the landlord's share of the harvest to him. Fleets of porters carry loads of merchandise from road heads for the merchants whose shops supply villages. Farmers carry grain or fruit or vegetables to the bazaar to sell to the salaried workers posted to government offices there. The picture of carrying loads can be a picture of work, but it is often a picture of carrying someone else's load. When people speak of places of bikās as places where people do not have to carry loads they are calling to mind not just the relation between places of little and much bikās, but the relationship between tenant and landlord, villager and merchant, farmer and salaried worker.

Given that most Nepalis are simultaneously involved in numerous overlapping relations of production, those who carry loads and those who do not can be the same individuals. The landlord who today walks empty-handed next to a tenant carrying a load of grain may spend tomorrow carrying fodder to his livestock. The merchant who pays porters to carry bolts of cloth up from the trading centers of the plains might also haul basket loads of manure to his own corn fields. And relations of labor exchange mean that villagers carry loads for each other. Yet there is no doubt that Nepalese society is stratified and load-carrying is asymmetrically distributed so that some people are compelled most often to carry loads for others. The economic inequalities of Nepalese society notwithstanding, carrying loads has a fundamentally relational and relativistic quality when used metaphorically to represent social difference. It all depends on whether you are a day laborer comparing your load to that of the landlord's daughter, or whether you are the landlord's daughter comparing yours to the tea stall owner's, or you are the tea-stall owner comparing yours to that of an imaginary resident of Kathmandu. The symbolism of carrying loads reverberates along the conceptual path from village to bazaar to town to bikāsi places like America, where "no one has to work."

The illustrations from a UNICEF-Nepal produced comic book story about a man called Punya Bahadur show these permutations clearly, though few Nepalis would be familiar with this story itself.[29] Punya Bahadur is a health post "peon" (or *pāle*), that is, a menial salaried worker whose official job is to serve as an errand-runner, but who actually ends up serving as health care deliverer (see Justice 1983).[30]

[29] This story appeared in *Nawa Drishya,* an educational comic book produced by UNICEF.

[30] Justice dubs peons "the invisible workers" of the health care system when she says that "the peon was, in fact, the only real local worker in the health program. He lived in the village, spoke the local dialect, and knew the patients and their families. There was not the status differential between villagers and peons that existed with the health assistants, who were usually educated urbanites with sophisticated clothing and manners, unfamiliar with local conditions and local dialects. Whereas the trained health workers were away from the health posts much of the time and transferred frequently, thus having little opportunity or desire to become part of the local community, the peon was always available, either at the health post or in the village" (1983:968).

When the health-post doctor leaves the village to return to Kathmandu on business, Punya Bahadur carries the doctor's suitcase down the trail to the bus stop (Plate 4). Punya Bahadur carries the doctor's load because that is his job. The men walk side by side, but the trip paces out each man's different relationship to bikās. Punya Bahadur, as load-carrier, goes to the bus stop as a villager, but the doctor goes to the bus stop as a man returning to his appropriate space, the city where people do not carry loads. The bus stop in town is a symbolic threshold through which the doctor passes, but Punya Bahadur does not (Plate 5).

Punya Bahadur returns to his village to find that a man has brought his pregnant wife, whose leg is broken, to the health post. Because the doctor is absent, Punya Bahadur, who is in charge, advises them to make the long journey to the hospital in Pokhara (Plate 6). The same path that Punya Bahadur trod carrying the doctor's baggage he now paces out as a different journey (Plate 7). This time a porter carries the disabled woman, while the husband and Punya Bahadur accompany them virtually empty-handed. On this trip Punya Bahadur goes to Pokhara, a place of greater bikās than the village, as the cultural broker between the hospital, an institution of bikās, and his village neighbors, who are a step farther from bikās than he (Plates 8 and 9). It would be inconceivable for Punya Bahadur to have carried the woman as the porter did (Plate 10). Inside the hospital, Punya Bahadur, a person who "understands," is aligned with the perspective of bikās when he helps the village couple in the unfamiliar world of the hospital (Plate 11).

This story and its images show that "carrying loads" is a relative matter. Punya Bahadur himself is someone who sometimes carries loads and sometimes does not. More revealingly, the story helps us see carrying loads in relation to the spaces of bikās. Whether or not Punya Bahadur carries a load depends on whether he enters the space of bikās as a villager (as he does when he accompanies the doctor) or as a person who implements bikās. Punya Bahadur's journeys to and from the town of Pokhara show how the relationship between village and bikās is quite literally a matter of traversing space.

The story, of course, ends happily. The woman's broken leg is set, and she gives birth to a son. Punya Bahadur, moreover, is able to pick up supplies that the health post needed. In the final scene of the story we see Punya Bahadur returning to his village in the company of the porter, who is now carrying a box of packets of oral rehydration salts supplied by UNICEF (Plate 12). This last picture is not without irony. I noted earlier that people talk about bikās as things. These things, the substance of bikās, arrive in villages on people's backs.

The pictures of the story about Punya Bahadur show the ways that carrying loads serves as an image people use to characterize the relationship of villages to bikās. Like the characterization that villagers are people who do not under-

stand things, the formulation that in places of bikās people do not have to carry loads identifies a social position by identifying an absence in the other. Significantly, these two formulations cast the difference between village and bikās in different terms, one by seeing it as a difference of consciousness, the other by seeing it as a difference of labor. Nevertheless, both understanding and carrying loads are ways of drawing symbolic boundaries between the village and bikās. Each offers a way for individuals to locate themselves in this mapped society.

MAPS AND MOVEMENTS

To speak of the generic villager is to identify oneself with bikās, because it is only from that point of view that this generic villager can be seen. Though it is most often the urbanized elite who refer to the village in this way, rural people also sometimes adopt this rhetoric. People who live in rural areas know how they are seen as villagers by cosmopolitan elites. Yet they do not necessarily see themselves in this way. They are cosmopolitan villagers, and they claim their place on the side of bikās, not the village. The construction of the village I have discussed lends itself to infinite dislocation: Someone else is a real villager, that kind of villager. By recognizing someone else as a villager, a person places him or herself on the side of bikās.

I have noted, however, that this logic equates a place of residence with a kind of consciousness, flattening a relativistic and multidimensional social landscape into a two-dimensional grid. For people who are villagers, for people whose lives are reflected in the fictional Punya Bahadur, for example, this static formulation is problematic because they move in and out of spaces of bikās. They themselves both understand and carry loads. They adopt rhetoric about the village, and they also speak of distinctive village ways and village life in terms that are specific and that locate people by homeplace and in specific webs of relationship.

Local people are simultaneously caught up in two social orders: One is the local world of hierarchies of age, gender, and caste or ethnic group [jāt]; of relations of patronage; of exclusion; and of exchange. The other is the national society, with its centers and peripheries of development. Each provides people with a way of framing local identity, and the disjunctions between these overlapped worlds makes their place as villagers in national society a real and important question for local people. Like a magnetic field aligning iron filings, the polarity between the village and bikās exerts its influence on local social relationships. As people move into, out of, and through the social spaces of bikās, their orientation within rural society changes.

The ideology of modernization becomes hegemonic to the extent that the social map it draws serves as a guide in orienting people in all sectors of Nepalese society. The ideology of modernization guides Nepalese people in a changing Nepal in the same way that a map and compass serve a person

traversing an unknown landscape. The map does not represent the movement of the people who are finding their way, yet its abstract representation of space orients their movements by giving them a way of conceptualizing the ground upon which they stand. Development discourse creates a paradox: It locates villages on the periphery of development, yet its ostensible aim to is to make villages developed. I have raised the question of how and why rural people would find the map of society drawn in the discourse of development compelling, especially given that the imagery of the village it fosters leaves no space for the villagers' subjectivity.

It is important to remember that the ideology of modernization discussed here accompanies the nation's pursuit of bikās. The politics embedded in the representation of the villager is entwined with the politics of development itself. What is at stake? What do people get out of seeing others as villagers? Increasingly, the apparatus of bikās (the burgeoning of office jobs, the money brought in by foreign aid, the positions of influence in the bureaucracy) is the source of power, wealth, and upward social mobility. Therefore, to be relegated to the margins of bikās is to be excluded from the opportunities it offers. Simply put, everyone wants a piece of the development pie. From the local people's perspective, the tangible advantages of bikās lie less in receiving the benefits of its programs (though no one minds if an agency decides to bring them piped water, build a clinic, or install electricity) than in becoming one of the salaried workers who implements bikās. They figure they gain the advantage by becoming an agent of bikās rather than one of its targets, which is why local people portray themselves as bikāsi and why they contest constructions of themselves as villagers.

This politics of representation has further implications if we recall that it connects villagers, urban Nepalese elites, national political institutions, international development, and representations of the third world in the West. The category of the village stretches across national boundaries. It knots together two social worlds, one tightly bound to Nepal, the other reaching far outside Nepal's borders. In the localized, everyday social encounters of Nepalese people, the village melds with other idioms of social difference. It brings localized differences into alignment with a picture of Nepalese society as a whole, thus integrating all rural areas into a nationally shared vision of Nepalese society. This is how the ideology of modernization saturates local societies and alters the formulation of local identities.

At the same time, the category of the village follows the channels that connect Nepal to other places. It connects the cosmopolitan Nepalis who can recognize villagers to a world-wide discourse about the third world and modernity. It translates the particularities of Nepal into the Esperanto of global social categories. Nepali villagers are seen to be more like any other third world villagers than like Nepalese elites. By virtue of their participation in this language of categorization, cosmopolitan Nepalis stake out their place in

a global society and legitimate their political authority over villagers who do not understand their villageness. This is why the ideology of modernization in Nepal is not simply a matter of western influence, but a matter of simultaneous nepalization and globalization. It connects people of developed places—that is, us, and our categories of social difference—directly to Nepalese villages.

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