

## Migration from Jumla to the Southern Plain

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Migration is not a recent phenomenon in Jumla, it has been a part of the livelihood strategies of the inhabitants of Jumla (called Jumli) for generations. It provides them with a new possibility of improving their existing economic condition. Migration in this region has been taking place in at 'seasonal' and 'temporary' form to the Tarai and India. The latter category of migrants leaves for longer periods to work as guards (*chaukidar*), labourers, generally on construction sites mainly in Northern India. Dahal, *et al.* (1977: 68) define this type of migration as 'long-term labour migration': "labour done outside the villages of origin for a period which keeps the migrant out of the village for at least one entire yearly agricultural cycle", and they "regularly send back cash to their families and bring back food and cloth when they return on leave" (*ibid*: 69). Besides, seasonal migration takes place in winter and between the months of December-January (*Push*) and February-March (*Phāgun*) is the slack season in agricultural work; the need of farm labour is minimal, so men have plenty of leisure time. They thus go to the south on a seasonal trip. Most of these seasonal migrants work as peddlers in India and in Nepalese plains and cities. Occasionally, they find temporary employment, mainly in the agricultural sector as labourers. They usually return home in spring to begin a new agricultural season. However, since the early 1970s, a different migration pattern has emerged among Jumlis, in particular among the inhabitants of the Sinja valley. Besides their traditional seasonal and temporary migration, some families and family members have opted for permanent emigration to the Tarai. They mainly settle in Banke, Bardia, Kailali and Surkhet districts in Western and Far Western Nepal. The creation of Rara National Park in 1976 in Jumla (now in Mugu district) had forced the inhabitants of two villages situated within the National Park perimeter to move out; however, they were resettled by the government in the recently cleared forestland in Bardia district. A decade long Maoist insurgency has generated another category of migrants in this region that can be called 'conflict migrants'; most of them have settled in cities and district headquarters where security is well managed. Except for the involuntary migrants from the perimeter of Rara National Park and 'conflict migrants', for Jumlis whether rich or poor, migration remains part of the livelihood strategies for generation rather than a simple survival strategy in times of hardship; it is, therefore, carefully planned. This article first discusses the historical context of migration to demonstrate that migration is indeed not a recent phenomenon and is deeply rooted in the socio-economic context of the region. It then looks

into migration patterns and processes of permanent migration. Moving to the Tarai permanently is not a drastic move, it is rather a gradual process, with seasonal migration followed by permanent migration in the course of time. This article is based on several years of field observation in Jumla.

### The Setting

Jumla is one of the five districts of Karnali Zone in Mid-Western Nepal that lies above 2,300 m in altitude. The district is divided into 30 VDCs (Village Development Committees) which are mainly located in three valleys: Tila River (*kholā*), Chaudhabisa River and Sinja or Hima River. The district headquarter is situated in Khalanga and is also known as Jumla Bazar.

This district has recently been linked by the Karnali highway. It is more of a wider trail than a proper road. Despite its precarious and dangerous state, small trucks, tractors, and jeeps brave the road. This road link has brought some relief to the local inhabitants of this district and its neighbouring districts. It has not only provided easy access to the outside world, but has also drastically down the price of basic necessities and increased their availability. In the past, goods had to be brought in either by plane, helicopter or on mule or horseback, thereby increasing transportation costs.

Most Jumlis are by and large Hindu: Matwali Chetris (the Chetris who consumes alcohol), high caste (Brahman, Thakuri) and artisan groups: tailor-musician (Damāī), shoemaker (Sārki) and carpenter (Kāmī). Nevertheless, they do not live in the same area; they occupy different ecological niches. Matwali Chetris reside in the hill areas, whereas, high caste (Brahman Thakuri) and artisan groups live in the valley. Some Mugal Bhotias and Newars are also found in the district headquarter, Jumla Bazar. Newars are said to have arrived in Jumla more than a hundred years ago from Kathmandu, whereas Mugals arrived in Jumla only a few years ago from Mugu district.

The economy of Jumla is primarily based on agriculture and animal husbandry. Brahman, Thakuri and artisan groups cultivate paddy on irrigated land called *gyūlā* in the valley, whereas Matwali Chetris own large herds of sheep and goats and grow dry crops mainly on un-irrigated land called *pākho* or *bhuwā*. Agricultural production and animal husbandry alone are not sufficient to sustain their subsistence; thus, Jumli people supplement their economy through seasonal and temporary migration. Temporary migrants do not choose a particular month to migrate, they can leave at any time of the year. However, seasonal migration takes place in winter when there is no major agriculture work that requires the presence of the male workforce. Most men, regardless of their economic status, leave in November-December (*Mangsir*) for their seasonal trip to

the south (India and Nepal), returning in March-April (*Cait*) to begin the new agricultural cycle. During these periods, villages are mainly inhabited by women, children and elderly men. In Jumla, only men take part in migration whether it is seasonal or temporary migration, while women stay behind to deal with farm work, livestock, household work, children, etc.

### **Historical context of trade and seasonal migration**

Inter-, intra-regional migration and trade have been a part of the livelihood strategy of the Jumlis for centuries. Without this type of temporary migration and trade, Jumlis are not able to acquire household necessities, such as, salt, iron, tea, spices, sugar, clothing, etc., that are either not available or not produced in the region

Trading between north (Tibet) and the south had become well established as early as the twelfth century when the powerful Malla Kingdom, whose capital was situated in Jumla district (Lamathada in the Sinja valley), ruled the whole of western Nepal and part of Tibet (Guge and Purung), and controlled the Himalayan trading route running north to south (Bishop 1990: 300). According to Bishop, wool and other indispensable goods of Tibetan and Chinese origin flowed southward, and grains and other necessities of Indian and Nepalese origin went to the north (*ibid*). People from western Nepal, particularly from Jumla, not only controlled the trading route between the north and south, but also enjoyed trading with India. Nepalese falcons are said to have been very popular among *Navāb* in India for their hunting technique. Birds were usually captured in Jumla and its surrounding areas by Jumli traders during the period of July-August (*Sāun*) and October-November (*Kārtik*) (Singh 1971: 234-265). Then the birds were trained before being taken to Rajapur and Golaghat for sale. Muslim *Navābs* from Lucknow, Kanpur, Delhi, Kashmir and Andrapradesh came there to buy the birds; however, this trade is said to have plummeted since 1946 and to have completely disappeared since 1950 (*ibid*: 167).

### **Migration pattern in the past and at present**

Although migration has been a main feature of the Jumlis' livelihood system, the migration pattern differs according to geographical distribution and ethnic/caste groups. It can first be divided into two broad categories based on the geographical division: between the inhabitants of the Sinja Valley and the rest of the population of Jumla district.

Most men from Jumla, except for the inhabitants of the Sinja Valley are mainly temporary migrants to northern India: Uttaranchal and Himachal Pradesh, where construction work can be found in abundance.

By contrast, the Sinjals are mainly involved in trading. They are traditionally known to be good traders, and they are also known for their shrewdness. The following saying commonly used by Jumlis themselves to illustrate the Sinjals' shrewdness: "Seven Rakals one Sinjal and seven Sinjals one Mugal (*sāt Rakāl ek Sinjāl, sat Sinjāl ek Muḡāl*)". Even though, Sinjals are collectively known for their business instinct, their migration pattern can be split according to their ethnic belonging: high caste and Matwali Chetri.

Singh (1971: 226-227) explains a complex migration pattern followed by the high caste Sinjals between the north and south until 1950; according to the author, the Sinjals' main trading destinations to the north were border-trading centres with Tibet (China): Taklakot, Cepkalung, Hariyacaur and Tanke. Among the four centres, Sinjals preferred to trade in Taklakot because it was open throughout the year. However, most business took place during a five-month period: July-August (*Sāun*) and November-December (*Mangsir*), whereas, the other three border trading centres were open only for three months during the periods: July-August (*Sāun*) and September-October (*Asoj*). The Sinjals did not speak the local language so they hired an interpreter who could speak the Nepali and Tibetan languages to communicate with the local people. The interpreter's work was not only to interpret the language between locals and the Sinjals but also to solve the border court cases. An interpreter for Taklakot was locally hired and was paid 15 rupees per month. For Cepkalung, the interpreter was from Limi (Humla district). For Hariyacaur, the interpreter was hired in Dojam, while the interpreter for Tanke was from Nepka. Since the annexation of Tibet by China in 1959, the traditional trading system with Tibet has declined or totally stopped.

However, the high caste Sinjals continued to travel between the north in summer and the south in winter. They went northwards to Mugu and Humla, to buy or to barter local products, such as, herbs, wool and woollen products, yak tails and musk mainly for Indian clothes. Local products from the north would then be sold in southern Nepal and India during their winter trip. Some Sinjals sold these products in Nepalgunj and carried the money to India, and some of them carried the products to different cities in India: Kanpur, Delhi, Lukhnow, Ludhiyana, Amritsar, Nainital, Kolkata, etc., to get a better price. With the money they earned by trading in different cities, they bought readymade garments at auctions, coral (*muḡā*), and bracelets (*kaka*) these were sold in the Tarai and in the hills, particularly in Mugu and Humla districts (*ibid*: 234).

Horses from Jumla have been known throughout western Nepal for their strength and stamina, and the demand is very high in lower part of the hills. They are mainly sold in Dang Valley, Rajapur, Joljibi, Nepalgunj, Mahendranagar, Tribeni and Butwol (Bishop 1990: 249). Among those

places, Joljibi (border market between Nepal and India is located in Darchula district, far western Nepal) is the most popular destination for horse-trading. Once a year Sinjals from the Sinja Valley leave with horses that were bought or bartered from Humla, Mugu districts and the Sinja Valley to Joljibi to sell on the market. This trade takes place over eight days once a year between October-November (*Kārtik*) and November-December (*Mangsir*). According to Singh (1971: 232), horse-trading is a generations old tradition among Sinjals, whereas Shrestha explains (1993: 100) that it is a recent phenomenon among Sinjals. According to the latter author, Sinjals learnt this trade from the Byansis (an ethnic group from Darchula district) who came to the Sinja Valley to buy horses. Three generations ago, a Sinjal from Diyargaon decided to follow the Byansis and, ever since, the locals themselves travel to the market. Nevertheless, horse-trading remains a lucrative business and is very popular among high caste Sinjals who have the courage and the means to continue this type of trading regardless of the risks involved on their way to the market. Travelling to Joljibi takes 15 to 20 days on foot with horses, and the horses can die of sickness or can be stolen on the way to the market.

Until the 1970s Matwali Chetris, like their high caste neighbours from the valley, also migrated to the north in summer and to the south in winter. Their trade was more localised and focused on upper Mugu in the north. They travelled to Mugu village (*gāon*), the last Nepalese village with its checkpoint entering to Tibet. Matwali Chetris took grain packed on the back of sheep to upper Mugu; the goods were bartered for wool and Tibetan salt with Mugal Bhotias. Matwali Chetris took Tibetan salt exchanged with Mugal Bhotias and woollen carpets called *raḥī*, *liu* to regions in the south, particularly to Bajura, Acham, Jajarkot, Dailekh and Surkhet, on their winter grazing trip. They bartered Tibetan salt and woollen carpet for grain and Indian salt. The latter would be exchanged in the Sinja Valley for grain, and the grain would later be taken to upper Mugu to be exchanged for wool and Tibetan salt. There is a strong demand for Tibetan salt in Jumla as well as in southern regions; villagers believe that Tibetan salt is best for animals despite the availability of Indian salt, and it is sought after even to this day.

While the affluent high castes and Matwali Chetris were engaged in a complex migratory trading system between the north and south, other villagers in the Sinja Valley, including artisans groups, were more involved in seasonal and temporary labour migration that did not call for more cash. Temporary migrants have worked on construction sites, on apple farms, as porters and sometimes as guards (*caukidār*); most of the seasonal migrants have worked as peddlers in India and in Nepal. Some of the artisan groups, such as tailor-musicians (*Damāīs*) have been lucky to be able to carry on their traditional work, tailoring, in southern Nepal,

while other artisan groups have to move on to northern India to work as labourers.

### **Change in (trade) migration pattern**

The trading tradition of the Sinjals from the Sinja Valley whose trade to the north was affected due to the closing of the northern border with Tibet suffered another setback due to government intervention in the region. The government expanded Nepal Airlines (a state-owned airline, formally known as Royal Nepal Airlines) network to Humla in the 1970s. The airline connection with Humla has made it easier for Humlis (inhabitants of Humla) to travel outside the region and also made it easier for local traders to import basic necessities by air. However, the airline network has put an end to the trading tradition that high caste Sinjals enjoyed in Humla for many generations. They were not able to compete with imported goods due to the high cost involved in portage from the southern border to Humla. According to Shrestha, only one trader from Diyargaon was still regularly going to Mugu and Humla to sell cloth during the period of the author's research (1993: 101-102). Since then this trader has also put an end to his trading trip to Humla. The affluent high castes of the Sinja Valley have turned to horse breeding, as it brings in more money. Most high caste Sinjals rear horses in view of selling them to horse traders. The price of a horse varies from twenty thousand Rupees to fifty/sixty thousand Rupees; in some cases it costs even more. Some Sinjas are involved in trading dry wild mushrooms (*Himalayan morel*). They are known to be an aphrodisiac and are said to have other medicinal properties. They grow in the months of April-May (*Baisākh*) and May-June (*Jetha*) in the Sinja Valley. Mushroom traders buy the mushrooms from the local villagers paying them one to two Rupees for one mushroom. After drying the mushrooms, the traders take them to Delhi to sell them. In the early 1990s, a kilo of dry *morel* mushroom was said to be worth five thousand Nepalese Rupees in Delhi. Due to the profit margin, more and more people became attracted to this trade, and as a result the price went down. Villagers nowadays say that mushroom trading is not as lucrative as it used to be. They have consequently stopped going to Delhi themselves to sell the mushrooms. The latest business venture among high-caste Sinjals is *yarsagumba* (*Cordyceps sinensis*), also known as 'Himalayan Viagra' that grows above 4,000m altitude in spring and summer. It is a very lucrative industry with one kilo of *yarsagumba* believed to be worth around eight hundred thousand Nepalese Rupees on the international market in 2008. Given the large amount of money to be made, some Sinjals have ventured to Dolpa district (which is a few days' walk from Jumla) in

the hope of collecting yarsagumba. So far the quest for new found gold has not been met with any success.

In 1976, the government set up Rara Nation Park in Jumla district (now in Mugu district) to protect fauna and flora and also to develop tourism in the region. Since its creation, any exploitation within the National Park and along its perimeter has been prohibited. This prohibition has severely affected Matwali Chetris who depended on the Park for grazing their livestock. Most of the good pastureland was to be found within the National Park's perimeter, but the locals were forbidden to graze their animals there. Due to the lack of sufficient pastures for their herd, villagers were forced to reduce their number of ovine. This reduction in ovine seriously affected the salt-grain trade between the north and south. The Matwali Chetris who used to travel to upper Mugu for trade no longer travel. The Matwali Chetris pattern of travelling to Mugu has somewhat changed. Nowadays some Mugals Bhotias from Mugu district travel to Sinja to exchange salt with grain, but on a smaller scale. Mugal Bhotias make the trip with salt whenever they need grain, though more and more they buy grain from the Sinjals in cash. Since traditional salt trading between the north and south has stopped, Matwali Chetris have changed their trade route to the south. They now particularly travel to Dailekh with kidney beans to exchange them for rice. Nowadays, more and more villagers use mules to carry kidney beans and rice to and from Dailekh. Sheep are rarely used to transport grain. However, transhumance is still practised by villagers who do not have enough pasture to keep their herd of sheep in the village throughout the winter; for example, this is the case of the Budals (inhabitants of Budu village in the Sinja Valley). They therefore take their flock to Acham for three months every winter. They leave in the month of October-November (*Kārtik*) and return to their village in the month of January-February (*Māgh*) or February-March (*Fāgun*). During the trip the Budals sell homemade woollen blankets and with the earnings generated from the sale they bring rice with them when they return home.

An important factor that restricted trading with the southern region was the police posts that were set up on the trail to Surkhet in the 1980s. The police at these checkpoints were known to be notorious for harassing Jumlis who went southwards for winter migration. They prevented the Jumlis from taking medicinal herbs that were not even on the list of banned herbs for export. If a migrant was caught with any herb even for personal use, he would be arrested. If the person arrested paid a hefty sum to the policemen at the check post, he would be allowed to proceed with his journey. Otherwise, he would be held back at the checkpoint thus delaying his trip. One anecdote I might recount: in 1996 I accompanied one of the migrant groups from Botan village in Sinja valley. After having

gone through other checkpoints, we arrived at the famous checkpoint situated in Ghumaune, in Byauli; it was under the jurisdiction of Dailekh district. We were all held up at the check post, and our belongings thoroughly checked; but they could not find anything illegal. However, they found some walnuts from two of our group members, which they had brought to eat on the way. They were not on the list of banned medicinal herbs; nonetheless, the policemen took the two into custody for possessing walnuts. Members of the group told me that because of my presence, the policemen could not ask for a bribe. They therefore took the two persons into custody as a reprisal. The two culprits were taken to the police station at the Dailekh district headquarter. The walnuts were all eaten by the accompanying policemen on the way to the police station. The two arrested were retained for two days at Dailekh police station, then released. However, they were told to appear in court in Dailekh headquarter when they return from their winter migration.

To avoid any harassment at checkpoints, villagers do not carry any local produce, which mostly consisted of herbs, for trade. In the past, they used to take some of these products to peddle them in India and in Nepal, which gave a good return. Nowadays, they set out with money if they have any; if not, they just carry enough to get to Nepalgunj where they borrow money from a *baniyāñs* (shopkeeper). All Sinjals know one or two such *baniyāñs* in Nepalgunj from whom they regularly borrow money for their winter trip to India and in Nepal. Some *baniyāñs* even provide free accommodation for Sinjals. The arrangement is that *baniyāñs* loan money to Sinjals interest free; when they return from their seasonal migration, they must return the borrowed money to the *baniyāñs* and buy any necessary clothing in their shops.

With the borrowed money, the migrants buy readymade garments in India and peddle them in Indian villages. They also buy asafoetida in India, and use artful tactic to sell it in the same country (for details, see Shrestha, 1993: 103-104).

The major changes in the Jumlis' migration pattern occurred in the 1960s with opening of the Tarai for settlement. Since then some seasonal and temporary migrants from Jumla have settled permanently in this newly opened region.

### **Permanent Migration to the Tarai**

The migration process from the hills to the Tarai, including Surkhet, began as early as the 1910s during the Rana reign, yet the resettlement programme in the Tarai was not as successful as the government had hoped. At the time people were afraid to move to the Tarai because of it being a malaria-infested area, thus presenting a deadly threat (J.P. Elder *et*

*al.*, 1976: 11). The king of Dullu had said to have given the land in Surkhet Valley as a *birtā* to the Thanis (tax collectors). Sher Bahadur Mall, an ex-colonel from Dailekh came with soldiers and farmers to the valley to clear the land (H. Buchmann *et al.*, 1973: 35). In addition, farmers from Dailekh, Baglung, Sallyan and Gorkha also came to cultivate the valley, but for fear of catching malaria they avoided spending a night on the spot; they set up residence in the nearby hills to avoid catching the illness (*ibid.*). Permanent settlement in the Tarai, including Surkhet Valley, only started after malaria had been eradicated in the 1960s. Prior to that, the region was inhabited by Tharus and Rajis (indigenous people) who were immune to malaria. Most of the Tharus found in Sukhet valley today are said to have come from Dang Valley in the 1920s (*ibid.*).

After the eradication of malaria from the Tarai region, the government opened the land for settlement in the 1960s. The government had not only encouraged the hill people to migrate to the Tarai, but also set up settlement offices called Punarvas Company Office in different parts of the Tarai to facilitate the settlement process (J W. Elder *et al.*, 1976: 12-17). At the beginning of settlement process, the State-owned Punarvas Company seemed to have maintained the ethnic identity and geographical division of the migrants. In 1970, G.P. Sharma, the general manager of Punarvas Company wrote that “In the new settlement villages, the grouping are being made primarily of those who come from the same district or region and secondarily of the family of the same origin”, to maintain the traditional community links so that new ideas would easily be introduced into the community through their own community leaders (cited in J.B Elder *et al.*, 1976: 35). Sometimes later, the Company changed this policy, and efforts were made to intermix the different ethnic groups from different regions, settling them in the same area in order to reduce the regional and ethnical division and to encourage the settlers to think of themselves all as Nepalese (*ibid.*).

Since the opening of the Tarai in the 1960s, some people from Jumla district, particularly from the Sinja Valley, have turned their seasonal and temporary migration into permanent migration to the Tarai. According to the findings of my fieldwork, Matwali Chetris from the Sinja Valley started to migrate to Surkhet in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Their decision to migrate and resettle permanently in the Tarai was carefully planned, and the selection of a place for migration was heavily influenced by ethnicity, social networks and prior knowledge of the place.

Most Matwali Chetris from the Sinja Valley who migrated to the Tarai in the late 1960s and early 1970s were subsistent farmers. They chose to settle in the surrounding areas of the Surkhet Valley rather than in the district headquarters, Birendra Nagar (a planned city). Their choice of the area or village was influenced by their familiarity with the place, ethnic

homogeneity and their social network. They often settled in villages closer to forests where one of their kin members had already settled. For example, Kalapani village in Surkhet Valley is located an hour's drive away from Birendra Nagar and is known as Lumal (inhabitants of Luma village located in the Sinja Valley) village. Most of the inhabitants of this village are Matwali Chetris who migrated from Luma village. To reach the village one has to walk for an hour on leaving the main road. It is surrounded by forest and pastures. The physical features of Kalapani are very similar to those of Luma village except for its location; it is situated at a lower altitude. It is said that Lumals were attracted to the place because of the aspects similar to their village; in addition, most of them could continue their traditional line of work. Most Lumals in Sinja, by tradition, were shepherds and they have remained shepherds at their new destination. The following example illustrates the importance of close relationships of ethnicity and social network. During my recent trip (September 2009) to the Sinja Valley, I met a family who was all set on moving to Surkhet, Kalapani, where one of their kin members has been living for a number of years; the latter facilitated the Lumal family's migration to Kalapani. The family has already sold all their belongings in Lumal village, their land, house and their herd, and has bought land in Kalapani. The eldest son of the family has already moved to the new village. His wife and children, his brother, sister and parents were planning on joining him before the winter. Furthermore, they planned to breed goats as a living in the new village, Kalapani.

Similarly, this ethnic division is maintained not only in Surkhet, but also in other regions by Sinjal migrants. Matwali Chetris and Thakuris from the Sinja Valley, who migrated to Kailali district, live in different villages. Not all inhabitants of a village in Kailali come from a single village, but most of them belong to the same caste. I was told that ethnic homogeneity helps villagers to maintain their social cohesion.

Furthermore, although the trend of migrating to the Tarai is very popular among Matwali Chetris and high castes, very few artisan groups have migrated here. The lack of capital to buy land in the Tarai made artisans groups less mobile than their high caste and Matwali Chetri neighbours. I only got to know one artisan family, Damāī, who moved to India several years ago; since then the family has never returned to the village. Although artisan groups are poor and do not have enough capital to buy land in the Tarai, they refuse to become Sukumbasi (landless people) upon migrating. However, a Matwali Chetri family from Botan (the Sinja Valley) migrated to the Tarai to become Sukumbasi a few years ago. The family is not poor; they own property in the village.

Despite migrating to the Tarai, migrant families remain closely related to their village of origin. Even after permanently migrating to the Tarai,

some family members keep their part of the share in the village. The house is usually entrusted to the brothers or kin members still in the village along with the land they cultivate until the families decide to sell them both. But, a long time goes by before a migrant family decides to sell or give the land away officially. For example, a Botal who migrated to Kailali in the early 1970s, returned to the village twenty years later to sell his property. Whether migrant families own property in their village of origin or not, they remain religiously attached to the village. Their lineage god remains in the village of origin. They have to come back to their lineage god's main shrine now and then. There is no rule as to when a migrant should return to the main shrine to perform a ritual; however, after major events, such as marriage, birth of a son, etc., family members usually come back to offer a ritual to their lineage god.

Moreover, the newly acquired house in the Tarai would be used by kin brothers as a safe house or a transit house during their seasonal migration to India. Permanent settlers continue to join their kin brothers who have come from their native village during the seasonal migration. Permanent migration to the Tarai does not put an end to Jumlis' seasonal migration to India and Nepalese cities. Some migrants' families do not have enough land in Tarai to be able to feed the family members throughout the year, and they are therefore forced to make trips to India. Land in the Tarai is less labour intensive; therefore, men have plenty of leisure time, and India is closer. They do not wait for the seasonal migration period to leave for India; they make trips to India throughout the year.

## **Conclusion**

Population movements in Jumla, particularly in the Sinja Valley, have been the norm rather than an exception regardless of their ethnicity and caste. Although some populations are forced to migrate for lack of food and money without which they would not be able to buy daily basic necessities, such as, clothing, shoes, iron, etc., the population as a whole has been mobile for centuries. Although migration has been crucial to their livelihood and an integral part of the local economy, the type of migration the Jumlis are involved in does not necessarily enable family members to better their economic status substantially. It only helps to sustain their livelihood. Even if a migrant is able to save substantial amounts of money, this is rarely invested. For example, one of the inhabitants of Botan village in the Sinja Valley told me during my field trip in 2007 that a few years ago, he had made 60,000 Nepalese rupees even after spending money on consumer goods to bring back to the village; this indeed represented exceptional earnings. Generally speaking, a seasonal migrant brings home 2,000 to 5,000 (in some cases 10,000) Nepalese rupees

after buying basic necessities to bring home. Instead of investing the money, the inhabitant of Botan village lent the money to one of his relatives who was in need. This was an interest-free loan. He explained that in this way not only did he help his relative who needed money, but his money also remained safe, since he could ask for it whenever he needed to.

Geopolitical change in Tibet and government interventions in the region have forced Sinjals to change their traditional migration pattern and adopt new ones. This has encouraged Sinjals to be innovative. In addition, it has also provided them with an opportunity of transforming their seasonal and temporary migration into permanent migration to the Tarai. Many Sinjals, particularly Matwali Chetris, have seized this opportunity and have settled down in the Tarai region, as a way of diversifying their economy. However, they continue to migrate to India. This proximity to India has provided them with the opportunity of making several trips a year to India. Therefore, migration is not only a simple survival strategy to cope with a food shortage and a lack of money, but it is an integral part of the livelihood strategy of villagers regardless of their wealth. It is deeply rooted in their socio-economic culture.

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