

Full Length Research Paper

Ethnic/caste diversification in Kathmandu metropolitan: Changing social landscape of a capital city

Bhim Prasad Subedi

Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu, Nepal. E-mail: bhim.subedi@gmail.com.

Accepted July 8, 2010

Kathmandu metropolitan, the capital city of Nepal is a socio-geographic microcosm of the nation as a whole and demonstrates caste/ethnic mosaic. Known historically as a Newar settlement, Kathmandu accommodates at least 67 caste/ethnic groups. It has witnessed nearly six-fold increase in population within the last 40 years. Utilizing the population census 2001, this paper examines the population dynamics from a socio-geographic perspective by focusing on concentration of caste/ethnic groups, migration in the city and apparent ethnic diversification. The findings suggest that spatial distribution of caste/ethnic population demonstrates more of diversification than concentration. The index of ethnic diversification clearly demonstrates a geographic pattern associated with distance. The level of diversification increases from the city core to the periphery along with increase in distance from the core. Diversification is closely related to migration both internal and international but primarily internal. These findings are expected to contribute to the ongoing national debate of formation of federal states reflecting one or other group's primacy. This primacy issue is grounded in argument of ethnic concentration while in reality the social landscape has been much more diversified than many of them have realized.

Key words: Kathmandu metropolitan, capital city, caste/ethnic groups, concentration, ethnic diversification, geographic pattern, migration.

INTRODUCTION

Since capital cities are among the most ethnically diversified locations in most of the nation-states of the world, it is quite natural to assume Kathmandu metropolitan, the capital city of Nepal to demonstrate high level of ethnic diversity. However, as one of the oldest settled mid-land valley of Nepal, Kathmandu is historically known as Newar settlement (Slusser, 1982; Malla, 1978; Kirkpatrick, 1969). During the course of time this fertile valley attracted people from outside mostly the non-Newar. More importantly, when Nepal was unified during the second half of eighteenth century, Kathmandu became the capital attracting people from all over the country and it was then already an established religious center (Tiwari, 2001). At present, Kathmandu metropolitan with an area of 49.45 km² and a total population of 671,846 in 2001 is not only the single metropolitan but also the hub of cultural-religious, political-administrative and educational activities in the county (Sharma, 1989, 2006; Haffner, 1981, 1982). The

naming of the municipality comes from Kathmandu valley itself and in the past the valley was known as Nepala khaldo or Nepal valley by the hill and mountain people of the country.

The unprecedented population increase in Kathmandu over the last few decades is not only due to higher rate of natural increase but also due to high level of in-migration and immigration both in the city and in the valley. In Kathmandu, the proportion of population born outside the district was 44.2% (40.5% internal migrants and 3.7% international migrants; Source: Census, 2001). In the country as a whole, among 22.7 million people, 2.9 million (13%) were internal lifetime migrants who moved from their district of birth to other district (Census, 2001). From 1991 till 2001 the inter-censal growth rate of population in Kathmandu was 4.67% against national total population growth rate of 2.25% per annum.

This paper deals with the population concentration, migration and ethnic diversification in Kathmandu. The

Table 1. Kathmandu: Trends of urban population growth.

Census year	Kathmandu metropolitan		Kathmandu valley		Nepal	
	Population size	As % of KV	Population size	As % of urban Nepal	Population size	% urban
1952/54	106,579	54.2	196,777 (5)	82.6	238,275	2.9
1961	121,019	55.5	218,092 (5)	64.9	336,222	3.6
1971	150,402	60.3	249,563 (3)	54.0	461,938	4.0
1981	235,160	64.7	363,507 (3)	38.0	956,721	6.4
1991	421,258	70.4	598,528 (3)	35.3	1,695,719	9.2
2001	671,846	67.5	995,966 (5)	30.9	3,227,879	13.9

Figures in parenthesis indicate number of municipalities in the valley in the respective censuses.
Source: Population censuses: 1952/54-2001.

study discusses the “concentration” based on the proportion of particular caste/ethnic group in the given spatial unit. It also demonstrates the level of ethnic mix-up using an index of diversification and its relation to the stretch of migration in the city. It argues that for a capital city of multi-ethnic nation the ethnic diversification is imperative and that migration is the main factor behind the diversification. Whether the process of ethnic diversification in Kathmandu was historically right or wrong and whether it happened at the cost of one or other group in the past could be debated, but the contemporary cosmopolitan identity of Kathmandu as capital of Nepal is hard to visualize in isolation and as a landscape dominated by one or other group. The unique identity of Kathmandu today at national and international level owes much to the migration and ethnic diversification.

This paper intends to contribute in two ways. First, there has been much discussion on ethnic concentration or diversification in the country based on subjective judgment and with absolute numbers. This paper aims to provide more astute basis for specifying the caste/ethnic diversification. Second, it also contributes towards better understanding of the caste/ethnic-based debate at the federal level.

DATA AND METHODS

The decennial population censuses since 1952/54 to 2001 are the main sources of data used in this paper. Nepal is divided into 75 districts and most of the socio-economic data are available at district level and for the past few decades for urban areas. Information/ data on caste/ethnicity are available since 1991. In 2001, detail data at ward level were available from the Central Bureau of Statistics, Nepal. To examine the level of ethnic/caste diversity in the metropolitan, present study utilizes wards as unit of analysis. The Census 2001 reported population of 67 caste and ethnic groups living in the metropolitan. In this paper their proportions in the lowest spatial unit that is, wards are calculated and their ranking up to fourth place has been discussed to demonstrate the state of concentration.

The extent of caste/ethnic diversity is examined using an index originally developed and used in agricultural geography (Gibbs and Martin, 1962). Further, considering its potential in examining the

spatial diversification of socio-cultural groups, this index has been used to analyze the level of caste/ethnic diversification by Subedi (2002), which is as follows:

$$\text{Index of ethnic diversification (I)} = 1 - \frac{\sum X^2}{(\sum X)^2}$$

Where X is the proportion of population shared by each caste or ethnic group within the ward. The minimum value of this index is “0” when there is only one group settled in the given area that is, district. Such a situation represents no diversification. The higher the index value the higher is the level of diversification in the particular ward. On the contrary, the presence of diverse groups within the wards of metropolitan represents higher level of diversification. Latter same index was adapted to analyze the 2001 census data by Sharma (2006).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Perspectives on population of Kathmandu metropolitan

The 1920 head count showed a total of 108,805 people living in Kathmandu including urban as well as rural areas. The earliest figure for Kathmandu city is that of 1941 with 68,594 people. However, it is worth to note that population census 1952/54, provided more reliable data for urban areas since it was the first scientific census in the country (Karki, 1995). As per the population census 1952/54 Kathmandu city as one of 10 ‘prominent localities,’ had a total population of 106,579 comprising 54.2% of total Kathmandu valley population. Since then the city population has shown a steady increase reaching its highest share in 1991. Census 2001 showed an absolute increase of 250,588 compared to 1991 census but its proportional share in the valley population decreased (Table 1). By then not only the rural areas adjacent to the city showed an increase, other cities in the valley namely Lalitpur, Bhaktapur, Kirtipur and Madhyapur Thimi had also grown significantly in their population sizes.

Along with growth of Kathmandu city population, the population of Kathmandu valley has also grown more than five times over the past five decades. Since there were only 10 urban areas that is, ‘prominent localities’

during 1950s and 1960s, the urban Kathmandu (valley) consisted 83% of total urban population in the country. Gradually with emergence of other urban areas and with increase in proportion of urban population from about 3% (1952/54) to 14% (2001), its share on total urban population declined steadily reaching only 31% in 2001.

The age structure of metropolitan population is another important demographic component. Age structure of metropolitan can be considered as mature compared with young age structure of the nation. Of the total population, 68.6% belongs to the age group 15 - 59 years. The proportion of children below 15 years of age comprises only 26.4%. Likewise the proportion of aged population (60 years of age and over) constitutes 5.1%. The corresponding figures at the national level are 54.1, 39.4 and 6.5% for 15 - 59 years, 0 - 14 years and 60 and above years, respectively. This metropolitan age structure results into a total dependency ratio of 45.8% with old dependency of 7.4 and young dependency of 38.4%. This is quite contrary to the national situation where the total dependency ratio is as high as 84.7% with young dependency of 72.7% and old dependency of 12.0%. This apparent low dependency and high proportion of population in economically active age group reflects the impact of rural-urban migration in Kathmandu.

As a multi-ethnic country such as Nepal characterized by rapid growth of population (over 2.0% per annum over last four decades, see, Bastola and GC, 2003), ethnic diversification over space is an inevitable result of internal mobility and increased exposure of various groups with outside world. The impact of mobility and diversification is experienced more distinctly in urban areas in general and capital cities in particular. The cosmopolitan feature of Kathmandu dates back to several centuries. The precise beginning of population concentration in Kathmandu is unknown. Sharma (1989) stated that the first sizeable settlement in the valley probably evolved during the Lichchavi period (ca. AD 300 - 800). Throughout the known history, Kathmandu has functioned as the capital city. Historical records show that three principal localities of Kathmandu valley namely Kathmandu, Patan (Lalitpur) and Bhadgaon (Bhaktapur) acquired a relatively higher concentration of population by 12th and 13th centuries (Slusser, 1982). Each of these three localities was capital of independent principalities until 1769. The locational advantage of the valley has long attracted people. The impetus for population concentration in Kathmandu primarily during Malla period owes to its role as a center of entrepot trade and a contact zone between Tibetan, Nepali and Indian cultural areas to the north and the south (Subedi, 1995). The long distance trade was further reinforced by a productive agricultural base and small scale industrial production of metal ware and textiles, thereby providing a situation conducive to population growth. The status of Kathmandu as capital of unified Nepal after 1769 further reinforced its political, economic and social power thereby its eminence continued

unsurpassed since then, attracting more people from outside the valley.

Urban population distribution by wards

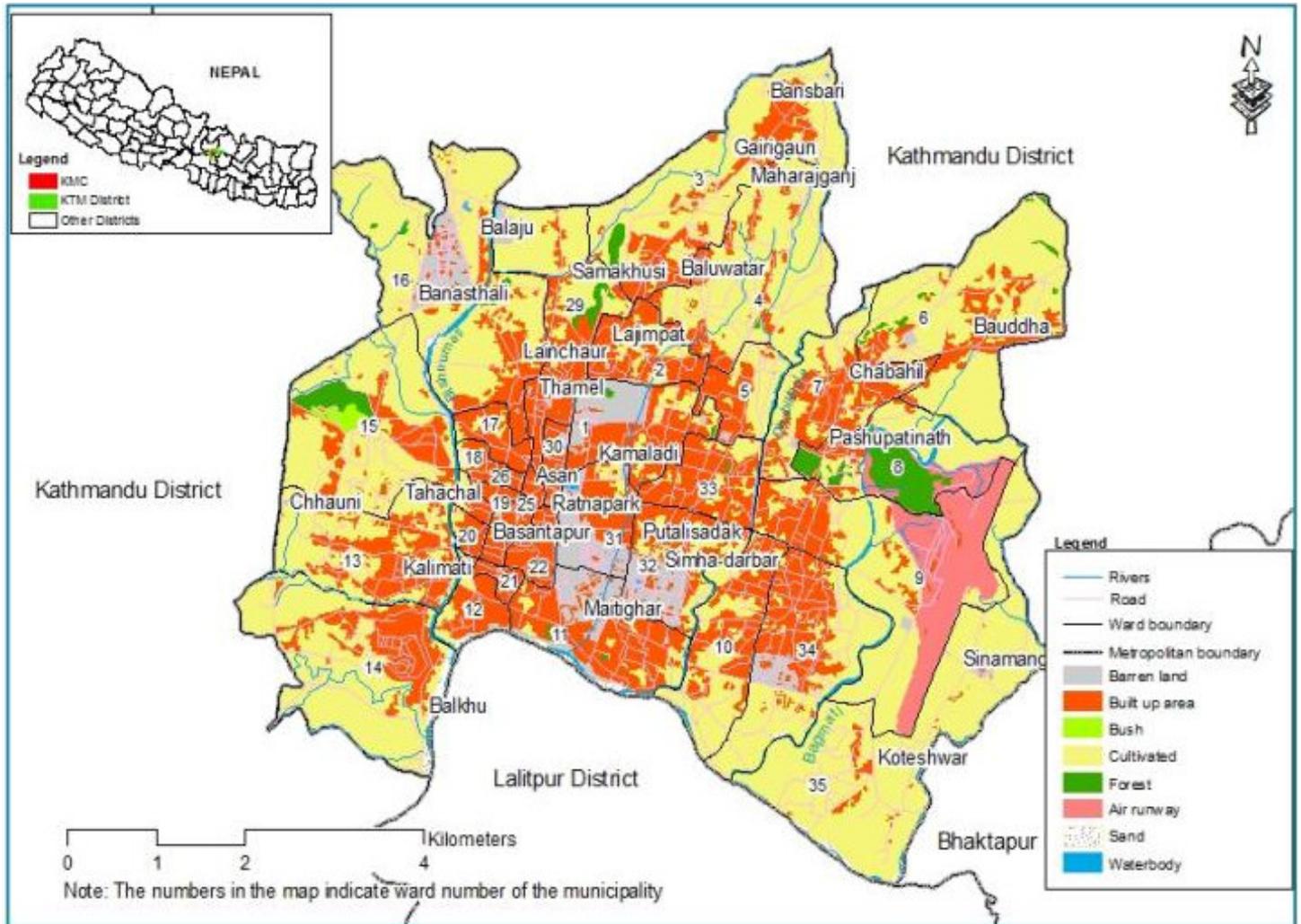
In the existing administrative set-up of the country, municipality or village development committee is the lowest politico-administrative unit. The municipalities are divided into local units known as wards ranging from nine in the minimum to 35 in the maximum. For administrative facilitation, Kathmandu metropolitan has been divided into 35 wards (Map 1) and population data are available at the ward level in 2001 census.

The average population of wards was 19,196 persons in 2001. A total of sixteen wards had population above average and the remaining below the average. There was a huge disparity in ward-wise distribution of population. It ranged from 3,764 (Ward 26) to 46,136 (Ward 34). The ratio of population of largest ward to smallest ward was 12.3:1. Wards 34, 16, 7 and 6 are among bigger ones whereas wards 26, 25, 24, 28 are among the smallest ones (Table 2).

Caste/ethnic nexus

Of all the municipalities of the country, Kathmandu is most complex in terms of caste/ethnic composition. Census 2001 enumerated 67 castes/ethnic and/or religious group with significant population living within the metropolitan. Among them Newar, Brahmin (Hill), Chhetri, Tamang, Gurung, Sherpa and Magar, are the main caste/ethnic groups. No caste or ethnic group holds the majority, not even one-thirds of total municipal population. By far, Newar is the single largest group with its share of 31.8% (Table 3). Brahmin (Hill) is the second largest group with 21.5%. Chhetri constitutes 16.4%. Together these three groups constitute almost 70% of the total metropolitan population. Tamang and Gurung comprise 5.3 and 3.7% whereas Sherpa and Magar comprise 3.2% each. These seven groups together share 85% of total population. Other groups having 1% or more shares in the municipal population include Rai, Muslim, Marwadi, Thakuri and Tharu, respectively.

The census figure shows a mixed and diversified social demography on the whole rather than concentration of one or two specific groups in the metropolitan (Table 3). Altogether there were 30 groups having a population of 1000 or more in the capital city. Overall, they made up 98.4% of total population. Of the remaining, at least 36 groups were listed and their specific proportion was 0.1% or less. Together they represented 1.6%. In particular, among groups with 0.1% or less share, Rajput, Hajam, Koiri, Nurang, Sudi, and Kurmi were notable and their population in the metropolitan was recorded to be between 908 to 522 persons.



Map 1. Kathmandu metropolitan: ward boundary and general land use.

Though Newar, Brahmin (Hill) and Chhetri are three main groups, with each group having more than 16% share in the metropolitan, none of these groups shared comparable proportion at the national level. Chhetri and Brahmin (Hill), the first two largest groups in the nation, constituted 15.8 and 12.7% respectively, whereas Newar ranked sixth with 5.5%. Newar being one of the earliest settled groups in the valley obviously has the single largest position in the total metropolitan population. Interestingly, the proportion of Tamang (fourth largest group in the metropolitan) in the total national population and in the metropolitan population roughly corresponds. At the national level it shared 5.6% and ranked fifth while in the metropolitan it shared 5.7% and ranked fourth. Since the hills surrounding Kathmandu valley and adjacent districts are the main areas of Tamang concentration, their considerable presence in the metropolitan is understandable. Unlike many caste and ethnic groups of comparable size at the national level, the

proportions of Sherpa and Gurung are higher in metropolitan than their corresponding shares in the total national population.

CONCENTRATION OR DIVERSIFICATION

Caste and ethnic identities are prime socio-cultural identities among Nepali people. Whereas 'Nepali' identity comes first, the second level identity is that of caste/ethnic identity. Within the nation, the second level identity prevails because there is a tendency to associate individual's social self identities with residential context and thus this individual identity directly or indirectly ties up with a particular location. This place based identity is the main concern behind the notion of indigenous nationalities (adivasi janajati). This implies that particular locations (areas) demonstrate residential concentration of

Table 2. Kathmandu metropolitan: Population, household size and sex ratio by wards, 2001.

Ward No.	Population	HH size	Sex ratio	Ward no	Population	HH size	Sex ratio
1	8464	5.01	110.0	19	7400	5.01	105.6
2	13655	4.27	113.2	20	8240	4.84	110.7
3	20782	4.55	105.5	21	12369	4.93	109.4
4	29539	4.36	107.9	22	5840	5.79	107.5
5	15340	4.29	113.7	23	8289	4.85	111.2
6	39316	4.48	109.5	24	5272	5.70	124.7
7	39530	4.24	114.3	25	4310	5.79	104.2
8	9434	4.36	112.4	26	3764	4.97	103.1
9	29263	4.36	115.4	27	7789	5.05	106.7
10	25977	4.21	120.0	28	5462	5.02	106.1
11	15244	4.37	120.7	29	24543	4.40	116.4
12	10313	4.95	109.3	30	9896	4.85	108.7
13	29721	4.62	120.0	31	14502	4.46	135.9
14	34488	4.40	117.1	32	24355	4.28	126.5
15	32441	4.36	112.2	33	21597	4.26	117.9
16	45450	4.21	117.0	34	46136	4.18	124.8
17	19876	4.36	114.9	35	35184	4.04	121.4
18	8065	4.66	109.8	KTM	671846	4.42	115.5

Source: Population census, 2001.

particular caste/ethnic group. Concentration as it is used in this paper refers to a pattern of occupancy of an area by a specific group demonstrating a collective place based identity and prevailing numerically in the given location. On the other hand, diversification refers to a tendency of place showing occupancy of various groups in a given area and thus more of a caste/ethnic mix up. In recent years, issue of ethnic identity and associated rights over resource has surfaced more vividly as social and political agenda than ever before. The current diverse caste/ethnic composition of population in Kathmandu as capital city in the context of historical dominance of this territory by a particular group e.g. Newar; makes it imperative to discuss its make-up from both the perspectives that is, concentration and diversification. In reality, the current socio-political debate on ethnic federalism revolves around the issue of considering an area as region of concentration of a particular group or considering a particular place as ethnic mosaic.

Concentration

In the metropolitan that constitutes 35 wards, four groups namely, Newar, Brahmin, Chhetri and Tamang make up either majority or single largest group status in one or more wards. Newar by far is the first ranking group in 25 wards. This group has the absolute majority that is, more than 66.7% in 10 wards and simple majority in 3 wards (Table 4). However, Newar as majority group appear to

be in wards with small population in general. For example, the average population of the wards where Newar is in majority is 7,462 but as noted above the average population size of all 35 wards is 19,196. In wards with larger population size, none of the groups commands majority. It seems 'geography matters' in the distribution of Newar population in the city. It means with an increase in the distance from the city core (Indrachok, Hanumandhoka) the proportional share of Newar population decreases thereby justifying distance decay situation (Map 2). A negative correlation between the proportion of single largest group and the population size is also observed ($r = -0.21$). This suggests a tendency of decrease in the numerical dominance of one or the other group with an increase in population size of the wards.

Setting aside the Newar, the Brahmin and Chhetri are two caste groups having single largest group status in nine wards. Among them Brahmin occupies its single largest group status in eight wards and Chhetri in one ward only. Brahmin and Chhetri as single largest group exist in wards with large population size. For example, the average population in these nine wards was 29,658 (against average of 19,196).

Brahmin and Chhetri are the two groups that command second and third ranking status in most of the wards. Chhetri hold second ranking in 15 wards and Brahmin in 14 wards (Map 3). Together these two groups command second ranking in 29 wards (Table 5). If all wards are taken together Chhetri and Brahmin hold second or third position except in ward six where Tamang is the largest group, Sherpa holds second position and in ward 24

Table 3. Kathmandu metropolitan: Caste/ethnic composition of population, 2001.

Caste/ethnic group	Share in total metropolitan population			Sex ratio
	Number	%	Cumulative %	
Newar	213337	31.8	31.8	102.1
Brahman – Hill	144713	21.5	53.3	124.7
Chhetri	110180	16.4	69.7	118.0
Tamang	38491	5.7	75.4	113.3
Gurung	21849	3.3	78.7	102.0
Sherpa	21619	3.2	81.9	105.8
Magar	21360	3.2	85.1	116.5
Rai	14464	2.2	87.3	106.7
Muslim	10729	1.6	88.9	208.0
Marwadi	9750	1.5	90.4	116.6
Thakuri	7871	1.2	91.6	115.6
Tharu	6850	1.0	92.6	171.1
Limbu	3934	0.6	93.2	115.0
Unidentified Caste	3666	0.6	93.8	107.6
Damai/Dholi	3260	0.5	94.3	151.6
Baniya	2707	0.5	94.8	107.8
Yadav	2355	0.4	95.2	155.4
Teli	2342	0.4	95.6	245.3
Kami	2288	0.3	95.9	206.1
Kalwar	2102	0.3	96.2	126.8
Sunuwar	1687	0.3	96.5	261.2
Thakali	1549	0.3	96.8	103.3
Brahman – Tarai	1491	0.2	97.0	180.3
Sonar	1472	0.2	97.2	121.4
Majhi	1338	0.2	97.4	117.6
Bangali	1317	0.2	97.6	319.4
Sarki	1273	0.2	97.8	111.5
Unidentified Dalit	1246	0.2	98.0	120.9
Gharti/Bhujel	1128	0.2	98.2	123.8
Kayastha	1000	0.15	98.4	133.1
Other (36 + groups)	10501	1.6	100	154.4
Total	671846	100	-	115.5

Source: Population census, 2001.

Bengali holds similar ranking. In three of the 14 wards where Brahmin occupy second largest group status their share is as high as 25.0 to 33.3%. It is interesting to note that with the same proportion, Newar and Brahmin occupy single largest group status in five wards, respectively (Table 4).

Chhetri and Brahmin hold third ranking status in 28 wards (Table 6). Newar occupies third ranking in six wards and Tamang in one ward (Map 4). Of the numerically dominant groups Chhetri occupies third ranking in sixteen wards. In the two wards where it occupies third largest group status, its share is between 20 to 25% in the total ward population. It is obvious that wards where the proportion of third largest group is less

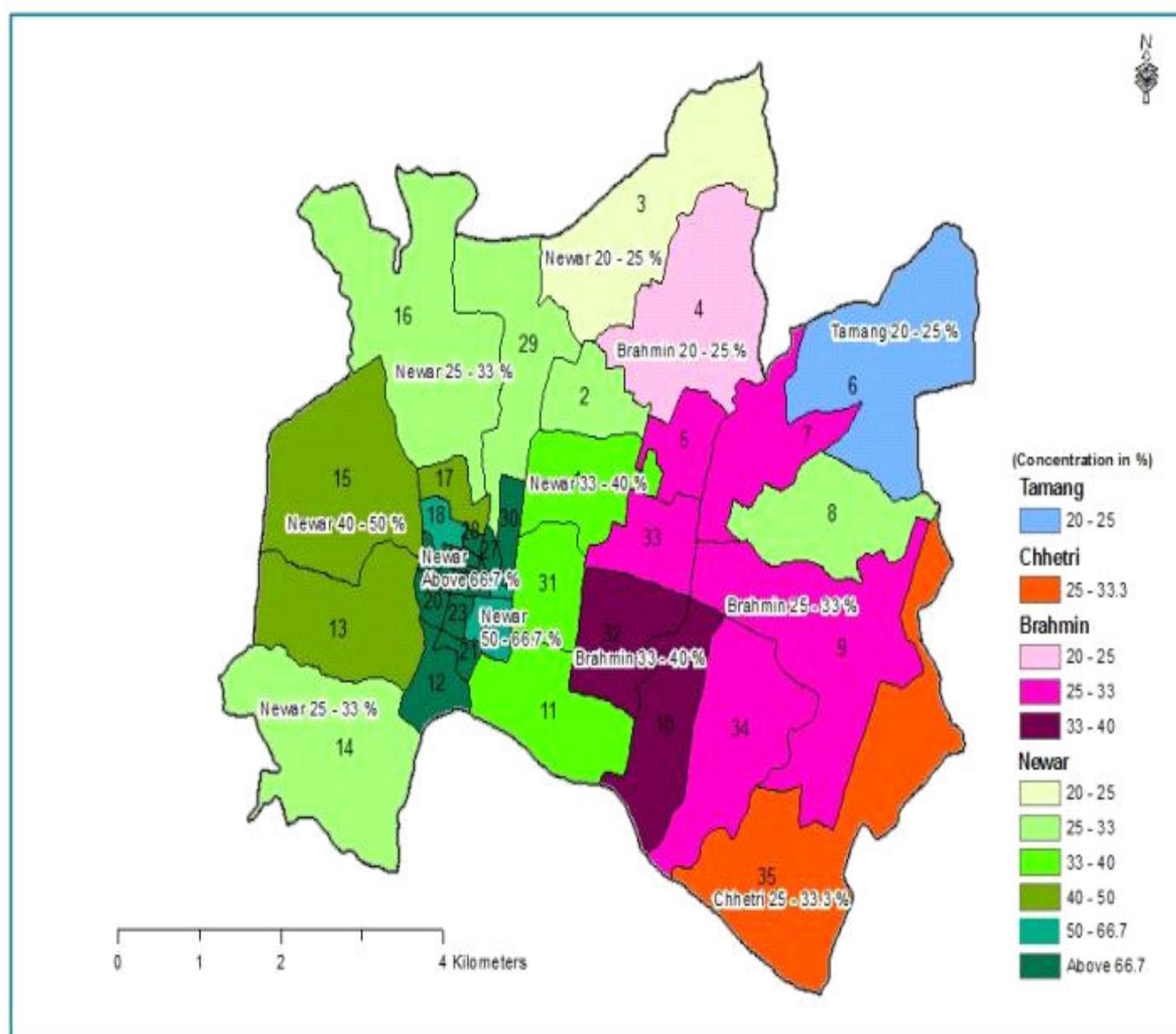
than five percent are characterized by primacy of Newar as majority.

If the fourth and fifth ranking status is taken into account Tamang ranks fourth in 12 wards and Gurung in six wards. It is to be noted that while the ranking of Newar goes up to 5th position, the ranking of Brahmin and Chhetri does not fall below 4th position in any of the wards. More importantly, Chhetri occupy fourth position in three wards while Brahmin in only one ward. This indicates that despite cultural and demographic eminence of Newar from historical times the Brahmin and Chhetri have become significant groups in the social and cultural landscape of Kathmandu metropolitan. Likewise, Tamang, Gurung, Magar and Sherpa have also emerged

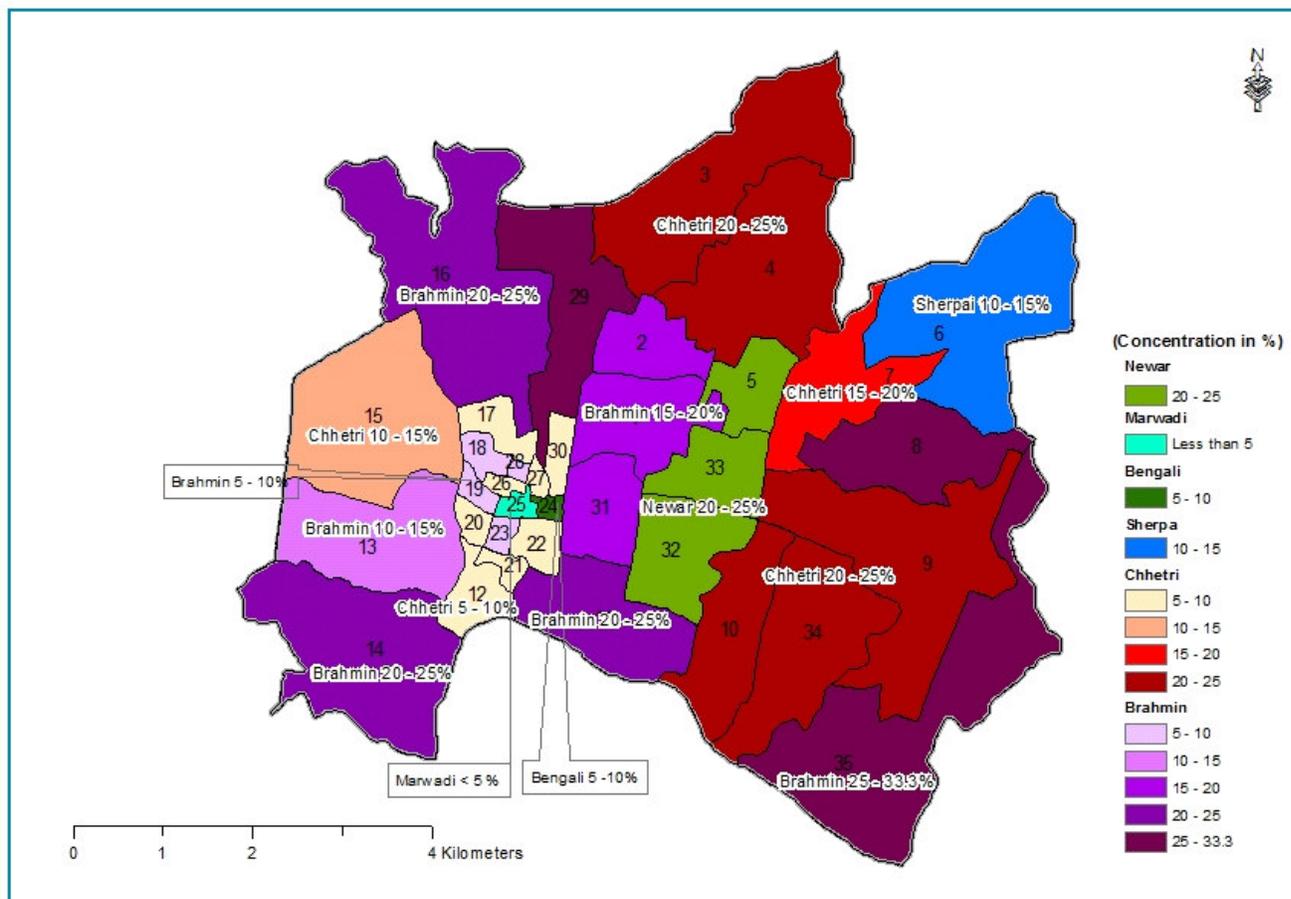
Table 4. Ethnic concentration: Largest group and its proportional share in wards, 2001.

Caste/ethnic group	Wards with concentration of respective group (%)						Total wards
	More than 66.7	50 - 66.7	40 - 50	33.3 - 39.9	25 - 33.3	20 - 24.9	
Newar	26, 27, 19, 28, 25, 20, 23, 21, 12, 30 (10)	24, 22, 18 (3)	17, 13, 15 (3)	31, 1, 11 (3)	16, 29, 2, 8, 14 (5)	3 (1)	25
Brahmin (Hill)	-	-	-	10, 32 (2)	9, 33, 34, 7, 5 (5)	4 (1)	8
Chhetri	-	-	-	-	35 (1)	-	1
Tamang	-	-	-	-	-	6 (1)	1
Total	10	3	3	5	11	3	35

Figures in the parenthesis refer to number of wards in the particular category.
 Source: Calculation based on population census, 2001.



Map 2. Caste/Ethnic concentration in Kathmandu metropolitan: Largest group and its proportional share, 2001.



Map 3. State of Caste/Ethnic concentration: Second largest group in Kathmandu metropolitan.

Table 5. State of concentration: Second largest group.

Caste/ethnic group	Status as second largest group in the wards (%)						Total wards
	25 - 33.3	20 - 24.9	15 - 19.1	10 - 14.9	5 - 10	Less than 5	
Newar	-	5, 32, 33	-	-	-	-	3
Brahmin (Hill)	8, 35, 29	14, 16, 11	1, 2, 31	13	18, 28, 23, 19	-	14
Chhetri	-	9, 3, 10, 4, 34	7	15	17, 30, 12, 20, 22, 21, 27, 26	-	15
Sherpa	-	-	-	6	-	-	1
Bengali	-	-	-	-	24	-	1
Marwadi	-	-	-	-	-	25	1
Total	3	11	4	3	13	1	35

Source: Calculation based on Population Census, 2001

as formidable groups there.

The diversification

The above discussion on distribution of main caste/ethnic groups by lowest spatial units in the metropolitan gives

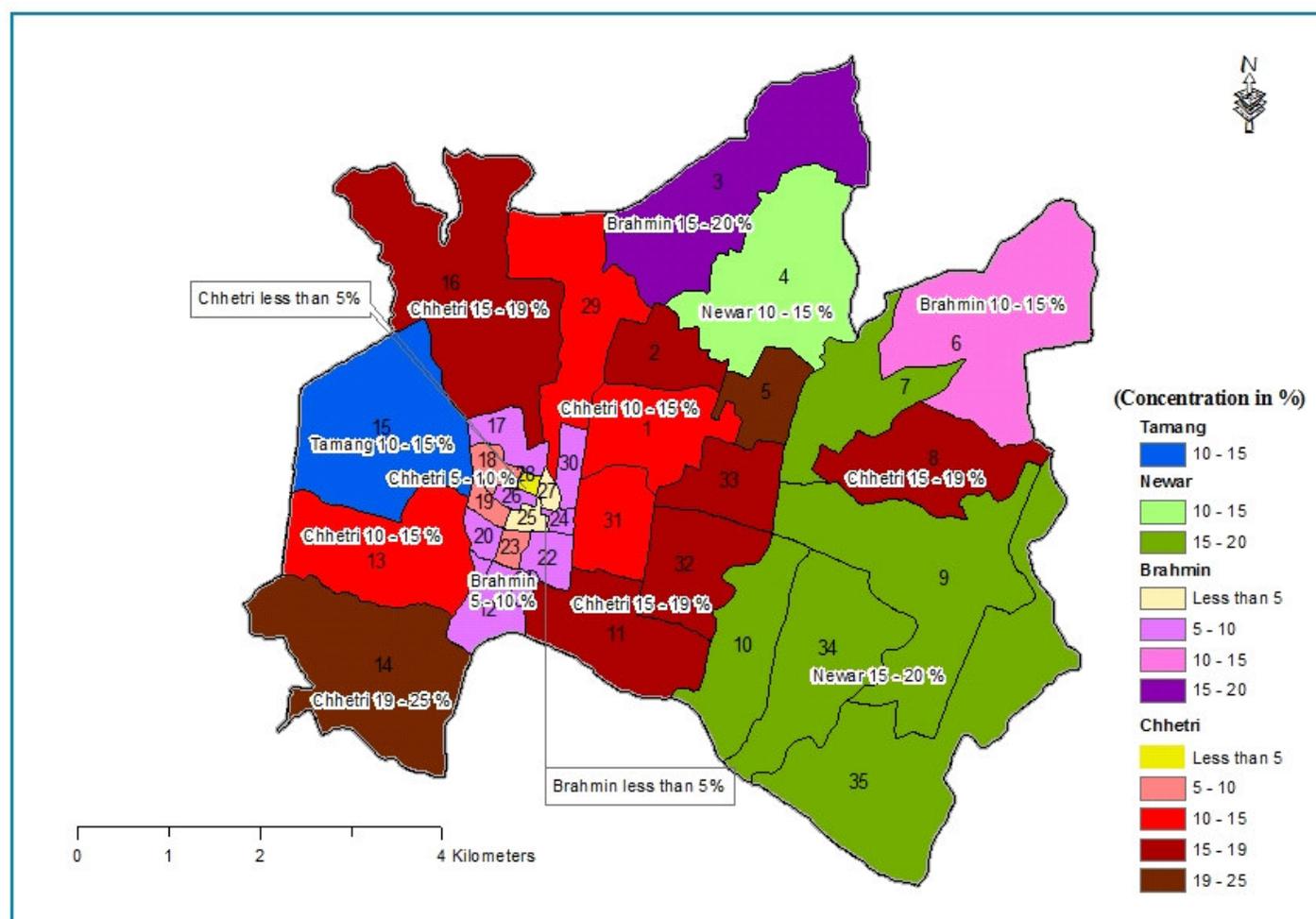
an impression of concentration of various groups within the given wards. This is a conventional approach of interpreting the geography of ethnic groups where proportions of various caste and ethnic groups within the

¹ Choropleth maps represent all quantification based real maps prepared on the basis of average numbers per unit area.

Table 6. State of concentration: Third largest group.

Caste/ethnic group	Status as third largest group in the wards (%)					Total wards
	20 - 24.9	15 - 19.1	10 - 14.9	5 - 10	Less than 5	
Newar		10, 34, 7, 9, 35	4	-	-	6
Brahmin (Hill)	-	3	6	17, 30, 24, 22, 12, 20, 21, 26	25, 27	12
Chhetri	5, 14	33, 32, 8, 11, 2, 16	29, 13, 31, 1	18, 23, 19	28	16
Tamang	-	-	15	-	-	1
Total	2	12	7	11	3	35

Source: Calculation based on population census, 2001.



Map 4. State of Caste/Ethnic concentration: Third largest group in Kathmandu metropolitan.

spatial unit are calculated and presented in the choropleth map. But this approach fails to demonstrate the degree of diversity of caste/ethnic groups within the given geographic area. For a comprehensive understanding of the geography of ethnic groups within the area, it is essential to find out their diversification within

the spatial unit. The index of ethnic diversification helps address this issue.

The overall ethnic diversification index (EDI) of Kathmandu metropolitan is 81.8%. This is indicative of highly diversified social landscape. However, the level of diversification varies by wards. The index value ranges

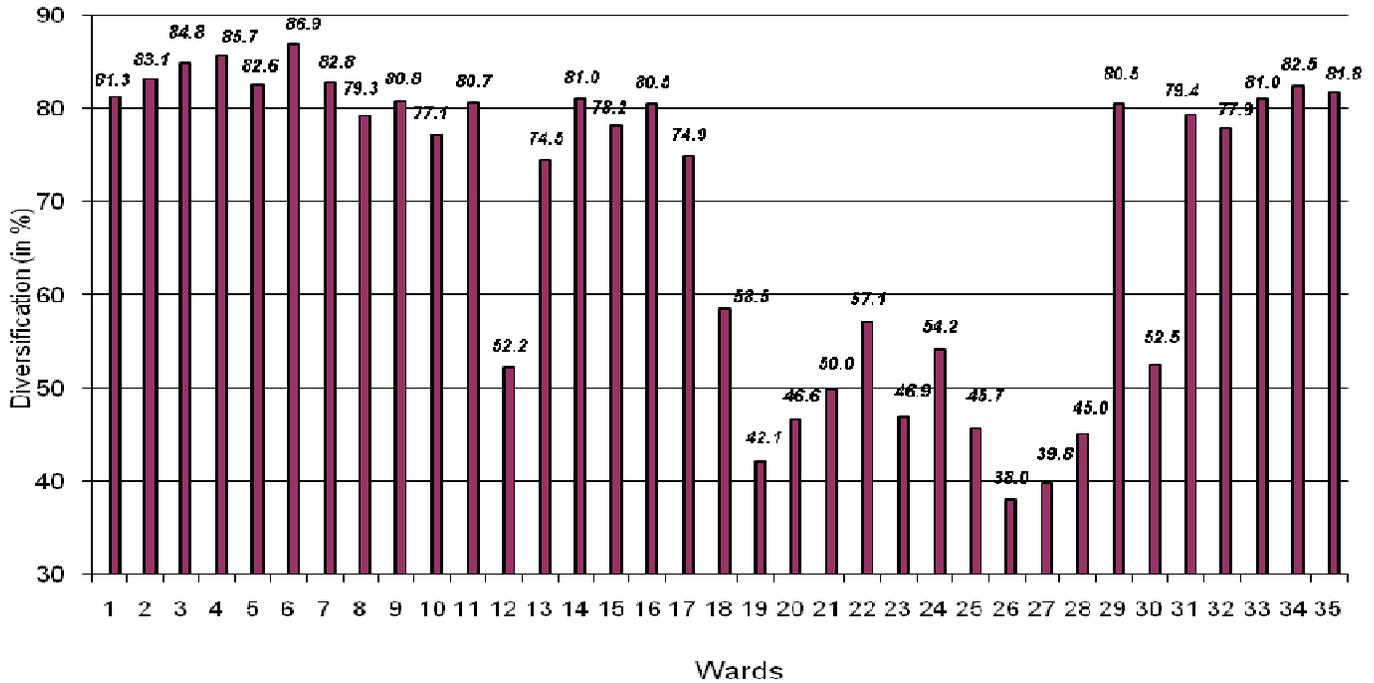


Figure 1. Kathmandu metropolitan: Levels of ethnic diversification, 2001.

from 38% (ward 26) to 86.9% (ward 6). Apparently these two wards lie in the extremes. Ward 26 lies at the core (older section) of the city and ward six lies in the far north-eastern section. Figure 1 gives the ward-wise status of ethnic diversification. Among 35 wards eight wards demonstrate low diversification and have their index value below 50%. Likewise, five wards have medium diversification that is, between 50 and 60%. Seven wards show high level of diversification and their index value ranges from 70 - 80%. More importantly 15 wards have index values over 80% and demonstrate very high level of caste/ethnic diversification.

Diversification and proportion of largest group

An examination of link between EDI and population size of the wards suggest a tendency of higher EDI value with an increase in population size ($r = 0.213$). The link between ethnic diversification and the proportion of single largest group is clear. The higher the EDI value the lower would be the proportional share of single largest group in the ward or vice versa (Figure 2). In addition, the correlation coefficient of EDI and proportion of single largest group comes out to be $r = -0.987$.

Ethnic diversification may be considered as a normal phenomenon especially in capital cities that operate as nation's center of executive, legislative and judiciary functions. As a fertile mid-land valley Kathmandu had attracted people from the hills for long. Its status as the

capital of unified Nepal since late 18th century further reinforced its attraction to various caste/ethnic groups. More importantly, the political events and other activities in the nation after unification have no less contributed to ethnic diversification of this city. The demographic changes, poverty, unemployment and inequality in rural areas have forced many people to think of big cities such as Kathmandu as center of hope, the insurgent activities, insecurity in the village plus successive political changes in the recent past have resulted into incoming of more people in Kathmandu than ever before. It is obvious that any national or regional level changes in the country no matter whether it is a change in the political system or in the economic or social life during the second half of the 20th century has added population in this city. With the change in political system, members of the new political parties have dominated the parliament house in Kathmandu. Together with these members have come their followers in the city for long-term stay. It has been quite natural that once these high profile people entered Kathmandu, they have bought, built or rented residence in Kathmandu. Since the dawn of democracy in 1950, this has happened and is so obvious that this needs no further elaboration.

Distance and diversification

The level of ethnic diversification reflects a clear spatial dimension. Wards located in the older sections or core

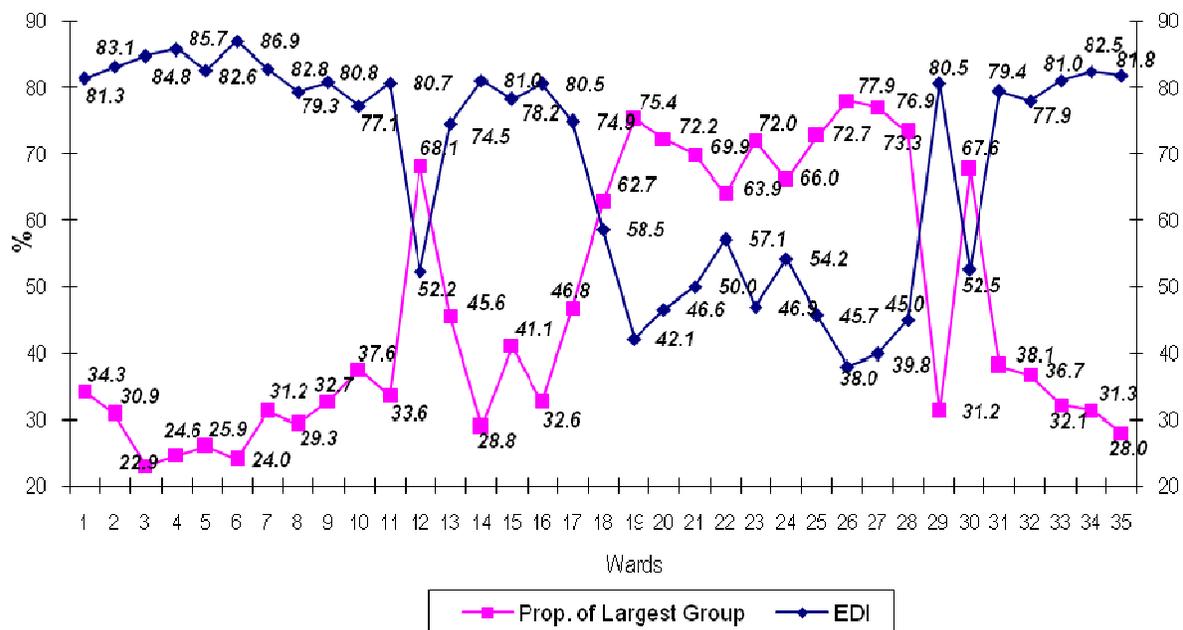


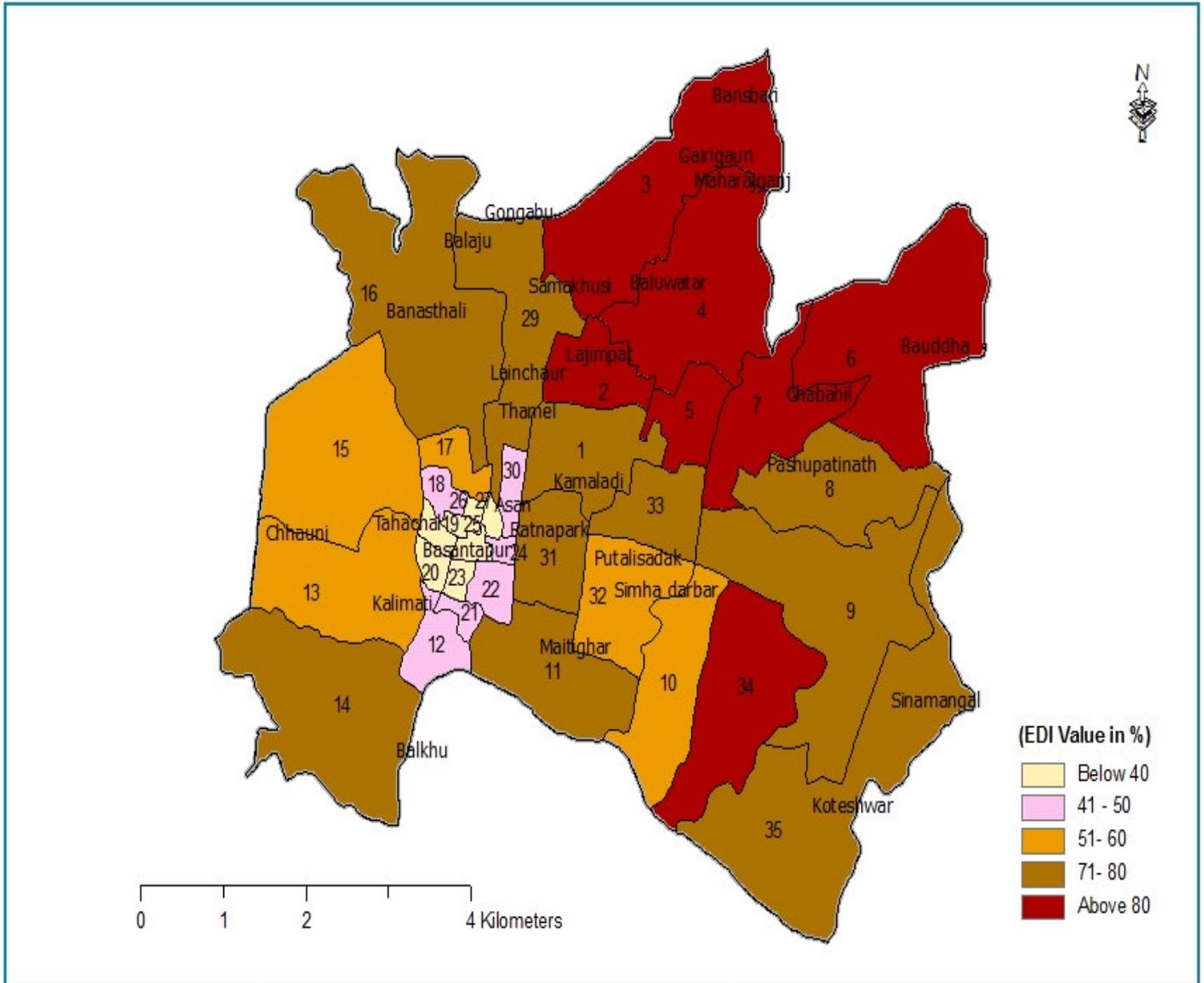
Figure 2. Proportion of largest group and level of ethnic diversification, 2001.

areas of the metropolitan are less diversified (Map 5). For example, wards 26, 27, 19, 28, 25, 20 and 23 reflect lower index values and rank at the bottom respectively. On the contrary, the wards located farther from the city core demonstrate higher values. Wards 6, 4, 3, 2, 7, 5, 34 and 35 that rank top on the list respectively are spatially farther from the city core. All these wards have EDI values higher than 81%. Implicitly, this pattern also reflects Newar's preference to settle in cluster than in scattered form of settlement.

The EDI value not only reflects spatial pattern of increase with an increase in distance from the core but also the direction. The diversification is high towards east and low towards south e.g., wards 12 and 21. The west reflects medium e.g., wards 13 and 15, and the north moderately high. One plausible explanation could be that since the core areas were built-up earlier and were controlled by the local residents, the new (late) comer had to settle outside the core areas. In addition, there is also a regional dimension on those coming and settling in Kathmandu. The street running northward from the statue of king Tribhuvan at Tripureswor to Narayan Gopal Chowk (Kantipath) can be roughly taken as a division for easterners and westerners. Although detailed studies are warranted, a cursory examination suggests that the east of the division is largely dominated by those coming from the east of Kathmandu whereas the westerners largely dominate the west. The high index values of the wards in the east are also likely to reflect greater extent of migration from the east in the immediate past than from the west. These conjectures need further assessment but the following section on internal migration supports this.

Rural-urban migration and ethnic diversification

Migration both internal and international, has largely contributed to the ethnic diversification. Nowhere else in Nepal than Kathmandu metropolitan exemplifies this. According to Population Census 2001, 44.2% of people in the metropolitan were life-time migrants. Among total native born population living in the city 42% were migrant that is, internal. Likewise, the immigrant population constituted 4% in the city. This means more than two out of every five in Kathmandu was a migrant either internal or international. A definite geographic pattern is evident in the distribution of internal and international migrants in the city. Whereas the proportion of international migrants is higher in and around the city core, the proportion of internal migrants is higher in wards located farther from the core. For example, wards 24, 11 and 31 demonstrate higher proportion of international migrants (mainly from India). Geographically, these wards are either parts of city core e.g., New Road, Basantapur, or adjacent to Tundikhel, Mahabouddha and Ganabahal area. On the contrary, the proportion of internal migrants is higher in wards such as 34, 32, 35, 10, 6 and others that are located away from the core. Map 6 shows the pattern of distribution of internal and international migrants by wards. A discussion on the causes of migration to Kathmandu is beyond the scope of this paper. However, the causes are likely to be a combination of reasons related to place of origin such as rapid population growth resulting into youth bulge, lack of employment opportunities, unavailability of suitable educational and health institutions plus poor infrastructural facilities in the



Map 5. Castle/Ethnic Diversification in Kathmandu Metropolitan, 2001.

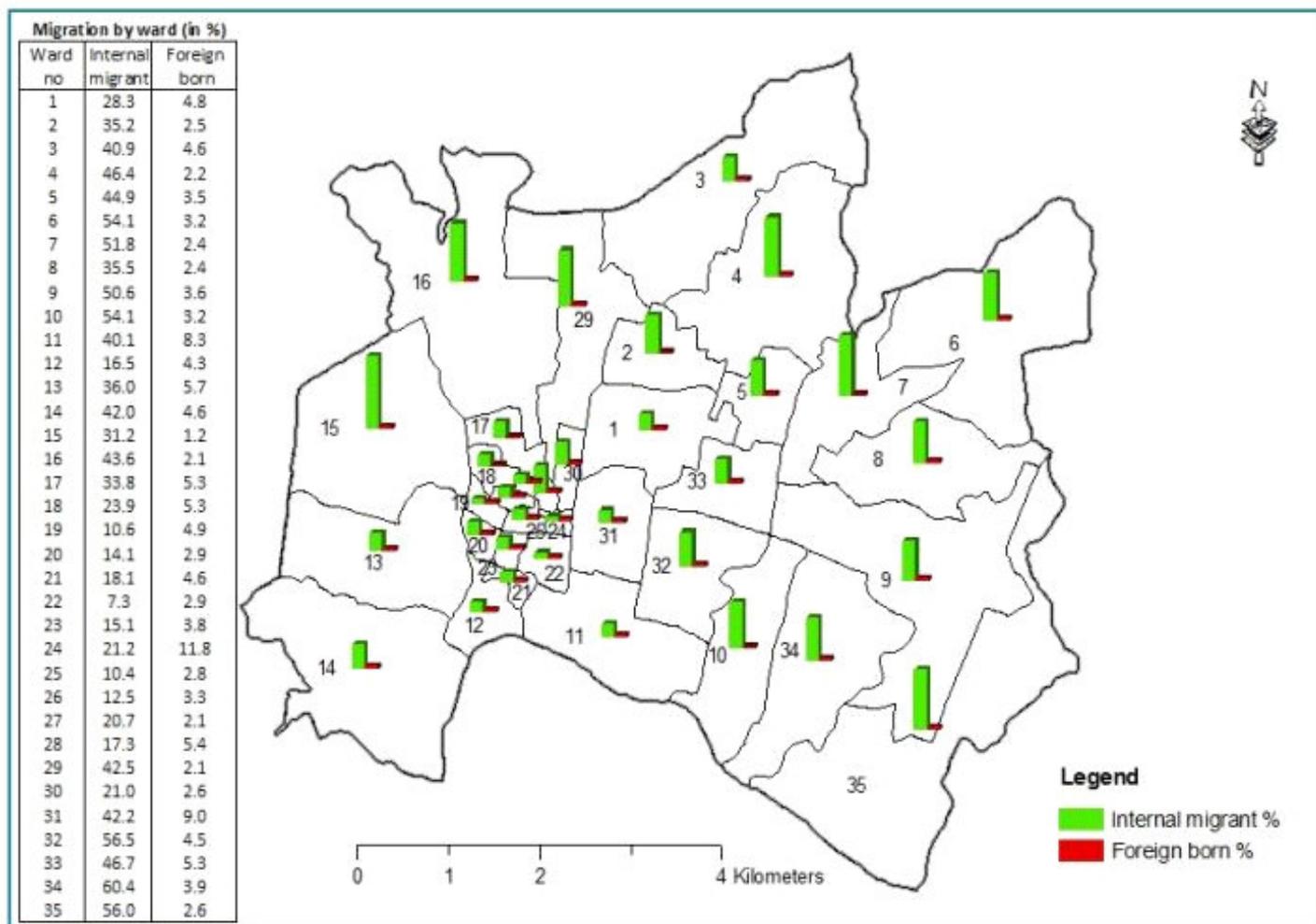
village and that of reasons related to destination primarily the irresistible ‘impression of cities as hope.’

Migrant (both internal and international) as percentage of total city population ranges from 10 - 62%. Ward 22 which is part of the old city has lowest value and ward 34 which lies in the outer section of the city has the highest proportion of migrants. The ward-wise distribution of proportion of migrants suggests an increase in the proportion with an increase in the distance from the city core, not much different from the case of internal migration. A general tendency of increase in the proportion of migrants with an increase in the total population size of the wards is apparent. A circular situation of distance from the city core related to increase in population size and the population size linked with

proportion of migrants roughly holds.

Ethnic diversification is positively correlated with overall migration and that of ethnic diversification index is high in wards where proportion of migrants is high ($r = 0.87$). Whereas the association of internal migration is far stronger with ethnic diversification, the association between immigration and ethnic diversification is at best unclear. This is as reflected by r value of 0.88 between diversification and internal migration. On the contrary, the overall correlation coefficient between immigration and ethnic diversification happens to be negative but with too low r value (- 0.069).

Figure 3 illustrates the level of ethnic diversification and migration (combined internal and international) in the metropolitan by wards. A close parallel between the



Map 6. Kathmandu Metropolitan: Internal and International Migration by Wards, 2001.

two variables is evident. Whether diversification is good for the overall progress of an area may be a matter of interpretation and no universally acceptable explanations are available. However, the unique identity of Kathmandu metropolitan as the capital of the nation owes much to its diversified social landscape.

Conclusions

According to official figures, by the first decade of the 21st century, Kathmandu metropolitan hosts about one-third of total urban population and three percent of total population of Nepal. As one of 58 officially recognized urban area with 49.45 km², it occupies 0.03% of the nation's territory and 1.5% of its total urban territory. This city has experienced nearly six-fold increase in its population between 1961 and 2001. As a capital city with historical, cultural and politico-administrative significance, it has attracted large number of people both from within

and outside the country over the years. As a result, its social landscape has been diversified; 67 castes/ethnic and/or religious groups with sizeable population are recorded to have been living within this metropolitan area.

Historically known as Newar settlement, Newar group today occupies only 32% though it is the single largest group in the city. Brahmin and Chhetri occupy second and third major group status with 22 and 16% population, respectively. The distribution of three major groups expressed in terms of their share in 35 sub-units of the metropolitan gives an impression of a spatial pattern of concentration of Newar in core areas and that of others in intermediate and outer part of the city.

An obvious tendency of concentration is evident in thirteen sub-units (wards) where Newar is in majority. These sub-units are generally small in their spatial extent and their population sizes. However, in 22 wards, a high level of ethnic diversification is evident. Wards with high level of diversification are large in both the spatial extent

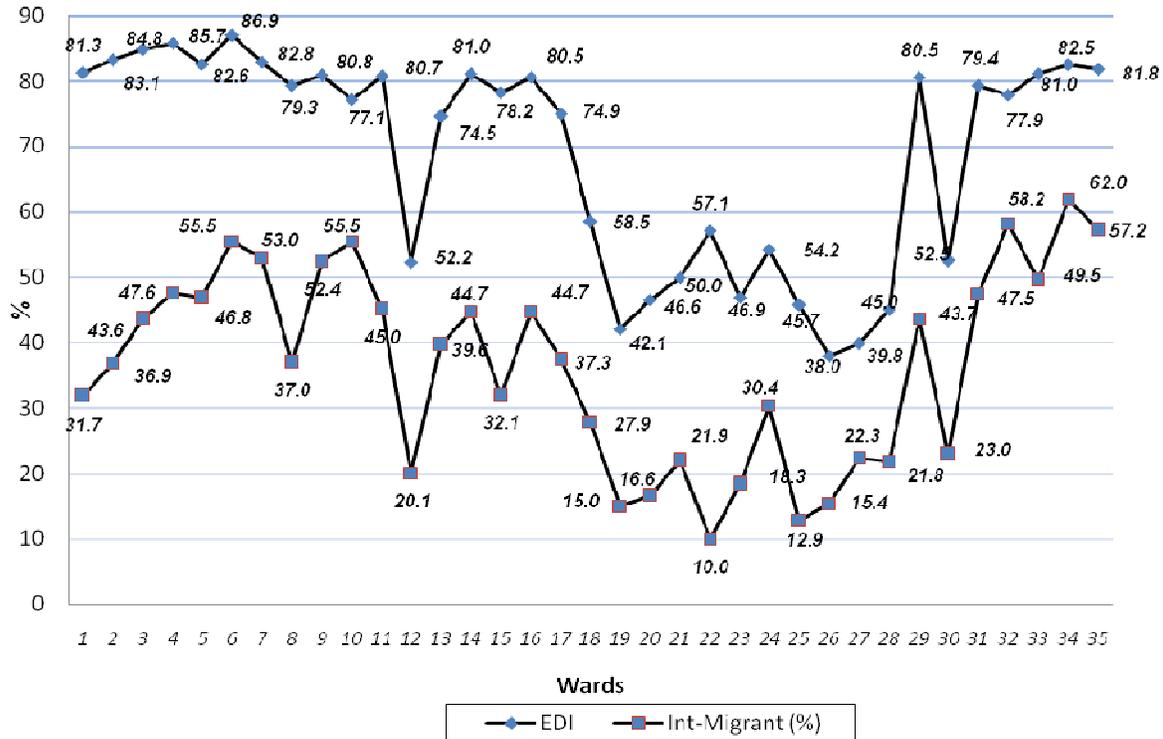


Figure 3. Kathmandu metropolitan: Ethnic diversification and migration, 2001.

and the population size. More importantly, the overall ethnic diversification index of Kathmandu metropolitan (82%) clearly suggests an enduring diversification than a tendency of concentration. The geographic pattern of diversification that is, increase in EDI value with an increase in the distance from the old part of the city and a similar tendency in the proportion of migrants in the city further reinforce the apparent ethnic/caste diversification in the capital. This diversification is also symptomatic of a third demographic transition in the capital city (Coleman, 2006).

The issue of ethnic concentration and/or diversification has occupied center stage in the national debate leading the country to the verge of ethnic federalism as of 2009. Conventionally, ethnic groups are considered to have occupied specific niche and as those having a tendency of clustering in their settlement pattern. But as mentioned in Gurung (1998), the contemporary ethnic map of Nepal demonstrates more blurred boundaries of nationalities (ethnic groups) today than ever before. Over the years with internal growth and economic and social development opportunities within and outside the country, while caste groups have persistently demonstrated the non-clustering and wider distribution, the indigenous nationalities have gradually come out of their traditional niche and have conveniently settled in various parts of the country. This dynamism has resulted into greater ethnic diversity at all regional divisions e.g., rural-urban, Hill-Tarai,

highland-lowland etc.

The contemporary social landscape of Nepal especially after political change in 2006 has been preoccupied with debate, sentiment and actions on the issue of ethnic /caste identity. The tendency has been to demand a particular area of the nation as a state so that one or other group's identity prevails (Himal Media, 2009). The argument is built on the state of concentration of particular ethnic group(s) in a specific area and that the particular territory should be named and ruled by this group. This may be logical given their deprivation due to the weaknesses of the state mechanism in the past, but equally important is the issue of other's identity and their aspiration towards the same so that their identity also prevails in the same area. To bolster the argument, data on majority/minority groups or single largest groups in particular area as well as historical predominance has been used. Thus, some document put forward the prevalence of caste/ethnic group from the perspective of concentration in certain area while others attempt to demonstrate the diversification dynamics stating that hardly one or other group commands the majority in a geographical region. This debate is equally vibrant in Kathmandu valley as elsewhere in the country. This paper concludes by demonstrating how diverse the capital city is with respect to caste/ethnic groups. Likewise, it also demonstrates how large the stock of migrant population in the capital city is and leads to

thinking of how to accommodate this diverse stock of population in such a way that possible ethnic tensions are avoided and their identities are not overlooked in the context of immediate restructuring of the state in Nepal.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The author is thankful to Mr. Tibendra Raj Baskota for his help in preparing the maps.

REFERENCES

- Bastola TS, GC RK (2003). A perspective on population census 2001. In: Central Bureau of Statistics (ed) Population Monograph of Nepal, Vol.1. Kathmandu: Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) pp. 1-27.
- Central Bureau of Statistics (2003). Population Census 2001 (various volumes), Kathmandu: Central Bureau of Statistics, Nepal.
- Coleman D (2006). Immigration and ethnic change in low-fertility countries: A third demographic transition. *Population Dev. Rev.* 32(3): 401-466.
- Dahal DR (2003). Social composition of population: Caste/ethnicity and religion in Nepal. In: Central Bureau of Statistics (ed) Population Monograph of Nepal Vol. I. Kathmandu: CBS.
- Gibbs J, Martin W (1962). Urbanization, technology and the division of labour: International patterns. *Am. Sociol. Rev.*, 27.
- Gurung H (1998). Nepal: Social Demography and Expression. Kathmandu: New ERA.
- Haffner W (1981-82). The Kathmandu Valley: A study in regional geography. *J. Nepal Res. Centre* 5/6: 3-26.
- Himal Media 2066 (2009). Sambhidhan yatra: naya sambhidhan ra sanghiyatasambandhi bahas (Journey to constitution: debates on new constitution and federalism). Lalitpur, Kathmandu: Himal Media Pvt Ltd.
- Karki YB (1995). Organization, design and quality aspects of the 1991 population census of Nepal. In: CBS (ed) Population Monograph of Nepal. Kathmandu: Central Bureau of Statistics pp. 503-534.
- Kirkpatrick W (1969). An Account of the Kingdom of Nepal. New Delhi: Manjushri. (Reprint of the 1811 edition).
- Malla UM (1978). Settlement geography of Kathmandu Valley from 600 B.C. to 1000 A.D. *Geogr. J. Nepal.*, 1: 28-36.
- Sharma P (2006). Unraveling the Ethnic Mosaic. Kathmandu: Social Science Baha.
- Sharma P (1989). Urbanization in Nepal (Papers of the East-West Population Institute No. 110). Honolulu : East-West Center, Hawaii.
- Slusser M (1982). Nepal Mandala : A Cultural Study of the Kathmandu Valley. Princeton : Princeton University Press.
- Subedi BP (2002). Concentration or diversification: geography of ethnic diversification in Nepal. *Population and Development in Nepal*, 10: 157-172.
- Subedi BP (1995). Regulating Growth Kathmandu Valley: Population (Annex 8 of the Main Report), Kathmandu: National Planning Commission/IUCN The World Conservation Union.
- Tiwari SR (2001). The Ancient Settlements of Kathmandu Valley. Kathmandu: Centre for Nepal and Asian Studies.