

# MIGRATION, MODERNIZATION AND HERITAGE: A CASE STUDY OF DOLAKHA

Sudarshan Aryal<sup>1</sup>

## Abstract

This study examines the intricate relationship between cultural identities, Migration, and heritage in the historic city of Dolakha, Nepal. Through a comprehensive analysis of the socio-cultural transformations in the region, the study highlights how migration patterns—both voluntary and forced—have shaped the local population's cultural landscape. It examines the preservation and adaptation of heritage practices in the face of changing demographics and the impact of globalization on local traditions. Using qualitative and quantitative methodologies, including short surveys, various types of interviews, and ethnographic observations, the data are analyzed using different methods, including content, thematic, and comparative analysis. The research provides insights into the experiences of migrants and their contributions to the evolving identity of Dolakha. The findings highlight the resilience of cultural heritage in the face of challenges and emphasize the importance of fostering an inclusive narrative that acknowledges the diverse identities within the community. This introduction sets the stage for a deeper understanding of the dynamics of culture, identity, and heritage in a rapidly changing world.

**Keywords :** Migration, Modernization, Heritage, Culture, cultural identity, cultural congruity, ethnic density.

## 1. Introduction

Indigenous peoples have historically maintained elaborate customs, elaborate knowledge systems, and lifestyles closely linked to their natural surroundings (Harbor, L. C., & Hunt, C. A. (2021)). However, the preservation and continuation of these indigenous cultures have faced serious threats from the unrelenting forces of modernization brought about by globalization, industrialization, and economic development (Abuov et al., 2020). It is crucial to understand how modernization affects the customs, identities, and general well-being of indigenous people as they navigate its complex dynamics (Paradies, 2020). This paper analyzes the effect of modernization and migration on the culture and heritage of Dolakha, Nepal.

Dolakha is located on the northeastern side of the Kathmandu Valley, the capital of Nepal. It was a prosperous and significant city in the medieval period, both economically and culturally. However, Dolakha's culture and heritage are now at high risk, with low perseverance at this time. This study provides a nuanced examination of the effects and aftermath on tangible and intangible heritage after the impact of migration

and modernization. The townspeople are attempting to revitalize and restore their prosperous culture, but their endeavors are not proving successful.

This article offers a foundational overview of the complex dynamics surrounding cultural identities, migration patterns, and heritage preservation in Dolakha City, Nepal. As a historical site that has endured significant hardships, particularly following the devastating earthquakes of 2015, Dolakha presents a unique case study for exploring how cultural identities evolve and adapt in response to migration and external pressures. Through a comprehensive analysis of these themes, this work aims to shed light on the multifaceted experiences of communities residing in this city while highlighting the rich tapestry of cultural heritage that persists amid change.

The subsequent chapters will unpack the historical events that have shaped Dolakha's cultural landscape. Key to this exploration is understanding how the aftermath of disasters, such as the earthquake that caused widespread damage in Dolakha, destroying 90% of buildings (Joshi & Shrestha, 2023), has influenced migration patterns and cultural identity formation. This investigation will lead to

---

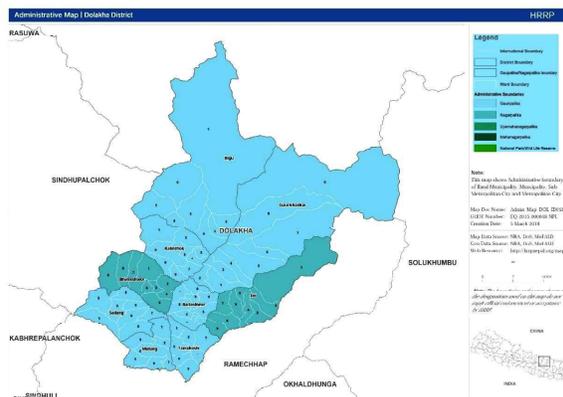
1. Researcher at the Culture and Archaeology Research Center; ORCID: 0009-0001-5848-7806; Email: ashrukiran@gmail.com

a detailed discussion on the cohabitation and manifestation of various cultural identities in contemporary Dolakha, illustrating how historical narratives intersect with current situations.

In addition, this study aims to contribute to the identification of core issues in this area and the development of solutions to address those problems. Despite the myriad challenges they encounter, Dolakha's inhabitants have demonstrated remarkable resilience in tradition. Despite several studies on Dolakha's culture and heritage, there is a lack of research on the reasons for migration and its effect on the culture and heritage. This study aims to inspire the community to embrace their own culture through sustainable development in this area.

### Study Site Location and Context

Dolakha is one of the remote districts located on the northeast side of the Kathmandu Valley, the capital of Nepal. Situated at latitude 27°47'37.68" North and longitude 86°11'48" East and 1,660 meters above sea level, the Dolakha district has a total of 9 local bodies, comprising two municipalities and seven rural municipalities. Historic Dolakha City is situated in Ward 2 of Bhimeshwor Municipality.



**Figure 1.** Geographical location of the Dolakha district. (Source: Map source: NRA, DoS, MoFALD NRA, DoS, MoFALD)

According to the 2021 census, Bhimeshwor Municipality has a total population of 34,712, comprising 48 percent males and 52 percent females. There are 10,164 households in Bhimeshwor Municipality. The core area of Dolakha city is located in Ward 2 of Bhimeshwor Municipality. This ward has a total population of 3802, comprising 1,800 males and 2002 females, as per the 2021 census. Approximately 29.7 percent of the female population in this ward falls within the 15- to 55-year age group, while 70 percent of the residents are either over 55 or under 15 years old.

Similarly, 25.4 percent of males in the total ward population belong to the 15 -55 age group, according to the 2021 census. There are 1,342 households belonging to

extended families in this ward, which accounts for 35.3% of the total households. Additionally, 2460 families are nuclear. As per the census, 705 houses in Bhimeshwor-2 out of 1183 are made of stone and bricks and joined by concrete, while 378 houses are joined by mud. Out of the total 34,712 migrations based on birth in the municipality, 24,535 people migrated within Bhimeshwor Municipality, with many moving to the district headquarters, Charikot.

## 2. Materials and Methods

### Data Collection

A mixed-methods approach was used, combining quantitative and qualitative data for comprehensive analysis. This was chosen due to the complex and multifaceted nature of the topics, benefiting from the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative approaches (Small, 2011). Population and migration data were collected by the National Census from the National Statistics Office of Nepal, with additional data gathered from local government sources. Sample surveys were also employed, both as qualitative and quantitative tools. A random sampling method was applied for this research. Qualitative data were collected through participatory observations and semi-structured interviews with locals, authorities, civil society organizations, and key community members. These insights were crucial for understanding the relationship between land management, cultural identity, and the implementation of local policies. Primary data were gathered through interviews with residents, community leaders, and surveys on the impact of migration.

### Qualitative Data:

The qualitative data for this research were collected through various methods.

**Interviews:** In-depth interviews were conducted with individuals, including migrants, community leaders, and heritage experts, to gather detailed narratives and insights into their experiences and perspectives. The interviewee was selected based on relevance to the topic, diversity of perspectives, ability to articulate, and availability and willingness.

**Key Informant Interview:** Discussions were held with stakeholders, such as immigrants, community members, and local authorities, to explore shared experiences, challenges, and opportunities related to Migration, modernization, and heritage.

**Ethnography:** Short-term observation and participation in communities were employed to gain an understanding of their cultural practices, social dynamics, and attitudes towards migration, modernization, and heritage preservation, as evidenced by the ethnographic survey data collected from participation in 10 different festivals in Dolakha.

**Document Analysis:** Existing documents, including official records, policy papers, and media reports, were examined to analyze trends, patterns, and narratives surrounding migration, modernization, and heritage.

#### Quantitative Data:

Quantitative data were gathered from the following sources:

**Surveys:** Structured questionnaires were administered to a small sample of respondents to gather numerical data on migration and its impact on culture and heritage. This research involved 20 respondents who migrated to Kathmandu from Dolakha. This figure represents approximately 10 percent of the total migration after the 2015 earthquake (Pradhan, 2016).

**Statistical Analysis:** Data from surveys, databases, and census records were analyzed to identify patterns, correlations, and trends in migration flows, economic modernization, and heritage preservation efforts.

#### Data analysis

This research focuses on the thematic analysis of qualitative data and statistical methods for quantitative analysis. Different methods were used for data analysis. Content analysis examined how migration, modernization, and heritage were discussed, focusing on questions such as the effects of modernization and migration on culture and heritage, and whether migration and modernization were seen as disruptors or preservers of heritage.

Thematic analysis focused on key themes like 'loss of tradition,' 'cultural erosion,' or 'heritage decay.' A comparative analysis examined the two distinct phases of heritage and tradition in Dolakha over the past decade, comparing traditional and modern aspects, as well as the perspectives of migrants and locals. Sociocultural analysis was employed to explore how identities, traditions, and values shifted due to migration or modernization. Data triangulation was carried out to validate the results by cross-referencing geospatial analysis with qualitative data from interviews, participatory observations, and municipal development plans.

### 3. Results

#### Migration Scenario of Dolakha City

The migration trend in Dolakha dates back to the pre-Malla dynasty, with an increase in out-migration following the unification of Nepal. There were 700 households in the post-Malla era. A fortified wall surrounded the core habitation of the Dolakha Kingdom, and they were known as the 700 Newar under the fortified wall of Dolakha (Bajracharya & Shrestha, 2002).

According to the 2021 National Census, 56 districts (16 from the Mountain, 33 from the Hill, and seven from the Tarai regions) experienced net out-migration, including

Dolakha. This city has been significantly impacted by migration trends, with over 200 households permanently leaving after the 2015 earthquake (Pradhan, 2016). Now, historic Dolakha is located in Ward No. 2 of Bhimeshwor Municipality.

The population profile of Bhimeshwor municipality, particularly Ward No. 2 (the historical city of Dolakha), has undergone significant changes from the 2011 to the 2021 census. Noteworthy was the realization that disparities existed between official data and on-the-ground realities, particularly in terms of numbers, reflecting concerns related to local-level data representation and accuracy. Following the 2015 disaster, nearly three-quarters of the locals relocated to Kathmandu and other cities, seeking better opportunities, including employment and education (Shrestha, personal interview, 2023). Hence, the core area demonstrates physical transformation but not its old population base.

According to the 2078 household survey, Bhimeshwor Municipality covered a total of 10,164 households with 1,183 households and their population in Ward No. 2. In comparison with this, the 2011 census covered 6,076 households and a population of 22,537 for the entire municipality with 476 households and 1,615 people in Ward No. 2. This data indicates a near three times increase in households and more than two times increase in population over the decade (CBS, 2011; CBS, 2021).

Nevertheless, the exhibited growth in households does not validate past population trends based on previous data. The 2011 municipal survey counted the entire population of Dolakha city as 5,286, compared to 5,645 in 1988, indicating a negative growth rate (USAID/NSET, 2016). Out of this population, the Newar population consisted of 2,368 individuals, accounting for 44.8% of the total population. The area consisted of 338 households with a mean of 7 members per household. Furthermore, the 2011 municipal survey estimated 1,124 households in the Dolakha area, representing the reconstruction efforts following the earthquake, but overlooked the ongoing depopulation patterns (USAID/NSET, 2016).

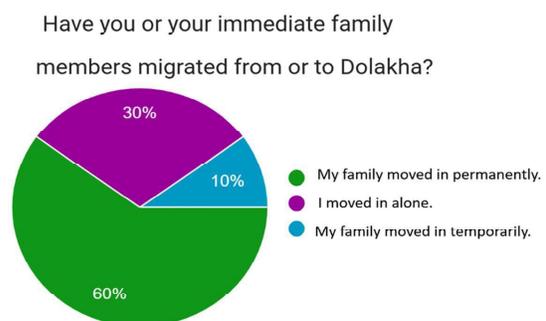


Figure 2.: Migration Scenario in Dolakha.

At the local level, an estimated 215 of the 297 families registered on cadastral maps have migrated, predominantly to Kathmandu and indirectly to other districts and abroad (Shrestha, personal interview, 2023). The youth, particularly, are drawn towards urban cities like Kathmandu for employment opportunities. Despite this out-migration, the Dolakha diaspora is endowed with rich social networks and maintains various active civic associations dedicated to the development of Dolakha (Joshi & Shrestha, 2017).

The area consisted of 338 households with a mean of seven members per household. Furthermore, the 2011 municipal survey estimated 1,124 households in the Dolakha area, representing the reconstruction efforts following the earthquake, but overlooked the ongoing depopulation patterns (USAID/NSET, 2016). At the local level, an estimated 215 out of the 297 families registered on cadastral maps have migrated, predominantly to Kathmandu and indirectly to other districts and abroad (Shrestha, personal interview, 2023). The youth, particularly, are drawn towards urban cities like Kathmandu for employment opportunities. Despite this out-migration, the Dolakha diaspora is endowed with rich social networks and maintains various active civic associations dedicated to the development of Dolakha (Joshi & Shrestha, 2017).

Census 2021 figures also support the significant out-migration trends in the Dolakha district. It has registered a lifetime net migration rate of -43.7%, whereas the net migration percentage to the native-born population was -7.8% (CBS, 2021). Net Migration, as defined by the World Bank, refers to the net balance between the number of immigrants and the number of emigrants within the same timeframe, encompassing both citizens and non-citizens (World Bank, 2021).

During the 2021 census, 86,596 individuals from Dolakha migrated to other districts, and 11,361 migrated to Dolakha, resulting in a net migration of -75,235 (CBS, 2021). The data also show that 9,100 individuals from Dolakha lived abroad, with the Middle East being the primary destination for 3,236 residents, followed by India, which accommodated 2,033 individuals (CBS, 2021). These trends indicate the continued trend of out-migration from Dolakha, driven, to a significant degree, by economic factors (Dhakal, 2022).

### The effects of migrations in Dolakha

The 2021 National Census reveals several reasons for the current migration in Nepal. A dependent family member is the main reason for current migration, accounting for 23.6 percent of the total migrated population. Other reasons for current migration are work/job (23.5%), trade/business (3.4%), study/training (13.1%), marriage (22.5%), natural disaster (0.8%), agriculture (1.6%),

returnee (2.7%) and other (8.0%). By sex, 37.6 percent of males who migrated are due to work or job, and 39.8 percent of females are due to marriage (CBS, 2021).

What was the primary reason for migration? (If Yes)

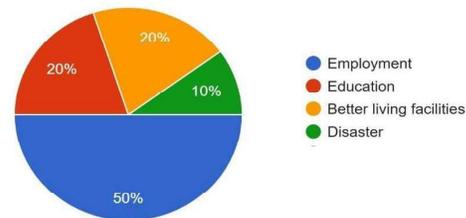


Fig 3. : Reason for migration

In migration, both voluntary and forced migrations have had a profound impact on Dolakha's cultural landscape. A rapid survey revealed that migrants are not actively participating in their festivals and celebrations. In a random sample of 20 Dolakha-to-Kathmandu migrants, 60% migrated with their families. Among these, 50% migrated for employment, 20% for education, 20% for better facilities, and 10% due to natural calamities. The survey also showed that 60% of the people never visit Dolakha during festivals, but 50% of them have a desire to return if the economic situation improves. Migration is considered a force to shape traditional heritage and culture by 90% of the respondents, while 80% believe that modernization undermines heritage preservation. The majority of migrants provided reasons for their migration, which were primarily due to economic opportunities or the 2015 earthquake. Another unpublished survey conducted among local people reveals that nearly 70% of respondents migrated from Dolakha in search of better job opportunities.

Due to migration, youth participation in festivals related to the Tripurasundari Temple and others in Dolakha is very low. Public participation in bhajans and kirtans related to the temple is decreasing. Due to the lack of young people, the number of individuals learning traditional skills is very low (Achaju, Personal interview, 2025).

Dolakha is considered the main venue of the Jatra festival. The Jatra festival of Dolakha is funded with resources from the state, semi-state, and local sources. There were original instruments and melodies here. Different types of tunes for the birth and death of people have disappeared now. The locals are now attempting to revive some of these instruments and melodies, known as Shivabhakti.

### Traditions and culture of Dolakha

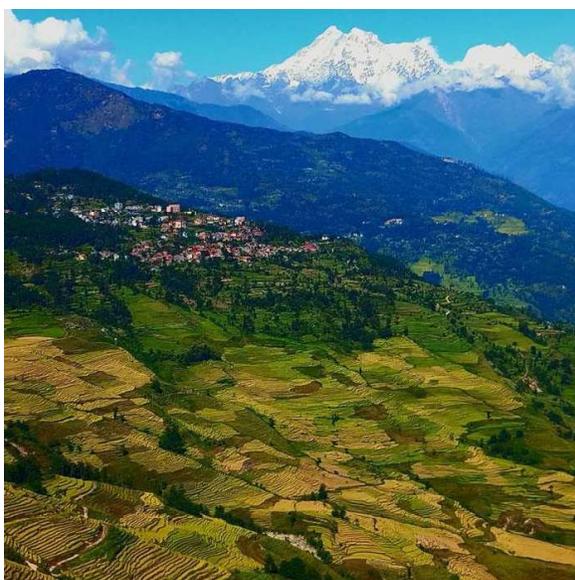
Historically, Dolakha was established in 1534 BS (approximately 1479 AD), when Jay Indra Singh was the ruler of Dolakha. During the rule of Jay Indra Singh, Dolakha established its identity and initiated various traditions. Dolakha was an economically and culturally

prosperous kingdom at that time (Bajracharya & Shrestha, 2002). Historical records indicate that Dolakha gained prominence as a transit location between Tibet and India during the Lichhavi period (early 7th century), and Kuti in Tibet served as a route to the Kathmandu Valley and India (LDT, 2020).

Under the rule of Jay Indra Singh and his successors, Dolakha developed unique art, craftsmanship, and traditions that distinguish Dolakha from the contemporary Kathmandu Valley. Historians believe that in 1534 B.C., King Jaya Indra Singh of Dolakha introduced Nepal's first silver coins to promote trade with Tibet, symbolizing the wealth of Dolakha at the time. Several successes were achieved in various areas during the post-Malla period. Here are some historical achievements of Dolakha, as well as its current trends.

### Agriculture and Land System

Agriculture and land systems formed the backbone of the Dolakha Kingdom until the recent past. Dolakha cultivated and exported major grains and fruits, including rice, millet, sorghum, wheat, garlic, onions, bananas, lemons, and oranges (Bajracharya & Shrestha, 2002). A very high proportion of the population pursued agriculture and animal husbandry as their primary occupation, and labor, foreign employment, and service as other major occupations. There were hardly any houses involved in business and industry. The land cover classification of the municipality indicates that 55.51% of the area is forested, 37.18% is agricultural land, and 0.87% comprises water bodies. Now, more than half of the inhabitants have left agriculture, and almost all farmers depend on traditional farming systems (Shrestha, personal interview, 2025).



**Photo 1:** Cultivated land near Dolakha city (Photo source: Banpijhyal online)

### Animal Husbandry

In the Malla period, horses, cows, buffalo, sheep, and goats were the primary livestock. Both Nepal and India highly sought after horses, and Nepal used to export advanced breeds to India. Jagajjaya Malla also granted land to breed horses in 1784 BS, which underscores the importance of horses. Documents from Jagajjaya Malla's time indicate that a horse was priced between 50 and 95 rupees, while an enslaved person cost between 15 and 16 rupees (Bajracharya & Shrestha, 2002). Now, almost all people are involved in animal husbandry for personal purposes, rather than for business (Shrestha, personal interview, 2025).

### Textile Business and Costumes

Changa and Panga are unique local cultures of Dolakha, and a letter written in BS 1873 was found in the Kathmandu Valley praising Dolakha's cloth. Kochin, the unique cloth of Dolakha, was exported to Kathmandu. The Municipal Transport Master Plan identified 405 local business units in the municipality, including agricultural processing industries, agrovet, livestock farms, hotels, restaurants, and other retail establishments; however, it did not include textile businesses (Bhimeswor Municipality, 2024). Jama, Pagari, Changa, and Panga were customary dresses of Dolakha in the past, but none of them are practiced now. Angrakha was used by men with a Patuka and a pearl necklace. Due to modernization, people have overlooked their traditional dresses and begun to wear clothing typical of other cultures (Pradhan, personal interview, 2025).

### Metalware-making Business

Dolakha was renowned for copper and bronze ware in the medieval period, with a metalware industry in the past. Sculpture and jewelry-making were also prevalent in Dolakha. Crafts and related trade workers comprised 6% of the population, but the metalware-making business no longer exists (Bajracharya & Shrestha, 2002).

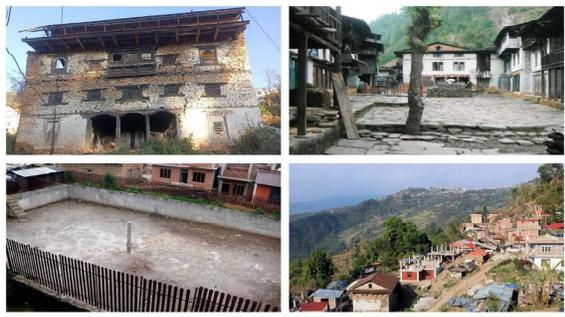
### Mining Industry

Prior to the past century, several mines in Dolakha yielded copper, iron, lead, and other minerals, as documented in a letter dated 1873 BS. A few small paper industry arrangements were also operational within the area. The Department of Survey discovered 0.041 square kilometers of mines and minerals, representing only 0.03% of the total land area (census, 2021).

### Art and Architecture

Nine stair palaces are mentioned in the historical accounts in Dolakha, which are no longer available (Bajracharya & Shrestha, 2002). Dolakha was surrounded by a walled enclosure, serving as a forest fort, until the year 1932 BS, which was instructed to be preserved by the Rana ruler

(Pradhan, 2016). Traditional buildings in Dolakha, Nepal, often feature thick stone walls, ground-floor kitchens, upper-story bedrooms, and attics for storage.



**Photo 2:** Traditional architecture in the above photos and the modernization effect on architecture below. (Photo source: self, nagariknews.nagariknetwork.com & Onlinekhabar.com)

These homes are typically designed with spacious courtyards, verandas, and sheds for livestock. The architecture reflects a potent blend of geography and culture, utilizing local materials such as stone and wood to harmonize with the rugged landscape. Innovations, including earthquake-resistant designs, are also incorporated. Now, traditional architecture can rarely be found in Dolakha city. Approximately more than two-thirds of earthquake victims have built their own modern houses and are now living in Kathmandu and Charikot (Pradhan, personal interview, 2025).

## Culture and Heritage

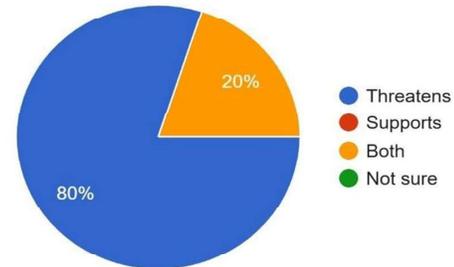
Dolakha had an unusual culture in which work responsibilities were assigned based on caste, and there was no nuclear family system. Families cohabited under the same kitchen until the death of the parents, after which the sons established separate kitchens inside the same building. An upper Dokshe Tol house had 52 separate kitchens, families, seven main gates, and a four-storey building (Pradhan, 2016). Currently, extended families are rarely found there (Achaju, personal interview, 2025).

## Modernization's effect on traditions

Modernization theory describes development as a uniform process of evolution that all societies undergo, progressing from agricultural, rural, and traditional societies to postindustrial, urban, and modern societies (Bradshaw, 1987; Escobar, 1995; Chirot & Hall, 1982; Shrum, 2000). In essence, once societies begin modernization, they go through predetermined stages of development: traditional economies, transition to takeoff, takeoff proper, drive to maturity, age of high consumption, and postindustrial society (Chirot & Hall, 1982, p. 82). Modernization theory emphasizes internal forces and sources of socioeconomic progress, including formal education, market-based economies, and democratic and secular political systems. While modernization theory does not

rule out the influence of external forces and origins of social change and economic development, it attributes less weight to foreign influences (Shrum, 2000; Jenkins & Scanlan, 2001).

Do you think modernization threatens or supports the preservation of heritage?



**Figure 4.** Modernization threatens or supports

Impacts of modernization on traditions, as per modernization theory, vary. Tradition in traditional societies was characterized by collectivism, fatalism, and a strong sense of tradition. However, with the impact of modernization, the term "culture" began shifting towards individualism, rationalism, and innovation. This study examines the impact of modernization on the heritage and culture of Dolakha, drawing on relevant theoretical frameworks. The family structure in Dolakha has shifted from patriarchal and extended families to individualistic and nuclear families due to modernization. Similarly, the economy, power, and education also altered with modernization.

The rich cultural heritage of Dolakha is gradually diminishing due to modernization. The intangible as well as the tangible heritage and culture of Dolakha are being affected. For instance, the custom of multi-family systems in Dolakha is decreasing due to modernization. Previously, with Dolakha's unique style of architecture, multiple families used to inhabit a single roof. However, now people reside in small, separate houses, reflecting the impact of modernization on such practices.

After the 2015 earthquake, nearly all the inhabitants of Dolakha city adopted new concrete structures as their residential area (Shrestha, personal interview, 2025). Dolakha's traditional architecture has become extremely rare since 2015. The food culture, customs, and local material culture are also significantly impacted by modernization. Local traditional crafts and skills in Dolakha, such as the local garment industry, pottery production, and leaf-making, are in decline (Pradhan, personal interview, 2025).

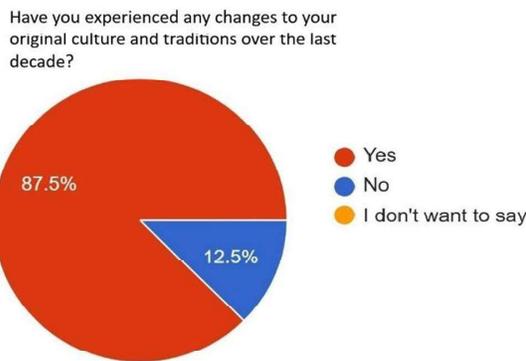


Fig 5: Changing Scenario of Migrant People's Culture.

Dolakha also possessed an architecture and material culture of its own, distinct from Kathmandu. The artistic Newa houses, made of local stone with slate and thatched roofs, are now all but extinct, and the earthquake damaged the few remaining ones. Concrete has replaced traditional ponds and other structures. Dressing in traditional fashion has nearly disappeared, and traditional practices are being overpowered by modern dress. Jatra festivals, previously closed to women, now include women, illustrating the gradual dismantling of traditional food cultures (Pradhan, 2016).

#### 4. Discussion

There have been dramatic shifts in the physical and socio-cultural context of Dolakha heritage. There have been shifts in indigenous architecture, where out-migration has affected traditional building skills and techniques due to the absence of young men. Due to the lack of proper regulation, the revival of traditional structures following the 2015 earthquake has led to the widespread use of cement and concrete, altering the village's appearance and potentially compromising or destroying pre-existing structures.

Would you like to return to Dolakha if it becomes economically vibrant?

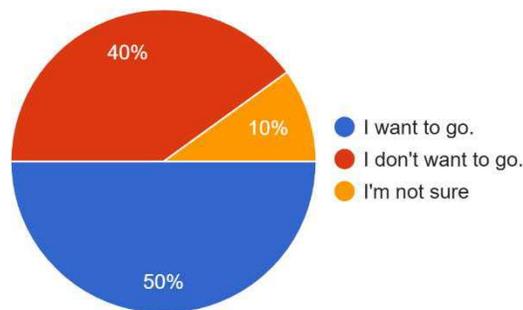


Figure 6. Migrants wanting to return to native place

It has had a direct impact on agriculture and land use, with an exodus reducing the agricultural labor force, potentially leading to the abandonment of some terraced plots, alterations in cropping patterns, and the loss of traditional knowledge and practices. Still, locals also import food from other parts of Dolakha (Pradhan, 2016).

Customary knowledge and skills erosion is evident. There were different work divisions for different casts. This system has been broken down. The Dwalkha Newari language has been pushed into a danger zone due to the influence of Nepali and the Newari language of the Kathmandu Valley, thereby affecting oral traditions and cultural knowledge. Altered social structures and roles are observed, where male out-migration reshapes traditional gender roles and responsibilities, potentially affecting the transmission of gender-specific cultural practices and knowledge. The influence of new cultural elements from home-coming migrants has led to the integration of new ideas, technologies, foods, and social customs into local culture, resulting in hybridization and the creation of traditions.

The disintegration of community ties is an issue, as migration breaks up families and communities, potentially disrupting customary social networks, communal activities, and the collective preservation of cultural heritage. There are also attempts at cultural conservation; the women in Dolakha initiate efforts to conserve eroding practices.

#### The role of modernization in enhancing or diluting local traditions

There are pros and cons of modernization on the Dolakha culture and heritage. The positive effects of modernization on Dolakha's heritage include growing visibility and pride. Modern media and communication is also spreading the culture worldwide. Absentee communities are participating in the Jatras and other festivals via the Internet. Some even transfer money for conducting the rituals (Self survey, 2025). Another advantage is the development of infrastructure. Dolakha is no longer an isolated location, as it is accessible within almost 6 hours from Kathmandu. It is now connected by road, electricity, communication, and other infrastructural developments. The issue is how to preserve the local culture and traditions.

Modernization also creates economic incentives, particularly in tourism and cultural industries. This creates numerous opportunities for the locals, but Dolakha must prioritize preserving its local culture and heritage as a tourist attraction. Local costumes and food can be reinstated to show a unique identity (Shrestha, personal interview, 2025).

The adverse effects of modernization on Dolakha heritage are profound. The city is losing valuable cultural rituals.

The traditional costumes, language, art, architecture, and local handicrafts are all under threat of extinction due to urbanization and modernization. Even the traditional food and beverages are being substituted by imported ones, rendering them obsolete.

## 5. Conclusion

The migration and modernization pathway of the Dolakha cultural town stems from a combination of historical legacies, economic issues, and natural disasters, most notably the 2015 earthquake, which has dramatically altered its demographic, cultural, and socio-economic profiles. Traditionally, a once-flourishing and strategically important kingdom during the Malla and pre-Malla periods, Dolakha has faced long-term depopulation trends, including the out-migration of its indigenous Newar people and youth seeking better employment and educational opportunities in urban centers and abroad.

Future research should focus on longitudinal studies to evaluate ongoing changes in the cultural landscape of Dolakha and analyze the effects of migration in the surrounding areas, thus deepening our understanding of regional dynamics. Areas for further study in Dolakha may include migration drivers and patterns, diaspora models for engagement, economic renewal at the local level, and post-disaster urban planning. Although the census data from 2011 to 2021 indicate a statistical increase in household population, this does not reflect sustainable population growth. Instead, it results primarily from reconstruction activities and administrative expansions, rather than actual demographic recovery. The process of depopulation is further exacerbated by a net migration rate of -43.7%, positioning Dolakha as one of the most severely affected districts in Nepal in terms of migration.

Despite these challenges, Dolakha continues to uphold a rich cultural heritage in metalwork, art, trade, and architecture. However, most of its traditional economic activities, such as metal production, textile manufacturing, cattle raising, and agriculture, have either been marginalized or overlooked. Even traditional cultural attire and practices in Dolakha are disappearing due to modernization and urbanization. Nonetheless, the Dolakha diaspora remains very active and contributes to the cultural advancement and preservation of the city through various civic groups.

## References

- Abuov, A., Orazaliyev, B., & Raimkulova, A. (2020). The Islamic world in the context of modernization in the era of globalization: Dynamics and prospects. *Scientific Journal of Pedagogy and Economics*, (5), 275–280. Retrieved from <https://journals.nauka-nanrk.kz/bulletin-science/article/view/903>
- Achaju, B. (2025, February 1). Interview by S. Aryal.
- Bah, N., & Patureau, L. (2020). Migration, cultural change, and regional identity (CEPII Working Paper No. 2020-10). *Centre d'Études Prospectives et d'Informations Internationales*. [https://www.cepii.fr/PDF\\_PUB/wp/2020/wp2020-10.pdf](https://www.cepii.fr/PDF_PUB/wp/2020/wp2020-10.pdf)
- Bajracharya, D., & Shrestha, T. B. (2002). Dolakhāko aitiḥāsika rūprekhā [Historical outline of Dolakha]. *Jilla Vikāsa Samiti* (in association with Nepal and Asian Research Centre, Tribhuvan University)
- Bhimeshwar Municipality. (2024). Municipal Transport Master Plan (MTMP). *Bhimeshwar Municipality, Government of Nepal*. Retrieved from <https://www.bhimeshwormun.gov.np/sites/bhimeshwormun.gov.np/files/documents/MTMP%20Bhimeshwar%20Mun..pdf>
- Bradshaw, Y. (1987). Urbanization and development: A global study of modernization, urban bias, and economic dependency. *American Sociological Review*, 52, 224–239.
- CBS. (2011). National Population and Housing Census 2011 (Village Development Committee/Municipality). *Central Bureau of Statistics, Government of Nepal*.
- CBS. (2021). National Population and Housing Census 2021. *Central Bureau of Statistics, Government of Nepal*.
- Central Bureau of Statistics. (2021). Dolakha: Ward level population and housing data (Census of Nepal 2021). [https://docs.censusnepal.cbs.gov.np/Documents/08e6cf0c-1b05-4d3b-8043-f98a6ac2c656\\_\\_22Dolakha\\_WardLevel.pdf](https://docs.censusnepal.cbs.gov.np/Documents/08e6cf0c-1b05-4d3b-8043-f98a6ac2c656__22Dolakha_WardLevel.pdf)
- Chirot, D., & Hall, T. (1982). *World-system theory. Annual Review of Sociology*, 8, 81–106.
- Dhakal, S. (2022). Migration trends in Nepal: *Causes and consequences*. Migration Studies Nepal.
- Eisenbruch, M. (1990). The Cultural Bereavement Interview: A new clinical research approach for refugees. *Psychiatric Clinics of North America*, 13, 715–735. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0193953X18303459>
- Escobar, A. (1995). *Encountering development: The making and unmaking of the Third World*. Princeton University Press.
- Glogowska, M. (2011). Paradigms, pragmatism, and possibilities: Mixed-methods research in speech and language therapy. *International Journal of Language & Communication Disorders*, 46(3), 251–260. <https://doi.org/10.3109/13682822.2010.507614>
- Harbor, L. C., & Hunt, C. A. (2021). Indigenous tourism and cultural justice in a Tz'utujil Maya community, Guatemala. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 29(2-3), 214–233. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09669582.2020.1770771>

- Jenkins, J. C., & Scanlan, S. J. (2001). Food security in less developed countries, 1970–1990. *American Sociological Review*, 66, 718–744.
- Joshi, M., & Shrestha, B. (2017). Diaspora, development, and identity: The Dolakha experience. *Dolakha Civic Network*.
- Joshi, R. (2023). Revitalizing the ancient city of Dolakha [ResearchGate]. [https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Rajendra-Joshi-12/publication/370833065\\_REVITALIZING\\_ANCIENT\\_CITY\\_DOLAKHA/links/6464ec7a9533894cac77181f/REVITALIZING-ANCIENT-CITY-DOLAKHA.pdf](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Rajendra-Joshi-12/publication/370833065_REVITALIZING_ANCIENT_CITY_DOLAKHA/links/6464ec7a9533894cac77181f/REVITALIZING-ANCIENT-CITY-DOLAKHA.pdf)
- Joshi, R. K., & Shrestha, S. K. (2017, April 18–20). Revitalizing ancient city Dolakha (IFEE Paper No. 48). *In Proceedings of the Joint 8th IFEE2017 and 3rd TSDIC2017*, Sharjah, United Arab Emirates. Retrieved from [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/370833065\\_REVITALIZING\\_ANCIENT\\_CITY\\_DOLAKHA](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/370833065_REVITALIZING_ANCIENT_CITY_DOLAKHA)
- Lee, Everett S. “*A Theory of Migration*.” *Demography*, vol. 3, no. 1, 1966, pp. 47–57. JSTOR, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2060063>
- Lumbini Development Trust. (2020). Buddhist circuits of Nepal: As a premier pilgrimage, spiritual and cultural tourism product. *Government of Nepal, Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation*. [https://lumbinidevtrust.gov.np/upload\\_file/files/post/1738915092\\_1822163869\\_1738912790\\_1949469077\\_Buddhist%20Circuits%20of%20Nepal%201.pdf](https://lumbinidevtrust.gov.np/upload_file/files/post/1738915092_1822163869_1738912790_1949469077_Buddhist%20Circuits%20of%20Nepal%201.pdf)
- National Statistics Office – Nepal. (2023). National Population and Housing Census 2021: Internal Migration in Nepal (Thematic Report V). *Government of Nepal*. [https://giwmscdnone.gov.np/media/pdf\\_upload/V-Internal%20Migration%20in%20Nepal-Final%20Web%20Version\\_ljubpit.pdf](https://giwmscdnone.gov.np/media/pdf_upload/V-Internal%20Migration%20in%20Nepal-Final%20Web%20Version_ljubpit.pdf)
- Paradies, Y. (2020). Unsettling truths: Modernity, (de-)coloniality and Indigenous futures. *Postcolonial Studies*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13688790.2020.1809069>
- Pradhan, S. (2025, February 2). Interview by S. Aryal.
- Pradhan, Y. K. (2016). *Cultural heritage of Dolakha* (2nd ed.). Dolakha, Nepal: Harati Press.
- Shrum, W. (2000). Science and story in development: The emergence of nongovernmental organizations in agricultural research. *Social Studies of Science*, 30, 1–?.
- Shivabhakti, B. (2025, February 22). Interview by S. Aryal.
- Shrestha, A. (2025, February 1). Interview by S. Aryal.
- Shrestha, B. (2023). Personal interview, age 69, Bhimeshwor Municipality, Dolakha.
- Shrestha, B. L. (2025, February 11). Interview by S. Aryal.
- Shrestha, J. (2025, February 12). Interview by S. Aryal.
- Shrestha, M. (2025, February 11). Interview by S. Aryal.
- Shrestha, R. (2025, February 4). Interview by S. Aryal.
- Shrestha, S. K. (2025, January 31). Interview by S. Aryal.
- Shrestha, S. (2025, February 22). Interview by S. Aryal.
- Shrankarman, S. (2025, February 22). Interview by S. Aryal.
- USAID/NSET. (2016a). Household survey of Bhimeshwor Municipality: Post-earthquake reconstruction and migration analysis. National Society for Earthquake Technology–Nepal.
- USAID/NSET. (2016b). Reconstruction and redevelopment of Dolakha. National Society for Earthquake Technology–Nepal.
- Wisdom, J., & Creswell, J. W. (2013). Mixed methods: Integrating quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis while studying patient-centered medical home models. *Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality*.
- World Bank. (2021). World Development Indicators: Glossary. <https://databank.worldbank.org>