

## **Social Values as the Soul of Progress: Understanding the Synergetic Impact on Economic Development of Jumla**

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### **Abstract**

*Both economic and non-economic elements influence economic development, and social values are a major determinant of economic behavior and results. Through semi-structured interviews and focus groups, this study investigates the connection between social values and economic development in rural Nepal, providing qualitative insights into the ways in which social and cultural factors impact local economies. The results show that gender roles, labor involvement, and financial decisions are significantly influenced by traditional beliefs, customs, and rituals in homes and communities. Cultural customs like marriage ceremonies, religious rites, and neighborhood gatherings have a big impact on how much money is spent and saved, which shapes the economy as a whole. Women are frequently restricted to informal unpaid labor, which limits their economic empowerment. Gender-based norms also have an impact on involvement in productive employment. On the other hand, social values also foster community welfare, solidarity, and collaboration, all of which support sustainable local growth. The study emphasizes that it is impossible to comprehend or accomplish economic growth in rural Nepal without taking into account its cultural context. To achieve equitable and sustainable growth, development programs must acknowledge and incorporate cultural and social values. Depending on their customs, values, and social systems, different cultures have varying degrees of influence. The study's overall goal is to shed light on how social norms and cultural ideas influence economic life by directing productivity, resource allocation, and the larger process of societal advancement.*

**Keywords:** Cultural, Economic Development, Income, Social Values, Traditional

### **Introduction**

Do cultural issues affect economic progress? If so, is it feasible to measure them and contrast their effects with those of typical economic factors like savings and investment? In this article, the explanatory power of the traditional endogenous growth model is contrasted

with that of two cultural variables that reflect motivational factors: achievement motivation and post-materialist ideals. We believe that economic and cultural factors are complementary therefore it's not a decision between the two. This perspective is backed by actual data, and we use newly developed econometric techniques to assess the relative merits of these many theories.

Cultural variables alone cannot account for all of the variation in economic growth rates across nations. Every economy experiences significant fluctuations in growth rates from year to year due to short-term causes like unforeseen occurrences that affect output technological shocks. These could not be linked to cultural influences because they change gradually. A society's political and economic structures also play a role. For example, despite having a similar culture prior to 1945, South Korea has fared much better economically than North Korea.

The word "economic development" is defined from a variety of angles. In the 20th century, economists thought that economic progress was synonymous with economic growth. However, sociologists see it as a modernization and transformation process (David, 1988). Karl Seidman (2005) defines economic development as the process of producing and employing social, financial, human, and physical resources to improve a community's or region's overall quality of life and economic well-being. Therefore, it can be argued that economic progress involves qualitative aspects and is a broader term. Economic development entails both economic expansion and steady improvements in a number of critical factors that affect people's quality of life, including health, education, and other areas.

Economic development encompasses quality changes in the financial, social, and physical facets of society as well as quantitative changes in its capital (Burt, 2005) and (Cypher, 2014). Therefore, it can be said that a number of factors contribute to economic progress. Both economic and non-economic factors are among these causes. In contrast to non-economic variables like societal values and human psychology, economic factors include things like GDP and per capita income. Social values are perhaps the most obscure of all the elements affecting economic progress. Social values and the theoretical understanding of their impact on economic development are still hotly debated topics. Various social ideals never function in isolation from one another, according to (Best, 2001). Because of this, economists have hardly ever included social values as a variable in their research. Today's economists,

however, are becoming more and more aware of the significance of non-economic factors like social values.

Social capital is a quality of human relationships and is occasionally even referred to as an individual's asset (Florida, 2002). Social values can be readily included into economics since the study of economics is primarily concerned with human economic behavior. Social values should be examined in the line determinants of economic growth since, despite being practiced by individuals, they are more frequently viewed as a characteristic of societies. Social values play a role in explaining economic development to a certain degree.

Thus, the relationship between a society's social ideals and economic progress is the main focus of this article. It is assumed that social values which are cultural reflections and influence people's behavior have a significant impact on economic development. I wrote a discussion paper for this study that focused on the connection between social values and economic progress. Five respondents were purposefully chosen by the researcher based on his own persuasiveness, and a semi-structured interview, discourse, and dialogue on the subject were done. The information gathered from the interview was examined and interpreted.

### **Methodology**

The qualitative exploratory research approach used in this study allowed for flexibility in examining participants' life experiences, perceptions, and difficulties. The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between social ideals and societal economic development. Using a grounded theory technique, a semi-structured interview with the respondents is conducted in order to generate a discussion report. All of the residents in Sinja Valley, Jumla, make up the research's population. Five participants from the Sinja Valley who work in various occupations were purposefully chosen for the interview based on the convenience of the researchers. Dhanlal Budha, a government school teacher; Mun Bdr Rokaya, a local businessman and apple farmer; Sangita Kami, a staff nurse; Junmaya Rawat, a housewife; Jangabir Bhandari, a shepherd; Girga Budha, Dham; Dil Bahadur Budha, Hotel owner, are the individuals sampled. The semi-structured interview schedule provided in Annex 1 was used to interview each of the aforementioned respondents. Various guiding questions were included to interview questionnaires in accordance with the needs of the interview. Written transcriptions of the responses were gathered and compiled. Data was then triangulated and subjected to descriptive analysis.

### **Data and Interpretation**

The paper offers insightful information about how social values and economic growth interact in rural Nepal, emphasizing how gender roles, cultural customs, and traditional norms influence economic behavior and means of subsistence. Seven Sinja Valley respondents participated in semi-structured interviews for the study, which shows that cultural calendars, social expectations, and rituals all have an impact on economic activity in addition to money. This strategy emphasizes how crucial it is to include cultural sensitivity in development plans in order to guarantee context-sensitive and sustainable economic growth.

The study does, however, have some significant shortcomings. The findings applicability to larger groups is constrained by the extremely small and purposefully chosen sample size of five respondents. Even if the research is qualitative and detailed, it lacks quantitative metrics that would allow it to more accurately assess how social values affect the economy. Furthermore, the study ignores metropolitan areas or industries where cultural influence may vary in favor of concentrating mostly on rural lifestyles and traditional jobs. Despite this, the research's scope is important since it highlights the qualitative aspects of economic progress, particularly in traditional civilizations. It highlights how rituals, societal responsibilities, and gender conventions influence how people earn money, spend it, and invest it.

In terms of policy ramifications, the government could encourage culturally sensitive economic development plans, like offering financial literacy courses that take social norms into consideration, encouraging gender parity in the production of income, and fusing traditional farming methods with contemporary ones. Policies that support entrepreneurship and productivity while honoring cultural customs can improve rural livelihoods and spur economic expansion in general. In order to influence evidence-based policymaking and quantify the relative impact of social values on economic development, further research using mixed method approaches and larger, more diverse sample is needed.

### **Dhanlal Budha**

For the past 20 years, Mr. Dhanlal Budha has been employed as a dedicated secondary school teacher in a government school. He is 48 years old. He has gained both professional experience and a strong reputation throughout his entire community throughout this time. Because of their social status and apparent financial security, his family is well-liked and frequently looked up to. Mr. Budha's teaching career provides the majority of his income,

which he utilizes to pay for his family's daily necessities, his schooling, and his social responsibilities. Mr. Budha earns a living from small-scale farming in addition to his teaching salary. In addition to raising sheep and goats for food, he also owns apple orchards and other sources of income. Even though they come second to his work as a teacher, these agricultural pursuits are essential to supporting his family, especially when social or cultural costs are high. His income is further taxed since, as a well-respected member of the society, he is frequently expected to make large contributions during social gatherings, festivals, and cultural rituals.

Mr. Budha is also responsible for his children's education, and they are currently studying in Kathmandu and Surkhet. In addition to handling these financial obligations, he keeps the house in order and makes sure that everything goes as planned. In the community where he resides, it is customary for men to be the primary breadwinners and for women to largely serve as housewives, handling domestic matters. His income, spending, and social status are all greatly impacted by these social values, which include conventions, customs, and expectations. Mr. Budha has learnt to compromise and adapt as life goes on, even in the face of pressure and great expectations. He frequently considers how his family's lifestyle would have been different if he had permitted his wife to work from the start, defying accepted social mores. He still manages to juggle his work, farming, and family duties, though, exhibiting fortitude and dedication to his social and familial commitments.

#### **Mun Bahadur Rokaya**

Mr. Mun Bahadur Rokaya has been a local merchant and apple farmer for 52 years. His farm is his main source of income. The foundation of his income is his farm, where he employs five people to help him with everyday tasks like planting, caring for, and harvesting apple crops. Additionally, he has two children who are studying at Karnali Province's administrative and educational hub, Surkhet. Mr. Rokaya puts in a lot of effort each year, planting new trees, picking ripe fruits, and organizing and carrying out farm operations in accordance with seasonal cycles. His revenue is mostly reliant on the farm's excellent care and maintenance, as well as weather conditions, which can have a big impact on productivity. Mr. Rokaya has expanded the range of products he grows on his farm beyond apples. He grows young apple saplings to sell for extra cash in addition to producing apple juice, apple-based goods, seeds, and potatoes. In addition to optimizing the use of his land, this diversification stabilizes his income throughout the year. Even though he prioritizes

productivity, his agricultural methods are greatly influenced by social and cultural norms. If a woman in the family clan has given birth or someone has died, tasks are put off, work is avoided on full or off-moon days, and new tree planting is done on auspicious days. Good omens also accompany the sale of harvested items. According to him, these social customs often carry more weight than money or prestige, guiding the timing of farm activities and influencing annual earnings.

In Nepal's local economy, Mr. Rokaya is a prime example of the traits of a resilient and creative farmer. By combining traditional methods with business ventures, he not only increases his family's income but also boosts the local economy by creating jobs, trading, and value-added goods. His story demonstrates how farmers in Karnali manage cultural expectations and economic opportunities to maintain their livelihoods, highlighting the delicate balance between social norms, environmental considerations, and economic planning in rural farming.

### **Sangita Kami**

For the past four years, Sangita Kami, a 29-year veteran staff nurse, has been employed at the Karnali Swasthya Bigyan Pratisthan in Jumla. In addition to caring for her husband's parents, she and her husband, a government official, have a child. Since they are both employed by the government, they have strenuous work schedules that leave little time for leisure. They therefore depend on the grandparents to care for their child. The couple makes enough money together to support the family and maintain a decent lifestyle. Despite having a better salary than she does, Sangita notes that her husband's savings are far less than hers. She explains this by saying that spending patterns are influenced by societal norms and behaviors. Men are compelled to spend more impulsively in order to meet the expectations of their social circle because of the societal tendency of frequent trips, social gatherings, and time spent with friends.

Sangita, on the other hand, meticulously handles her work and home obligations. She saves almost all of her pay, goes to work with diligence, and handles household duties. She rarely participates in outings or social gatherings. According to Sangita, this discrepancy in income, spending, and saving behaviors has been brought about by the makeup of society and traditional standards for men's social behavior. This illustrates how social beliefs can influence financial habits even in wealthy households.

**Junmaya Rawat**

While her husband travels to India on a seasonal basis for work, Junmaya Rawat, a 38 year old housewife, handles her household, agricultural work, and livestock, including goats. During important times like planting and harvesting, her husband comes home, but he works overseas the rest of the year to support the family. By selling food items, hens, and goats at the local market, Junmaya also helps the family out financially. With intentions to send their kids to the town for further study, the family must carefully conserve money despite their united efforts to finance their education. Gyani, the family's 13-year-old child, has been sick from birth, and the treatment of him consumes a large amount of their income. With little success, they have sought medical attention in hospitals in India and Nepalgunj. As a result, under the direction of local wizards, they increasingly rely on witchcraft and traditional local traditions for therapy. They think that because of these methods, Gyani's health has become better over the past few years.

Additionally, as advised by the wizards, the family frequently offers sacrifices, such as chickens, cocks, and goats, to placate various deities for the child's welfare. The family's decisions, priorities, and day-to-day activities have been shaped by these ingrained social and cultural views, which go well beyond their financial circumstances. The intricate relationship between social beliefs and economic life is highlighted by Junmaya's household, which serves as an example of how traditional values, social conventions, and cultural practices continue to influence family management, financial decisions, and coping mechanisms in rural communities.

**Jangabir Bhandari**

The 47 yearold Jangabir Bhandari is a seasoned shepherd who has about 300 sheep. In order to guarantee sufficient grazing, he employs seasonal migration, relocating his flock from lower elevations in the winter to higher pastures in the summer. He has over ten years of experience in this field and has established a solid name in his community. His children, who are now graduating from university, have received a top-notch education thanks to his hard work and prudent cattle management. When Jangabir obtains a sizable salary from the yearly sale of sheep and related items, he notes that the challenges of year-round labor are forgotten, despite the physically demanding nature of his job. Because pastures are inaccessible in the local lowland areas due to snow cover throughout the winter, seasonal migration is required. He guarantees ideal nutrition and growth for the sheep by moving them strategically, which

has a direct effect on output and revenue. Social and cultural customs also have an impact on Jangabir's income; for instance, the holiday season raises the demand for cattle, which raises the price at which his sheep can be sold.

Jangabir makes several contributions to the local economy in addition to his personal wealth. He delivers meat and wool to local markets, engages in trading operations that support seasonal market cycles, and offers jobs to workers who help manage and herd the sheep. His cattle operations boost auxiliary economic sectors like local trade, transportation, and feed production. The job of Jangabir Bhandari is a prime example of how traditional occupations, which are influenced by social conventions and seasonal cycles, are essential to maintaining rural lives and advancing the local economy.

### **Girga Budha**

A 36 year old Dhami from Sinja, Karnali, Nepal, Girga Budha is an active member of his community in addition to being a traditional spiritual practitioner. In his capacity as a Dhami, he performs healing rites, chants, and uses herbal medicines to treat illnesses brought on by supernatural or spiritual forces. He also acts as a mediator between the spiritual and human worlds. In order to help families with health, farming, and personal issues, he also deciphers natural signals and speaks with spirits. His focus on education in addition to traditional responsibilities is demonstrated by the fact that his family today comprises of two children who reside in Surkhet for their schooling. Spiritual services, farming, and seasonal business are all part of Girga Budha's household income, which reflects how cultural, social, and economic activities are integrated to support rural living in India.

In addition to his spiritual function, Girga Budha helps to preserve indigenous knowledge, local customs, and folklore by transferring them to future generations. He synchronizes community activities with auspicious periods by performing rituals for festivals, marriages, and births. His combined engagement in seasonal trade and farming shows how Dhami frequently connect spiritual instruction with economic production, impacting local market activity as well as home income. His counsel and deeds as a well-respected community member, influence social norms, resource distribution and decision-making, demonstrating how culture and economy interact in rural Nepal.

The Girga Budha instance underlines the wider connection between cultural norms, social values, and economic growth. Like him, Dhami not only direct social and spiritual life but also have an indirect impact on economic behavior through their influence on trade



decisions, home management, and farming practices. Their presence supports the continuation of traditional livelihoods, promotes community involvement in productive activities, and strengthens cultural cohesiveness. Spiritual practitioners serve as socio-cultural economy agents in this way, showing how social values, cultural norms, and traditional knowledge systems are all intricately linked to rural economic development, making culture a crucial factor in long-term, sustainable rural growth.

### **Dil Bahdur Budha**

From the rural highlands of Karnali, Nepal, comes the diligent hotel owner Dil Bahdur Budha. He is 45 years old and has made a name for himself as a hard-working, resourceful person who works several jobs to provide for his family and community. As the father of three daughters and one son, he works hard to instill in them the principles of integrity, hard work, and deference to social customs. He spends the most of his time running his hotel, where he greets guests with warmth and provides top-notch hospitality services. In addition to generating revenue, his hotel helps to boost local tourism and job prospects, which benefits his community's overall economic growth. Dil Bahdur serves as a guide for tourists visiting Mugu's picturesque Rara Lake, one of Nepal's most stunning locations, during the tourist season. Tourists admire and trust him as a guide because of his extensive understanding of the area, its culture, and its natural environment. He earns extra money by gathering priceless herbal plants like Yarsagumba and other therapeutic herbs in addition to his work as a guesthouse and guide.

The life of Dil Bahdur serves as an example of how social values and economic advancement work in concert. His economic actions are shaped by his devotion to moral behavior, cultural norms, and family obligations, but his entrepreneurial endeavors also serve to strengthen communal cohesiveness and trust. He illustrates how cultural and social values may propel sustainable economic growth in his work by incorporating traditional knowledge, local resources, and social responsibility. His initiatives serve as an example for socially responsible, community-focused development, demonstrating that economic growth in rural Nepal works best when it is in line with local customs, beliefs, and societal expectations.

### **Conclusion**

The complex relationship between cultural elements and economic progress is demonstrated by the profiles of people and households in rural Nepal. The creation of revenue is not the only factor driving economic activity in these societies; social conventions, cultural

customs, and traditional values are all intricately entwined. As an illustration of how cultural norms, such as social duties during festivals and rituals, influence financial choices and resource allocation, consider Mr. Dhanlal Budha's dual roles as a teacher and small-scale farmer. Cultural norms can have a direct impact on production and income timing, as evidenced by Mun Bahadur Rokaya's farming techniques, which are impacted by local beliefs regarding auspicious days. While Junmaya Rawat's household demonstrates how traditional healing practices and ritual expenditures impact economic priorities, particularly in healthcare and child welfare, Sangita Kami's careful management of income contrasts with her husband's relatively higher but less controlled expenditures, highlighting the role of gendered social values in influencing economic behavior.

Sheep husbandry by Jangabir Bhandari serves as another example of how traditional means of subsistence, which are influenced by the environment and cultural cycles, support local economic activity by creating jobs, promoting trade, and stimulating the market. A Dhami from Sinja named Girga Budha combines farming, seasonal trading, and spiritual counselling to preserve local customs while influencing societal mores and economic conduct. His position serves as an example of how traditional knowledge and cultural values support rural livelihoods and long-term economic growth. Dil Bahadur Budha, a hotel owner and guide in Karnali, is a shining example of how social ideals and commercial development can coexist. In keeping with cultural norms, ethics, and family obligations, he blends tradition with business to promote tourism, community welfare, and sustainable growth founded on local values and social responsibility.

When taken as a whole, these examples highlight how cultural context is essential to understanding economic progress in rural Nepal. Culture affects labor allocation, consumption patterns, savings, investments, and decision-making, all of which have an impact on total productivity and growth. Designing development plans that uphold regional customs while expanding economic possibilities requires an understanding of these relationships. Since culture both influences and supports economic activity, these examples show that including cultural understanding into economic planning is necessary for sustained economic development. As such, it is a crucial part of rural development initiatives. The information shown above demonstrates that people believe social ideals and economic development are closely intertwined. Mainly, a society's economic development is greatly influenced by its cultural and religious beliefs. It has been discovered that several rituals,

including janma sanskar, mrityu sanskar, marriage, and poojas, are closely linked factors that influence economic progress. However, it has been discovered that concerns pertaining to gender do have an impact on economic development. On the other hand, it may be argued that social values are essential to the economic activities of the society, which either directly or indirectly influence economic growth.

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