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## THE VALUE OF SONS AND DAUGHTERS AMONG THE GURUNGS IN NEPAL

Narayani Tiwari

### Introduction

This paper<sup>1</sup> addresses the issue on the value of sons and daughters in the Gurung village where the fieldwork was carried out. The conceptual framework of this paper is based on theoretical literature about the fertility transition. In the literatures, questions are raised about the relationship between fertility and value of children, as well as the relationship of high fertility with preference for sons or daughters. In this paper, the value of children and the preference for sons or daughters is placed in the context of household activities and the role of sons and daughters in those activities.

### Literature review and conceptual framework

The value of children in Nepal involves certain socio-economic, cultural and religious factors, which sometimes conflict with the interests of the family and the inheritance rules. The values attached to the role of sons and daughters can influence fertility trends. Various factors are responsible for the fertility patterns and changes in Nepal and elsewhere. Many demographers (Davis and Blake 1956; Bongaarts 1978; Freedman 1987; Jones 1990; Caldwell 1996; Cleland 1993; Volland 1998; Crow and Allan, 2001; Singh *et al.*, 2003) have noted factors affecting fertility through proximate variables (Bongaarts 1978) or intermediate variables. These can be clustered into three groups: first, variables relating exposure to intercourse; second, variables relating to conception; and, third, variables relating to pregnancy outcome (Jones, 1990). Age at marriage is an important variable in the first cluster, the use of contraception is an important one in the second cluster and socio-economic and cultural factors affecting fertility are placed in the third cluster.

Authors like Karki (1988), Niraula and Morgan (1995) and Riley (1999) have reported that the meaning of masculinity and femininity in patriarchal society is often such that it contributes the population growth. The meanings and value attached to masculinity and femininity will influence parental investments in sons and daughters. While the latter should be equal, this is often not the case (Sieff, 1990; Casimir and Dutilh, 2003). Also the status of women, their fertility choices and gender preferences have direct effect on fertility trends in any country.

Due to socio-economic and cultural differences, the demand for and the value of children vary between the developing and developed countries. Freedman (1974) observed that the preferred number of sons is relatively

they all face. This is an excellent chapter which does not lend itself to facile summaries. It should be studied and pondered, not just in the context of Newar Buddhism but in the larger context of what is happening to all religious and cultural communities in Nepal. *In conclusion the book is an excellent investment for anyone who wants to understand what is going on in Nepal today and what the future might hold not only for the Newar community but for all the peoples of Nepal,*

The book concludes with two appendices: one, short biographical notes on the prominent personalities in the Theravada Movement and the second a complete list of the Theravada Viharas in Nepal. There is also a glossary of technical terms.

– John K. Locke

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- Khatri, Sridhar K. 2001. "Teaching of International Relations in Nepal." *Contributions to Nepalese Studies*. 28:2, pp 139-154.
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