

## **Religion, Gender and Dalit Issues**

### **Religious sites and practices as economic indicators: A consideration of the rural and urban Nepal**

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The aim of this paper is to further discussion on the changing landscape of Nepal's socioeconomic world as seen through the lens of religious worship sites and practices. Anthropologists of religion in Nepal have a long history of exploring worship sites, practices, and the ways in which those sites and practices integrate, and integrate into, Nepali cultures and societies. As Nepal is increasingly connected to an economically, politically and socially globalizing world, a fresh review of worship sites and practices is in order — not only from a strictly ethnographic, documentary perspective, but from a perspective which considers how the rapid changes in the structure of Nepal's economic, political and social structures are affecting, and being affected by, religious realities.

This paper will address two major connected themes. The first looks at the effects that urbanization and urban sprawl have had on the religious landscape (both physical and metaphorical), and how urban socioeconomic conditions interact with religiosity to turn religious practice, at some points, into a leisure-time activity.

The second theme explores the different approaches to religious site organization and worship practice from urban areas (Kathmandu, Pokhara) through ex-urban areas (Pharping, Nagarkot) to rural areas (Dolakha district, Mustang district, parts of Gorkha district) with an eye towards how socioeconomic factors, such as time spent engaging in secondary economic activities and related observed cash flow, may affect the sites, practices, and local attitudes.